
Excerpt from

The Kindermann Depiction

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Desperate to revive their drowned child, Agnes and Alfred provoke the death of the creature whose blood they harvest for food. In the play, characters never speak but sometimes sing. The currencies are blood and books. The engine is grief.

The Kindermann Depiction is a play without words. The script (score) describes a specific series of interactions of characters, props, and sound.

SETTING:

The audience sits in a single row of chairs on a platform elevated ten feet above the action. Each person wears headphones through which the sound score is played.

The performance area below the platform is divided down the middle by a fence of tall black metal pikes. On one side (audience left), a great hill of white fabric; on the other, fallen leaves several feet deep. The fence and both yards might extend infinitely toward each horizon.

At the top of the hill of fabric: a small house of dingy bed sheets. At the bottom of the hill, nestled against the fence, sits a table with two ledger books, a set of metal measuring pincers, three teacups, a pen, and an inkpot.

Another table sits just opposite, on the other side of the fence, all but buried in leaves. On this table: two books with their hard covers removed, various old metal tools, two worn teacups, and a wooden

bowl and box. At one edge of the table is a book in a vise. The pages of this book have been half-rasped away into paper dust that sits in the nearby box.

Behind the leaf-side table stands a tall structure reminiscent of a tenement's rooftop water tank, old and wooden, with book covers shingling its conical roof. A black tube runs from this distilling tank to a dusty glass water-jug nearby. A makeshift wooden ladder provides access to a hatch door in its side.

Furthest audience right, half-buried in leaves, sits a small shack made of old wood and shingled with book covers. A small chimney. A paneless window facing the yard.

Perhaps hardest to discern in the dim light—though closest in proximity to the audience—at extreme audience left, on top of the hill of fabric: A child-sized mummy, swaddled in gauze, hanging upright in its swaddling from a hook.

CHARACTERS:

[AGNES] A woman in a faded white gown. In place of a forearm and hand, she has a long, tapering, sturdy, metal needle, wrapped with gauze where it meets the flesh of her elbow. Just above the elbow, a black leather strap. She lives on the fabric side of the fence.

[FRANK] Her husband. A man in a black captain's jacket. His right arm resembles Agnes' except that the top half of his metal needle has been roughly broken off. Lives on the fabric side.

[THE CREATURE] A translucent thing, gauzy and vaguely aquatic, but for the head, which is a birdcage with a live bluejay in it. She lives in the river on the fabric side of the fence.

[ALFRED] A man in dirty shirt and pants, with dirty nails and hair. Carries a drab-white megaphone. Lives on leaf side.

[LUDWIG] A boy. Alfred's son, dressed like Alfred. Leaf side.

ABOUT THE SCORE:

Each row describing a character's action represents a moment in time. Actions for different characters occurring in the same row play more or less simultaneously. Thoughts and intentions appear in parentheses.

Scene 1A

	LUDWIG	AGNES	SOUND/SIGHT
1			Rumbling in headphones
2	Using a wire brush, rasp down clamped book		LUDWIG'S SONG starts
3	Sing your song while you work		
4			After first verse, leaf rustling
5			Sporadically throughout, a drip of water
6			Sounds of FRANK straining to lift mummy
7			Lights slowly up
8			Curtain slowly rises
9	Sing up to the audience	Your eyes follow FRANK, walking off DR	The dusky light fades as the scene progresses
10	Look wonderingly at the mummy	Stop and lean against a leg of the tripod hook	
11		(You seem tired and weak)	
12	Look back at the audience		
13	Finish your singing		Music continues, fades
14	Gaze at the mummy a moment		
15	Look at AGNES		
16		Turn to see LUDWIG looking at you	
17			For the first time, the world is completely quiet
18			After a while, another drop of liquid falls into the jug
19	Look away	Turn back and look at the ground	
20	Finish rasping the book		
21	Put the book dust in the box		
22	Discard the unraspable remains of the pages		
23	Stretch your arm and hand		Mid-yard, one small movement under the leaves
24	You hear rustling: look at the yard		A quick, muffled whispering starts
25	Shuffle slowly, methodically searching thru yard		
26	Stop: your feet find something		
27	Lift it		
28	It's a chained clamp, pinching a feather		
29	Spruce the feather a bit		
30	Replace the clamp under the leaves		
31	Smooth the leaves over to disguise it		
32	Continue shuffling, searching		
33	Stop: your feet find something		
34	Lift it		
35	It's another chained clamp, pinching a feather		
36	Spruce the feather a bit		
37	Replace the clamp under the leaves		

