

DAS WEISSE BAND
(THE WHITE RIBBON
or The Schoolteacher's tale)

Michael Haneke

CHARACTERS

The Narrator (31)

The Pastor (44)
Anna, *his wife* (48)
Their children:
Marie (14)
Martin (12)
Anton (11)
Magdalena (10)
Katharina (9)
Florian (8)

The Landowner (56)
Beatrix, *his wife* (34)
Their children:
Sigmund, *their son* (9)
The Twins (1)

The Steward (53)
Emma, *his wife* (42)
Their children:
Liesl (15)
Georg (14)
Ferdinand (10)

The Doctor (61)
His children :
Xenia (13)
Rudolph (4)

The Midwife (36)
Hansi, *her son* (8)

The Farmer (51)
His children:
Leni (22)
Franz (20)
Paul (14)
Kathi (12)
Sophie (10)
Annerl (7)
Sepp (5)
Peterl (2)

Eva (18)
Her Father
Her Mother
Her brothers and sisters

The Bathing-Midwife
The Tutor
The Policeman
The two Police Officers
Matti, slight boy (16)
Driver of the carriage
The Italian Nanny

1. COVERED RIDING SCHOOL OF THE MANORIAL ESTATE INT/DAY

MONTAGE OF CLOSE-SHOTS:

A man is riding a dressage horse. We can't see his face. Only his boots, spurs, whip, the taut reins, the horse's foamy mouth, the movements that steer the animal. We watch him for a while and hear the SNORTS of the horse, the dull SOUND of THE HOOVES on the ground, the fast-uttered COMMANDS of the rider. Then we start to hear a gentle voice:

NARRATOR (o.s.): *I don't know if the story that I want to tell you, reflects the truth in every detail. Much of it I only know by hearsay, and a lot of it remains obscure to me even today, and I must leave it in darkness. Many of these questions remain without answer. But I believe I must tell of the strange events that occurred in our village, because they may cast a new light on some of the goings-on in this country...*

LONG SHOT OF THE RIDING STABLES.

The rider is the village doctor, a gaunt, intellectual-looking man of around 60, who has finished his dressage session, and now rides toward the open gate beside the CAMERA, goes through it and into the landscape. We see him in the avenue, now visible behind him, and watch him grow smaller until he vanishes.

NARRATOR (o.s. continuing): *...Everything began, if I remember correctly, with the doctor's riding accident. After his dressage session in the manor's riding school, he was first headed for his home...*

* * *

2. THE DOCTOR'S PROPERTY EXT/DAY

The garden opens up on the meadows and fields of the flat countryside.

The doctor lies beside his wounded horse. His arm is strangely twisted, his broken collarbone has made a bump in the blood-drenched jacket. He yells with pain.

After a few moments Xenia, the doctor's 12-year old daughter, comes running out of the house. She rushes up to her father and looks at him, horrified, then at the twitching horse, screams with horror. Her father shouts something to her, she bends over him and tries to raise him to his feet. He screams at her as he's in such pain. She staggers back helplessly, he shouts something to her again, whereupon she runs off. We hear all this from far away, because during the whole scene the narrator has continued his tale:

NARRATOR: ...to see if any of his patients had arrived. As it entered the property, the horse had tripped over a hardly visible, taut wire that had been strung between two trees. The doctor's fourteen-year old daughter had watched the accident from the window of the house, and was able to inform the woman who was their neighbor, who in turn got the message to the manor house, so that the agonizing doctor could be transported to the hospital of the district capital that was over 30 kilometers away...

* * *

3. VILLAGE-STREET AND SCHOOL EXT/DAY

TRACKING SHOT:

Emilie Wagner, a skinny, modestly dressed woman in her late thirties hurries along the village street.

NARRATOR: ...The neighbor, a single woman of around 40, was the village midwife, who had filled the invaluable position of housekeeper and receptionist for the doctor since the death of his wife in childbirth. After tending to the doctor's two children, she had gone to the school to fetch her own son, Hans. Since she didn't like leaving him alone, she asked me - in return for a small fee - to keep him at the school with me every day, after the other children had finished their lessons. But on the day of the riding accident there was choir practice in the afternoon, so that most of the children were still present.

A few children pass Emilie and greet her. Then she reaches the school. The door is open. The schoolchildren stream out.

We see the schoolteacher, a slight man, hardly 30 years old, talking inside to some of the older students.

Martin, a tall gangly boy of around 12, whose elegant clothes make him stand out among the other children coming out of the school, turns to the midwife:

MARTIN: *Were you at Xenia's place?*

He's interrupted by Marie, a delicate, pretty and polite girl of around 13 who has the odd characteristic of already behaving like an adult.

MARIE: *Can't you say hello? Good afternoon, Mrs. Wagner, excuse me.*

MIDWIFE: *Hello, Marie.*

MARIE: *We're so worried, you know. That's why Martin forgot his manners.*

MIDWIFE: *That's all right.*

MARIE: *How is the Doctor?*

MIDWIFE: *Not very well.*

MARIE: *Will he have to stay in the hospital?*

MIDWIFE: *I don't know.*

The midwife is tired of Marie's precocious and endless questions. She peers over the heads of children surrounding them, looking for someone in the classroom.

MARIE: *We'll take care of Xenia. Maybe, we can help her somehow.*

MIDWIFE (distracted): *Good idea. It'll cheer her up.*

She has seen her son, who's coming out of the door: he is a mongoloid boy of 8. His name is Hans. He hesitates, as he sees his mother surrounded by the others. The midwife leaves the group and goes over to him.

MIDWIFE: *Well, did you enjoy the singing?*

HANS (nods eagerly): *It was great!*

The schoolteacher comes in.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Show your mother what you've been singing.*

Hans looks doubtfully, first at the schoolteacher, then at his mother, who nods at him encouragingly. After hesitating for a second, he starts to SING:

HANS: *La... La... lalala...*

MARIE turns to leave.

MARIE: *Good-bye, Sir. Good-bye, Mrs. Wagner.*

Her saying good-bye acts as an invitation to the other children: they also SAY GOOD-BYE, though some less distinctively, and follow the girl.

TRACKING SHOT with the children. After a short distance, Georg, a strong boy of around 13, shouts, encouraging the others:

GEORG: *Last one is a rotten egg!*

Then he sprints off. Most of the children follow him. But Marie and some of the other kids merely walk off at a brisk pace.

The CAMERA, that stopped when Georg ran off, now FOLLOWS Marie, so that, after a while, the others can be seen again at the far end of the street.

* * *

4. THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE INT/DAY

Xenia, who is herself in a pitiful condition, holds her four-year-old brother Rudolph on her knees. She rocks him and herself back and forth. As his head is bowed, we can only guess that he's crying. After a while

XENIA (quietly): *If you want, I can cut out some animals for you, as I did last week?*

No reaction.

Would you like that?!

Rudolph shakes his head faintly.

We could color them together, no?

No reaction.

Or we could cut them from the lovely colored paper? The golden one, do you remember? The one I got for Easter?

No reaction. Xenia ends up pressing her head helplessly against her little brother's head and mutters:

Come on, come on.

They remain that way for a while. Finally Xenia raises Rudolph high enough so she can stand up:

All right! Now I'm going to make us something to eat. Mrs. Wagner has prepared everything, I...

RUDOLPH (interrupts her softly, his head still bowed): *What if he never comes back?*

XENIA (as if she hasn't understood): *What?*

Rudolph merely shakes his bowed head. Xenia kneels down in front of her brother and tries to look into his eyes, but the boy bows his head even deeper.

XENIA (tenderly): *Come on! Don't be stupid! It goes away just like the flu. Remember last winter? You were very sick, weren't you? And then, two weeks later...*

A NOISE makes her cock her ear: it's as if something had hit the window in the next room.

Xenia stands up and listens. SILENCE. And then, after listening for a while, once again the same noise.

XENIA: *Hush!*

She goes into the OTHER ROOM and, hiding behind the curtain, looks out.

Outside, the group of children are gathered around Marie. They look up at the house. They're waiting for something.

After a while, Georg, the boy who earlier had urged them to race, throws another stone at the window. Xenia is startled. She hesitates. Finally, she opens the window.

GEORG: *Hi, Xeni!*

Xenia doesn't answer. After a while

MARIE(quietly): *How are you? Can we help you?*

* * *

5. MANOR EXT/NIGHT

The steward of the estate, a heavy set rustic man in his mid fifties, is talking with the landowner (who's about the same age). They are standing beside a team of carthorses. With a torch the steward lights up a dead horse that lies on the ground after being towed in by the carthorses.

STEWARD: *...its tendons were almost severed. It never would have recovered.*

The landowner bends down and examines the wounds on the pasterns of the dead animal's front legs.

LANDOWNER: *How did that thing get there? Didn't the Doctor say anything?*

STEWARD (with a snicker): *He was in no mood to talk, with his collarbone sticking out of his throat. I asked his daughter. She has no idea. He always rides through those trees.*

LANDOWNER: *Did you look at the wire?*

STEWARD: *Of course. It's thin, but strong. You can hardly see it, if you don't look closely.*

LANDOWNER: *But why was it tied there?*

STEWARD (shrugging): *And at knee height! I don't know... Maybe so the kids could jump over it. No idea. I don't think the doctor himself was stupid enough to tie that thing there.*

LANDOWNER: *Meaning?*

STEWARD: *Meaning: I don't know. Anyway it was definitely put there intentionally and looks damn...*

* * *

6. MANOR. LIVING ROOM ON THE TOP FLOOR. INT/NIGHT

Sigi, the 9-year old son of the landowner stands at the window, and watches his father and the steward standing in the torchlight beside the dead horse.

In the background MUSIC (Piano/violin).

After a short while the two men down in the courtyard separate: the landowner heads to the manor, the steward with the team of carthorses to a farm building.

Sigi turns away from the window and looks into the room. There his mother Beatrix, a beautiful, nervous woman in her late thirties, is sitting at a baby grand piano. Beside her stands the tutor, holding a violin tucked under his chin. He looks as if he's in his late twenties, plump and slightly greasy, and obviously infatuated with his beautiful employer, who has just interrupted her playing with an annoyed sigh.

TUTOR: *I'm sorry, Madame. You're just playing too well for me.*

BEATRIX: *Stop apologizing and concentrate. That'll be more helpful for both of us.*

TUTOR: *To tell the truth: You're just playing too fast for me. I'm not Paganini.*

Beatrix looks up at him with a quick amused smile, then turns back the pages of her sheet music.

BEATRIX: *Well, let's start all over again at the letter D.*

The tutor does the same, they glance at each other and start again.

Sigi watches them from the window, then he saunters in, stops some distance away and watches. Then he saunters away again.

Suddenly, Beatrix stops playing again.

BEATRIX: *Listen, darling. If you like the music, then sit down beside me and turn the pages of the sheet music. But if you're bored, go up to your room and at least stay out of my sight. It makes me nervous if you're constantly sauntering around in front of me.*

Sigi bows his head ashamed, but doesn't move.

BEATRIX (turning to the tutor): *By the way, what time is it? Where is the girl?*

The tutor pulls out his pocket watch.

TUTOR: *She's with the twins, I presume. Twenty to nine.*

BEATRIX: *Twenty to nine?! (turning to Sigi): You should have been in bed long ago. (to the tutor): Has he done his homework?*

TUTOR: *Of course, Madame.*

BEATRIX: *All right. (to Sigi): Well, do you want to turn the pages for me or not?*

Sigi nods.

BEATRIX: *Then come here!*

With a little caustic smile, she taps beside her on the piano bench. Sigi comes over sits down beside her and looks at the sheet music. Beatrix turns the pages back.

BEATRIX (to the tutor): *All right, here we go again: the letter D. Try to play a bit faster. Or else I might as well play with the village schoolteacher.*

They PLAY again. Sigi reads the music with her, then turns the page.

* * *

7. RECTORY. DINING ROOM. INT/NIGHT

Marie and Martin come through the door and stand in front of it.

At the dinner table, the pastor (in his mid-forties) sits with his back to the door. In front of him, at the other end of the table, sits his wife Anna, a woman in her late forties. On the sides of the table sit the children:

Anton (11), Magdalena (10), Katharina (9) and Florian (7). Two other places are empty.

The table is set for 8 people, but the plates are empty.

SILENCE.

MARIE (quietly): *Please forgive us.*

MARTIN (following her lead): *Please forgive us.*

SILENCE. Then the pastor speaks very quietly, without turning to the two children:

PASTOR: *There's no question of forgiving. You haven't offended me. It's your mother and your brothers and sisters that you have frightened away and offended. Ask them for forgiveness. You amaze me. I didn't know that the two oldest and therefore most reasonable of my children wouldn't mind frightening their mother and brothers and sisters to death.*

He turns around toward the two children:

Are you now grown up enough to live on your own? Are you? Do you want to leave home and start a life of your own? So you can come and go as you please, and nobody gets in your way. Is that what you want?

The two remain silent, their heads bowed. The pastor turns his back to them again, and faces the table.

Nobody at this table has eaten tonight. When it grew dark, and you hadn't returned, your mother went all over the village in tears, looking for you. Do you really think we could've enjoyed our meal, if we feared something had happened to you?

Do you think we can enjoy our meal now, when you've come back and dish up lies as an excuse?

I don't know what's worse: your absence or your coming back. (PAUSE).

Tonight we shall all go to bed hungry.

He stands up, followed by the mother and the children who were sitting at the table. Again he turns to the two wrongdoers:

PASTOR: *You probably agree with me, that I cannot leave your offense unpunished, if we want keep living in mutual respect. So, tomorrow evening at this hour, I shall give each of you 10 strokes of the cane. Until then, you have time to ponder over your offense. Do you agree with me?*

MARIE and MARTIN: *Yes, Father.*

PASTOR: *All right then. Go to bed now, all of you.*

The children who were sitting at the table go first to their mother, then to their father. They kiss their hands and leave the room. As Marie and Martin want to do the same, the father says

PASTOR: *I refuse to be touched by you. Your mother and I will sleep poorly because we know I have to hurt you tomorrow, and because it will more painful to us than the strokes will be painful to you. Leave us alone and go to bed.*

As the two children are about to leave the room, he says

PASTOR: *When you were small, your mother once in a while would tie a ribbon in your hair or around your arm. Its white color was to remind you of innocence and purity. I thought that at your age you were well-mannered enough to get by without such reminders. I was wrong. Tomorrow, once you've been purified by your punishment,*

*your mother will tie such a ribbon on you again,
and you'll wear it until your behavior shows us
that we can trust you again.*

** * **

8. THE DOCTOR'S PROPERTY EXT/DAY

CLOSE ANGLE: one of the trees to which the wire was tied that tripped up the doctor's horse. A policeman is looking for clues.

With him are Xenia, Rudolph, the midwife and her son Hans.

The two boys don't show much interest in the investigation. They run after each other in the garden and the neighboring fields. Hans especially seems enjoy this, and is shrieking with delight.

POLICEMAN: *Where is the wire now?*

The midwife looks at Xenia, who shrugs her shoulders.

POLICEMAN: *Then who took it away?*

XENIA: *I don't know.*

POLICEMAN: *You weren't here?*

Xenia, uncertain, looks at the midwife.

POLICEMAN: *Did you accompany your father? To town?*

XENIA: *No.*

POLICEMAN: *That means you were here.*

XENIA: *I was in school. Today.*

POLICEMAN: *And when you left for school, the wire was still here?*

XENIA: *I didn't check.*

The policeman turns to the midwife:

POLICEMAN: *And when did you come?*

MIDWIFE: *At noon. I make lunch for the Doctor and the kids. Since the death of the Doctor's wife, I've been helping him out.*

POLICEMAN: *Since when?*

MIDWIFE: *It's been 4 years. Since the birth of little Rudolph. I'm the midwife here. We often work together.*

POLICEMAN: *But you didn't see anything?*

MIDWIFE: *No.*

POLICEMAN: *Do you have any idea how long the wire had been there?*

MIDWIFE: *I'd never seen it before.*

POLICEMAN (angrily): *Let me get this straight: Nobody saw the thing before, nobody saw it afterwards. It wound itself around the two trees all alone, and made itself vanish after the doctor's fall. Right?*

Neither the midwife nor Xenia know what to answer. At that moment Hans comes running in from the field, excited:

HANS: *Mother! ... Look! ...Look... come!*

MIDWIFE (reluctantly): *What's happening?*

HANS: *People! ...Lots of people. Come!!*

MIDWIFE (to the policeman): *Sorry...*

Indeed, as the midwife sets out for the field, a group of people hurry along the path bordering the doctor's property, and cross our POV. They carry a body on a makeshift stretcher. The policeman and Xenia follow the midwife. The group vanishes as quickly as it appeared behind the surrounding bushes.

As the group was approaching, we have been hearing

NARRATOR: *The day following the doctor's riding accident not only brought no solution to the question of who'd done it, but a second, far more tragic incident almost made people forget the misfortune of the previous day: the wife of a tenant farmer died in a work-accident.*

* * *

9. FARM INT/DAY

It's very dark in the low-ceilinged room. Small windows. A couple of women in peasant dresses take care of the dead woman, who's been laid out on the bed. The women remove her clothes and wash her.

NARRATOR: *The woman, who because of an injured arm could only do light work, had been dispensed*

by the steward from harvesting chores, and was assigned to easier work in the sawmill.

Everything happens very silently. An elderly woman, a midwife specialized in bathing, takes care of the proceedings.

Every time the door is opened, one hears the mutterings of the people waiting outside. Soiled water is carried out, new underwear brought in, and the women start to clothe the naked corpse again.

Outside, the sounds of excited VOICES are getting louder. Then the door opens and the farmer (around fifty) enters the room. The old midwife turns around angrily:

BATHING-MIDWIFE: *You stay outside! I haven't yet...*

FARMER (quietly): *Get out!*

Reluctantly, the old midwife abandons her half completed work, not without having spread the dress she had draped over the still half-naked body of the dead woman. The other women follow her, embarrassed.

Once the door has closed behind them, the farmer just stands there. Only after a long while does he move forward and sit beside his dead wife. He remains seated, motionless. For a very long time. He only tugs once at the dress draped over the half-naked body, as if he wanted to cover a patch of nudity. Then he just sits there again in the dark room, and only his halting breath lets us know that any moment he may cry.

* * *

10. A RIVER AND MEADOW WITH BRIDGE EXT/DAY

With his net and his fishing rod the schoolteacher is landing a fish.

NARRATOR: *On the same day, I had a strange encounter: the weather was beautiful and hot, so I decided to try and improve my meager menu with some brown trout, which are plentiful in the river. The landowner apparently liked me, and allowed me to fish.*

Suddenly, the schoolteacher stops dead: like a tightrope walker Martin is walking along on the top of the wall of the bridge, thirty feet above the riverbed.

