

SERGIO VODANOVIC

SAME AS EVER:

A play in eight scenes

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY RAMON LAYERA

Cast: VICTOR, a middle-aged industrialist.  
ANA, his wife.  
SYLVIA, their daughter, a university student.  
MARTIN, a university student, SYLVIA's boyfriend.  
TONY, VICTOR's auditor, business associate and friend.  
BETTY, SYLVIA's roommate.  
MAGGIE,  
POSIE, factory workers.

SCENE ONE

(A semitransparent curtain covers the stage in such a way that it leaves a space in front where part of the opening and closing scenes take place. Behind the curtain there is an octagonal platform where the rest of the scenes will take place. The lighting for these scenes shall give the impression that the octagonal platform is suspended in time and space. The title of each scene, as indicated in the text, will be projected on the curtain, which will be closed between each scene. In front of the curtain, to one side of the stage, there will be a cast iron table and three chairs of the same material around it. These objects will remain in place throughout the performance. At the beginning of the action a badminton shuttlecock will fly across the stage several times: voices will be heard laughing, keeping score and talking about the game. Depending on who is returning the volley SYLVIA and VICTOR will appear on the stage. They are both dressed informally. One of SYLVIA's volleys flies over to VICTOR's side: he appears to miss it and she breaks out shouting victoriously as she moves, jumping, to the center of the stage.)

SYLVIA: I beat you! I beat you!

VICTOR: (entering from his side): How about a rematch?

SYLVIA: No. There won't be any. I beat you fair and square.

VICTOR: I think tennis is really my game. How about going to the Club tomorrow to play a real sport?

SYLVIA: That would ruin Tony's morning.

VICTOR: Tony is no good. I'm tired of beating him at tennis.

SYLVIA: Are you sure?

VICTOR: We've been playing for over five years and I don't think he's beat me more than a couple of times.

SYLVIA: It's just that you like to win.

VICTOR: Who doesn't?

SYLVIA: You're a born winner!

VICTOR: Not when I'm playing badminton with you. (ANA comes in with a tray of table settings for tea and a pie. She comes in from the side where the table and chairs are and places the tray on the table.)

ANA: Are you finished?

VICTOR: Sylvia doesn't want to give me a rematch.

ANA: Did you lose again?

VICTOR (moving closer to the table): What's that about losing again?

ANA: That's what happened last Saturday. And if I remember correctly every Saturday...

VICTOR: Sylvia is the only one who beats me. (He kisses ANA on her cheek.) And that's because she is your daughter. And mine.

SYLVIA (moving closer to the table): Did you make an apple pie?

VICTOR: Same as before!

ANA (quickly, with a certain hardness in her voice): Same as ever. (VICTOR gives a quick and worried look at ANA, then he sits down. ANA also sits down.)

VICTOR: Sit down, baby. If you take too long there won't be any pie left.

SYLVIA (joining them): I'll be happy if you leave a small piece for me. I don't want to eat too much.

ANA: Are you going out?

SYLVIA: Tonight. George will stop by to pick me up. But I have to study until then. I have a test on Monday at the university.

VICTOR: Study, on Saturday? That's against the rules, Sylvia. This is a family day. You don't study, I forget all about the factory and your mother promises not to complain about the maids.

SYLVIA: You don't say much about the factory because you're doing well, right?

VICTOR: I'm not complaining. Business is good. Same as before.

(Upon saying this there is a quick exchange of looks between ANA and VICTOR. He gives the impression of apologizing while she seems to be admonishing him.)

ANA (serving tea): Same as before. Everything is like it used to be. When I used to tell you, you wouldn't believe me. You had no faith. But I knew... I knew it had to happen. It was so crazy... something that could happen to any family, any country... (To SYLVIA.) Are you sure all you want is a small piece of pie?

SYLVIA (faintly): Yes, mom.

ANA: When we are together, like this, like a family, I feel something I can't explain. Something here in my breast. And I know I'm happy. One enjoys peace and tranquility better when one has gone through a small storm and one thanks God that it was just that, that it hasn't left any scars and that life goes on the way it is, as it really is, as it should be... (ANA stons, SYLVIA and VICTOR drink their tea silently, but the expression on their faces has changed showing deep sadness. ANA notices this change in

attitude and goes on, quickly.) You know what? Just the other day I started looking for a picture with the three of us together and I couldn't find any. I can't think where they all went. There was a time when all we did was take pictures of us. So this morning I thought of buying some film. I've got the camera ready.

No, it isn't that I think all this may change, it's just that I see George coming so often to pick up Sylvia and, any day, when we least expect it, his parents can come over and ask for our daughter's hand. And before that happens I want to take a picture of the three of us, just the way we are now, happy... (She looks at VICTOR and SYLVIA. They are both serious, absorbed, drinking tea in silence.) I'll go get the camera. (ANA exits. A moment of silence.)

VICTOR (without looking at SYLVIA): That boy... I've never asked you about him...

SYLVIA (after a moment): Who?

VICTOR: You know... that one... the one that...

SYLVIA: Martin?

VICTOR: Yes, Martin.

SYLVIA: He died.

VICTOR: How?

SYLVIA: Can't you guess?

VICTOR: I'm sorry.

SYLVIA (after a moment): How about you? How are you doing?

VICTOR: Fine. The factory is growing... the workers are quiet. There are no strikes, everything is fine, just fine.

SYLVIA: How about you?

VICTOR: Fine... quiet... no problems...

SYLVIA (with a touch of irony): Same as before?

(ANA comes back with a camera and a tripod.)

ANA (while she walks across the stage and sets up the camera):

Fortunately I found the remote control attachment. That way we can all appear in the picture. (Looking through the viewfinder.) Let's see... Sylvia move your chair closer to mine, that way we'll make a better group. (SYLVIA does it.) That's it, that's better... Look this way... No, not with that face, good heavens. The nightmare is over. Let's see... both of you say: happy!

SYLVIA and VICTOR: Happy!

ANA: See? Saying "happy" and keeping your mouth in that position you obtain a spontaneous smile. That's a trick my father taught me. Attention. I'll set the shutter release. (Looks at her watch.) As soon as I sit down next to you we'll all say: We are a happy family! We'll keep the "happy" until the picture is taken. (Sets the camera and runs to her place in the group.)

ANA: One... two... and, three...

ANA, SYLVIA and VICTOR: We are a happy family!

(They all keep the same expression on their faces when they say "happy": the lights go out and the curtain opens. The photograph that has just been taken is projected on the back of the stage. This picture will remain projected throughout the performance. The name of the next scene: "Beethoven refuses to play fifth wheel")

is projected on the photograph. A melody which produces the  
impression of a dream can be heard in crescendo, then it dies down  
until the lights come back on the octagonal platform. The same  
melody will link all the different scenes in the play.)

SCENE TWO "Beethoven refuses to play fifth wheel"

(Small studio apartment. An entrance and bathroom door. A bed and a sofa bed. A small stove upstage. The room offers a general appearance of youthful disarray. The action begins with a couple kissing and caressing on the bed. With her clothes in disarray she makes half-hearted efforts to resist while he caresses her with one hand and with the other manages to slip his pants down to his knees. When it looks like he is going to get what he wants, the bell rings. They stop and look at each other expectantly. She looks at her watch.)

SYLVIA: Three minutes late.

MARTIN: Shhhhht!

SYLVIA (sitting up and fixing her clothes): It's no use. It's Beethoven.

MARTI She has a key.

MARTIN: Not this time.

SYLVIA (startled): No?

MARTIN (feeling through the pockets of his pants on the floor; he pulls out a key): I've got it.

SYLVIA: Did you steal it from her? (He nods) Traitor!

MARTIN (throwing himself on top of her): Now! Now or never, Sylvia!

SYLVIA (managing to break loose): Never!

MARTIN: Are you serious? Then, why did you let me...?

(The bell rings again interrupting MARTIN.)

SYLVIA (goes over to open the door): We have no right to make Beethoven wait outside. The apartment is as much hers as it is mine. We share the rent.

(SYLVIA opens the door and BETTY comes in looking uncomfortable.)

BETTY: Hello.

(MARTIN, annoyed, pulls up his pants and zips them up without looking at the girls.)

MARTIN: Good by.

(He throws the key to BETTY; she catches it as he leaves slamming the door.)

BETTY: Why did he have my key?

SYLVIA (fixing her hair in front of a mirror): Because you are a dumb idiot.

BETTY: Martin said good by.

SYLVIA: So what?

BETTY: Aren't we going to see him again?

SYLVIA: Don't worry. He'll be back.

(The bell rings. BETTY opens the door. MARTIN barges in and goes to the bed. He picks up his belt and leaves without looking at anyone.)

SYLVIA: Didn't I tell you?

BETTY: He took his belt. Now it's for sure.

SYLVIA: He'll think up a pretext. He always does.

BETTY: You're always so sure of yourself.

SYLVIA: I wasn't just a moment ago.

BETTY: Is that right? Did it happen...?

SYLVIA: Almost. Almost.

BETTY: Tell me!

SYLVIA: It was all your fault. Three minutes late, Beethoven. Three minutes late. More than enough time to... (Sudden change.) Why were you three minutes late?

BETTY: I was held up by the neighbor, Miss Pope. She wanted to show me the locks she put in to stop burglars from breaking in and raping her.

SYLVIA: Is that how you were wasting your time?

BETTY: She insisted.

SYLVIA: Meanwhile Martin was insisting too.

BETTY: Sylvia, do you want to know what I almost did when I realized I didn't have the key?

SYLVIA (horrified): No!

BETTY: Yes. I almost turned around and left.

SYLVIA: But where would you have gone?

BETTY: To the movies.

SYLVIA: To the movies? And meanwhile, I, here....?

BETTY: Wouldn't you have liked it?

SYLVIA: That's an impertinent question.

BETTY: But you would have liked it, wouldn't you?

SYLVIA (admonishingly): Betty, you always came back at the exact time you said you would. Promise me from now on you'll never be late again. Never. Not on any pretext.

BETTY: I won't do it again, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Thanks.

BETTY: I won't do it again. I just can't see myself returning at the exact time everytime you are alone in the apartment with Martin, right on time to interrupt...whatever you are doing.

SYLVIA: Why not?

BETTY: I don't want to go on playing fifth wheel.

SYLVIA: But Beethoven...

BETTY: Beethoven is not going to go on playing fifth wheel. Is that clear?

SYLVIA (offended): Crystal clear. (Goes over to fix her bed.)

BETTY (helping her): It's for your own good.

SYLVIA: I left home because I was sick and tired of hearing that. Don't you say that again.

BETTY: You didn't have to leave home to do what you are doing now.

SYLVIA: I didn't leave home to go to bed with someone. I left because the psychiatrist told me to.

BETTY: You are going to bed with someone. The only difference is that you've made arrangements with me so that I come back just in time to prevent the "consummation." Is that the way you say it?

SYLVIA: I think so. Bourgeois people "consume" each other the night of the wedding.

BETTY (ironically): Is that what you're saving yourself for?

SYLVIA: No. But I'll decide when and where I'll lose my virginity and it won't be because you stayed on talking with that old maid next door.

BETTY: When you come right down to it what bothers you and Miss Hope is the same thing.

SYLVIA: What?

BETTY: How to protect her virginity against those awful men who might come to her apartment.

SYLVIA: (sticking her tongue out at her): Phooey!

BETTY: Sylvia. Now, this is serious. What is it that you cannot forgive in your mother, your father, your aunt and uncle, the people from

the older generation?

SYLVIA: That they are all a bunch of hypocrites!

BETTY: How about you?

SYLVIA: I've had about enough of you, Beethoven.

BETTY: Haven't we talked often enough about the ridiculousness of torturing oneself with the question of virginity; that if men don't care about being virgins themselves we shouldn't either; that nothing should stand in the path of love and that we should enjoy sex and everything else. Haven't you said it yourself? Isn't that what is going to happen in the new society? Aren't we new women ahead of our time?

SYLVIA: Yeah, but... do you know that this business about virginity is like agrarian reform.

BETTY: What do you mean?

SYLVIA: It's irreversible.

BETTY: Are you scared?

SYLVIA: Terrified!

BETTY: That's absurd.

SYLVIA: More than that. It's idiotic!

BETTY: The weight of night...

SYLVIA: What's that?

BETTY: We saw that in class this morning at the university. The weight of night. That's what Portales used to call the influence of reactionaries in the life of the country and the people.

SYLVIA: That must have been in those days. I, for one, feel totally liberated. Leaving home was only the first step in my rebellion.

There'll be plenty of others until I become what I want to be and not what my parents want me to be. I'll be a woman, a real woman. A human being, not an object. You'll see! You'll see how I'll blow up the world I come from.

BETTY: Sounds fine. But when the crunch comes you can't get rid of your little prejudices.

SYLVIA: You'll see. Time will tell.

BETTY: We'd better have a drink.

SYLVIA: There isn't any.

BETTY: What do you mean? Didn't Martin bring any?

SYLVIA: Nothing.

BETTY: What a cheapskate! He wants to crawl in bed with you but he can't even bring one lousy bottle of booze. Who does he think he is?

SYLVIA: Poor Martin.

BETTY: Oh, now you feel sorry for him?

SYLVIA: I wonder where he went.

BETTY (going towards the stove): Shall we eat?

SYLVIA: I wonder who he went to.

BETTY: We have eggs and potatoes. How about some potato pancakes?

SYLVIA: Do you want to know what this sex education teacher used to tell us in school?

BETTY (starts to peel potatoes): Down south the old ladies didn't know about these things. We could teach them a thing or two.

SYLVIA: She used to tell us not to wear low necklines and short skirts because otherwise the boys would get excited and then some poor servant or waitress would end up paying for the broken dishes.

BETTY: One good reason more for not wanting to play the role of official interrupter. I don't see why the proletariat should pay the consequences of the ideological deviations of the bourgeoisie.

SYLVIA: I'd do the same for you.

