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SF PERUSALS

Tales from Hollywood

A Play

Christopher Hampton

Samuel French—London
New York—Sydney—Toronto—Hollywood

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TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD

First produced in Great Britain in the Olivier auditorium of the National Theatre on 1st September, 1983, with the following cast of characters:

Ödön von Horváth	Michael Gambon
Young Man	Michael Mueller
Johnny Weissmuller	Franc Morgan
Thomas Mann	Guy Rolfe
Chico Marx	Roderick Smith
Harpo Marx	Harry Dickman
Greta Garbo	Sylvia Rotter
Charles Money	John Bluthal
Heinrich Mann	Philip Locke
Nelly Mann, his wife	Billie Whitelaw
Salka Viertel	Pamela Buchner
Walter, the butler	Brian Kent
Lion Feuchtwanger	Harry Perscy
Marta Feutchwanger	Annie Leon
Toni Spuhler, the cook	Mary Chester
Katja Mann, Thomas's wife	Sylvia Barter
Helen Schwartz	Barbara Flynn
Bertolt Brecht	Ian McDiarmid
Helene Weigel, his wife	Sylvia Rotter
Hal, the barman	Paul Imbusch
Angel	Belinda Lang
Jacob Lomakhin	John Bluthal
Robert E. Stripling	Paul Stewart
Art Nicely	David Baron
with	Eve Adam
	Audrey Noble

Other parts played by members of the company

Directed by Peter Gill
Designed by Alison Chitty

ACT I 1938–41

SCENE 1
SCENE 2 Charles Money's office
SCENE 3 Thomas Mann's bungalow
SCENE 4 Charles Money's office
SCENE 5 The Warner Brothers' commissary
SCENE 6 Salka Viertel's house
SCENE 7 Helen Schwartz's apartment
SCENE 8
SCENE 9 Heinrich Mann's sitting-room
SCENE 10 Brecht's garden
SCENE 11 Heinrich Mann's sitting-room

ACT II 1942–50

SCENE 1 *The Sleeping Beauty* bar
SCENE 2 *The Sleeping Beauty* bar
SCENE 3 The beach
SCENE 4 Heinrich Mann's sitting-room
SCENE 5 Salka Viertel's front room
SCENE 6 Horváth's sitting-room
SCENE 7 Heinrich Mann's sitting-room
SCENE 8
SCENE 9 Heinrich Mann's bed-sitting-room
SCENE 10 Helen Schwartz's apartment
SCENE 11 A poolside in the garden of a Bel Air mansion

CHARACTERS

Odön von Horváth
Charles Money
Thomas Mann
Heinrich Mann
Helen Schwartz
Nelly Mann
Salka Viertel
Marta Feuchtwanger
Bertolt Brecht
Helene Weigel
Hal
Angel
Jacob Lomakhin
Art Nicely
Voice of Robert E. Stripling

A Young Man
Katja Mann
Lion Feuchtwanger
Toni Spuhler
Walter

And with the friendly participation of:
Johnny Weissmuller
Chico Marx
Harpo Marx
Greta Garbo

PRODUCTION NOTE

This Acting Edition is based on the National Theatre production where elaborate staging facilities were used to ensure rapid, fluent scene changes. Each director will have to evolve settings to suit the facilities available but it is important that the scenes should flow smoothly into each other without interruption.

It will be seen from the text that in Act I scenes 1 and 8 and Act II scene 8 no settings are specified.

Ödön von Horváth (b. 1901) was one of the most talented writers of his generation. He was killed on 1st June 1938, in a freak accident on the Champs Élysées, when a branch of the chestnut tree under which he was sheltering fell on his head.

A colleague, Walter Mehring, who was staying in the same hotel in Paris, went into Horváth's room. On his desk were two half-empty glasses of red wine and a page of notes for the novel (*Adieu Europa*) Horváth was just starting to write. The first line of the notes read: "Ein Poet emigriert nach Amerika . . ."

ACT I

1938–41

Scene 1

A curious rippling submarine light

Into it steps a striking figure, fortyish, somewhat overweight, overcoat open to display a well-cut double-breasted grey flannel suit, a Homburg on his head and black shoes, good but scuffed, on his feet, his exophthalmia the most notable feature of his expressive face

He pauses a moment, assessing the audience

Horváth Hello. My name is Ödön von Horváth. (*Pause*) Ödön. (*Pause*) No, Ödön. (*Pause*) Oh, never mind, call me Ed. (*Silence. He listens*) No, that's all right, don't apologize. There's no reason you should ever have heard of me. I had a certain reputation about ten years ago. You know, in the theatre. In Germany. I was considered, you know that word, when they don't really like you but think you might not go away, promising. I had a play in rehearsal when the Nazis came in. It never opened. After that, no-one would put on my plays in Germany, however bad I tried to make them. In the end, I took to writing novels. Also ... but you don't want to hear about all that and I don't want to tell you. Just that through all those years to be a writer in Germany was to be a non-swimmer in the water-polo team.

He moves a few paces, listening. Distant thunder. The underwater effect vanishes and he seems now to be standing under an old-fashioned street light

During the thirties which were also as it happened my thirties, I travelled a good deal. I knew the melancholy of railway stations and the grey wallpaper of cheap hotels. And as the decade, which appeared to have been constructed by a dramatist of the kind many of my more progressive contemporaries were denouncing as hopelessly old-fashioned, as it moved by way of smoothly-plotted climaxes and neatly engineered last minute reversals towards its inevitable conclusion a good many of us, us German writers, I mean, had very narrow escapes. I want to start by telling you about mine. So. (*He pauses*)

Very distant thunder. A light wind, rising

I never had subscribed to the fashionable view that the cinema as an art-form could not survive the coming of sound. On the other hand, I

hadn't yet had sufficient experience of the medium to realize that the writer's importance to it was somewhere on a par with the hairdresser's.

The Paris crowd are revealed upstage, standing in a line across the stage

Consequently, when I was invited to Paris in May nineteen thirty-eight, to discuss filming one of my novels, I accepted at once. I was still unfamiliar enough with the business to be surprised when at the first meeting, instead of discussing the project, I was bundled into a car, driven to the Champs-Élysées, handed a ticket and sent in to see the latest sensation: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Hard to tell what connection it might have had with my novel (which dealt with Nazi education policy) and, given the historical circumstances, I found the film a little optimistic in tone; all the same, in many ways a remarkable piece of work, don't you agree? Afterwards, we had our meeting, which lasted a good ten minutes, at a sidewalk café, and then Siodmak's wife offered to drive me back to my hotel. It was a pleasant evening. I said I would walk.