SCHOOLTEACHER (shouts, fearful): *Martin!*

The boy doesn't seem to hear him and keeps up his balancing act.

SCHOOLTEACHER (louder): *Martin!!*

The boy keeps at it.

The schoolteacher quickly wades ashore, throws his fishing rod and the net and the wriggling fish on the gravel beside the river and climbs up the river bank. When he gets on top, he sees the boy balancing himself at the other end of the bridge.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Martin, be careful!*

The boy takes a few more steps, then reaches the end of the wall and jumps down onto the bridge. Hesitatingly, he turns to the schoolteacher, who comes toward him.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Are you completely insane? ! Do you want to break your neck? !*

MARTIN (his head bowed): *Hello, sir.*

The schoolteacher has reached him.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What's happening? Are you mad? ! Don't you know how high that is?*

The boy remains silent, keeping his head bent down.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Didn't you hear me? I shouted to you.*

MARTIN (after a short silence): *Yes, I did.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well?*

The boy remains silent.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well?!!*

Keeping his head bowed, the boy shrugs a little. The schoolteacher, realizing that this won't get him any further, tries again, talking in a gentle voice:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You saw me down there and wanted to impress me?*

The boy shakes his head.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well, why didn't you...*

MARTIN (interrupting him) *I gave God an opportunity to kill me. He didn't do it. That means, he's pleased with me.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (staggered): *What are you saying?*

MARTIN: *He doesn't want me to die.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (bewildered): *Who? Who doesn't want you to die?*

MARTIN: *God.*

Pause.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Why would God want you to die?*

The boy stops answering, his head bowed again. The schoolteacher remains silent and looks at him for a while. Then, he adds softly:

Promise me never to do such nonsense again. All right? Look at me.

Martin looks up reluctantly.

Promise it to me.

Martin remains silent. He doesn't dare look down, and instead looks past the schoolteacher.

You don't trust me, don't you?

MARTIN (polite, emotionless): *Yes, I do, Sir.*

The schoolteacher realizes that there's no use in talking any further.

SCHOOLTEACHER (concluding): *All right. Go home now. I'll be coming tomorrow for the piano lesson. I'll talk to your father then.*

Martin turns and faces the schoolteacher, and says in such a pleading voice that it startles him:

MARTIN: *Please, don't tell him! Please, sir, don't!*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Why?*

Martin just looks pleadingly at the schoolteacher and shakes his head, as if to stress his request.

* * *

11. SAWMILL INT/DAY

Franz, the farmer eldest son, is searching for evidence of his mother's accident. He is accompanied by the neighbor's son Matti, a slight boy of around 16. The sawmill is a ramshackle wooden building beside the river.

Matti, who obviously was there when the accident happened, shows Franz the place.

MATTI: *There. Be careful. Everything's rotten here.*

Franz moves slowly forward. He looks down at the lower floor. Immediately below: the saw. Franz steps back carefully and turns to Matti:

FRANZ: *Who made her climb up here?*

MATTI: *I haven't a clue. They told us to collect all the lose ends. She just climbed up there.*

FRANZ: *She could never stand heights. It made her dizzy.*

Who assigned you to this job?

MATTI (uneasy): *You know how it works. The sawmill needed to be cleaned up, and the foremen pick the weaker harvesters*

FRANZ: *Who picked her?*

* * *

12. STREET AT THE END OF THE VILLAGE EXT/DAY

The schoolteacher with his fishing gear and several fish that he caught.

NARRATOR: *It was on my way home after the strange encounter with Martin that I met Eva for the first time.*

Eva (18), a redhead, somewhat chubby, but pretty girl, crosses him way on her bicycle. A big bag is strapped to the baggage carrier.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Hello.*

EVA (passing by): *Hello.*

The schoolteacher stops, turns to the girl:

SCHOOLTEACHER (hesitantly): *Excuse me!*

EVA (Off): *Yes?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (embarrassed): *Excuse me for accosting you this way. You're the new nanny of the Baron's children, aren't you?*

We hear the bicycle stopping.

EVA (o.s.): *Why?*

The schoolteacher has turned around and now moves toward the girl.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *They say you're from Oberdorf.*

EVA: *Who says that?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Folks around here.*

EVA: *Oh. So what?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Nothing. I don't know. Sorry. I'm the schoolteacher here. I just thought I... I don't know (he laughs embarrassed): when I saw you, I thought... I'm from Grundbach... I'm the tailor's son...*

EVA: *I know.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (confused): *What?*

EVA: *The Baroness already told me.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What did she tell you?*

EVA: *That the schoolteacher is from the village next to mine.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (laughs): *Oh, I see! Yes. Well... I thought... (he points at the bag on the baggage carrier): You look as if you're going there...*

EVA: *Where?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Back home. To Oberdorf.*

EVA (doesn't understand what he's referring to): *Yes?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Are you going there?*

EVA: *Yes, I am.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (doesn't know what to say): *Well, I thought... since you'll cycle through our village... you might perhaps...(he's thinking, looks down and sees the fish): ... say hello to my father and (laughing at his own idea, he holds up a fish) bring him one of the fishes. They're fresh. I just caught them.*

Now Eva laughs too.

EVA: *What?!*

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiling as if to apologize): *Well. I'm sure he'd be delighted. Especially as it's the start of the weekend.*

She nods at the fish. The absurdity of the suggestion amuses her. At the same time she doesn't really know how to behave.

EVA: *Well, how...*

The schoolteacher holds up the fish, laughs, as if he himself doesn't know how he got this idea.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I don't know either. Unfortunately, I have nothing to wrap them in.*

The both laugh. Pause. Then the girl points at the bag on the baggage carrier of her bicycle and says regretfully:

EVA: *Neither have I. Unfortunately.*

The schoolteacher has a new "idea ":

SCHOOLTEACHER ("amused"): *I could give you some fishing line, to tie them up.*

EVA (equally amused): *There on the bicycle?!*

The schoolteacher shrugs his shoulders with a smile ("why not").

EVA: *I don't think that's a very good idea.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You're right. It was just an idea.*

EVA: *Yes.*

Embarrassed pause. Then

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Is that your bicycle?*

EVA ("What an idea!"): *No! It belongs to the estate.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I see.*

Pause.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Is this your first day off?*

EVA (rather suspicious because all this is too intimate for her): *Yes.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well, you're probably looking forward to being at home.*

EVA: *Yes, I am.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I can imagine.*

Pause. Then

EVA says (putting the pedals and handlebar in a "ready to leave" position): *Well. I've still a long way to go.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (stepping back): *Of course. Well, good-bye.*

EVA: *Good-bye.*

She's about to ride off.

SCHOOLTEACHER (with a smile): *If you cycle through Grundbach and see my father, at least say hello to him from me.*

EVA: *I don't know your father.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *That's true.*

They look at each other for a while and then Eva rides off. The CAMERA FOLLOWS her. Eva and the bicycle are tottering a bit. The girl looks around and shouts, laughing:

EVA: *I only learned to ride a bicycle today!*

SCHOOLTEACHER (now o.s., also shouting): *Well, you're doing fine! But be careful!*

As she picks up speed, Eva rides better and soon is just a speck on the dusty country road.

* * *

13. THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE INT/DUSK

It's still too early to switch on the light.
Xenia and little Rudolph are sitting in the kitchen,
eating. For quite a while. Suddenly

RUDOLPH: *The woman today. What was wrong with her?*

XENIA (eating): *Which woman? Oh, I see. She was dead.*

Pause. Then

RUDOLPH: *What's that?*

XENIA: *What?*

RUDOLPH: *Dead.*

Xenia looks up from her meal.

XENIA: *What's dead? My God, that's when someone doesn't live anymore. When he's stopped living.*

SILENCE. Then

RUDOLPH: *When does one stop living?*

Xenia looks up from her meal again. Now she tries to talk more seriously to her brother because she understands that these questions matter to him. But she's also feeling uneasy and put on.

XENIA: *When you're too old or very ill.*

RUDOLPH: *And the woman?*

XENIA: *She had an accident.*

RUDOLPH: *An accident?*

XENIA: *Yes. That's when you hurt yourself very badly.*

RUDOLPH: *Like Dad?*

XENIA: *Yes, but much worse than that. So bad, that your body can't take it anymore.*

Another SILENCE: Then

RUDOLPH: *And then you're dead?*

XENIA: *Yes. But most people don't have an accident.*

RUDOLPH: *That means they don't need to die?*

XENIA: *No, they die much later.*

RUDOLPH: *When?*

XENIA: *Later, when they're very old.*

Long PAUSE.

RUDOLPH: *Do all people die?*

XENIA: *Yes.*

RUDOLPH: *All of them, really?*

XENIA: *Yes, everyone dies.*

RUDOLPH: *But not you, Xeni?*

XENIA: *Me too. Everyone.*

RUDOLPH: *But not Dad?*

XENIA: *Dad too.*

RUDOLPH: *Me too?*

XENIA: *You too. But not before a very very long time. All of us, only in a very long time.*

RUDOLPH: *And you can't do anything against it? It has to happen?*

XENIA: *It has to happen. But not now, not for a very long time.*

Long PAUSE. Then

RUDOLPH: *And Mom? She didn't go on a trip?*

PAUSE.

RUDOLPH: *Is she dead too?*

PAUSE.

XENIA: *Yes. She's dead too. But that was a long time ago.*

Both remain SILENT. In the meantime it has grown dark in the kitchen.

Suddenly, Rudolph brushes away his plate off the table with an angry movement, and turns away from Xenia. The plate shatters on the floor.

At first Xenia is stunned, paralyzed. Then she starts to sob, but tries to hide it from her brother.

* * *

14. RECTORY. DINING ROOM. INT/NIGHT

While we hear the SOUNDS of the punishment and the children being beaten, COUNTING the strokes with increasing MOANS and stifled WHINING, we see (CLOSE ANGLES) the faces of the other brothers and sisters. Some have turned away their faces, and others start to cry with pity and fear.

Finally both have received their 10 strokes.

CLOSE ANGLE: The pastor. He is breathless and beads of sweat on his forehead.

PASTOR: *There.*

He hands Martin the cane. CLOSE ANGLE: Martin.

Here, take the cane and put it back in its place.

As Martin is about to go, his father goes on:

But first you can thank me for trying to protect you from any further misconduct.

CLOSE ANGLE: Marie.

You know how much I love you and how much it hurts me to inflict such pain on you. Today was a very sad day in my life, and I hope for all of us that it doesn't happen again.

CLOSE ANGLE: Both kiss their father's hand.

CLOSE ANGLE: The pastor.

PASTOR (smiles): *And now hug me. There's nothing we have to forgive each other anymore. I love you with all my heart.*

He first hugs Marie who, her face still wet with tears, tries a forced smile and then Martin. Then, the pastor turns to his wife:

PASTOR: *Now the ribbon, Anna.*

Anna goes toward the two children, tying a white ribbon around Martin's upper arm and another in Marie's hair.

PASTOR: *This will remain on you until we're all sure you have learned how to fight bad thoughts and manners. You're well aware, this year you will receive Christ's body in the form of bread and wine. Until then, strive to be free of sinful thoughts. Now let's eat.*

Martin carries the cane out of the room. The pastor and the other children sit around the table. Marie leaves the room with her mother. After all the others have sat down and put their plates back where they were before the punishment, the two come back with two soup bowls and put them on the table. Martin has also come back and sits down at his place beside his father. The pastor folds his hands in prayer, the others follow suit.

PASTOR (very friendly): *Marie, would you say grace today?*

MARIE (smiling eagerly): *With pleasure, father.*

She bows her head, so do the others.

MARIE: *Come Lord Jesus and be our guest*

And bless what you've given to us.

PASTOR: *Amen. Blessed be this meal.*

THE OTHERS: *Blessed be this meal.*

The mother and Marie open the soup tureens and hand out the soup. Then they eat.

* * *

15. FARM INT/NIGHT

The body of the farmer's wife has been laid out. The candles to its left and right are almost burnt out. Its very quiet.

Little five-year old Sepp sneaks into the room, bare-foot and wearing a shirt. He hesitates. Then, slowly and carefully, he comes over to his dead mother. He ends up standing beside the bed. The face of the dead woman is covered with a white handkerchief.

Sepp is very frightened. He makes several attempts before he dares to lift the handkerchief. Then he watches her, breathless, his eyes and mouth wide open. Suddenly, startled by a noise, he jerks back. He turns around: his 14-year old brother Paul is sitting on a bench against the wall. He too only wears a shirt.

SEPP (surprised, with a whispering voice):
Pauli?!

Paul doesn't say a word. Sepp doesn't know what to do. He looks at his mother again, then again at his brother. He goes over to him and sits beside him on the bench. Like birds in a cage, they remain seated in the dark. Very close together.

* * *

16. ESTATE. THE STEWARD'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. BEDROOM. INT/NIGHT

The steward and his children Liesl (15), Georg and Ferdinand (10)] are waiting for something. Then the door opens and the midwife comes out. She tells them to come into the other room.

NARRATOR: *That night, the wife of the steward gave birth to her fourth and last child at the age of 42.*

The children want to follow their father. At least Liesl, a chubby and good-natured teenager, rather plain, can't wait to go in. But the midwife tells them to be patient, and only the father is let through.

LIESL (burning with curiosity): *What is it?*

MIDWIFE (smiling): *Well, what do you think?*

LIESL(shakes her head impatiently): *I don't know.*

MIDWIFE: *It's a boy.*

FERDINAND: *Oh God!*

MIDWIFE: *What do you mean?! Don't you want a brother?*

FERDINAND: *Pff!*

MIDWIFE: *You're lucky your father can't hear you.*

Instead of the father, Georg hits his brother on the back of the head. They quarrel.

MIDWIFE: *Stop that!*

She steps in and distributes a few smacks. Liesl runs out of the room howling.

MIDWIFE: *You should be ashamed.*

FERDINAND (Suddenly, as if he'd become another person): *Sorry.*

The midwife looks at him, confused.

* * *

17. TRACK NEAR THE FARM EXT/DAWN

The farmer, Franz and Paul leave the farm, they go to work. The two oldest carry scythes.
In the background vast fields of crops.
The three walk hurriedly. After a while

FRANZ (hesitantly): *Father, I have to tell you something.*

FARMER: *What is it?*

FRANZ: *I went to the sawmill.*

The farmer keeps on walking as if he hasn't heard. Franz looks at him from the side. For a long moment he remains silent, while all three keep walking. Then, Franz goes on softly:

The floor, on the first level, where mother worked, was totally rotten.

They keep on walking.

The steward, who sent her there, must have known it. And the landowner too.

The farmer remains silent. They keep walking.

Father?!

FARMER (hostile): *What do you want?*

FRANZ (doesn't understand his father's refusal): *They sent her there knowing it was dangerous.*

The farmer stops, turns to Franz:

FARMER (aggressive): *What are you getting at?*

FRANZ (doesn't understand): *But...*

FARMER (furious, but with forced calm): *Do you want me to sue the Baron? Or kill the steward?*

FRANZ: *I...*

FARMER: *Go and cut off his head of with your scythe. Sure, that'll bring your mother back to life.*

He turns away from Franz and keeps on walking. The others follow. After a few steps

FRANZ (softly): *I think our father loved our mother.*

Suddenly the farmer stops and screams, almost crying with fury and despair:

FARMER: *Shut up!*

CLOSE ANGLE: Paul. He was listening carefully the whole time. He looks at the father. Then, lowers his eyes.

NARRATOR: *After these two days in July, life in the village returned to what it had always been...*

* * *

18. MONTAGE EXT/INS./DAY/NIGHT

a) Harvesting. Even teenagers and children are used to tie the sheaves and to do other easier jobs.

NARRATOR: *... The daily harvesting drove the people almost to exhaustion. Most of the children were busy helping their parents.*

b) The midwife is doing housework in the Doctor's house. A quarrel between her retarded son and the 4-year old Rudolph (that we barely can follow due to the Narrator's voice, o.s.) is settled by the midwife in favor of her son.

For the time being, the doctor remained in the hospital. In the meantime the midwife catered the basic needs of Xenia and Rudolph, his two children. After the burial of the farmer's wife, that was attended by the whole village, the two accidents were soon forgotten...

* * *

19. MANOR EXT/DAY

NARRATOR: *... until the harvest festival at the end of the summer brought the whole village*

together again, first in a festive hustle and bustle, and then in horror and perplexity.

The courtyard is full of people, dressed in their Sunday best: Farmers, seasonal-workers, people from the village, children and teenagers.

A dance hall has been set up. On it we see the landowner, the steward and the pastor with their families.

A couple of younger women, a delegation of the harvesters, goes over to present the harvest crown to the landowner.

HARVESTER: *...with our songs and our prayers
We've gathered the rye
and given that crown to your lordship.
It is not big, it is not small,
But pretty, nice and fine.
Not with thistles or thorns is it made,
but with pure grain.
Had our lordship sowed more,
The men would've scythed more
And we girls gathered more.
We girls have gathered the grain,
Over mountains and valleys,
Over thistles and thorn,
Over the fields of our lordship.
I wish our lordship a happy life,
As many years as there's sand on the beach
As many years as there are drops in the rain
So much may our lordship be blessed.
And as a reward to be of good cheer
We'd like for our folks a barrel of beer,
And if we could have a fried goose perchance
Then we'll all be ready to dance.*

During the poem, the camera has shown all those we have met until now. They have all (except for the Doctor, the farmer and his two eldest sons) come to the feast.

While all the folks present LAUGH and SHOUT, the maid, with a clumsy curtsy, hands over the harvest crown to the Baron. The village band plays a fanfare.

As soon as the hullabaloo has died down

BARON(answering): *My thanks to all of you. Thank you very much. You have worked well and the heavens were merciful, and now the barns are full.*

Therefore there's more than enough beer, and you won't starve today.

He points to the open barn, where food and beer are waiting. In front of the barn are tables with long benches.

BARON: *Enjoy your meal!! Eat and drink as much as you wish. You deserve it.*

Again the people YELL and CHEER. Then, the MUSIC starts and the feast is off and running.

* * *

20. VEGETABLE GARDEN OF THE MANOR EXT/DAY

The vegetable garden is at the back of the manor house. In the distance we hear the MUSIC from the feast. Franz, in working clothes, comes over, opens a gate in the fence, then goes to a large field with the cabbages and slices them all off with his scythe. The whole scene looks like a mass execution.

