

Drums in the Night (1922 Script)

by
Bertolt Brecht

**Translation by
Erin Merritt
(2013/2014)**

Cast of Characters

BALICKE, owner of a munitions-basket factory

MRS BALICKE, his wife

ANNA, their daughter

MURK, a war profiteer who's seeing Anna

BABUSCH, a journalist and friend to the Balickes

KRAGLER, a soldier who was Anna's fiancé

The Balickes' MAID

MANKE, a WAITER at the Piccadilly Bar

MARIE, a taxi dancer

A MAN with news

ONE, a wannabe protester (later, MAN 2, leaving the uprising)

THE OTHER, another wannabe protester (later, MAN 1, leaving the uprising)

GLUBB, a schnapps distiller and owner of the Red Raison Bar

BULLTROTTER, a newspaper hawker

MANKE, waiter at the Red Raison, brother to the Piccadilly-Manke

AUGUSTA, a prostitute

A DRUNK MAN

LAAR, a country bumpkin, wounded in the war

A WOMAN selling newspapers

A WOMAN ON THE STREET, coming from the protests

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Act 1: Africa

At the Balicke's. Dark room with muslin curtains. It is evening.

BALICKE: [*shaving at the window*] It's been four years since he went missing—he won't be coming back now. The times are damned uncertain—any man's worth his weight in gold. I'd gladly have given him my blessing two years ago if it weren't for your damned sentimentality. But now we've got to bury the dead and reel in a live one.

MRS BALICKE: [*standing by the framed photograph of Kragler as a gunner*] He was such a good man. Such a pure, childlike man.

BALICKE: Well he's rotten by now.

MRS BALICKE: When he comes back...!

BALICKE: No one comes back from heaven.

MRS BALICKE: Then by heaven, Anna will drown herself.

BALICKE: If she says that, she's a goose, and I've never known a goose to drown itself.

MRS BALICKE: She's been pretty green around the gills lately.

BALICKE: Then she shouldn't stuff herself with blackberries and pickled herring! Murk's a fine fellow. We can thank God on our knees for him.

MRS BALICKE: Yes, a fine fellow with a fat salary. But compared to the other one... I could cry.

BALICKE: Compared to a corpse? I told her, "It's now or never!" What is she waiting for? The Pope? Some exotic African? I've had it with all the Romantic hogwash.

MRS BALICKE: But when he does come back, this corpse, from Heaven or from Hell—"My name is Kragler"—who is going to tell him he's a corpse and someone else is in bed with his girl?

BALICKE: I'll do it. And now, you tell that goose that I'm sick of the nonsense. The Wedding March is overdue and Murk's the man. If I try to tell her, she'll only drown us all in a sea of tears. Now, can I kindly get some light?

MRS BALICKE: I'll get the band-aids. You always cut yourself in the dark.

BALICKE: Cuts are cheap. It's the light bill that's bleeding me dry. [*Calls*] Anna!

ANNA: [*in the doorway*] What's the matter, Father?

BALICKE: Your mother needs to speak to you. And no bawling on your big day.

MRS BALICKE: Anna, your father thinks you're looking pale, like you're not sleeping well.

ANNA: I'm sleeping fine.

MRS BALICKE: Look, this can't go on forever. He's not coming back again. [*Lights candles*]

BALICKE: Here come the waterworks!

MRS BALICKE: This has been very hard on you, and he was a good man, but now, he's dead.

BALICKE: Rotting away underground!

MRS BALICKE: Karl! But you have Murk now. He's handy, and he has a bright future.

BALICKE: Like I always say.

MRS BALICKE. So say yes, for heaven's sake.

BALICKE: And no melodrama, please.

MRS BALICKE: For heaven's sake, take him already!

BALICKE: [*Furious, busy with the band-aids*] Yes, damnit, stop kicking him around like a football. Yes or no? And no more of this looking up to Heaven bullshit—you're the one who has to answer.

ANNA: Y-yes, Papa.

BALICKE: [*in a huff*] All right, go ahead and bawl, open up the floodgates. I'll get my life jacket.

MRS BALICKE: Don't you love Murk just the teeniest bit?

BALICKE: It's absolutely indecent!

MRS BALICKE: Karl! Anna, listen, aren't you and Friedrich getting along?

ANNA: Of course, but you have to understand... ugh, I feel so sick.

BALICKE: I don't have to understand anything! Look, the man's dead—he's rotted away, nothing left but a pile of bones. Three years! No hide nor hair of him, or any of his battalion. They've been blown to bits, vanished into thin air, boom! You wouldn't have to be a genius to know where he's gone, if it weren't for your fuckin' fear of ghosts. But a live man will scare away the ghosts. [*goes to Anna with open arms*] Are you a brave girl or not? Of course you are. Now get over here.