The crowd briskly walk downstage. Horváth sets off, strolling across the stage, humming "Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to work we go". The wind gets up. A few premonitory drops of rain and then the sound of a solid downpour. The Lights darken downstage. Horváth turns up the collar of his coat

However, I was only half-way down the hill when, out of a clear blue sky, this storm.

Thunderclap

The crowd react and scurry off in all directions

The Young Man moves C *in the shadow of an overhanging branch. We see the glint of his glasses, the shabbiness of his raincoat, and, as he beckons to Horváth, the dull and surprising gleam of an incongruous pair of black leather gloves. Horváth joins him. He has to raise his voice, against the sound of the wind, lashing through the trees*

I joined him in the shelter of an enormous chestnut tree, opposite the *Théâtre Marigny*. Even before he spoke I sensed that he might be, like me, a foreigner, and when he did speak, in better French than I could muster, of the weather, the whereabouts of the nearest bar and the unbearable vulgarity of the Arc de Triomphe, I began to think he might even be a fellow-writer. But before I could ask him, a bizarre commotion occurred.

We hear the sounds, as he describes them

Some way off from where we were standing a tree suddenly snapped in the wind. This fell against our tree, causing a thick branch above our heads to detach itself from the trunk with a slight sucking noise. It then landed on the back of my companion's head.

Without a sound, the Young Man falls to his knees. Then he topples forward on to his face. The back of his head, which is in full light, is crushed like an eggshell. Silence falls, abruptly

Three Men and a Woman rush on immediately. The group freeze as Horváth speaks

He died instantaneously. And this was the incident which prompted me to make the following remark. Why is it people are so afraid of the Nazis? Why aren't they afraid of just walking down the street?

The group come to life again, two of the Men dragging the body by the legs swiftly off, followed by the other Man and Woman

Horváth, having watched the activity, moves downstage and resumes speaking to the audience

I know of no political theory or philosophical system which takes into account the workings of chance. I don't just mean a few centimetres to left or right and it would have been me face down on the stone: I mean that chance, in its most brutal guise, was about to take charge of the lives of millions of Europeans. Not that people realized, of course—I have friends who took taxis to the internment camps. For me, the tree on the Champs-Élysées was enough. And being as I was a German-speaking Hungarian born in an Italian town now part of Yugoslavia, or, as it might be, a native of the sea-coast of Illyria, chance was on my side. Not only did I have a Hungarian passport, I even had a real American uncle, in Lexington, Virginia, who came across right away with the famous affidavit. So while some scrambled desperately for papers which might take them to Mexico City, Helsinki, Shanghai, anywhere, and others sat serenely in Switzerland, while some, calmly or in panic, took their places in the cattle-trucks or swallowed poison in obscure border towns, I was already, flushed with optimism and disregarding certain superstitions I have concerning water, well on the way to . . .

Projection: the skyline of New York

Even as I marvelled, though, standing on the deck at dawn, I became aware of a difficulty. For I was a man who, for complicated reasons which took the form of simple fear, was unable to step into an elevator.

The projection fades. Birdsong

Lexington, Virginia, was no better. For my uncle, although in other respects most amiable, was a radio ham and also a member of the Bund. So every evening was spent grappling with the bloody cat's whisker in order to get the full benefit of the Führer's latest thinking.

There is a brief snatch of a Hitler speech, varying wildly in volume and drowned in static, which Horváth abruptly cuts off with a gesture

It seemed there was only one thing for it. Namely . . . (*He spreads out his arms*) Los Angeles!

There is an immediate blaze of white light: circus lighting. Horváth begins to wander off

Thomas Mann enters and sits in a wicker chair. He wears a white jacket

and a panama hat, glasses and a moustache dyed black, and is about sixty-five

(*As he goes*) Chugging across interminable wheat fields, I dreamed of legendary encounters.

Horváth exits R

Thomas Mann is reading. Quietly in the background a little Wagner plays, the prelude to Lohengrin. *A moment passes. The tranquility is rudely shattered by a familiar ear-splitting cry. Thomas looks up*

Crossing the stage in a great arc, hanging on the end of a rope, a startling apparition: Tarzan. Completing his cry, he lands at Thomas's feet

Thomas looks up at him, his mild expression touched with apprehension and annoyance. Tarzan stretches out his hand. Thomas reluctantly accepts it

Tarzan Me Johnny Weissmuller, you Thomas Mann.

The Wagner snaps out

Tarzan and Thomas Mann exit. Chico and Harpo Marx enter

The Lights cross fade to Chico and Harpo Marx. Harpo is in baggy white trousers and carries a tennis racquet

Chico Who wuza this little guy you wuza playin' tennis with?

Harpo shakes his head; disconsolate expression

He beat you, uh?

Harpo nods, tearful

Who wuz he?

Harpo draws his racquet, which has a motor-horn on the end of it, across an imaginary violin

Heifetz?

Harpo drops to one knee. His sneakers have no toecaps. He counts out silently; six toes to each foot

What?

Same routine

He gotta twelve toes? No wunna he beat you. What's his name?

Harpo works his jaw furiously. Chico is puzzled. As the excitement of the question-and-answer session mounts, Harpo punctuates it with blasts on the motor-horn

Teeth?

Harpo shakes his head

Moosejaw?

Harpo shakes his head. His jaw now working frantically, he takes an imaginary something out of his mouth and sticks it behind his ear

Chewinagum?

Harpo nods; then shakes his head. Continuing to chew, he begins to flap imaginary wings

Ostrich?

Harpo shakes his head; begins to move around the stage chewing and flapping his wings

Chicklet?

He's pleased with this, but Harpo shakes his head, exhibiting terrible frustration; he redoubles his efforts

Chewinaboid?

Harpo nods, delighted: congratulatory blasts on the horn. Chico, however, is puzzled again

Chewinaboid? Chewinaboid? I don't know no Chewinaboid.

Harpo holds up a finger for silence. Then, magically, he strums on his tennis racquet, the four regular, melancholy, opening notes of "Verklärte Nacht". Chico's expression clears

Ah! Arnold Schönberg!

Harpo nods ecstatically

Why didn't you say so inna the foist place?