* * *

21. ESTATE EXT/DAY

The party is in full swing: people dance and shout, children run around, young men quarrel and show off in front of the young girls. Older women are stand around in groups, gossiping. Some farmers are gathered around the landowner - he is friendly with them, but we don't understand what they're talking about. His wife, with her nervous frailty, looks out of place in this crowd. She's talking to the schoolteacher.

BEATRIX: *...didn't you promise us a little chorale sung by your protégés.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You have to talk to the pastor, Baroness. We're still busy studying the choir pieces for the confirmation feast.*

BEATRIX (amused): *But that's in spring, my dear. This is the start of autumn.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiles, embarrassed): *I know, but unfortunately not all of our little singers are very musical. I'm sorry if...*

* * *

22. ESTATE. UNDER THE LIME TREE . EXT/DAY

A quieter part of the estate. Under a big shadowy tree, we see the two strollers of the landowner's family, a small table and a few chairs. Eva is sitting beside the twins and watches the colorful bustle. Sitting beside her, turning her back to the manor, is Emma, the steward's wife who is breastfeeding her baby. The steward separates from a group of men and comes over to the two women. As he comes over, he shouts to them:

STEWARD: *Well, you two "mothers"? Don't you want to be part of the festivities?*

Eva looks at the steward's wife, not knowing, how to react to the "mother joke". But the slightly naive wife of the steward is basically fond of any jokes her husband cracks. She turns halfway to him and says:

EMMA: *It's so nice here in the shade.*

In the meantime the steward has come over. He's smoking a pipe.

STEWARD (in excellent mood): *Well, our son seems to be enjoying that, right?!*

EMMA: *Yes.*

STEWARD: *I can imagine. Who wouldn't like that.*

EMMA (rebuking him gently): *Georg!*

STEWARD (to Eva): *What about you? Don't you get bored taking care of other people's children, with all the young lads over there?*

EVA (uneasy, with forced sweetness): *No Sir, I love to be with the children.*

He gives his wife a short glance, then sits on a chair beside Eva:

How old are you anyway?

EVA: *Eighteen, Sir.*

STEWARD: *Eighteen! And you want me to believe you'd rather hold the Baroness's baby in your arms than your true love?*

EMMA (good-naturedly): *Come on, Georg, leave her alone.*

STEWARD: *I'm not doing her any harm. Can you get us something to eat, Emma?*

EVA (stands up, to Emma): *If you mind the children for a moment, I'll get us something.*

STEWARD (stands up too): *Don't worry, princess, I'm going. Not to panic.*

* * *

23. ESTATE. THE PATH LEADING TO THE VEGETABLE GARDEN. **EXT/DAY**

A bunch of children between 5 and 15, dressed up in their Sunday best, among them Marie and Martin, both wearing their white ribbons, the pastor's other

children, Xenia, Rudolph as well as Hans, Liesl, Georg, Ferdinand and Sigi. They leave the manor and head toward the fields. As they pass by the vegetable garden, they notice the sliced off cabbages and stop. Some laugh at it, others are unsettled. Most of the children keep run on out into the open fields.

* * *

24. ESTATE. OUTSIDE THE BARN. EXT/DAY

Farmhands and tenant farmers are eating at the tables. One of them tells a story, that we only partially understand because of all the noise:

FIRST TENANT FARMER: *...so the guy really tried to steal the rooster from the steeple. He was already completely pickled, but even then they couldn't stop him. A huge, massive guy, you see. So they just let him go, saying to themselves: if he falls down, he falls down, that's it. But he didn't get much farther than the first window, that's where the trellis ends, see. And even with all his strength, he couldn't hoist himself up on the lightning rod. So the guy stands up there in the window. And what do you think that idiot does: he starts to crow! He crows, shouting: I'm the rooster on the steeple. You'll never catch me! He made such a commotion that little by little the people in the neighborhood started to wake up...*

At the same time someone else starts to shout, causing the others to join in:

FARMHANDS and FARMERS:
*More beer, more beer, or I'll fall down, hurray!
More beer, more beer, or I'll fall down.
Has the landlord hung himself,
that he doesn't serve me any beer?
More beer, more beer, or I'll fall down!*

Laughter. Leni, Franz's sister, and another farmgirl do their best to cater to the drinker's thirst as fast as possible. The two young women try to keep their spirits up, but the guest's indelicate jokes and rude gestures don't make it easy.

LENI: *I'm coming. I haven't got a magic wand.*

FIRST FARMHAND (with a grin): *Shall I help you, Leni? I'd love to help you.*

SECOND FARMHAND (also grinning): *What do you want to help her with?!*

LAUGHTER.

FIRST FARMHAND: *All over. Front and backside.*

More LAUGHTER.

THIRD FARMHAND (to Leni): *Are you as slow with the Baron?*

SECOND TENANT FARMER: *Come on, leave her alone*

SECOND FARMHAND: *You like her that much? Go and help her.*

FOURTH FARMHAND (sitting beside the second, almost in a whisper): *Don't you know: it was her mother who had that accident?...*

At the same time a boy of ten comes over to the first farmer and butts in to his story:

BOY: *Father, they cut off the Baron's cabbages.*

FIRST TENANT FARMER: *What's that?*

BOY (grin): *They cut off the Baron's cabbages.*

Leni, who's just putting some glasses with beer on the table, glares at the boy, flabbergasted.

* * *

25. ESTATE. DANCE FLOOR. EXT/DAY

On the dance floor, Eva and the schoolteacher try to dance. Neither is very talented. Eva keeps looking at her feet and smiles, embarrassed.

EVA: *I never learned it.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (also with a smile): *Neither did I. You just have to count out loud. One. Two. Three. One. Two. Three. One...*

Their steps are far too big. They look clumsy and embarrassed, but happy. After a few spins

EVA: *Aren't you afraid your students might laugh at you, when they see you dancing with me that way, sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (laughs): *They'd better not! And stop being so formal with me. I'm not that old, am I?*

Eva laughs, embarrassed and looks down.

EVA: *One. Two. Three. One. Two. Three. One. Two. Three. One. Two. Three.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You see: we're getting better.*

EVA: *Well.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Stop looking at your feet.*

She lifts her head, looks at him and... stumbles. They laugh and start again.

* * *

26. VEGETABLE GARDEN EXT/DAY

MUSIC of the village band can be heard coming from the manor.

The Baroness reaches the vegetable garden, followed by the pastor's wife, the tutor and some "ladies" from the village. Behind the fence, among the "beheaded" cabbages are the Baron, the steward and some farmers. A couple of curious onlookers have gathered by the fence. Mutters, and now and then laughter.

The Baron turns to his wife and, with a snicker, points to the "heads" lying around him.

BARON: *Quite a job, isn't it?!*

The Baroness looks at the extent of the disaster. Then says, revolted:

BARONESS: *This is disgusting.*

The steward comes over to them and, with a little grin, comments on the sensitivity of his masters:

STEWARD: *It used to be an old custom (he quotes):*

*"Now that the harvesting's done,
"It's time to pay us, every one,
"Any miser who leaves us in a rut,
"He shall have his cabbage cut.*

The Baroness, who doesn't think the symbolic character of the deed is funny at all, looks briefly at him and then back again at the cabbage cemetery. Suddenly, she turns away and leaves the scene headed toward the manor. She makes her way through the bystanders, who step aside to let her through.

* * *

27. RECTORY. STUDY. INT/DUSK

The pastor works at his desk. Suddenly a KNOCK on the door

PASTOR (looking up): *Come in*

Florian comes hesitantly through the door.

PASTOR: *What do you want?*

FLORIAN (shy, almost frightened): *I'd like to ask you something, Father.*

PASTOR: *Yes?*

The boy comes over to the desk, opens a few buttons of his shirt and then seizes something inside. In the open shirt we see the head of a little bird.

PASTOR: *So what?*

FLORIAN: *I have found it. It's wounded.*

Short PAUSE.

PASTOR: *What do you want?*

FLORIAN (pleadingly): *May I keep it?*

Short pause. The pastor is moved by the request of his youngest son, but manages to hide his emotion skillfully.

PASTOR: *How do you plan to do that?*

FLORIAN: *We'll heal it.*

PASTOR (softly): *And when it's healed?*

Florian looks at him with round eyes, he doesn't know what to answer. The pastor continues:

*Don't you think, you'll be attached to it then?
Will you let it fly away?*

Florian thinks, then nods toward a cage behind the desk.

FLORIAN: *"Pipsi" also lives in a cage.*

The pastor looks at the cage shortly, hides a smile and turns to Florian again:

PASTOR: *Yes, but Pipsi grew up in captivity.
(nodding at Florian's bird): This one is used to
living in freedom.*

Florian doesn't know what to answer. So he merely looks at his father with pleading eyes.

PASTOR (repeats): *Will you set him free, as soon
he's healed?*

Florian, looks down and nods with a heavy heart.

PASTOR: *Have you already asked Mother?*

Florian nods eagerly.

PASTOR: *And? What did she say?*

FLORIAN: *She said, it was for Father to decide.*

PASTOR (smiling faintly): *That's what she said?*

Florian nods eagerly and looks at his father with eyes that are pleading with expectation.

PASTOR: *You'll really to take care of it? That's
a heavy responsibility. You know that, don't
you?*

Sensing that his father is not quite against it, Florian nods eagerly.

PASTOR: *Well. You're its father and mother now.*
Florian nods yet more eagerly, if that's possible. The pastor finds it difficult not to smile:

We'll have to find a cage for your patient.
Florian can hardly believe it. He'd like to fling his arms around his father's neck, but doesn't dare. So he just keeps standing there, beaming.

FLORIAN: Thanks, Father!

* * *

28. TRACK TO THE FARM EXT/DUSK

Leni comes along the track, excited. She's almost running. She reaches the farm and disappears inside.

* * *

29. FARM. ROOM. INT/DUSK

The family is eating. They're in working clothes, since they didn't attend the Thanksgiving feast. Only Leni, who visibly just came into the room, is still wearing the clothes she wore at the feast. She's out of breath and very excited. The farmer looks very concerned.

FARMER (to Franz): *Is that true?*

FRANZ (hostile, keeps on eating): *I don't know nothing.*

FARMER (threatening): *Is - that - true?!*

FRANZ (looks at him, aggressively): *Nothing is true! And even if it was true, so what?! Serves him right, that miser!*

FARMER (trying to control himself): *Did you do it, or did you not do it?*

Franz doesn't answer and keeps on eating.

LENI: *It seems somebody saw you.*

For a moment Franz remains calm, then he bursts out:

FRANZ (to Leni): *So what? They should be glad that they still have their own heads.(to the farmer) And I want you to know this, Father: I'm proud of it!*

The father responds to this by slapping his face hard. Franz jumps up.

FARMER (orders Franz without looking at him):
Sit down!

For a moment, we don't know how Franz will behave. Sitting on the corner bench, he's jammed between his

father and his brothers and sisters, who stare at the table, embarrassed. Only Paul, who sits opposite his brother, looks up at him.

Franz finally sits down again. SILENCE. The farmer stares at his plate, tries to speak softly, which is obviously difficult for him, to judge by the sound of his voice.

FARMER: *What did you intend to do?*

As Franz doesn't answer, he looks up, right into Franz's face, who avoids his father's eyes.

FARMER: *Well?*

FARMER: *Tell me.*

Franz keeps on glaring straight ahead. The farmer adopts a gentler tone.

Come on. Tell me:

FRANZ (who can hardly speak): *You know why, Father.*

FARMER (after a pause): *Because of your mother? Because you feel they're responsible for her death? Is that it? What do you think? That I'm not man enough to settle this? It's that what you think?*

Franz keeps on glaring, remaining silent. The father tries to stay calm, staring straight ahead. He takes a spoon and eats twice from the milk soup. He puts down the spoon, and looks at Franz again.

Did you ever think of what your behavior can mean for the whole family? If Leni loses her job, which enables us to keep our heads above water for the whole year? What if we can't work there anymore during the summer?

Franz makes an impatient movement, takes raises his spoon and wants to go on eating. The farmer grabs his arm and slams it down. The two stare at each other. For a moment, we don't know what will happen. Then the farmer goes on:

You want to marry and take over the farm in two years? Yes? And how will you feed them all (he points with his head at the other children) without the help of the manor, tell me?

Franz turns his head away. He disagrees, but does not know what to answer. The farmer goes on:

And how do you know they're responsible?

Franz turns to him abruptly:

FRANZ: *And how do you know they're innocent?*

The farmer looks at Franz with round eyes. A long PAUSE follows. Then the

FARMER says (quietly): *I don't know.*

And after another PAUSE.

FARMER: But I don't know the opposite either.

* * *

30. MANOR. STAIRWELL. INT/NIGHT

The Baron stands at the bottom and shouts up at the tutor who's standing on the stairs:

BARON: *...What do you mean "not there"?*

TUTOR (sheepish): *He... disappeared. I've already looked everywhere. I can't find him.*

BARON: *Nonsense. He can't have vanished into thin air. When did you see him last?*

TUTOR (as above): *Around 2 o'clock.*

BARON (his anger mounting): *Around two? Do you know what time it is?!*

TUTOR (guiltily): *I know, Sir.*

Furious, the landowner turns away from the nincompoop, pensive. Then he turns to the TUTOR again:

BARON: *What does my wife say, doesn't she have any clue?*

TUTOR: *Madame sent me to you, Baron. She is beside herself with fear.*

BARON (wryly): *I can imagine. (looks up to the tutor): You're an idiot, Huber. Why do you think you're here? To take care of a single child! Is that such a hard task?*

TUTOR (softly): *I'm awfully sorry, Baron.*

BARON: *You're even too stupid for that.*

The Baron turns away and heads for the door. Then he turns around again and asks:

BARON: *Where did you see my son for the last time?*

TUTOR: *Outside, in the courtyard. He said, he was going to play with the other children.*

BARON: *Where?*

TUTOR: *That he didn't say.*

BARON: *And my wife didn't notice anything either?*

TUTOR: *After that business with the cabbage heads, Madame retired to her room. She was indisposed.*

BARON (sarcastically): *Indisposed?!*

TUTOR: *Yes. She had a terrible migraine attack.*

BARON (almost to himself): *My God, this place is a zoo!*

He turns away and goes out into the courtyard. The tutor follow him with his eyes. He feels he's being badly treated and hates the Baron for his insults. Finally he goes back up the stairs.

* * *

31. MANOR. EXT/NIGHT

BACK TO THE SCENE.

The torches of the feast have almost burned out. Here and there we see some lanterns, put there to facilitate the cleaning up.

Coming from the front door, the Baron crosses the vast courtyard. Half way across he screams:

BARON: *Bräker!!*

The steward is overseeing a dozen farmhands, who are putting the tables and the benches of the feast back the barn. He walks toward the Baron.

BARON. *Have you seen my son?*

STEWARD (surprised): *No.*

BARON (quietly): *Could you please ask your boys. Apparently, Sigi has disappeared with a whole bunch of kids.*

STEWARD: *Immediately. (shouting to the farmhands): When you're finished with the cleaning up, wait for me. There's still a job to do. Get some fresh torches and lanterns!*

BARON: *In the meantime I'll go round up the men.*

The steward goes to his house, the Baron to the outbuildings. There, he switches on the SIREN.

NARRATOR: *The steward's children said, they had seen Sigi only for a short time, that he had gone off with other kids, and that they didn't pay much attention to it...*

* * *

32. MONTAGE EXT/INT/NIGHT

IN THE COURTYARD.

Many men of different ages with lanterns and torches. The Baron makes a short speech and the steward assigns the areas to be searched. Most of this is drowned out by the narrator's voice.

NARRATOR: *...The search began shortly after midnight. Before, the Baron had ridden to the Rectory. But there he found out nothing new from the children who had been specially woken up.*

STABLE AND OUTBUILDINGS OF THE ESTATE.

VARIOUS LANDSCAPES: FOREST, FIELD, RIVER MEADOWS.

The search.

The searchers, who were tired and some of whom were still drunk, were divided into two groups: one group started to search all the buildings on the estate, one by one, while the others combed the surrounding areas.

It was around half past two, when some members of the search party had already preferred to lie down somewhere and to sleep off their drunkenness, that the siren suddenly sounded again, calling the men back to the courtyard...

IN THE COURTYARD.

The men come in with a stretcher.

...They had found Sigi. He had been tied up in the old sawmill, upside down. His trousers had been pulled down and his buttocks were bleeding from cane strokes. He seemed to be in a state of shock, was unable to walk and had to be brought back to the manor on a makeshift stretcher, lying on his belly.

* * *

33. CHURCH INT/DAY

The room is packed. The whole village is gathered.

NARRATOR: *The next Sunday, the Baron, at the end of the service, asked the pastor if he could say a few words:*

BARON: *You all know now what was done to my son Siegmund. Policemen from the district town were here this week. They questioned many of you. But to no avail. First I thought that the people who tortured my child were the same people who cut off my family's "cabbage heads"...*

Unrest in the attendance.

...because they wanted to "get even". Get even for what? Because their mother had died while she was working in the sawmill, and it was supposedly my fault, which is an absurd assertion.

The farmer, Leni and the other children are there, with the exception of Franz.

The unrest grows.

At least, that's what Franz Felder gave as the motive for his "mowing prowess", when the policemen arrested him. I have always supported the farmer Felder and his family, but one can't always expect people to be grateful. That's a matter of character.

The farmer wants to leave the church.

BARON: *Don't run away, Felder. It's your honor I want to salvage.*

It has turned out that the valiant Franz Felder has been boasting of his feat in front of his fiancée. Then the coward that he is, hid among his family, and so he didn't have time to torture my son. And there's one thing I know for sure: the senior Felder would rather bite off his tongue, than cover for his wayward son. May I remind you something what most of you have already forgotten. Almost two months ago, the doctor had a riding accident and he has still not returned from the hospital. This accident was caused by a wire that had been strung in his garden with the explicit intent of bringing him down. And in that case too, nobody knows anything, saw anything or heard anything.

Disconcerted MUTTER among the attendance.

We all know that the people responsible for the terrible injuries suffered by my son, and those suffered by the doctor are sitting here among us, in this room. I won't tolerate that crimes of this nature go unpunished. I don't wish something similar to happen to any of your children. That's why I call upon you all to help me find the culprit or the culprits. Ask questions, keep your ears open, be watchful. If we fail to find out the truth, the peace within our community will be gone. Thank you, pastor.

The pastor says a few last words which we don't grasp, that the narrator's voice drowns out. The people file out of the church, quietly and slowly, but talking worriedly to each other.

NARRATOR: The landowner's speech frightened the people. Most knew about the incident at the Thanksgiving feast. But the majority didn't know exactly what had happened, and in the end they didn't care. The Baron was not really popular among the people, but he was respected as a powerful social figure, as well as the employer of nearly the whole village.