The doorbell rings.

ANNA: [*frightened*] It's him!

BALICKE: Keep him outside. Talk to him.

MRS BALICKE: [*standing in doorway with washing basket*] Don't you have anything for the wash?

ANNA: Yes. No. No, I don't think so...

MRS BALICKE: But it's the eighth already.

ANNA: The eighth?

MRS BALICKE: Of course, the eighth.

ANNA: Well, what if it were the eighteenth?

BALICKE: What is all that chatter in the doorway? Come inside.

MRS BALICKE: Well, make sure you put something in the wash. [*Mrs Balicke exits.*]

BALICKE: [*sets Anna on his lap*] Now look, God didn't create woman to live without a man—it's blasphemy! You're missing a soldier who has been promoted to God's Army above. But do you even remember anything about him? Not a thing, my dear. Death's been dressing him for the *Danse Macabre* for three years. And even if he weren't dead as a doornail, he wouldn't be the fresh-faced boy you knew. No matter what, he's revolting and rotten now. He's got no nose! But you think you miss him. Just take another man—it's perfectly natural. And when you do, you'll wake up happy as a lark. You're a strong, healthy girl, with a strong, healthy appetite! No blasphemy in that!

ANNA: But I can never forget him! Never! You want to talk me into it, but I can't.

BALICKE: Take Murk. He will help you forget him!

ANNA: I do love him. And one day I won't love anyone else—but not yet.

BALICKE: Don't worry about that—he'll win you over. You just have to give him certain "privileges," the kind that marriage gives a man. I can't say any more than that—you're too young. [*Tickles her*] So, are we agreed?

ANNA: [*laughs salaciously*] But I don't know if Friedrich even wants to.

BALICKE: Come in, woman.

MRS BALICKE: Let's join them in the parlor. Do come in, Mr. Murk.

Mrs. Balicke and Murk enter.

BALICKE: Evening, Murk! You're pale as death, man!

MURK: Good evening, Anna.

BALICKE: What's wrong? See a ghost, did you? You're white as a sheet! All the shooting in the streets getting to you?

Silence.

BALICKE: Okay Anna, give him hell.

Balicke exits ostentatiously with his wife.

ANNA: What is wrong Friedrich? You really are pale.

MURK: [*sniffing*] I suppose they've popped the champagne already?

Silence.

MURK: Was someone else here? [*Goes up to Anna*] Who was here? Now you're the one who's white as a sheet. Who was here?

ANNA: No one! No one's been here! What's wrong with you?

MURK: Then what's the big rush? You won't put one over on me! Well, whatever he wants! But I'm not getting engaged in this hole.

ANNA: Who said anything about getting engaged?

MURK: The old woman. The Lord's eye maketh the cattle fat. [*paces around*] Well, when are we doing it?

ANNA: You're acting like it's really important to my parents. God knows, my parents couldn't care less. Nothing's pinning you down.

MURK: And you're just off your First Communion, I suppose?

ANNA: I'm just saying you're taking my answer for granted.

MURK: Oh, yeah? Because of the other?

ANNA: I didn't say anything about him.

MURK: But he's hanging right here in between us, haunting the place.

ANNA: It was different with him. You'll never understand that. It was spiritual.

MURK: Whereas what's between us is carnal.

ANNA: What's between us is nothing.

MURK: Was nothing! But it's something now!

ANNA: You don't know anything about it.

MURK: You'll be singing a different tune soon!

ANNA: That's what you think!

MURK: I'm proposing to you.

ANNA: And this is your declaration of love?

MURK: No, that'll come later.

ANNA: After all, there is a basket factory in it for you.

MURK: You're such a little bitch! So they still haven't caught on?

ANNA: Oh, Friedrich. They sleep like the dead.

Nestles up to him.

MURK: We don't!

ANNA: You dog!

Murk grabs Anna to him, then kisses her nonchalantly.

MURK: Bitch!

ANNA: Shhh! The evening train is passing. Do you hear it? I'm always afraid he'll be on it. It gives me the willies.

MURK: That mummy? I'll take care of him. But I'm telling you, you need to put that business behind you. I'm not letting a stiff come between us in bed.

ANNA: Don't get mad. Come on Friedrich—forgive me.

MURK: For praying to Saint Andreas? You've got cobwebs on your brain! He'll be just as dead after our wedding as he was after his funeral. You want to bet? [*laughs*] I'll bet you... a baby.

ANNA: [*Burrowing her face into him.*] Oh, don't talk like that, Friedrich.