Harpo frowns. Chico throws an arm round him and begins to lead him off

You gotta be careful with him, he gotta very sneaky rhythm.

Chico and Harpo exit. As they do so, Horváth enters upstage, arm-in-arm with a staggeringly beautiful woman: Greta Garbo. They are hotly pursued by several reporters and photographers. Horváth is now dressed for California

They advance downstage, looking deep into each other's eyes. Suddenly, a flashbulb pops. Then, the flashes of what must be dozens of cameras. Garbo breaks away from Horváth, holding up a hand. The flashbulbs stop

Garbo Ve vant to be alone.

The flashbulbs start up again

Garbo turns, looks at Horváth for a moment, then runs off, distraught, hotly pursued by the media

Horváth looks after her, sadly. The Lights change to normal California daytime. Horváth smiles and turns to the audience

Horváth Well. Thomas Mann did know Johnny Weissmuller. Schönberg did

play tennis with Harpo Marx. And I did meet Garbo. But I need hardly say the reality was very different.

Scene 2

Charles Money's office

The Lights come up on Charles Money, sitting behind a desk innocent of books, but with a great many telephones deployed on it. He is a shortish, overweight man of middle years

He looks up as Horváth is shown into his office

In the scenes where he is with other émigrés, or simply addressing the audience, Horváth has no accent. However, in his scenes with Americans, his accent is very strong, and although it will improve as time passes and the play goes on, as will his use of English, it will always remain very noticeable in these scenes

Money struggles to his feet, extending a plump hand

Money Hi.

Horváth shakes his hand, bowing slightly

Horváth Mr Money.
Money Chuck.

Horváth looks around uncertainly, not at all sure what he means by this

Good of you to find the time, Mr Horváth.

He mispronounces the name horrendously. Horváth winces

Horváth Ödön.
Money Uh?
Horváth Ed.
Money Oh, yeah, good.

The telephone rings. Money turns to answer one of the many telephones on his desk

(*On the telephone*) I'm in a meeting. Oh, Christ, all right. (*To Horváth, gesturing*) Ed. Sit.

Horváth sits in the chair by the desk

(*Sitting; effusively into the receiver*) Jack! How are you! ... End of next week, Jack, I told you ... Yes, I know that, but ... (*Silence, during which he puts his hand over the receiver*) Talking to this guy is like drowning in cold gravy. (*Back into the receiver*) Well, I really appreciate your patience on this, Jack ... She's fine, how's Eileen? ... Yeah, nice talking to you. (*He puts the receiver down, a trace shaken*) Have you seen *The Adventures of Robin Hood*?

Horváth This is a film?
Money You haven't seen *The Adventures of Robin Hood*?
Horváth No.
Money Oh.

A different telephone rings. Money picks up the receiver. Brief silence

Of course it's raining. I can see it's fuckn raining! (*He slams down the receiver, irate, takes a moment to collect himself*) You worked for Fox over in Europe, is that right, Ed?
Horváth Yes.
Money And my people tell me you wrote a play about Edward the Second.
Horváth Please?
Money Play. Theatre play. You wrote a play. About Edward Second. English king.
Horváth No.
Money No?
Horváth No.
Money Oh.

Silence

Horváth Ah, I know that, what you mean. *Eduard der Zweite*. Yes. No. This play was from Bertolt Brecht und Lion Feuchtwanger.
Money You didn't have anything to do with it?
Horváth No.

Money considers for a moment

Money Either of them in town, you happen to know?
Horváth No. Mr Feuchtwanger is in France and Mr Brecht is, I think, in Denmark or so.
Money But you are familiar with the material?
Horváth Sorry? My English.
Money Do you know the play?
Horváth Oh. Yes. But in any case is it an old English play.
Money What's that?
Horváth Yes. From Christopher Marlowe.

Silence. Money broods

And I don't think he is in town either.

No reaction to this from Money, who continues to reflect, frowning

Money Let me have it run for you.
Horváth I'm sorry?
Money *The Adventures of Robin Hood.* It was huge. It did three million domestic. It'll give you an idea.
Horváth For what?
Money Listen, let me explain. These things nobody can explain. But for some reason right now English history is very hot. So somebody came

up with this Edward the Second idea, and what we have here is a treatment. (*He hands Horváth a slim folder*)

Horváth Thank you.

Money It's a way of presenting the facts we think may work, but you don't have to take any notice of it, hell, you're the writer.

Horváth Yes.

Money frowns

Money You a member of the Screenwriters' Guild?

Horváth No. You want I become a membership?

Money No, no, that's fine.

Silence. Money stares at him for a moment

OK, Ed, I'm prepared to offer you a hundred dollars a week.

Horváth makes a gesture, wearily assenting

Half now, half on delivery.

Horváth But . . . ?

Money You need two weeks?

Horváth Maybe.

Money OK, you got it. End of next week, then. (*He smiles. Then a thought strikes him and the smile disappears*) You OK to write in English?

Horváth (*eagerly*) Oh, sure. I am taking lessons.

Money Good.

Horváth Yes. I am now knowing three thousand words of English.

Money Congratulations.

Horváth Excuse me?

A telephone rings. Money selects a receiver and listens. Horváth abruptly turns to the audience, rises and moves downstage as he speaks. His accent has disappeared. In the background, the Lights go down on Money, as he listens on the telephone. A spot follows Horváth

The telephone. They even have some damned bird out here sounds like a telephone. That week Hitler marched into Czechoslovakia. *Variety* said: Hitler's reshuffling of Central Europe represents a loss of two and a half to three per cent of total foreign film income.

Scene 3

Thomas Mann's bungalow

Horváth These mundane tasks were interrupted by a summons to Parnassus. The Nobel Prize-winner was passing through on one of his lecture-tours, speaking on "The Problems of Freedom" or some such burning topic. I had, of course, met Thomas Mann often during the twenties, in Germany, but this was the first evening I ever spent with him alone.

The Lights come up on Thomas Mann, comfortably installed in his bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel, *pouring himself a cup of coffee. Horváth joins him, picking up a glass of brandy on his way*

Pleasant as it was to be able to speak my own language again, the occasion was not without its mishaps. (*He sits in the armchair*)

Thomas Mann lights a cigarette, carefully

Thomas What did you think of my lecture? Be honest.
Horváth I shall have to be very honest. I'm afraid I missed it.
Thomas Oh?
Horváth I have a deadline coming up, my first American screenplay.
Thomas I hope I'm not keeping you from it now.
Horváth Also, I wasn't quite sure if I would be able to follow your English.
Thomas My English is very good.
Horváth Oh, yes, it's mine that's terrible. I took some lessons in Vienna but I had to give them up.
Thomas Why?
Horváth They made me feel like a head waiter.