* * *

34. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH EXT/DAY

BACK TO THE SCENE.

The people are leaving the church, groups are forming. As the farmer Felder and his children come out, they're shunned.

Gauntlet down the village street. The CAMERA follows.

NARRATOR: ...His threat about loosing the peace of the community couldn't mean anything good.

At the same time the mysterious character of what were obviously criminal deeds fed the mistrust of the farmers, deeply rooted since time immemorial.

* * *

35. SCHOOL. INT/NIGHT

The empty classroom. On the harmonium: a petroleum lamp. The schoolteacher is PLAYING.

After a while, someone knocks at the door. The schoolteacher stops.

SCHOOLTEACHER (surprised): *Come in!*

The door opens hesitantly. In the dark: Eva (hardly recognizable because she's so far from the lamp).

SCHOOLTEACHER (surprised and glad): *Eva!*

EVA (hardly understandable): *May I come in?*

The Schoolteacher stands up, goes toward and, laughing with surprise, says to her.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What a question. Of course. Come in. What happened.*

Eva enters the room and closes the door behind her. She's carrying a suitcase. Shyly she looks around and doesn't say a word.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Come over here. It's so dark. Come on.*

He moves toward the lamp and waits half-way because she doesn't follow.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What's going on?*

EVA: *They fired me.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (startled): *What do you mean?*

She shrugs her shoulders.

EVA: *Nothing. They just threw me out (pause, then) The tutor has also been fired.*

Suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, she bursts into floods of tears. At the same time she turns away from the schoolteacher. He goes over to her, and stops in front of her, but is too shy to touch her. Suddenly she turns to him again and says, sobbing:

I don't know where to go. I can't go back home in the middle of the night. I'm afraid to walk on the road all alone.

SCHOOLTEACHER (calming her down): *Don't worry. Try to calm down. There's nothing to worry about.*

EVA (sobbing, childish): *There is.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (with a calming smile): *Come here and sit down. Please calm down and then tell me what happened. All right?*

She's sits down on the school bench beside her. The schoolteacher sits on his haunches in front of her:

Well?!

It takes her time to calm down.

What happened?

Slowly she manages to calm down, breathes deeply a few times. The schoolteacher is visibly charmed by her childish despair.

EVA: *The son of the Baron isn't at all well. His parents are angry and desperate. Now they say that it's the tutor's and my fault, because we didn't pay enough attention to him. But I'm only there for the twins.*

She starts to sob again:

I've always taken care of them very well. When you and I were dancing, the Baroness had given me permission. I haven't done anything wrong, really.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I know, come on. Stop crying!*

EVA: *Where shall I go now? We need the money I was earning here.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You'll find something else. Besides, you know very well that the Baron is quick-tempered. With him, nothing is ever as bad as it seems.*

EVA (fiercely shaking her head): *No, no, that's all over now, I know it. The Baroness doesn't want to see anyone. She wants to take the children with her to town or to her parent's estate - I don't know exactly.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: (after a pause): *I'll try to talk to her. A while back, we played music together. (with a smile): Unfortunately, I wasn't very good. Now she's got the tutor, he plays better. As far as I know, he's been studying music in town.*

EVA (forgetting her grief a bit): *He doesn't play that well.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *That's true.*

EVA (after a pause, serious again): *Who could have done such things?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What?*

EVA: *To beat a child that way.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I don't know.*

Long PAUSE. Then she says softly:

EVA: *Can I stay here tonight? Don't send me away, sir, please.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *How can you think something like that?*

EVA: *I'll just wait for the daylight to come. Here in the classroom. Then I'll leave.*

Suddenly she starts to cry again:

They won't understand this, at home. They'll think I did something wrong.

PAUSE. Then the

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Do you want me to come with you.*

She stops crying and looks at him, surprised.

EVA: *What did you say?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (cheerful): *Tomorrow, after school? I can try to find us a carriage. I'll be back by evening.*

EVA: *And why should you do that, Sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Stop being so formal.*

EVA (after a break): *Why should you do this?*

PAUSE. Then the schoolteacher stands up and says:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Come here, I'll play something for you. If you'd like that.*

She thinks for a moment, then she nods eagerly. She follows him, as he goes and settles in front of the harmonium. She sits on a bench nearby. He starts to PLAY.

* * *

36. FARM. PIGSTY. INT/EXT/DAY

The farmer and Paul are cleaning the pigsty which is not very big. The pigs grunt excitedly because of the disturbance.

Suddenly, Franz enters.

FRANZ: *Good morning, Father.*

The farmer looks up, keeps on working as if nobody had come in.

Paul greets Franz with a nod, remaining silent.

After a while, they've done their work. Ignoring Franz, the farmer goes outside.

Franz, who has stepped aside to let his father by, says to him as he goes out:

FRANZ: *I'm back again. They set me free.*

At this, the farmer stops and turns around. He looks Franz right into the eyes:

FARMER: *I can see that. So what?*

Franz bows his head. Paul, who has followed his father, out of the pigsty, glances surreptitiously at his brother. The farmer goes over to the fountain and washes himself. Franz follows him slowly and stops beside his father, who keeps ignoring him. After a while

FRANZ says (softly): Can't you forgive me, Father?

The farmer stops washing and turns to Franz:

FARMER: What do you want me to forgive for? That the estate won't give me any work now? That Leni has been fired in disgrace? That your brothers and sisters soon won't have anything to eat. Is that what you mean? Or is it something else?

* * *

37. COUNTRY ROAD AND DOCTOR'S PROPERTY EXT/DAY

The CAMERA follows the carriage in which are Eva and the schoolteacher.

NARRATOR: The next day, after school, I went to the estate to inquire about Sigi's health and to intercede for Eva's reinstatement. We were told the Baroness had left that morning with her children. Reluctantly, the steward lent me a carriage to take Eva home.

An open carriage with the Doctor inside comes from the opposite direction. The passengers of the two carriages greet each other. The CAMERA follows the Doctor and loses Eva and the schoolteacher.

The doctor has one arm in a sling.

The Doctor's carriage ends up turning into his property. The driver helps the doctor get out. Xenia comes running out of the house and greets her father. The driver unloads the luggage. The doctor and Xenia go into the house.

Just as we were leaving the village, we met the doctor.

A few days after the Thanksgiving feast, Rudolph, his four year old son, had suddenly disappeared. Of course, everybody was terribly upset in view of all the previous occurrences. Finally, he was found walking down the road, scantily dressed for a trip, headed eagerly toward the town. When he was asked where he was going, he said he wanted to visit his father. Seems he fought tooth and nail against being taken home.

Somebody must have told this to the Doctor. Since he was scheduled to be released from medical care anyway, he had prematurely put an end to his stay at the hospital.

* * *

38. THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE INT/DAY

BACK TO THE SCENE.
STAIRWELL.

DOCTOR (calls several times): *Rudi?*

He throws an ironical inquiring look at Xenia. Xenia shrugs her shoulders, clueless:

XENIA: *He was in the living room a short time ago.*

Just as they're about to go to the living room, the driver comes in with the luggage. The Doctor thanks him and pays him. The driver leaves. Xenia has been waiting in the doorway. Now they go together into the

LIVING ROOM

There's nobody. They go into the kitchen

KITCHEN. Nobody. The look under the kitchen table, in the pantry. Nobody.

DOCTOR: *Rudi? Where are you?*

Again the

STAIRWELL. The doctor doesn't know whether to be angry or to laugh about the whole matter. He goes to his wardrobe to take his off his jacket. Because of the sling, Xenia has to help him. That's when she notices the toilet. She tells her father with a smile. As Xenia hangs up the doctor's jacket, he goes to the toilet door and tries to open it. It's locked. The Doctor stops in front of it.

DOCTOR (quiet): *Hello, Rudi. Don't you want to say hello to your father? No?*

PAUSE:

I heard you even wanted to visit me at the hospital. And now you lock yourself in?

PAUSE. The doctor looks shortly at Xenia who's carrying the luggage upstairs. Then he keeps on talking to Rudolph:

All right. Then, I don't want to see you either. I'm going away now. You can stay in the toilet, if you want.

He goes down the few steps to the entrance, waits a moment and then leaves the house.

* * *

39. PROPERTY THE DOCTOR'S EXT/DAY

BACK TO THE scene.

The doctor steps out of the door, and wanders through the garden. He goes over to the trees, where the wire had been strung. He examines the traces of the wire on the bark. He lights a cigar, then looks out at the mowed fields.

After a while Xenia comes over to him. He glances at her, then again at the fields. Both remain silent. After a while

XENIA says: *Everything is ready in your practice. Mrs. Wagner prepared everything yesterday.*

PAUSE then

DOCTOR: *Why do you tell me that?*

Xenia looks at him, surprised, shrugs her shoulders.

XENIA: *I don't know. I just thought you might want to know.*

PAUSE.

DOCTOR: *Has she taken good care of you?*

XENIA: *Yes.*

PAUSE. The doctor turns to Xenia:

DOCTOR: *How old are you now?*

XENIA: *Fourteen.*

The doctor looks at her, laughs silently and shakes his head. Again he looks out on the fields. After a while he says:

DOCTOR: *It's amazing how much you look like your mother.*

Xenia remains silent. Suddenly she whispers:

XENIA: *Dad.*

The doctor turns to her. She nods toward the house. The doctor follows her look. Indeed Rudolph, who from here looks even smaller than he really is, has stepped gingerly out of the door. Unsure and undecided, torn between defiance and longing, he's kept one hand on the door handle that he can barely reach.

* * *

40. RECTORY. STUDY. INT/NIGHT

The pastor cleans the cage of the small bird behind the desk and feeds the animal. As he does it, he talks to

Martin, who, the white ribbon still tied around his upper arm, stands in front of the desk.

PASTOR: *Your mother and I are deeply worried about you. Think about it. Are you sleeping badly? Are you overtired?*

MARTIN (as if he didn't understand the question): *No.*

PASTOR: *Do you have problems in school that I don't know?*

MARTIN (as above): *No, Father.*

The pastor turns shortly around to his son, looks at him, then turns again to the bird.

PASTOR: *You probably don't understand why we worry. It comes from a sad experience I want to tell you briefly about:*

As you know, I'm also acting as pastor for the communities of Birkenbrunn and Hebern. In the latter place, some years ago, a mother came to see me. She had noticed that her son, who was about the same age as you, and had the same symptoms that you've been showing for some time. Although until then the boy had been healthy and active, suddenly he showed a noticeable weariness, he had dark rings under the eyes, seemed depressed and joyless. The boy had also changed emotionally: before he had been funny, frank, almost naughty, but now he became withdrawn. He tried not to look his parents in the eye, and was caught telling small and even big lies.

The pastor has finished the cleaning and feeding, and now sits down behind his desk, Martin opposite him:

That lasted approximately half a year. Then everything went very fast: he lost his appetite, couldn't sleep any more, his whole face took on the brownish color of the rings under his eyes, his hands began to shake, his memory started to fail him, he was covered with numerous small pustules, first on his face, then on his whole body and finally he died. The body, which I blessed, looked like the body of an old man.

The pastor watches Martin:

PASTOR: *Do you understand now why I'm worried?*

Martin reacts with a timid nod of his head.

PASTOR: *So, according to you: what caused these changes that led to the miserable end of this boy?*

MARTIN (hardly able to speak): *I don't know.*

PASTOR: *I think you know well.*

Martin doesn't know what to say, he looks down. The pastor watches him for a long moment, then he gets up, walks around the desk and sits down on its edge, in front of the boy, so that their heads are facing each other.

Won't you tell me? No?

Then I'll tell you what the cause was: The boy had learned from someone, who had harmed the finest nerves of his body, in the area where God's will has erected sacred barriers. The boy imitated this action. He couldn't stop doing it, so that at the end he destroyed all the nerves in his body, and so much that he died of it.

Martin seems very affected. He has bowed his head, swallows several times, and hardly dares to breath.

Look at me, Martin.

Martin looks up fearfully, then immediately looks away again.

I just want to help you. I love you with all my heart. Look at me.

Martin looks his father in the eyes.

Be sincere, Martin. Why did you blush and become so nervous when I told you the story of the poor boy.

MARTIN: *Blushed? I don't know... I felt sorry for him.*

PASTOR: *Is that all?*

No, Martin, there has to be another reason. It's written on your face.

Be sincere, Martin. Sincerity brings you closer to God, our beloved Father, and to all human beings.

MARTIN (starts to cry): *Oh, my God!*

He cries in a such pitiful way that even the pastor has tears in his eyes. He embraces the boy. The latter seizes the hand of his father and kisses it intensely.

PASTOR: *Well, Martin, why are you crying? Shall I spare you that confession? You too have done what that wretched boy did, haven't you?*

MARTIN (crying): *Oh my God! Yes.*

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

* * *

41. THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. INT/NIGHT

Intercourse between the midwife and the doctor. She holds on to the sideboard, as he penetrates her from behind. Both are fully dressed, she has just lifted her skirt.

When he is ready, she turns around and puts her arms around him. He lets her do it, with a patronizing smile and pulls gently away from her.

DOCTOR: *Careful, my arm.*

She tries to hide her frustration, sits down again with him at the table, on which are the leftovers of their meal. With a little ironic smile, the doctor raises his glass to her. She takes her glass and clinks it with his. She drinks. An embarrassed silence follows. Finally, she says

MIDWIFE: *It's great that you're back. It was about time.*

DOCTOR: *You can say that. Yes.*

PAUSE.

MIDWIFE: *It was difficult with the children, without you.*

DOCTOR: *I know.*

MIDWIFE: *He doesn't like me.*

DOCTOR: *Who?*

MIDWIFE: *Rudi.*

DOCTOR (after a pause): *He's at a difficult age.*

MIDWIFE: *Actually not.*

PAUSE. Then:

They're always at a difficult age.

DOCTOR (more to himself, with a faint smile): *Yes.*

LONG PAUSE.

MIDWIFE: *You didn't miss me.*

DOCTOR: *Come on. What are you saying?!*

MIDWIFE: *Nothing. I said it because it's the truth.*

PAUSE.

DOCTOR: *There's nothing like a nice dose of self-hate.*

MIDWIFE: *What?*

DOCTOR: *Nothing. Forget it.*

After a pause, she reaches over the table, takes his hand, puts her cheek against it. He lets her do it, then takes his hand from under her head and strokes her hair.

* * *

42. CHURCH EXT/DAY

It's snowing. From the inside of the church, we hear the children's choir:

CHILDREN (singing in harmony):

*...us free from all misery,
That has hit us now.
That old evil enemy,
Is serious about it,
Great power and much deceit
Are his cruel armor,
No one on earth resembles him...**

Over this:

NARRATOR: *Winter came early that year. At the Reformation feast on the first Sunday of November, a deep blanket of snow covered the village.*

The Baron, who had come back without his family, didn't attend, which was very unusual for him...

* * *

43. CHURCH INT/DAY

IMMEDIATE BACK TO THE scene.

The community celebrates the Reformation Feast.

The schoolteacher conducts the children's choir. The children sing enthusiastically. Marie and Martin wear the white ribbon on their arm.

NARRATOR: *...The villagers took that as a sign of his anger. Indeed, no evidence had been found as to the possible author of the crime, although the Baron's appeal had led to a flood of mutual suspicions, even to some attempts of denunciation that had all turned out to be untenable.*

* * *

44. THE STEWARD'S HOUSE. INT/NIGHT

The doctor examines the steward's baby that is crying. Finally, he turns to the parents.

DOCTOR: *Well, it's not pneumonia. But you must be careful. If his temperature rises, call me again. For the time being you must give these drops every two hours. And hang some wet sheets over the oven. That facilitates breathing.*

While the mother puts the child back in the cradle, the doctor and the father go down the STAIRWAY to the LIVING ROOM.

How long has the window been open?

STEWARD: *Difficult to say. My wife nursed him at about one o'clock. When she came back, it was around half past two. At that time it was icy cold in this room.*

DOCTOR: *And the baby didn't cry?*

STEWARD: *No. The children were upstairs and didn't hear anything either.*

They have reached the living room where Liesl, Georg and Ferdinand get up as he comes in.

DOCTOR (to the children): *He's doing all right, considering the circumstances. We have to wait.*

The children seem worried. To calm them the doctor adds:

For now we'll have to wait.

The steward has gone to the sideboard.

STEWARD: *Can I offer you something to warm you up?*

DOCTOR: *No, thanks. I'm overloaded with work. When one has been away for so long...*

STEWARD: *Georg!*

At a sign of the father, Georg jumps up and gets the doctor's coat and hat from outside. In the meantime, the father keeps on chatting with the doctor:

And how is your arm doing?

DOCTOR: *It's all right. Everything will be fine in two or three weeks.*

STEWARD: *That must be terrible, I imagine. You probably feel like half a man when you can't use your arm properly.*

Georg has come back with the hat and the coat, and hands them to the doctor,

DOCTOR: *Thank you.*

The steward helps him with his coat because of his bad arm.

DOCTOR (laughs): *Quod erat demonstrandum. Thank you. Well, good night, children.*

CHILDREN: *Good night, Doctor.*

DOCTOR (to the steward who holds the door open):
Thank you. If your wife thinks that the baby...

The steward closes the door to the stairwell, so that we can't grasp the rest of their conversation.

The children are alone. They remain silent. Then

FERDINAND: *Well...*

GEORG: *What do you mean "well"?*

FERDINAND ("dumb question, it's obvious"): *I mean! That's fine.*

PAUSE.

LIESL (to Ferdinand): *When did you go down to see Father? Down in his office.*

FERDINAND: *Why?*

LIESL: *Just asking.*

* * *

45. SNOW-COVERED COUNTRY ROAD EXT/DAY

The schoolteacher, a rucksack on his back, walks through the snow which is only furrowed by some carriage tracks.

NARRATOR: *In mid-December, I finally got a letter from Eva. Her father had found her a new job in the district capital, which she would start at the beginning of the New Year.*

Since that night, where she had come looking for shelter in the school and we had tried to tell each other the story of our short lives until the wee hours of the morning, I could no longer banish from my thoughts her pale face, her shy but frank personality and her shining hair red.

The school holidays lasted until the morning after New Year's Day, but already the second day after Christmas - the weather was cold but sunny - I went on my way to Obersdorf in order to visit Eva and her parents.

* * *

46. THE HORSE-TRADER'S LIVING-ROOM INT/DAY

A lower middle-class room.

