

Lauris Gundars

LIVINGSTONE

A comedy

Translated by Margita Gailitis

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Catherine, 52 years old
George, her husband, 45 years old
Armand, Catherine's son, 24 years old
Mareck, Catherine's brother, 48 years old
Anne, Mareck's wife, 42 years old
Carl, Mareck's friend, 56 years old
Joy, Carl's wife, 50 years old
Johnny, 39 years old

ACT I

Summer day. An open terrace. Entry to the terrace is through a wide open, three-fold doors, stepping down three stairs on each side of the terrace.

In the middle of the terrace there is a long table, with benches. Traces of a party can be seen – the white tablecloth is no longer totally fresh, the candles in the two silver candelabras are almost burned out, and the large flower bouquet in a splendid porcelain vase is slightly wilted. Glasses of various sizes have been left where they have been emptied. There are no dishes, only one empty bowl at the end. Beside it, JOHNNY, his head laid on the table is sleeping.

MARECK quickly comes out of the house – his black suit is slightly wrinkled and he is in the process of buttoning his shirt under the suit jacket. Sitting down on edge of the terrace, Mareck looks around for a good while, several times breathing in deeply and again exhaling. Then he starts to mimic a bird singing. Mareck tries out several trilling sounds, however, no birds respond from the surrounding treetops – as, obviously, Mareck had expected. His trilling has, however, disturbed Johnny's sleep. Johnny looks into the empty bowl, lifts the empty glasses around him. And reconciles himself with the situation.

MARECK You were down early at the boats. I saw through the window – I was going for a piss...

While talking, Mareck doesn't turn around. He's still looking at the landscape.

MARECK After that I couldn't fall asleep for a good half-hour – I almost had woken up. We could have taken a boat ride together. All my life I've been a night owl. But those really are idiotic fantasies, empty fantasies. If a person wants to, he can become a skylark. I'll be a lark. You only need to want it badly enough ... But I did want – to open my eyes. Wanted, yes, but no deal! ...*(laughs)* Promise to come up tomorrow, and wake me up, will you. Help me fulfil my desire. One morning, then another and everything will be fine – I'll be a different person. It isn't so hard... You did get me a fishing rod, didn't you? I don't even know what kind of worms should be dug. I only understood that this morning. But you have some, don't you. Come up tomorrow, and kick at the door! So I feel uncomfortable that you're waiting while I'm not getting up. Knock again, if there's silence. So I feel ashamed...

His head laid on the table, Johnny has still not answered Mareck – this, however, seems not to be expected of him. Johnny's eyes are open.

MARECK Already yesterday I wanted to ask you – do you read any books? No, of course, you read. I wanted to ask if... Let's say, you were reading a story, no, a novel, about a person. He is living relatively

comfortably. Would it interest you? A person, a man's life. In which seemingly everything is fine. Fine, but he...he can't get himself together in the mornings to go fishing on the lake! (*laughs*) So, in general he is living quite comfortably, but something is not quite fine: that kind of a man. And then a problem develops for him. What's happening here. Well, why it isn't fine – you do understand... Even though everything seems to be in order!

JOY quickly comes out of the house. Also she is dressed for a formal occasion in a suitable, black dress.

JOY (*to Mareck*) Good morning! Good morning, good morning, good morning!...

She kneels beside Mareck, and takes his hands in hers.

JOY Cold, cold! You were on the lake after all! Got up in the middle of the night! Good morning, good morning, are you listening? Is there anyone here!

They quickly kiss, and then Joy begins to straighten out Mareck's suit. She even pulls out a shiny bow tie from his pocket and puts it around Mareck's neck.

JOY I'll bring a blanket straight away! You'll get sick! On the lake you need at least a jacket at the minimum! Did you catch a pike? I'll bring it right now – you're frozen cold! In the middle of the night! Straight away! Right now! Are you feeling ill? Sick?! Talk, for God's sake, don't keep mum! Are you feeling ill?!

MARECK I'm not cold. I'm just fine.

JOY What did you eat? Nothing! Having got up in the middle of the night, you haven't eaten anything! What would you like?

MARECK Breakfast.

JOY If I steal two eggs – no one will notice, would they? Straight away. They don't get up so early – we'll manage yet! Will you eat a little omelette?

MARECK Yes.

JOY What will I get for it? There's no one here! ...

Mark presses a kiss on Joy's cheek.

JOY I'll also bring a blanket – your nose is totally cold! Here, until breakfast!

She presses a banana in Mareck's hand that she's taken out of a serviette, and then enters the house. Mareck sits quietly for a while.

MARECK ... And then this man decides that everything ...No, it seems as if it is fine... Well you can see, it very much depends on how you judge it, doesn't it. You could say, if he's fine, let's say, middling fine, it could be worse, couldn't it? He, that man, thinks that...

Johnny has sat up straight and for a good while now is performing incomprehensible manipulations with small shot glasses – hiding them in his sleeves and pockets, and again pulling them out.

MARECK No, all of it isn't happening because it is unbearable, but simply, because it seems that it could better. And the moment of decision has arrived. And it's a joyful moment. Soon, soon it will be here! This man is not feeling sad, not at all! He's singing! Singing in his sleep, singing while awake. No one hears him, but he's singing. Joyful songs! Only joyful!

Mareck gets up, takes an accordeon, which has been left on a bench on the other side of the table, and puts it in Johnny's lap. Johnny' is forced to stop his manipulation with the glasses.

MARECK The man sounds good! Sounds full of joy.

Johnny starts playing *Sentimental Journey*...

MARECK No, this one doesn't sound like him!

Johnny starts *Begin the Beguine*...

MARECK Too fast!

The very sad *Sentimental Journey* sounds again...Mareck no longer objects. He again sits down at the edge of the terrace.

MARECK It's really not that bad for this person, it's fine. And the whole world is open...

CATHERINE comes out of the house – she, unlike everyone else, is in everyday clothes. In an elegant pant suit which also suits her.

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* How many did you catch? Just tell me where you put the fish pail – then you can continue mourning.

MARECK There's nothing wrong with us.

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* Overslept, did you? Sweet, sweet dreams.

Johnny's playing stops.

MARECK He already was down at the boats in the middle of the night. I saw him.

CATHERINE He must have been down there by himself!

MARECK He can't pull out everything by himself – all by himself.

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* Go on, scale them, all right.

MARECK Fish can't be caught to order.

CATHERINE Can all of you also not eat?

Suddenly, having patted Catherine, Mareck pulls a banana from the décolleté of her blouse. Both of them laugh.

CATHERINE He doesn't need to be defended – he needs a beating!

MARECK Bon Apetit! Everything's fine.

CATHERINE I couldn't even have imagined that all of you would be sitting here for three days. I had only counted on a large dinner and breakfast – that's all.

MARECK And we'll continue to sit.

CATHERINE No, stop it - it's so lovely. One could never be able to plan this. One person would have this, another something else. And such beautiful weather. God loves us.

MARECK Where is he?

CATHERINE God?

Both laugh.

MARECK Far?

CATHERINE Should be quite near – He's checked in Copenhagen...

MARECK God?

They both laugh again. Catherine gives the banana back to Mareck.

CATHERINE Don't die from starvation until breakfast. I'll think of something soon.

She again turns to leave, but then returns and takes Mareck aside.

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* Play! Play some more!...

Johnny obeys and again *Sentimental Journey* can be heard.

CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* Please tell Anne to at least wash the socks. I understand – a three-day wait, no-one has brought anything, but socks can be washed, can't they. I would be embarrassed to tell them – you understand. Alright? She's our relative, when all is said and done.

Then Catherine, still smiling, again leaves.

MARECK *(to Johnny)* Something else! Something more stupid!...

Johnny does stop playing, but he isn't able to begin a new tune before GEORGE comes out of the house – in a white linen suit, and a freshly ironed shirt. He has grabbed Catherine at the door and brings her with him.

GEORGE He's near, isn't he? He's almost here!

MARECK In Copenhagen.

GEORGE When everything begins to right itself, always more and more positive electrical charges develop in this world – I must believe this. Never in my life have I been able to sleep so long. Not simply to lie in. The deepest of sleep. My nervous system – therefore – permits rest: *Everything is moving in a better direction, guy, so don't fight it ?!*

CATHERINE That's crazy!

GEORGE But it really seems like that to me, I swear to God!

CATHERINE What would you talk about if everything were fine in this world?

GEORGE Why? Please – he's got as far as Copenhagen. In three days. We fools, all of us are waiting for him and he's only got as far as Copenhagen! He didn't want to be here three days ago? Nonsense! Of course, he wanted to. But he isn't here. And what does that prove? The more orderly world, the less concern there is for a person. If we think about it, that's the way it is, isn't it? *(about Johnny)* Ask him!

He laughs.

GEORGE *(to Mareck, about Johnny)* Do you know what happened to that idiot once?

But Mareck all of a sudden pulls out a banana from George's nose: his magician's skills are truly finely tuned.

GEORGE *(laughs)* And what's growing from my ass? *(to Catherine)* Have I missed a breakfast?

MARECK Eat – till breakfast.

George does in fact peel the banana and begins to demolish it in big bites.

GEORGE *(to Mareck)* At one time you used to take out gorgeous looking dolls from boxes – where are they all living now? I wanted to ask this long ago...

Catherine has headed for the house, but in the doorway she runs into Joy, who in two towels is holding a steaming pot – its contents almost spill on contact.

JOY Everyone's up already! We thought we would – quietly – not to disturb any one. I have here only enough for two – I didn't know...

GEORGE How good it smells!...

He already has taken the hot pot, placed it on the table and with a ladle is spooning out the content.

JOY Straight on the plates...

GEORGE I love you nonetheless! What is it? A watery omelette?

He also gives Catherine a taste.

JOY If there was only more flour...

GEORGE I'll buy you nonetheless.

CATHERINE There's nothing left in the kitchen after all!

JOY I was afraid that you'd notice – two eggs, flour. There's very little there...

CATHERINE That can't be done!

JOY My boys, when they were small, would nag me for days, to make this.

Quickly biting the banana as accompaniment, George is eating the concoction by himself.

JOY *(to Mareck)* Taste it!

GEORGE There is no more...

CATHERINE *(to Joy)* How many eggs do you need? How much flour?

JOY One for every three persons.

CATHERINE Can't be!

GEORGE *(laughs)* What sort of eggs?

JOY Are we going to have breakfast?

CATHERINE I'll manage myself – you're guests! Straight away! Four eggs – for twelve people. I need three eggs ...

JOY Don't stint on the flour...

Joy follows Catherine into the house. In leaving she manages to covertly pat Mareck on the back.

GEORGE *(to Mareck)* When you see women like that, you start re-evaluating life, don't you? What would happen, if you were ...terribly fat, eh!

Not answering, Mareck steps down from the terrace, in order to leave.

GEORGE You know, I would be very grateful if you would spare me some time so we could talk. I swear to God – I'm not joking! Why doesn't anyone in this world believe me?!

MARECK I got up on the right foot this morning. The sun is shining. I would like that the day would end in the same way. That's strange but it's a fact.

GEORGE You don't believe, not even a little, that a person can change over the years?

MARECK I don't want to think at all.

GEORGE I solemnly promise never to say anything about you! I swear to God. And there's nothing to say, really. I assume that how you live – it's your life, and I, thank God, don't have to live it.

MARECK (to Johnny) Let's just walk to the fields!

GEORGE Enough is enough! I don't want to talk about you and I won't! And I don't have a reason to! That's all.

MARECK (to Johnny, about the accordion) Take the squeeze box.

GEORGE (softly) Maybe we'll never meet again. Tomorrow we'll each get our fortune, we'll live high and we won't have the slightest need to talk to each other.

MARECK What need do we have now?

GEORGE The need is mine. Yes, I admit it. Sit down, please ... Yes, I admit. I'm afraid, don't laugh! I myself have to laugh. I don't know what I'll be doing. The future. Everything has changed, after all. I will return ... so, and then? No one knows me there any more. I'll say – *I'm the same as I was* ... No ovations. ... Do you think they'll sound?

Mareck finally sits down at the edge of the terrace. George sits down beside him.

GEORGE Where does the Chellist now sit?

MARECK I don't know...

GEORGE And that idiot Henry?

MARECK He's dead. I heard that somewhere, a few years ago.

GEORGE See, I tell you: I'll be screwed!

MARECK I saw the grey haired one once.

GEORGE Well, is the old goat still breathing? We almost started a revolution, the two of us. I don't remember who was the first to say – *let's go*, but we even ruined the nerves of the Almighty. You've heard this, haven't you?