BETTY: For me? When? Fellows look on me as just a friend. They tell me everything, they tell jokes, but nobody even pinches me. I don't even get their hormones going. What can I do!

SYLVIA: You'll get your turn, Beethoven.

(The bell rings.)

BETTY: You see? Just as I finish peeling the potatoes we get an uninvited guest. As if they could smell them.

SYLVIA (absolutely certain): It's Martin.

BETTY: If it's Martin, I'll go.

SYLVIA: You wouldn't dare, would you?

BETTY: And I won't come back.

SYLVIA: All right. What has to happen, will happen. But you'll be responsible.

(SYLVIA goes to the door.)

BETTY: Sylvia!

(SYLVIA stops.)

BETTY (going over to SYLVIA): Are you ready? Are you really?

SYLVIA: Are you going to leave me alone?

BETTY (hesitates for a moment; then quite sure): Yes.

SYLVIA: All right... if it's God's will.

(Opens the door. MARTIN walks in carrying a bottle of brandy.)

MARTIN: Hi....I brought this... I want to apologize.

SYLVIA (coquettish): For what?

MARTIN: Well... my behavior... I realize I shouldn't have... But you must understand... As a man...

SYLVIA (still coquettish): Of course!

MARTIN (confused): What?

BETTY: She said, of course.

(There is a long embarrassing pause. MARTIN guesses something is wrong. Resorts to the brandy to break the ice.)

MARTIN: How about a drink?

BETTY: Did you eat?

MARTIN: No. I'm not hungry. How about you?

SYLVIA: We're not hungry either.

MARTIN (going over to get the glasses): Let's have some brandy. (Notices the half-made potato pancakes.) But you were preparing potato pancakes...

BETTY: Just out of habit. (MARTIN starts serving the brandy.) Don't give me any.

MARTIN: Don't you drink anymore?

BETTY (looking for her purse): I'm going out.

MARTIN (puzzled): Going out?

BETTY: Yes.

MARTIN: But you got here just a while ago.

BETTY: I came back to get some money. I'm going to the movies. It's a double feature and both movies are long. I'll be gone about four hours.

MARTIN: And you are going to leave me alone with Sylvia for four hours?

BETTY: Or five...

(Goes over to SYLVIA and pulling out a small bottle from her purse she gives it to her, making every effort to keep MARTIN from seeing it.)

SYLVIA (in a low voice): What's this?

BETTY (also in a low voice): The pill.

SYLVIA (almost shouting): What?

BETTY: I bought them just in case. One never knows. Here, I'll leave them for you. (Holds SYLVIA's face in her hands and gives her an intense look. Then she kisses her on her forehead.) May everything be perfect. Bye.

(She starts to leave, overcome by her emotions.)

MARTIN (puzzled and unable to understand the scene): Beethoven!

(BETTY turns around and kisses MARTIN on his cheek.)

BETTY: Make her happy.

MARTIN (stopping her): But Beethoven, you have as much right to the apartment as Sylvia.

BETTY (brusquely, holding back her emotions): I've got to go to the movies.

MARTIN: But...

BETTY: I have to go to the movies. I've got to...

(She moves away from him and leaves. MARTIN turns to SYLVIA looking confused.)

MARTIN: Beethoven is acting strange. Do you know what she said? Make her happy.

(SYLVIA nods affirmatively, acting coquettish.) Why?

SYLVIA: Aren't you hot?

MARTIN: No.

SYLVIA: I am.

MARTIN: Shall I open the window?

SYLVIA: No.

MARTIN: Well, what is it then?

SYLVIA: I'll get into something cooler? (Goes towards the bathroom. Turns to MARTIN.) Don't you want to get comfortable?

MARTIN: I am comfortable.

SYLVIA: I won't take long.

(She throws a kiss to MARTIN as she goes in the bathroom. MARTIN, still confused, scratches his head. He thinks for a moment that BETTY has played a trick on him. He walks stealthily towards the door, listens through it then pulls it open. There is nobody. He looks out.)

MARTIN: Betty? Beethoven...

(Looking disappointed he closes the door and looks around the apartment trying to find a clue to explain the strange behavior of his friends. He finds the small bottle that BETTY gave to SYLVIA. Reads the label.)

MARTIN: The pill!

(He quickly puts the bottle where it was. He tries to hide his confusion. He picks up a magazine and looks as though he is busy trying to solve a crossword puzzle. SYLVIA comes in, her hair down, wearing a vaporous white nightgown. MARTIN doesn't look up from the magazine. SYLVIA comes from behind and covers his eyes with her hands.)

SYLVIA: Who is it?

MARTIN: Friar Tuck.

SYLVIA: Cold... very cold.

MARTIN: Karl Marx.

SYLVIA: Getting colder.

MARTIN: Cleopatra.

SYLVIA: Getting warmer.

MARTIN: I know! Little Lulu!

SYLVIA (taking her hands off his eyes and adopting a markedly childish attitude): You burned yourself.

(MARTIN stands up and turns around toward SYLVIA. He looks astonished upon seeing the way she is dressed.)

MARTIN: What's that?

SYLVIA (parading like a model): A nightgown.

MARTIN: Are you going to sleep?

SYLVIA (coquettish): No.

MARTIN: You can see through it!

SYLVIA: That's the fashion.

MARTIN (throwing a bathrobe at her): Put this on!

(SYLVIA looks offended, unable to understand.)

MARTIN (by way of explanation, returning to his crossword puzzle): I'm a man.

SYLVIA (throwing the bathrobe at his face): And I'm a woman!

(Looking upset she walks over to her bed and lies down while MARTIN appears to be absorbed in his crossword puzzle. A moment of silence.)

MARTIN: Russian river. Three letters, with a K in the middle.

SYLVIA: Oka.

MARTIN: Fictional elephant.

SYLVIA: How many letters?

MARTIN: Five.

SYLVIA: Dumbo.

(MARTIN writes it down then erases it.)

MARTIN: No, that's not it. It starts with B.

SYLVIA: Babar.

MARTIN (writing): Babar. That's it! Babar. You're a dictionary!

SYLVIA (throwing a book at him): That's a dictionary! I hope you can tell the difference.

MARTIN (checking the binding): Pretty well put together.

(Acting nervous, SYLVIA springs up from the bed, picks up the bath-robe, puts it on, then walks over to the stove where BETTY was preparing the potato pancakes.)

SYLVIA (prepares the pancakes while she talks with growing excitement):

Of course... the gentleman came back to digest. Is the gentleman satisfied? Did he have enough? Did he have a good dish? Perhaps some cheap waitress? Or did he go to the emergency room at some whorehouse? Because I assume he didn't go next door to rape Miss Hope.

(MARTIN doesn't understand a word. He has walked over to her showing his bewilderment while she talked.)

MARTIN: Are you crazy?

SYLVIA: Do you think I was born yesterday? Don't you think I know? It's one of the first things one learns in sex education.

MARTIN: What is?

SYLVIA (on the verge of tears): You're a monster! You're disgusting! You're... You're....a man!

MARTIN: Anything wrong with that?

SYLVIA (trying to calm down): Will you promise to tell me nothing but the truth if I ask you something?

MARTIN: Word of honor.

SYLVIA: Did you get in bed with a woman after you left here when Beethoven came back?

MARTIN: But there was hardly any time.

SYLVIA (demanding): You gave me your word!

MARTIN: No. (SYLVIA gives him a quizzical look, then points at him with her finger and breaks out laughing.) What's the matter now?

SYLVIA (still laughing): You masturbated!

MARTIN (pointing toward the stove): The pancakes are burning.

SYLVIA (stops laughing, turns around quickly and shuts off the stove): Oh shit!

MARTIN (very calmly, after giving it some thought): So you think that if I don't run and get in bed with you it's because I'm satisfied?

SYLVIA (she starts eating the omelet. Answers with her mouth full while trying not to burn herself): Obviously.

MARTIN: What if I lost interest in you?

SYLVIA (snapping her fingers): Just like that?

MARTIN (picking up the bottle with pills and showing them to her threateningly): No. Like this!

SYLVIA: What's that?

MARTIN: So, you don't know. Perhaps some hidden enemy tossed them through the window right on top of the nightstand. Or maybe they are only for Betty's use? Beethoven! Or maybe you use them for stomach aches! (Emphatically, like the prosecutor who produces the smoking gun in front of the jury.) They're birth control pills!

SYLVIA (unmoved): So what? Do you want to have a baby?

MARTIN: I hate promiscuity.

SYLVIA: I do too.

MARTIN: Oh, yeah? And so why are you taking the pill? Not for me, that's for sure. With me, you fight it, you tease me and when I am about to get you, in comes Beethoven, without fail. But with the others, there is no Beethoven, or Brahms, or Mozart. There's the pill!

SYLVIA (impressed): You're jealous!

MARTIN: And today, I'll never know why, I get here and Beethoven informs me that I have four hours, maybe five. Then Miss Sylvia disappears into the bathroom and out comes Little Lulu, stinking with expensive perfume, wearing a transparent nightgown. Little Lulu wants to satisfy her sexual needs. Let the next one come in please! No! I won't have that!

SYLVIA: No? What does the gentleman want? The gentleman is a macho and he has to seduce, to deceive...to rape! He wants to be rejected so that he can assert himself with his filthy, greasy hands; he wants to enjoy himself and leave the poor woman humiliated and crying. That's what he wants! Well, you came to the wrong place. Miss Hope next door is waiting to be raped. I am a woman and I have the same rights as a man. I want a lover, not a rapist.

MARTIN: Sylvia!

SYLVIA: Ah! Are you shocked? You can talk of revolution, of equality, of sexual freedom but when the time comes you behave just like my father who raped my mother, like my grandfather who raped my grandmother, like my uncle who raped my aunt. But I'm not my mother,

or my grandmother or my aunt. That's why I left home! I belong to a different generation!

(Annoyed, she takes off her bathrobe and gets in bed.)

MARTIN: What are you going to do?

SYLVIA: What I've done this time of day since the day I was born: sleep!

MARTIN: Alright. I'm leaving.

SYLVIA (half-sitting in bed): And for your satisfaction, that of my parents, my grandparents and my aunt and uncle....I am a virgin!

(Breaks down into tears. MARTIN doesn't know what to do. Goes near her. Doesn't know whether to touch her or talk to her. Finally he decides to stay and sits down on the sofa.)

SYLVIA (calming down as she mops up her tears with a handkerchief): What are you doing?

MARTIN: I'll stay until Betty comes back. Go to sleep. I'll keep you company.

SYLVIA (with irony): Like a brother?

MARTIN: Like a friend.

(A moment of silence. SYLVIA pretends she is asleep while she keeps an eye on what he is doing. He goes back to his crossword puzzle.)

SYLVIA (aggressive): Ten across, Greek letter, is Omega. Alpine sound, five down is Yodel. Small weight is Gram and fifteen across beginning with R can be Reap, Rope or Rape! If you just wake me up to ask me another question, I'll castrate you!

(She covers her head with the sheet as MARTIN looks on in disbelief. He goes back to his crossword puzzle and thinks for a while.)

MARTIN (to himself): What did she say an Alpine sound was? (Tries to remem-

ber, then he writes.) Yodel!....that's it!

(The lights are dimmed slowly, go off and then are turned back on.

A few hours have gone by. MARTIN has apparently finished his cross-  
word puzzle and is now thinking. He gets up and walks over to SYLVIA.  
He caresses her tenderly. He gets closer and smells her hair. He  
uncovers her and looks at her lovingly. SYLVIA wakes up startled.)

SYLVIA: What is it?

MARTIN: I'm sorry.

SYLVIA: About what?

MARTIN: I woke you up.

SYLVIA: That's alright.

MARTIN: Also, I'm sorry about what I said.

SYLVIA: I forgot all about it.

MARTIN (kissing her forehead): Good night.

SYLVIA (taking one of his hands): Your hands are cold. Are you cold?

MARTIN: A little bit.

SYLVIA (moving over and making room for him): I'm also cold. Come and  
make me warm.

MARTIN (while he takes his pants and shoes off): I couldn't solve the cross-  
word puzzle. I needed your help. I don't know any minor Roman  
rural deities.

SYLVIA: A Faun, with F, like in fool.

MARTIN (getting in bed): You know everything.

SYLVIA: Now you are the one who has to teach me.

(They start kissing and caressing. A pause.)

MARTIN: The pill!

SYLVIA: That's right!

(They sit up. MARTIN gets out from the bed and finds the bottle)

MARTIN: With water?

SYLVIA: I suppose so.

(MARTIN goes to the bathroom and returns with a glass of water. He places the pill on her tongue with great ceremony as if he was giving her some medicine. He holds the glass with one hand and her head with the other. He watches her reaction.)

MARTIN: What do you feel?

SYLVIA: Nothing.

(He gets back in bed and starts caressing her again. A pause.)

MARTIN (sitting up): Does it work right away?

SYLVIA: I don't know...and I don't care. (She takes the initiative now. A moment goes by. BETTY comes in. She turns on the light.)

BETTY: That's it fellas!

SYLVIA (sitting up): Betty!

MARTIN (sitting up): Oh, no!

BETTY: It's cold out there and I'd also like to get in bed. That's enough for today, don't be greedy.

(MARTIN, with his pants half on and his shoes in one hand is now indignant.)

MARTIN (to himself): I can't stand it! I can't stand it any longer! (He exits, slamming the door.)

(SYLVIA breaks down into tears.)

BETTY: You were with him for five hours, Sylvia. That's enough for the first time. Be reasonable!

(Curtain.)

SCENE THREE "That's Really Socialism"

(Locker-room area in a sports club that caters to the bourgeoisie. Dressing-rooms, shower stall, washstand, lockers where the club members store away their things. VICTOR comes in followed by TONY. They are both in their late forties. They are wearing tennis clothes.)

VICTOR: Six, love! Six, love! I really wiped you out!

(TONY comes in.) If anybody hears about this, they'll put you at the bottom of the list.