Thomas Mann relaxes, somewhat mollified. He drinks some coffee

Thomas What does it deal with, this screenplay of yours?
Horváth Edward the Second of England. Based on Marlowe's play.
Thomas Interesting. Did you ever see Brecht's version?
Horváth No.
Thomas Oh, I did. About fifteen years ago in Berlin. I remember it vividly. It was dreadful.
Horváth In what way?
Thomas Everything so relentlessly ugly. Costumes made out of old sacks. They kept complaining about the king's extravagance, and then on he'd come wearing something they'd just shaken the potatoes out of. Even the king's boyfriend was the most unattractive lump in the company. And quite deliberately so. I don't begin to understand that Brecht, do you? Of course, as you know, in my book *Buddenbrooks*, the dentist is called Herr Brecht, so I've never been able to take him quite seriously, his name doesn't have the right resonance. I feel much more comfortable with your work.
Horváth Well . . .
Thomas That first charming little book of yours, you know the one I mean, I thought it was remarkable. No-one else has been able to write like that about life inside the Third Reich. How did you manage to find out all those things?
Horváth I . . . I've kept up my contacts with people inside Germany.
Thomas Well, so have we all. But I couldn't write about what it is to live there. You're very bold.
Horváth Well, you know, I . . . at the beginning, I went back quite often.
Thomas Really?

Horváth Oh, yes, I even, I meant to tell you this, at the book-burning, the great book-burning in Berlin, I was there.

Thomas I don't see how you could possibly have been.

Horváth I saw them all filing past Goebbels in their academic robes, heaving books on to the bonfire, and that professor, what's his name, Bäumler, I saw him dance. I heard him shouting: "Burn, Thomas Mann, burn!", yelling like a bad actor.

Silence. Mann is shaken

Then Goebbels made a speech and said: "Tonight, the intellect awakes". I watched the whole thing.

Thomas Weren't they burning your books too?

Horváth No, no, I'm not well-known enough. The compensations of obscurity.

Thomas It's true. Fame carries very heavy obligations.

Horváth I'm sure.

Thomas I often wonder, you know, if we writers have done enough to prevent the world from rolling to the brink of war.

Horváth Oh, my family has a very poor record when it comes to preventing wars. My father, who was a diplomat, had a meeting with the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in the spring of nineteen fourteen. His highness said he was planning a tour of Bosnia. My father assured him this was an excellent idea and particularly recommended a visit to Sarajevo. So all this is really his fault.

Thomas Forgive me if I can't bring myself to smile. Ever since that monster destroyed Czechoslovakia ... my brother Heinrich and I are Czech citizens now, you know, the government granted us special passports. I blame perfidious Albion, of course. How can that cretinous weakling Chamberlain suppose that letting Hitler do as he pleases is less dangerous than negotiating with the Communists? If he'd stood firm, none of this would ever have happened, Hitler would have fallen ... and I would not have been placed in the intolerable position of having to advocate war. That's enough of that. Have you a new book ready for us?

Horváth Yes. It's called *Europe, Goodbye.*

Thomas Will you read some of it to me? Do you have it with you?

Horváth No. No, I don't.

Thomas Oh, what a disappointment.

Silence. Thomas Mann seems to be waiting for something

Horváth Perhaps ... would you read something of yours?

Thomas (*picking up a thick manuscript off the table*) Well, all right, if you insist, certainly. My voice is a little tired from lecturing, but ...

Horváth Well, then, please don't ...

Thomas No, no, if you insist. At the moment, I'm writing about Goethe. This was intended to be a *Novelle*, but these things have a habit of expanding out of my grasp. I don't have your enviable gift of brevity any more.

Horváth Some would say I'm short-winded.

Thomas Oh, come, come. Now, where are we? (*He shuffles through the manuscript*). Of course, at this critical point of history, it may seem criminally irresponsible to spend one's energies painting a portrait of some long-dead German writer, however great . . .

Pause. Thomas Mann waits

Horváth Oh, I don't see why.

Thomas But one must obey the dictates of one's instinct. It takes years for the secret significance of a work of art to reveal itself to the artist himself, let alone to his public.

Horváth Well, I must say your story *Death in Venice* has taken on a special meaning for me in recent years.

Thomas No doubt on the grounds of its convenient length.

Horváth No. No. Not on those grounds.

Thomas I started work, for instance, on my *Joseph* book in 'twenty-three. Who could have imagined then how relevant the theme of an intellectual in exile would become? The laws of art are truly unfathomable. We have no choice but to obey them, even if we can never understand them. (*He picks up the manuscript again and puts on his glasses*)

Horváth turns to address the audience

Horváth I agreed that the laws of art were whatever it was he'd said they were. He began to read.

Thomas reads out loud. After a moment, Horváth puts Money's "treatment" down on the coffee table, gets up and moves downstage. Thomas's voice fades and the Lights on the bungalow slowly fade to Black-out. A spot follows Horváth

He read from his imperishable masterpiece, *Lotte In Weimar*. But the sinuous elaboration of his syntax, the lulling sonorities of his laureate's voice were such that, regrettably, within a very few minutes, I was sound asleep.

Scene 4

Charles Money's office

Horváth I delivered my script and was asked to call back the following day. Only the kind collaboration of Christopher Marlowe had enabled me, in the time allotted, to complete a piece of work in a foreign language. I made the play as filmic as I could, but almost all the words were Marlowe's. I returned, quietly confident.

The Lights come up on Money sitting glowering behind his desk. Horváth approaches, smiling

Mr Money.

Money rises and picks up a heavy black folder, which he instantly hurls

across the room at Horváth. They look at each other for a moment. Horváth's expression is quizzical

Money (*suddenly shouting*) Whaddya think that is?

Silence. Horváth picks up the folder and studies it briefly

Horváth Well, heavens to Betsy, it's my script.
Money Script! You wouldn't get that on fuckn radio!