MARECK Yeah...

GEORGE That doesn't sound convincing!

George laughs too loud. For a moment both are silent. Johnny again is manipulating the shot glasses – it looks like he is attempting to do something similar to Mareck's magic tricks.

MARECK Why do you even have to go anywhere?

GEORGE Are you making fun of me?

MARECK I would be happy just to live here. It's peaceful. Birds. The lake.

GEORGE And a boat full of vomit!

MARECK Seriously.

GEORGE This place is as if created for me.

MARECK I really respect you as a person, truly! When I think of myself...
Fifty is approaching.

GEORGE Who have I here to talk to? With nature? (*about Johnny*) With this
one maybe?! When a person lives each day on a television screen,
he jumps to different conclusions, you know.

MARECK I haven't been there every day for a long time now!

GEORGE Yes you have!

They fall silent again. But after a moment George is again smiling.

GEORGE It's good we had this little talk, isn't it?

MARECK But I really have arrived at some conclusions!

GEORGE Me too!

MARECK (*laughs*) At one time it really seemed to me that I should hang
myself, I swear to God.

GEORGE I'm going to write a book! Would that interest you? The story line
is the following: it's about a person, a man, who has lived half his
life, but has not used his capabilities. He objectively is smarter
than the people around him – I'll prove it with various totally
idiotic happenstances – but he has never particularly wished to be
friendly with his neighbours. So then, one day he starts a new life.
He falls on them like snow. He enters the café – *bah!* Not very
nice! But objectively everything starts to fall into place. In other
words, everyone starts to take account of him. That's roughly
speaking. Well?! The right story at the right time, isn't it? I'm
going to live in this stinking Armand's dive and I'll write and
write! Interesting, isn't it?!

MARECK Yeah...

GEORGE Would you read it?

MARECK Of course.

GEORGE Well, I am really the same as I was earlier? I haven't changed, have I? Well?!

George laughs and hugs Mareck.

GEORGE Smile, for God's sake, life is beautiful! And he is already near. I'll leave already this evening. Maybe. Tomorrow. (calls out loudly) There's no room to breathe here any more! ...

Joy comes out of the house with a large load of dirty dishes.

JOY We'll be eating shortly!

Joy has put the dishes on the edge of the terrace and, kneeling beside Mareck, she hands the spatula to him to lick.

JOY That's better than the cooked!

Mareck licks the spatula. George is still laughing. CARL has arrived on the terrace – his black suit a touch too small, trousers stained, the two top buttons of his shirt undone and his tie twisted.

JOY *(to Carl)* Do you want some?

She hands the spatula, half-licked by Mareck, to Carl, but he ignores it.

CARL *(to George)* Roughly estimating, you'll need three weeks, three weeks and four men. Some emergency work first...

GEORGE In order to demolish everything here and level it to the ground!

CARL *(about Joy)* If we both would live here for about six months, people would rush here and pay good money. She knows how to feed half the world on two eggs.

GEORGE *(laughs)* What eggs?

CARL Regular ones. Understanding that conditionally, of course.

Joy takes the dishes, steps down from the terrace and departs.

CARL And there should be some dish washing facility built on the lake – it's tough to do them from the deck sitting on all fours. Two guys could get this hut ready for me in half a day.

- GEORGE Go ahead! Old Armand will pay. And ask for twice as much as would be decent.
- CARL Why?
- GEORGE Because he is very smart and capable.
- CARL No. I'll only take as much for the work as it costs. And not a penny more! That's written in stone!
- GEORGE This would be the real place for you. Seriously (*about Johnny*) He alone can't manage all.
- CARL No! I only would, conditionally, so to speak. We have double the work at the headquarters this year, we can't keep up.
- GEORGE Are we getting ready for war?
- CARL Yes and no – very shrewd. Not noticeably, we're intensifying mobilisation by three per cent.
- GEORGE What are you doing?
- CARL I'm intensifying the levels of mobilisation. By three per cent. But the man power is poor – some days our men even start to be nervous. Then there will be two principal relocations. A small army has to be a smart army. Have you noticed – at night, around four, the relocation of military columns?
- GEORGE Don't reveal State secrets!
- CARL Sometimes it's necessary to reveal State secrets – so that people can understand that life doesn't consist only of sunny days and sweet cream, conditionally speaking.
- GEORGE And runny omelettes. Conditionally speaking.
- CARL Our men know that they're working for their children's children.
- GEORGE I have envisaged a book. A story about a man who, all his life has floated - like a fishing bob, conditionally speaking. Irrespective of what shit he has been thrown into.
- MARECK (*to Carl*) Can those cottages have one wall torn down?
- CARL Why tear them down? The walls are still good.

MARECK But take one out – that can be done?

CARL So a garage can be made?

MARECK And put in a window – from floor to ceiling. With a view of the lake.

CARL Then you simply have to saw down the right wall.

MARECK The main thing is that it can be done.

CARL I've been wondering all the time already – nobody guards it – why hasn't the lake been fished out?! There should be good perch here, good perch. I would have long ago put a person there. Yes, the first thing: a large window facing the lake – let him sit there and guard it.

George laughs.

CARL that can be done without a problem! Like shitting in cabbage, conditionally speaking. The soldiers, let's say, shall be allowed to throw in a net once a month – the whole company will be sitting here with their bombers, believe me.

GEORGE *(to Mareck)* What time is it?

CARL What's the man's name?

GEORGE Livingstone.

CARL Will you be writing about foreigners?

GEORGE Ah, about those people who feel good in any kind of shit? I still haven't thought it out fully.

CARL We could talk sometime - a good story...

MARECK Something's burning! Do you smell it?! A fire?!

Mareck, Carl and George simultaneously hurry toward the doors, disappearing behind them. Johnny, however, remains sitting in his place. And he takes the accordion in his lap - as if it were a treasure. However, then Catherine appears in the doorway holding a large, steaming kettle.

CATHERINE Breakfast...

She puts the kettle in front of Johnny's nose.

CATHERINE Bon Apetit!

Johnny pushes the kettle away from him – the smell of the contents is obviously not appetising.

CATHERINE I'm happy that I'll not have to see you any more. Yes. No, I do understand – you can't manage all on your own, but why did you promise? You promised fish...I'll have to be embarrassed again in your place. Again. All right – it's the last time... Alone, you'll be left totally alone! Life continues. You'll rot. And I'm not even sorry. Yes. Not at all.

The three who had disappeared in the house come out again.

CATHERINE Breakfast!

She already has a wide smile on her face.

GEORGE Did you burn the last eggs ?!

Catherine laughs. The men look into the kettle, but no one is brave enough to try the contents.

CATHERINE There's always been a cook here. Who am I to try filling her shoes! Only last month I let her go – we're changing things here. There'll be other meals.

Joy returns with the washed dishes.

JOY Did it get burned?!

CATHERINE I can't be left alone!

CARL They say you can make porridge even from an axe! Conditionally speaking. (*to Joy*) Let's go, mom!

Carl takes the kettle and he and Joy disappear into the house.

GEORGE God, of course, has need of all kinds of people, but I still can't quite understand why I have to be in the same place with them for so long, why does it always happen precisely like this. I have no use for him whatsoever, a total idiot, but I will be forced to talk to him again! Oh, God! It's clear this is the work of some higher intelligence, a test – Livingstone being late is not a coincidence. We still have to live together for a short while, to once more calmly look at life, whatever it may be, conditionally speaking. In order to understand that a human being has to be human, not a fishing float, again conditionally speaking. Perhaps it really is like this! Reality makes me come to this conclusion. Please, I have

concluded, said it out loud, confirmed it, well ...Livingstone! Yoo-hoo!...

CATHERINE Nobody is to blame here!

GEORGE Would he himself wait for three days? Three days! Has our life stopped? Do we not have plans? It's humiliating!

Carl returns. He starts to put the dishes just washed by Joy on the table.

CARL She could make something from dog shit – excuse me – could, conditionally, make tarts.

GEORGE *(to Catherine and Mareck about Carl)* Well! Why? Why?!

CARL In order to feed everyone.

GEORGE Conditionally speaking?

CARL No. I was talking conditionally about the shit, conditionally about shit!

He laughs. Also Catherine giggles and Mareck smiles.

CARL I sometimes blurt out like that ...impulsively. There are only men at the headquarters!

Now also George is laughing full-heartedly.
Joy appears in the doorway with a water jug.

JOY You have very good-tasting water here!

CARL You said that it would be enough!

JOY I'm sorry.

CATHERINE I'm the one who is to blame!

CARL If you extended this cooked mess a bit, then you could, couldn't you...

He disappears into the house, only to reappear a moment later with the empty kettle.

CARL It didn't taste as if it was burned, it only smelled like that!

CATHERINE *(about Johnny)* We were promised fish for the evening! We'll have a banquet.

CARL We know how to fry fish like they wouldn't even see in a palace!

GEORGE Conditionally speaking.

CARL No, really! *(to Johnny)* We'll empty the lake of fish! One small net, a small campfire, and you'll have something to remember for the rest of your life, conditionally speaking.

Carl sits down beside Joy, embraces and kisses her.

CARL If we haven't already left by then.

CATHERINE He won't have arrived by the evening yet.

GEORGE How do you know?

CATHERINE I've figured it out.

GEORGE If he was in Copenhagen, he could arrive any minute now.

CARL We have no more time. The headquarters...

CATHERINE Then forget it...

A moment of silence.

CARL *(to Joy)* What do you think?

JOY What do I think?

CARL Should we still stay? No, that's how it is. It rarely happens that friends simply come together like this. Put everything aside, and come together. Stay just for the fun of it. *(to Joy)* Shall we stay? Your sweetie pies will be longing to see you – they can't be even a moment without their Granny. They don't even ask for me: *Opis karo!* *(laughs)* Fine, let's stay. *(to everybody)* And we'll kill you with those fish, conditionally speaking.

Carl is the only one who laughs.

All of a sudden a woman's scream can be heard. Then again another scream. Everyone jumps to their feet.

CATHERINE From the lake, Johnny! The lake!

CARL Where? ...

Catherine is the first to hurry down from the terrace, followed by Joy.

GEORGE There by the boats! *(to Johnny)* Hurry, hurry!!!

CARL The screaming has stopped. I can't hear it any more.

GEORGE *(to Johnny)* Run, for God's sake!!!

Johnny has in fact got up from his seat and is looking in the same direction as everyone else.

MARECK They're coming. It's over.

CARL I said...everything's all right...

GEORGE *(to Johnny)* As if asleep!

Joy and Catherine appear, and with them is ANNE, dressed in a long white lace dress, her feet bare. Following her is ARMAND, also barefoot, in his underpants and sweater. He's carrying his trousers.

GEORGE *(laughs)* They dressed me today like a bridegroom – as if I wasn't living in this world anymore!

ANNE I'm sorry. So very, very sorry – my foot slipped in the boat. I was going to wash my stockings...

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* Right. Off you go, to clean the boat! Quick as lightning!

CARL You could wash laundry in that dish hut!

ANNE It's a good thing that Armand came by.

As Anne climbs up to the terrace, Mareck extends a helping hand to her. The rest of the group also ascend.

CARL *(to Armand)* I was saying before, there should be a dishwashing facility on the deck – three men could without any problem, in two days...

CATHERINE *(to Armand)* Put on your trousers!

ANNE Shall we have breakfast? Have we missed it?

CARL In the evening we'll have a fish orgy, a festival! *(to Armand)* Make certain we have a net, landlord!

Everyone, slowly, almost imperceptibly, sits down at the table. Also Johnny again is at his end of the table, while Armand takes his place at the other end.

CATHERINE The weather couldn't be better if it was specially ordered. I'll

Be sorry to leave.

ARMAND Did you already eat? What time is it?

CARL (*looking at his watch*) We've missed the news. It's already twenty past four.

GEORGE Maybe Livingstone has been detained by war measures. The planes are no longer flying.

CATHERINE Our water has not only medicinal but also curative characteristics. We didn't know this earlier. This woman came...

GEORGE And became substantially younger.

Water is being poured from the large jug that Joy has brought out.

CARL That's a total sham. The only true value is in real and tangible work, where you slave away, conditionally speaking.

CATHERINE We made some analysis after...

CARL No, I'm not talking about your water – I'm speaking theoretically. It's a belief of mine.

GEORGE Conditionally speaking...

ANNE There's such a good aura here – I'm sleeping as if drugged. I could sleep the whole day...