TONY (who looks worried and dejected in contrast to VICTOR's vitality and joviality): What time is it?

VICTOR: It's only eight thirty. You see? It's taken us half an hour less than usual. It took me only forty five minutes to wipe you out.

TONY: Just once...

VICTOR: Just once? You've got a bad memory, companero.

(He opens his locker and starts putting his tennis equipment away and taking his clothes out.) You know what's happening? You're

turning into a mummy by the day. First it started up here.

(Points to his head.) Now, your mummified ideas have slowly gone down to your muscles which are in turn becoming mummified. Soon you will end up in a sarcophagus which we'll put in the middle of the tennis court so that future generations can see what man in the old society looked like.

TONY: I'm afraid there'll have to be two sarcophagi...

VICTOR: Are you referring to me? Look! Fifty years old, but I have a young mind, with fresh progressive ideas, and not an ounce of fat. Feel me. Go ahead, feel me. Nothing but muscle. Those young fellows don't have to talk to me about the new man. I am the new man!

TONY: I wonder what's going to happen to the new man when he starts crumbling.

VICTOR: First take a look at how the old men have crumbled down. Have you noticed? We used to have to make reservations in advance to play at this time. Now the Club is deserted. Half of the club members grabbed their money and left the country before this government took over and the other half doesn't even dare to come for fear of being accused of practicing bourgeois habits. As if socialism were against sports, against health recreation!

TONY: I don't think it's against them, but I can assure you, at least in my case, that it interferes with them.

VICTOR: What? Now you're going to blame the government for the score? Aren't you exaggerating a little bit? And what excuse are you going to come up with this Sunday when, as usual, you don't shoot one single duck. C'mon, get dressed. With so much complaining you'll be late for work.

TONY: I'm not going to the office this morning.

VICTOR: You're not going? Remember that you work for me too. You're my auditor. I don't understand this business of changing the names of everything. First, you used to be bookkeepers, then you were accountants, now you're auditors. And all that so you can

raise your fees! (He goes into the dressing-room.)

TONY: I have an appointment at the Ministry.

VICTOR (inside): An audit?

TONY: No, they did that yesterday.

VICTOR: Why are you going then?

TONY: I am going to the Tax Crimes Division.

VICTOR (inside. A whistle): Nothing serious?

(TONY, as if about to reply, changes his mind, opens his locker and starts taking his clothes out. VICTOR comes out from the dressing-room with a towel tied around his waist on his way to the shower.)

VICTOR: I warned you to be careful. Things are different nowadays. Morality counts a lot now.

TONY: You're not exactly an angel yourself.

VICTOR: What's that supposed to mean?

TONY: Since our days at the university I've always been impressed by your ability to theorize.

VICTOR: To theorize?

TONY: Your leftwing ideas...

VICTOR: Those are not theories.

TONY: Your fiery speeches at the Student Union that always ended in a big party with lots of food and drink...

VICTOR: You didn't expect me to starve, did you? I had to recover my strength.

TONY: And then your factory, your financial success.

VICTOR: So what? Did you think that in order to help the oppressed I shouldn't have become an outcast?

TONY: Not an outcast, but not an exploiter, either.

VICTOR: Me, an exploiter? You know, you sound ridiculous when you use that kind of language.

TONY: So do you.

VICTOR: I've always used it. It's my kind of language. (Transition)  
Oh! I never thought that getting knocked off six-love would make you so bitter - so depressed.

TONY: Victor, there's something I've got to tell you. I've been trying to tell you since last night, but you....

VICTOR (going into the shower): Let me take a shower first. What's the matter with you? You're nervous, old man! (Draws the shower curtain.)

TONY: You didn't want to hear about it last night, you said we should leave it for today. This morning you wanted to play first, now the shower...

VICTOR (appears from behind the shower curtain and hangs the towel on a hook outside the shower): Is there anything better than a nice shower after a six-love? Six - love! (He winks at him and disappears behind the shower curtain.)

TONY (determined to speak): Victor, there's something about your books that....

(TONY cannot talk because VICTOR has turned the shower on. TONY walks over and takes his clothes out of the locker.)

VICTOR (singing as he takes his shower):

We shall overcome

We shall overcome

We shall overcome, some day...

Deep in my heart...

We shall overcome....

(Raising his voice so that TONY can hear him over the noise of the shower.) Do you remember? I used to get goose bumps when we sang it in rallies!

TONY: That's what I feel now.

(TONY goes in the dressing-room while VICTOR can still be heard singing. He shuts off the water. An arm reaches out for the towel.)

VICTOR (inside the shower stall): Well, what is it that you wanted to tell me. What did you find in my books?

TONY (from inside the dressing-room): I wasn't the one who found it.

(VICTOR comes out from the shower with a towel tied around his waist and walks over to the door of the dressing-room where TONY is.)

VICTOR: The auditors?

TONY (inside): The auditors.

VICTOR: From the IRS?

TONY (comes out from the dressing-room with a towel tied around his waist):

From the IRS.

VICTOR: What? What did they find?

TONY: Remember how we juggled the books? The way we found to bury your personal income in the company's assets.

VICTOR: That was your idea!

TONY: You asked me to find you a way.

VICTOR: You told me everybody did it.

TONY: That's right.

VICTOR: Then I'm not the only one who is in trouble. There's quite a few of us. We can get together, we can work out a deal, we can fix it. Dismiss the charges, no interest, and we can start on a clean slate. We've done it before. How many of your clients are in the same situation?

TONY: You are the only one.

VICTOR: What do you mean? You said...

TONY: Yes. I told you that other industrialists also did it. But they didn't check their books. Just yours.

VICTOR: Damned luck! I've never won anything in the lottery, but they have a drawing to see whose books they're going to look at and I hit the jackpot!

TONY: There was no drawing.

VICTOR: There wasn't?

TONY: No.

VICTOR (after a pause): Somebody reported me? (TONY nods affirmatively.)  
Who? Who thinks he's so clean that he can throw stones at me?

TONY: Your workers.

VICTOR: No!

TONY: Yes, your workers.

VICTOR: But.... they're my friends. We've been to political rallies together, they know that I'm a leftist just like them and that...  
Are you sure?

TONY: They didn't tell me directly but I could tell from what the auditors were saying.

VICTOR: Ungrateful sonofabitches!

TONY: After all, they're the ones who are affected by...

VICTOR: I can fix that in no time. I'll just throw a few extra bucks at them and everything will be fine. (Enters the dressing-room.) I'll get dressed and go to the factory.

TONY: I don't think that it'll be that easy.

VICTOR (inside the dressing-room): You don't know about these things. All you know is about numbers and figures. My workers are like my children. They owe everything to me. If it wasn't for me, where would they be now?

TONY (with sarcasm): So they're your children, huh?

VICTOR (inside): No more, no less.

TONY: I hope you have better luck with them than with your daughter. (A long silence. After a while VICTOR appears at the door of his dressing-room wearing his pants and no undershirt. He looks dumb-founded.)

VICTOR: What? What did you say?

TONY (making as if he is about to go into the shower): Forget it. (VICTOR walks up to him, stops him abruptly and makes him turn around.)

VICTOR: No, I won't take that. You've got to explain. What did you mean?

TONY: Well, just the other day I went to see... this girlfriend of mine. When I was in this friend's apartment building I ran into Sylvia.

VICTOR: So what. What about it?

TONY: Last Sunday I made a casual remark about it to the fellows we go hunting with and they said that it was common knowledge that Sylvia does not live at home with you anymore.

VICTOR: Did they talk about it? What did they say?

TONY: Nothing to be ashamed of. Half of the membership at the Club has problems with their children.

VICTOR: But I don't have any problems. None. Why should I have any? Sylvia is staying over with a girlfriend who happens to be sick and alone. That's all.

TONY: It's alright. I'm sorry.

VICTOR: Don't you doubt it. I won't take that from you or anyone else. Stick your nose in my books, talk to me about the factory and, if you want, tell me that they are going to take it away from me. But leave my daughter alone. She is important to me. She's the only thing that's important to me. Understood?

(Without waiting for an answer VICTOR goes back in the dressing-room and comes back out with his shirt and tie in one hand. He puts on his shirt in front of the mirror and starts making a knot in his tie. TONY, who has been watching him doubtfully, dares talk to him when he sees that he has calmed down.)

TONY: There's one thing that I'd like to ask you, Victor. I respect your ideas. You've always said that the means of production must belong to the State, and you must have good reasons. But your business is also my business. Don't forget that.

VICTOR: And what's all that supposed to mean?

TONY: I only want to ask you to keep me informed about your dealings.

VICTOR: Dealings? What dealings?

TONY: What I understood from the inspectors is that your factory will go to the State. (VICTOR turns around with his hair half-combed. He looks astounded.) Didn't you know it?

VICTOR: What you're saying is outright idiocy!

TONY: I'm not saying it. That's what they said. They used the same expressions you've always used, the same words...

VICTOR: Words? What words? What expressions?

TONY: How should I know! The public interest, a planned economy, social function...

VICTOR: But that's for the big monopolies! That's for another reality. We are in a country which is just beginning to develop. What we need to do is stimulate productivity. We just can't do without private investment. Besides, it would be outright theft!

TONY: Well, what's the story? Are you a socialist or not?

VICTOR: I am.

TONY: Practice what you preach, then.

VICTOR: Practice what you preach! They're a bunch of ignoramuses! They read a book by Marx and they want to do everything it says. It's been years since Marx wrote what he wrote. Our reality is different.

TONY (fed up, he goes in the shower): Explain that to them!

VICTOR: As if they would listen to explanations! They're just a bunch of inexperienced brats. I've been defending socialist ideas for over thirty years. And they come at me with all this!

TONY (appears from behind the shower curtain and hangs the towel on the hook outside): Do you want me to be frank with you? I've always been under the impression that you were never a socialist, that all you really wanted was to shock your friends at the Club, but deep down you were as much of a reactionary as all of us.

VICTOR: And you come and tell me that after all this time?

TONY: Yes, now. Whether we like it or not the moment of truth has come. We have to define ourselves. Words cannot disguise anything now. (VICTOR makes as if he wants to contradict him but TONY does not let him and goes on talking.) The moment of truth, Victor. Go on and ask your conscience. See if you can find out who you really are and what your truth is.

(TONY disappears behind the shower curtain and starts the water running. During the following monolog VICTOR will finish getting dressed and comb his hair while emphasizing his words with shaken and nervous movement.)

VICTOR: The truth! Now everybody wants to know the truth. Sylvia leaves the house to find her truth. My workers want to know the truth about my books. As if the times were such that you could find the truth! One gets strangled, stabbed. Your own daughter stabs you in the back, your own employees stab you and the stupid idiot asks: What is your truth?

Until now it was only Sylvia. Now there are these other things that one has brought to life like a child. Take the factory. I created it. It was born out of my imagination. Out of my work. My money. Each machine in it was like a pregnancy. My pregnancy, not my wife's. And they're mine and they don't abandon me. They don't leave me alone. Unless they take them away from you. And now they're saying that they must perform a social function! What do they know about social function! Is getting drunk a social function? Goofing off at work is a social function. Because that's

all they know. And they're the ones who want to run things.  
They're the ones!

First, they take away your factory, then your children and then...  
then what?

There's no shortage of excuses, that's for sure. Just like  
Sylvia's excuse to live by herself: the psychiatrist prescribed  
it. Now, which psychiatrist prescribed the audit at my factory?  
The Minister? The Undersecretary? Ministers, undersecretaries  
and psychiatrists can all go to hell. All of them, so that they  
let young people be young and those who want to work do their  
jobs.

What's happening now is that nobody wants to give you credit for  
anything. No appreciation. She was sent to the best schools.  
She had everything she needed. I was even going to buy her a car!  
And my workers' salaries. Is there any factory that pays higher  
wages than mine?

And now they talk about exploitation! What do they want? To live  
her own life, Sylvia said. To run the factory is what they'll say.  
Didn't I give her enough freedom? Haven't I always spoken in favor  
of labor participation in management? But no, they wanted more.  
They always want more. She had to go away from home. They had  
to ask for expropriation by the State.

(TONY comes out from the shower with a towel around his waist.)

TONY: So? Are you a socialist or not?

VICTOR: I am what I've always been.

TONY: A socialist?

VICTOR: A socialist...a libertarian...a democrat...a collectivist.

TONY: But that's not socialism!

VICTOR: No? What about Sweden? What do you have to say about Sweden?  
Haven't you ever heard about Swedish socialism?

TONY: But...

VICTOR: Sweden! That's really socialism!

SCENE FOUR "Tarzan loves Jane, but..."

(SYLVIA's apartment. Before the lights go on, SYLVIA, BETTY and MARTIN can be heard laughing and talking. After that they are seen sitting on the floor around some food and drink, the remains of an informal farewell party for BETTY. SYLVIA and MARTIN are dressed informally but BETTY is dressed for a trip. Lying around on the floor there is a suitcase.)

MARTIN: What do we play now?

SYLVIA: Let's do a romantic soap opera.

MARTIN: How about a horror one...

BETTY: That's enough. If I stay on any longer I'm gonna miss the train.

SYLVIA: Wouldn't that be nice?

BETTY: What about later? You'll end up sending me out to go around the block while you stay here nice and warm. That's why I've had so many colds lately.

SYLVIA: You make me feel guilty.

BETTY: No, it's my fault. I've got some luck... This is the third time it happens to me. Better be the last one.

MARTIN: What happened?

BETTY: No matter which girl I get a room with, she finds herself a boyfriend and I have to make room for him. I should start a matrimonial agency...

MARTIN: That's a good idea!

SYLVIA: I could give you a letter of recommendation.

MARTIN: That's it! She can't leave without a recommendation.

(He picks up a pencil and a piece of paper and starts writing.)

BETTY: It won't do me any good back home.

SYLVIA: Is it that bad?

BETTY: Just to give you an idea: I won't have any choice but to get married.

