# *The Poet and the Patient*

A Swedish midsummer play
or an eventual murder investigation
in five acts

by Christian Lanciai *(2003)*

*The play is an homage to Staffan Tjerneld and Göran Gentele.*

*The characters :*

Arnold
Gustav
Helena
Henning
Harry
Betty
Doctor Glassberg
a receptionist
a policeman

The action is in a villa by the sea,
in a rehabilitation home and at a police station,
somewhere in Sweden in the later half of the 20th century.

## *The Poet and the Patient*

Act I scene 1.

A roof terrace with a splendid view of the landscape with forests and lakes.
The patient sits alone in a recliner with a blanket over his legs as the visitor enters.

*Arnold* How kind of you to pay me a visit, Gustav.

*Gustav* It was about time. You have been here far too long.

*Arnold* I am not cured, Gustav.

*Gustav* What's the matter with you? Don't you want to be cured? Is self-torture what you want to devote yourself to for the rest of your life?

*Arnold* With pleasure, as long as I don't get over it.

*Gustav* You are tragic and pathetic, Arnold.

*Arnold* I know, but don't scold me for it. It was not my fault that I was born soft and over-sensitive.

*Gustav* You have to start working again. You can't just sit here languishing by burying yourself alive in your memories.

*Arnold* Why not? Could it be any better? Have you seen the view? Could there be anything more beautiful?

*Gustav* There are just trees everywhere. The forest always fills me with dismay.

*Arnold* Then you suppress beauty instead of enjoying it. You experience beauty only subconsciously and deny it to yourself. Then you are worse off than me.

*Gustav* I am a dutiful man of the town, Arnold, completely void of your inborn creativity. But just because you had it you must resume it and let it live.

*Arnold* It only caused me pains.

*Gustav* No, it can't have, since it only brought joy to others.

*Arnold* You are only trying to be kind.

*Gustav* We want you back, Arnold. We don't want to see you disappear in front of our eyes.

*Arnold* I would gladly disappear into my dreams.

*Gustav* They are only beguiling. They only lead you astray and never home.

*Arnold* The dreams brought me into music and made me live for it, the music you say that brought others such joy. Now all I have left is the dreams. Do you want to bereave me of them?

*Gustav* Have you left the music completely?

*Arnold* I haven't played or composed one note since I entered here.

*Gustav* You are well, Arnold. There is no reason for you sitting here to rot. The doctors think so too.

*Arnold* Which one of them? Doctor Glassberg?

*Gustav* He thinks you are getting lost in narcissism.

*Arnold* In that case I would at least have some sort of imagined happiness, but I am only grieving, Gustav. I have nothing to live for. I was at least happy still as an alcoholic.

*Gustav* You are only torturing yourself.
*Arnold* With every right!
*Gustav* How can you say so?
*Arnold (wants to explode but controls himself and says quietly:)* We were all responsible for his death, Gustav.
*Gustav (thinks before responding)* How do you know?
*Arnold* I don't know it. I just feel it.
*Gustav* I thought we were all agreed that it obviously was an accident.
*Arnold* It can't have been an accident.
*Gustav* What else could it have been?
*Arnold* Perhaps murder? We were all dead drunk that midsummer, Gustav. We were all mad at each other from time to time, and we all had reasons enough for killing Henning.
*Gustav* How can you say that?
*Arnold* Am I brutal? Perhaps it is to wake you up.
*Gustav* Do you know anything else that didn't come up with the inquest?
*Arnold* That's what I am uncertain of. I don't know if what I know is the truth or my imagination. We were all so drunk. Anyone could have been hallucinating that night – and maybe I most of all.
*Gustav* What is your point?
*Arnold* I want the matter cleared, Gustav. I want to get rid of it. I have brooded on it too long, and I can't get rid of it. I want to know what really happened.
*Gustav* So you wish to dig up the whole thing again?
*Arnold* Someone among us, Gustav, knew more about the matter than he dared to reveal.
*Gustav* Perhaps all of us.
*Arnold* Yes, perhaps all of us.
*Gustav* Is there anyone else coming here to visit you?
*Arnold* Helena is the most faithful.
*Gustav* Is she the one who keeps the trauma alive for you?
*Arnold* No, it's me myself. But she was alone with him that night out on the skerry.
*Gustav* She never told us what really happened.
*Arnold* She tried. But Henning was a poet. It wasn't always easy to understand him, and he often expressed himself ambiguously and vaguely.
*Gustav* What do you think? Do you have any theory?
*Arnold* Yes, I have a theory. It has become clearer every month I have been sitting here. Would you like to hear it?
*Gustav* I suppose that's why I am here – to listen to you and help you.
*Arnold* I don't think you can help me. But you can listen to me.
*Gustav* Tell me, Arnold, what you think.

*Arnold* It feels as if I was there myself out with them on the skerry. I would have followed them, but they did not wait for me. I saw them vanish in the boat from land and could do nothing…

Scene 2. Henning and Helena on the skerry. Night and moonlight.

*Helena* Why didn't you wait for him?
*Henning* He never came. He probably forgot all about us.
*Helena* You are so impatient and impulsive. You never wait for anyone.
*Henning* I know. It's my illness.
*Helena* What do you mean?
*Henning* I mean that I was born like that.
*Helena* Are you joking? Are you pulling my leg?
*Henning* Not at all. I am far too honest to do that.
*Helena* Do you mean that you are ill?
*Henning* Acording to ordinary measures.
*Helena* No one of us could ever understand you.
*Henning* No, I know. I suppose no one is supposed to.
*Helena* Aren't we allowed then if we want to?
*Henning* You are welcome to try.
*Helena* You are always so detached, as if you didn't want to have anything to do with us.
*Henning* Helena, my illness is my solitude. I was born alone. I can only manage and survive alone. Company makes me sick. I can't associate with others without feeling dragged down to their level. Company only teaches me disdain, but I don't want to despize anyone. I want to be able to love like everyone else. I want to see life and people as something positive, but when I get to know them it will not work.
*Helena* Then you are just unhappy like all lonely people.
*Henning* Perhaps, but that unhappiness is my safety.
*Helena* Why then don't you become an alcoholic like Arnold?
*Henning* It doesn't amuse me. I find no joy or relief in the illusion of intoxication. It only adds to my bitterness.
*Helena* Have you tried?
*Henning* Helena, we all love Arnold, he is a good and happy man, but he has his own destiny, which only he can follow. My destiny is different.
*Helena* What is your destiny?
*Henning* As if I knew. We probably never learn what it is until too late.
*Helena* Why did you want me to follow you here?
*Henning* I wanted someone to speak with.
*Helena* Can't you speak with Arnold? He is your best friend.
*Henning* Yes, he is my best and oldest friend, but he is no woman.
*Helena* So you needed a woman.

*Henning* Men are no company for a man. It's only the opposite kind that makes good company if any. A man stands on the same level, it's easy to reach consensus, but there is seldom any dialogue. Man needs an opposite part, and the opposite part of man is woman.

*Helena* So you still want company.

*Henning* Yes and no, Helena. I actually don't know. I wanted you with me because I wanted to find out if I could love you. Yes, I could love you, but that's not enough. I need something more.

*Helena* Like what?

*Henning* A good friend, who is not a man.

*Helena* Many think you and Arnold have been gay.

*Henning* I know. We never bothered. We are childhood friends, we always had each other and were closer than brothers, but still there are great differences.

*Helena* Have you ever quarrelled?

*Henning* No, never. And that's maybe what we missed in each other.

*Helena* So you want a woman to be able to argue with.

*Henning* Helena, I don't know how well you know me. I need constant change and relaxation. I can't stand routines. I must always have new challenges, new relationships, new worlds to discover, new experiments…

*Helena* With people?

*Henning* I always need them to try them and provoke them, since I always want to give them a second chance, but they never make the test…

*Helena* Are you aware that Harry hates you?

*Henning (gives a short dry laugh)* He is welcome to. I scorn him.

*Helena* That's why he hates you.

*Henning* Not because I went out with you?

*Helena* I was the one who wanted to follow you.

*Henning* Why?

*Helena* To push the limits. To try you and maybe get to know you.

*Henning* Do you want me?

*Helena* Yes, Henning, I would love to know you.

*Henning* Then you break your engagement with Harry.

*Helena* We will come to that later.

*Henning* You mean he could remain faithful to you even while you are deceiving him?

*Helena* I doubt it, but it's not impossible.

*Henning* If he doesn't break your engagement tomorrow after our night together he will deserve my sincere respect.

*Helena* There I noticed your scorn. It is fathomless.

*Henning* Yes, it is.

*Helena* Can't you stick to Arnold and leave me alone?

*Henning* Do you think we are having a relationship?

*Helena* Everybody knows you do.