CATHERINE People do really feel it. They subconsciously travel there where all of this exists. They don't only need fresh air, water, the sun or simply a lake. This is a special place, dear Armand.

CARL (*to Armand*) When I was your age, we guys used to get such steps ready in two days!

CATHERINE But I'm afraid – will I be able to return here again – Armand has such plans! Everything will change beyond recognition. The older generation will have to step aside, won't they?

She has taken hold of George's elbow.

CARL All of our life has been lived here.

GEORGE (*to Catherine*) At what time did you call the last time?

MARECK *(to Armand)* How much does one of your cottages cost? Per year? Let's say the one at the edge of the lake. Number eight, I think. I would build a floor-to-ceiling window in one of the walls.

CARL To guard?

MARECK *(to Armand)* I'm going to move here to live.

Catherine laughs.

CARL Have you even seen a saw? What it looks like?

To everyone's amusement, Mareck pulls a ping-pong ball from Mareck's ear.

MARECK Are you listening?! Will you give me the little house?

ARMAND If it'll fit in the plans...

MARECK You won't allow it.

CATHERINE It really would be good if someone would be here, beside him. I no longer am allowed to interfere in my child's life, but I'm afraid, that I'll want to. If you could be near here. With Anne.

GEORGE *(to Mareck)* What are you bullshitting about?

CARL Really!

CATHERINE *(laughs, to Mareck)* You're kidding me!

GEORGE And yourself!

MARECK *(to Armand)* Answer, when your godfather asks you a question!

ARMAND Yes...

ANNE Yes – what?

CARL What the hell for?

JOY Carl!...

Unexpectedly Johnny starts to play the accordion – a fast one.

GEORGE Stop! Stop it!

Although Johnny doesn't sing, Carl very loudly joins in the chorus.

GEORGE Be quiet!!!

He has jumped to his feet, and because of this, Johnny falls silent. As does Carl.

CATHERINE (*to George*) The plane won't fly any the faster if we sit in silence.

She pats George's hand.

GEORGE Then sing louder! So he can hear, and hurry!

He very quickly departs, disappearing into the house. For a moment there is silence, but then Catherine giggles softly and the rest start laughing.

CATHERINE Three days. Even one is too much for him

MARECK How will he get here from the airport?

CARL We should send someone to get him.

CATHERINE Whom?

JOY The last train has already gone today.

ANNE Already? The days are so short!...

CATHERINE He wouldn't be coming by train, would he!

CARL Of course!

MARECK How will he come?

CATHERINE Please don't worry – that's one of the things he must take care of himself.

CARL Sometimes it's better to take care of such things oneself. So they don't forget you, so to speak.

JOY Well, Then, let's go!

CARL Theoretically. I am thinking about life as such – conditionally speaking. Not about this specific instance. We also don't know where he is, when he will fly in and so...

ARMAND Did you already eat breakfast?

CATHERINE I want fish, fish, fish!

CARL *(to Armand)* A net, landlord!

CATHERINE To the lake!

CARL You must have perch here, good perch!

Catherine and Carl manage to get the others to get up from their seats.

MARECK We won't all get into one boat.

CARL Then shrink us, maestro!

Carl laughs and Catherine joins in. But the first to jump down from the terrace is Joy, who extends her hand to Mareck. Then Carl jumps, pulling a squealing Anne along with him. Catherine also chases Johnny out of his seat and, taking away his accordion, urges him down the terrace stairs. Soon the laughter ceases near the lake.

CATHERINE And you?

ARMAND I haven't eaten breakfast!

CATHERINE Don't you want to say something to me?

ARMAND I want breakfast!

CATHERINE Do you not have something to say to me?

ARMAND Did you not save something for me?

CATHERINE If I say something to you, do I want to harm you? Answer me. Otherwise you won't get something to eat.

ARMAND What do you want me to answer?

CATHERINE Why are you lying? I heard you. You said – it's all over! What's over?

ARMAND How old am I?

CATHERINE Eleven!

ARMAND Then give me something to eat – so I can grow up faster!

CATHERINE Look me in the eye! Look!

ARMAND I really am very hungry...

Johnny has returned, but as soon as he has climbed up to the terrace, Catherine pushes him back down. Also Armand flies after him.

CATHERINE You're the landlord!

ARMAND How do I know where the nets are?!

CATHERINE We have to have dinner!

Johnny and Armand exit.
George is standing in the doorway of the house.

CATHERINE (*laughs*) It'll still be crazy here! It's a good thing that Livingstone is going to be his consultant.

GEORGE A gypsy camp! A veritable gypsy camp!

CATHERINE It seems to me – that you hate people!

GEORGE Yes, I hate them! And I'm not ashamed to say so!

Catherine closes his mouth with a kiss.

GEORGE No, I don't hate them – they themselves are like that! Themselves ... like that...

Catherine's lips don't allow him to talk. She's laughing.

GEORGE They had already asked about me – when would I be there? They would welcome me with open arms, they said! A joke, of course. We'll sit, and talk, and talk and talk. Only Henry has died, otherwise life has not changed there – man can't escape himself!

Catherine becomes more and more aggressive. She already has unbuttoned George's shirt, and is playing with his trouser buttons.

GEORGE I can't right now – too nervous, d'you hear?! ... No, please, I can't right now...

But Catherine is already pushing George into the house, and his resistance is proving useless. As soon as they have disappeared, Johnny returns. and sits down in his place at the end of the table. He again begins his manipulations of the shot glasses. After a while, also Armand and Anne come back from the lake.

ARMAND He really doesn't need that cottage!

ANNE That's serious!

ARMAND Whose ass will he be pulling balls out of? His own? He got a bit too much sun that's all.

ANNE But you said – *yes!*

ARMAND I haven't had breakfast!

Anne doesn't let him in the house.

ANNE That's what's important – you said *yes* to him! Are you listening?! He's your godfather, all right. And I?

ARMAND He doesn't force you to be home nights!

ANNE He's my husband. Still is. And has been!

ARMAND (*to Johnny*) What are you eating?

ANNE Nothing gets settled on its own, ever, believe me!

Finally Armand manages to disappear in the house. After a while he reappears with a pineapple. He cuts it and eats it in large chunks.

ANNE Then the two of you will live here...Do you want that?

ARMAND (*to Johnny*) There's a good wind today – shall we fly a kite?

ANNE No, you don't have to conquer life - just make a decision. That's all. There's such a good aura surrounding us. If not today, then tomorrow, you'll be able to live totally freely and fully. And what if you don't know then what you want! You have to be honest with yourself. Out loud. Hiding from ourselves we harm ourselves!

Carl, Joy and Mareck with a net and oars are coming up from the lake. All are bare foot. Having noticed them approaching, Anne quickly sits in Armand's lap and kisses him – long and passionately. When the kiss has ended, Anne remains snuggled up to Armand.

ANNE Do we suit each other?

Carl laughs.

CARL He better should learn how to hold an axe.

Armand attempts to get up, but Anne again kisses him.

CARL All women to the kitchen! Women!!!

He's holding a forked branch with two small fish speared on it. But Anne only hangs on more tightly to Armand. Joy quickly throws down the net. She takes Mareck by the hand, the oars falling to the ground, and pulls him into the house. Anne has stopped kissing Armand.

ANNE Wait!...

 But Joy and Mareck have already disappeared.

CARL Why are you fooling around like that?

ANNE I'm not fooling around, you know.

CARL Fine, I understand – a boy. Head full of piss, conditionally speaking. (*laughs*) But you?

ANNE You don't understand...

CARL I understand.

ANNE What do you understand?

CARL We haven't driven here to break and destroy, conditionally speaking.

ANNE What do you understand, I asked?

CARL I don't understand a thing!

ANNE Maybe to break and destroy means to create something new. New and strong! ...Your miserable steps, for example.

CARL No, I wasn't talking about the steps...

ANNE But I'm talking about the steps! It's exactly the same with life!

CARL Conditionally speaking?

ANNE I could write a book! About the necessity to blow up things! A book of poetry!

CARL Pyrotechnics...

ANNE Don't you want to go?

CARL Where?

ANNE You'll be offended if I tell you!

ARMAND (*to Carl*) That's all you caught?

CARL I didn't need to catch anything at all! Why do I need it? It's just a bugger for me, taking it conditionally.

ANNE He hasn't done anything to you!

CARL We're going!

ANNE I'm sorry.

CARL We have come together to relax - old friends - for our own enjoyment...

ANNE You'll be able to relax afterwards. We're living now! Conditionally speaking.

CARL *(to Armand)* I want to talk to you! Under four eyes.

ANNE We have no secrets.

Armand however gets up and pulls Anne aside. He sits down at the edge of the terrace, inviting Carl to sit down beside him.

ANNE Should I leave?

CARL You'll be offended if I say it.!

Armand starts to laugh first, then Carl joins him and, because of this, Anne quickly hurries into the house.

CARL I do know what to say sometimes, don't I ?!

ARMAND What did you have for breakfast?

Carl takes out of his pocket a paper serviette with writing on it, folded several times.

CARL Here it is! Examine it, look at it at your leisure!...

Armand, obviously attempts to do so, without success.

CARL I have terrible handwriting!... That's an estimate. Four weeks. Five guys for four weeks. It's sort of first aid. For the first season. No, of course, your mom did say: the plans are great, the possibilities even greater. But this is in the future. Who's going to think about today? The steps - to all the cottages. The roofs. Out of ...nothing to do - I was just passing by. No I find I can't just idly walk by such things! It's not hard to write something like this. The son of friends of relatives. For the first season.

Unnoticed, Anne has returned, and again has sat down at the table, taking up and examining the pineapple skins chewed by Armand.

ARMAND

Is the lake fished out?

CARL

No, I do understand that you have some old chap who's bullshitting here, don't you?! Fortunate the country where the young themselves are planning, building and doing accounts. That's how it is! Don't take it to heart, forget it – I won't be offended! I'm good-natured! You have to do what you yourself think is best, of course...unless you haven't thought it out. This is an estimate. Four weeks, five or six men. We drive them to the limit. For the first season. Afterwards you can have your skyscrapers. Fine, chase me away! The idle talk of old men. Forget it!

ARMAND

Where did mom go?

CARL

Come on! Just to see what they would look like, as an example, the steps leading to the first little cottage!...

He very adeptly jumps down from the terrace and pulls Armand with him. Both men disappear in the direction of the lake. Anne has not been able to detain them: she quickly hurries after them. Johnny looks after the departing trio without particular interest. He again is doing the exercises with the shot glasses. Joy exits from the house – in her hands a steaming bowl. She stops on the doorstep.

JOY

(calling into the house) There's no one here!

In a flash Mareck appears behind her. He puts Joy's bowl on the table and embraces her. The two laugh.

MARECK

And then he took the smelly mess of fried fish from her hands, put his arms around her waist, no – fell to one knee in front of her *(does so)* and said – *I marvel at myself! What's happening?...*

JOY

Oh, where has my mind gone!...

MARECK

...she said. And that's how he knelt in front of her, and she, gazed for a long, long time out at the lake...

Johnny has put the bowl brought out by Joy in front of him and is unhurriedly eating its contents.

MARECK

It sounds like a low-class, sickeningly sweet, cheap romance. Why? All of it is true - we are grown up, real people, who honestly are confessing their...internal climate. And these are not trivial feelings...She smiled quietly, because she noticed at the edge of the lake the hero's main antagonist...Maybe I really needed to

write precisely like that? I have never read anything in that style...The protagonist kneels at the feet of a woman, while his rival is running along the huts with a saw. *Opis karo!* His ass is motorised, thinks the protagonist. The antagonist, on the other hand, isn't thinking at all. He is just swinging his axe and sawing. But the heroine thinks, how much my sons look like him...Her past flashes before her eyes...(to Johnny) The music sounds. Do you hear?! Music, quickly!

Johnny wipes off his mouth, takes the accordion – and the sound of *Sentimental Journey* can be heard...

MARECK He is thinking of his grandchildren. Your boys don't have kids, only Tina, isn't that right? Two little girls?...

Suddenly the smile disappears from her face and she sags in her seat.

MARECK The heroine feels faint...

JOY I had even forgotten the sweetie pies!...

MARECK The protagonist doesn't have any children, he stares and asks: *Are you feeling ill?*

JOY I'm harming you!

MARECK The protagonist understands everything.

JOY But I'm going to do it! I could, probably! We only live once...

MARECK (to Johnny) Stop the music!

But Johnny continues to play as if he has not heard.