MURK: [jolly] You'll see. [to the door] You can come back in now, Mother! Hullo, Father!

MRS BALICKE: [right behind the door] Oh, children! [bursting into tears] It's so out of the blue!

BALICKE: Tough birth, eh?

Emotional hugs all around.

MURK: Twins! So when's the wedding? Time is money.

BALICKE: In three weeks if it's up to me! The bed is ready. Mother, dinner!

MRS BALICKE: Yes, yes, man, just let me catch my breath. [Runs out] Like a bolt from the blue!

MURK: Let me take you out for a bottle at the Piccadilly Bar. I'm all for getting engaged right away, aren't you? Anna?

ANNA: If we must.

BALICKE: Wait—why the Piccadilly? Have you lost your mind?

MURK: [restlessly] Not here—definitely not here.

BALICKE: Why not?

ANNA: Oh, he's so funny. That's fine, we'll just go to the Piccadilly Bar.

BALICKE: Tonight?! We're likely to get killed!

Mrs Balicke enters with the maid carrying food.

MRS BALICKE: Yes, children. Expect the unexpected! To the table, everyone!

They eat.

BALICKE: [raising his glass] To the happy couple! [They toast] Times are uncertain. The war is ending. This pork is too fatty, Amalie. Demobilization begets disorder. Greed and beastly inhumanity are flooding the oases of peaceful labor.

MURK: —Where we make ammo baskets—cheers! Cheers, Anna!

BALICKE: Bad economies breed shady characters. The government is far too soft on these so-called "revolutionaries." [Opens a newspaper] These raging masses are just vultures—they have no real ideals, no honor. And worst of all, I can say this among friends, are the soldiers coming back from the front, feral and fallen, these ersatz heroes with nothing to save—nothing's sacred to them. Yes, these are trying times, Anna, and a man is worth his weight in gold. Hold on to him. Claw your way to the top, but always together—together to the top... cheers!

He winds up the gramophone.

MURK: [mopping away sweat] Bravo! A real man always ends up on top. You need sharp elbows, steel-toed boots and a steelier vision, and the ability to never look back. That's right, Anna. I came from nothing—errand boy, machine

shop, a shortcut here and there, and I picked up what I could wherever I could. It's people like me who've made Germany mighty. Okay, so sometimes we had to take the kid gloves off, but we always worked hard. Cheers, Anna!

The gramophone plays: "I pray to the power of love" (a portion of the German military's "Grand Tattoo")

BALICKE: Bravo! What's wrong, Anna?

ANNA: [*has risen, stands half turned*] I don't know. This is all happening so fast. Maybe it's not such a good thing, Mother, huh?

MRS BALICKE: What, child? What a goose you are! Just get ready faster. What's not to like?!

BALICKE: Sit down! Or since you're up, wind the gramophone again.

Anna sits down. Pause.

MURK: Cheers then! [*clinks glasses with Anna*] What's wrong with you?

BALICKE: So back to business, Fritz—people won't be wanting ammo baskets much longer. At most a few weeks of civil war, and after that we're washed up. And then what? But I've got a brilliant idea—no joke—baby carriages! The factory's in peak condition.

He takes Murk by the arm, takes him to the back of the stage. Opens the curtains.

BALICKE: Annex 2 and Annex 3—both permanent and state-of-the-art. Anna, wind up the gramophone. This song always moves me.

The gramophone plays: "Deutschland Über Alles"

MURK: Hey, there's a man in the factory yard! What's he doing?

ANNA: How creepy! I think he's looking up here!

BALICKE: Probably the security guard. What are you laughing at, Fritz? Cat got your tongue? The women have gone pale.

MURK: I've just had the most comical thought—the Spartacists...

BALICKE: Nonsense—none of that type around here! [*But he turns away, uncomfortable*] So, that's the factory!

He goes back to the table as Anna closes the curtain.

BALICKE: The war made my fortune. It was just lying there for the taking, so why not? I'm not crazy. If I hadn't taken it, someone else would have. The end of the sow is the beginning of the sausage, as they say! If you think about it, the war was a blessing for us. Our bellies are pleasantly pregnant with prosperity, and in due time, we'll deliver... baby carriages. No reason to rush it. Are you in?

MURK: With both feet, Papa! Cheers!

BALICKE: And in due time, you can make the babies! Hahahahaha!

MAID: Mr Babusch is here, Mr Balicke!

BABUSCH: [*Trots in*] I see you're well fortified against the Witches' Sabbath those Reds are plotting out there. Spartacus is mobilizing—the negotiations have been terminated. In 24 hours there'll be artillery fire over Berlin.