	LUDWIG	AGNES	SOUND/SIGHT
38	Smooth the leaves over to disguise it		
39	Continue shuffling		
40	Stop: your feet find something mid-yard		Scared book noise, still muffled
41	Pick it up		Scared book noise, unmuffled
42	This chained clamp has trapped a live book		
43	Loosen the chained clamp		
44	Examine the book's binding and cover		
45	The book wiggles nervously in your hands		The book's frightened whispering
46	As you carry it to the table,		
47	Stroke it gently, calming it		
48	Position the book in the vise with its binding up		The book whines
49	Pick up the broken icepick and mallet		
50	Aim the icepick on the binding, raise the mallet		
51	Puncture the book through the binding		The whining stops abruptly
52	You've killed it		
53	Relax your grip on the book		
54	Gently tug a feather from the book's pages		
55	Take the feather back to the empty tethered clamp		
56	Lift up the clamp		
57	Tighten it until it is almost closed		
58	Tuck the nib of the feather into the clamp		
59	Close the clamp so that it holds the feather		
60	Spruce the feather		
61	Set the clamp back under the leaves		
62	Smooth the leaves over to disguise it		
63	Return to the table		
64	Unclamp the book		
65	Fold back the front cover		
66	Take the knife		
67	Cut the book cover from the binding and pages		
68	Turn the book over and make another cut		
69	Hold up the loose cover		
70	Examine it		
71	Stretch it a little		
72	Put it onto a nearby pile of book covers		
73	Reclamp the book pages		
74	Take the wire brush for rasping		
75	Rasp the book	Look toward the mummy	
76		Look at the ground, lost in thought	
77	Brush the dust into the dust box		
78	Knock the side of the brush on the box	Watch LUDWIG rasp the book	

	LUDWIG	AGNES	SOUND/SIGHT
79		Walk to the table and sit on the bench	
80		Notice bread crumbs on the table	
81		Pick them up with a fingertip and eat them	
82	Look at AGNES a moment		
83	Go to the watertower		Another drip
84	Take the jug of water to the fence, near AGNES		
85	Look at her; offer the jug	Notice LUDWIG	
86		Pass your teacup through the fence to him	
87	Fill the teacup		
88	Pass it back	Take the cup	
89		Look at LUDWIG, smile weakly	
90	Smile back at her	Drink the water	
91	Return the jug to its place		
92		Sit for a moment	
93	Go toward the table, ready to rasp	Gather your strength and rise	
94	See AGNES rise		
95	Hurry toward her		
96	Knock on her table	Notice LUDWIG	
97	Shake your head "no"	Turn away	
98	Watch her go	Walk slowly to the stone patch	
99	Return to your work	Use your needle to prod the cloth	
100	Rasp for a second	Sense something under the cloth	
101	Watch AGNES	Reach down with your hand	
102		Pull out a water stone	
103	Rasp the book	Examine it casually	
104		Take it to LUDWIG	
105		Hold the stone across the fence, waiting for him to notice	
106	Ignore AGNES; continue rasping	Deposit the stone on his table	
107	Glance at the stone as you continue working	Walk back to the stone patch	
108		Use your needle to prod the cloth	
109		Sense something under the cloth	
110		Reach down with your left hand	
111		Pull out a water stone	
112		Examine it casually	
113		Take it to LUDWIG	
114		Deposit the stone on his table	
115		Hover, waiting for him to respond	
116	Wipe your hands on the rag		
117	Examine the stones		
118	Pick up the larger		
119	Clean off any lint or thread		