*Henning* In that case I can't define that relationship.
*Helena* You behave like twins although you are totally different both in your ways and looks. Therefore everyone takes for granted that you are partners.
*Henning* We *are* partners. That does not mean we are having an affair.
*Helena* Don't you love each other?
*Henning* Now you try to drag me down, Helena, like everyone else. I loathe all carnal thinking and speculation.
*Helena* Then you can never love me.
*Henning* Perhaps not.
*Helena* Then you can never love anybody except yourself.
*Henning* Or I love too much, so that I can't love any special being for the sake of my universal love of humanity.
*Helena* You are flattering yourself. You are no Jesus.
*Henning* Thank heavens for that. No one was ever a subject to greater misunderstandings.
*Helena* Shall we just go on chatting all night here under the full moon alone out on a skerry?
*Henning* I find it rather entertaining. Don't you?
*Helena* All I can think of is how furious Harry will be tomorrow.
*Henning* We could go back immediately if you want to.
*Helena* We will anyway reach home long after midnight.
*Henning* Yes, I guess we have gone swimming too far from the shore to be able to turn back.
*Helena* Something like that. Wouldn't it be just as well to make the best of it?
*Henning* Isn't that what we are doing?
*Helena* Love me, Henning. I want you. Harry will end our engagement tomorrow anyway.
*Henning* Aren't you the one to end it?
*Helena* It doesn't matter. It will end anyway.
*Henning* You will never be able to trust me, Helena. I will never be a faithful lover.
*Helena* Why do we all love you in spite of your intolerable cruelty in all your relationships? Your ruthlessness must make you hated by everyone who comes near you, while at the same time we can never let you go. It's like the only possible relationship with you has to be sado-masochistic.
*Henning* Aren't all relationships sado-masochistic?
*Helena* Perhaps. Still we enjoy them.
*Henning* Until they hurt too much and we kill them.
*Helena* No one can hurt others like you, Henning.
*Henning* I know. But it is never intentional.
*Helena* You blame it on your honesty.
*Henning* No, my sincerity.
*Helena* It's the same thing.

*Henning* I can never lie, Helena. That is my pride.
*Helena* But that makes you the better in abusing your relationships.
*Henning* Leave me without relationships then.
*Helena* Then you will go down like Arnold, who drowns his relationships in drinking.
*Henning* I am the one to blame for it, who caused him harm.
*Helena* How?
*Henning* I feel responsible for all of you, Helena. Therefore I must harm you, although I don't want to. You get too close, you get burned, and then I become responsible for you and all your disasters.
*Helena* Poor Henning. Who are you really?
*Henning* Do you think I could explain that even to myself?
*Helena* No.
*Henning* Come, Helena. Let's go back, before Harry explodes.
*Helena* He already has.
*Henning* I don't want to ruin your engagement.
*Helena* You already did.
*Henning* I should never have brought you here.
*Helena* It's too late for regrets now. Take me, Henning, before we go back.
*Henning* You asked for it, poor stupid Helena. *(They move on to make love.)*

## Scene 3. In the villa by the sea.

*(From some distance you hear someone play Chopin on a grand piano.)*

*Betty* He is always melancholy like that.
*Gustav* Once a musician, always spirited away and lost from normal human pleasures.
*Betty* What do you think he is trying to express? Heartaches and pains? Unrequited love? Despair or just general frustration?
*Gustav* A musician at least is never bored.
*Betty* No, but he suffers the more, for he can't just wallow in music constantly, and his pauses amount to acute abstinence. Then he often becomes intolerable.
*Gustav* You talk as if you had been married to him.
*Betty* I know a number of jazz musicians, drug addicts and alcoholics all of them without a single exception. All they know is their music. They can't live.
*Gustav* But Arnold is no jazz musician.
*Betty* Music is music. Do you think Beethoven was sober? Sibelius couldn't even conduct without liquor.
*Gustav* Still I think Arnold is comparatively pure.
*Betty* He is pure indeed, but that is an entiurely different matter.
*Harry (enters, furious)* I can't stand this any more. Does he have to go on like that?

*Gustav* Who do you mean?
*Harry* That – piano masturbation.
*Betty* It's no masturbation, Harry. It is Chopin. Show some respect for a suffering musician.
*Harry* I can't stand it.
*Betty* Go then and slam the lid on his fingers, and you will make him happy.
*Gustav* Don't provoke him to any encroachment, Betty.
*Betty* What is it you can't stand? Is the music too sensual and romantic? Or is it your own convulsive suffering that is extended by the inspired music?
*Harry* You are not exactly making it easier, Betty.
*Gustav* Don't worry, Harry. They will soon be back any moment. Helena is not the one to do anything stupid.
*Harry (furious)* That's what *you* think!
*Betty* Don't work yourself up, Harry. It will pass. Taker another drink in the meantime, and the fury of your heart will be quenched.
*Harry* Or get worse. It makes no difference. *(pours himself eagerly a drink and takes it all at once)* For once you said something positive, Betty.
*Bettan* I always try to be positive. *(The music falls silent.)*
*Gustav (after a short pause for breath)* It all turns extremely void and quiet when Arnold stops playing.
*Harry* Thank goodness for that.
*Betty* I didn't know you to be so unmusical, Harry.
*Harry* That is not the case. I just can't stand it. *(throws his glass violently on the floor, just as Arnold enters)*
*Arnold* I hope it's not my music inspiring you to this.
*Gustav* Harry is only worried about Helena.
*Betty* No, he is jealous, he is mortally jealous, for he really loves her.
*Harry* Haven't I the right to be? We are engaged, aren't we?
*Betty* And when will you marry?
*Harry (perfectly furious)* Never! *(rushes out)*
*Arnold (watches the clock)* They have been away for long now.
*Betty* It's midsummer, so they won't notice when it turns to midnight.
*Gustav* It's already past midnight. Harry has reason enough for his concern.
*Betty* Why do you think they would not let you come along, Arnold?
*Arnold* They probably just forgot all about me.
*Betty* Do you think so? Weren't you on the shore when they just sailed off?
*Arnold* No, I had not reached the shore.
*Gustav* Why did you never become a concert pianist, Arnold?
*Arnold* I never wanted to.
*Betty* He wanted to keep his music for himself.
*Arnold* Exactly. I didn't wish to prostitute myself as a music tradesman on stage.

*Betty* "It's only popsingers who are musicians bad enough to make the effort to make money on it." Arnold Bergroth.
*Arnold* Yes, I actually said that, and there is still some truth in it.
*Gustav* But you are hiding your light under a bushel.
*Arnold* No, I am protecting music against its pimps.
*Betty* It's self preservation, Gustav.
*Gustav* Is it better then to drink instead, Arnold? Could that compensate your lack of musical self-confidence? *(lays his hand on Arnold's drink just as he intends to bring it to his mouth)*
*Arnold* Let me follow my way, Gustav, as I let you follow yours.
*Gustav* That's what I am doing when I try to protect you against yourself.
*Arnold* No one can do that.
*Gustav* No, if you can't do it yourself. *(let's go of the glass)*
*Arnold (drinks)* Yes, music can. *(goes back out. The music starts again: Schumann.)*
*Harry (returns)* I thought he had finished.
*Betty* Get in and quarrel with him, Harry. He is never finished.
*Harry* If the music at least could inspire some peace, but it is only upsetting.
*Gustav* There is no music for inspiring peace.
*Betty* Don't turn him on to some eruption, Gustav.
*Harry* He is right. All music goes deep penetrating the soul. That's what makes it so terrible, as it opens up and reveals all your spiritual life to yourself.
*(Helena and Henning have suddenly entered. They are not immediately noticed.)*
*Helena* How beautiful he plays. What is it? Is it Brahms? *(Everyone turns around. Not until now everyone notices them.)*
*Harry* Where the hell have you been?
*Henning* Out on the skerry in the moonlight.
*Harry* Alone?
*Henning* No, there were elves dancing all around us.
*Helena* Take it easy, Harry.
*Harry* How the devil am I supposed to take it easy when my intended goes out to sea in the moonlight together with a poet?
*Betty* He has been taking it as easy as that all evening, Helena.
*Henning* I am harmless, Harry.
*Harry* You convince me of the opposite.
*Helena (goes up to him)* Harry, let's go to bed.
*Harry* With you? Never in my life!
*Helena* But what do you mean?
*Harry* Stick to your new man! Our engagement is off!
*Henning* Nothing happened, Harry.
*Harry (furious like hell)* And you want me to believe that?
*Arnold (has interrupted the music and returns to them)* What are you roaring about? Has anything happened?

*Betty* Henning and Helena have returned home. Perhaps they shouldn't have done that.
*Harry (shouts)* It is over! Do you hear?
*Helena* Yes, I am hearing. There is no need to shout.
*Arnold* Calm down then a little. You are waking up the archipelago, and people might think we are murdering each other.
*Harry (like before)* They are welcome to believe that!
*Helena* I think you had better go to bed, Harry.
*Harry* Not with you!
*Helena* I didn't suggest that either.
*Harry* So be it! *(has nothing more to say, marches out, banging the door behind him.)*
*Henning* He is finished. Why didn't you join us, Arnold? We might have needed some chaperon, the way Harry now behaves.
*Arnold* I was too late for the boat.
*Henning* Yes, we noticed that, so we had to go along without you. *(pours himself a drink)* I have been needing this all day.
*Arnold* Me too. *(pours himself a drink.)*
*Gustav* Stop him, someone. He has been drinking all day.
*Henning* It will only do him good, Gustav. He knows what he is doing.
*Gustav* No, that's what he doesn't know.
*Henning* Cheers, Arnold. *(toasts Arnold)*
*Arnold* But how could you leave without me? You must have known it would drive Harry out of his mind.
*Henning* No, we didn't know, did we, Helena?
*Helena* We never intended to stay away so long.
*Arnold* It cost Helena her engagement.
*Henning* Bosh, he will regret it tomorrow. It will pass, Arnold. Love passes by, and so does jealousy, when you at last become aware of its senseless proportions.
*Gustav* Harry is deeply hurt, Henning. I don't think it will pass.
*Henning* In that case it is his problem, not mine. Mud in your eyes, boys.
*Betty* Are we excluded?
*Henning* Not at all, of course! *(pours two drinks for the ladies, carry them along and serve them)* Cheers then, my ladies!
*Helena (throws her drink in Henning's face, leaves in fury, banging the door behind)*
*Henning* That's what I call a sound cold shower!
*Betty* Dear me, how passionate everyone is here tonight!
*Henning* It's the midsummer night, the lightest night in the year, which never grows entirely dark. That's the night for you to sleep and dream about the man you are to marry.
*Betty* You will never get married, Henning.
*Henning* No, thank goodness for that!
*Arnold* I'll go and see if there is anything I can do for Helena. I suspect that she is crying.