SYLVIA: Don't be so tragic.

MARTIN (gives the piece of paper to SYLVIA): Sign here.

SYLVIA (reads the paper): Whoever it may concern. The undersigned hereby certify that Miss Betty, alias Beethoven, is endowed with the extraordinary virtue of enabling any woman who decides to share a room with her to enjoy the guaranteed loss of her virginity.

BETTY (while SYLVIA is signing): Make sure you explain that it is through natural means, otherwise they'll think I'm a lesbian.

MARTIN (stands up and imitates a television announcer): And now we welcome you back to another chapter in our continuing drama: "Betty's Homecoming."

SYLVIA (imitating a TV commercial): Recent studies conducted at a major medical institution have shown how truly effective Betty's method can be... For fast, guaranteed results, try Betty...

(MARTIN ties a colored scarf over his head, puts on large, sophisticated sunglasses and acts as if he is knitting.)

MARTIN (imitating the voice of a woman): Someone told me that Betsy turned out to be a tramp in Santiago.

SYLVIA (playing the role of a small town gossip): I've heard that she dances on top of a table without any clothes on.

MARTIN (the same): She wouldn't!

SYLVIA (the same): And that's nothing: no clothes and no shoes.

MARTIN (the same): Emily says she saw her stomach out to here.

SYLVIA (the same): The other day I saw her in the paper with some of those hippies who were caught smoking marijuana. She gave a false name, of course, but she doesn't fool me: I saw through the phony name!

MARTIN (the same): And that's nothing. She was seen in some of those land take-overs. Guns and all.

SYLVIA (changes her voice and imitates a television announcer): But Betty, who was innocent and pure, would one day return to dispel the unkind rumors that had so unjustly tarnished her good name.

(BETTY picks up her suitcase and walks up to MARTIN.)

BETTY: Mother!

MARTIN (embraces her): Betty! You're back, sweetheart!

BETTY: Yes, mother. I made it back there in the big city.

MARTIN: I always had faith in you, dear. Did you get your degree?

BETTY: I got my Ph.D.

MARTIN: In what?

BETTY: African languages. I majored in Swahili.

MARTIN (brings BETTY over to SYLVIA): Let's see, dear, say hello in Swahili to the lady.

BETTY (with the most genuine Swahilian accent): Upyourass Youbigshit.

SYLVIA: Good heavens, she speaks it as well as my husband!

MARTIN: Betty is a fine daughter. Just think, she'll have to get married someday.

BETTY: No!

MARTIN: Yes!

BETTY: No, mother. I'll never leave you.

MARTIN: Yes. You'll have to. That's your fate.

BETTY: But... to who?

MARTIN: To the son of any of my friends.

SYLVIA: To Jerry!

MARTIN: To Dick!

SYLVIA: To Terry!

MARTIN: To Rick!

SYLVIA: To Perry!

MARTIN: To Mick!

SYLVIA (walks around BETTY): It looks like she's got everything.

MARTIN (does likewise): A fine bod... Nice boobs... Big ass...

SYLVIA (looks BETTY over carefully like she would a product at the super-market): How about use?

MARTIN (does the same): Is she guaranteed?

SYLVIA: Is she vacuum packed?

MARTIN: Is she sanforized?

(While checking her out SYLVIA has gotten under BETTY's skirts. She reappears triumphantly.)

SYLVIA: The hymen is intact!

BETTY (modestly): I'm a virgin.

SYLVIA and MARTIN (embracing each other): She's a virgin!

BETTY (she sings, acting the role of a naive girl):

I'm simply a sweet young child  
Who, through immense ingenuity,

Has surmounted the dangers most wild;  
I may let my body get riled,  
But I've managed to save my virginity!

MARTIN and SYLVIA (they sing in chorus acting like BETTY's parents):

Now, isn't that nice? --She's saved her skin,  
She's let them come close, but she won't let them in.  
We'll marry her off to an eligible guy,  
Use her own honesty and pray he won't try.

BETTY: Surely you know that it's true--  
Or, at least, I thought that you knew--  
That in spite of their efforts to do,  
I have given them nothing to screw.  
(The problem is, they know it too!)

MARTIN and SYLVIA (in chorus):

Now I'll tell you what we should do,  
For a girl so pure and true-blue:  
A dirty old man with a wad in his hand  
Will marry this chick,  
'cause he can't use his stick,  
And be happy he won't have to screw.

BETTY: The bad girls who pass me by  
Are pitiful--they don't know why.  
I'm so voluptuous and stunning  
(the truth is, I am cunning!)  
My real virtue lies  
In no hands, just their eyes.

MARTIN and SYLVIA (in chorus):

Here she is, the virgin girl!

Who'll buy the chance to unfrock this chick?

Ten bucks? That's absurd!

To unfurl this bird,

Come up with the money,

But don't come too quick!

(BETTY picks up her suitcase and leaves surreptitiously when she finishes her last stanza. MARTIN and SYLVIA who haven't noticed, expect her to continue singing.)

SYLVIA: Alright Betty! The last stanza! (They realize that she isn't there.) Betty? Beethoven?

MARTIN: She's gone. She took her suitcase. (SYLVIA makes as if she is about to go after her. MARTIN stops her.) Don't. It's better that way.

SYLVIA: We were playing. She didn't even say good-bye.

MARTIN: And it was supposed to be her farewell party.

SYLVIA: I feel guilty.

MARTIN: And now I officially take charge of Betty's bed!

(He runs, jumps and lands on his back on top of BETTY's bed. He hurts himself. He groans.)

SYLVIA: She put some boards in.

MARTIN (still groaning): Was she a monk or something?

SYLVIA: Something wrong with her back.

MARTIN: It feels like I got the same thing now. (Rubbing.)

SYLVIA: Does it hurt a lot?

MARTIN: I'll be alright.

SYLVIA (kneeling next to him): Let's see... (Rubs his back.) Mommy'll  
kiss it...

MARTIN: ...and make it all better.

SYLVIA (laughing): Did they also tell you that when you were little?

MARTIN (laughing): Let's see, dear, you go on after me: The Eency  
Weency Spider...

SYLVIA (acts like a little girl): Went up the water spout...

MARTIN: Down came the rain...

SYLVIA: And washed the spider out! (They embrace and laugh like children.)

MARTIN: Let me see sweetheart, your turn now.

SYLVIA (makes the appropriate movements with her fingers):  
Two little blackbirds  
Sitting on a wall  
One named Peter  
The other named Paul  
Fly away, Peter  
Fly away, Paul  
Come back, Peter.  
Come back, Paul.

MARTIN: Bravo! Bravo!

SYLVIA: Now it's your turn! Which one do you know?

MARTIN (assuming the solemn air of a child reciting a poem): Once upon  
a time there were three little pigs.. When they were old  
enough... (He stops suddenly. He looks confused for a moment,  
then he moves away from SYLVIA trying to keep her from seeing

his face.)

SYLVIA: What's the matter?

MARTIN: I forgot the rest.

SYLVIA: I remember. Do you want me to help you?

MARTIN (abruptly): Never mind.

(SYLVIA looks at him intently. MARTIN picks up a magazine, thumbs through it acting as if he is interested in it. A pause. SYLVIA comes close to him.)

SYLVIA: Were you a happy child?

MARTIN (pretending he is not interested, still looking at the magazine):

Yes, I suppose so.

(A pause. SYLVIA watches him carefully. She insists.)

SYLVIA: What's your mother like? You've never told me about her.

MARTIN (gruff): I don't have one.

SYLVIA: Is she dead?

MARTIN: I never had one.

SYLVIA: Impossible.

MARTIN (turning towards SYLVIA, still gruff): That's the way it is.

Period.

SYLVIA: You've got a navel. I've seen it.

MARTIN: That's just a scar.

(Unexpectedly SYLVIA reaches over and pulls his pants down a little showing his navel.)

SYLVIA: No. It's a navel.

MARTIN: It's a scar! (He moves away annoyed.)

SYLVIA (bothered, starting to get upset): Of course, the gentleman is

perfect. He doesn't have the one defect common to all man-kind: he doesn't have a mother. How about a father?

MARTIN (starting to get angry): I don't have one either.

SYLVIA (comes close to him, tenderly): Martin, today is a special day. Don't you realize? Betty left through that door with a suitcase. She'll never come back. From now on this is our house. And tonight is like our wedding night. You won't have to get up tomorrow morning and leave.

MARTIN: So what?

SYLVIA: If we are going to live together; if we are going to love each other it doesn't seem fair that one of us should have an advantage over the other. I've been honest with you. From the start I admitted that I had a mother and a father.

MARTIN (after awhile): Alright.

SYLVIA: Alright what?

MARTIN: I confess.

SYLVIA: I want a complete confession.

MARTIN (he hesitates for a moment, then speaks with an effort): I have a mother and a father.

SYLVIA: Do you feel better now?

MARTIN: No.

SYLVIA (looking intently at MARTIN): Mine is an industrialist.

(MARTIN again hesitates. SYLVIA motions to him to speak.)

MARTIN: Lawyer.

SYLVIA: Housewife.

MARTIN: Bridge champion.

SYLVIA: Cadillac.

MARTIN: Is it really necessary? (SYLVIA nods affirmatively.)  
Mercedes Benz.

SYLVIA: Mason.

MARTIN: I wish I knew!

SYLVIA: And now....a promise.

MARTIN (ironically): On the Bible?

SYLVIA (gives him a magazine): On Little Lulu.

MARTIN: Is it that solemn?

SYLVIA: Do you promise... do you promise that you'll never want to marry me?

MARTIN (solemnly, his hand over the magazine): I promise.

SYLVIA (kisses him): Thank you.

MARTIN: I also want you to promise me something.

SYLVIA (MARTIN holds the magazine and SYLVIA puts her hand over it):  
I'm ready.

MARTIN: Do you promise me that you'll never want to have a baby and that if you ever get pregnant you'll get rid of it? (SYLVIA hesitates.)  
Do you?

SYLVIA: I do.

MARTIN (cheerfully): Now we can pronounce ourselves man and wife.

SYLVIA: Do I get to have a license?

MARTIN: For what?

SYLVIA: As lover... as mistress... What an absurd obsession people have for calling everything a name!

MARTIN (picks up a magazine which is open where there is a cross-word puzzle): If that weren't the case how could one solve cross-

word puzzles?

SYLVIA (gets closer to him and takes a look at the cross-word puzzle):

Do you have a lot to go?

MARTIN: I'm stuck.

SYLVIA: Do you need help?

MARTIN (gets comfortable next to her): No. We'll do it together. We'll do a different one every night.

SYLVIA: How exciting!

MARTIN: I've heard that it's the best aphrodisiac ever invented.

SYLVIA: So, then, it's going to be "right before"?

MARTIN: Yes, and not "instead of."

SYLVIA (caresses him passionately): Couldn't it be "together with?"

MARTIN (tries to stop her): It wouldn't work. We would only do the horizontal part.

SYLVIA (ready to start working on the puzzle): I hate the vertical part.

MARTIN: That's exactly where I'm stuck.

SYLVIA: How many letters?

MARTIN (counts them): Six. It starts with a "U" and it has this damn "H" stuck right in the middle. It's a roguish, mischievous youngster.

SYLVIA: Urchin.

MARTIN (writing): Urchin?

SYLVIA (looking over his shoulder): You see? That's it.

MARTIN: So an urchin is a roguish, mischievous youngster? I thought it was some kind of fish or seafood.

SYLVIA: That's right. But it also means brat. Think of a group of poor kids, garbage pickers or beggars playing tricks on people in the

streets. Those are street urchins.

(Suddenly MARTIN looks at her bewildered as if a disturbing image had cropped up in his mind.)

MARTIN (to himself): Garbage pickers...a family of garbage pickers...

SYLVIA: What did you say?

MARTIN: This memory has been troubling me for several days. It's like an image which keeps coming back. Now I've got the words to name the image: a family of garbage pickers.

(He stands up, takes a few steps, stops and buries himself in thought. SYLVIA watches him uneasily.)

SYLVIA: What image? What family?

MARTIN: It was one morning. You and Betty were at the university. I was going out when I ran into them. A man, a woman and a little girl. About ten years old. She was pretty. She looked like my sister. I have a sister that same age. He had a push-cart and stopped in front of every garbage can. They rummaged and rummaged until they found a treasure.

SYLVIA (amused): A treasure?

MARTIN: An empty bottle...a paper plate...a box. The little girl stuck her head in our garbage can. All our filth, our waste, was a world of wonder for her.

SYLVIA: Did she find anything?

MARTIN: A pair of your stockings.

SYLVIA: But they were full of runs!

MARTIN: She thought they were great. She was happy.

SYLVIA: How sweet!

MARTIN (suddenly annoyed): You fool!

(SYLVIA looks astonished. MARTIN feels uncomfortable. SYLVIA tries to hide her hurt feelings concentrating on the puzzle. MARTIN attempts to explain with difficulty.)

MARTIN: What I'm trying to say is that I was ashamed that someone had to rummage through garbage to be able to live; that I was ashamed that a ten-year old girl who looked like my sister would be happy to find a pair of stockings you had thrown out while my sister was, at the same time, in school learning French and taking ballet lessons. And that I should be there just looking, unable to do anything, nothing.

SYLVIA: What could you do?

MARTIN: For a moment I thought of coming back in and giving them everything we owned.

SYLVIA: I'm glad you didn't do that.

MARTIN: I didn't do it because I realized that it was pointless. If I had gone out five minutes before or after I wouldn't have seen the family of garbage pickers. And I still don't see many other families, many other ten year-old girls who'll be prostitutes two years from now. And I don't see them because I've chosen not to. Like the thousands of idiots who've solved that puzzle and have written urchin under five down and haven't had that image, or felt that shame, simply because they didn't see anything, did not see what I saw by chance!

SYLVIA: Maybe they were happy.

MARTIN: That happy man didn't have a shirt on. (Takes his shirt off.)