MARECK Be quiet! Enough! Do you hear?!

Johnny is lost in his music – his eyes closed.

MARECK I shut off the music! I shut you off!!!

Only after being nudged several times, does Johnny stop playing.

MARECK The protagonist turns and runs! Runs alone, not understanding why. Runs away from the heroine, whom he is not indifferent to, and she, whom he is not indifferent to, and whose antagonist is a total jackass, conditionally speaking. He doesn't understand why he's running away, but he knows.

JOY I know. I know.

MARECK And she knows it. They both know - blowing up something does not create anything new.

 JOY Enough! That's enough! Stop. The heroine again is smiling! She admires the protagonist. She doesn't understand where someone like him has come from.

MARECK The protagonist doesn't understand himself. It doesn't happen like that in real life. Maybe he already has died?!...

 They both laugh.
 Then Mareck takes Joy in his arms. They fall silent.

MARECK It's a stupid book. I won't write it.

 JOY Your language is wonderful! And the thought behind it.

MARECK But it isn't the truth.

 JOY Why?

MARECK I don't know, why?

 JOY And what is the truth?

MARECK I don't know. I don't. The protagonist senses lies, but doesn't know what they are.

 JOY You're excited! That's all. It's so natural. Your hands are cold. Put on some sandals.

MARECK And in a flash you'll learn all of life's secrets.

 JOY You have to write. You yourself know that. You truly, really have to write. Another person would never ever even have the opportunity. You absolutely can't pass this up. Another person can for the rest of their life pull little balls out of all holes. You won't have to do it any more.

MARECK I know how to do that, I really know how...

 JOY All your life! Your only life! You haven't been created for that!

 Suddenly Mareck pulls from his chest a bright red marzipan heart.

MARECK Fool! Fool, fool!

They both laugh. Mareck makes Joy bite off half the heart, popping the other half in his own mouth.

MARECK But what if the protagonist only wants the heroine because she's a good cook – he's grown tired of frequenting cafeterias!

JOY Stop! You have such a good story! A real story! Put on your sandals.

MARECK I haven't had breakfast.

But he doesn't get as far as the table – George, wearing a brilliantly white shirt and underpants, comes out of the house. He's holding a piece of paper with some writing on it.

GEORGE Listen! (*he reads*) When the door banged shut behind them, the eyes of everyone sitting in the café turned toward the door... toward the entry: that's better. So – everyone looks at him. (*he reads*) The air was filled with cigarette smoke, but the shining silhouette pushed through it... Now everyone immediately noticed him, that's clear, isn't it? (*reads*) The stranger did not move from his place. Only the smoke vibrated, rustled like fish scales in the stuffy air. Even though everyone had stopped talking mid-word, they all fell silent. And then they all at the same time understood that they knew the stranger. He was a person from the time when the walls of this room were white ... That's the beginning. The first chapter. The book is called – *Renovation*... Has something happened? What's happened? Livingstone?

MARECK No, nothing. It's a good title.

GEORGE Isn't it? I had all sorts of alternatives: *It's Time; Life, Which...* no, phooey, stupid! *The Stranger Who Was Known*. But *Renovation* is more precise, isn't it?! Short, specific. Dead on target! A kick in the ass, conditionally speaking!

Catherine comes out of the house carrying George's trousers.

CATHERINE Your ass is bare, Mr. Author.

GEORGE Writers should have bare asses! A man who has eaten never takes a pen in his hand, isn't that right?!

Catherine pulls the trousers on George, and buttons him up – while George still continues to intensely examine his piece of paper.

GEORGE Can you understand that the white walls of a café are a symbol of the soul? Not a thing in hell was white there in reality. And that time was absolutely black. But the white walls. Well, like our ...

souls - a stupid word. We used to say then - *guts*. A guy with *guts*. Conditionally speaking, that will be understood, won't it. And now *the guts are cancerous* - totally black!

CATHERINE It's odd, but I also have really longed for these talks. Then, to be honest, I couldn't spare the time. After some years, a person starts to grasp the sense of it. Starts to long for it. After a lot of bullshit. (*laughs, to George*) Just don't hit me!

GEORGE Maybe *Capital Renovation*? Simply *Renovation* seems too short, doesn't it?

CATHERINE How good it is that your children are grown but you're still young. Now life is only beginning. And it's good for Armand – he has a free hand. We'll still hear about him. When all our plans will have been realised, he'll be able to write a book! We old folks don't know how to think openly any more. We limit, censor ourselves. The whole world is open for them. The sea up to their knees. Surely to be envied!

Armand appears suddenly. He steps up to the terrace, heads directly for the table – his objective is the bowl that Joy has brought from the kitchen. It's now empty.

ARMAND I hadn't had breakfast yet! Mom!

CATHERINE No one has eaten yet.

ARMAND Fish!

GEORGE It's evening! The fish festival!!!

Also Carl shows up, totally out of breath. He heads directly toward Catherine, handing her the serviette with writing on it.

CARL This is a copy! A copy of the estimate. Armand...Armand has agreed to it. But we decided – first the roofs and then the steps. He's really got the touch. Determination. Six men in four weeks – and he agrees. The cottages will hold out for another season. I suggested that the rooms be divided in half: more people can be shoved in the rooms then. They don't, after all, have to dance there. Six men in six weeks and all of it can be earned back. Also the younger generation will fall in love with this corner of the world. Six men in six weeks. All we need is an experienced slave driver. It's really a pity that I have the headquarters.

CATHERINE It's a pity...

CARL I can feel my hands itching.

CATHERINE Too bad.

GEORGE *(to Carl)* Where are the fish? We're starving to death!

ARMAND There's no more!

GEORGE *(to Catherine)* After all I could write later...

CATHERINE *(to Joy)* There's more being fried, aren't they?!

CARL A taste will make you think you're in heaven! Conditionally, of course!

JOY *(about the bowl)* It's a mystery!

ARMAND Contrary to all of you, I hadn't even had breakfast! Not even a crumb!

Catherine notices the pineapple peels.

CATHERINE That was for Livingstone! He apparently is crazy about fruit...

CARL Who ate the fish?

Mareck We put them here! And don't scream!

CARL No, of course I'm not an investigator, but we could be more decent. Our own people, as I see it, conditionally.

CATHERINE In your opinion, someone is lying here?

CARL No! But the fish are gone...

George starts to laugh.

GEORGE I suggest that everyone show their stomachs!

CATHERINE *(laughs)* Really! *(to Mareck)* Again your stupid little jokes! One person can't eat all that we caught in that net!

CARL What net?

CATHERINE Our net.

Not saying a word, Carl unfurls the net and hangs it on the oars – it's substantially hole-ridden.

CARL There are no whales in the lake!

CATHERINE Then were there no fish?

ARMAND There were!

CARL But I promised you a festival, didn't I?!

CATHERINE It could fall through – that does happen...

CARL When a person promises, it doesn't happen.

GEORGE Were there fish then?

ARMAND Yes, there were!

CATHERINE *(to Armand)* Don't fret! We'll find some!

CARL I ran the whole length of the lake: I did promise a festival!

CATHERINE It's not important...

CARL Strangers can't fish in the lake, can they? I didn't know that – but I notified him that he's lucky we don't arrest him. We confiscated the fish.

CATHERINE You took them!

CARL A small army has to be a shrewd army.

ARMAND But who gobbled them all up?!

MARECK We fried them! There weren't many – a small festival...

CARL *(about Joy)* She could feed all of China with one fish!

Suddenly Armand gets up quickly, hurries down the steps and exits.

CATHERINE *(to George)* Run after him...*(to everyone)* The young aren't used to hardships – a small detail can knock them off balance – so, what can you do with the child. And in reality there are no hardships, only one must be patient. We're sitting. And it's nothing after all, is it? *(to George)* Go look where he's gone to.

GEORGE Gone! He drove off!

CATHERINE *(laughs)* He's the landlord – why should he drive off to somewhere?!

- GEORGE And why should he rot here? What's to do here? Wait for Livingstone? How long?
- CATHERINE Until he comes.
- GEORGE He won't come!
- CATHERINE (*about Armand*) Where did he run off to? I begged you...
- GEORGE Thanks! Enough! I won't demean myself any more! A normal person would have left long ago! And would do what he has to do! He'd be working! Would be talking to people! Has life stopped, or something?! I have understood that and that's why I'm sleeping so soundly! That's for sure! I've felt it with all of my being that I have understood! (*to Carl*) A small shrewd army! We're great and ...bright. How revolting that people adjust! (*to Catherine*) And don't look at me like that!
- CATHERINE I'm not looking.
- GEORGE You are so looking! You're not my keeper even though you are my wife— no matter how I would wish it! ...
- And also George jumps down from the terrace.
- GEORGE Renovation! Capital Renovation! Cancer in your guts!!!...
- He also disappears.
A moment of silence. Then Catherine starts laughing.
- CATHERINE Oh! My ears are ringing!...
- CARL Everyone is nervous because they're so uninformed, know so little ...Where, what, already for the third day: so it's understandable. Usually when people come to a funeral, there is someone there to bury. And they get buried. And everything develops from that process, conditionally speaking.
- CATHERINE Livingstone is coming.
- CARL Good – on that day he couldn't get on the plane...
- CATHERINE How was he to know that to take out an urn you need a special permit!
- CARL And it's only right that you should need one! Otherwise all the corpses would be exported from there for them!

Carl laughs but no one joins him.

CATHERINE He just missed the first flight, so he had to wait for a connecting flight in Caracas – for one night. Then in Washington – the customs, that misunderstanding - again one more day. Is that so hard to understand?! As if I was to blame for it!

CARL Of course not! Nonsense!

Suddenly Johnny starts to play *Sentimental Journey*...

CATHERINE Be silent! Stop!

CARL Stop!!! Save it!!!

Johnny stops playing.

CARL Idiot!

CATHERINE But we have the festival! We'll have fish tomorrow, but the festival will be today! (*to Johnny*) Play!

CARL Tomorrow we'll mend the net, and we'll fish the lake clean! Dry!

CATHERINE (*to Johnny*) Mine!

CARL Play!!!

Johnny starts to play. He doesn't sing – the same as always. For a moment everyone listens.

CARL Maybe we shouldn't have eaten everything all at once...

CATHERINE Did anyone doubt that he would soon be here?

CARL The roast was fantastic! Simply fantastic! Almost as if my old lady had made it... Maybe everyone shouldn't have been fed breakfast all at once?

CATHERINE (*suddenly*) What are you doing here?!

CARL Me? What am I doing here?

CATHERINE They're waiting for you at the headquarters! For three days already!

CARL Waiting...

CATHERINE To hear what's in the will?! If we're rich.

CARL Me?! A will?! What do I have to do with your will?!

CATHERINE Small, shrewd army!

CARL *(to Mareck)* Tell her! I have been your best friend all your life! How unfair, tell them! *(to Catherine)* Maybe he invited me! The funeral! A tough moment! *(to Johnny)* Be quiet!!!

CATHERINE Play!!!

CARL Save it!!! *(to Catherine)* I want to talk it out! Shall we talk it out!!! This is too important! How will we be able to look each other in the eye?! *(to Johnny)* Quiet!

CATHERINE Play!!!

CARL I don't need anything from you! Nothing!!! You yourself are bare-
assed – to put it bluntly! And there is no Livingstone! *(to Joy)*
We're leaving! Pack your bags!

Determined, he enters the house.

CARL What an idiot I am! Never, ever do a good deed for someone close
to you!!! To put it bluntly!

Joy, however, doesn't disappear with Clark into the house, but hurries
away toward the lake.
For a good while yet Johnny keeps playing. Mareck pulls Catherine's
disconsolate head close to him.

MARECK He'll come. You're not to blame. They'll understand. Everything
will be alright...

CATHERINE I'm not crying. I'm not at all crying...

MARECK Simply everyone is hungry. Yesterday it was the same.

CATHERINE No need to comfort me! I'm not to blame for anything. Do I need
this? I have already spent mine.!... And I'm not crying!...And I
also didn't cry yesterday!

Mareck pulls a handkerchief from Catherine's ear, but it doesn't
generate laughter – she jumps to her feet in a flash and hurries away
into the house. Again for a moment there's silence.

MARECK Play! Play I say! ... If a person has hands, feet, a head in place and their bowels move regularly – what else do you need? Do I lack anything? Nothing. Maybe I even have too much!

Johnny starts to play the soothing *Sentimental Journey*...

MARECK Why do we invent problems where there are none? Could you tell me that?