BALICKE: [*his napkin around his neck*] Goddamit! Will those devils never be satisfied?

MRS BALICKE: Artillery? Ohgodogodogod! What a night! What a night! I'm going down to the cellar, Balicke!

BABUSCH: It's still quiet in the inner city—the revolutionary activity is mostly in the outer precincts, but the rumor is they're planning to occupy the newspaper offices.

BALICKE: What? We're getting engaged here! Why today, for God's sake? They're lunatics!

MURK: They ought to be lined up against the wall and shot!

BALICKE: That's right, whoever's dissatisfied with this country can line up against the wall!

BABUSCH: Wait, you're getting engaged, Balicke?

MURK: Babusch, my bride!

MRS BALICKE: Like a bolt from the blue! But when will the shooting start?

BABUSCH: [*shaking hands with Anna and Murk*] The Spartacists have hoarded a huge cache of weapons. The parasites! And yet here's Anna, and nothing can stop her celebrating the sanctity of the hearth. The family! The German family! "My home is my castle," she says.

MRS BALICKE: But why now? Why now? On your special day, Anna!

BABUSCH: But folks, it is pretty interesting.

BALICKE: Not to me it isn't. Not one bit! [*Wipes his lips with a napkin*]

MURK: You know what? You should come with us to the Piccadilly Bar! We're getting engaged!

BABUSCH: What about the Spartacists?

BALICKE: They can wait, Babusch! Let them shoot someone else in the belly, Babusch—come along to the Piccadilly Bar! Get dressed, girls!

MRS BALICKE: The Piccadilly Bar? Tonight? [*She sits in a chair*]

BALICKE: Well, it used to be the Piccadilly Bar. Now it's Café Fatherland. Well, since Friedrich's invited us, why not tonight? That's what cabs are for! March, old woman, go freshen up!

MRS BALICKE: I'm not taking one step outside these four walls! What's wrong with you, Fritzie?

ANNA: A man thinks his will is the will of Heaven. When Friedrich wants something, he wants it now.

All look at Murk.

MURK: Not here—no way! I... I want music, and lights. It's a classy joint. It's so dark here, and I dressed up just for the occasion. So how about it, mother-in-law?

MRS BALICKE: I don't understand a bit of this. [*Leaves the room*]

ANNA: Wait for me Friedrich, I'm almost done.

BABUSCH: Fabulous lot happening! Everything flying at us at once. Infants, form your Infantry! (Which reminds me, apricots—fat, fleshy, burst-in-your mouth juicy—are five marks a pound now!) Idlers, don't be incited! We're only surrounded by swarthy swarms, fingers in their filthy mouths, whistling into the brightly lit cafés. Their flag red like a crusty scab. And there's the upper crust dancing in the nightclubs! Well, ahem... congratulations on the wedding!

MURK: Don't change, ladies. These days everyone wants to be "Equal." If you sparkle too much, you'll attract the wrong kind of attention.

BALICKE: Absolutely right! It's a somber time. And your oldest things are good enough for this gang, anyway. Come back down, Anna!

MURK: We'll go on ahead. Don't change.

ANNA: Brute! [*Goes out*]

BALICKE: Forward march... it's the will of Heaven! Oh wait, let me just change my shirt.

MURK: So you'll follow with Mother? And we'll take Babusch as a chaperone. [*sings*] 'Babusch, Babusch, Babusch, trotting through the hall...'

BABUSCH: Will you stop singing that godawful ditty? [*Goes off with him arm in arm*]

MURK: [*Sings off*]: "Pull your thumbs out of your mouths, kiddies, we're off to the Bacchanal!"

Balicke is alone. He lights a cigar.

BALICKE: Thank God that's all sorted out. The hardest work I've ever done, chasing that girl into a fellow's bed. Blind with love for a dead man. My clean shirt's soaked through. Oh well, all's well that end's well, and now my motto's "Baby Stroller!" [*Exiting*] Woman, a shirt!

ANNA: [*outside*] Friedrich! Friedrich! [*Hurrying in*] Friedrich!

MURK: [*in the doorway*] Anna! [*Dryly, restlessly, his arms hanging like an orangutan's*] Are you coming?

ANNA: What's wrong? Why are you looking at me like that?

MURK: Are you still coming with me? I know what I'm asking! Quit stalling and answer me once and for all.

ANNA: Yes, of course I am. Surprise!