*Henning* Yes, go and comfort her, Arnold. She won't be needing me any more. *(Arnold leaves.)*
*Betty* What did you do to her, Henning?
*Henning* Nothing out of the ordinary.
*Betty* You are like two different persons. One is the tender poet, who can turn any heart round his finger and be just adorable, and the other is this ruthless monster of unbearable overbearing superiority.
*Henning* I am just natural.
*Betty* I doubt it.
*Henning* Aren't the two of us finally going to bed sometime?
*Betty* Together?
*Henning* Yes, why not?
*Betty (rising)* Henning, one day not only your victims but life itself will rise against you and turn you down. *(leaves)*
*Henning (after her)* Surely you know, Betty, that I am the last man to take no for an answer. *(She disappears without banging the door.)* Dear me, how squeamish everyone is today. Well, just one more drink, and I will be fit for fight of the night. *(takes it all and leaves. A clock chimes two o'clock.))*

Akt II scene 1. The terrace, (like in act I scene 1).

*Gustav* But all that is just the prelude. It has nothing to do with the mystery, which perhaps wasn't any mystery at all. No one was to blame for the bad weather or for the capsizing of the sailingboat.
*Arnold* We never found the body.
*Gustav* Yes, I suppose that's the mystery, if there is a mystery. At least that became the source of the mysteries.
*Arnold* I think he came back.
*Gustav* You were dead drunk all the time, Arnold, and only became worse during the night.
*Arnold* I couldn't sleep. I could only stay aswake. It was as if all the time I expected him to come back. Anything else was unthinkable for me. And I am almost certain he did come back.
*Gustav* As a phantom?
*Arnold* No, as himself.
*Gustav* You were delirious.
*Arnold* No, only washed up.
*Gustav* It's the same thing.
*Arnold* Is it? In a state of delirium you confuse your fancies with reality, but you are never more alert and aware than when you are overstrained on the verge of collapse.

*Gustav* But if you then have five per mille in your blood at the same time, it could be difficult to keep your delirium and your collapse apart.
*Arnold* I am not so sure.
*Gustav* You don't surprise me. And on that night you should have been more unsure than ever.
*Arnold* No, I was absolutely sure, until something happened.
*Gustav* What happened?
*Arnold* That's what I am uncertain of.
*Gustav* In court you would make an ideal witness.

*(The doctor arrives.)*

*Doctor* I hope the patient is all right.
*Gustav* I am taking well care of him, doctor.
*Doctor* No, we are. What are you discussing? *(Arnold give a dissuasive sign to Gustav.)*
*Gustav* Just old memories.
*Doctor* I hope you won't remind him of too sensitive matters. It is vital that the patient doesn't have any relapse.
*Gustav* Is there any risk?
*Doctor* That's the constant threat to every patient on rehabilitation.
*Gustav* We only discuss old mysteries.
*Doctor* That could be dangerous. He must not get upset.
*Arnold* I am not upset, only melancholy.
*Doctor* Also melancholy could be risky since it is sensitive.
*Gustav* But doctor, we have to be able to talk freely with each other without restrictions. We are after all old friends. We have many friends in common, and especially one we shared equally.
*Doctor* Who?
*Gustav* Arnold's best friend.
*Doctor* Do you mean Henning Malmsten?
*Gustav* Yes.
*Doctor* Are you talking about him?
*Gustav* Yes. Is it forbidden?
*Doctor (upset)* It is most improper for you to discuss that person with the patient! That was the very triggering crisis of his total nervous breakdown! I must forbid you to discuss that matter! If you do I must lock you out from here!
*Arnold* Take it easy, doctor. I am not drinking.
*Doctor (calming down)* Well, you seem to take it easy. *(to Gustav)* But that subject if anything has resulted in several relapses for the patient! We had problems with that matter for years. It was enough for someone to just mention the name Henning, and he immediately resorted to the bottle. It must not be repeated!
*Arnold* Take it easy, doctor. I have no such access here.
*Gustav* I think it would be best for you to leave the patient in peace, doctor, as you could upset him, being so upset as you are.

*Doctor* I hope you accept my warning.
*Gustav* Of course.
*Arnold* Please go now, doctor. You have a round to make, haven't you?
*Doctor* You were part of it. *(passes on, but lifts a warning finger to Gustav, who nods complacently showing his understanding)*
*Arnold* That doctor is worse than all the patients here put together. He is the one who keeps them ill, and he gets paid for it.
*Gustav* How did he end up here?
*Arnold* Mind you, he is a psychiatrist. Such blokes usually end up in any sort of open sewer.
*Gustav* Are there others among the patients besides you who despize him?
*Arnold* Everyone does.
*Gustav* I see.
*Arnold* But psychic patients have no say. Therefore we can't get rid of him, and someone has to be the managing boss of the asylum. So they keep him here.
*Gustav* Perhaps he is better than no one.
*Arnold* I doubt it. But we had more important things to discuss than demented psychiatrists. As you understand, I can never get rid of Henning. I still brood on him every day and night and will go on doing so until I at last will get his fate sorted out. We did work together, you know. I put some of his finest poems to music.
*Gustav* They still remain, don't they?
*Arnold* Yes, somewhere. But my memory is so bad, except when it sometimes gets refreshed… You don't happen to have anything with you?
*Gustav* I know you are thirsting to death here. But no one must see it.
*Arnold* No one sees us.
*Gustav* Well then. *(brings a pocket flask out of his inner pocket)* Be quick and discreet, please.
*(Arnold quickly takes a sound draught and then immediately retuns the flask to Gustav, who swiftly makes it disappear again. It all takes only half a moment.)*
*Arnold* Now I am funtioning again.
*Gustav* Shall we try to reach the bottom of the problem now, while we are inspired? What really happened?
*Arnold* Everyone had a hangover at that breakfast.
*Gustav* Yes, I remember. Who brought the idea that you would go out sailing again?
*Arnold* It was not seriously meant. Someone just happened to mention it. No one really felt like it. Besides, the weather was uncertain. Everyone knew it would be risky. Everyone advised against it.
*Gustav* And still Harry and Henning went out together.
*Arnold* Yes, they placed themselves in the same boat, as if they knew they had to go down with it. They couldn't have done anything more senseless.
*Gustav* Do you remember all that was said that morning?
*Arnold* I am trying to. *(watches thoughtfully out afar)*

Scene 2. On the open terrace outside the villa.

*(Gustav is laying the table for breakfast as Betty enters.)*

*Betty* How awfully energetic you are this morning when everyone else is down-and-out in devastating hangovers!

*Gustav* You appear surprisingly sober to be of this company.

*Betty* No wonder. I had to take all my pills this morning in order to get up at all. Fortunatelty I had brought the whole arsenal along.

*Gustav* You and your pills. You turn all of us into addicts.

*Betty* You have to admit they are efficient.

*Gustav* Perhaps a bit too efficient to be healthy.

*Betty* Gustav, you should have become a doctor.

*Gustav* I was bad enough ending up as a curator.

*Betty* You are probably the only person in the world today who could even make a cup of coffee at all.

*Gustav* At least before dinner.

*(Harry appears, yawning.)*

*Betty* Here comes another outdated sourpuss. You look beaten by a heavy-weight of a hangover.

*Harry* Don't remind me of it. Apparently we were heated yesterday.

*Betty* Yes, you smashed your latest engagement into sawdust.

*Harry* Was it that bad?

*Betty* How much do you remember?

*Harry* I think I got angry.

*Betty* Angry? You could have murdered Helena and Henning.

*Harry* They were out on the skerry all night, I think?

*Betty* Yes. They were mad to get back home at all.

*Harry* Where are the others? Has no one got up yet?

*Betty* It's not even noon yet, Harry. Give them a chance to sleep it off.

*Harry* Were we all equally drunk?

*Betty* No, Gustav was sober all night, so he could make us all coffee today. Or else we would all still be lying under the table.

*Harry* My, my, how cheerful and sprightly you are today! Are you also full of outrageous sobriety?

*Gustav* She has her pills.

*Harry* Oh yes. The ambulant chemist. The drug expert. The ideal provider. Never too much but always the right thing.

*Betty* You know me.

*(Henning shows up.)*

*Henning* Dare you show yourself here today?

*Betty* Too late for regrets. You already have.