He hasn't noticed that Anne has arrived at the edge of the terrace,

ANNE (*in the same tone*) I can tell you. So that you, son, can feel even more sorry for yourself!...

Mareck swings around to face the smiling Anne, but then he quickly enters the house without saying anything to her.
But only a moment later George is embracing Anne from behind.

GEORGE (*whispering*) It's me! ... Look at the moon – does it not remind you of something?...

George quickly spins Anne around and kisses her long and passionately.

GEORGE I'll drive away, but I want you to know that it will never happen a second time in our life! Never! Not for you or me.

He kisses Anne once more.

GEORGE What are you laughing about?

ANNE I'm not laughing!

Anne, however, is laughing.

GEORGE You feel like laughing?

ANNE No!

GEORGE What are you laughing about?!

ANNE I'm not laughing. Not at all!

But she laughs even more loudly.

GEORGE Quiet down!... Did you hear what I said to you? ... When all is said and done, it's stupid! Stupid!... Please, don't believe me! It doesn't touch me. I know what I know, that I'm being honest to myself, honest, and, to tell the truth, I don't need anything beyond that! Don't laugh!!!...

Anne, however, is not able to stop. George climbs up quickly to the terrace and heads for the house.

GEORGE Thanks!

But he doesn't disappear into the house – he runs into Catherine in the doorway. She's fixing up her running mascara, and hurriedly brushing her hair.

CATHERINE Someone's coming – I can see through the window! What time is it?

GEORGE On the road?

Also George quickly tidies up his clothes. Catherine speedily cleans up the table – throwing everything superfluous under the table.

GEORGE What is he driving?

Also Anne quickly pats her hair, tears off a hanging bit of lace from her dress hem. Mareck also comes out of the house.

MARECK It's totally dark and there are potholes there!

CATHERINE Go and meet him!

GEORGE I could!

MARECK Don't! Sit down! As if there was nothing happening. As if we weren't waiting for anyone!...

Anne climbs up to the terrace. Also Armand has arrived.

CATHERINE *(to Armand)* Button up your shirt!

ARMAND It doesn't have to be buttoned up.

CATHERINE Nonetheless!

Everyone sits down at the table.

GEORGE What shall we drink the water from?

ANNE Candles!

MARECK *(to Catherine)* Was he still quite far?

CATHERINE Quiet!

Also Joy has returned. Mareck helps her to get up faster unto the terrace. Finally Carl also has come out of the house.

CARL I said – he had to be here today!

Everyone is already sitting around the table.

CATHERINE The net!!!

Carl jumps up, and stumbling and falling, he getting tangled up in it but succeeds in winding up the net and in throwing it under the table.

GEORGE *(to Johnny)* Be quiet for once!

CATHERINE *(to Johnny)* Really! You don't understand?! This is very, very important for all of us! Be quiet for once!

Johnny, it appears, has only now opened his eyes and has seen what is happening. The accordion stops playing.

ANNE *(whispering)* Maybe we should sing? Quietly...

MARECK *(whispering)* Let's not!...

CATHERINE *(whispering)* Talk, for God's sake talk! Anything! Calmly!

Everyone is silent.

ARMAND *(whispering)* Did you eat?

CATHERINE Shut up!

CARL *(loudly)* I remember how we once gathered at headquarters for a national holiday...

CATHERINE Quiet!...

CARL Talk, then, don't talk...

CATHERINE Keep your mouth shut!

Again everyone is silent.

ANNE Let's go and meet him! After all we're waiting for him! Three days! Let him see that we haven't gone off anywhere...

Everyone instantaneously gets up in unison and climbs down from the terrace.

CATHERINE Let's go in pairs!!!... It's so dark!...

Pushing each other, chaotically they exit.
 The only one to remain is Johnny.
 After a moment he gets up, puts down his accordion, pulls the oars out from under the table, where Carl has shoved them together with the nets, and then also departs. In the opposite direction, to the lake.

ACT II

Day. On the terrace it is exactly the same as it was the evening before. Only the candles now have totally burned down and the flowers in the vase have totally wilted. Johnny, as always, is seated in his place. His head again is leaned on the table, but he is not sleeping. His eyes are open.

Mareck comes quickly out of the house, still buttoning up his shirt. He sits down on the edge of the terrace and breathes in deeply several times. Then he makes some trilling sounds but again this morning the birds don't respond to him.

MARECK At the least say something. Yes, I feel embarrassed, I feel ashamed...but maybe nothing can be done about it at my age – if I'm a night owl will I ever become a lark? Physiologically that's impossible. Maybe... But I won't respect myself if I don't try at least. Tomorrow knock until you can claim a victory. You can also hit me as well as the door – you have to accomplish it somehow!... How do those perch look? Are they fat with bulging eyes? You know I already saw them in a dream! See, I, to tell the truth, am ready to cross over, so things may change – tomorrow I'll get up, and we'll go! Today we were pulling out those perch three to one hook! In my dream. My sister was already frying them on the shore...Did you eat breakfast? Have I slept in?

Johnny doesn't answer, but – as always – it's not even expected of him.

MARECK ...You know, I thought up an even better story. Do you want to read this one – a person, a man, is living ...it hit me during the night that good literature talks through images. They can't be my memoirs. Therefore it is necessary to exaggerate – to find an

image. That's why I put myself, that is, the man in the cellar. But not in a regular cellar! In a cellar where everything is glistening and shining. It's warm and there's nothing lacking. But! The door is shut. But! And the most interesting thing about it is that the man doesn't know it! He lives all his life not knowing it! Well, have you ever heard such a story? You haven't! You only have to close your eyes! And then, he finds out that the door is locked, but the key is broken off! And there's no one to ask, and no one who can be called to help – a trap! A good title – *Trap!*

Johnny has for some time now busied himself, digging under the table – now he gets up and heads over to Mark.

MARECK And then he kicks at the door! Why shouldn't he do that?! He gathers his forces and kicks!...Aha! No one had expected that!...

Johnny reaches for Mareck's nose – as if wishing to take something. Only when the small shot glass falls to the ground, it becomes clear that Johnny has wanted to do a magic trick. Mareck laughs and jumps to his feet.

MARECK So, show me. Go on, show me!

Johnny again very seriously gets ready, but he doesn't succeed in pulling another glass from Mareck's ear. While Mareck laughs, he desperately tries once more. Without success. Anne, barefoot, coming from the side of the lake, climbs up to the terrace.

MARECK (to Anne) A clown. A veritable clown! Look!

Another glass falls down for Johnny.

MARECK What a stupidity! Look!!! Now, once again!

But Johnny has already hurried off quickly. He hasn't got very far, however – he stumbles and falls.

MARECK Idiot. An absolute idiot! That's a number! That's a great number! That's your number! People are going to sweat bullets!

Johnny, however, doesn't move.

MARECK Get up! You're an incredible idiot! ...The number still continues, eh? Do we still have to look? Laugh? Do you hear me? ... Have you hurt yourself? I think, it's still the number...

Johnny gets up, refusing help from Mareck. He sits down in his place.

MARECK You have to do it with your squeeze box hanging from your neck! That will be a yet unseen image! That is an image! (to Anne) Look!

ANNE Good morning...

Mareck pulls the strap of the accordion around Johnny's neck.

MARECK An image! A complete image! An idiot with a squeeze box!...

ANNE Did you sleep well?

MARECK Yes, very.

ANNE Sweet little dreams!

MARECK Sweet! With perch. Will we be eating them for breakfast?

ANNE I hear you. Very well.

MARECK Why should I scream – I'm not screaming. I have no reason to scream. (*whispers*) And how did you sleep?

ANNE Well, hubby mine.

They both laugh loudly.

MARECK But that's not honest! Have you thought about that my sweet little wifey?

ANNE What precisely, by dear husband?

MARECK Precisely because last night you were screwing me yesterday evening – publicly!

ANNE I was only being honest, my dearest husband!

MARECK Shut up! You publicly were exposing your feelings! Particularly so!

In a flash he has become sharp. Also Anne's smile disappears.

ANNE you of course exposed it intimately all your life. I should be thankful at least that you didn't sleep with all the television cleaning women publicly.

MARECK Why with the ones from television?

ANNE Excuse me – not only the ones from television.

MARECK We have talked this out long ago. And five hundred times. And it hasn't been like that now for a very long time.

ANNE Now they're kindergarten nannies. Also intimately.

MARECK I don't need it any more! Already for some time, or haven't you noticed!

ANNE You do understand what I want to say!

MARECK Every week, each month they still call me from television, if you must know, but kindergartens...they're so pure! Never have I had such an extraordinary experience. I really love doing my magic there! How they look at me! You can't imagine! They're alive! With large, wonder-filled eyes.

ANNE Why such a flap? I understand everything. I have noticed. And not only I.

MARECK I'm writing a book! Among other things.

ANNE How intense a conversation we've had!

MARECK And you're also sitting here because there's nothing to eat!

ANNE The same as you?

MARECK Don't worry about me! But I'll take care of it – my sister won't give up Armand to you! I won't have to worry about it.

ANNE That isn't within your limited powers.

MARK That's laughable! Comical!

ANNE Comical?

MARECK Comical!

ANNE Comical!

MARECK Comical...

ANNE I'm going to live here. I'm sorry. But you'll have to saw out that large window of yours somewhere else. Let them give you a cash advance. Your pension. Organise it yourself.

Mareck is silent for a moment.

MARECK That's my... our uncle, our will...

ANNE I also am somewhat "one of us". Even twice running.

MARECK I'm writing. A book.

ANNE The boy is involved up to his ears. And below. And irreversibly. And I too have the right to something in this life. Enough is enough. Excuse me. And forgive me.

MARECK That's not in character for you.

ANNE But it is in yours.

 Mareck laughs loudly and heads toward Johnny.

MARECK Do you hear what she's saying? Do you hear?

 It's not clear, however, if Johnny has heard and understood.

MARECK Don't ever, little fool, do a good deed for someone close to you!

ANNE Don't give your good nature to another. Not even for a brief moment.

 She heads for the house.

MARECK Don't even try to go into our room! D'you hear! I'll tell my sister right now!...

 But then Mareck falls silent –because Anne and Joy have met at the door and greeted each other cordially. Anne disappears, while Joy comes outside. She's holding a blanket.

JOY (*loudly*) Good morning! Am I interrupting something? (*whispers*) What's happened. Has she smelled something?

 Mareck has sagged on the bench on the other side of the table.

JOY I'm the one to blame, me! ... What shall we do now? Talk, say something, for God's sake! What shall we do? Lie down, sleep a while!...

 She helps Mareck lie down on the seat, and covers him with the blanket she has brought – he no longer can be seen behind the table.

JOY You're frozen – again you were at the lake without your jacket, weren't you? That's a move that the sweetie pies would do...

 Again she unwraps a banana from a serviette.

JOY Don't starve to death until breakfast!...What d you want? I can't hear you! What do you want?...

She leans lower and lower, trying to hear what Mareck is saying, but then he quickly grabs a hold of Joy and kisses her. Her laughter is smothered by kisses.

JOY You're crazy! ... What's happened to you? ... You're hot! ...A bruise, a blue bruise will remain!...

When Carl comes out of the house, the two of them have already vanished behind the table.

CARL *(to Johnny)* Have you already eaten breakfast?

Having noticed the banana on the table, Carl takes it and after peeling it, eats it. Joy appears from behind the table, totally flushed.

CARL The floor should be washed when they are here – otherwise, it makes no sense: no one will notice in this pigsty! Are you listening?! Put it away now! I'll give you a sign when. And it's better to wash here, in the middle... Yes, yes, yes – I'm really a revolting cynic! But, you know I'm not ashamed of it. When the sweetie pies need a sweet, or a little ribbon, then: *grandad d'you have some money?! What a trio!... Only a week left, one week!* You don't care, of course! We have to invite them, and we'll do it! I found out there is more there than we could ever imagine! And you know I'll make an ideal manager. With my wonderful and irresistible personality. *(laughs)* Those two jackasses of ours should get a beating, but they'll get their education – one can't do without it these days. You know I again feel as if I'm alive, conditionally speaking! *(to Johnny)* Play something ... well something that would feed the body and soul of a man! Do you hear?!

Carl however has to cuff Johnny, who's still sitting with his accordion in his lap, in order for Johnny to be aware that he's being talked to.

CARL Something that feeds the body and soul of a man. The one, you know, which I like!...

Johnny starts playing.

JOY You know...

