

The Lulu Plays
and Other Sex Tragedies



Caricature by Bruno Pau

The Lulu Plays
and Other Sex Tragedies

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Translated by Stephen Spender



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EARTH-SPIRIT
A Tragedy in Four Acts

I was created out of coarser stuff
By nature, and desire draws me earthwards.
For to the spirit of evil, not of good,
The earth belongs. What the immortals send
Us from above are but the common goods;
Their light gives joy, but it makes no one rich,
And in their realm are no possessions gained.
For precious stones and gold treasured by all
From the deceitful powers must be wrested
Who evil-natured dwell deep underground.
Not without sacrifice their favour is won
And there is no one who from serving them
Has extricated undefiled his soul.

(From Wallenstein's Death by Schiller)

CHARACTERS

DR. GOLL

DR. SCHÖN Editor-in-chief

ALWA his son

SCHWARZ an artist

PRINCE ESCERNY an African explorer

SCHIGOLCH

RODRIGO an acrobat

HUGENBERG a schoolboy

ESCHERICH a reporter

LULU

COUNTESS GESCHWITZ an artist

FERDINAND a coachman

HENRIETTE a chamber-maid

A FOOTMAN

The part of Hugenberg should be played by a girl

PROLOGUE

(The curtain rises to disclose the entrance to a tent from which emerges to the sound of cymbals and the beating of drums an animal tamer dressed in a vermillion red frock-coat, white tie, he has long black curly hair, white breeches and top-boots; in his left hand he carries a riding whip, in his right a loaded revolver)

ANIMAL TAMER

Proud gentlemen and ladies who are gay
 Step right inside to look around the zoo
 With burning pleasure, icy shudders too,
 Here where the soulless brute creations play.
 The show is just beginning, come and see
 How to each pair a child's admitted – free.

Here beast and man fight in the narrow cage,
 Where the one sways his whip disdainfully,
 The other with a roar of thunderous rage
 Jumps up against the man's neck murderously;
 First cleverness and later strength proves more
 First man then beast lies stretched out on the floor.
 The beast rears up, and on all fours the man,
 A single, ice-cold domineering look,
 The beast, abased, bends low the stricken neck,
 Tamely beneath the heel now placed thereon.

The times are bad. Ladies and gentlemen
 Who once would crowd before my cage's show,
 They honour farces, dramas, operas, Ibsen,
 With their most estimable presence now –
 And all my pensioners are short of fodder
 So at the moment they devour each other.
 How well off is an actor in the theatre,
 He can be sure the flesh covers the bone
 However hunger makes his colleague moan,

And be his belly never emptier.
 But if you seek for greatness in the arts
 Don't think that work and wage have equal parts.

What do these plays of joys and griefs reveal?
 Domestic beasts, well-bred in what they feel,
 Who vent their rage on vegetarian fare
 And then indulge in a complacent tear,
 Just like those others – down in the parterre.
 This hero cannot hold his liquor in,
 This one's uncertain if his love is genuine.
 You hear the third despair of this earth-ball
 (For five long acts he groans about it all),
 None gives the coup de grace to do him in.
 The wild and lovely animal, the true,
 Ladies and gentlemen, only I can show you.
 You see the tiger, whose habit it is
 To strike down all that comes across his path,
 You see the bear begin with gluttonies,
 After night's meal fall down dead to earth.
 You see the little entertaining monkey
 Fritter away his strength through sheer ennui.
 Talent he has, but lacks all sense of greatness,
 And so coquets with his own nakedness.
 In my own tent, you see – upon my soul –
 Just behind the curtain, there stands a camel.
 The beasts are meekly fawning round my feet,
 When (He fires into the audience) my revolver thunderously I pull
 The creatures tremble round me. I stay cool –
 The man stays cool! – respectfully to greet you.
 Wake up? You hang back? No one budges?
 Well then, you yourselves can be the judges.
 Reptiles you may behold, of all devices,
 Also chameleon, snake and crocodile
 Dragon and salamander in crevices.
 Of course I know you sit back there and smile
 And don't believe a single word I say.

(He raises the curtain in front of the door and calls into the tent)

Hey, August, bring our snake this way!

(A navvy with a big stomach carries the actress taking the part of LULU
 out of the tent and sets her down in front of the ANIMAL TAMER)

She was created for every abuse,
 To allure and to poison and seduce,
 To murder without leaving any trace.

(Tickling LULU under the chin)

Sweet creature, now keep in your proper place,
 Not foolish nor affected nor eccentric,
 Even when you fail to please the critic.
 You have no right with miaows and spits inhuman
 To distort for us the primal form of woman,
 With clowning and with pulling stupid faces
 To ape for us the childlike simple vices.
 You should – I discuss this today lengthily –
 Speak naturally and not unnaturally.
 For since the earliest time the basic element
 Of every art is that it be self-evident.

(To the audience)

There's nothing now especial to be seen
 But wait and see what happens later on.
 She coils herself with strong squeeze round the tiger,
 He howls and groans. Who finally wins the wager?
 Hopla! August! Carry her to her place.

(The NAVVY takes her across his arms; the ANIMAL TAMER strokes her hips)

Sweet innocence. My treasure all of grace!

(The NAVVY carries her back into the tent)

But now the best of all is still before us.
 My head placed in a beast of prey's jaws.
 Walk up! It is a sight one often sees
 And yet it's one which never fails to please.
 I'll tear his jaws apart . I'm not afraid.
 And he'll not dare to close them on my head.
 So lovely, wild, and varied in his aspect
 And yet he holds my head in such respect.
 Trustfully I put my head under the teeth.
 One joke – and both my temples crack beneath.
 Yet I forgo to use my eyes' brightness.

Against my life I set a joke's lightness.
I throw away my whip and all these weapons
And appear harmless as God made me once.
Do you know the name of this wild beast? –
Honoured spectators, do step inside please!

(The ANIMAL TAMER steps back into the tent to the sound of
cymbals and the beating of drums)