*Henning* I must have behaved terribly yesterday.

*Betty* Only towards Helena.

*Harry* You are like that, Henning. You can't help it.
*Henning* You know me. I am glad you forgive me.
*Harry* I didn't say that.
*Betty* Don't start it all again, boys. You haven't even taken your first schnaps yet.
*Harry* I am the last one who wants an argument today. *(grasps his head)*
*Henning* I guess we are all in the same boat.
*Betty* A boat is probably the last thing you should embark on today.
*Gustav* They might need some keel-hauling, both of them, to make them calm.
*Harry* What do you say, Henning? Shall we face the challenge??
*Henning* And reach a settlement in the boat?
*Harry* I mean the sailing-boat. It is blowing well today. We could do with some fresh blasts.
*Betty* I never should have mentioned that boat.
*Henning* In that case we should all go sailing along.
*Harry* Are you afraid of sailing with me alone?
*Henning* The weather is risky. It could turn out into anything. It would be a challenge. In the boat we would be too busy sailing to consider any quarrel. It's not a bad idea.
*Betty* No, don't do it, boys! I should never have given you such a mad idea!
*Gustav* You inspired them.

*(enter Arnold)*

*Arnold* What is the argument about? It sounds too incredibly energetic to be on the morning after the evening that was.
*Betty* They have decided to go sailing in the storm to settle things in the boat.
*Arnold* Are they out of their minds?
*Harry* We try to reach that stage.
*Arnold* Wait at least till after breakfast, and you will have time to change your minds. Are you the one who repaired it, Gustav?
*Gustav* I have been working since eight this morning.
*Betty* He is still too outrageously sober.
*Gustav* No, my beer sense is just too good. To my immense grief and disappointment I always failed in getting drunk. You can't guess how much I envy you.
*Harry* With all our hangovers?
*Henning* Don't speak of it!
*Arnold* You all seem to be a bunch of patients. I thought I was the only alcoholic, but now you make me feel like an outsider.
*Betty* Go to the piano, Arnold. Play something beautiful.
*Harry* But no nocturnes. It's too early in the day.
*Arnold* I accept your resommendation. *(exits. Soon Chopin's Nocturne no. 12 is heard.)*
*Betty* He certainly never lets us down.

*Harry* That was the very sort of music I tried to avoid.
*Henning* No, you asked for it.
*Betty* Don't start it again, boys.
*Gustav* He is actually right, Harry. This time you actually asked for it.
*Harry* Why not strike at once and go out immediately, Henning? Before Helena wakes up and we get a lady on our hands who wants to keep us down?
*Henning (throws his napkin)* You said it. Let's go at once.
*Betty* Could nothing then turn you rational?
*Gustav* Let them go, Betty. They just need to sober up a little. If they capsize they can both swim, and then they'll get all the waters they need.
*Bettan* Perhaps you are right. Be off then, boys, fight around in the boat so that you go over, and then swim all the way home, and you will cool off and get sober.
*Henning* You could help us, Betty, with some of your pills.
*Betty* Only a few.
*Henning* Just for keeping me from falling asleep.
*Betty* Do you also want some, Harry?
*Harry* No, Betty, I will be at the helm. Drunkenness at sea is unnecessary.
*Betty* They are no drugs, Harry.
*Harry* Yes, you could convince the whole world about that. You never push drugs.
*Henning* Sometimes they could even make you sober up.
*Harry* Indeed, sometimes even a bit too much. Are you ready? Everything is in the boat.
*Henning* I am coming.
*Betty* Wait a moment, boys.
*Harry* No, we cannot wait. We must catch the good weather and wind, while it is blowing.
*Betty* Alas, they don't know what they are doing!
*Gustav* That's why they have to do it.
*Helena (enters just as Harry and Henning are gone)* Where are they going? What will they do?
*Gustav* They have decided to go out capsizing.
*Betty* Don't be cruel, Gustav. They just wanted to test the wind and take the opportunity to sober up.
*Helena* They must not go! How could you let them go?
*Gustav* Try to stop them if you can. Arnold could not stop you yesterday. Henning is always too much in a hurry.
*Helena* But Harry is worse. Oh! *(faints)*
*Betty* Help her, Gustav. *(The music stops.)*
*Gustav (hurries to her rescuie)* She had least of all to drink but shouldn't drink at all, as she is too sensitive.
*Betty* Your sicklied pallor of thought is so wonderfully beneficial in arrears.

*(enter Arnold)*

*Arnold* What has happened? New scenes? Where is Henning and Harry?
*Betty* They have gone sailing. I think they had a mutual understanding that it would be a settlement for life or death. They were so determined about it.
*Arnold* They are out of their minds! It will blow up! There will be a storm!
*Betty (calm)* Let them swim, Arnold. Let them swim.
*Arnold (watches the fainted Helena in Gustav's arms. No one is able to do anything.)*
This is only getting worse and worse, and I am to blame for it all!
*Gustav* Take it easy, Arnold. When they return they will be completely cooled off and quite sober, which is all they need.
*Arnold* I hope you are right, Gustav. *(sits down for breakfast while Helena returns to life.)*
*Helena* What happened?
*Gustav*

*Helena* Who can sleep under the circumstances?
*Betty* I will actually gladly go to bed. Who may I sleep with? Are you available, Gustav?
*Harry* Betty, please try to behave!
*Betty* Who ever did in this company? I thought we knew each other. You should know better, Harry, than to make demands on me. Very well, I am off to bed anyway. I don't think Henning will be coming any more tonight. *(stretches and yawns)*
*Helena* Betty is probably the only sensible one among us.
*Gustav* I will take you to your room, Betty.
*Bettan* Thanks for that, Gustav. You are welcome to follow me in and further. *(they leave)*
*Helena* Aren't you going to bed yourself, Harry, after your ordeals?
*Harry* What do you mean?
*Helena* You did founder today, didn't you?
*Harry* Are you coming with me up?
*Helena* You broke our engagement, not I.
*Harry* I know. But that was before the accident. Much has happened since then.
*Helena* There will probably be time for more things to happen.
*Harry* You still think Henning will come back?
*Helena* I know he will – to his own ruin.
*Harry* Are you staying up, Arnold?
*Arnold* Don't worry. I will put out the lights later.
*Harry* Don't drink too much.
*Helena* He never drinks too much, only too little.
*Harry* I'll follow you to your room, Helena.
*Helena* As you wish. *(they leave)*
*Arnold (alone)* They don't know what they are talking about, but they are rather funny. Now the real nightmare hours make their entrance. Henning, Henning, whatever happened to you out there? Did you fight in the middle of the storm? Who tried to kill whom? And Betty with her drugs. She could have given you the deadliest pills, and no one would ever have found out about it. Perhaps… *(listens intensely)* Do I hear right, or? *(listens)* No, it's just my overstrained imagination. I had better fill up my glass to some decency. The night is long, and there are many nightmares to scare off at the piano… *(stops)* No, I must be hearing wrong. *(looks out into the dark, looks down into his glass, stares out into the darkness again, hesitates)* Or is it really you, Henning?

*(black-out)*

Scene 3. The terrace

*Gustav* Was it him really?

*Arnold* I have been wondering about that ever since. So much happened that day and night. Everything happened at once, and we were were all on the edge of a nervous breakdown, several of us going over the top. My first thought as I saw Henning out there was that I could no longer rely on my senses. I felt completely out of my mind. And then I had my total nervous breakdown as a direct consequence of that overstrained nightmare prolonged orgy of a party.

*Gustav* We were all upstairs then, so if it really was Henning you must have been completely alone with him. Did you see him? Did you talk with him?

*Arnold* This is where my memories get so blurred that I can't keep them separated from feverish dreams and sick imaginations… At court I would really make an ideal witness for a possible murder investigation.

*Gustav* Do you think it was murder?

*Arnold* That possibility cannot be excluded.

*Gustav* Poor Henning. So talented. So abused. So wasted. What a tragedy. And you are just like him – all lost in addiction and waste for nothing.

*Arnold* We did as well as we could, and Henning at least had the good sense to take his leave.

*Doctor (has unnoticeably come up behind them)* So here you are discussing the very matter that I forbade you! I must immediately ask your visitor to leave, Arnold. He is seriously jeopardizing your convalescence!

*Arnold* You can't drive him out now, doctor. We are just concluding a murder investigation.

*Doctor* The more reason for his expulsion! Private murder investigations are out of bounds for your part, Arnold, for the sake of your health!

*Gustav* Let then the patient himself decide with whom he may associate, doctor, for Christ's sake!

*Doctor* I am responsible for his life! Nothing must risk the course of his rehabilitation! And nothing could risk it more than rekindling the trauma that wreaked his total breakdown! And you don't seem to be good for anything else than to force him back into that trauma!

*Arnold* Doctor, he is my best friend, and it is vital that we are allowed to investigate the murder of our best and mutual friend.

*Doctor* Leave it to the police! Sir, I must ask you to immediately get out of my nursing home! *(sniffles)* But you smell of liquor! *(smells Arnold also)* You don't mean to say that you have been sitting here offering liquor to the patient??!!

*Arnold* Just brandy, doctor. Just a few drops of wholesome brandy.

*Doctor (beside himself, to Gustav)* Get out at once! Or I will call for the personnel to *throw* you out!