CARL No, I don't buy that! It's not true! If I hadn't got tough yesterday then she would think that I have to desperately stay here. But now – *no thanks, prop up your own corpse, conditionally speaking.*

You'll have to beg me, beg I say! And it wouldn't be bad if it happened in a week's time! (*laughs*)

JOY Listen, please! About lies...It seems to me, that with lies...you can't get very far...I want...

She is forced to talk loud because Johnny is still playing.

CARL What lies?! In this instance it has no relevance. They're throwing me out of headquarters! If they knew that, it would seem as if I'm begging! No thanks, never in my life have I begged, and I won't beg now! You don't want me? Well I don't need you! And besides that, they know nothing – how can I prove that it's unfair, that I simply am the most honest person there?! Tell me – how?! With your blue eyes, conditionally speaking?! (*laughs*)

JOY I wanted something else...

CARL But I don't want anything else: I – a manager, you – the chef. The sweetie pies – guards! (*laughs*)

JOY Listen for once!

CARL You listen! Today you have to make a royal dinner - then they'll take us on right away. Everyone is hungry to the point of fainting! I'll get the food!

JOY Fir-cones from the woods?!

CARL (*laughs*) On the other side of the lake there's a house. I'll present myself as the new manager of the spa. It won't really be a lie. Will a pail of potatoes be enough? For the get-together.

Joy starts to nudge the sleeping Mareck who eventually sits up.

CARL Oh! Good morning! Was it cold at night here? But it's really healthy – to be in the fresh air! Forest air. Apparently it's good for pregnant women!...

He laughs and heads back to the house.

JOY Carl!!!...

CARL Are there clean socks in the bag?...

He disappears into the house.

MARECK (*to Johnny*) Quiet!!!

Johnny stops playing. A moment of silence.

JOY Let him stay here...The heroine has decided... To help the protagonist saw out the wall in a different little house, in a different forest. But the antagonist can hew and build right here. With his motorised behind... And the heroine together with the protagonist jumps from a high, high cliff – so high that it's unbelievable that they stay alive. But they will stay alive, because the book still needs to be written. The story... a story about a person, a man ... who has understood the meaning of life...And his old lady, who also soon...

MARECK (*suddenly*) The eighth cottage is mine! Mine! And I have a right to it! I have earned it! I have worked! All my life!...

JOY (*to Mareck*) Sweetie pie!

All of a sudden Catherine comes out of the house, with Carl right behind her.

CATHERINE It can't be!

CARL I swear! I saw it with my own eyes!

Joy jumps to her feet.

JOY I've had enough!

CATHERINE I also don't believe him!

However, contrary to what Joy is expecting, Catherine and Carl rush by her and step down from the terrace. Carl crawls below the terrace and pulls out from it a bundle of dishevelled wallpaper rolls.

CATHERINE Twelve years! When it was the latest in fashion!...

CARL You only need to unwind and take off the first layer – and it looks new - as if from the factory – clean as a whistle!

He tears open one edge of the wallpaper roll.

CATHERINE How many are here...

CARL Enough for one cottage! For the model cottage. Let's paste the reverse side so no one will know that they're twelve years old. And for free!

CATHERINE (*to Joy*) You really have a good life! (*to Carl*) What do you actually do there at your headquarters?

- CARL We are intensifying mobilisation. But I really don't know how long our State will be able to survive – the manpower is so poor.
- CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* Let's start with your cottage!
- CARL Some days I don't understand what is the sense of it all!...
- CATHERINE *(to Carl about Mareck)* Your best friend is going to write a book – he needs a bright environment. The eighth cottage.
- MARECK *(to Carl)* Am I your friend? Your best friend?
- CATHERINE Armand also has to agree that everything, in reality, is very simple – you only have to do it.
- MARECK A goldmine?
- CARL That's not fair!
- MARECK I promised and I also have never counted what you owe, but why the *best friend*?
- CARL *(about Catherine)* She said so!
- CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* Have you not slept?
- CARL Do you really not see or feel anything? I offer to slave for your family, for you, conditionally speaking! To slave here for the rest of my life, please!
- JOY Carl!
- CARL No, I'm not screaming! Have I been ungrateful? A thief?
- CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* He hasn't slept!
- MARECK I have slept! Do you want to know with whom?!
- CARL *(to Catherine)* If you want me to paste the wallpaper on the walls – please! If not – then thanks!
- CATHERINE You'll both go and paste! The fact that breakfast is not ready yet, doesn't mean that you have to unload all the anger of the night! We all are lonely! And all of us are angry! Go on, to the eighth cottage! Writer!

But, not saying another word, Mareck disappears into the house.

CARL I can do it alone – there’s not much work there. The eighth – is that the one by the lake? With the terribly rotted steps. *(to Joy)* Come and help me.

Carl turns as if to go away.

CARL At least the sweetie pies will live in fresh air this summer.

He has almost disappeared but then again he turns around.

CARL *(to Catherine, quietly)* And it isn’t the truth...

Then Carl departs. There is a moment of silence. Catherine and Joy don’t look at each other.

CATHERINE Is there nothing more in the kitchen? ...Those starved men will kill us... Tell your men to change their socks. No, I do understand: the fourth day, by necessity, but, for God’s sake, there’s a lake right here...

Joy climbs down from the terrace and departs, not answering Catherine. Again there is a moment of silence. Then Catherine starts to pull the net out from under the table. She starts feverishly to untangle it. Johnny still has the accordion in his lap.

CATHERINE At least help me untangle it! I’ll mend it myself... I don’t ask you to pull it all by yourself, you can’t be alone all the time, but at least try to feel sorry for me. Just once... You do have a longer-term view. And I’ll tell them that. Livingstone is also a person. And you have worked like crazy here all your life. Who else would if not you?...

George, in a suit, a straw hat and holding a leather attaché case, comes out of the house.

GEORGE Hello!

He descends from the terrace, and exits. Catherine simply looks after him, not being able to respond. Then she grabs the net with renewed force. But after a moment George returns.

GEORGE I really am driving away!

Catherine doesn’t answer. George climbs up to the terrace.

GEORGE I just once need to be principled. How is it that you don’t understand that! Otherwise I’ll never accomplish anything in life. I won’t write a novel, if I have to keep waiting for longer here. Who else will write it, if not me – you yourself said that! Of course, the fish are more important to you, of course! ... Have you eaten breakfast yet? You didn’t call me!...

He has noticed the discarded peel of the banana Carl has eaten on the table.

GEORGE I would have read the second chapter to you! I wanted to! No, you don't have to hear it! Just the end, only the end! (*looks at his watch*) I'll just manage to catch the train!

He opens the attaché case, takes out two pages with writing on them. There's nothing else in the case.

CATHERINE You'll miss the train!

GEORGE Did you get frightened?! Yes, soon it could be uncomfortable for you!

CATHERINE I've become tired of you!

GEORGE Look! Yes! I'll write that down right away!!! (*writes*) But in reality
For the next few years he was her prestigious plaything. Her talking bear, her thinking...kangaroo, with whom to show off to her friends and to society. Nobody else had anything remotely like him. After twenty-one years she is going to tell him: *I have grown tired of you, you insignificant man! ... (to Catherine) Word for word, right? (writes)* Then he didn't know it, couldn't even imagine it...End of chapter two. Flash back to the hero's past... Will you once and for all stop fooling around with that shitty thing?!

CATHERINE Leave, for God's sake!

GEORGE See?! At last I've started to talk! Surprising, isn't it?! Yes, all these years I was indispensable to you, but not you to me! Would I have starved to death? That's laughable! A human being, in your opinion is meant only for eating! And then pants off! Eat once more, and again pants off! You dragged me here just at the moment when important things were starting to happen -: Henry and I were being noticed right at that time! Ah!!!... Maybe, it really was your mission, was it?! To drag me away, so I could rot, so I would no longer be in anybody's way?! Oh, what a fool I was! You're an agent, right?!!!

Catherine gets up surprisingly quickly and slaps George hard. His straw hat flies off the terrace.

CATHERINE And don't you ever show your face here again!

GEORGE Are you still hoping?!...

CATHERINE The orchestra is waiting at the station! And there are thousands there to meet you.

GEORGE They're waiting for me!...

 With trembling hands he throws the pieces of paper back into the case, slams it shut, and jumps off the terrace to get his straw hat. But he still does not leave.

GEORGE One more thing - totally practical. Shoptalk, if you please. This is your world – the shop. Please, I also can dicker, bargain! Listen! I have a condition – your honourable son shall never again put a foot in his apartment – the dive. He's to live here, right. Yes, I'm sorry but I don't have any other place to stay. I can just imagine how long it will take to air the place of his stupidity! His limitations. Cowardice. The snotnose. If you had let me raise him...And the second thing: you're going to support me until my book comes out. You'll have that possibility! I don't have anything else. Twenty-one years – I have earned it after all. I don't need strange things. Twenty-one years! During which I have never had anything with anyone else! A prison!...

 For a while there is silence.

CATHERINE Get up here.

 George hesitates, but does climb up.

GEORGE Well...

CATHERINE Come closer.

 George very slowly approaches George.

GEORGE Well...

CATHERINE Idiot...

GEORGE I have to hear that from the likes of you...

CATHERINE Are you hungry?

GEORGE Well...

CATHERINE There isn't anything.

GEORGE Very funny!...

CATHERINE Well.

GEORGE What do you mean *Well*?

CATHERINE Well!

After still hesitating for a moment, George finally embraces Catherine with his free hand. She kisses George. Again and again.

GEORGE Stop! We shouldn't do this – everything is too serious...I'll leave anyway...

Catherine becomes more and more passionate. George's straw hat and attaché case fall out of his hands. They move closer and closer to the door.

GEORGE No, no! I feel so badly that I won't be able to!

But they are already inside the house. Looking after the two of them, Johnny starts to play *Sentimental Journey*...Slowly and thoughtfully. Armand comes out of the house. Also he notices the banana peel that Carl has left on the table.

ARMAND *(to Johnny)* Have you eaten already? Did you have breakfast?! Be quiet for once! Have you gorged yourself?! Where is mom, you imbecile?!

Finally he takes the accordion away from Johnny and the music stops. But in the very next moment Armand trips on the net laid out on the floor and falls.

ARMAND Fish! Did you eat fish!!!

He desperately tries to get rid of the net, but no matter how he tries, he doesn't succeed. Finally Armand is helped by Anne who has come out of the house.

ARMAND I'll have order here! I will!!!

Anne makes him sit down, and throws the blanket that Joy had brought previously for Mareck, around his shoulders.

ARMAND You're not my mom, you're not!

He throws the blanket to the ground.

ANNE They haven't eaten anything.

ARMAND *(about the banana peel)* They have so!!!

ANNE You don't have to scream at me because of it!

ARMAND I do too!!!

ANNE You're not tied to me, I repeat once again.

ARMAND I know! And I said! It's over! I think so. And that's how it is!

ANNE You're totally free. A free, beautiful, young man.

ARMAND Yes!

ANNE A man who has the right to go anywhere his nose points him to! Have I ever not let you go? You yourself said – I haven't done that.

ARMAND I won't get involved in any further discussions – on principle! Enough is enough!

ANNE Please, leave. You're free to go! I understand you – you haven't lived your life yet. Yes, I agree. Go.

ARMAND You're the one who has to leave – we agreed!

ANNE You said!

ARMAND I won't go anywhere, I can't leave - all my life...is here. There are such plans for this – I will be able to write a book after!...

ANNE I really envy the young girls who will then get you. Seriously. I swear to God – I'm not at all jealous. But I do envy them.

ARMAND I don't. (*laughs*) With my character!

ANNE Will you remember me sometimes?

ARMAND Of course.

ANNE But you shouldn't. It'll only interfere.

ARMAND Why? Not at all.

ANNE Well, leave then.

For a while both are silent.

ARMAND I desperately want breakfast!

ANNE Go quickly.

Again a silence.

ARMAND But what if it won't be better with those girls?

ANNE You promised – never to return. I'll be strong.

ARMAND You know I don't even know how to meet girls!...

ANNE They themselves will stick to you like glue.

ARMAND You know that that's not the way it is. Don't make fun of me.

ANNE I know it's so. I'm totally convinced.

For a moment both are silent again.

ARMAND But how important is age?

ANNE Very important. Please, go.

ARMAND None! Exactly the opposite! What's so good about being young?! Are you listening? I understand, just now I have understood! Listen to what I'm saying - being young is revolting! All that...foolishness - narcotics, the painted whores... no plans, just blowing the same horn as everyone else – in order not to be worse than them. Beautiful youth! Do you hear me – I tell you, being young is horrible!