Silence. Money paces up and down. Horváth watches him with mild interest

How could you do this to me, Ed?
Horváth Do what?
Money I put my ass on the line for you. Have you any idea what kind of trouble I'm in now?
Horváth No.
Money Well, now, Ed, this is going to be a very short meeting. But you're new in town and I think I'd better straighten you out.
Horváth Am I bent?

A telephone rings before Money can answer. He picks up the receiver

Money (*shouting into the telephone*) No! Five minutes! (*He slams the receiver down and looks up at Horváth*) Listen, Ed, I know your English is bad, you can't help that, but this is a goddamn disaster area.
Horváth Well, I used the Marlowe . . .
Money I don't care if you used fuckn Webster's, Ed, English this ain't.
Horváth I see.
Money Another thing. You can't even type right. The whole script is laid out like some goddamn poem.
Horváth You want me, that I explain . . .
Money No, I don't want you, that you explain. All I'm saying is, you want Ty Power and Linda Darnell to read your script you do not bring them fuckn *Hiawatha*.
Horváth This I understand.

Money's tone changes abruptly to one of solicitude

Money I gave you a treatment, Ed, why didn't you work from the treatment?
Horváth Excuse me?
Money The treatment!
Horváth Oh. Yes, I threw this away. I thought it was unbelievable wulgar.
Money Vulgar! Wait a minute, Ed, I wrote that.

Horváth shrugs. Money's rage is mounting again

Vulgar! Listen, when I read your script, I pass over the fact it was in pidgin English, there was this stuff, I couldn't believe it, I had to go back and read it again, but there it was, I've never seen anything like it in the script of a major motion picture, in your story the King of England is a goddamn faggot!

Horváth A faggot?
Money A faggot, a fruit, a . . . homosexual!
Horváth Ah. But this is historic true.
Money Are you crazy? So what? Listen, for all I know Robin Hood liked to do it with sheep, you think anyone wants to see that? This is for family audiences, not for the back room of the cathouse. This is an adventure picture, not the goddamn ballet. You come to me with some piece of shit has the King of England climbing into bed with a boy and you tell me I'm vulgar? Jesus fucking Christ!
Horváth So I am how you say fired.
Money You bet your ass.
Horváth Then I say good-day.

Money calms down as Horváth starts to leave

Money Wait a minute.

Horváth waits

I don't know what you do in Europe, Ed, I don't know the kind of material Fox goes for over there. All I'm telling you is you can't pull this kind of stunt in this country. We're not ready for it.

A telephone rings. Money picks up the receiver angrily

Didn't you hear what I said? . . . Oh . . . oh, Jack . . . Yeah, listen, I have a little problem . . .

As he speaks, Horváth leaves the room. The Lights go down on Money, as Horváth approaches the audience

Horváth I couldn't find it in my heart to be too angry with Herr Money. Later on, of course, I realized what had really been happening: he was a writer-producer, and he'd subcontracted me, at a fraction of his own salary, to do a job he was supposed to be doing himself. Anyway, at least he paid me, despite his horror at European morals, which is more than I can say for some later employers, however amiable their manner. So. First blood to Hollywood.

Scene 5

The Warner Brothers' commissary

Horváth I had earned a reasonable amount of money in my youth, but all of it had disappeared on train fares and hotel rooms, in bars and taxi cabs and coffee houses. Now I discovered that in contrast to many parts of Europe, this was a country in which it was difficult to be poor with dignity. However, the inconveniences I suffered were as nothing compared to those of my friends who were still in Europe. The governments of Britain and France, entirely ignoring the misgivings of *Variety*, had declared war on Germany. Individuals in America were making heroic

efforts to help those trapped in Occupied Europe, but at the same time chance was sharpening the knives on its chariot-wheels. The man the State Department put in charge of the refugee problem was a former Ambassador to Rome who had been enormously impressed by the punctuality of Mussolini's trains, and who thought anyone who mismanaged their life to the extent of becoming a refugee was deeply suspicious, probably undesirable and, as often as not, a Jew. I, on the other hand, was a beneficiary of all this frenzied activity. An organization was formed, called the European Film Fund, to provide work in Hollywood for needy émigré writers. And so it was that I found myself an employee of: (*he indicates the projection screen*)

Projection: The Warner Brothers' logo; music: signature tune from Looney Tunes

Truth to tell, when it came to devising something for all their new writers to do, the Brothers found themselves somewhat at a loss. So the corridors of the writers' building were jammed with bewildered Germans asking each other how they ought to be treating their secretaries.

The Lights come up on a corner of the Warner Brothers' commissary. Also, way upstage and not in light, is the indistinct figure of an old man, Heinrich Mann, slightly hunched, waiting, as if lost or abandoned, not moving. In the commissary, sitting alone at a corner table, reading, drinking black coffee, is a slight, dark woman in her late twenties, Helen Schwartz

One day, in the rest room, I was amazed to find standing next to me, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann's elder brother. As he had always been something of a hero of mine, I invited him to join me in the commissary for a coffee.

Horváth moves upstage to collect Heinrich Mann. He is sixty-nine, a dignified figure, somewhat heavier in build than his brother, but with the same neat moustache and round glasses. His clothes are old but good, incongruously formal for the setting, a handkerchief carefully arranged in his breast pocket. He moves with Horváth, into the commissary. Helen looks up when they arrive, then back at her book. Heinrich installs himself at a table

Horváth goes off, returning immediately with coffee on a tray, and still holding the manuscript

As he's unloading the tray, he's staring at Helen. She looks up and sees him. Instead of turning away, he smiles at her. She nods, in brusque acknowledgement, frowning slightly. Horváth sits down next to Heinrich, who's just taking a sip of coffee

Heinrich Not coffee as we think of it, of course, but then in France, these last few months, it wasn't to be found anywhere.
Horváth Hard to imagine France without coffee.
Heinrich I would have been happy to spend the rest of my life in France.

Silence

Tell me, what is it they expect us to do here?

Horváth Keep out of their way, I think, I don't know.

Heinrich But we're supposed to be writing scenarios, is that right?

Horváth Theoretically.

Heinrich What are scenarios?

Horváth Oh, stories you think might work well as films.

Heinrich People keep asking me to go to, what are they called, the film-shows here?

Horváth Screenings.

Heinrich Screenings, yes, and I sit and watch them, but I never know why they ask me.

Horváth They want to know what you think of them.

Heinrich Oh, I always say the same thing. Very good.

Horváth Even if they're terrible?