The schoolteacher sits in front of Eva and her siblings, 6 children between 14 and 6, mostly red-haired like Eva. Embarrassed silence. The younger children whisper and giggle. The conversation is slow. After a long pause

EVA says: *And Sigi?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I don't know. The Baroness isn't back yet.*

EVA: *And the Baron?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (shrugs): *We hardly see him. He talks to nobody. I don't know. Some say they've gone to the south. To Italy.*

EVA: *To Italy? Really.*

PAUSE. The children giggle, amused over the embarrassment of the two people.

The schoolteacher and Eva look at each other, but Eva soon averts her eyes.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *They now want to tear down the sawmill for good. That's what the steward says. Because it isn't worthwhile to...*

At that moment the door opens and Eva's parents come in. Obviously, the mother went to fetch the father. She is plump, in her late forties and only wears a woolen shawl over her shoulders. The father wears a hat and overcoat. He's a sturdy man in his early fifties, of peasant stock. He probably came straight from a tavern, and appears to be slightly drunk. The schoolteacher, Eva and the children stand up. The schoolteacher bows deeply:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Good morning.*

FATHER: *Good morning, young man.*

They shake hands.

FATHER: *Please be seated. We're not very formal here.*

With a short movement of his hand the father invites him to sit down.

FATHER (to the children): *Scram!*

The children, rather sheepish since the arrival of their father, leave the room. The father unbuttons his overcoat, throws the hat on the sofa and sits down. The mother has removed her shawl and asks the schoolteacher:

MOTHER: *Would you like something to drink?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *No, thank you. Very kind.*

MOTHER: *Really?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Really. Thank you very much.*

The father sits down beside Eva and looks at the schoolteacher. Eva appears to be awkward, and stares at the table in front of her.

FATHER: *So you're a schoolteacher.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes.*

FATHER: *Can you afford to have a wife?*

Short embarrassed PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *My father works as a tailor in Grundbach. I have an apprentice's diploma. So I earn quite a bit on the side*

FATHER: *You should have taken over your father's business, that would have been smarter.*

PAUSE.

Well. And why are you so focused on that girl? She's almost still a child. You could almost be her father.

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiles): *I'm thirty-one.*

FATHER (grinning): *Well, you can still handle what matters.*

MOTHER (embarrassed): *Father!*

Eva and the schoolteacher don't know where to look.

FATHER: *Let's be serious: do you know whether she's willing to get married. She's still a child. She hasn't seen anything of the world.*

To Eva: *Say something. Do you want him?*

Eva wishes the earth would engulf her.

FATHER: *Come on. Don't make such a fuss. He walked all the way over through the fresh snow.*

MOTHER: *Why don't you leave her alone. Of course, she wants him. Can't you feel that?!*

FATHER: *How can I? If she keeps her mouth shut!*

Eva jumps up and runs out, so as not to burst into tears out of shame.

The mother follows her, shaking her head disapprovingly at the father. The schoolteacher stands up, as Eva ran out. He'd rather follow her, but has to remain polite toward the father. The father says calmly:

FATHER: *Just sit down. That's how women are. A bit hysterical, the whole lot of them. Listen. I'm not a big talker. On one hand, it suits me for the girl to leave the house. We have a lot of mouths to feed, as you can see.*

On the other hand, it's all moving a bit too fast for me. I don't know you. It's not that I don't like you, but I need to get some information about you first. Besides, the town hairdresser has agreed to take her on as an apprentice.

That way she'll get to meet people and she can make up her mind whether she really wants this or not. And if in a year's time she has stuck to this idea, we can talk about it again. And you can make up your mind too, all right?

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I actually thought I...*

FATHER (interrupts him): *I know, I know. But it's either that or nothing. You get it?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (after a short pause) steps back: *If you insist...*

FATHER: *Yes, I do.*

He holds out his hand to the schoolteacher, who accepts it after a brief hesitation.

FATHER: *That's it. I'm pleased. Well, business is waiting. Even on holidays. I'll send the girl back in so that you can say good-bye. A year goes by fast. The world won't collapse. And during your holidays you can come and visit her. Good-bye.*

He leaves the room. The schoolteacher is thrown off balance by all this. He stands up and takes a few steps. He sits down again and thinks.

Finally, the door opens and Eva enters. She doesn't really know what to do. Neither does the schoolteacher. As she comes in he stands up again. Finally Eva goes over to the table and sits down. The schoolteacher also sits down. They exchange a short glance and an equally brief smile.

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER says: *Did your father tell...?*

EVA: *Yes.*

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Is that all right with you?*

PAUSE.

EVA: *Is that all right with you, sir?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiles): *Don't be so formal with me.*

Eva looks up. Their eyes meet. Then she takes his hand in her hand. They remain seated without saying a word.

* * *

47. RECTORY. THE BOYS' BEDROOM. INT/NIGHT

It is dark. Martin, Anton and Florian, whom we don't recognize at first glance, are lying in their beds. Through the window, a red glow, slowly getting stronger. Suddenly

MARTIN'S VOICE: *Toni! Are you awake?*

Toni!!

ANTON'S VOICE (half asleep): *What is it?*

MARTIN VOICE: *Look.*

ANTON'S VOICE: *What's happening?*

MARTIN VOICE: *Look! Look what's happening out there!!*

Now, Anton sits up slowly, rubs his eyes.

ANTON'S VOICE: *My God, what do you want?*

MARTIN VOICE: *Over there!! Have a look out of the window!!*

Anton turns to the window and looks at the red glow. Then he slips out of the bed and goes to the window. Suddenly, he is wide-awake:

ANTON: *Something is burning! Over there at the estate!*

MARTIN: *Untie me!*

Anton turns around to Martin, hesitates.

MARTIN: *Come on, untie me!*

Anton doesn't really know what to do. He turns to the window again, then again to Martin. The latter screams angrily:

I told you to untie me!!

ANTON: *I don't know...*

MARTIN: *I'll beat you black and blue, if you don't untie me!*

The loud dispute has now also awakened Florian, who says in a drowsy voice:

FLORIAN: *What's happening? Why can't you be quiet.*

MARTIN: *Flori, come over and untie me!*

FLORIAN: *What's going on?*

MARTIN (yells): *Untie me, dammit!! You idiots! It's burning!!*

FLORIAN: *It's burning?*

Florian gets up himself and patters to the window. He looks out and then says, amazed and enthusiastic:

It's burning!

MARTIN (imitates him angrily): *OK, it's burning! Now untie me, godammit!*

Florian looks at Anton with questioning eyes and then says to Martin:

FLORIAN: *But Father hasn't allowed it...*

Reverse angle POV of the two boys at the window toward Martin, who we see for the first from the front. His wrists are tied to the left and the right side of the bed. Trying sit up, he pulls furiously at his ties.

MARTIN (furious): *But if there's an emergency, you idiot. Somebody must warn them! (he yells loudly: Faaaather!! Mooooother!! Father!*

Frightened by his screams, Anton now goes over to him and undoes his ties.

ANTON: *Stop shouting. I'll untie you.*

FLORIAN: *Shall I call Mother?*

We already hear hurried STEPS in the corridor. The door opens and the mother enters, dressed in a nightgown.

MOTHER: *What's going on here?*

Martin has just been untied.

MARTIN: *It's burning!*

MOTHER: *I know. Your father has already gone.*

In the door, the girls appear after their mother. They have left their room attracted by the noise. The mother turns to them:

MOTHER: *What are you doing here? (to everyone): You all go to bed now. It's nothing. There's a fire on the estate. You don't need to be afraid. Go to bed and sleep. Come on, Marie, take your sisters with you and go to your room. Otherwise you'll catch a cold.*

The girls disappear again. The mother turns to Martin:

Why did you make so much noise? You woke us all up!

Martin doesn't know what to answer. Then he says apologetically:

MARTIN: *I thought it was dangerous.*

ANTON (apologizing): *I had to untie his hands.*

MOTHER (calming them down): *Now, everything's all right again. Tomorrow, Father will tell you what happened with the fire. All right? Now you*

all got back to bed. I'll wait till you're back in bed. It's freezing cold outside.

The three boys go back to bed. But first Anton ties up Martin's hands again. He pulls a blanket over his brother. Then they all disappear under their blankets.

MOTHER: *Good night then. Sleep well.*

MARTIN, ANTON, FLORIAN: *Good night, Mom!*

The mother closes the door. Coming from outside, we can see the glow of the fire.

* * *

48. ESTATE EXT/NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT.

A big barn is blazing fiercely. SOUNDS of the FIRE. Against it we see, as silhouettes, the Baron, the steward and his wife, the pastor, and all those, who are vainly trying to save thing.

* * *

49. THE STEWARD'S HOUSE INT/NIGHT

In the children's bedroom, lit by the reflection from the nearby flames: Liesl, Georg and Ferdinand. They stand at the window and stare into the flames.

* * *

50. FARM BUILDINGS /EXT/DAY

Paul discovers his dead father in the pigsty. The farmer has hung himself up from a hook in the wall. The knocked-over stool still lies beneath his dangling feet. Paul runs from the stable out to the courtyard. He stops.

Then he tiptoes toward the stable door. As he touches the stable door, he lacks the strength to go inside again. Slowly he heads for the living room. The children, who are gathered, pay no attention to him. Leni, who's cooking, has looked up from her work briefly. Paul sits down on the bench against the wall. It is quite dark in there.

* * *

51. THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE. OFFICE. INT/DAY

The doctor sits at his desk, the midwife sits on the visitor's chair opposite him. She tries to masturbate him.

This time, too, both are fully dressed. Over his clothes, the doctor wears an unbuttoned white coat. He watches the woman for a while in her activity, then he says coldly:

DOCTOR: *Wouldn't it be better if you stopped doing that?*

It's like a slap in the face. She looks dumbfounded.

DOCTOR: *Why all the effort? Don't look at me so dumbfounded.*

It's not that you lack talent... It's just that I can't do it with you any more, that's all.

To tell you the truth: you disgust me.

He gets up and buttons up his pants. She feels as if the world had collapsed around her.

Please finish your work now? I don't want to spend all night here.

The midwife remains seated, her head bowed, as if struck by a lightning

MIDWIFE (quietly): *What did I do to you?*

DOCTOR (irritated): *My God, you haven't done anything at all. You're ugly, you're messy, you're flabby and you have bad breath. Isn't that enough?*

PAUSE. He points at the examination couch on the other side of the small room, saying casually:

The upholstery has to be sterilized with boiling water

She remains immobile, and shoots a quick mechanical glance at the examination couch. He looks at her.

Stop sitting there as if you were carrying all the world's woes on your shoulders. The world won't collapse down. Not on you, or on me.

(explains): *I just want it to stop, that's all. I've been trying, but it's just disgusting. I try to think of another woman when I'm making love to you, a woman who smells good, who's young one, one who's less flabby than you, but my imagination can't handle it. In the end, it's you again and then I just feel like throwing up and am embarrassed at myself. So what's the point?!*

MIDWIFE: *Are you through?*

DOCTOR: (contemptuously): *Yes, I have been for ages.*

He turns away. The midwife hardly moves. She's still sitting on the visitor's chair. It takes her a lot of

strength not to faint - at the same time she speaks out calmly.

MIDWIFE: *You must be very unhappy to be so mean.*

DOCTOR: *Oh God! Please, not that routine!*

MIDWIFE: *I know that I'm not much to look at. My bad breath comes from my stomach, you know that very well. But it didn't bother you in the past when we got together. I already had my ulcer when your wife was still alive.*

DOCTOR: *Please spare me these sordid details. But let me reassure you: it has always disgusted me. I accepted it, because I wanted to ease my pain after Erika's death and I didn't care with whom. I could have screwed a cow. Whores are unfortunately too far from here and regrettably once every two months isn't enough for me, even though I'm getting older. So skip your damn martyrdom routine and get out.*

PAUSE.

MIDWIFE (keeps on speaking softly): *Why did this only occur to you now?*

DOCTOR: *According to you: when should it have occurred to me?
At the hospital, I had forgotten how tiresome you were. One grows sentimental when one's in pain.*

PAUSE.

DOCTOR (tired): *Get out. Why don't you get out. Don't you have any pride?*

MIDWIFE (equally tired): *There's no room for any with you.*

DOCTOR: *That's true.*

MIDWIFE: *Aren't you afraid that I might do something silly?*

DOCTOR (laughs with disdain): *Go ahead. At least that would surprise me. But be careful: it might be painful.*

MIDWIFE: *I know. I'm ridiculous. You wouldn't care anyway.*

DOCTOR: *Well...*

She looks at him.

MIDWIFE: *Why do you despise me? For helping to raise the boy? For watching you fingering your little daughter and not saying a word?*

The doctor goes over and slaps her. Tears start to run down her face, but after a short pause she keeps on speaking, "unmoved":

*For helping you to deceive yourself? For listening to you claim how unique your love for Erika was, though the whole village knew, how badly you treated her?
For loving you, although I know you can't stand being loved?*

The doctor snorts with disdain.

DOCTOR: *That's it. Now leave me alone. I've got work to do.*

She gets up and makes room for him. He sits down at the desk and "works". She looks down at him:

MIDWIFE: *You can't afford to get rid of me. Who would do the dirty work for you, who would help you with the children, and here in your practice? You're not speaking seriously. You just want to see how far you can go, don't you: will she still put up with it or can I drag her even lower through the mud?*

PAUSE. The doctor "works", as if he hadn't heard. She keeps watching him for a while, and then says softly:

I'm tired too. I've got two retarded children: Hans and you. You're the one that gives me most trouble.

He looks up at her. After a pause, he says:

DOCTOR: *My God, why don't you just die?!*

* * *

52. FARM. EXT/DAY

Rays of cold winter sun.

The men carry the coffin out of the house. Some people are already waiting outside. All wear mourning clothes. The coffin is shouldered, the funeral procession forms, with the pallbearers and in the lead. The others who had gathered in the house follow. Paul comes out with Sepp, whom he tries to calm. Finally Leni comes out and, in

words that we can't hear, asks the old midwife to look after the farm for a short while. She gathers her sisters and with them gets in the funeral procession right behind the coffin.

The procession starts to move off. As it comes around the corner of the farm to go down the path leading to the village, Franz comes toward them. Muttering is heard from the villagers. They don't know how to react. The procession slows down. Franz comes over. For a while he stands in front of the coffin, head bowed. Then he joins his brothers and sisters. He and Leni exchange a glance, then he takes his place beside her. After he has motioned to the coffin bearers, the procession starts to move off again slowly, despite of the continued muttering. Paul, who is still carrying Sepp, looks expectantly toward his older brother who squeezes his hand. Paul smiles shyly. Then Franz takes over little Sepp, in the most natural way. For a long moment it almost looks as if, despite of all the gloom, these people weren't desperate.

* * *

53. VILLAGE AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE EXT/DAY

Various long shots of the snow-covered landscape.

NARRATOR: *The year was coming to an end with fine weather. The sun made the snowy landscape sparkle so brightly that it hurt the eyes. None of us suspected that it would be the last time a year moved on to the next in an era of peace, and that that same year a radical change would take place of which no one had the faintest inkling...*

* * *

54. RECTORY. LIVING ROOM. INT/DAY

The decorated Christmas tree. Outside bright sunlight. The pastor is taking the white ribbon off Marie's head and Martin's arm. The rest of the family witnesses this almost solemn act.

NARRATOR: *...Despite of the strange events, that had unsettled the village, we thought of ourselves as united in the belief that the life in our community was God's will and worth living.*

PASTOR: *... I take of this ribbon from you, in the belief that from now on you'll no longer need it.*

You, Marie, will be accepted this year as a full member of the church community. You will receive

Christ's body as bread and as wine. May the time of preparation for the confirmation feast be one of happiness and enrichment.

And you, Martin: from now on you shall not only be free of that ribbon, but also from those nightly ties that were intended to save you from yielding to the temptations of your young body. For in a house full of festive expectation, you too, on your own, shall make your contribution to mental and physical purity.

I trust in you, my beloved children, and wish you a profitable and happy new year.

He strokes the children's heads. They kiss his hand. The mother embraces them heartily.

* * *

55. ESTATE EXT/DAY

Springtime.

The Baroness, Sigi and a new, a forty-ish nanny with the twins are get out of a carriage in front of the manor.

NARRATOR: Shortly after Easter, in the last week of April, the Baroness came back with the children. She was accompanied by a new nurse. Thus my secret hope that Eva would be able to come back here, had definitely been dashed. The nurse was a chubby, middle-aged Italian who came, as everybody soon learned, from the town on the Mediterranean coast where the Baroness had spent the winter.

A maid hurries out of the house with reinforcements, the Baroness is being welcomed respectfully and the luggage is being unloaded. The nurse gives instructions in Italian, which leads to some confusion. Then the nanny talks to Sigi who translates to the servants, laughing. Besides, the boy looks transformed: instead of his former pale skin color, his face now has a nice tan, his fair hair has been further bleached by the sun, he has grown taller and looks altogether stronger and happier. The Baroness too seems more relaxed and restored. She and Sigi are about to go straight into the house when we hear, coming from the other side of the courtyard

FERDINAND'S VOICE: *Sigi!*

Sigi turns around. Ferdinand has seen him from the window and called. Sigi waves back:

SIGI: *Hi, Ferdinand!*

FERDINAND: *Wait! I'm coming down!*

Sigi wants to run over to the steward's house.

BARONESS: *Stay here, Sigi, you can see him later.*

NURSE (in Italian): *Let him go, Signora! He's so happy to be home again.*

BARONESS (muses, then smiles): *All right, you can go. But don't stay too long.*

Sigi hurries off. The Baroness and the nurse look at each other in agreement. The Baroness smiles faintly. Then they go through the door into the house.

For a moment we only see the open door with the dark stairwell behind it.

Then we hear the STEPS of the Baron, first on the gravel in the yard. Then Baron comes into frame, and goes through the door into the house. He vanishes into the darkness of the stairwell. From there we hear his voice:

BARON (calling): *Beatrix? Beatrix, where are you?*

The nurse comes out after a while again

NURSE (calls in Italian): *Sigi. Don't you want to come say hello to your father?*

But Sigi is talking intensely to Ferdinand on the other side of the courtyard and doesn't answer.

* * *

56. SCHOOL. INT/DAY

CLASSROOMS.

The children are going wild. Brawling, sponge and chalk are flying through the air. Some are packing up their belongings, preparing to leave the classroom. In short, the way children behave once the lesson is over.

Marie stands at the classroom door. She watches her classmates. The she looks through the door into the CORRIDOR.

It's empty. She comes back to the CLASSROOM, but stays at the door so that she can still keep an eye on the corridor. Apparently, she has been posted there as a lookout to warn against the possible arrival of a teacher.