MURK: Good, good. I'm not sure of anything anymore. For twenty years I froze in cramped garrets, and now I wear shoes with fancy buttons on them. I sweated

so hard in the dark that it ran into my eyes. Now it's others who sweat at the sight of me. But I still feel like I'm on thin ice—cold drafts sneak up on me, icy breezes haunt me: I still remember what it is to have cold toes. [*Approaches Anna, but does not take hold of her; he stands swaying before her*] Now at last my flesh is growing solid. I can bathe in the best bubbly if I want. I've finally made it! Soaked in sweat, eyes clenched, fists balled so tight my nails cut into my palms. I've done it. Security! Warmth. I've traded my harsh, dirty work clothes for a big, soft, white bed. [*Looking fleetingly out a window as he passes*] Come to me. I'm unclenching my fists. I'll relax in your sunshine; I have you.

ANNA: [*rushing to him*] Dearest!

MURK: Snuggle Bunny!

ANNA: Yes, you have me now.

MURK: So I didn't have you already?

BABUSCH: [*off*] Let's get things moving! I'm the maid of honor, kids!

MURK: [*winds up the phonograph again, re-playing "the power of love"*] And I'm the very best man, as long as I get my way.

They exit, pressed close together.

MRS BALICKE: [*Scurries in, wearing black. Stands at the mirror arranging her cloche*] The moon is so full and red... And the children, oh God! Ah, yes... one can truly give thanks to God for a night like this.

At this moment, a man in a muddy dark-blue artillery uniform steps into the doorway, carrying a small pipe.

THE MAN: My name is Kragler.

MRS BALICKE: [*going weak in the knees, supporting herself on the dressing table*] Sweet Jesus!

KRAGLER: Why talk to Heaven when I'm right here? Been wasting money on wreaths? Too bad! Humbly reporting: in Algiers I'm a well-known ghost. But this dead body has a killer appetite. I'd eat the worms that want to eat me! What's the matter, Mother Balicke? Ghastly fucking song!

He turns off the gramophone. Mrs Balicke still stares at him in stunned silence.

KRAGLER: Well, don't faint. Here's a chair. There's water to drink. [*Walks humming to the cupboard*] I still remember my way around here pretty well. [*Pours wine into a glass*] Wine! Niersteiner! Sip some spirits when you see a spirit. I'm pretty lively for a dead guy, aren't I? [*Looks after Mrs Balicke*]

BALICKE: [*off*] Come on, old woman! *Marchons!* You look beautiful, Sugar Angel! [*Enters, stands transfixed*] What the...

KRAGLER: Evening, Mr. Balicke. Your wife is not feeling well.

Kragler tries to pour wine into her mouth, but she averts her head in horror. Balicke looks on uneasily.

KRAGLER: Take it! No? You'll be back to yourself in a moment. Didn't think you'd remember me so well. I came straight back from Africa—via Spain. Fake passport and all that. So, where's Anna?

BALICKE: For God's sake, leave my wife alone. You're drowning her.

KRAGLER: I'll stop then.

MRS BALICKE: [*runs to Balicke, who stands stiffly*] Karl!

BALICKE: [*severely*] Mr. Kragler, if you are who you say you are, may I ask what exactly you are doing here?

KRAGLER: [*taken aback*] Well, I was a prisoner-of-war in Africa.

BALICKE: Fuck! [*Goes to the wall cupboard and downs a swig of schnapps*] This is brilliant. You look just like him. What a fucking mess! What do you want? What?! My daughter—not 30 minutes ago—got engaged.

KRAGLER: [*sways uncertainly*] What do you mean?

BALICKE: You've been gone for four years. She's waited four years. We've waited four years. But that's all over now, and nothing to do about it.

Kragler sits. Balicke is shaken, but is making an effort to keep his dignity.

BALICKE: In other words, Mr Kragler, we are otherwise engaged this evening.

KRAGLER: [*looks up*] Otherwise engaged...? [*absent-mindedly*] Yes... [*slumps again*]

MRS BALICKE: Don't take it so badly, Mr Kragler. There are plenty of fish in the sea. What's happened has happened. So, you know... kindly forever hold your peace.

KRAGLER: Anna...

BALICKE: [*brusquely*] Woman! [*She goes over to him hesitantly, he with sudden determination*] No more sentimentality! *Marchons!* [*Exits with his wife. The maid appears in the doorway*]

KRAGLER: Hmm... [*Shakes his head*]

MAID: The Balickes have gone out.

Silence.

MAID: They've gone to the Piccadilly Bar for the engagement party.

Silence. Wind.

KRAGLER: [*looks up at her*] Hm!

He stands up slowly as if life is cumbersome, looks at the room, walks around silently, hunched over, looks through the window, turns around, and toddles out slowly, whistling, without his hat.

MAID: Your hat! You forgot your hat!