Heinrich Yes. Unless they're completely terrible.

Horváth Then what do you say?

Heinrich I say very interesting.

Horváth I don't think you need my advice.

Heinrich They always introduce me as the man who wrote *The Blue Angel.*

Horváth Ah, yes.

Heinrich At first, I used to say, I didn't write it, I wrote a novel thirty-five years ago, on which the film is very loosely based. They changed the ending, I would say. Then I understood they didn't want to hear that. So now I say, did you like it oh I'm so glad thank you very much.

Horváth I'm sure you're right.

Heinrich Yes. My entire American reputation stands on the legs of Marlene Dietrich.

Horváth Surely not.

Heinrich When I arrived in New York last month with my nephew Golo, the *New York Times* welcomed the arrival of the famous German author, Golo Mann. Then they said he was accompanied by his Uncle Heinrich.

Horváth I can't believe it.

Heinrich I wouldn't mind so much, except Golo's never written a book in his life.

Silence

Horváth If I were you, I wouldn't take any notice of all this, I'd just sit in my office and get on with my novel. You are writing a novel?

Heinrich Yes. I am. Is that what you do?

Horváth That's what I do.

Heinrich nods, digesting this advice. Horváth looks across at Helen. Silence

How did you get out of France?

Heinrich With extreme difficulty I think is the answer to that.

Pause

I had the papers for America and the Spanish visa and the Portuguese visa, but I couldn't get the French to give me an exit visa. Finally, there

was this wonderful young American who said if I didn't go now, I'd be arrested and sent back to Germany. He took us to the Spanish border and we climbed out of France, over the Pyrenees.

Horváth How did you manage?

Heinrich I'll never know. I didn't mind the walking, but I kept falling over. If it hadn't been for Nelly, my wife, I'd still be there ...

Pause. He looks at Horváth

You must meet Nelly, she doesn't get a chance to see many people her own age, all my friends are so ancient now.

Horváth I'd like to.

Heinrich I don't know how, but she managed to get us tickets on a Greek ship, she fought for them like a wild thing, the last Greek ship out of Europe before Mussolini invaded Greece.

Pause

Lisbon harbour, you know. I'm a continental European. I've never even been across the Channel. And the harbour. I can't tell you how beautiful it is. Like some long-lost love. To watch it vanish. Hard to bear.

Silence. His eyes are misty

My daughter's still there. With her mother, my first wife. I tried everything I knew, but I couldn't get them out of Prague.

Silence. Horváth struggles for a change of subject and finally hits on it

Horváth How is your brother?

Heinrich Tommy? He's bought some land out at Pacific Palisades. He's having a house built there.

Horváth He's all right, then?

Heinrich Well, his daughter's family was torpedoed a few weeks ago. She and the baby were rescued, thank God, but Tommy's son-in-law was drowned.

Silence. Helen gets up to leave. Despite the gravity of his expression, Horváth is unable to prevent himself from watching her as she goes

She catches his eye on the way out

How much are they paying you?

Horváth Hundred and twenty-five bucks a week.

Heinrich Me too. Yes. Me too.

Silence

I know what you're thinking, my boy. How is it we've managed to be so lucky?

Horváth rises to his feet, leaves his manuscript (from the previous scene) on the table, and moves downstage. Behind him, the Lights fade on Heinrich Mann

Horváth That wasn't at all what I was thinking. I was thinking that after the First World War, Heinrich was the most famous writer in Germany, when Thomas Mann was just a name. I remembered the rumours about their not being on speaking terms all through the twenties, and how in nineteen twenty-nine many of us believed the Nobel Prize had gone to the wrong brother. I was trying to control the sadness and anger I felt at rediscovering my old hero in some Burbank toilet.

Scene 6

Salka Viertel's front room

Horváth By now, we émigrés had a favourite meeting place: a little house in Mabery Road, Santa Monica, which belonged to Garbo's writer, Salka Viertel.

The Lights come up slowly on the long table in the front room of the house; the table is set for dinner and lavishly decorated with flowers and candles. It runs diagonally across the stage and upstage of it is an opening which leads to the kitchen. Milling around, standing close to each other to suggest a confined space, are a number of guests, mostly of a certain age, formally dressed for the occasion; these include Salka Viertel herself, Thomas Mann, and his wife Katja, Lion Feuchtwanger, Walter the butler, and as many others as is feasible. Conspicuous among them, and somehow immediately obviously different from them, is a dazzling blonde woman: Nelly Mann. She's forty-three, and she's wearing a red silk blouse, stretching tight across her capacious bosom, and holding a glass of red wine, to which she has frequent recourse

We met here to celebrate Heinrich Mann's seventieth birthday; not actually on his birthday, because on that date Thomas Mann was receiving one of his honorary doctorates, this time at Berkeley. All the same, it was a notable occasion and one I would always remember, if only because it was there I first made the acquaintance of the famous Nelly.

By now, Nelly is at his elbow. She's somehow acquired a second glass of red wine which she holds out to him

Nelly Want some?
Horváth (*taking the glass*) Thank you.
Nelly It's the real French stuff, I think, God knows where she got hold of it.
Horváth Prost.

He takes a sip. Nelly takes a swig

Nelly Of course, I don't mind the Californian, what do you think?
Horváth I quite like it.
Nelly Yes, it's rough and strong, and what more do you need, I always say.

She laughs. Horváth smiles at her

All this lot are so bloody snobbish about it. What do you do?

Horváth I'm a writer.

Nelly You're not.

Horváth Yes. Ödön Horváth.

Nelly Bloody Hungarian, by the sound of it.

Horváth Well, you know, the usual Austro-Hungarian mixture.

Nelly I am disappointed. When I saw you over here, I said to myself, well at least I bet he's not a writer.

Horváth I'm sorry.

Nelly You don't look like a writer.

Horváth It's good of you to say so.

Nelly If anyone'd told me, when I was a young slip working the Kurfürstendamm, I'd finish up other end of the bloody world in bloody California with a lot of bloody writers, I'd have blacked his eye for him.

She turns, gesturing lavishly at the table. The others, meanwhile, are taking their places at the discreet urging of Salka and Walter

Heini doesn't want all this, you know. He's been dreading it for weeks. Who wants a lot of people telling you you're seventy? He knows he's seventy, poor old bugger. Bad enough turning forty, wouldn't you say?

Horváth Ah, there you have me.