The shouting, laughter and brawling goes on. Suddenly, Marie sees the schoolteacher in the CORRIDOR with her father. The two are having an animated conversation. Marie bursts into the CLASSROOM and closes the door to muffle the noise, then she shouts to her classmates:

MARIE: *Watch out, he's coming!*

But with all the shouting and laughter, her voice isn't heard by all of the pupils. The noise dies down, some of them stop misbehaving. Somebody picks up the sponge, and

the blackboard is quickly cleaned up of the traces of the fight. But a small group who had started to chase each other around, doesn't hear and keeps at it. Marie shouts to them again, this time louder:

Be quiet! For God's sake! Be quiet!!

But as the wild chase goes on and some over-excited children even make fun of her, and she yells at the top of her voice:

QUIET!!!!

At that moment, the door opens and the pastor comes in with the schoolteacher.

Almost instantly, the room becomes QUIET. Without saying a word, the pastor goes over to Marie, grabs her by the ear and drags her through the whole classroom to the stove, where he makes her stand, face to the wall. The pupils remain silent, embarrassed.

While the pastor goes back to the black board, putting his briefcase on the desk without saying a word, the schoolteacher, who feels slightly responsible for the lack of discipline of his classroom, says:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What's going on here? Why are you still here? You know that there's a confirmation class now! Get out!*

The children disappear quickly. To the first child who tries to sneak out the schoolteacher says:

How about saying good-bye?

Immediately all the CHILDREN rushing out say:

Good-bye, Sir! Good-bye, Pastor!

Finally, all the children have left the classroom, except eight candidates for confirmation, among them Paul, Xenia and Marie with her face still turned to the wall.

The schoolteacher turns to the pastor:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I'm sorry, Pastor. It won't happen again.*

The pastor answers with a reserved nod. In an icy silence, he has waited for the all the younger pupils to leave. As the schoolteacher notices that there will be no further reaction from the pastor, he bows slightly to him and says:

Good-bye, Pastor.

PASTOR: *Good-bye.*

The schoolteacher leaves the room. The pastor turns to the candidates for confirmation:

Let us pray.

They say the LORD'S PRAYER together. Then the pastor says:

Sit down.

The students sit down. Marie keeps standing facing the wall. The pastor stops too. After a while he begins to talk.

*This is a very sad day for me.
In a few weeks, we all want to celebrate the confirmation feast together.
For many months I have tried to bring God's word closer to you, and to make responsible human beings out of you in His spirit.
And what do I face today? A horde of yelling monkeys, without any discipline or human dignity, as childish as the seven-year olds, with whom you're sharing this classroom.
But what makes me even sadder is the fact that my own daughter is playing the leading role in this pitiful display.
Last year I bound a white ribbon in her hair. Well, you all know that white is the color of innocence. The ribbon was meant to help Marie to avoid sin, selfishness, envy, indecency, lies and sloth.
Well, at the start of the year, I was naive enough to believe, that now, in the year of her confirmation, she'd become mature enough, and that she wouldn't need that ribbon any more
I believed that she felt responsible, being the daughter of the spiritual leader of a Christian communi...*

Marie, who all this time has been waiting beside the stove, faints and collapses to the floor.

* * *

57. THE DOCTOR'S HOUSE. INT/NIGHT

STAIRWELL.

The only light comes in from the living room. Rudolph comes down the stairs, wearing a nightshirt.

RUDOLPH (softly): Xeni?

He goes into the LIVING ROOM.
It's empty.

RUDOLPH (as above, anxiously): Xeni? Where are you?

He goes into the KITCHEN.

It's also empty. Rudolph is desperate. He starts to cry. Finally, he goes back to the STAIRWELL and goes up the stairs to his room.

On the stairway, he notices light coming from under the door of the practice. He goes back down the stairs down again and opens the door of the PRACTICE.

In the bright light, sitting in front of each other, are the doctor and Xenia. The doctor has his back to Rudolph, so that we see Xenia's face first. She sits on

the visitor's chair. He has placed his chair in front of hers, and his legs are closed around her legs. She's crying.

The situation is ambiguous, we don't know what has happened.

The noise at the door startles Xenia, she looks at Rudolph:

XENIA (startled, her face tearstained): *Rudi?!*

The doctor spins around, and looks stunned to his young son. Both look as if they have been caught red-handed.

XENIA: *What are you doing here? Why aren't you in bed?*

Rudolph doesn't really know, what to think of all this, but being the good child he is, he answers automatically:

RUDOLPH: *I can't get to sleep.*

XENIA: *That's why you're wandering around like a ghost in the middle of the night?*

RUDOLPH: *I woke up and you weren't there.*

Short PAUSE. Xenia wipes the tears from her face.

XENIA (trying to smile): *Dad has pierced my earlobes.*

RUDOLPH: *Does it hurt?*

XENIA: *Yes, a bit.*

RUDOLPH: *That's why you're crying?*

XENIA (tries to smile): *I'm not crying any more.*

DOCTOR (trying to joke): *Beauty has to suffer. That's what they say. At least for girls...*

He gets up and goes, still seen from behind, to a closet, and puts something into it that we can't recognize. He's straightens his clothes. Then he goes over to Rudolph:

DOCTOR: *Now go to bed again. You too, Xeni.*

XENIA: *Yes.*

As Rudolph hesitates and looks at her dubiously, she explains, almost eagerly:

I haven't worn earrings for a long time, that's why my earlobes grew back again.

To show him, she grasps one of her ears.

For Whitsun feast, when we all want to look our best make ourselves look beautiful, I'm getting new earrings. The ones that Mom had, with garnets...

Rudolph looks at her. He doesn't think she's telling the truth.

* * *

58. RECTORY. THE PASTOR'S STUDY. INT/DAY

Marie comes in. She's wearing a nightshirt, her hair is damp and sticks to her head. She looks sick and feverish.

She closes the door quietly, then goes to her father's desk and opens a few drawers. She ends up finding the letter-opener. It has a hilt and looks like a small sword.

She takes the letter-opener, goes to the birdcage, puts the letter-opener down beside it and grabs the tiny canary. As the bird chirps, she glances round at the door, as if to make sure that nobody is coming.

NARRATOR: A few days after Marie's fainting-fit that frightened us all, and that was followed by her feverish and debilitated state...

She takes the bird into her left hand so that its little head is turned upwards, and picks up the letter-opener with her right hand...

* * *

59. ESTATE. STEWARD'S HOUSE. INT/DAY

The schoolteacher is led by the steward's wife to the living room. She carries an apron and her sleeves are rolled up. Apparently she was just preparing a cake, and her sticky hands make her open the door with her elbow. Because of the narrator's voice, we don't grasp what they're saying, but we understand that she's asking him to come in and wait for the person he wants to see, and that she can't keep him company now.

NARRATOR:...I went to see the steward, because I wanted to borrow the carriage for the Whitsun holidays again.

Since my marriage proposal, Eva had written me once a week, and I got the feeling that she felt lost and alone in the city, and was asking me between the lines to come to see her again, despite of her father's interdiction.

I wanted to spend Whitsun Saturday with her so that I could be back on Sunday again and prepare the confirmation feast with the pastor.

The steward had gone to the sawmill, but was supposed to be back any minute. His wife, who was busy preparing for Whitsun, asked me into the living room and to wait there for his return.

The steward's wife has left the room. The schoolteacher sits around, bored. After a while he gets up, goes to the window and looks out.

The courtyard is empty.

Suddenly, the schoolteacher hears a female VOICE in the next room SPEAKING softly.

He listens, then he goes to the wing door and looks through the gap on the etched glass-window of the door into the next room.

There, Liesl sits beside the cradle and talks quietly to the baby.

The schoolteacher opens the door. Liesl sees him, gets up and greets him politely with a curtsy:

LIESL: *Good morning, Sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Hello, Liesl..*

Smiling, the schoolteacher goes to the cradle and looks into it.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *He's cute..*

LIESL: *Yes, he is.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Do you like him.*

LIESL: *Yes. Very much.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *He was very sick last winter, I was told.*

LIESL: *Yes. Very sick. But the doctor cured him. With God's help.*

PAUSE. The schoolteacher looks out the window to see if the steward isn't coming.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Maybe, I'll pop back this evening.*

LIESL: *I'm sure Father will be back for coffee at four.*

She looks at the grandfather clock, that indicates quarter to four. The schoolteacher thinks for a moment, then he goes to the living room:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Then, I'll go sit down again next door.*

LIESL: *Can I bring you something? A cup of coffee. I'm sure it's ready.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiling at her eagerness): *No, no. Thanks.*

He stands in the door:

I'll sit down over there again and just wait.

He wants to close the door behind himself. Suddenly

LIESL says: *Sir!*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes?*

LIESL: *Can dreams come true?*

The schoolteacher smiles, surprised at the unexpected question:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *That depends, why?*

LIESL(serious): *On what?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (smile): *On what does it depend? Well if you dream of getting the first prize at the school feast, and study hard for it, then your dream can come true.*

LIESL, shakes her head, quietly: *That's not what I meant.*

The schoolteacher feels that she has something on her mind and asks, this time without irony:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well, what did you mean then?*

She looks at him, wondering if she should really discuss it. He nods to encourage her.

LIESL: *I mean, if you dream something in your sleep, I mean, if you really dream it in your sleep, can it come true?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (also serious): *Why, what did you dream?*

She bows her head.

The schoolteacher thinks for a moment, then he goes over to her.

Come on, tell me. You have something on your mind, haven't you?

She shakes her bowed head. But suddenly, she starts to cry:

LIESL (crying): *I always dream such horrible things.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (dear): *Tell me what you've been dreaming?*

She sobs, he takes out a handkerchief and hands it to her:

Take this. Now, calm down again. And then tell me what's going on.

Liesl takes the handkerchief, blows her nose and wipes away her tears. She doesn't completely manage to hold her tears back, and breathes haltingly. She hands the handkerchief back to the schoolteacher.

LIESL: *Thanks.*

The schoolteacher puts the handkerchief away with an imperceptible smile and then says reassuringly:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *All right. Now go on.*

The girl snuffles a couple of times again, then swallows and says quietly:

LIESL: *I dreamt that the Hansi - the midwife's odd little boy ...*

SCHOOLTEACHER (reassuringly): *I know, I know.*

LIESL: *- ...that something very bad is going to happen to him.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Something very bad?*

Liesl nods eagerly.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Like what?*

LIESL: *I don't know. Something like what happened to Sigi not long ago. But even worse.*

She starts to cry again:

But he's so sweet. He harms no one.

Touched, the schoolteacher puts his arm around Liesl's shoulder.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *All right. All right. That was just a dream. You needn't take it so seriously.*

LIESL (crying): *They always make fun of him, because he doesn't really...*

SCHOOLTEACHER (calmly): *Yes, I know, but nobody will do him any harm, you can be sure of that.*

Liesl can't calm down.

Do you want my handkerchief back?

She shakes her head.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What gave you the idea that your dream would come true?*

She just shakes her head, and keeps on crying. Then he takes the handkerchief out again and hands it to her. As she doesn't take it, he nudges her. She looks up, confused. He holds the handkerchief again with a cheerful nod. She takes it and blows her nose. Then she slowly calms down.

SCHOOLTEACHER (now "reasonable" in order to "calm her down"): *Dreams don't come true. Let alone that kind.*

She shrugs her shoulders, as if she disagrees with what he's saying. Her head bowed she stands before him, holding his handkerchief.

She breathes a few more times, then says with an almost "adult" voice:

LIESL(serious): *But sometimes my dreams do come true.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What do you mean?*

PAUSE.

LIESL *says: Last winter, before Putzl (she points to the baby) became ill, I dreamt that my brother put him beside the open window, so that he'd die.*

And the day the window was open and he caught a chill and he almost died.

The schoolteacher is completely perplexed. At first he doesn't know what to say.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What are you saying there? That's complete nonsense!*

Liesl bows her head again.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Somebody probably didn't close the window properly.*

What gave you that idea? Why would your brother do such a thing?

LIESL, (defiantly, as he's not believing her): *Because he's jealous.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *And because you believe that, you dreamt it. It doesn't mean anything at all. It's just a coincidence.*

LIESL (keeping her head bowed): *All right.*

The schoolteacher bends over to catch her gaze.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Look at me.*

She looks at him reluctantly, maintaining her defiant reserve.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Don't tell such stories to anybody!*

You obviously don't realize the harm you can do with it.

Again she looks down at the floor.

You didn't tell the story to your parents, didn't you?

She shakes her head.

All right then.

Forget it quickly. I shall forget it, too. Promise?

As she doesn't answer, he repeats:

Promise?

She nods almost imperceptibly.

Good.

Now can I have my handkerchief back...

He holds his hand out to her. Astonished she looks at the handkerchief in her hands. She had forgotten it completely, and gives it back the schoolteacher.

Thank you.

He pockets the handkerchief.

Now, we both have a secret. And you promise me that it will remain a secret between us. All right?

She nods reluctantly. He insists, seeks her gaze:

Yes?!

LIESL (reluctantly): *Yes.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well. All right then.*

You don't have to worry. Nothing will happen to Hansi.

(smiling): Nobody is jealous of him.

She glances at him to see whether he's making fun of her. He looks at her seriously and gives her a nod that demands an answer. She nods briefly. But it isn't clear whether she just does it to please him.

Dreams don't come true. That only happens in fairy-tales. Forget all about it.

He looks at her, as she stands there, head bowed. Finally he smiles and tries to "crack a joke" to make the matter less serious:

Do you know what they did to little girls who predicted the future in ancient times? They burned them at the stake as witches.

She looks up at him, round-eyed.

* * *

60. RECTORY. THE PASTOR'S STUDY. INT/DAY

The pastor comes through the door, goes to his desk, and is about to put down his briefcase.

The dead bird lies in the middle of the desk with its wings spread out. The pastor's letter-opener is stuck in its neck - only the hilt sticks out from its beak.

* * *

61. STREET. EXT/DAY

The schoolteacher and Eva drive in the carriage. In the background, we catch glimpses of the town.

NARRATOR: *We had arranged to meet at the town railway station, since Eva wanted to avoid being seen with me. She was living with distant relatives, who were apparently reporting regularly to Eva's parents about her life-style. She had become thinner which made her even prettier, and once again I was ravished by her mixture of shyness and almost childlike outspokenness.*

EVA (imitating somebody): *"...You want your hair parted to the right or to the left?" "How about one parting to the left and one to the right?"*

Both laugh heartily.

All the people in the saloon were laughing their heads off. Even Mr. Murer, who's so distinguished that he never cracks a smile, had to laugh.

SHORT PAUSE, in which the laughter fades down.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Then, it isn't really so awful, is it?*

EVA: *No. But sweeping up hair all day - honestly the twins were more fun, I must say. But it's all right. I can't really complain.*

The schoolteacher looks at her sideways, smiling:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *No?*

She looks at him, doesn't understand that he's trying to make her complain about their forced separation, and says cheerfully:

EVA: *No. Really.*

The schoolteacher exchanges a smiling glance with her, then looks back at the road:

SCHOOLTEACHER (smiling): *And apart from the twins, there's nothing you're missing?*

She looks at him, surprised. Suddenly, she understands. She shakes her head with a smile, then takes his hand for a short moment, as if she were apologizing for her lack of sensitivity.

EVA: *Oh, you of course!*

He looks at her hand on his, but she already has withdrawn it. Both seem very happy. After a few moments, during which the horse keeps trotting, Eva leans against the schoolteacher and puts her head against his shoulder. But the shaking of the carriage on the rutted road makes that position untenable and so they sit side by side again and drive on. Finally

EVA says: *And how is the nurse? Does she only speak Italian?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I don't know. That's what the steward told me.*

EVA: *I see.*

At that moment the road crosses a brook, that runs through a small wood. The schoolteacher steers the carriage on to a trail that branches off the road after the bridge.

EVA: *Where are you going?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Over there, into the forest beside the brook. We can picnic over there. I brought a basket of food.*

EVA (softly): *I don't want that.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (perplexed): *Why?*

Eva looks down and shakes her head. The schoolteacher stops the carriage, turns to her:

What's going on?

EVA: *Nothing. Please.*

Now he understands. He smiles although he can't really understand that she's been thinking such a thing of him. Now he talks to her almost as to a child, astonished and reassuringly.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *But I don't want anything forbidden from you. I just wanted you to enjoy the picnic.*

She looks up at him.

EVA: *Please.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (astonished): *Do you think, I might want to bring disgrace on my future wife?*

She keeps looking at him pleadingly. Finally he gives in, slightly disappointed:

All right then. I'll turn over there.

He drives on. After a few meters, Eva puts her hand on his hands and on the reins. He stops the carriage, she looks at him.

EVA: *Thanks.*

He doesn't know what say. They look at each other. Suddenly Eva leans forward and kisses him on the lips very cautiously. They remain that way for a long while without their bodies touching each other. After separating, they forget at first to keep breathing. Then, once the worst of the confusion has abated, they both turn away from each other. The schoolteacher lets the horse start trotting again, and

they sit side by side on the bumping vehicle, looking straight ahead, quiet and overwhelmed by the happiness of the moment.

* * *

62. CHURCH INT/DAY

The church is packed.

The 8 candidates for confirmation are kneeling at the Communion bench. One after the other, the pastor puts the cup to their lips.

PASTOR:

Accept and drink!

This is the blood of the New Testament,

Shed for the forgiveness of your sins.

As he reaches Marie, who is kneeling fifth in line, he hesitates a long moment. For so long, that this causes a few irritated stares from the devout parish. Even more than the other children, Marie is also numb with excitement. It almost looks like she might faint again. But then he holds out the cup to her too, and she drinks:

Accept and drink!

That is the blood of the new will,

spilled for you so that your sins will be forgiven.

He wipes the cup, where Marie's mouth drank - as he does after each child - and goes on to the next one, repeating the rite...

* * *

63. FOREST EXT/NIGHT

Distant VOICES. At first incomprehensible. Gradually we understand them better:

VOICES: *Hansi? Where are you? Give us a sign!*

Hansi, where are you?

Here and there silhouettes appear in the half-light. Some carry lanterns, other torches. It takes some time before they get nearer and become recognizable: they're men and women from the village.

After a while

MAN'S VOICE(calling): *Over here. He's here.*

We follow those running over: Bound to a tree is a small boy. His whole head is wrapped up in rags. A small slit has been left open so the nose can breathe. He MOANS.

A paper has been tied around his neck with a white ribbon.

The people hurry toward the child, free the child of its fetters. The child slumps down, his head is unwrapped, covered in blood: it's the mongoloid son of the midwife. Astonished, somebody reads the words written in block letters on the paper):

FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD,
VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE
CHILDREN TO THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH GENERATION
OF THOSE WHO HATE ME.