I'm happy! The happy man didn't have any pants on. (Takes his pants off.) I'm happier! And here in my deserted island, like Tarzan of the Jungle with his girlfriend Jane, now that Cheetah grabbed her suitcase and left. (Beats on his chest and screams like Tarzan.) Me...Tarzan...You...Jane...We... Happy...Bed...Make Love...(SYLVIA laughs and lies on the bed.) We in deserted island...Unhappy world out there...Garbage pickers over there...Poverty...Shit...Over here...Love...Happiness. (MARTIN kneels down next to SYLVIA. When he is about to embrace her and kiss her he suddenly breaks away from her.) But it's all a lie. I'm not Tarzan...You're not Jane...and this is not a deserted island...and out there are children with their heads stuck in garbage cans. (Pause.) And we have wasted the afternoon playing children's games. (He is left thinking, his face contorted with an absurd and inexplicable pain.)

SCENE FIVE "Catch me if you can..."

(Inside of an abandoned cabin. There is a place to build a fire, a pot and some other rusty utensils. A few logs and pieces of wood have been used as table and chairs. There is only one door in the room; it is old and rotted away. The imaginary fourth wall is supposed to have a window. At the beginning there is no one on the stage. Later TONY and VICTOR's voices can be heard as they come closer, talking about the hunt. They try to open the door, unsuccessfully.)

VICTOR (off): This damned thing is stuck again!

TONY (off): There's a trick to it.

VICTOR (off): A trick? The only trick is to give it a good kick!

(They pound on the door without any result.)

TONY (off): Let's see. Let me try.

(The door is shaken less violently.)

VICTOR (off): It's hopeless, the wood is all swollen.

TONY (off): Give me your knife.

VICTOR (off): You'll break it. Let me try kicking it again. Don't forget doors are supposed to be feminine.

(More banging at the door.)

TONY (off): Is that the way you treat women?

VICTOR (off): Boy, do I get results! That's the only formula that doesn't ever fail.

(More banging until the door gives in.)

VICTOR (comes in): Didn't I tell you? I always get it open like that.

TONY (he comes in and he notices the dust that has been kicked up by opening the door): Christ, look at all the dirt!

VICTOR: A whole lot of it collects. And since it hasn't rained...

TONY: But now it looks like we're going to have a big storm.

VICTOR (looking at the ceiling): If it rains a lot I think we're going to get soaked all the same. The roof is full of holes.

TONY: What do you expect? I've never known what to make of this room. Was it supposed to be a stable, a lodge, a house... Ever since I started coming here it's been like this, abandoned. But it looks like other hunters also use it.

(Both men start taking off their hunting gear and putting it down on top of or near the logs.)

VICTOR: I wonder where the others went?

TONY: Who knows! There hasn't been a single shot for quite some time.

VICTOR: I bet they haven't even noticed that it's going to rain.

TONY: They wouldn't know. They see a clear sky over their heads and they think everything is fine. But the North wind is blowing and that's sure to bring rain. I should know, I've been hunting for the last twenty years!

VICTOR: You mean you've gone out hunting, because as far as ducks are concerned...

TONY (walks over to open the window. When he does it the light increases): Hunting is a sport and trophies aren't what counts in sports. It's how you play the game that counts. (Smelling the air that comes in.) Yes, it's going to rain. There come the first clouds.

VICTOR: But this game-playing is getting pretty expensive for me.  
When I go back, I've got to buy a few ducks to convince the  
old lady that we've been hunting.

TONY: And do you convince her?

VICTOR: She's always had a lingering doubt.

TONY (maliciously): She must have her reasons.

VICTOR: More than she can think of.

TONY: Same old Victor!

VICTOR: So what? I like women, don't you?

TONY: If they had invented something better we would've heard by now.

VICTOR: The best part is that they like me.

TONY: There you go bragging again. That's all you do: talk about  
your conquests. I think that with so much talking you scare  
the ducks away.

VICTOR: And how about you? The whole group knows the story about your  
girlfriend Martha by heart. I could even tell you where she's  
got her birthmarks.

TONY: Martha? That's an old story....

VICTOR: Is there a new one?

TONY: Nothing serious....

VICTOR: Is she young?

TONY: Is that the way you like them? You like the Lolita type?

VICTOR: The one I've got now.....She looks like she's fifteen... What  
a woman!

TONY: Tell me about her!

VICTOR: Weren't you complaining that I talk too much?

TONY: Alright...if you want.... (Looks around.)  
We'll have to start a fire. At least we've got some coffee.  
They've got the meat and the wine. (He starts piling up wood  
and pieces of paper to build a fire.)

VICTOR: She's studying at the university.

TONY: She's a little older then... I thought she was still in highschool.

VICTOR: She's in her first year.

TONY: That's better.

VICTOR: If my aim had been as good this morning as it was last night  
there wouldn't be a single duck alive within twenty miles. What  
a night!

TONY: Have you got any matches?

VICTOR (comes closer to TONY and gives him the matches): Three times!

TONY: Oh, come on!

VICTOR: It's true! It's because I take care of myself. These hunting  
week-ends are part of my training. I might not kill anything,  
but I stay in shape.

TONY: It's the same with me. Mondays I'm tops!

VICTOR: And the one who makes the most of it is Martha.

TONY: There you go again with Martha! I told you that's an old story.

VICTOR: Did you dump her?

TONY: No. But I don't see her on Mondays. She's more for Saturdays  
when I'm tired. With time you come to realize that girls like  
older men. They go with young fellows their age to dances, to  
discotheques, they hold hands, but when they want the real thing  
they go after experience. And that you don't find in books.

VICTOR: As far as I'm concerned...the day I can't make it with the girls, I'll know I've had it. Look, why do you think I'm so relaxed in spite of what's going on at the factory? Because in bed I'm doing just fine and, call it superstition or whatever you want, but I've always thought that any man who is capable of handling and pleasing women is capable of handling any situation. Do you know that I almost asked that skinny engineer they sent me as an auditor how he was in bed? What women thought of him? But there was no need to ask. Just by looking at him you could see he only went to bed with his wife. So there!

TONY: And do you think you're going to have your way with him?

VICTOR: You bet!

TONY (goes to the window): Do you think it's going to rain?

VICTOR: Sure, I never fail.

(TONY notices something through the window and looks fascinated.)

TONY: Victor! (Motions him to go over and look.)

VICTOR (going over next to TONY and looking out through the window.)  
What's up? Are the others coming?

TONY: No, Look! Over there! By the side of the lake!

VICTOR (looking, very excited): They're gonna go swimming!

TONY: And they're just the way we like them! Young!

VICTOR: Do you think they brought bathing suits?

TONY: Like hell they did! Can't you see that the tall one has nothing but her panties on!

VICTOR: She's gonna take 'em off!

TONY: The other one too!

VICTOR: Nude! They're gonna go swimming nude!

TONY: Look at the one going in first. What a body!

VICTOR: The other one isn't bad at all.

(They remain silent for a moment, looking expectantly. They gesture off and on and call each other's attention with their elbows. VICTOR is the first one to move away from the window while TONY stays on looking out.)

VICTOR: What else is there to look at? (Underscoring his words with a gesture.) They went in.....

TONY: They'll have to come out.

VICTOR (looking at his watch): Let's give 'em ten minutes. (Looks around with some concern.) And there's not even a bunch of hay in this cabin!

TONY: You're not thinking.....

VICTOR: Of course I am! (Mocking.) Aren't you?

TONY: But how? By force?

VICTOR: Well, what do you say? Do we like girls or not?

TONY: Yes, but.....

VICTOR: It'll have to be out there, in the bushes. It's a long time since I did it out in the open! It's fantastic!

(TONY goes over to the fire and pours some coffee.)

TONY: Coffee?

VICTOR (holding the cup that TONY hands over to him): This is good to get us in the mood.

(TONY pours himself some coffee and drinks it in silence. VICTOR sits on the floor and leans against the wall. He drinks. Pause.)

VICTOR: Do you believe in predestination?

TONY: What?

VICTOR: It's got to be predestination. First the rest of the group takes off. We end up by ourselves in this hut. Then these mermaids turn up right in front of our eyes. And nude! It's got to be predestination.

TONY: ...or a mirage.

VICTOR: Hey, that's good! A mirage! Do you know how we find out if it isn't? We pinch the mirage! What do you say?

TONY: It looks simple to you but maybe they're not what you think they are. Maybe they're nice girls who'll cause a scandal and...

VICTOR: Nice girls! There is no such thing! They're all the same.

TONY: You can't say that.....

VICTOR: I'm sure they did it on purpose. They saw us and they're provoking us. (Gets up.) Alright, let's go.

TONY: Where?

VICTOR: Since we didn't have any luck hunting let's go fishing in the lake.

TONY: How about bait?

VICTOR: I always carry it with me. And you?

TONY: We'd better wait right here.

VICTOR: Wait for what? They'll get out of the water, they'll get dressed and leave.

TONY: Didn't you say they saw us? That they're provoking us?

VICTOR: Let's show some interest then. Look, it's very simple. This is what we'll do: let's go to where they left their clothes;

we'll sit on top of them and we'll wait until they come out.  
They're not going to stay in the water all day, right?

TONY (excited): It's gotta work. (Thunder and heavy rain can be heard.) The storm! It started!

VICTOR: You see, it had to happen! (As he goes toward the window.)  
And it's your fault.

TONY (joining VICTOR by the window): Can you see them?

VICTOR: Right there. They're still swimming.

TONY: They can't stay in the water with all this rain.

VICTOR: Now we've got a good excuse! Let's go and offer them some help.

TONY: Wait! They're coming out.

VICTOR (he returns to the window, he looks, he's stunned): Didn't I  
tell you? What a woman! Look at her!

TONY: Look, they're picking up their clothes? They're soaked.

VICTOR: Let's go! This is the time!

TONY: They're looking this way! They're coming! They're running!

VICTOR: On a silver platter! Now tell me if this isn't predestination!  
(TONY walks towards the door.) What are you gonna do?

TONY: Open the door.

VICTOR: No. Let them think we haven't seen them. Let's act surprised.  
Where were you?

TONY: When?

VICTOR: Before you looked out through the window.

TONY (pointing with his head): Over there. Sitting.

VICTOR: Go back there.

(TONY goes back to his original position, like VICTOR. The two

men show the expectant attitude of two hunters living in wait.  
MAGGIE and ROSIE's voices can be heard. Hurrying each other  
up with little screams and giggles they try to open the door.  
They can't do it.)

MAGGIE (outside): Hurry up! I'm soaked!

ROSIE (outside): It's stuck!

(TONY makes as if he is to get up and go to open the door but  
VICTOR stops him with a gesture.)

VICTOR (mutters, nervously): Open up, damn it!

TONY: It'll give sooner or later.

(Eventually the door does open. MAGGIE and ROSIE come in dressed  
in sweaters and shirts. They have the rest of their wet clothing  
in their hands.)

ROSIE: At last!

MAGGIE (closing the door): Some storm!

(MAGGIE turns around and sees what ROSIE has already seen. There  
is an awkward moment of silence as the men remain motionless in  
their places.)

ROSIE: Hi.

VICTOR: Hello.

MAGGIE: We were swimming in the lake when the storm caught us by surprise.

ROSIE: ...and we thought this cabin was abandoned.

MAGGIE: You don't mind, do you?

VICTOR: No, come in, come on in...

ROSIE: We're almost naked. (She giggles.)

VICTOR: We can see that.

TONY: There's a fire over there.

MAGGIE: Thanks. (They get close to the fire and lay their clothes down in front of it while trying to get warm.)

ROSIE: Have you got a towel?

VICTOR: I don't. What about you, Tony?

(TONY shakes his head, no.)

MAGGIE: What are you doing here?

VICTOR: We're hunters.

ROSIE: What do you hunt?

TONY: Ducks

VICTOR (meaningfully): .....and what ever else we catch.

MAGGIE (giggling): Like us.

VICTOR: That's right.

TONY: What about you? Were you also hunting?

ROSIE: We always come to the lake on Sundays. It's close by. We work at the cannery.

VICTOR: Workers, huh?

MAGGIE: You didn't think we were executives, did you?

VICTOR: Do you usually come alone?

ROSIE: Today, yes.

VICTOR: ...and the other times?

ROSIE: You ask a lot of questions.

VICTOR: You have some fun, you go swimming, then you come here and.....

(He stops.)

MAGGIE: .....and what?

VICTOR: Dum, dee, dum, dee, dum. (He accompanies his words with meaningful gestures.)

MAGGIE: And what's wrong with that?

VICTOR: Nothing! Who says there's anything wrong?

TONY: It's the best thing ever!

(The girls laugh.)

VICTOR (moves closer to them giving insinuating looks): It's lucky you ran into us. This way you don't have to waste your Sunday.

MAGGIE (pushes TONY gently to keep him away): Hold it!

VICTOR: What are we waiting for?

MAGGIE (picking up her clothes): Let's go, Rosie!

VICTOR (standing in front of the door): We're hunters. We don't let our prey escape so easily.

TONY: Why play games now? When you came running to the cabin you knew we were here.

ROSIE: No, we didn't.

TONY: And you knew we were looking when you took your clothes off by the side of the lake.

MAGGIE: Dirty old men, huh?

TONY: Dirty, maybe, but old.....

VICTOR (to ROSIE): I'm gonna show you how old I am....

(He grabs her tightly by the waist trying to kiss her. ROSIE resists. MAGGIE pulls a small transistor radio out from a pocket of the pants she is carrying and turns it on.)

MAGGIE: Shall we dance?

TONY: That's a good idea.

(ROSIE breaks loose from VICTOR and starts dancing away from him. MAGGIE does the same.)

ROSIE: We'll get warmed up this way.

VICTOR: I don't need to.

(ROSIE gestures him to dance. VICTOR starts to dance. TONY tries to put his arms around MAGGIE's waist.)