*Gustav* I am sorry, Arnold. We will have to continue some other time. - Doctor, how soon may the patient be released from here?

*Doctor* It depends entirely on the patient.
*Gustav* What do you think?
*Doctor* That judgement is beyond my scope of competence.
*Gustav* Do you have any human scope of competence at all?
*Doctor* As a doctor I am first of all a scientist.
*Gustav* That's what I thought. You don't have any. Between ourselves, Doctor, you should never have become a doctor. You have no empathy.
*Doctor* I am a psychiatrist, not just a doctor.
*Gustav* In that case you should even less have been allowed to become a psychiatrist.
*Doctor* We have had enough of you. Get out at once.
*Gustav (to Arnold)* I will get you out of here, Arnold.
*Arnold* Do that, so that we can go on drinking.
*Doctor* You have ruined years of work for me!
*Gustav* No, Doctor. Your only work here is to ruin the lives of your patients. I really hope never to see youi again, but I intend to do everything I can to continue trying to save Arnold's life and at least his psychic health from your totally incompetent hands.
*Doctor* You will get nowhere with your reckless insults!
*Gustav* And you will get nowhere by your dehydration of your patients! Goodbye! *(leaves in a fury)*
*Arnold* I am sorry, Doctor, but out of the two of you I think I have better confidence in my old friend.
*Doctor* How much did he give you to drink?
*Arnold* Only some small sips.
*Doctor* Arnold! We have to start again from the beginning!
*Arnold* Do it at your own risk, Doctor, at your own risk.
*(The doctor forces Arnold out of his chair and brings him with him away from the terrace.)*

## Act IV scene 1. The reception of the nursing home.

*(enter Gustav.)*

*Gustav* Is it possible to see the patient Arnold today?
*receptionist* Good morning, Gustav. Don't you know then what has happened?
*Gustav* I notice there is some commotion here.
*receptionist* Here he is, inspector. *(A policeman appears from behind.)*
*police* You were the one who gave the patient alcohol.
*Gustav* Is anything wrong?
*receptionist (to the police)* He doesn't know what has happened.
*Gustav* What has happened?
*police* Take it easy, Gustav. Sit down. We have some questions.

*Gustav* May I at least know what it is all about? Yes, I gave Arnold a few refreshing drops since he was thirsting to death. Is that a crime? Has he expired as a consequence? Am I accused of attempted murder?
*police* Take it easy, for God's sake, chum. Here all patients are provided with everything by their visitors from toilet paper to heroin. You might be the greenest of all.
*Gustav* But what has happened?
*police* The consultant has been murdered.
*Gustav (relieved)* Is that all?
*polisen* Yes, that is actually all, although this place is crowded with all kinds of extreme criminals, who are all sacred and immune since they are assumed to be patients on the wagon.
*Gustav* But how did it happen?
*police* He was found this morning in the swimmingpool strangled with an electrical extension cord.
*Gustav* Do we know who did it?
*police* No, that's what nobody knows, for everyone in the hospital had motive enough, especially every patient. No one seems to have appreciated him. Are you surprised?
*Gustav* I am surprised that someone actually took the trouble.
*police* Why shouldn't he?
*Gustav* Doctor Glassberg seemed somewhat redundant here. All he did was to irritate the patients.
*police* That fits completely. So you knew him?
*Gustav* Yes, I met him. He forbade me to come here to visit a childhood friend, who is interned here.
*police* The patient Arnold Bergroth. Did he also hate the doctor like all the patients did?
*Gustav* I don't know if he did, but he would have had reasons enough indeed.
*police* Like everyone here.
*Gustav* But may I see the patient? That was the only reason I came here.
*Police* You don't happen to have any clues to the mystery? Something odd that you noticed, some deviation from routine, something curious about doctor Glassberg?
*Gustav* Nothing was all right about him.
*police* Everyone seems to agree to that. But such a bloke should just have been disdained and not worth the trouble to murder.
*Gustav* That's excactly my idea. *(sees Arnold)* But here is Arnold.
*Arnold* You seem to have been initiated in what has happened. Now perhaps they will at last let me out from here.
*police* Most patients are likely to be released now. But no one will be free to go until we have concluded our investigation.
*Arnold* We might have another murder mystery for you as well.

*police* Thank you, but one is enough for the moment.
*Arnold* But if you can't solve it you might need another more difficult.
*police (looks doubtfully at Arnold)* I had better leave the two of you alone. Spare me your own murder investigations.
*Gustav* We shall be glad to, Inspector, until we find you a murderer.
*police* For that we shall be grateful in that case. *(leaves)*
*Gustav* Has anything new turned up?
*Arnold* Good God, what efforts I have made to remember! But they ruined my brains by their drugs and electroshocks as soon as I was interred here by those damned clumsy headshrinker amateurs, so they just messed everything up! Now the worst of them is fortunately dead, so now they might at last start getting things done here.
*Gustav* Are there any clues?
*Arnold* Not one. In this hospital there are only labyrinths leading nowhere, so a murder should be the easiest thing in the world to commit here and get away with, and I misgrudge no murderer that joy, especially when he has succeeded in disposing of the chief consultant.
*Gustav* Forget the doctor. Henning is our only issue.
*Arnold* I will try to recollect my impressions of that night, no matter how blurred my memories are, but I am at least certain of a few details that actually might have occurred…
*Gustav* The star witness.
*Arnold* Yes, I am aware of it. But it would be helpful if we could all meet together, you and I and Betty and Helena and Harry to try to reconstruct the whole scene together. Do you think they would mind?
*Gustav* Not if they are innocent.
*Arnold* I think one of us might be guilty but I don't know of what. I will never myself get rid of my feelings of guilt.
*Gustav* Your idea is good, and it is perhaps the only possibility.
*Arnold* Let's try it, Gustav. Give me the chance to sometime perhaps find some peace from this memory.
*Gustav* I will be glad to. I will contact the others.
*Arnold* We could meet in my villa as soon as I get out from here. I will try to stay sober to make it happen sooner. You do get released sometimes for good behaviour.
*Gustav* Good luck, Arnold. The sooner you get out, the better. And there is no mean chief consultant any more to keep you confined in compulsory care.
*Arnold* He was a specialist on keeping patients under compulsory care to their death.
*Gustav* I leave this place to its labyrinthine police investigations. Come out soon, Arnold.
*Arnold* I promise.

*(Gustav leaves. Arnold remains seated immersed in thoughts, brings out a small flask, drinks quickly and discreetly, then continues sitting in dreams – and remembers.)*

## Scene 2. *Continued directly from act III scene 2.*

*Arnold (hesitates, stands half reeling with his glass in his hand looking out into the darkness outside the hall, then moves somewhat tottering to the terrace doors.)*

Is it really you, Henning?

*(Henning becomes visible outside. Arnold opens the glass door to him.)*

*Arnold* Are you coming in?

*Henning* I really shouldn't.

*Arnold* You don't look like of this world.

*Henning* I shouldn't have come back.

*Arnold* But you have come back. You can't imagine how we have been worrying all day. Come in for God's sake. Have a drink.

*Henning* No, I should not stay.

*Arnold* But what's the matter with you?

*Henning* Where are the others?

*Arnold* They are all asleep. They are completely finished. We have been drinking all day.

*Henning* I have also been drinking all day but mostly salt water only.

*Arnold* Have a seat at least. What happened?

*Henning (takes a seat)* We only had ourselves to blame. We should never have gone out of course. But it was as if we wanted to challenge each other and test each other and drive each other to some sort of settlement. I tried to reconcile myself with Harry there in the boat, but he would not believe me. Nothing could make him trust me or Helena any more. We were both hopelessly discarded by him forever, I as a friend and Helena as his love. I actually tried to give her back to him, Arnold. I tried to make it good. But he only grew more angry and finally lost his temper. "Stop it!" he cried at last, "or I will make us both founder! We deserve to be drowned both of us!" And perhaps we did. It had started blowing up already, and the situation soon became dangerous. The entire boat whimpered and creaked, the strain of the hulk was tremendous, and I wanted to take down the foresail, which threatened to pull us down. He ordered me not to, as if he wanted to sail us both into perdition, and I suspected him of actually having that desire. So I went up on foredeck to take down the foresail. Then suddenly something broke, which resulted in a chain reaction, and suddenly the boat was out of control. Neither he nor I could have done anything. We capsized, and the boat was immediately filled with water.

*Arnold* So it was an accident.

*Henning* No, it was no accident. It was intentional.

*Arnold* Whose intention?

*Henning* That is the question. I will never get clear about that. I had certainly behaved like a scoundrel both against Helena and others, Arnold, but it's not more than human for a man to fall in love with girls. My problem is that I could never take care of them, take responsibility, support them or give them anything else than my feelings, since I never had any money.

*Arnold* You were always unfairly tunred down, Henning. I don't think the publishers even read your offered manuscripts.

*Henning* I worked hard at it all my life, Arnold! I produced any amount of works, and they were all qualified! My fault was to be anti-modernistic and consistently radical as a traditionalist. I considered all modernists from James Joyce and T.S.Eliot to Samuel Beckett and Gunnar Björling as fakes, who only deceived people by pretending to be remarkable for being able to market downright nonsense. They were no serious artists. They did not suffer for their art. They only made themselves into puerile dilettantic hypocrites. It's the same thing with all modern music, which only makes squeaking revolting noise.