* * *

64. SCHOOL. INT/DAY

CORRIDOR.

Marie, Martin, Paul, Georg, and a couple of other children are waiting at the classroom door. They remain silent. They're listening.

NARRATOR: *After this intricate atrocity committed on the retarded boy, even the Baron was finally convinced that it would be more intelligent to call upon the professional help of the county's police force. So a few days later a couple of plainclothes policemen arrived and, after a visit to the several of the crime scenes, started to ask in various homes if anyone had noticed anything suspicious.*

CLASSROOM

The two detectives question Liesl in the presence of the schoolteacher and become more and more aggressive. Liesl ends up crying.

NARRATOR: *After learning of Hansi's torture, I didn't think at first of what Liesl had told me. When it came back to my mind, I at first hesitated to tell the authorities about it. Because of such an absurd coincidence, I didn't want to jeopardize the reputation and inner peace of the steward's family. But when I heard that Hansi might lose his eyesight because of his injuries, one afternoon I made Liesl come to school and tell the police officers about her dream.*

FIRST POLICE OFFICER: *...Thank God, we're not as stupid as you might think.*

LIESL (crying, desperate): *But I only dreamt it.*

PAUSE. The officers exchange an impatient look with the schoolteacher, who himself doesn't really know what to think of Liesl's story. He looks at her thoughtfully. The police officer turns to the girl again:

FIRST POLICE OFFICER: *Now listen carefully! I'll give you a last chance: you tell me, who told you about the plan to torture the boy, and we won't tell anybody who told us. All right?*

Liesl shakes her head desperately, crying again. The police officer looks at the schoolteacher. The latter doubts whether he should speak up. He feels sorry for the girl. Finally, he says:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *She's already dreamed of something that has come true.*

FIRST POLICE OFFICER (ironic): *Is that so? And what was it, if I may ask?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (wanting to spare her talking about it): *Something that happened in her family.*

FIRST POLICE OFFICER (just as before): *I see. Something to do with her family. And have you checked if it was true?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (irritated): *No.*

The police officer looks at him, grunts with disdain, and turns to his colleague:

FIRST POLICE OFFICER (scornfully): *Well, all that may be true. Maybe we're really dealing here with an authentic clairvoyant, and we don't realize how lucky we are. Maybe we only need to ask her, who's behind all this. The we send her to bed, she dreams a bit, and tomorrow she tells us who did it. How about that? Everything's possible, isn't it?*

Suddenly, he yells at the girl:

Stop crying!

Liesl jumps up with fear. The police officer stands right in front of her:

Your deceitful whining won't work with me. I've got other ways to make you talk. I don't believe in witches and magicians, let alone that a chubby little girl like you has supernatural hallucinations. Therefore you'd better get used to the idea of telling the truth, because you won't be rid of me until you've come clean. Is that clear?

All right, and now we're going to visit your parents to see what they think of your version of the story.

He pulls the girl to her feet. She's thoroughly intimidated, and snuffles faintly. Then he leads her toward the door, at the same time turning to the schoolteacher:

I'd be grateful if you came too.

The schoolteacher finds the policeman's behavior toward the child exaggeratedly aggressive, but he follows reluctantly:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Of course.*

The police officer opens the door to the

CORRIDOR

and almost bumps into a group of pupils that have assembled there.

FIRST POLICE OFFICER: *Oooops! What do we have here?*

MARIE (kindly): *Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Sir.*

CHILDREN (as before): *Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Sir.*

Obviously the schoolteacher didn't expect them, but doesn't want to show it in front of the police.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Good afternoon.*

FIRST POLICE OFFICER: *Why are you eavesdropping?*

MARIE (politely): *We saw from outside that the schoolteacher was having visitors. We didn't want to intrude. We were just waiting to talk to the schoolteacher.*

PAUSE. The police officer looks at the schoolteacher:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What do you want?*

MARIE (as if she was too shy to talk in front of strangers: *We wanted to ask you something about Hansi.*

Again, the police officer looks at the schoolteacher.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What is it?*

MARIE (hesitates a moment, then "screws up her courage" and asks): *We heard he isn't well. We just wanted to ask if we could be of any help.*

* * *

65. THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE INT/NIGHT

The doctor carefully examines Hansi's wounds. Especially the areas around eyes that are badly affected. The boy moans softly.

The midwife stands beside him, trying to stay calm, but she is paralyzed with fear, and visibly still in a state of shock.

It's very quiet. The doctor speaks with a soothing, almost tender voice to the child, who keeps on moaning:

DOCTOR (softly): *All right... Everything's all right, Hansi... I know, it hurts... You've got to be patient... everything will be fine again... everything...*

He has finished his treatment (and has bandaged the boy's eyes again), and wants get up. But Hansi's hand clings to his, and holds him back. He hesitates a moment. The doctor and the midwife exchange a brief glance. Then, the doctor cautiously frees his hand from the child's.

I have to go now, Hansi. Don't worry, I'll be back tomorrow.

The boy moans louder and tries again to grasp the hand of the doctor, who he can't see. Brief exchange of glances between the doctor and the midwife, who ends up sitting on Hansi's bed, taking the boy's hands.

MIDWIFE: *It's all right, Hansi. Don't be afraid. The Doctor will be back.*

The doctor motions to the midwife that she should stay with the child, and leaves the room silently and almost hastily.

* * *

66. LANDSCAPE WITH A BROOK AND PASTURES EXT/DAY

Sitting at a brook, Sigi, Ferdinand and Georg have cut willow twigs with their pocketknives and are now carving whistles out of them. Their feet dangle in the water, they're concentrated on their work.

Georg is the first to have finished. Proudly he tries it out, but the little whistle doesn't sound very good. He hides his disappointment, and keeps on carving to improve the sound.

Then Sigi's whistle is ready and it sounds very good. Sigi is delighted. After a short and proud look over to his rivals, he leans back into the grass and keeps on whistling.

Georg looks with irritation at the "braggart", and keeps on carving. Then he gives it another try, but the whistle doesn't sound much better than before.

Sigi's whistling makes Georg's seem ridiculous. Ferdinand looks at Georg with a gloating grin.

Suddenly Georg pounces on Sigi and tries to grab his whistle. Sigi fights back and refuses to let go. Ferdinand also gets up and watches the two, grinning.

Even if Sigi is no longer the weakling he used to be before his stay in Italy, Georg, who is three years older than him, is much stronger: with the weight of his whole body he charges at Sigi, making him fall backward into the shallow water of the brook, and takes his whistle away.

The shock almost knocks out Sigi, and though the stream isn't deep, half of his head lies under the flowing water. Georg sees the danger, but his pride prevents him from helping him, as it means admitting his own unjust behavior. For a moment he hesitates, a helpless and defiant grin on his face. But Ferdinand has already jumped into the water and pulls out Sigi, who shakes his head to fully come to his senses.

Ferdinand looks up at Georg, who is standing on the bank, still holding the whistle in his hand. Then Georg points his finger at him, and says furiously and guiltily.

GEORG (threatening): *If you rat on me, you'll be sorry!*

* * *

67. RECTORY. STUDY. INT/DAY

The pastor sits at his desk, working. A KNOCK is heard.

PASTOR: *Come in!*

Florian comes in, hesitantly. In his hand, he carries a birdcage (we've already seen it in Scene 49 in the boy's bedroom at night). In the cage is the bird that Florian had found on Thanksgiving day, and who has recovered in the meantime.

PASTOR: Yes?

The boy looks embarrassed. He glances at his father, then comes over with the cage and puts it carefully on his father's desk. As Florian approaches, the pastor looked on, amazed. After putting down the cage, Florian steps back a little, then stops, his head slightly bowed.

PASTOR (not really understanding): *What is it? What do you want?*

FLORIAN (softly): *For Pipsi.* (PAUSE. Then even more softly): *Because Father is sad.*

The pastor looks at him, doesn't know how to react. Then, with a hoarse voice and trying to look indifferent, he says:

PASTOR: *Thank you.*

FLORIAN (as apprehensive in front of his father's perceptible emotion): *You're welcome, Father.*

For a moment, neither of them knows what to do. Then the boy leaves the room.

The pastor follows him with his eyes. Then, he sits down. He tries to keep his composure, but in the end he bursts into tears. He sobs haltingly, trying hard not let it be heard.

* * *

68.THE STEWARD'S HOUSE INT/EXT/DAY

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.

Georg stands at the window and looks down at the

COURTYARD

Coming from the manor, the steward is walking over briskly.

THE CHILDREN'S ROOM.

Georg leaves the window and sits down at his table, doing his homework.

We hear the FRONT DOOR opening downstairs, then the father's hasty STEPS on the stairs.

Finally, the father appears in the door. He's out of breath, furious, and tries to speak quietly

STEWARD: *Give me that whistle!*

Georg looks at his father, "not understanding".

GEORG: *I beg your pardon?*

STEWARD (forcedly, with threatening calm): *Give me that whistle!*

GEORG: *What whistle?*

At this, the steward pounces on the boy and smacks him so hard that he falls out of his chair.

Give it to me!

GEORG (on the ground): *What whistle?*

The steward yanks him up and shoves him against the wall. Georg stumbles over the table which is standing in the way, and lies back on the table top, trying to protect his face with his hands.

STEWARD: *Give away it to me, or I'll kill you.*

GEORG (half moaning): *I have no whistle.*

The steward lets go of him and starts to beat him furiously.

GEORG (screaming): *Ouch! ...Ouch!!*

STEWARD (beat): *You bastard, you wretch!*

GEORG (scream): *Ouch! Ouch! !! Please don't*

At that moment, attracted by the noise, Emma, the mother, appears:

EMMA: *For God's sake, Georg, what are you doing? What has the boy done?*

The mother's arrival has snapped the father out of his blind rage. He glances at her, then turns to the boy again, breathless with excitement, but forcing himself to be calm:

STEWARD: *For the last time: give it to me!*

GEORG (almost crying with pain): *But I don't know what you mean, Father.*

The mother looks uncomprehendingly from one to the other, then turns pleadingly to her husband:

EMMA: *What's going on? What are you talking about?*

STEWARD (to Georg): *You know exactly what I mean.*

Again the mother looks from one to the other, trying to save the situation:

EMMA: *But if he says so! Georg! What's going on?*

The steward turns to her, annoyed by her insistence, looks at her for a long moment, then at Georg again and turns on his heels and leaves the room.

STAIRWELL.

The steward runs down the stairs. The mother follows him.

EMMA (excited): *Georg! Please wait! What did the boy do?! Please, tell me! Why are you so furious?*

She reaches the steward as he is just about to open the front door and places herself in front of him.

EMMA (imploring, "reasonable"): *Georg! Please! Calm down. If you could tell me...*

STEWARD (also "reasonable", in order to get rid of her): *Please don't interfere. Leave me alone now! I have to go back to the Baron. He...*

At that moment we hear from upstairs the full SOUND of Sigi's whistle s from above, wild and lasting. For a moment, the steward is paralyzed, then he seizes the horsewhip hanging from hook in the wardrobe and dashes upstairs. We hear him thrashing the boy in the

room, and soon the WHISTLING is replaced by Georg's SCREAMS OF PAIN

After a short hesitation, the mother runs upstairs after her husband, and we now hear her trying in vain trying to control her husband.

EMMA: *Georg! Please! Stop it! Don't kill him...!*

* * *

69. ESTATE. DINING ROOM. COURTYARD. INT/EXT/NIGHT

The meal is over. The Baroness watches the maid clearing the table and putting everything away on a tray.

The Baron has stood up, standing with his back to his wife. He pours himself a glass of brandy.

BARON: *... with the birches over there in Aigen that should make about six-thousand cubic meters. Working steadily, they should have finished it within three weeks. If until the end of the month we...*

The maid has left with the tray.

BARONESS (interrupts him): *I won't stay here.*

BARON (doesn't understand): *What did you say?*

BARONESS: *I won't stay here.*

BARON (turns around to her): *What do you mean*

BARONESS: *What I mean is that I shall leave with the children.*

BARON: *What do you mean: you're leaving with the children?*

BARONESS: *Come on, Armin! It's not that difficult to understand, is it?*

PAUSE.

BARON: *May I ask you how you plan to do that?*

BARONESS (quiet): *I don't know yet. But in any case, we're leaving this place.*

BARON (sarcastic): *We.*

Look of the Baroness ("I don't need that kind of irony").

BARONESS: *Yes.*

The maid enters to clear the rest of the table. It leads to a longer PAUSE. The Baron drinks his brandy, goes to the window, waits. As the maid leaves the room, she looks at the Baroness inquiringly:

BARONESS (to the maid): *I don't need you any longer. Thank you.*

MAID: *Good night, Baroness. Good night, Baron.*

BARONESS: *Good night.*

Even after the maid has left, they remain SILENT for quite a long while. Finally, she says

BARONESS: *I returned from Italy only out of decency toward you. I wanted to give us a chance.*

BARON (turns around): *You wanted me "to give me a chance"?!*

BARONESS: *Yes.*

BARON: *Well, that's brilliant! And did I miss my chance? Or what?*

PAUSE.

BARONESS (quietly): *Do you think that will help us solve the problem?*

BARON: *What?*

BARONESS: *Your sarcasm.*

BARON: *Actually, what is the problem that has to be solved?*

The Baroness looks at him, then gets up and wants to leave the room.

BARON (suddenly yelling): *You stay here!!*

She turns around, looks at him.

BARON (softer): *You only leave this room if I tell you to do so.*

She looks at him.

BARONESS: *Fine.*

She goes back to her chair and sits down.

BARONESS: *I wanted to spare you this, but you force me to do it:*

During our stay with Uncle Edoardo I fell in love with a man. He's from Lombardy, he works in the banking business and helped Uncle Edoardo in a financial matter. He courted me and was also very fond of the children. If Sigi has blossomed and grown so healthy, it's largely thanks to him.

Despite all this, we came back.

Because I feel committed to you. But I can't stand this place any longer. Not so much for me personally, though I can't say that life with you is exactly thrilling for a woman of my age. But if I leave this place, it's because I don't

want Sigi, and later the twins, to grow up in surroundings dominated by malice, envy, apathy and brutality. What happened with Sigi's whistle was the last straw. I'm sick and tired of persecutions, threats and perverse acts of revenge.

PAUSE.

BARON: *Did you sleep with him?*

BARONESS (laughing scornfully): *You don't understand anything.*

BARON: *Did you sleep with him?*

PAUSE.

BARONESS (quietly): *No. I didn't sleep with him.*

PAUSE.

BARON: *You're lying, aren't you?*

The Baroness looks at him. Then she gets up, about to leave the room again. At the same moment, somebody KNOCKS at the door. After a short gesture of irritation

BARON (irked): *Come in!*

The steward appears.

STEWARD: *Good evening. Could I talk to you for a moment, Baron?*

BARON (annoyed): *Can't it wait until tomorrow?*

STEWARD: *It's really urgent. Normally, I wouldn't have disturbed you so late.*

Annoyed, the Baron leaves the room with him. As he goes out, the steward greets the Baroness with a nod. Once the door is closed, she stops for a moment, goes to the window, and looks out pensive. She ends up going to the small bar and pours herself a glass of brandy. Her hands are shaking a little. She drinks from the glass, goes back to the window and looks out waiting, taking a sip from now and then. Below in the

COURTYARD

a few people walk around nervously. But it doesn't look particularly unusual. A saddled horse is led into the stable. Finally, the door of the

DINING ROOM

opens again. The Baron comes back inside. He looks distressed. The Baroness doesn't know whether this is the result of her conversation, or of the message brought by the steward. The Baron paces a few steps, pondering, then glances at his wife. Finally, she asks

BARONESS: *What's going on?*

BARON: *They've shot the heir to the throne of Austria. In Sarajevo.*

* * *

70. VILLAGE AND SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE EXT/DAY

The same setting as in Scene 57. The countryside in all its summer splendor.

NARRATOR: *The news spread around the village like wildfire. What would the consequences be? The first person who spoke the word WAR, was severely contradicted. But once it had been uttered, it remained at the center of all our thoughts in a curiously stubborn way. I wanted to go to the town as quickly as possible, in order to discuss it with Eva, what we should do if war broke out. Perhaps her father would now agree to an earlier marriage. I asked the Baroness for the bicycle, with which Eva had visited her parents some time ago. The following weekend I planned use it to ride to town and see her.*

* * *

71. ESTATE EXT/DAY

The schoolteacher is pushing the bicycle out of the manor house. He says good-bye to a maid, who closes the door behind him. Some SHOUTING o.s. makes him look toward the steward's house: the steward comes out with the midwife, and it looks like he's throwing her out with a flood of angry insults.

NARRATOR: *When I went to the estate on Friday evening to pick up the bicycle, so I could take it with me to the school, and get going early, as the trip was a quite long one, I witnessed a strange confrontation:*

STEWARD: *...completely mad! Go if you want. He'll throw you out on your ear. Slandering other people and creating trouble. That's all we need now! Get out and never come back again! This is unbelievable! Go ahead, do whatever you think you have to do! You're hysterical!*

MIDWIFE (simultaneously): *...I'll go to the Baron. We'll see what he says. You won't silence me. Who do you think you are?! You'll see. I'll*

tell him that you tried to prevent me from giving the police a statement.

Angrily the steward slams the door behind him. At first the midwife doesn't know what to do. Finally she turns away from the door and starts to cross the yard. There, she sees the schoolteacher. She comes over to him.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Good afternoon, Mrs. Wagner. What's happening?*

MIDWIFE (very excited): *Good afternoon. Can I borrow your bicycle?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *It's not mine.*

MIDWIFE: *Could I borrow it just the same?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I just borrowed it myself. I going to ride to town, to see my fiancée..*

MIDWIFE: *Please! Lend it to me!*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Why do you need it? Where do you want to go?*

MIDWIFE: *I must go to town.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What for?*

MIDWIFE: *I asked the steward for a carriage, but that stubborn fool won't agree to anything.*

PAUSE.

Please! Lend me the bicycle.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Why? What is going on?*

After hesitating a while

MIDWIFE: *I have to go to the police in town. I now know who committed all these crimes.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (flabbergasted): *Who?*

MIDWIFE: *Will you let me have the bicycle?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Why don't you tell me?*

MIDWIFE: *From now on I shall only talk to the police. I won't let them insult me (turning to the steward's house): As you just saw.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Can't the doctor can lend you his horse?*

MIDWIFE: *I don't know how to ride.*

The schoolteacher looks at her inquisitively, because he still doesn't understand what it's all about, but she doesn't respond, and says:

MIDWIFE: *Please! Believe me! (She hesitates and adds, now quietly and imploringly):*

My son told me who did it to him. He may lose his eyesight.

