

PLAY FOR TWO

by

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A play for one ACTOR and one ACTRESS

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*The easiest thing, for us,
is to die; slightly less easy, is
to dream; hard, is to rebel;
and the hardest thing is to love.*

CARLOS FUENTES

*Love is never strong enough to find
the words befitting it.*

ALBERT CAMUS

*Curious how the act of living can
become mere acceptance.*

JULIO CORTÁZAR

*Love and hate are two horns on the
same goat.*

ANONYMOUS

CHARACTERS

ACTOR

ACTRESS

**Awarded first prize in Torreperogil's 7th Competition for
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Play for Two premiered on 18th April 2009, in the Sala Blanca Podestá of the Teatro Agadu in Montevideo, Uruguay, produced by Ilusionario Teatro and performed by Luciana Acuña and Javier Barboza. Directed by Antonio Baldomir.

ACT ONE

A plain.

A moonlit night.

The ACTRESS, back to the audience, sleeps wrapped up in a bedsheet. Beside her, two trunks, one large, and one smaller.

The ACTOR, sitting very close to her, stares up at the heavens. He gesticulates. As if he is counting stars. Occasionally he seems to get lost in the black immensity of the sky. Then he stays still, expressionless; then he repeats the same movements.

ACTOR: Lucía...

ACTRESS: Mmmhhh...

*The ACTOR continues looking at the sky.
Pause.*

ACTOR: Lucía... *(Shakes her brusquely.)* Lucía!

ACTRESS: *(Sits up, startled.)* Ah!

ACTOR: A star!

ACTRESS: *(Angry.)* You woke me up for that?

She lies down again.

ACTOR: It was a shooting star... *(Thinks.)* Quick! Come on! Let's make a wish.

ACTRESS: You make one. You're the one that saw it fall.

ACTOR: No. We should both make a wish. So then it will be more likely to come true.

ACTRESS: *(Irritated.)* Alright. *(Sits up.)* I wish...

The ACTOR covers her mouth.

ACTOR: Shhhh! It must be in silence. Nobody needs to hear it. *(He closes his eyes, fervently makes a wish. The ACTRESS still has an annoyed expression. Pause.)* Done! What did you wish for?

ACTRESS: For you to let me sleep in peace!

ACTOR: You didn't wish for the usual thing.

ACTRESS: So what?

ACTOR: We've always made the same wishes.

ACTRESS: I'm going to bed.

She lies down again.

ACTOR: But... Why did you wish for something different?

Pause.

ACTRESS: How about you go to sleep now, hmm?

ACTOR: I can't.

ACTRESS: Why not?

ACTOR: I have insomnia.

ACTRESS: Count stars.

ACTOR: It's no good. I've already counted them all.

ACTRESS: So count them again.

ACTOR: I don't want to count stars!

ACTRESS: So count sheep then.

ACTOR: I don't like counting sheep.

ACTRESS: (*Outburst.*) Count whatever the fuck you want!
Shit! But just let me sleep!

The ACTOR stands up.

He paces up and down, confused.

Long pause.

ACTOR: I don't know how you can sleep.

ACTRESS: I'm not sleeping. You won't let me.

The ACTOR sits down where he was before.

ACTOR: It'll be the same as every other night: the sun will come out and I will still be here, sitting, counting stars and without having had a wink of sleep all fucking night.

ACTRESS: You never stay up all night. I'm the one who ends up being awake every night.

ACTOR: It happened the other night. (*He looks at the trunks.*) Mum was where she always was; I was sitting here, and, the sun, it came out just as I counted the final star.

ACTRESS: And where was I?

ACTOR: You? (*Thinks.*) You weren't there.

ACTRESS: (*She sits down, surprised.*) I wasn't there?

ACTOR: No. It was just Mum and me.

ACTRESS: But... How? We've always been together.

ACTOR: Not that time.

ACTRESS: Come on! Remember. Perhaps you forgot.

ACTOR: I remember it well. You weren't there.

ACTRESS: That's not possible. You know it.

ACTOR: It's true.

ACTRESS: Well?

ACTOR: I don't remember you being there with us.

ACTRESS: Try harder.

ACTOR: (*Thinks.*) No! (*Thinks.*) You weren't there.

ACTRESS: (*Stands up.*) You're lying!

ACTOR: No!

ACTRESS: You're saying that to annoy me. To stop me from sleeping. You've done it before.

ACTOR: Not this time. I swear. It's the truth.

ACTRESS: Bah!

ACTOR: I was here, like I am now. I was looking at the vast sky. I was counting stars so I didn't get bored. Mum was where she always is and... you... (*Thinks.*) You... You weren't there. You weren't there.

ACTRESS: Maybe I was there; it's just that you can't see beyond the end of your nose. I'm sure I was lying there, wrapped up in my bedsheet pretending to sleep.

ACTOR: I would have heard your breathing.

ACTRESS: You mistook it for Mum's.

ACTOR: You know that's not possible.

ACTRESS: Fuck you!

*She moves to stage left.
Crosses her arms.
Long pause.*

ACTOR: (*Intriguing.*) But there's one thing I can't figure out: there was a third trunk, the same size as the smallest one, and underneath it, a bedsheet.

ACTRESS: (*Surprised.*) A bedsheet?

ACTOR: Yes. A bedsheet. (*He stands up and goes over to the ACTRESS. He takes hold of one end of the bedsheet she's wrapped in.*) Like this one!

ACTRESS: (*Snatches it from him.*) Cut the crap!

ACTOR: Yes, it was the same. With identical patterns and lace. That's why I went over to the trunk... I was about to open it when... I woke up!

ACTRESS: You woke up?

ACTOR: Yes. I woke up.

ACTRESS: So you were sleeping... It was a dream! You bastard!

*The ACTRESS tries to hit the ACTOR.
He runs away.
She follows him.
They circle around the trunks slightly and then
stop on opposite sides, facing one another.*

ACTOR: Didn't I tell you in the beginning that it was all a dream? "Everything I'm telling you, I dreamt it". Didn't I tell you?

ACTRESS: Wait 'til I get my hands on you, you prick. You asshole!

*They circle around again.
They stop.*

ACTOR: But I'm sure your bedsheet and the one in my dream are the same thing. I'm absolutely certain of it.

ACTRESS: Shut up!

*Another circle.
They stop.*

ACTOR: Did I disturb you? I wish I hadn't woken up so soon. If I hadn't, I could have seen what was inside the...

ACTRESS: Shut up!

*Another circle.
They stop.*

ACTOR: (*Tired.*) Enough! Stop chasing me about.

ACTRESS: Let me catch you and I'll stop doing it.

*Another circle.
The ACTRESS changes direction, they bump into one another, but both of them collapse, exhausted.
They are left sitting on the floor, shoulder to shoulder, facing the audience.*

ACTOR: Phew! It's been a while since we've done this, eh?

Long silence.

ACTRESS: Antonio...

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: Is it really true?

ACTOR: Is what true?

ACTRESS: What you just told me about your dream.

ACTOR: (*Annoyed*). What?

ACTRESS: About the other trunk and the bedsheet under it.

ACTOR: (*Now without interest.*) Oh yes, yes... Of course!

The ACTRESS stands up abruptly and the ACTOR falls down.

She walks over to stage right with very slow but firm steps.

She stops. Ponders for a moment; looks at the bedsheet, takes it off.

She is dressed in the same way as the ACTOR.

She folds up the bedsheet, very carefully; looks at it without blinking.

The ACTOR has left his place. He is now sitting on top of the larger trunk.

ACTRESS: Are you sure it was the same as this one?

ACTOR: Of course.

ACTRESS: With the same frills and lace?

ACTOR: Yes.

*The ACTRESS drops the bedsheet.
Silence.*

ACTRESS: When was it?

ACTOR: Sorry?

ACTRESS: Your dream. When did you dream it?

ACTOR: I don't know. One night.

ACTRESS: Like any other.

*She paces back and forth.
The ACTOR looks up as if searching for something.*

ACTOR: A star! A shooting star!

*He closes his eyes, fervently makes a wish.
The ACTRESS continues walking around mechanically,
pensive.
Long pause.*

ACTRESS: *(Stops suddenly.)* It's similar! There's no doubt about it.

ACTOR: Oh?!

ACTRESS: Your dream. *(She rushes over to the ACTOR.)* It's similar to the one you had nights before what happened. You and I alone in a place like this. Our trunk here; