

Alma has been left by Oskar Kokoschka. Alma's friend, Lili Lieser, enters.

ALMA Oh God! Oh God! I'm free!!! I'm finally free!

LILI Congratulations! You handled it like a queen! Like a goddess!

ALMA Lili, my dear! Have you been eavesdropping again? I didn't think I'd manage to shake him off. I hope I won't ever see him again. *(She starts to pack for her journey)* Now I have to get the abortion as soon I can, and then go to Berlin to hunt down Gropius. I've got to see him. I miss him so much! He'll marry me. No doubt about it.

LILI But didn't you split up with him?

ALMA Walter has to sacrifice himself at my altar so that his magnificent Aryan blood will merge with mine. to create a demigod.

LILI But I thought you didn't love him any more--

ALMA I don't know-- but when I was with Oskar I suddenly missed him. God knows why... *(She bursts into tears:)* Oskar is lost to me! I can't find him inside me any more. He has become a stranger He isolated me from the world so completely that I began to sense how little one is really needed in it. I know he'll go further, and probably be better off, without me. We almost killed each other with our love! We rubbed up against each other, and now he can live in peace and quiet. No-one to get on his nerves any more. No-one. I want to forget him. You have to help me to do that. You have to! !

LILI What have you done to him?

ALMA It's for his own sake--

LILI You've mutilated an artist-- you'll never forgive yourself--

ALMA If his real voice had called him to stay with me, and to paint a masterpiece, he wouldn't have given in...!

LILI You abandoned yours when you were pressured! *(she takes Mahler's bust)* You surrendered...!

ALMA It only proves I wasn't destined to be an artist—

LILI You loved him.

ALMA I loved him like crazy. He and I were compatible to the last fibre of our beings. He had everything a person needs to be great. I loved him for that, and I loved the ill-bred, stubborn child in him. That big kid. He robbed me of all my reason. He's the only one I ever let do that to me. I wish I'd never met him.

Alma leaves the room; Lili follows her.

LILI There's nothing as delicate and fragile as the soul of an artist at the fugitive moment it conceives a new idea-- that moment requires perfect faith-- divine grace-- endless love-- not reservations-- disbelief and criticism of the new-born impulse

ALMA Now you say it-- It's too late my dear—

LILI You know how easy it is to strangle that fledgling before it grows feathers and spreads its wings—

ALMA Too late!!

LILI But you were born to become an artist yourself! You have to compose music -- remember how Gustav used to work-- if you don't let go of men you're lost. Stop running from one man to the next !

ALMA Walter Gropius is not just anybody! He's a genius! He is going to be the prophet of modern architecture. And he will marry me! He will have to marry me! There's no alternative!

LILI Listen Alma-- you don't know what you're doing with your life—you're still young -- you can still begin a new existence--

ALMA There's not going to be any new beginning-- I'm not going to be a composer any more-- I can't help it-- the muses don't like me. But men do. And precisely the ones the muses love. These men adore me! They pray at my altar! That's why the muses are jealous of me. Let them drop dead with envy-- like their lovers die of love for me. That's the truth. -- I don't know why, but that's how it is. Gustav was never as absorbed in his work as he was in his love for me, believe it or not! Whatever he did, he did for me, to reach me, to touch me, to worship me...! In his last Symphony, he even wrote it down! *(takes a score:)* Here, have a look: »Almschi! Almschi! To live for you, for you to die« There it is, in black and white! And that's what he died for!

MUSIC: Adagio from Mahler's 10th Symphony.

HOLLNSTEINER (Obituary to Mahler)

Kokoschka is carried in on a stretcher. He is wounded.

ALMA It's not my fault if I spark fires of passion, it's not my fault! Men swarm around me like moths to a flame, like flies to a honey pot...! I was made that way! That's why I was born into this world!

LILI Flies swarm to shit in the street too ...

ALMA You're just jealous.

LILI Go on devouring life like a pig-- stuff yourself with food, drinks and cum--

ALMA I am what I am! I was made to devour life, not to describe it...!

LILI But you have to make a choice: men -- or music. You have to choose one of them.

ALMA When I start a new love there's more life in me than in any music--

LILI But what are you left with when you finish a love affair...?

ALMA There's always a new love to start up.

LILI And you think Walter is that new love? What's so new about him ?

ALMA Walter is not just anybody. He is going to be the prophet of modern architecture. I know it!

LILI You can deceive me, Alma. And you can deceive the world -- but you can't deceive yourself.

ALMA I'm going to get that Gropius, or I'll eat my hat!

LILI I'll probably do the same - one day.

ALMA Does it have to be your hat? There *are* alternatives.

LILI For example?

ALMA The sperm of a genius!

LILI What?

ALMA Nothing tastes better than the sperm of a genius. Didn't you know that?

LILI You should know.

ALMA You think so?

LILI You are disgraceful. You have such awful comic timing.

ALMA Well. Shut up then.

LILI You're right. I have to shut up. When I start talking, I don't know what I'm saying. I'm a bag full of holes. I play the clown only to hide my real feelings.

ALMA You're just trying to hide the truth from yourself.

LILI That I love you? Maybe. But don't worry. I've not really fallen in love with you. I'm only playing games. I've never been in love. Never. You'd better believe that. But it's so goddamn easy to pretend you are. In love with people, with convictions, with beliefs. But inside it's all hollow.

ALMA But you've got me! I'm your friend!

LILI Why is it that we always spend our only existence with the wrong people? Always saying the wrong words, always doing the wrong things.

ALMA Why are you saying this to me?

LILI You know what I'm talking about. Don't you? We are birds of a feather, you and me. Don't try to deny it. And don't play games with me. It's so boring! You owe me nothing, and I don't owe you anything.

ALMA You've always been very generous. And I know why, too.

LILI Oh, that little sum of money? That's insignificant. It was my pleasure.

ALMA Are you sure?

LILI Yes. I was even silly enough to spend my own good money to help finance the printing of Alban Berg's "Wozzek".

ALMA I *knew* you were behind it.

LILI Yes! I had to do it! If it weren't for my money, he would not have been able to dedicate his opera to you.

ALMA Really? But don't get your hopes up. . I won't show any appreciation.

LILI Alma, relax! I know there's no chance of a relationship between the two of us. So we can tell each other the truth . It's such a luxury! Wow! Otherwise neither of us would dare.

ALMA I can do without it.

LILI You do believe in love, don't you? You believe the love of others will save you. But it can't. All it can do is help you fall asleep. And there is always the morning after. But mornings are not the time for love. Mornings are the time for waking up. And when the morning is without love, the end of the day is without hope. Didn't you know that?

ALMA I had a voice-- a gentle-- tender voice-- that used to sing in my soul-- it sang about people I loved-- new-born feelings -- the grief of parting -- I had a voice that mourned beloved friends who had died-- there are not many other things worth talking about-- I had a voice that knew how to sing about things like that those —and it was my responsibility to safeguard my voice-- not to let strange hands touch it-- but I didn't protect my voice-- a man came who said that because he loved me- I would have to silence my voice-- listen only to his -- because it was stronger-- and that he would speak for me-- and I-- instead of telling that man-- get out of my way-- I don't want to hear your voice-- I said I agree—and to this day my voice is stifled inside me-- broken- torn-- shattered — like a mirror that doesn't reflect who I am anymore. !

LILI Unless you open your mouth one day— and try it. Try it...! But don't let it shock you. . Because a cry of despair will come out-- the likes of which the world has never heard-- the scream of a woman-- of millions of women-- whose voices have been strangled by weak and frightened men--

ALMA You make me sick...!

LILI You *are* sick! How can a person be so blind, so deaf, so vain? Go on, go to Berlin. Slaughter your noble wild beast, your prophetic architect. But at least let me watch. May I?

ALMA What do you mean?

LILI Can I come with you to Berlin? I'll cover all expenses. I'm willing to pay to see you suffer. It will be my pleasure!

Alma puts the courtesan's costume on Lili.

ALMA Hmm, nice. If you really want to know what life is like at the front line of the battle of the sexes, come with me.

LILI Oh, darling!! (*embraces and kisses her*) Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

ALMA You'll be surprised...!

Alma and Lili leave as Venetian courtesans to Oskar's Masked Ball.