*Arnold* There you have me.

*Henning* It's all just nonsense, Arnold! What is the meaning with nonsense, poems without beauty, prose without a plot, music without melody, or art without form? No junk art can survive, since people have to realize sooner or later that it is all merely junk! Picasso derailed and could thereafter only paint nonsense, which he established by giving it the noble name of cubism, and he was not alone. Dali was sick in his head, no matter how brilliant he was in his skill. One of the few true artists among them was Chagall, who actually painted beautifully. Vlaminck and Utrillo were two others, but they were no modernists. I loved my language and cherished it and wrote as well as I could and made sure I always had something interesting to tell. Was that wrong?

*Arnold* No, you were right, but the world was wrong.

*Henning* And the world took its revenge on me by refusing me the right of a decent life. Therefore I was forced to work hard all my life without a salary. But what are publishers for then if not to publish unpublished authors? Why was I labelled an exception? Why was I discarded, dumped and sacrificed?

*Arnold* You were never discovered, Henning. Talents are not discovered in this country. They are buried alive according to the law of mediocrity, which allows no exceptions.

*Henning* And what purpose then do I have for staying alive, when no one wants the only meaningful thing I can produce? Not one publisher with resources ever gave me any encouragement or even showed that they had read my scripts! It was as if I was blacklisted and scrapped from the beginning, as if just my name was enough reason for them not to read me! And therefore I have nothing to do here. Therefore I leave again. I am tired of being compelled to live in limbo among living people. *(rises)*

*Arnold* Where are you going?

*Henning* Home. And I am not coming back.

*Arnold* Will you disappear?
*Henning* Yes, I intend to disappear. It was the intention of both me and Harry to disappear at sea, we were both desperate, but only I succeeded, and that was not Harry's fault, no matter how much he will blame himself for it.
*Arnold* But what is this, Henning? I don't understand you.
*Henning* Just as well. Now at least I don't have to lay myself down on the railway track and maul myself into a gaugy mess to pass away. You will never find me. It's best that way, Arnold.
*Arnold* Will you walk out into the darkness again?
*Henning* Yes, Arnold, I will walk back out into the darkness. But I will always remain close to you. You will never be rid of me. *(walks out again in peace and calm.)*
*Arnold* Henning! Henning! *(Henning does not turn but walks out and vanishes. Arnold finally rushes up, empties his drink, runs in despair to the glass doors, open them wide, screams: )* Henning! Henning! *(puffs. Gets back inside. Fills up a new large whisky, drinks it all up almost at once.)* He has left us. *(bawls)* He has left us! *(reels)*

*(Helena and Harry have awakened and show up.)*

*Helena* Arnold! *(rushes forth)* What is the matter?
*Harry* He has been drinking too much.
*Arnold* He was here! He is not dead!
*Harry* Has Henning returned?
*Helena* I knew it!
*Arnold* Yes, he came back, but he left again.
*Harry (rushing to the doors, opens up, calls: )* Henning! Henning! *(no answer. He returns.)* Everything is dead and quiet out there.
*Arnold* Yes, everything is dead and quiet out there. He is not coming back any more.
*Helena* How many grogs have you had?
*Arnold* Only countless.
*Helena (to Harry, upset)* He has been drinking straight whisky all evening.
*Harry* And all night.
*Helena* Arnold! We must get you to bed!
*Arnold* Too late. He is gone.
*Harry* Do you think Henning has been here?
*Helena* Of course he has been here since Arnold has seen him.
*Betty (has awakened, entering in a nightgown and provocative night coat)* Has he had another delirium again?
*Harry* Has he had it before?
*Betty* He usually gets it now and then, seeing all kinds of things, ghosts for instance.
*Gustav (has got up too)* How is it with Arnold? His heart-rending screams could make the dead turn around in terror.
*Betty* That's maybe just what they have done, for Arnold seems to have seen them.

*Gustav* Arnold! How are you? Can you see us?
*Arnold* I saw Henning more clearly.
*Helena* I have never seen him so distraught before.
*Harry* Do you think he is breaking up?
*Gustav* I am afraid his symptoms are an indication. *(takes his pulse. Waves his hand in front of his eyes. Observes his pupil.)* He is passing out completely.
*Helena* Shall we call an ambulance?
*Gustav* Yes, if he isn't any better tomorrow.
*Harry* We must get him to bed. It's perhaps the best for him to pass out completely.
*Betty* Poor Arnold! My pills would have been better for him. They at least don't turn on delirium.
*Gustav* Did he have delirium?
*Harry* It seemed like it. You heard him yourself. Give me a hand, and we will carry him upstairs.

*(Harry and Gustav carry out Arnold.)*

*Betty* Poor Arnold! He must have got the DTs.
*Helena* What do you think he saw?
*Betty* I suspect he was visited by someone who told him more than what was good for him.
*Helena* I suspect that as well.
*Betty* Do you think he was dead or alive?
*Helena* I don't think we shall ever know.

## Scene 3. The reception. Enter Gustav.

*Gustav* Is Arnold Bergroth available?
*receptionist* I am sorry, he has been taken to the police station.
*Gustav* Why?
*receptionist* I thought you knew a murder has been committed here.
*Gustav* Is he a suspect?
*receptionist* He is the most suspect of all, for he had the strongest motive.
*Gustav* What motive?
*receptionist* He was the only one who was seen fighting with the doctor. No one else dared.
*Gustav* Could I see him then at the police station?
*receptionist* You could try.
*Gustav* You don't think he did it, do you?
*receptionist* Someone must have done it, and the cord came from the patient Bergroth's room.
*Gustav* But Arnold never went bathing in the swimming-pool!

*Receptionist* He might have done it anyway.
*Gustav* Shall we bet on it?
*receptionist* Don't get angry. The police are doing their best.
*Gustav* Yes, and they are paid for it. But Arnold gets nothing for being harassed by them for nothing.
*receptionist* How do you know he is innocent?
*Gustav* Because he suffers from an enormous guilt complex. Such a guilt complex you can only cultivate if you are innocent.
*receptionist* I will call the police and tell them you are coming. *(takes up a telephone)*
*Gustav* Thank you. *(leaves)*
*receptionist* Hallo, sergeant Billig? That friend of the suspect patient has been here again. He is coming down to you. Have you found any evidence? *(listens)* No, he is completely harmless, and the patient trusts him implicitly. The only thing is that he sometimes smuggles some liquor to the patient. (*hangs up)* If only liquor was the only thing they kept smuggling here in the ward!

## Scene 4. In prison.

*police* No, he is not under arrest. He is just here for questioning. Yes, of course you may see him. Just a moment.
*Gustav* How much of a suspect is he?
*police* All the patients of that scandal ward are highly suspected. No matter how many and how gravely aslcoholised and drug poisoned the patients are, they are not supposed to be able to murder a chief consultant. Your good friend is the only one to whom any technical evidence can be connected.
*Gustav* The cord?
*police* Doctor Glassberg was found in the swimming-pool in his medical outfit with stetoscope and all with your friend's electrical extension cord round his neck , which doctor Glassberg without doubt had been strangled with. That is enough.
*Gustav* But no finger prints?
*police* Not yet.
*Gustav* But anyone could have taken the cord from his room.
*police* Who is anyone? That patient is most closely linked, and he had a motive.
*Gustav* What was the motive?
*Police* He felt personally persecuted by the doctor. None of the other patients did.
*Gustav* In your lack of evidence you waste your time on nonsense.
*police* I know. Here he is now. You may speak with him yourself.
*Arnold (enters)* There is no danger, Gustav. The technical evidence is not enough. No patient can be charged.

*Gustav* Will you be released?
*Arnold* The prosecutor has withdrawn all charges in the want of evidence. Could I go home now, Sir?
*police* Your friend here could follow you. Have you anywhere else to go than home to the ward?
*Arnold (to Gustav)* Let me offer a cab, Gustav. Will you follow? Nowadays there is always a bar open at the ward. I bet they also serve syringes free of charge.
*Gustav* You must get out of there, Arnold. An asylum like that is no place for a musician.
*Arnold* You forget that I no longer am a musician. I am on the wagon. Music is the most dangerous intoxication of all. If I start playing again, I start drinking again.
*Gustav* What about our investigation?
*Arnold* It is proceeding well. I will stand by my word, Gustav. We will all meet again there in the villa by the sea. We will go through it all again. I already talked with the others. They also wish to reach some clarity in what actually happenend.
*Gustav* Do you know what happened?
*Arnold* Yes, Gustav, now I know how it all happened and what we shall do about it.
*police* What are you talking about? Is that another murder investigation?
*Arnold* Yes, Sir. You arrested me for a murder I never committed, and although I will be released I will never get rid of the brand of the undispelled suspicion. I will now always be known as 'the patient who probably murdered his doctor and got away with it'. But this real murder committed a number of years ago is a much more serious issue. In that murder I was the most guilty, for I was responsible for what happened to my guests, but for that murder justice will never even suspect me, which is wrong, for the guilt of that murder is the only guilt I feel.
*police* Just get out before we nail you again.
*Arnold* Do you get it, Gustav? We had better leave this institution.
*Gustav* I will follow all the way.
*Arnold* Do you know what we used to call our beloved chief consultant?
*Gustav* No?
*Arnold* Our prison director.
*Gustav* Come on, Arnold. *(they leave)*
*police* Sometimes I wonder what the difference is between a police station and an asylum. *(gets into his papers)*