Please, you let me have the bicycle!

The schoolteacher looks at her. The midwife looks pitiful: she tries to smile at him pleadingly, tears are streaming down her face.

Finally, he gives the bicycle to her. She grabs it quickly, says

Thanks!

and rides away. The schoolteacher remains behind, alone. He stands pensive, then he goes slowly back to the village.

NARRATOR: *The state that woman was in, who I knew was level-headed, had deeply impressed me. What had her son told her, that she didn't dare tell anybody?*

* * *

72. VILLAGE STREET. EXT/DUSK

The schoolteacher goes home.

TRACKING SHOT.

NARRATOR: *With each step I took from the estate back to the school, I felt more foolish for having given away the bicycle.*

As he passes the midwife's house, he sees behind the fence in the garden, half hidden behind the bushes, Marie and a few other children. The shutters of the house are closed.

As I passed the midwife's house, I saw Marie, Martin, and a few other children in the garden.

The schoolteacher stops, watches the children. After a few moments, they notice that somebody is watching them.

MARIE: *Good evening, Sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Good evening, Marie.*

CHILDREN: *Good evening, Sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What are you doing here?*

MARIE: *We wanted to see how Hansi was doing.*

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *But can't you see that the shutters are closed.*

PAUSE.

MARIE: *Yes. We were worried. We saw Mrs. Wagner riding off on a bicycle. So we wondered what had happened to Hansi.*

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Go home now. Nobody said you could come in here.*

The children go out slowly. They open the wooden gate in the fence, and go out into the street. They're visibly embarrassed at being caught by the schoolteacher when they were doing something wrong. Some avoid the schoolteacher's eyes, while others mutter a greeting, as if they wanted to say goodbye, as they went away. The schoolteacher looks annoyed. As Marie steps out of the garden door, he says:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You better go back home now, hurry.*

Marie doesn't seem to feel guilty at all. Again she greets him politely.

MARIE: *Good evening, Teacher.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (reluctantly): *Good evening.*

The children go away. The schoolteacher also goes on his way. After a few steps he turns around and looks at the children, then walks on.

NARRATOR: *Then I thought of Liesl's dream again. What if Liesl hadn't dreamt, but had known, that Hansi was going to be tortured. Whose crimes did she know of? Whose name had she refused to reveal?*

The strong interest of the children in Hansi seemed strange to me, considering that they had usually refused to have any contact with him because of his disability, or only dealt with him in a rather disdainful manner.

The schoolteacher stops. He ponders about this. Then he goes back to the midwife's house.

Suddenly I wondered why the midwife had closed the shutters of the house. Nobody in the village ever shut their house. Why had the midwife locked her boy in?

He has reached the front of the house again. Indeed, with its closed shutters, it looks uninhabited. Only because of the tidy little front garden, could one tell that somebody lived there.

The schoolteacher opens the garden gate and goes up to the house. He tries to open the door and then the shutters. Everything is well shut. He peers through the cracks in the wooden shutters.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Hansi? Can you hear me? Hansi!*

Nobody seems to answer. For a short moment the schoolteacher disappears behind the house, apparently looking for another way to get inside. But he soon comes back without having found anything.

NARRATOR: *If the midwife couldn't take care of him, she would have entrusted the boy to me, or to the doctor. But since the night he was mistreated, I hadn't seen him again.*

He leaves the midwife's house and hurries to the neighboring house, the doctor's.

I decided to ask the doctor directly.

He enters the property, goes up to the entrance and rings. Nobody answers. He rings again, then he sees a note tacked up:

***The doctor's practice is closed
until further notice***

* * *

73. RECTORY. INT/NIGHT

STAIRWELL.

The pastor's wife and the schoolteacher stand before the closed front door.

PASTOR'S WIFE: *His daughter? Wasn't she with you at your school?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes, she was.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *And she didn't say anything?*

The schoolteacher shakes his head. They both remain silent and pensive.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I have a request.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Yes?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Could I ask Marie and Martin?*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Don't you want to wait for my husband? He's at the church. The service will be over in a quarter of an hour. But if you insist. Please, come in.*

She opens the door

LIVING ROOM

and points to a chair.

Please be seated. Please. I'll fetch the kids for you.

She leaves the room. The schoolteacher remains standing. Waiting.
Finally, the pastor's wife comes back with the two children.

MARIE and MARTIN: *Good evening, Sir.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Good evening.*

PAUSE.

THE PASTOR'S WIFE: *Don't you want to sit down?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (who hasn't thought of it): *Yes. Perhaps. With pleasure.*

They sit down. The children sit opposite the schoolteacher.

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Can I offer you something? , (smiling faintly): A cup of coffee? Like during the piano lessons*

First the schoolteacher wants to refuse, then he decides to accept so as to get rid of the woman, and be alone with the children.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes, with pleasure. That's very kind of you.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *I'll be back in a minute.*

The schoolteacher turns to the children:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Did you know that the Doctor was leaving Eichwald?*

Short PAUSE.

MARIE: *No.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *But you don't seem surprised at my question.*

MARIE: *Our mother told us when she came to fetch us.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *And Xenia didn't tell you anything about it?*

MARIE: *No.*

She looks at Martin who confirms it:

MARTIN: *No.*

SCHOOLTEACHER (incredulously): *Not a word? It's very unusual for a child not to tell his classmates before going away on a trip.*

MARIE (unimpressed): *Xenia never talks much about home.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well, that's something completely different?!*

Apparently Marie doesn't take it as a further question, and remains silent.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I get the feeling you're hiding something from me.*

MARIE: *What?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *That's what I'd really like to know.*

SILENCE. Then the schoolteacher turns to Martin:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *When you were looking for Hansi a while ago, what did you want from him?*

Short PAUSE.

MARIE : *We were worried. He's ill.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I'm asking Martin.*

PAUSE.

MARTIN: *Yes. He isn't well. And since his mother is gone... we thought, we should go and pay him a visit.*

The schoolteacher realizes that he won't get any further this way.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Did you ever ask yourselves who could have treated Hansi that way?*

PAUSE. Then the schoolteacher adds:

And Sigi?

PAUSE.

*And who tied the wire in the doctor's garden?
And who set fire to the barn?
Well?!*

PAUSE.

MARIE: *Yes, of course we wondered.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Well?*

MARIE: *We discussed it with Father. He said it must be a sick person.*

PAUSE. The schoolteacher doesn't know how to go on.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Sigi was with you at Thanksgiving. And so was Hansi.*

PAUSE.

MARIE: *I don't understand.*

With demonstrative helplessness she looks at the schoolteacher, then at her brother, and again at the schoolteacher: Shaking her head and shrugging her shoulders.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *What did they do to you?*

MARIE (doesn't seem to understand): *Who?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Sigi and Hansi?*

MARIE (as above): *Why?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *They obviously were being punished. For what?*

MARIE (as above): *I don't know.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Liesl foresaw that Hansi would be punished? What for?*

MARIE (as above): *I don't know.*

PAUSE.

Why do you ask us?

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *You're an intelligent girl, Marie. Don't try and play dumb.*

PAUSE.

MARIE: *I don't understand you, Sir. You should talk with Father about this or with Mother. Shall I go get her?*

The schoolteacher looks at her.

MARIE: *Martin, would you please get her?*

Martin gets up and is about to go to the door.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Stay here, Martin: I'll talk to your parents when I consider it's the right time. Now, I'm talking to you. And I expect you tell me the truth.*

Martin sits down after exchanging a glance with Marie again.

Where were you on the evening Hansi was found?

MARIE (doesn't seem to understand): *At home.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I mean after the confirmation?*

At that moment, the pastor's wife enters with the coffee cups on a tray.

PASTOR'S WIFE: *There we are. The coffee will be ready in a minute.*

She puts the tray on the table. Turns to the schoolteacher, friendly as ever:

Were the children able to help you?

The schoolteacher looks at Marie, then he answers:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I'm afraid not. They don't know anything, either.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *That's really odd. A doctor can't vanish into thin air. What about his patients?*

(to the children) *Didn't his daughter tell you anything at school?*

The schoolteacher gets up, ready to leave.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *No. I'm sorry if I disturbed you.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Why don't you stay? My husband will be back any moment, and the coffee is almost ready.*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *That's very kind of you, but I'm really worried about the midwife's son.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *And she didn't say when she'd be back?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I didn't ask her. She caught me off guard. She was completely panicked.*

The pastor's wife shakes her head thoughtfully.

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Strange... Wait a second! I think that's my husband.*

And indeed, outside one can hear the FRONT DOOR and then the STEPS of the pastor. The wife goes to the door to open it. The pastor appears.

PASTOR (surprised to see the schoolteacher): *Good evening.*

PASTOR'S WIFE: *Good evening. The schoolteacher has been anxiously waiting for you.*

PASTOR (to the schoolteacher): *Yes?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes. I'd like to have a quick chat with you.*

The pastor doesn't really understand what can be so urgent, and why the schoolteacher, which was unusual for him, came to see him in the evening. But he remains friendly:

PASTOR: *Please. We'd better go to my study. It's quieter there.*

The schoolteacher nods to the pastor's wife, who is glad that the required meeting can now take place, while the pastor walks ahead with an inviting gesture. As the pastor opens the door of the STUDY, he asks:

PASTOR: *Well, how can I help you?*

They enter the room and the pastor offers the schoolteacher a chair. Then he realizes that the windows are open and closes them, as the schoolteacher starts to speak.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I spoke to the midwife today: she said she now knew who tortured her son.*

PASTOR ("who"?): *She does?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *She'll only tell the police. That's why she went to town.*

PASTOR (doesn't quite understand what the schoolteacher is getting at): *Well?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *She left the boy behind alone and has locked the whole house.*

PASTOR: *Locked it?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (nods): *I went to the doctor's next door to ask him what was going on, whether he was taking care of the child or... But there's a piece of paper saying that the practice is closed until further notice. The doctor and his children have disappeared.*

The pastor has almost finished closing the windows. He pauses and turns to the schoolteacher:

PASTOR (stunned): *What do you mean?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (shrugs): *I don't know. I thought you might have been informed. That's why I'm here.*

After a startled PAUSE the pastor shakes his head:

PASTOR: *I have no idea.*

He finishes closing the windows. Then he goes thoughtfully over to the schoolteacher and sits down in front of him.

PASTOR: *Xenia... Wasn't his daughter in school?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Yes, she was. She never mentioned anything.*

SILENCE. The pastor ponders. Then, after a while

SCHOOLTEACHER : *I asked Marie and Martin. They both know nothing either.*

PASTOR (looks up to the schoolteacher, "stunned"): *Why should they?*

The schoolteacher almost dodges speaking further:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *I don't know. When I went to the midwife's place, they were there with a few others in the garden.*

PASTOR ("doesn't understand"): *To do what?!*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *They were looking for the boy.*

PASTOR (as before): *Why?*

SCHOOLTEACHER: *They wanted to help him.*

PASTOR: *So what*

SCHOOLTEACHER (hesitates, then says): *I don't know how to say it. I have the feeling they're hiding something.*

PASTOR (refuses): *What?*

SCHOOLTEACHER (keeps on searching hesitantly for his words): *I don't know. (finally he dares to come out with his suspicion): When the doctor had his accident... last year, you remember, Suddenly the children were in his garden. Supposedly, in order to help Xenia.*

PASTOR (doesn't understand): *Yes... and?*

The schoolteacher, uneasy, breathes hard. He knows that his suspicions will seem odd, and senses that the pastor won't go along with then.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *Nothing. I had forgotten it. Today, it came back to my mind again.*

PASTOR (as before): *I don't understand.*

PAUSE.

SCHOOLTEACHER: *When they found the Baron's son... the last time he had been seen, he was with the children.*

The pastor looks at the schoolteacher, then his face slowly freezes to a mask of refusal:

PASTOR: *What are you getting at?*

Of course, the schoolteacher notices the reaction. But he has already gone too far to backtrack. After a PAUSE he goes on:

SCHOOLTEACHER: *A couple of days before Hansi was almost beaten to death, the steward's daughter had predicted precisely that to me. Supposedly, she had dreamed it. The police thinks she's lying. Who told her about it? Who announced it to her?*

LONG SILENCE. Finally, the pastor gets up, takes a few steps, then, after another PAUSE, turns again to the schoolteacher. His face is ashen, and he can hardly speak:

PASTOR: *If I understand you correctly, you're saying that your pupils, my children included, committed these crimes. Is that right?*

The schoolteacher has little affirmative and regretful gesture. He feels extremely uncomfortable in this role. Another PAUSE. Then, the pastor continues:

Do you realize what you're saying?

PAUSE. He breathes heavily, tries to control his emotions.

Do you know...

His voice fails. His chin starts to shake, tears flood his eyes, and he suddenly turns away. The schoolteacher who has been looking at him, now looks down and stays where he is without saying a word. After a while, the pastor has regained enough control of himself to turn back to the schoolteacher:

I assume that I'm the first person to whom you've uttered this monstrosity.

Mute reaction of the schoolteacher ("of course").

If you ever dare to bother other people with it, if you publicly denounce respectable families and their children in this abject way, I shall make sure -- and you can take my word for it -- that you will go to prison.

The schoolteacher wants to reply something, but the pastor continues:

I've seen quite a lot during my work as a pastor, but I've never come across anything as repulsive as this.

He looks at the schoolteacher for a moment with disdain:

One can tell that you have no children. Otherwise, you wouldn't stoop to such viciousness. You have a sick mind. I wonder how the school authorities could let you loose among those poor creatures. I'll have a word with the authorities at the proper time. And now please leave my house. I never want to see you here again.

* * *

74. THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE EXT/DAY

The steward, his wife and the schoolteacher try to break into the house.

First the steward tries several keys. As this doesn't work, they break down a door at the rear of the house and go in.

NARRATOR: *The midwife never came back. I waited until the morning, two days later. Then, I went to the manor house to inform the Baron. He referred me to the steward and said to open the house immediately and to look after the disabled boy.*

* * *

75. THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE INT/DAY

BACK TO THE SCENE.

The schoolteacher, the steward and his wife search through the house. Because of the closed shutters, its rooms are veiled in half-light. Several times they call "Hansi"!, "Hello, Hansi, where are you"?, which can faintly be heard under the narrator's voice.

In the midwife's bedroom, the schoolteacher notices a photo: it shows the doctor, an unknown woman, and Xenia as a small girl.

The boy is nowhere to be found.

NARRATOR: *I had never come to the midwife's house and felt uncomfortable at the idea of barging into somebody else's house without asking. It was strange, but we were still seeking and calling out anxiously Hansi's name, and I already knew, that we were searching in vain. Anyone who knew the midwife also knew how devoted she was to her disabled child, and that she would never have left her wounded Hansi all alone.*

The three searchers, who have found nothing, meet again in the stairwell.

* * *

76. THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE EXT/DAY

The schoolteacher, the steward and his wife come out from behind the house, leave the property and go their separate ways on the street. All that is left is the empty house with its closed shutters.

NARRATOR: *During the next few weeks, the village gossip-factory worked overtime. Some claimed, the doctor was Hansi's father. He and the midwife had tried to abort the child so that the shame of their relationship wouldn't be found out, and that's how the child became disabled. Others even went as far as to claim that there was something fishy about the death of the doctor's wife, and that they wouldn't be surprised, if the two weren't responsible for it.*

* * *

77. MONTAGE: EXT/DAY

The houses of the doctor, the pastor, the farmer, the street before the school, the estate's administrative buildings and the manor house.

There is nobody to be seen.

NARRATOR: *Whoever had lynched the boy obviously knew about the hidden crimes of his parents.*

Suddenly it seemed even possible that the doctor and the midwife, as potential murderers, were also the perpetrators of all the other crimes. It was suspected, that the doctor had wanted to spare his legitimate children and himself public disclosure of his guilt, and had therefore fled with them. Apparently he had taken the disabled boy with him out of guilt. Understandably enough, he had left behind his accomplice and the mother of the disgraced child. The fact that it was on a bicycle that she tried to catch up with the man who had happily escaped, was the cause of a great deal of laughter.

The deserted estate is decorated with flags.

On July 28th Austria declared war on Serbia. It was followed on Saturday, August 1st, by the German declaration of war on Russia, and on France the following Monday.

* * *

78. CHURCH INT/DAY

HIGH ANGLE SHOT:

The villagers are about to take their seats. The smaller children are sitting with their parents on the pews. All are in their Sunday best, the members of the militia are in uniform. Flags are planted. Joyful excitement reigns everywhere. Once the church is full, the Baron, the Baroness and their son Sigi walk down the aisle and sit down in the front row.

NARRATOR: On the Sunday between those dates, the whole village came to the festive service. An atmosphere of expectation and departure was in the air. From now on nothing would be the same. Only a few days ago everybody would have called the life they lived as God's will, worthy of being lived, and would have shunned any change. The strange joy with which the coming war was greeted, showed that this certainty of order and security was based on very shaky foundations.

CLOSE-UPS:

Of all the adult leading characters of the film, aside from the doctor and the midwife. Also of Eva and her father.

In the frenzy of patriotic enthusiasm that was flaring up, the events that had shaken Eichwald, had become an irrelevant.

In the face of the coming war, Eva's father had taken his daughter back and, at her pleading, had come to Eichwald to cast an eye at the place where his future son-in-law was living and working. The prospect, that I might soon call this beloved creature my wife, turned this day also into a solemn day for me.

The pastor never mentioned our conversation again. Our relationship was limited to what was required professionally. He apparently never went through with his threat to denounce me to the school-authorities.

MORE CLOSE-UPS.

The schoolteacher on the gallery lifts his hands and cues them to begin. They start SINGING. We see them one after the other. At the end we see Marie: she wears the white ribbon in her hair.

Today, more than a quarter of a century later, toward the end of my life, and several years after the end of a second war that was to change this world in a more cruel and radical way than the first one, the one we faced at the time, I wonder if the events of those days and our silence about them, weren't the germ of the tragedy toward which we were heading.

Didn't we all know secretly what had happened in our midst? Hadn't we, in a way, made it possible by closing our eyes? Didn't we keep our mouths shut because otherwise we would have had to wonder if the misdeeds of these children, of our children, weren't actually the result of what we'd been teaching them?

The image of Marie singing with the shining white ribbon freezes.

I was drafted at the start of the third year of the war. After the war, I sold the house in Grundbach that I had inherited from my father, who had died in the meantime, and with the money I opened a tailor's shop in the town, where I still live now.

I never saw anybody from the village again.

Over the FREEZE FRAME the END CREDITS begin. Once the narrator's VOICE has gone silent, we listen to Bach's solemn chorale. The children sing beautifully.

* * *