	LUDWIG	AGNES	SOUND/SIGHT
120	Shake the stone with your ear near it		
121	Swirl it, listening		
122	Nod (You're satisfied.)		
123	Hand it back to AGNES	Take the first stone back	
124	Examine the other stone in the same way	Measure it with measuring pincers	
125	Put them on your table near AGNES	Open one of the ledgers	
126	Watch her record them	Record the dimensions of the stone with the pen	
127		Replace the stone on LUDWIG's table	
128		Grab the other stone	
129		Record the dimensions of the stone with the pen	
130		Replace the stone on LUDWIG's table	
131	Gather the stones in a clean rag	Put the ledger away	
132	Take them to the watertower	Rest your head on the table	
133	Climb the ladder		
134	Deposit them in the hole at the top		Sound of stones being processed Water drips quickly into the jug, then slower throughout
135	Return to the table		
136	Take the icepick and ring it on the fence lightly		
137		Come out of your reverie	
138	Give the icepick to AGNES	Take the icepick	
139	Try not to look at her	Scrape the clots out of the bore of your needle arm	
140	Give in and watch her scrape her needle	Gaze at LUDWIG as you clean the needle	
141	(You want to look away, but don't)	(You're aware of something sexual in his curiosity)	
142	Turn and go into the house		
143			Smoke begins to come softly from the chimney
144	Peek thru the window to watch AGNES		
145		Catch LUDWIG watching	
146		Finish cleaning	
147		Beckon him out again with the icepick	
148	Return to the table with a cooking sheet		
149	Put the sheet on the table	Hand him the icepick through the fence	
150	Pick up a rag		
151	Use it to take the icepick back		
152	Wipe it clean		
153	Put the rag and icepick down on the table	Aim your needle through the fence into the wooden bowl	
154		Make your left arm available to LUDWIG	
155	Loosen the strap on AGNES' left arm		
156	Watch her black blood flow into the bowl	Watch your black blood flow into the bowl	
157	When there's enough, tighten her strap		
158	Pick up the rag	(The blood stops)	
159	Wipe her needle clean very gently	Shudder a little	

LUDWIG

160 Put down the rag
161 Scoop book dust into the wooden bowl
162 Stir dust with a wooden spoon to make dough
163 Put a few extra scoops in from the dust box
164 Continue stirring, adding dust
165
166 Hear the rustling approaching
167 Look DL
168 (It's your dad, ALFRED.)
169 (ALFRED doesn't know the boy is dead)
170

AGNES

(The bloodletting makes you weak)
Lie down in your yard

Hear the rustling approaching
Sit up and look DL
(It's ALFRED.)
(ALFRED doesn't know the boy is dead)
Lower your head

SOUND/SIGHT

A soft rustle of leaves approaches from DL.

Scene 1B

	LUDWIG	AGNES	ALFRED	SOUND/SIGHT
1	Stand watching ALFRED		Enter (smiling & pleased)	
2			Carry megaphone and sack	
3			Notice LUDWIG's expression	
4			Stop smiling	
5	Run into ALFRED's arms		Welcome LUDWIG in your arms	
6	Hug him warmly		Return the hug	
7	Watch the action		Notice the mummy	
8			Stand and figure it out	
9			Let the sack go	
10			See AGNES	
11			Go toward her; stop at the fence	
12			Raise your megaphone to your mouth	
13			Mouth "Agnes...Agnes..."	ALFRED calls to AGNES
14		Start to cry		
15		Pull out your handkerchief		
16		Dry your eyes		
17			Lift the megaphone to your lips	
18			Ask where FRANK is	ALFRED asks AGNES
19		Gesture offstage DR	(FRANK is gone)	
20			Entreat her (kindly but pushily)	ALFRED entreats
21		Refuse to look up		
22			(She's not giving in)	
23			Stop and lower the megaphone	
24			Pause	
25			Raise the megaphone to your heart, at AGNES	Booming heartbeat
26		Clasp your ears as much as possible		
27		Glare at ALFRED		
28		Go into the house	Lower the megaphone	Heartbeat stops
29			Walk up to the fence	
30			Regard the mummy	
31	Short pause			
32	Grab ALFRED's sack			
33	Take it to the table			
34	Take out the gauze			
35	Put it back in the sack			

	LUDWIG	AGNES	ALFRED	SOUND/SIGHT
36	Take out the new icepick			
37	Put it on your table			
38	Take out the necklace			
39	Look at it			
40	Glance furtively at ALFRED			
41	Put the necklace back			
42	Take out the toy boat	Begin your song		tent lights up AGNES' SONG begins
43	(cool!)		Turn from the fence (You don't hear the song) See LUDWIG with the boat	
44	Examine the boat		Go to him	
45			Quickly but gently pry it away from him	
46			Hold it a moment	
47			Look off for FRANK	
48			Reach through the fence	
49			Place it on top of AGNES' ledger books	
50				
51				
52				By now, light barely up
53				Curtain falls
		(Song continues through change to next scene)		