Act V scene 1. The villa. Glorious sunny weather.
*Everyone is present and seemingly in excellent shape.*

*Harry* Well, how was it at the cleaner's, Arnold?
*Arnold* Thank you, relatively nice, but it was not easy to get out of there.
*Gustav* It would hardly have worked if the doctor hadn't been disposed of.
*Betty* Yes, we heard a lot about that. You were not the one who did it, were you?
*Arnold* Of course it was me. Who else would have done it?
*Betty (shocked)* But Arnold! I could never believe that of you!
*Helena* He is joking of course.
*Harry* But what actually happened, Arnold, since you were there?
*Arnold* I guess nature just followed its course. That doctor was a failure of the worst doctor in the world. He was a doctor only for the sake of money. He had no empathy and always denied all requests, forbidding any urge and effort at freedom.
*Harry* Wasn't the place crowded with addicts on detoxication?
*Arnold* Yes, there were more heroinists than alcoholics. And the heroinists got all the help they needed, they were served with free syringes and as much metadon they wanted, besides all the drugs being smuggled to them without anyone doing anything about it than looking the other way, while poor Gustav here was beaten up just because he gave me a sip out of his flask.
*Helena* Wasn't he even forbidden to visit you, Arnold?
*Gustav* Yes, I actually was.
*Helena* But that's insane! No wonder you took his life!
*Arnold* Whoever it was. The investigation was discontinued as they reached the conclusion that no one could be charged with the crime since every possible murderer was mentally non compos mentis.
*Harry* Yes, that's how you get away with murder nowadays.
*Betty* But to the point, Arnold. You were never fully cured, were you? Don't tell me you can't drink anything any more.
*Arnold* Of course I can drink anything, Betty. That's why you are here. You can't invite friends for old friendship's sake to only get dry! Cheers!
*Harry* We are really happy for your sake, Arnold.
*Betty* We were actually a bit worried.
*Arnold* Thanks to the doctor stumbling on his extension cord all the patients were free to start all over from the beginning. If they had been kept here they would all have been finished. But it was not for that celebration that I invited you all here again. Freedom is by all means to be celebrated best and most of all, and especially my own dyspeptic freedom, but there at the sanatorium I and Gustav discussed very much what actually happened that midsummer when Henning disappeared.
*Harry* Yes, none of us did ever get that matter cleared out. It's certainly about time.

*Gustav* I am glad you say so, Harry, for you were perhaps the last man to see him alive.

*Helena* I was always certain he would be back that terrible night when we all drank so awfully much.

*Gustav* Only Arnold saw him come back that night, bu the wasn't sure he was seeing all right. What he and I are sincerely hoping for is that someone of you saw him also.

*Harry* Betty and I were the first to break up. Or did Helena and you go up before us? How was it really?

*Betty* We were all as far from sober as possible and also stimulated by other stuff, if I remember correctly.

*Gustav* Is there anyone who can remember anything clearly of that night?

*Helena* I remember everything exactly. Betty was the first one to get tired, and you brought her up, Gustav. Then Harry went up, and I was the last one who left you, Arnold. I was probably the most sober of us all. And I was all the time certain that Henning would turn up. Then we all woke up when you started screaming, Arnold, and when we all came down you were alone but quite hysterical, for you said you had spoken with Henning, who had appeared.

*Betty* That's exactly how it was.-

*Gustav* And of the four of you no one saw anything of Henning's nightly visit? Or heard anything? His voice, for example?

*(All answer with silent denial, shaking their heads, etc.)*

*Betty* We are sorry. It would have been amusing to see him soaking wet as a cat out of the washing machine.

*Gustav* How was it, Arnold, the one who saw him? Was he wet?

*Arnold* If he was I didn't notice it.

*Gustav* You must have noticed it.

*Arnold* I was plastered.

*Betty* He was more than plastered. He had delirium.

*Harry* Another mystery. Henning must have come out of the water, but Arnold did not see if he was wet.

*Gustav* And what actually happened on board that boat, Harry?

*Harry* You have been asking me that a thousand times. Not one week has passed since that day when I haven't tried to reconstruct the entire disaster to myself again, trying to understand it. But what triggered it was Henning's insistence to go up taking down the foresail, although I forbade him.

*Gustav* Is it completely unthinkable that someone of you wished to stage the foundering?

*Harry* Why would we?

*Gustav* You were both desperate. You had quarrelled about the same girl. Henning had spent the night with her on the skerry. You had broken up the engagement in anger. Henning was always miserable and often considered suicide. You could have wished to take revenge on him or get rid of him, and he could have

wished to throw himself into perdition, which he could have succeeded in, since only you survived.

*Helena* That's what we don't know. He did come back in the night.

*Gustav* We don't know about that. He has remained disappeared ever since.

*Arnold* His body was never found.

*Gustav* No, his body was never found.

*Betty* Is it altogether impossible to consider that he came back and then voluntarily disappeared forever? Perhaps he travelled anonymously to India and stayed there? And also he could have dried himself before he returned. The weather was warm, and it was easy to dry. He doesn't have to have been wet.

*Arnold* Everything you say is reasonable, Betty. But we don't know.

*Bettan* Will we ever?

*Gustav* What happened before Hening went up to take down the foresail, Harry?

*Harry* We struggled with the storm. We had no possibility to discuss our private affairs, for the wind was too hard on. The weather was much more dramatic than all our arguments about Helena.

*Helena* But you consistently always had a bad conscience for that excursion.

*Harry* No wonder.

*Gustav* What kind of pills did you really give him, Betty?

*Betty* Only bracing ones, for that's what he needed and wanted.

*Gustav* How come that I then found a brown empty bottle of sleeping pills outside your window, from which the label had been removed to obstruct identification?

*Helena* You gave him sleeping pills instead of amphetamines! You and Harry intrigued against him!

*Betty* And didn't you also have motives to get rid of him, Helena, the way he treated you? He ruined your engagement and then scrapped you.

*Helena* That's what he did to you! Don't charge me with your experience of him!

*Arnold* Who among you did *not* have a motive to kill him?

*Gustav* Only you and I, it seems, Arnold.

*Arnold* But I was the one who killed him.

*Betty* No, it was me. Helena is right. I gave him sleeping pills instead of amphetamines, for I wanted to teach him a lesson. I actually hoped for him to have to swallow a lot of salt water that day. And Harry promised to assist me.

*Harry* It is true. Betty asked me if I couldn't wreak Henning overboard when we were going out in bad weather anyway, but I never even tried. The weather took over the initiative completely. Neither I nor Henning nor the boat had any chance against the storm that came over us, but the responsibility was mine for going out at all.

*Gustav* But no one could foresee the unsuspected capacity of the storm.

*Arnold* Henning least of all.

*Helena* No, it was me.
*Several* You too!
*Helena* Henning refused to take responsibility for what happened that night. We performed a wonderful coition out there alone on the skerry. It was divine. We enjoyed it thoroughly both of us. None of us could have believed it was so perfect. But as soon as we came back Henning refused to take any further responsibility. We had started a real relationship, but he denied it and trampled on it. I never hated a man so much in all my life. Harry immediately saw what it was all about, and it was perfectly reasonable for him to break our engagement. But that didn't make Henning change his mind. Then all I wanted was for him to die.
*Gustav* But you did nothing practical to manifest your wish.
*Helena* The mere wish was an unpardonable crime. I can't be absolved from responsibility. I take it all upon myself. My wishful thinking took his life! *(bursts into tears)*
*Arnold (comforting her)* But he did come back, Helena.
*Harry* And how did *you* take his life, Arnold? Was that also by telepathy?
*Arnold* I was the one who invited you all here. The party was on my responsibility. I knew Henning would be exposed to pressure. I wanted him to at last take responsibility for his life. He could have made it up with Betty. Instead he messed it up with Helena. He made his situation worse instead of mending it. Then I grew so angry with him that I sabotaged the sailing-bost. It was not in the direct intention to take both your lives, Harry. I just wanted to give Henning a thorough cold shower and taste of death, for that was what he asked for.
*Gustav* But wasn't he considering suicide?
*Bettan* We will never get any sense out of this.
*Arnold* One of his poses. A real suicide keeps his intention to himself. A suicide who talks about it, making a boast of it, never succeeds. He only makes a fool of himself, gradually he realizes his pose is not convincing, and then he speaks no more of it and forgets all about it.
*Harry* Yes, that's actually how it works.
*Betty* I need some more whisky.
*Arnold* Please yourself.
*Gustav* Still you seem to have known him best, Arnold, and you were actually the only one who saw him come back, if you did. You said at the hospital that you at last had understood how it all really happened. Let us finally have it cleared out.
*Arnold* My friends, we have arrived at the conclusion of the mystery. Yes, I have realized how it all really happened. The fact is that he came back. Helena was the only one of you who always believed it, but I can assure you it was true. But what I still don't know today is whether he came back as dead or alive.
*Betty* You make me implode. *(drinks)*
*Harry* And that would then explain that you didn't notice either that he was wet or not.
*Arnold* If he came back as dead it would hardly have been noticeable.