Nelly Get off!

Horváth No, I promise you, it's a good few months yet.

Nelly snorts sceptically. Walter arrives alongside her, murmuring, sotto voce and gesturing at the table

Nelly All right. More wine, is there?

She sets off towards the table. Walter hurries to get a bottle of wine, then intercepts her and pours her another glass. Horváth stays where he is for a moment, watching her. The others are already placed around the table: in the centre, facing the audience, is Salka Viertel, Heinrich on her right and Thomas on her left. Nelly is opposite her, next to Lion Feuchtwanger and Marta Feuchtwanger is next to Heinrich

Horváth (*moving to the table*) I thought she was wonderful. (*He sits and turns to the audience*) After the soup and before the special roast beef she'd been saving, dear Salka Viertel, our hostess, rose to her feet. This proved to be a fatal error.

Salka is on her feet, tapping her glass to attract attention

Salka I just wanted to say what an honour it is for us to be holding this little celebration in our house and to propose a first toast to a great writer: to our beloved Heinrich Mann.

Everybody rises, except Heinrich. Into the ensuing minute pause comes Nelly's voice, clear as a bell

Nelly I need some more.

Silence. Feuchtwanger fills Nelly's glass. Then everyone raises his glass to toast Heinrich. Everyone sits. Salka turns and gestures to Walter. Walter turns and gestures to the kitchen

Then, proudly, Toni Spuhler, the cook, emerges from the kitchen, bearing the roast

However, as she does so, Thomas, his back to the kitchen, rises deliberately, fumbling for his glasses, which he then cautiously adjusts on his nose. Salka gestures to Walter. Walter in turn gestures to Toni who stops, transfixed. Thomas produces a substantial manuscript from the inside pocket of his dinner-jacket. Walter gestures again, more urgently

Toni turns and retreats into the kitchen

Thomas clears his throat

Thomas This festive gathering then has finally taken place; and its cause—so moving and worthy a cause!—lies so far in the past, it is almost necessary to remind ourselves of it. The cause, my dear brother, is your seventieth birthday, which took place on March the twenty-seventh, and which we were unable to celebrate earlier. I was at fault for this, or rather my commitments were at fault . . .

Horváth turns, as Thomas continues to deliver his speech

Horváth And on he went, as the beef sizzled and browned, to speak of Goethe and Nietzsche, of liberty and pragmatism and evil, till buttocks stiffened and eyelids drooped . . .

The guests suddenly slump. Horváth turns back and Thomas's voice surges back

Thomas If genius, dear Heinrich, is foresight, the ability to anticipate, the passionate portrayal of things to come, then your work bears the stamp of genius. And if you have, as I'm sure you do, the organic stamina, your old eyes will see what you predicted in your youth: the fall of a tyrant.

He whips off his glasses: applause. He nods minimally in modest response; then sits. Salka gestures to Walter. Walter gestures to the kitchen. A few seconds pass and then:

Toni with the roast beef

But, as she crosses the threshold, Heinrich rises to his feet. Toni freezes. Heinrich searches his pockets, momentarily at a loss. Desperate pantomime between Salka, Walter and Toni

Finally, Toni, pale with rage, returns to the kitchen with the beef

Heinrich, meanwhile, has located his speech

Heinrich Thank you. (*Reading*) "Well, my dear brother, as you, in the course of your too kind address, so perceptively remarked ..."

Horváth turns to the audience, grinning and Heinrich's voice disappears

Horváth Afterwards, somebody explained to me they'd been doing this kind of thing ever since they were fifty. And so, at even greater length, as the beef shrivelled and blackened, Heinrich delivered his measured response.

The guests revert to slumped positions. Horváth turns back. Heinrich gives a little formal bow

Heinrich ... then, as indeed it is now. Thank you again. Nelly and I are profoundly grateful.

He sits, amid warm applause. Salka gestures to Walter. Walter signals to the kitchen

Presently, grim-faced, Toni emerges from the kitchen with the beef

She's hardly into the room, when Marta Feuchtwanger rises to her feet

Toni stops, staring in disbelief. Then she thrusts the beef into Walter's hands and, bursting into tears, rushes back into the kitchen. After a moment, Walter exits with the beef

Meanwhile, Marta, unaware of all this, has launched into her speech

Marta I should like to propose a toast to Nelly Mann, without whom I cannot think that this celebration would be taking place. Her cheerfulness and encouragement during that terrible journey over the Pyrenees will never be forgotten by any of us. So I would like to ask you ... (*She breaks off*)

Nelly has risen to her feet and now turns to face the audience, her back to the table. One hand is clenched across her breast, the other is covering her face. Her shoulders are shaking. Marta hurries round to her side and reaches up to pat her on the arm

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

Nelly Upset me? (*She breaks off, helpless with laughter. For a moment, she can't speak for laughing. She drops her hands and her blouse comes open, revealing a beautiful embroidered lacy bra*) No, Christ, I been laughing so hard, I've burst me button.

Peals of more uncontrollable laugher. Slight consternation among the guests. Salka rises to her feet to try to calm the situation

Black-out

Scene 7

Helen Schwartz's apartment

A spot comes up on Horváth

Horváth Well, I continued to work for the Warner Brothers, hoping that none of them would notice me, and sure enough, none of them did. And in the meantime, I found a new way, which was actually an old way, to improve my English.

Black-out. Pause

The Lights come up on Helen's apartment. Helen and Horváth lie entwined on the sofa. Silence

Helen Lot of American men don't like a girl to earn eight times their salary.
Horváth This is crazy. A girlfriend who takes me out to dinner and drives me to work, you want that I complain?
Helen European men must be different.
Horváth No. I think this er ... Einstellung ...
Helen Attitude?
Horváth Attitude, ja, is also common in Europe.
Helen Then it must be just you that's different.
Horváth I'm afraid yes.
Helen Actually, this is all highly irregular. As a rule, the two-thousand-dollar-a-week writers don't talk to the thousand-dollar-a-week writers, and the thousand-dollar-a-week writers stick pretty closely together.
Horváth So you are different also.
Helen It's just I'm a nice Jewish girl, I like to have someone to look after.
Horváth Yes, I have been once married to a Jewish girl.
Helen (*reacting*) Married?
Horváth Ja.
Helen You didn't tell me that.
Horváth Oh, it was just for the passport.
Helen What do you mean?
Horváth I married Maria to give her the Hungarian passport.
Helen Oh, I see. And what happened?
Horváth She used it and left. Gone with the wind.
Helen You been married many other times?
Horváth Oh, I think once is enough for anyone, don't you?
Helen I wouldn't know.
Horváth You know in the Fu Manchu movies, when he says, I can promise you a beautifully painful and slow, slow death? For me this is called marriage.
Helen I see.