MAGGIE: What are you trying to do? That's not the way you do it. Apart.  
Like your friend. Just looking.

VICTOR (getting excited with the dance): Don't be old-fashioned, Tony.  
That's not a tango.

(TONY, looking confused, does not make up his mind. MAGGIE dances around him; he tries to catch her but she escapes still dancing. She picks up a pair of bikini underpants from the clothes that are drying and waves them at TONY like a bullfighter provoking a bull. She brushes his face with the underpants; he gets excited and starts to dance clumsily. During the dance the girls have complete control of the situation. The men follow them clumsily, excited, starting to get tired by the ever-increasing, faster pace of the dance. When the men try to touch the girls they rhythmically avoid them by exchanging partners.

VICTOR (stops): Hold it! That's enough!

ROSIE: So that's how old you are?

(VICTOR goes back to dancing, his dignity offended. MAGGIE is now in front of him playing with the underpants. TONY manages to hold ROSIE by her waist as she starts to unzip his pants.)

TONY: What are you doing?

ROSIE: Weren't you in such a hurry to take 'em off?

TONY: Hey, I like that!

(MAGGIE puts the underpants on VICTOR's head like a hat and ends up pulling them down so that they cover his eyes and a good portion of his face.)

MAGGIE: Now you're it!

VICTOR: Ready or not here I come!

MAGGIE: Catch me if you can!

(She runs away from VICTOR who chases after her, still unable to see. Meanwhile, TONY's pants have fallen down.)

ROSIE: Catch me! (TONY makes as if he is about to pull his pants up.)

No! None of that! If you do, you won't get anything.

(The girls laugh and shout as they dodge the excited men. At a given moment, MAGGIE yells "Now!" and grabbing their clothes as they go, they run towards the door. VICTOR, unable to see, embraces TONY thinking that he has caught one of the girls. TONY, caught by surprise at the girls' move, remains motionless. The girls stop at the door and look at the men locked in a grotesque embrace.)

MAGGIE: Now that you're turned on do something about it!

ROSIE: If you can, that is! You impotent old men!

(TONY comes to and makes an attempt at chasing after them but trips on his pants and falls. VICTOR slowly pulls the underpants off his face and studies them with a melancholy look.)

TONY: Whores! That's what they were, whores! They come here every Sunday to get laid by filthy, dirty scum!

(VICTOR rubs the underpants over his face and body.)

TONY: (getting up): They would have just loved shacking up with decent people like us!

(Gunshot from the other hunters can be heard in the distance.)

VICTOR: Did you hear? The others are getting closer. They're hunting around here now. Maybe they even ran into the girls. Maybe they saw them leave. Not a word about what happened, you hear? Just let them think that..... And we even have proof! (Waving the underpants like a flag.) A war trophy! They're gonna die with envy!

TONY (slowly): Victor...what you told me...the story about that Lolita.... about the three times every night.....was that a lie? (VICTOR looks at him without answering.) Was that a lie, was it?

VICTOR: Well...sometimes one exaggerates.

TONY (holding on to VICTOR so that he does not look away): Did you hear what they shouted at us? That's the truth!

VICTOR (breaking away): I didn't hear anything.... Nothing. (A pause. He turns towards TONY and holds the underpants up to his face.) This is the proof! They can't doubt us. It's the truth! Got it? (TONY remains silent. More gunshots can be heard, this time closer. VICTOR goes to the door. From the doorway he shouts out.) Hev, over here! Where have you been? You don't know what you missed! Look! (He holds the underpants up with both hands like a sportsman showing his trophy to the public.) And you! Hunting ducks!

SCENE SIX "This old man..."

(SYLVIA's apartment. It is midday but the general unkemptness of the apartment suggests an earlier hour. The bed is unmade and there are male and female pieces of clothing and various other things lying around. The morning dishes, still unwashed, are on the stove. There is no one on the stage.

After a while a faint knocking is heard at the door. A while later the door slowly opens and VICTOR enters very cautiously. He stops by the door and looks around with an expression of disgust. He walks around touching things and getting his fingers dirty with dust. He picks up a pair of male pajama pants from the unmade bed and drops them again in disgust. He notices a picture of SYLVIA, he picks it up and looks at it intently with a sad expression on his face.

The sound of running water can be heard through the half-opened bathroom door. SYLVIA who is taking a shower is singing and gives occasional screams on account of the cold water.

VICTOR looks toward the bathroom door and stops short as if caught in the act. The sound of running water stops and VICTOR reacts trying to leave the apartment. In his haste he knocks down a chair full of books. He tries to pick them up in a hurry.

SYLVIA (from the bathroom): Is that you, Martin? Back so soon? (Laughs.)  
Didn't you have enough this morning? (VICTOR carefully places the books on the chair and remains silent.) Did you come back

for seconds? (VICTOR looking hurt stops. He thinks for a moment and then, having made up his mind he makes for the door. At the same time SYLVIA comes in with a bathrobe half-thrown over her.) Martin... (She sees VICTOR and stops. SYLVIA instinctively fixes her bathrobe.) You? (They stare at each other without moving. The situation is obviously uncomfortable for both of them.) Anything wrong? How's Mom?

VICTOR: She's fine.

SYLVIA: How about you?

VICTOR: Can't you see? (Forcing a smile.) Top of the world!

(Another moment of embarrassing silence. They study each other.)

SYLVIA: Cup of coffee?

VICTOR: Alright.

(SYLVIA walks over to the stove and starts preparing the coffee with her back to VICTOR. He sits around looking uncomfortable.)

VICTOR: (tentatively. As if starting a casual conversation): How long is it now?

SYLVIA: Since what?

VICTOR: Since you left home.

SYLVIA (after a moment, tense, watchful): Six or seven months.

VICTOR: No, ten.

SYLVIA: You keep good track, don't you?

VICTOR: Are you still seeing that doctor?

SYLVIA: Which one?

VICTOR: That psychiatrist. (Betraying his resentment.) The one who told you to live alone.

SYLVIA: Is he still sending you the bill?

VICTOR: You're alright then, aren't you?

SYLVIA (gruffly): Luckily.

VICTOR: Does that mean that you don't need to take any more medicine?

SYLVIA (serving his coffee): Do you want any sugar?

VICTOR: Don't you have any saccharine?

SYLVIA: No, I don't.

VICTOR: No sugar, then. (SYLVIA gives him his cup.) You haven't even said hello.

SYLVIA: Hi. (Kisses him on his cheek.)  
(VICTOR takes advantage of it and holding her by the waist he brings her close to him.)

VICTOR: My baby...my baby grew up so fast.  
(SYLVIA lets him hold her a moment trying not to act too distant, then quickly pulls away.)

SYLVIA: It's normal, isn't it?

VICTOR: (trying to sound casual): How about your girlfriend?

SYLVIA: Which one?

VICTOR: Your mother told me you share this apartment with a girlfriend. Isn't she from the South?

SYLVIA: Beethoven? That was before!  
(Goes to the stove and acts as though she is putting things away.)

VICTOR: It must be difficult living by yourself.

SYLVIA: More coffee?

VICTOR: No, thank you.  
(Another embarrassing pause. VICTOR decides to break the silence.)

He stands up, walks over to SYLVIA and suddenly breaks out singing, accompanying his words with graphic and grotesque gestures.)

VICTOR: This old man, he played one  
He played knick knack on my drum  
With a knick knack paddywack  
Give the dog a bone  
This old man came rolling home.

(VICTOR forces a laugh.) Do you remember?

SYLVIA (who has watched him astonished): No.

VICTOR: I used to sing it to you when you were little. You were only two, I think. You used to like it! (Accusingly.)

SYLVIA: And you want me to like it now?

VICTOR: No.

SYLVIA: What are you doing here, Father? The agreement was that neither you, nor Mother, nor anyone from the family would come to the apartment. The doctor insisted on that.

VICTOR: What doctor? That young kid who plays doctor and who has put God knows what ideas in your head... Besides you just told me you were alright and if you are alright I don't see why you can't come home.

SYLVIA: So that I can stay well.

VICTOR: What kind of an answer is that? You're not gonna tell me that it's us who make you sick?

SYLVIA: Yes, exactly.

VICTOR: (he is about to react violently but he controls himself. He tries

to make amends): I know that your mother is not easy to get along with but she isn't that bad. You've got to know how to handle her. She's a good woman.....

SYLVIA: We're all good, father. I'm good. She's good. (Pause.)  
You're also good.

VICTOR: Is there any doubt about it?

SYLVIA: But together....bam!

VICTOR (looking for another approach): You can't go on living by yourself. It's dangerous. Something can happen to you. You can get sick....

SYLVIA: I don't live by myself, father.

VICTOR (quickly, pretending he did not hear her): ...and besides, it isn't good for your mental health either. I know you're alright, but who knows... How about a trip? (SYLVIA makes as though she is about to answer negatively. VICTOR jumps in.) No. Without your mother. We'll leave her at home busy with her gossip and her friends. Just you and I. Not just out of town. To Europe... what do you say?

SYLVIA (firmly): I told you I don't live by myself, father.

(VICTOR is left with no other alternative but to face the facts. He takes a few steps in silence. He stops at the edge of the bed and looks at her.)

VICTOR: Yes. I can see. (He picks up the pajama pants.) He isn't...  
He isn't too tidy is he?

SYLVIA: Why beat around the bush? You knew it. Otherwise you wouldn't be here.

(VICTOR nods affirmatively. He looks defeated, as if he hadn't expected such a direct confrontation with his daughter. He starts talking as though to himself, without addressing himself directly to SYLVIA.)

VICTOR: First it's a friend who asks you: Wasn't that Sylvia I saw in this apartment building? It looks like she lives there. And then another: Did your daughter get married? I saw her with her husband yesterday. And then they don't tell you anything and they try not to mention you or their children. Finally, when they're a bit high they ask you jokingly: When are you gonna be a grampa?... And they all laugh. (He is a broken man. He tries to restore his paternal authority and blurts out.)  
Let's go!

SYLVIA: Where to?

VICTOR: Home.

SYLVIA: This is my home.

VICTOR: Where's your suitcase? (He opens the closet-door, he finds a suitcase and starts throwing in the clothes he finds on hand.  
SYLVIA watches him with apparent calm.)

SYLVIA: Aren't you going to throw me in too?

VICTOR: Alright! Get your clothes on!

SYLVIA: No, father.

VICTOR: It's only a whim. You're behaving like a spoiled child.

SYLVIA: A child? Look at me! (She opens her bathrobe and shows herself to him.) I'm a woman, father!

VICTOR: Cover yourself!

SYLVIA: It's important that you realize it. I'm a woman. And you, look at yourself in the mirror. You're not what you used to be.

VICTOR: Alright. You're a woman. We'll have an agreement then. An agreement between adults. We'll keep things the way they are, but the other way around. Until now you've lived here and gone home on Tuesdays. From now on you live at home and come here on Tuesdays. Is that a deal? (SYLVIA smiles ironically.) Well, let's say Tuesdays and Thursdays.

SYLVIA: What do you care about, Father?

VICTOR: About you, that's all I care about.

SYLVIA: Don't you care about me on Tuesdays and Thursdays?

VICTOR: Considering the way things are.....

SYLVIA: And do you expect me to accept?

VICTOR: Can you think of anything better for you? For you and for him! I can assure you that boyfriend of yours will be more than happy. I know about these things. We men are all alike. We like to love, of course, and all the rest, but a man needs freedom, he needs to be with his friends, to stay up all night long, talking, fixing up the world and also to have some fun from time to time. You'll see that he'll thank you for the arrangement that I'm proposing to you. I should know about these things.

SYLVIA: No, Father. You don't know anything.

VICTOR: You can't be serious. You know me. I'm not a prude. I don't approve of this situation, but I'm not horrified either. Someone else would have blown up by now instead of reasoning things

out and proposing such an advantageous arrangement. He would have threatened you, he would have yelled, called the police... Hell knows what else! No, I'm not one of those.

SYLVIA: That's true. You're not one of those.

VICTOR (triumphantly): Aha! You admit it!

SYLVIA: You don't like scandals.

VICTOR: Not in the least.

SYLVIA: You know how to keep up appearances....

VICTOR: I've done my best.

SYLVIA: And now, all you are concerned about is my reputation.

VICTOR: That's not all.

SYLVIA: You don't give a damn about the rest.

VICTOR: The rest? What rest?

SYLVIA: The truth.

VICTOR (disgusted): There we go again with the truth!

SYLVIA: Do you care how I feel about Martin?

VICTOR: I know. I've been your age too.

SYLVIA: What do you know? How do I feel?

VICTOR (explodes): Sex! Nothing but goddamn sex!

SYLVIA (piqued, returning the blow): Like you and Mary?

VICTOR (evasive, cautious): Who....what Mary?

SYLVIA: You thought it was a secret? Even the cat knows about it!

VICTOR: Let's not start with stories. You're talking nonsense.....

SYLVIA: What are you upset about? That I knew? Or that even the cat knew? Or that you were not able to keep appearances?

VICTOR: So what! The Hell with it! I'm a man and that's that....!

SYLVIA (interrupting): How about Martin? What is he? A Martian?

VICTOR: But you are my daughter!

SYLVIA: How about Marv? Is she an orphan?

VICTOR: I don't want the kind of life I've given that woman for you.

SYLVIA: Which one do you prefer? The one you gave to Mother?

VICTOR: Does she complain?

SYLVIA: She accepted your arrangement. Tuesdays and Thursdays for Mary, the rest for us, the family, like that, nice and prim, on display, so that everybody can see you, can see us, so they can say: What a nice family, so united! On Tuesdays it was the Club, on Thursdays the Lodge.... But, tell me, Father, I've been curious since I was a little girl. Did you ever belong to a club? Were you ever a Mason?

VICTOR: I never thought you would find out.

SYLVIA: You see? That's all you cared about! Hypocrite!

VICTOR: Your own father?