*Gustav* Do you then mean for serious, Arnold, that it wasn't noticeable whether he was alive or dead?
*Betty* Mind you, he was plastered and drugged and quite hysterical on top of that!
*Helena* You don't have to remind us, Betty.
*Arnold* Yes, Gustav. If he was dead or alive, it wasn't noticeable, if he was dead.
*Gustav* But to you he appeared quite alive.
*Arnold* To the highest degree.
*Harry* If he came back as dead, he could actually do that again.
*Arnold* But he hasn't.
*Helena* Do you have a monopoly on him as dead?
*Arnold* Have *you* seen him again?
*Helena* No, not yet.
*Harry* What do you think of the matter, Gustav, who are the most neutral and sober of us all?
*Gustav* I think that only Arnold knows the truth and that he tries to tell it. The problem is that he is not quite certain what the truth really is.
*Arnold* That's exactly how it is.
*Betty* But what do you *think,* Arnold? Tell us now.
*Arnold (rising, the glass in his hand)* My friends, I was hoping someone of you would have known more than I. I was hoping for someone among you to be the murderer or at least to have seen him dead. Now, none of you have done it, no matter how much you feel remorse and would have had a motive to kill him. But you are all as innocent as I, but still I am the one among you who carries the greatest blame, and it is even greater by all of you being so damned innocent!
*Gustav* Take it easy, Arnold!
*Arnold (drinks)* At last I may drink freely again! You all know that I am never more sober than when drinking, and especially you, Gustav. Henning and I were like foster brothers. We loved each other, because we understood each other so well. We shared everything. The only thing that separated us was that he had a weakness for girls. I lacked that interest, for I loved only him, and my jealousy about his affairs could sometimes approach madness and cross that limit, which drove me to constantly increased alcoholism. I was the only one who had the right to own him! – That is his soul. Our love was never physical. But when he was driven to death by his women affairs, among which you were only the last one in a very long line, Helena, and their comnplications, I first thought he had only himself to blame, but then it dawned upon me that it was my fault, the fault of my jealousy and anger, the fault of my bitterness and total disappointment, which cursed him for the sake of his affairs and infidelity…
*Helena* That's exactly how I felt it.
*Arnold* But then he came back. To take his leave. He went out into the darkness and has never returned. He must have realized that we all hated him. The lesson we

tried to teach him became too much for him. He separated from us. And then it dawned upon me, that he all the time had been too good for us. He wrote exquisite poetry and prose, which no one wanted since it was too classical and unmodern, as he made himself known for despising all modernism and lack of form and discipline in art. All publishers flushed him down the drain, and that was his life's greatest bitterness, for that was really all he wanted and was capable of. He wanted to share his beauty and be generous with his art, but everyone just refused him and shut the door on him. Our common practical joke with the sabotaged boat, Harry's capsizing, Betty's sleeping pills, Helena's furious hatred and my incurable jealousy made him fed up. So he left us, but in style and came back in a way to make us ever uncertain whether he came back as living or dead.

*Harry* God save us from kinky poets!

*Arnold* That's that. *(finishes his glass)* I have nothing more to say. You may draw your own conclusions. I have drawn mine and explained them. Now I need to take a walk.

*Helena* Where will you go?

*Arnold* Just for a short walk to have some fresh air.

*Betty* It is dark outside.

*Arnold* I know, but you are forgetting, Betty, that I am at home here. I know the paths.

*Gustav* You need a little fresh air between the rounds, Arnold.

*Arnold* That's what I mean. *(puts down his glass and walks out into the darkness.)*

*Harry* Well, what do you think?

*Betty* What a performance in straight metaphysics!

*Gustav* The question remains if he came back alive or dead, and that issue seems more doubtful than ever.

*Helena* Of course he came back alive. Arnold explained it clearly. *He came back in a way to make us ever uncertain whether he came back dead or alive.*

*Harry* A poet's leave.

*Betty* But then at least the hope remains that he might come back.

*Harry* Arnold forgot to play for us.

*Helena* You never asked him.

*Betty* You know since of old, Harry, your weakness for his music. You were the only one among us who never could stand it.

*Helena* Arnold always felt insulted by Harry's lack of musicality.

*Gustav* He can play for us when he comes back.

*Helena* Wait a moment!

*Betty* What is it? Do you need a drink?

*Helena* Which direction did Arnold take?

*Betty* He went out.

*Helena* Yes, but did he go straight out or down to the right, to the boats?

*Harry* He walked straight out.

*Helena* There are no boats in that direction and no path.

*Gustav* He said he knew the way.
*Helena (more and more upset, rising)* He walked straight out. Straight out into the woods! And there behind the woods...
*Harry* What is your poiint, Helena?
*Helena* In that direction there is the viewpoint with the precipice!
*Gustav (rising)* It is true. Arnold often goes there to see the view. But there is no view at this hour. There are only black rocks and a steep precipice straight down to the surge…
*Harry* You don't say!
*Betty (rising)* After him! Get torches and lamps! He might have done something immensely stupid!
*Harry (rising, calm)* Stay here, all of you. I and Gustav will go out. Take it easy. Are you ready, Gustav?
*Gustav* I have Arnold's night torch here. *(lights a strong lantern)*
*Harry* We will soon be back.
*(Harry and Gustav leave.)*
*Betty* You don't think he has done anything stupid, do you?
*Helena (beside herself)* That's exactly what I know that he has done! *(cries out. Betty embraces and comforts her, as they sit in the sofa.)*
*Betty* It must not be true. Not him as well.
*Helena* It *is* true! He always followed Henning!
*(Betty soothes and wags her as she cries out.*
*After a while, Harry and Gustav return.)*
*Betty* Well?
*Harry* It's hopeless. It's forty meters down. You can't see anything in that surge, and if you jump down there nothing can save you. You just vanish.
*Betty* Gustav?
*Gustav* He has obviously taken that path. We found his handkerchief on the rock, as if he had put it there on purpose, like to tell us: "As you see, I have also disappeared."
*Betty* But why?
*Helena* He always followed Henning.
*Gustav* I am afraid Helena could be right.
*Betty* Could we find him tomorrow?
*Harry* If he went down into that surge no one will ever find him. The sea has taken him in that case after he smashed himself against the rocks. You can't go down there, not even by a rope-ladder or helicopter. They are too steep.
*Betty* Do you think Henning went the same way?
*Helena* Henning came back to fetch Arnold. Now he has fetched him.
*Harry (sits down)* I need a drink. *(pours himself one.)*
*Gustav* Me too. We could all need one.
*Betty (raises her glass)* Cheers for Arnold and Henning!
*(They all share the toast.)*

*Helena* Do you think they will be back?
*Gustav* Honestly speaking, no. Arnold may have solved the mystery, but he will not come back to tell us the solution.
*Helena* We must figure that out for ourselves, if we aren't too stupid.
*Harry* The risk is that we are too stupid for such poets, since the chance is almost non-existent that we would ever become the wiser for them. *(drinks)*
*Gustav* So we have to live on our hopes, just like after Henning disappeared.
*Helena* But now none of them will come bac k.
*Betty* The risk is that we will all one by one gradually go down the precipice, if we go on digging this out.
*Harry* Betty is right! I give up! *(rises)*
*Helena* Where are you going?
*Harry* Up to sleep. I have had enough. *(leaves)*
*Betty* I guess we all have.
*Gustav* Before you go, Harry, - concede that you still actually tried to kill him practically.
*Harry* Of course I tried to murder him. Unfortunately I only succeeded with the contrary. Now we will never be rid of him whether he is dead or alive.
*Gustav* Could you specify your motive?
*Harry* They were both so damned superior, Arnold with his Chopin and he with the ruthless cruelty of his intelligence. But Arnold was harmless, for he was self-destructive as an alcoholic, while Henning was a direct threat to everyone's personal security.
*Betty* I guess he realized it when you tried to kill him.
*Helena* That's why he chose to disappear.
*Betty* Goodnight, Harry. Sweet dreams. See you tomorrow.
*Harry* No further questions?
*Betty* You are in the clear, Harry. After all, you were not alone.
*Harry* Then I go to tie myself up in something old. *(leaves)*
*Gustav* We will have to alert the police and coast guard again tomorrow.
*Betty* This will never end.
*Helena* At least it was not Arnold who executed the chief consultant.
*Betty* Not even that I think we can be entirely certain of.
*Gustav* I wash my hands and leave the rest to the authorities.
*Betty* No, my friends, let's not contact the authorities. Let's give both Henning and Arnold a chance to come back.
*Helena* She is right.
*Gustav* Both Henning and Arnold have come and passed, but both could come back and pass out again.
*Betty* I don't think we can get any more exact summing-up of the case than that, Gustav. Let's now follow Arnold's classical example and have another round of drinks.

*Helena* A good idea, Betty. And we don't have to worry about any aftermath at the doctor's, for Arnold whisked him away.

*Betty* No prison directors, please.

*Gustav* Thank you, Arnold and Henning, for an excellent performance. We are looking forward to a sequel.

*Betty* You are welcome to reappear, as long as we live, if only you always return.

*(All three toast each other.)*

*Curtain.*

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*Dedicated to the memory of the poet Henning Enedal and the musician Hugo Carlmark.*