She disengages from him gently, gets up and crosses the room to light a cigarette. Horváth sits up

Horváth Anyway, women have always been very kind to me.
Helen I don't know why that should be.
Horváth Me neither.

She smiles at him. Silence

What is it with these Warner Brothers? I write all these goddamn scenarios, no-one ever says a word to me.
Helen You want me to explain that?
Horváth Sure.
Helen It's what I was saying before.
Horváth What?
Helen First, they really don't like to read. So if they have to read, they're going to read what cost them money. Listen, their thirty-five-hundred-dollar-a-week writers earn more while they're taking a piss than you do all week. So whose scenarios do you think they're going to look at?
Horváth Yes, but I also am costing them money.
Helen That's peanuts, Ed. That's charity. You give a blind musician a dime, you don't expect the *Goldberg Variations*.
Horváth OK, but it's costing me time. Ten to five every day and the goddamn bus rides, when do I have time to write? My writing?
Helen You have a lot of time. You know why? Because no-one reads your scenarios. And actually it suits you that way, if the truth be known.
Horváth I suppose.
Helen So why are you complaining?
Horváth I like to be appreciated.
Helen You want them to pay you and appreciate you and shut up, right?
Horváth I think this is fair, yes. Like any artist.

They smile; then Helen looks away

I'm sorry. I know for you this is serious business.
Helen Yes, it is.

Pause

My folks took me to see *The Jazz Singer* in New York when I was fourteen. I thought it was terrible: God, so sentimental. But I was ... excited by it, you know? In those days I already knew I wanted to write, but I didn't know what.
Horváth And this decided you for the movies?
Helen No. It just started me thinking. A whole new medium. Infinite possibilities. Probably the first art form since Elizabethan theatre to appeal to every age group and every class. And you can take it out to audiences anywhere in the world. Now I can't imagine writing for anything but the cinema.
Horváth I understand you theoretic.
Helen I know it hasn't happened yet, I know the business is run by greedy opportunists and yes-men and chisellers, but they can't hold out forever. Just look at the progress that's been made in what, not even fifteen years.

Horváth Yes, but it's too powerful for them ever to listen to ze writers ...
Helen *The, th.*
Horváth Ach, zis goddamn sound. I know what is his answer, St Peter, when I come and say, OK, open ze gates: no, no, *the, the.*

She laughs, comes over and sits beside him again and takes his hand

Helen I liked your novels so much. I wish I could read your plays. Aren't any of them translated into English?
Horváth No, I'm sorry, I am not enough famous.
Helen What are they like, are they political, or what?
Horváth No, I think you wouldn't call them political, they don't deal about special ... Themen ...
Helen Issues?
Horváth No, and not from Marxist ideas, like Brecht.
Helen Who?
Horváth Bertolt Brecht, he's a writer, bit older than me. I just write about ordinary people, how bizarre they are. I write about life, as it regrettable is. I write about the poor, the ignorant, victims of society, women especially. The Left attack always: they say easy pessimism. But they love the people without knowing any people. I know the people, how terrible they are, and still I like them. Also, it turns out, my plays were not enough pessimistic.
Helen And what about the Right?
Horváth Oh, already, before ten years ...
Helen Ten years ago.
Horváth Ja, I was in court for fighting in a bar with Nazis. And when my play *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald*, er, *Tales from Vienna Wood* was in Berlin premièred, the Nazi critic said, not even an audience of niggers would watch the play without they would protest. I stand by my review.
Helen Well, I wish I could read German. My father has family in Germany.
Horváth Oh? Where?
Helen Düsseldorf, I think. They're, you know, cousins. I never met them.
Horváth And are they still in Germany?
Helen Far as I know.

Deathly silence. Horváth shakes his head dubiously, then looks up and across at Helen, deciding to break the mood

Horváth You know something, you're the best-looking playwright I ever met.
Helen That's the kind of remark I usually take exception to.
Horváth Take exception, sorry?
Helen Don't like.
Horváth Oh. All the same, it's true.

Helen smiles at him

Helen You want to go out this evening?
Horváth No.

Helen What do you want to do this evening?

Horváth looks at her. Silence

Oh, so that's what you want to do this evening?

Horváth I think my English is getting better.

Helen gets up and moves away, looking back over her shoulder and smiling seductively. She leaves the room

Horváth, a slow smile spreading in anticipation, rises from the sofa and is about to follow her off, when all of a sudden the House Lights snap on, startling him considerably. He moves downstage, peering into the auditorium

Scene 8

Advancing through the auditorium at a leisurely pace, inspecting the audience suspiciously, chewing a cheap cigar, is a slight, bespectacled man of forty-three, close-cropped, scruffy and unshaven, a scar on his left cheek, wearing a flat cap and a jacket with overlong sleeves and no lapels over an open-necked grey flannel shirt: Bertolt Brecht

Horváth Brecht always liked people to be aware that they were in a theatre. I said to him more than once, but Brecht, what makes you think they think they're anywhere else? But he had a way of not answering questions he didn't approve of.

By this time, Brecht has reached the stage, and the House Lights are off

Didn't you?

Brecht doesn't answer. Instead, as Horváth continues to speak, he approaches the set and inspects it, reaching up and rattling one of the flats, shaking his head in dismay

We'd met, of course, in Munich in the early twenties, but I never really got to know him, he always seemed wary of me; and I knew that although his teeth, unlike the shark's, were far from pearly-white, they were sharp enough to make it advisable to keep out of range of his jaws.

Brecht has found an apple in a fruit bowl on the set. He rubs it perfunctorily on his trousers and sinks his teeth into it. He takes his cap off and fans himself

He came direct from Vladivostok, ten days before the Nazis invaded Russia, just as the State Department was about to devise a really efficient way of keeping refugees out: they decided that no-one who had surviving close relatives in Germany should be admitted, on the grounds that they might be susceptible to pressure and let themselves be blackmailed into becoming Nazi spies. Consequently, he was one of the last émigrés to arrive.

Brecht Exiles.

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