SYLVIA: The man who goes to bed with my mother and Mary and who wrinkles up his nose in disgust when he finds a pair of pajama pants on his daughter's bed.

VICTOR: You're different! You've got to be!

SYLVIA: No, you want me to be just like you, like Mother, like Mary. You come here and propose that on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I see your friends at home, that I give them an innocent smile, that I play the piano for them, that I blush when they make gross remarks and that on Tuesdays and Thursdays I feel ashamed to love, to be a woman, the same shame that your very own Mary must feel.

VICTOR: I'm reasonable. All I do is try to be reasonable!

SYLVIA: Do you know what you want your daughter to become? Do you know what you've turned your wife and your lover into? Do you know what you call those women that love by the hour, by the day, that hide to do it? Whores! They're called whores! That's what you want to make me.

(VICTOR is unable to control himself and slaps SYLVIA across the face.)

VICTOR: You know.... You know I could kill you. You know I can do it. No court would convict me. All it would take would be a look at this room, that messed up bed, to understand that I couldn't control myself, that I went mad.

SYLVIA: No, Father. You wouldn't go mad. You couldn't do it. You'd lose your composure, you wouldn't keep up appearances. There would be a scandal. And you can't stand scandals.

VICTOR: I guess I'll have to start getting used to them....

SYLVIA: See? That's all you care about.

VICTOR: That's not true!

SYLVIA: Don't tell me you came here because you found out that I was living with Martin. What bothered you was that your friends found out about it, wasn't it? (VICTOR remains silent.) Isn't it true that you knew before? Be honest! For once try to be. The truth, Father! Isn't it true that you've known all along?

VICTOR: Yes.

SYLVIA (reproaches him tenderly): Didn't you care?

VICTOR: Yes. I did care. I cried. Honestly, I did. By myself. Nobody saw me. I did cry.

SYLVIA: Then, why didn't you come?

(Long pause. VICTOR is at a loss for words.)

VICTOR (looking at his watch):...It's late... (Looking around the room as if looking for something.) I should be in the factory now. The inspector takes charge of it today. Did you know that they're sending an inspector to the factory? My factory! (Pause. Gives a meaningful look at the bed.) Little by little they take away everything you own. (Pause.) I've gone through so much lately. I would have liked telling you about it..... (He expects a question from SYLVIA - but she never comes through.) Do you need anything? (SYLVIA nods negatively. VICTOR reaches for his wallet.) Money? (SYLVIA smiles contemptuously. VICTOR starts to go, he stops and turns around.) Go home more often. Your mother would appreciate it. She's very lonely. (SYLVIA stares at him motionless.) Aren't you going to kiss me good-bye? (SYLVIA remains the same. VICTOR is defeated. He turns around and exits quickly.)  
(SYLVIA remains motionless. She slowly walks over to the door which VICTOR has left open and closes it. Overwhelmed by sadness she starts to make the bed mechanically. While doing it she begins singing to herself in a low voice.)

This old man, he played one  
He played knick knack on my drum  
With a knick knack paddywack  
Give the dog a bone  
This old man...

(Overwhelmed with sorrow she falls down on her knees and  
cries.)

SYLVIA (crying): Dad!.....Daddy!

SCENE SEVEN "Everything in order."

(Study in VICTOR's house. He is sitting in an armchair looking through old photographs and papers which are lying around on the floor. The door to a closet is open indicating that the photographs and documents which VICTOR is tearing up have been stored away for a long time. For a moment VICTOR can be seen going through pictures and papers which he tears up and throws on the floor. There is an air of sadness about him. He examines some of the papers with an expression of irony on his face. ANA, a well-preserved, middle-aged woman comes in. She has just arrived in the house.)

ANA: Didn't you go to the factory? (VICTOR looks at her without answering.) Oh, yes, I'd forgotten about that inspector. All in all it must be nice to have somebody else do your job. (Pause.) Is he going to let you take money out? From sales, that is. (VICTOR shrugs his shoulders.) It should be over soon. It's crazy. It can't go on for much longer. Things are going to get back to normal, just like before! Everything in order..... (Notices the torn up papers scattered on the floor.) But, look what you've done to this room! Couldn't you use the waste basket? (Walks over, gets a waste-basket and places it next to VICTOR. He tears up more photographs and throws them on the floor ignoring the waste-basket. ANA picks them up and throws them in. She looks at some pieces of a photograph.) Look! Don't we look nice? How

old do you think Sylvia was here? Nine? Ten? What did you tear it up for?

VICTOR: Throw it out!

ANA (notices the door to the closet): So you finally opened your mysterious closet? You've never let me straighten it out for you and now you open it so that you can tear up everything you've saved all these years. It's not fair, Victor. These pictures, these letters are as much mine as they are yours. They're ours. (VICTOR, who has been ignoring her tears up more photographs and throws them down. ANA looks at him concerned but tries to hide it.) Are you going to the club tonight?

VICTOR: No.

ANA: How foolish of me! Today is Thursday. You've got to go to the Lodge. Do you want to have dinner early or are you eating out?

VICTOR: I'm not going out tonight.

ANA: Don't you feel well?

VICTOR: I'm alright.

ANA: But you've never had dinner at home on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

VICTOR: That's all over with. No more Club, no more Lodge.

(ANA interprets this as a sign that he has broken up with Mary. She smiles tenderly. She sits on the arm of the chair and leans her head against his.)

ANA: Everything will be like it used to be?

VICTOR: Nothing. Nothing will be like it used to be.

ANA (stands up): We have to celebrate this. It calls for a drink. The return of the prodigal husband.

VICTOR: What's that?

ANA: No, I didn't mean to say that. That was a bad joke. You've never left home. You're the ideal husband. My girlfriends envy me. "You must be so happy!", they say. And I tell them they're right. That I'm a happy woman. No, you are not the prodigal husband. Nobody has left this house.

VICTOR: How about Sylvia?

ANA (suddenly stubborn): She hasn't left either. She's not here. She won't be here for a while. But she'll be back as soon as she feels better. And everything will be like it used to be. (VICTOR gives her an inquisitive look. To avoid it she starts to leave.)

I'm going to get the drinks.

(VICTOR, unperturbed, goes back to what he was doing. He picks up a large photograph. He is about to tear it up but keeps on looking at it. ANA returns with a tray, a bottle, glasses and ice. She is wearing, instead of her shoes, a pair of cloth house slippers which she wears so as not to dirty the floor. She has brought another pair for VICTOR under her arm. She leaves the tray on a table.)

ANA: I've told you so many times to put on your scuffies when you are at home. You scratch the parquet floors and get them dirty with your shoes. It's so easy to put them on and that way everything stays nice and clean. (Kneels down next to VICTOR to help him take off his shoes. VICTOR lets her while trying not to show his impatience. He is holding the large picture he was looking at in

such a way that ANA can see it.) Oh no! You're not going to tear this one up! (Takes it away from him and looks at it with emotion.) This is our first family picture. It's Sylvia's first photograph with us. Look, we're a picture of happiness.

VICTOR: Did I ever tell you what I did the night I took you to the Clinic? The night Sylvia was born?

ANA: No.

VICTOR: I wandered around in the streets till dawn thinking then that my life had a purpose, that I had a reason to work, to succeed. I decided that day that everything I would do in life would be with one goal in mind: that my daughter would be proud of me.

ANA: She is. I know she is.

VICTOR: No, she isn't.

ANA: How do you know!

VICTOR: Went to see her.

ANA: When?

VICTOR: She despises me.

ANA: She's too proud, she's disoriented, she's sick. She'll tell you many things, but she doesn't really mean them. You'll see. You'll see when she comes back.

VICTOR: She has every reason to despise me. My good intentions of that night were nothing but that: good intentions. Like New Year's resolutions. (Picks up the photograph and tears it up.) Aren't you going to give me a drink?

(ANA stands up, pours him a drink and gives it to him.)

VICTOR (like a toast): Happy New Year!

ANA: It's not fair!

VICTOR: What?

ANA: I know what's happening. Until now this other "thing" of yours had never entered the house. But all it took was a quarrel with her for you to come here and take it out on Sylvia and me.

VICTOR (with an expression of irony): What "thing?" Did you know about it? Why didn't you bring it up....?

ANA: There are some things a woman like me doesn't talk about.

VICTOR: Is it in bad taste?

ANA: What is in bad taste is that after you have a fight with your mistress you come here to attack me and to destroy photographs and letters that belong to the family...and....

VICTOR: Sylvia was right. She told me even the cat at home knew all about it.

ANA: Did you talk to her about.....that woman?

VICTOR: She talked to me about her.

ANA: How did she find out?

VICTOR: Ask the cat!

ANA: Victor! You've never been vulgar with me. I could never have accused you of that.

VICTOR: I'm sorry.

ANA: What's the matter with you? Have the problems with that woman affected you that much?

VICTOR: No. I don't have any problems with her. There's something wrong with me, with what I thought I was. The problem is that these

pictures that I thought to be true were in fact nothing but paper. (Picks up pieces of photographs and drops them as he talks.) The family man....The good husband. (Showing a piece of photograph to ANA.) You've never seen this one: the hot-blooded lover... and here, the good boss...the liberal student leader. What am I left with if I tear these images? Who am I? Which photograph is really me? You've lived with me for a long time, you should know.

ANA: I love you. I've never complained.

VICTOR: To complain is in bad taste.

ANA: You've been a good husband.

VICTOR: Is that a fact? How can you tell? With the checkbook? With our social relations? In bed?

ANA: Victor!

VICTOR: How do you like me in bed?

ANA: That's not important for me.

VICTOR: It never was?

ANA: I don't know. I don't remember.

VICTOR: Couldn't you ever compare?

ANA: How can you ask that?

VICTOR: Didn't you ever want to do it with someone else? (ANA remains silent. She drinks.) You wanted to do it! You wanted to do it! But you didn't dare. (Cornering her.) What were you afraid of? That I would find out? Were you afraid to risk your well-ordered, boring life? Were you? Answer me!

ANA (with difficulty. Starts to talk, looking down at her drink.):

I didn't want.....I didn't want to find out what I was missing...  
I was afraid to enjoy myself, to really enjoy myself, and then  
to go back to our bed and to know that you wouldn't satisfy me.  
I did not want to know if there was a world of sensations that  
I had never been able to experience.

VICTOR: Nevertheless, you knew.....

ANA: In conversations with my girlfriends. Women can't keep secrets.  
We tell each other secrets.

VICTOR: How about you? What did you talk about?

ANA: I imagined things, I invented; sometimes it was better to just  
say anything, to smile like I was remembering.....

VICTOR: Remembering what?

ANA: What I was never able to experience.

VICTOR: Are you trying to tell me that I wasn't worth much in bed?

ANA: I'm also saying that you've been a good husband.

VICTOR: What about Mary? Is that being a good husband?

ANA: We've never talked about it, therefore it has never existed. If  
we talk about it now it's because it's all over with.

VICTOR: There's still time to discover what I never taught you. I'm not  
against it. You have every right.

ANA: No, Victor, it's too late. You know, I used to get out from  
the shower and look at myself in the mirror. Naked. I used to  
feel proud of my breasts, my legs, my hips and I used to think  
of how many men would have loved seeing them, touching them,  
enjoying them. Not anymore. Now, I wouldn't even feel modest,  
I'd feel ashamed.

VICTOR: I never thought...(Stops.)

ANA: That I was a woman? No, you never thought of that.

VICTOR (picks up a photograph and looks at it): This is one of our honeymoon.

(ANA holds it, looks at it, smiles sadly and tears it up.)

VICTOR: But.....

ANA: Weren't you tearing up old pictures? False images? I also have a few to tear up. (VICTOR feels an upsurge of tenderness, he makes as if he is about to caress his wife, but ANA, unaware of it, stoops down to pick up the pieces of paper. She throws them in the wastebasket as she talks.) But why are we talking about these things? They're not important. They're just minutes in the many hours, days, weeks, months, years we've lived together. And that's what really counts. This is our home. It's a solid home. We've lived here. We've been happy here. This is where Sylvia will return to. And nothing will have changed.

VICTOR: Nothing will have changed! Nothing will have changed! That's all I hear from you. Is that all you care about?

ANA: That's all we care about, Victor. (Picks up the wastebasket.)

VICTOR: I do too? Are you saying that all I care about is that nothing changes? When have you heard me say such a thing?

ANA: Always.....Ever since I first met you. You say it in a different way, though. I am a little simpler and I say it right out. You... you cover it up with your liberal ideas, you shock our friends a little when they come to see us, you dream about an ideal that you've always considered to be an impossibility. That's why you

could afford the luxury of dreaming. But if suddenly that dream starts becoming a reality you feel betrayed because you can't dream about it anymore, you can't make speeches anymore, you can't theorize, because it is not any longer a dream, a theory but a tangible reality. And so you feel let down. And you wish nothing would change so that you could keep on dreaming that you are an irresistible lover.....or a fiery revolutionary.

VICTOR (after a pause): How? How do you know about these things?

ANA: Because I am your wife, because I have lived watching you for so so long. Because I love you. (Leans over and kisses him. She looks at him tenderly for a moment then picks up the wastebasket.)  
Let's go. It's dinner time. Don't forget to put on your scuffies. We've got to take care of the parquet floor.

(ANA exits. VICTOR stands up and looks at the house slippers. He makes a gesture of rebellion at them and acts as if he is going to throw them away. He becomes resigned to them, puts them on and walks awkwardly after his wife.)

SCENE EIGHT "Same as Ever"

(SYLVIA's apartment. MARTIN is reading a book and making notes. After a while SYLVIA comes in with a bag of groceries. She is smiling.)

SYLVIA: At last! She finally did it! (MARTIN keeps on reading, absorbed. SYLVIA notices that he has not reacted but keeps on talking.) I had noticed that for a long time she's been dying to ask me and today, at last, she finally made up her mind. It was so funny! (She kisses him while she is still talking.)

MARTIN: What was so funny?