ANNE I don't hear you. I have to go.

ARMAND You did know, didn't you? Mom also knows.

ANNE What?...

ARMAND Are thirty years enough?

ANNE What are you talking about?

ARMAND At what age does youth end?

He embraces and kisses Anne.

ARMAND Still four years!...Do I not look older than my age? Well, don't sigh! Stop it, please! Like a little girl! Are you crying? About what? Me? About me?

ANNE I'm not crying. Not because of anybody. Be happy.

ARMAND But I have understood, haven't I?

Instead of answering him, Anne kisses him.
At that moment Catherine comes out of the house – fixing up her
mussed up hair.

CATHERINE Grandmother's advice on erotica...

Anne quickly gets up and departs, climbing down the terrace steps.

ARMAND Wait! You don't have to go anywhere!

CATHERINE She does have to go.

ARMAND No she doesn't need to!

He hurries to follow Anne, but can't catch her.

ARMAND She'll come back soon.

CATHERINE Those are hormonal games – you yourself agreed.

ARMAND Have you not noticed – puberty, among other things, has long ago
ended for me!

CATHERINE Armand!

ARMAND I won't look you in the eye, mom, I won't! Don't come near! I
won't look!

CATHERINE But you're still a young, good-looking man.

ARMAND Don't come near!

CATHERINE You only have to get over being shy.

ARMAND I'm not young! I don't want to be and I'm not! Maybe I look
younger than my age, but in fact I am already forty! Forty-five!
And I'm independent! Have you not noticed - I'm already old
mom! When I start on everything, you'll see and you'll
marvel!...Why are you silent? Do you hear me?!

CATHERINE I'll rustle up something to eat, shall I.

ARMAND No! No, I don't want anything. I don't need anything! I can do it
myself! We both can! And don't smirk!

CATHERINE I m not smirking.

ARMAND You are smirking! Please, do smirk! But it has been decided! I told her! That's enough. I think so. And that's how it is! And she'll return. It's essential. They don't have any children with my godfather! We will have some! Your grandkids, grandma!...

 He hurries after Anne, and disappears. For a moment Catherine is silent.

CATHERINE (*after Armand*) Well. Come out – I see you... Come on out. Please, don't look me in the eye. After all you have to live your own life...And you're young and full of energy...Do you hear me – I see you!...

 She climbs down the stairs, and follows Armand, but then returns.

CATHERINE Don't joke around...Where are you? There? I'm going to find you! Go on hide, don't breathe!...

 But as soon as Catherine moves toward the lake, Carl comes toward her, still holding the wallpaper rolls.

CARL What an unbelievably beautiful place this is! It's a veritable holy land! We, I and the neighbour – the one on the other side of the lake – we just explored all the little inlets in his motorboat! We were on the island! Really – It can be heard, it can.

CATHERINE What can?

CARL Well, the murmuring underground – I heard it! I didn't believe that I would hear it! Do you know it?

CATHERINE I know.

CARL In my old age I'm ready to believe that some kind of elves live underground! And he's right – when you get to the Spirit Inlet, the air gets so light, really light! And what a motorboat – have you seen it?! He promised to rent it to me. To take the sweetie pies for a ride. But we could also take the people on holiday. He apparently wants to buy the island – and is going to come here to talk about it.

 He laughs and pulls from his pocket a sugar candy – in the shape of a rooster.

CARL That's what he gave to me for dessert. But I brought it for the lady of the house! For being tolerant. We all have become nervous. Four days...

The sugar rooster is already in Catherine's hand. She heads for the house with Carl following close on her heels. Catherine stops on the doorstep.

CATHERINE Lovely...

CARL (*quietly*) It's good that we are here, like this...all the time there's chaos here. Like ants, bedbugs, conditionally speaking...I have wanted to say to you for a long, long time, tell you ...It isn't easy – you being the sister of my best friend...it's difficult to be so open. I have loved you already for a long time. No, don't misunderstand me – I just wanted to tell you, conditionally tell you...without jumping to conclusions, and without craziness. You are an adult, I'm an adult: We both understand that we have to be secretive, conditionally... That's what I wanted to tell you. What I had to tell you. You can hit me, laugh, but...you're a real woman. With a capital W. To carry all this. Alone. All the time. I do know what that means... Really I should have probably kept silent – so it wouldn't be hard for all of us, just in case I ...by chance ...come to help Armand...

Finally Carl catches Catherine's look, which is glued to the wallpaper roll under his arm. He starts to laugh loudly.

CARL Paste! How can I hang it, if I don't have wallpaper paste?! We really hadn't thought it out! You can't do it with snot, excuse me, can you?! We'll hang it. Hang it! But where is the paste?! We have real paste in our heads!... Has something happened? What's happened? Have I said something I shouldn't?...

CATHERINE Socks.

CARL What *socks*?

CATHERINE Socks!

CARL Whose socks? Do you need socks?

CATHERINE Socks!...

She turns and quickly disappears in the house. Carl remains with the sugar rooster – Catherine has given it back to him. For a while he fidgets, then, noticing Johnny, laughs.

CARL There's no love – terrible, it's again no good...

Throwing the wallpaper roll in the corner, Carl unwraps the sugar rooster, but he finds it too sweet, so he gives it to Johnny.

CARL So that life may be a little sweeter! ...If someone looks for me, I'll be on the deck. I have to soak my feet...I'll plan some little jobs for us...(about the net) Mend it, do...

When Carl has left, Johnny takes the sugar candy and starts to suck it. Catherine comes out of the house with Mareck.

CATHERINE There's no one here!

MARECK You're trembling...

CATHERINE You too.

MARECK I'm not trembling.

CATHERINE Nor am I.

MARECK Why do you think that someone is listening from the house?

CATHERINE Everybody's hungry, angry, suspicious.

MARECK And here?

Catherine picks up the accordion, which has been thrown on the ground and puts it in Johnny's lap.

CATHERINE Play! No matter what!...

Sucking on the sugar candy, Johnny sets to playing *Sentimental Journey*...

CATHERINE No, not that! There's no reason to be sad!

Johnny starts to play. Again just as slowly.

MARECK Who's listening in? What the hell for?!

CATHERINE That we can decide only ourselves

MARECK She and I have long ago decided.

CATHERINE I was talking about Livingstone.

MARECK Everyone is waiting for him, that's clear. Shall we chase away my good friend?

CATHERINE He has disappeared.

MARECK He's washing his socks in the lake.

CATHERINE Livingstone!

A moment of silence.

MARECK *(to Johnny)* Play louder!

CATHERINE Why do I have to feel guilty? Why?

MARECK We could have sent someone to meet him at the airport.

CATHERINE He really hasn't been in Copenhagen!

MARECK You said so!

CATHERINE What could I say? Every one is looking at my mouth move! Am I his representative on this earth?

MARECK Urn and all?

CATHERINE Including the will!

MARECK That's not money yet!

CATHERINE Are you a lawyer? Do you know the laws? And their laws?!

MARECK A lawyer has to be honest.

CATHERINE You say that? You who all your life have conned the whole world!

MARECK That's the fashion...

CATHERINE His too!

MARECK He's vanished with all the money?

CATHERINE I don't kn-o-o-w!!! He has flown out of Caracas – that's for certain. I have been calling Washington a dozen times a day! What a bill we'll have!...

MARECK Calm down...

CATHERINE Shut up!!!... Excuse me...*(to Johnny)* Play louder!...

For a moment both again are silent.

MARECK But what are we going to do if he doesn't come? ...

Catherine can only laugh nervously.

MARECK He can't not come.

CATHERINE Let him not come! Let him send it by mail! And he can keep the urn as honorarium!

MARECK You do understand what that means. To me. And to the others.

CATHERINE I had thought – that you would help me.

MARECK What can I do?! I'm not a miracle worker. We all are sitting, waiting, for the fourth day...

CATHERINE And besides, no one is asking any more – today no one has even mentioned Livingstone!

MARECK What good is asking...

CATHERINE But everyone is starving!

MARECK Forgive me...But it's beautiful here – air, water, the Spirit Inlet...

CATHERINE Are you laughing?!

MARECK What else should I do now?

CATHERINE And I?! How long will they believe me?

MARECK He could still come – it's not impossible.

CATHERINE And if he doesn't?

MARECK We'll think about it then.

CATHERINE When? What day will that be, when he won't be here for sure?

MARECK You know, you won't resolve anything if you force it!

CATHERINE Fine. Then let's do it intelligently. In the evening. By the campfire. We do still have matches. All right? Everyone together.

MARECK No! Everyone need not be told. We can't do that.

CATHERINE Why?!

MARECK It'll be ...that they don't understand, and... People have driven here for a funeral. And the rest of it. Traumatized. You understand what that means to them? And also to me. To the others.

CATHERINE And also to me, among other things!

MARECK Why are you playing such silly buggers then?!

CATHERINE But what should I do then?!

MARECK You have to do something of course...

 Johnny starts to play.

BOTH Play!!!

 Johnny plays again.

MARECK Are there not some hidden food reserves – for breakfast?

CATHERINE It's already nine. In the evening.

MARECK For dinner...I have to write. I can't think.

CATHERINE But what should I tell them?

MARECK They aren't asking any more, you said.

CATHERINE Get up! Get up I said!

MARECK Why?

CATHERINE Get up I said!!!

MARECK What do you want?

CATHERINE You want!!!

 She starts to bundle up the net laid out on the floor. Mareck however continues sitting.

MARECK Now, at night?

CATHERINE They have to be fed, at the minimum.

MARECK There are such holes in it!...

CATHERINE *(about Johnny)* He has mended something today.

MARECK Such big fish do not live here.

CATHERINE Then conjure up some, maestro!...And we have perch, good perch. Even if just a pair of them gets caught somehow!

MARECK Just the three of us on our own?...

CATHERINE Yes, gentlemen, on our own. *(to Johnny)* Quiet! All of life is one long festival for him!!!...

 Johnny stops playing.

CATHERINE To the lake, march!

MARECK I have to get dressed...

CATHERINE You'll manage!

MARECK No! After all, you know I'm also a human being!

 Catherine barely manages to lift the net and put it into Johnny's lap.

CATHERINE We'll come in a minute! Carry it to the boat!

 Johnny obeys.

CATHERINE You won't need your squeeze box there!

 She untangles the accordion from the mess of discarded net and throws it on the table. Johnny totters off the terrace to the lake and disappears.

CATHERINE You're still here?

MARECK We would have gone to the lake tomorrow anyway. We go every morning...

CATHERINE I'll start crying shortly...

MARECK I did promise, and I will do it!...

 Mareck goes into the house, but when Catherine finally collapses on the bench, his head reappears out the door.

MARECK They'll have eaten this evening. Tomorrow is another day...

 But then he disappears for a moment – Catherine has unexpectedly thrown a shoe at Mareck. After a while she herself limps into the house. And a moment later Anne, happy and out of breath, runs out on the terrace.

ANNE I see you – come on out!...

She runs off again. But from the opposite direction, out of breath, Armand emerges – he crawls under the terrace. Anne returns.

ANNE I don't play such games – where are you?! U-u-uh!...

Scaring Anne, Armand darts out of his hiding place and kisses her.

ARMAND You know, I'm not even hungry any more! Not at all!...

Then both of them hurriedly vanish under the terrace. Mareck and Catherine come out of the house. They both have changed – Catherine, in old overalls and man's rubber boots which are too big, while Mareck has managed to pull on fantastic fisherman's boots – up to his armpits.

MARECK Is this not too obvious?

CATHERINE Why? We're going to be in a boat – rubber boots are normal.

MARECK There's a hole! In the right foot, here.

He stops short.

CATHERINE How do you know?

MARECK I can feel – air...

Not saying another word, Catherine pushes Mareck to the side and with the large boot soles flapping, heads for the lake alone.

MARECK Wait! Did I say I wouldn't go! If you're hungry you don't have to load all your anger on others! I do understand that it is serious, I do!...

But Catherine hasn't even turned her head. Mareck disappears following her. Then George runs out of the house – still in his white suit.

GEORGE I'm coming! I'm coming! Don't take off without me – I have never thrown nets in!

Also he disappears in the direction of the lake. For a moment there is silence – only soft laughter and what seems like a tussle can be heard from below the terrace. Then Joy appears from the side of the lake.

JOY (*loudly*) Johnny! Johnny!...

She turns to go back to the lake. After just a moment, Carl arrives – barefoot, holding wet socks in his hands to dry.

CARL Johnny! John! Come out! John!!! Don't pretend you're deaf and dumb!...

 But no one answers Carl and he leaves. Then Mareck arrives.

MARECK Johnny! Pal!...

 Mareck exits, and, George, out of breath, runs in.

GEORGE Idiot!!! Stop fooling around!...

 Armand appears from below the terrace, greatly startling George.

ARMAND You can't do without servants!

GEORGE He has drowned, you cretin!

 George exits. Anne also crawls out from below the terrace.

ANNE Good Johnny...He's drowned, the poor man...

ARMAND He's snoring in the cellar!

 He goes into the house, but Anne after a moment goes down to the lake. After a while Catherine runs up from the lake. She and Armand meet on the doorstep.

CATHERINE In the cellar beside a hot pipe!

ARMAND Not there...

 Catherine collapses on the bench.

ARMAND At least tell me something!

CATHERINE The boat in the middle of the lake...empty...half of the net in the water, no oars...

ARMAND Maybe he's swimming.

CATHERINE Under water...

ARMAND Why did he have to do that now, at night?

CATHERINE Simply because! Because he had to!

ARMAND Because of the festival...

CATHERINE In order to survive!

ARMAND No one will die until morning.

CATHERINE Shut up!!!

ARMAND Don't cry mom, don't!...

CATHERINE I'm not crying! Have I ever cried – have you ever seen me?! ...I'm crying...

ARMAND He simply has crawled off somewhere!...

CATHERINE Don't go! Stay!

 But Armand has already left. Carl has come up on the terrace.

CATHERINE Get lost! Go, I said!!!

 Carl turns to go, but at the last moment Catherine, however, speaks to him.

CATHERINE Well tell me, for God's sake!!!

CARL *(after a long pause)* He's not there...Maybe he's...there, below...Joy is a good diver – she had at one time a third level...

CATHERINE What?...

CARL A third level in diving. In a deep sea hunt, that's where I captured her... You wouldn't even guess that now. It seems so long ago...

CATHERINE There's a large lantern in the barn.

CARL It's burned out...

CATHERINE Why precisely him...

CARL They asked me to comfort you, calm you...

CATHERINE Why are we living like this?

 Anne enters. She sits down uncertainly beside Catherine and puts her arm around Anne's shoulders. Catherine doesn't object.

ANNE It's so cold there... I can't even think of it!...

 Also George appears, with his trousers rolled up to his knees.

GEORGE I waded along the whole shoreline...beside the deck...

CARL *(to Catherine)* The formal responsibility rests with you, but... it still needs to be established. I know a public prosecutor, pensioned...

CATHERINE I'll answer for it. We have to answer for it. All of us.

GEORGE *(to Carl)* Conditionally...

Everyone has imperceptibly sat down at the table.

CATHERINE A funeral...a real...

ANNE No more candles...

Also Armand comes back from the lake.

ARMAND His clothes are not here...

CATHERINE Why are we living like this...

He unexpectedly kisses Anne.

CATHERINE That's punishment for all of us. Because we are living like this.

CARL Yes...

ANNE Only because of this we are beginning to understand!...

She kisses Catherine. For a moment again there is total silence.

GEORGE That's hypocrisy. I don't want to be a pig, at least at this moment. Don't be pigs the rest of you.

CARL We?...

GEORGE Putting it bluntly – pigs. What punishment? If he's dead, but we're alive – what punishment is that? At least let's be honest now.

CATHERINE You know very well, what I wanted to say!

CARL *(to George)* That is conditionally speaking!

ANNE He carried the whole thing here by himself...

CATHERINE He would have been forty next month, on the fifteenth...no, the sixth...

ANNE A young man...

- CARL Too young...
- GEORGE *(to Carl)* Be quiet!
- CATHERINE *(to George)* You still don't have enough?! The dissident is unhappy!
- GEORGE I can also be silent. Please, I'm silent!... Only let's look at things like they really are. I have no intention of telling anyone how to live, but you have to be aware of something! You all need to clean up your consciences?!...
- CATHERINE And you are silent!
- There is another moment of silence.
Everyone in unison gets up from the table when Mareck and Joy arrive – they both have wet hair and bare feet. Joy has wrapped herself tightly in an old blanket – in order not to freeze.
- MARECK In the beginning we thought it was him. No – it was only that the hook snagged on driftwood...
- CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* Come sit down beside me!
- Hesitating for just a moment, Mareck leaves Joy and sits down beside Catherine. Every one sits down again except for Joy, who remains standing.
- CARL *(to Joy)* Can you still stay underwater for three minutes without coming up for air? She could at one time...
- ANNE It's so cold and dark there...
- CARL *(to Mareck)* Did you pull the boat ashore?
- MARECK Does that have any significance now?
- JOY He couldn't stand it any more...
- CATHERINE We don't see, don't want to see what is happening to the people closest to us!...
- JOY He jumped in himself...
- CATHERINE Where? Who?
- JOY Johnny. In the lake.
- CATHERINE *(laughs)* Johnny! Why should he do that?!

ANNE Nonsense! What did he lack – he could just coast, no family, no problems!

CARL A non-ending festival!

GEORGE Never! I knew him – never!

ARMAND He was after all a member of our family...

CATHERINE He really was waiting for his birthday – the important forty...

ANNE What need had he to drown himself?

CARL The moment when life, in truth, really starts. Soon everything will be settled, and after all ... there'll be a spa. Isn't that right?! Putting it bluntly! Isn't that right?!

No one says anything more. A moment of silence.

JOY He jumped in himself. I saw it. I had waded into the lake. Just for fun. I turned my head by chance...I thought – I had seen wrong. Then I thought – someone is swimming. Swimming for a long time. It even got on my nerves. Too long, I thought...

Silence.

CARL No, but you ran here, looked for him!

JOY I also wanted to believe...

CATHERINE He jumped?

Joy doesn't answer, but no one asks her again.

CARL *(after a while)* Maybe simply his foot slipped – it was ...slippery in the boat, *(he presses his nose as if giving a sign)*.

JOY He jumped. And it was him.

Silence.

CATHERINE A young man. In the prime of his life. Worked all his life. An optimist. With a future, a good future. Clear thinking. Full of fun. Musical. Loved by all. Why did this happen? What the hell for? Can someone explain it? ... And what's to be done now? ... That, you see, is a book ...a book...

Silence.

Anne gets up and takes the accordion.

- ANNE Who knows how? Who?...Early in the morning he used to walk by the boats. We don't know, but maybe he also did it at night. But we saw. And no one asked him. What is his favourite song? What did he sing?
- CARL He didn't sing, by the way...
- CATHERINE I'll remember in a minute, what he used to sing.
- CARL Conditionally speaking.
- CATHERINE Why?
- CARL I have never heard a mute person sing!
- ARMAND He wasn't mute!
- MARECK Did he talk?
- CATHERINE Of course.
- CARL Conditionally.
- GEORGE He did talk sometime.
- CATHERINE He talked. Even a lot...he used to say important things. And very simply.
- CARL *(laughs)* He wasn't mute?!
- ANNE What song?
- CATHERINE I'll remember in a minute.
- CARL Fine, a person has drowned and because of it you shouldn't start to fantasise!
- ANNE Who is going to play?
- CATHERINE No, let's sing my song! He very much liked it! It would please him.
- ANNE Who'll play?
- GEORGE I've never tried!

- MARECK You used to tinker around on the piano.
- GORGE No, no, I don't remember!
- CATHERINE Does everybody know the words? *(to Joy)* Come, don't catch your death of a cold! Nothing more can be done. At the least let's be strong.
- CARL Yes.
- CATHERINE Come, come – let's get closer!
- Catherine embraces Joy, Mareck puts his arms around Catherine, Armand around Mareck, Carl – around Armand and also George.
- ANNE Who's going to play?! Do you hear – who will play?!
- But in just a moment there is total silence – behind Anne, at the edge of the terrace, stands Johnny. Anne shrieks. Johnny, chewing on a stem of grass, is looking at them.
- The first one to come to his senses is Carl, who bursts out laughing. Catherine slaps Carl and then hurries to hug Johnny. Joy starts sobbing, and cuddles up to Johnny. George slaps Johnny on the back. Armand pokes Johnny in a friendly fashion. Anne, however, approaches Johnny fearfully, but finally clings to him. Carl starts laughing again and Joy pokes him once more.
- JOHNNY Did the money come? ... Did the money finally come, did it? What's the matter? Is it not enough?...
- The relief is general – everyone starts to laugh. Euphoric lightheartedness.
- CATHERINE I would go to prison because of you, I swear to God. Now I know.
- GEORGE I would have wanted to be in your place!
- JOY You don't joke about such things!
- GEORGE To see how much all of you love me!
- CATHERINE We love you. Of course, we love you!
- ARMAND Was the water warm? Were you swimming?
- ANNE Such things don't happen so simply – it can't be!
- MARECK *(to Johnny)* We could practice a bit in the mornings – if you want to still fool the world with those glasses?

He pulls a banana peel from Johnny's nose.

- ANNE That's a sign!
- CARL What's a sign?
- GEORGE It's conditional, you know.
- CATHERINE Dear friends, it's the right moment for all of us to be reach a moment of clarity about ourselves! You know what all of us should talk out!
- MARECK *(to Carl, loudly)* The boat is still in the middle of the lake!
- CARL *(to Joy)* You didn't pull it out?
- ANNE Let's row to the Spirit Inlet! Someone really did stop us today and said – *Think!*...
- MARECK Yes, let's go!
- CATHERINE *(to Mareck)* Please listen, when your elders speak!
- MARECK *(to Joy)* We'll pull the boat out!
- CATHERINE We all can't fit in it! At night, in the dark – we shouldn't!
- ANNE Let's make two trips! We have to go to the Spirit Inlet. We have to! You can laugh at me, but believe me – we have to go – it's a sign!
- CATHERINE Who are we going to sacrifice there?
- ANNE We don't live in the here and now only, in this little world, dear people! And we all know it very well!
- CATHERINE But we also do live here!
- ANNE Tomorrow! Tomorrow we'll live here again – where can we escape to. But tonight someone stopped us – you said so yourself! Why?!
- CATHERINE But we're waiting for someone, aren't we?
- MARECK Ashes!
- CATHERINE Shut up!

ANNE What are you doing?! We're screaming. Screaming again –like savages! We just now almost touched upon something else! And now? Again?

 She is already leading Armand and Mareck in the direction of the lake and away.

CARL We'll fish out the boat shortly.

 He leaves with Joy.
Catherine has sagged on the bench. Johnny again is sitting in his place – he's picking his teeth with a match.

GEORGE Did you eat?

JOHNNY A fish...

 For a moment there is silence.

GEORGE *(to Catherine)* Livingstone? ... You wanted to say something?

 Catherine shakes her head in negation. Then George also heads for the lake.

CATHERINE Wait! You at least! Don't go, wait, please!!!

 George, however, has already left. Then also Catherine, still wearing her large boots, follows him.
For a moment only distanced voices, calls and laughter can be heard.
Johnny puts his head on the table and closes his eyes.
But then Carl at lightning speed rushes in from the lake.

CARL How do the night-lines look? Have you got some here? No? A float with a hook at the end, no? You drowned the net – so would you be so kind as to lift your ass now?! How do you make night-lines?

 Johnny shrugs his shoulders.

CARL How I love you all! You too! And you, I love the best! Remember my words! I'm your manager after all! *(laughs)* Have you even got some string here? What if someone wanted to hang themselves? I'm going to write a book about you all, I swear to God!!! ...

 Carl unfolds the tablecloth and starts to tear thin strips from one side.

CARL Bring bottles with corks – to use as floats! Women's hairpins for hooks! Quick! Ten! Twenty!...*(about the tablecloth)* Fix it up, so no one notices!

Braiding the white cloth strips, he rushes down toward the lake, but already after just a moment he returns. Carl puts the accordion in Johnny's lap.

CARL Mine! Loud! So it can be heard below! And joyfully, all right!...I love you!!!...

And off he goes.
Johnny without hurry fixes up the accordion straps and starts to play. After a moment, from the lake can be heard the song being sung. The chorus is particularly loud and energetic. But after the second verse the singing stops – it is interrupted by a loud bang. Johnny, however, continues playing, though he appears to be listening. Armand comes up from the lake. For a good while he sits beside Johnny who is still playing.

ARMAND She apparently had a pistol?...

Johnny continues playing.

ARMAND Mom...

Everyone else come up from the lake.

CURTAIN

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