

Here I'll Stay – Script Extract (Opening)

It's September 19th, 1935. New York is in the grip of its usual heatwave, and two tiny figures are standing in the vast shadow of the liner, the *SS Majestic*. The man, Kurt Weill, who is only 5 ft 2 inches, is sweating in an old tweed suit. He scratches his back constantly - psoriasis again. He always gets it when he is nervous.

The woman is Lotte Lenya, and she is carrying their one suitcase. They are divorced, they are broke. For a few years he had been the young hope of German music, the hugely successful and rich composer of *The Threepenny Opera*, and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Songs such as *Pirate Jenny*, *Surabaya Johnny*, "*that old Bilbao Moon...*", "*Oh, the shark has pearly teeth, dear...*". No, you're not going to get any of those tonight. But the point is, Kurt Weill by the age of 30 had been the most successful classical composer of his time. It was a hell of a height to fall from.

But fall he did. All his assets in Germany have been seized, his works are banned, his publishers in Vienna are forbidden to send him any money. In 1933 he was tipped off by a friend and escaped from Germany barely an hour before the Gestapo raided his house. He crossed the border into France, on foot, just the one suitcase. Lenya stayed on for another year or so.

Weill has tried to settle in France, and then Britain. In France he turned to cabaret, writing for Marlene Dietrich who moved in the same lesbian circles as Lenya. Cabaret in Paris was certainly not slumming it, it was seen as high art, and all self-respecting poets wrote song lyrics. This is by Maurice Magre, the 1930s answer to Leonard Cohen.

(I DON'T GIVE A DAMN)