SYLVIA: Miss Hope, the neighbor. I ran into her at the stairs and she couldn't stand it any longer. She asked me if we were married. (MARTIN remains unmoved.) You should've seen her face when I told her we weren't! (Laughs.) She tried to fix it up by asking me when we would be getting married and she almost fell down the stairs when I told her we had no intention of getting married. I don't think she'll ever say hello to me again. She might even go and report us to the landlord. Can you imagine? What would you tell the landlord if he came here saying that there are complaints against us because we are living immorally?

MARTIN: You would love that, huh?

SYLVIA: You bet!

MARTIN: You love to shock people.

SYLVIA: Don't you?

MARTIN: I'm not interested.

SYLVIA: To pull down their masks, to show them that we are capable of doing what they would like to do but don't have the guts. To be happy when they are bitter. To blow up their prejudices, their hypocrisy, their false prudery. Doesn't that make you feel superior?

MARTIN: Just a game. A children's game.

(Goes back to his book. SYLVIA looks at him with concern. She sorts out the groceries she brought in, walks up to him and puts her arms around him from behind.)

SYLVIA: Do you still love me?

MARTIN: Can't you tell?

SYLVIA: Sometimes I can't.

MARTIN: When?

SYLVIA: Right now.

MARTIN: I'm reading now. I'm taking notes.

SYLVIA: What for?

MARTIN: To know. To understand.

SYLVIA: To understand what?

MARTIN: The world. Us.

SYLVIA: You don't have to understand me with this. (Touches his head.)

MARTIN: It doesn't hurt to use it from time to time.

(SYLVIA stavs kneeling down next to him after he goes back to his reading. She takes one of his hands and places it on her inducing him to caress her. He lets her, keeping his hand limp. Then he pats her affectionately and pulls his hand away. Confusion and sadness show on her face.)

MARTIN: Are we eating tonight?

SYLVIA: We've got plenty of time to think about that.

MARTIN (negatively): Uh, uh.

SYLVIA: What? A meeting again?

MARTIN: At nine.

SYLVIA: Are you coming back late?

MARTIN (a little upset): What's the point of having decided not to get married if you're going to ask the same questions all wives ask?

SYLVIA (hurt): I'm sorry.

(Stands up and walks over to start dinner. She peels and cuts an onion. A pause.)

SYLVIA: You would've cracked up if you'd seen Miss Hope's face. (Pause. No reaction from him. She speaks, trying to hold her tears back.) It reminded me of cartoons.

MARTIN: Are you crying?

SYLVIA: It's the onion.

MARTIN: Well.....

SYLVIA (explodes): But I could cry. For the first time in a long time I feel like crying.

(MARTIN looks at her not knowing what to say. SYLVIA puts down the onion, goes over to her purse and pulls out a cigarette. She lights it and lies down on the bed.)

MARTIN (trying to make SYLVIA join him in his reading): Listen, listen to this. Tell me if this isn't fantastic. (Reads.) "Our bourgeoisie, not satisfied with having the wives and children of our proletariat at their disposal, not to mention legalized

prostitution, find their principal source of pleasure in the mutual seduction of their wives."

Don't you think that's an accurate diagnosis?

SYLVIA: Who made it?

MARTIN: Marx and Engels, of course.

SYLVIA (with a touch of irony): Of course.

MARTIN: Right here. It's all right here. You just get this little book through your head and you begin to understand the world you live in.

SYLVIA: Including me?

MARTIN: You're part of it.

SYLVIA: The hell with the world!

(MARTIN gives a puzzled look at SYLVIA after her outburst. He remains silent. She keeps on smoking as he goes back to his reading. After a moment he raises his head and sniffs the air.)

MARTIN: Can you smell anything? It smells like--(He stops short when he notices what she is smoking. He stands up and walks over to her.) What are you smoking?

SYLVIA (offering him the cigarette): Want some?

MARTIN: Marijuana!

SYLVIA: It's the good kind.

(MARTIN strikes the cigarette out of her hand. SYLVIA gets up, picks it up, takes another drag and puts it out.)

SYLVIA: My father couldn't have done better.

MARTIN: Since when?

SYLVIA: When did you start going to your meetings?

SYLVIA: I'm not interested.

MARTIN: What's the difference between you and your mother? She plays bridge and you smoke grass.

SYLVIA: I'm aware. She's not.

MARTIN: Of what?

SYLVIA: That there's nothing you can do about anything, except....make love.....listen to music, fly a little and play, laugh, laugh all you can. And not to turn everything into a whole bunch of words, big words, the kind you write with capital letters.

MARTIN: Bravo! That is some declaration of principles.

SYLVIA: The kind you could've come up with just a while ago.

MARTIN: Sylvia.....did I tell you I bumped into my father?

SYLVIA: Mine was here.

MARTIN: He wasn't upset. You might even say he was proud of me. He told me that he had also had a good time when he was my age. That he had his own "pad" too. He ended up saying that he was sure that I would settle down and that I would learn to combine fun with productive work. And I was afraid, Sylvia, afraid that he might be right.

SYLVIA: A chip off the old block!

MARTIN: That's it! I don't want to be that!

SYLVIA: Didn't they ever read to you the story of the ugly duckling? He wasn't ugly. He was a swan in a world of ducks.

MARTIN: It's just that the world we live in is not a world of ducks, or swans or anything else! It's a world of men. Men and women who are just like you and me, who have faces, arms,

legs, genitals. And who are, nevertheless, different because they are divided by one clear, precise, straight line.

SYLVIA (with a touch of irony): Exploiters and exploited?

MARTIN: Any doubts about it?

SYLVIA: No.

MARTIN: Now I know why I left home. I wanted to know the world. No more, no less. I was curious to know what lay beyond home, family, school, neighborhood, car and supermarket. Others take a plane or a liner for Europe. I've taken a more instructive journey. I've taken the buses, I've walked on dust and filth and I have not returned impressed with how far the Tower of Pisa leans or how small the Mona Lisa is. I have come back ashamed, with so much shame that I haven't even dared talk to you about it. And after my journey to poverty, hopelessness, death--just the same--just like those travellers who pick up an art history book to read and understand a little of what they saw at the Uffizi Gallery, at the Louvre, at the Sistine Chapel, I have picked up my books and I have tried to understand why. And I have, Sylvia. And I've wanted you to understand. (Pause.) But you prefer more abstract forms, strobe-light effects, distorted sounds. You prefer to stimulate your perception looking at a flower. I wish I could look at a flower now! But I can't, Sylvia. When you've seen children who are condemned to disease and death and you know that even if they manage to escape such a fate there is something worse waiting for them, a life without hope, without happiness, then... you just can't ever look at a flower again.

(A long moment of silence.)

SYLVIA: Do you want some coffee?

MARTIN: I don't have time.

SYLVIA: It's cold out. Take a sweater. (Goes to the closet but cannot find it.) Where did you put it?

MARTIN (goes to the closet and takes out a parcel): I've got my clothes here.

SYLVIA: Your clothes?

MARTIN: Someone told me that it would be better if I moved to the slums, with them.

SYLVIA: And you were going to leave tonight? Without telling me?

MARTIN: Tonight or any night. The problem was telling you about it.

SYLVIA (after a while): I'll make you some coffee. (Goes towards the stove to start the kettle.)

MARTIN: I'll be late.

SYLVIA: Only ten minutes.

MARTIN: The Revolution can't wait ten minutes.

SYLVIA: Go ahead, then! But take everything with you, not just old clothes. It isn't right to put on a disguise to see your friends. Show them how you really are. (Goes to the closet and pulls clothes out which she throws at MARTIN.) Your nice blue suit. It's clean. I got out that stain that bothered you so much. Your green polo shirt. (Looking at the label.) Aha! "Made in France"! (Noticing something in the closet.) Ah yes, you were only going to take your Marxist philosophy. (Throws

several issues of "Playboy" at him.) It just isn't right to leave Hugh Hefner, the philosopher, behind. The Playboy Philosophy! Illustrated!

MARTIN: If you're trying to make me feel ashamed, you don't have to. I'm ashamed enough.

SYLVIA: This is so touching! Just like the story the nuns used to tell me in school. Father Benedict leaves his worldly possessions and goes to live with the lepers.

MARTIN (holding on to SYLVIA's arms until he hurts her):

I want you to get this through your head! I'm not Father Benedict or Saint Francis of Assisi and I'm not going to do charity. I'm going to help change a system in which some people exploit other people. I'm going to make the Revolution!

(Lets go of her and starts to leave.)

SYLVIA (screams): Martin! (He stops, reconsiders.)

MARTIN: Don't think that this is something romantic.....or desperate. The conditions are there. The people are quite aware and ready. All the reforms have failed. Those from the right and from the left. The time has come. You either jump right in with them or they'll run you over.

SYLVIA: And you want to save yourself.....

MARTIN: And also save them.

SYLVIA (holding one of MARTIN's hands and looking at it): I like your hands. The long fingers, the hair on them, the soft palms. I like to feel your hands on me. I'll remember them. I'll wonder where they are, how they will be received wherever

you go, where everybody has rough hands, dirty nails, the callouses they get from using a shovel or a plough. How are you going to hide your hands? How are you going to explain their softness? When you fall in love and you want to make love to one of those women just think of how confused they'll be by the softness of your hands on their breasts, on their thighs. All they know is the pleasure of roughness.....

MARTIN (tenderly): Don't worry. I'll get callouses, I'll be rough. I'll be like one of them.

SYLVIA: I know you'll try but you won't make it. They are years ahead of you, centuries in the business of roughing their skin, strengthening their muscles so that we can be soft, weak, intelligent, refined.

MARTIN: There'll be an end to that.

SYLVIA: Yes, there'll be an end. No doubt about it. (SYLVIA walks over to the desk with a thoughtful and sad expression on her face. She picks up the book MARTIN was reading and smiles ironically.) You'll take your books, won't you? And you'll teach them, won't you? I'd give anything to see that! What will you teach them? Are you going to tell them what you learnt from your books? That there are exploiters and they have been exploited. Martin, they don't have to read about it, they've lived through it. And they haven't been the only ones. Their parents, their aunts and uncles, their grandparents, their ancestors. Can you describe poverty to the poor? Can you speak about suffering to those who suffer? Can you talk about the struggle with those who've fought

all their lives? Aren't you afraid to look into their eyes and to see the question? What about you? Where have you been? What have yours parents, your grand parents, your ancestors done? How much oppression was necessary so that you could enjoy your freedom? How many children didn't go to school so that you could? Who went hungry so that you could eat?

MARTIN: I didn't make the world. Nobody asked me if I wanted to come. And when I figured out how it worked I spat on it, and now, I cross the line.

SYLVIA: It isn't that easy.

MARTIN: I didn't say it was.

SYLVIA: The coffee must be ready.

MARTIN: No. It's getting late. (Gets closer to SYLVIA.) Incredible things are happening, Sylvia. Socialism is almost here. There's no such thing as generational conflicts. There's won't be any more young people, like you and I, who feel like orphans in a world they despise. There's going to be justice, happiness, solidarity. And we've got to work for all that, now. We were wrong, Sylvia. We haven't been living in an absurd world. Everything makes sense. Everything is waiting to be done. And we will be the ones to do it.

SYLVIA: Yes. All that will happen, but, we will not be the ones to do it.

MARTIN: Who, then?

SYLVIA: They will.

SYLVIA (explodes): You can't! You can't be! Get it through your head!

You came late. You can't change the past. You can't acquire in a few days the burden of humiliation, hatred, contempt, tears, impotence, struggles and failures they have known life after life. You'll be a latecomer, an opportunist, a traitor who joins the enemy when he sees that his side is losing. And they'll have every reason to despise you and destroy you. (She sobs.)

MARTIN: What can we do, then?

SYLVIA: (making an effort to stay calm): What a man who is sentenced to death would do at a first-class prison: to make love.....to listen to beat music.....smoke grass.....and wait!

(MARTIN pours a glass of water and offers it to SYLVIA.)

MARTIN: Here. A drink of water will make you feel better. (SYLVIA drinks silently.) Do you know that I love you?

SYLVIA: Yes, I know it.

MARTIN: But there's a time.....

SYLVIA (interrupting): No, no explanations. There were no explanations when you moved in. I don't want them now that you're leaving.

MARTIN: No, not yet. I want to see you calm.

SYLVIA: Go on. The Revolution can't wait ten minutes.

(MARTIN picks up the package with his clothes and starts to leave, stops at the door and turns toward SYLVIA.)

MARTIN: You do understand, don't you? All I want to be is true to myself. To be sincere.

SYLVIA: Me too.

(MARTIN exits. SYLVIA stands motionless for a moment, then, she

walks over to where the marijuana cigarette is, picks it up, lights it and smokes, inhaling deeply.)

To be sincere is to be powerful

The star shines in its nudity.....

(As the light dims, SYLVIA slowly walks over to the side of the stage where the table and chairs have been located since the beginning of the play. The photograph projected on the back of the stage disappears and there is total darkness as the semi-transparent curtain closes. Meantime the volume of the music increases and its distortion reminds us of a dream or a nightmare. The music stops and the lighting used at the beginning is restored with ANA, VICTOR and SYLVIA in the same position of the family portrait.)

ANA: There! (ANA adopts a normal posture but VICTOR and SYLVIA remain motionless, "frozen" in the forced smile of the picture. ANA goes back to serving the pie.) Let's finish this pie now. It tastes better when it's fresh. Do you know what I'll do with this picture? I'll always carry it in my purse and whenever somebody asks me about my family, and even if they don't ask, I'll show it with pride. That way everybody will know that we are united, that we are happy and proud of what we are.....A happy family! There were so many that couldn't make it together, so many that went astray, that split up and ended up scattered throughout the world, not seeing each other, creating stupid barriers for themselves, while we.... here we are, the same as ever!

(ANA's smile freezes and the three remain in the same frozen attitude of the family portrait. The light focuses on the group; they remain stationary. Lights go off. Total darkness.)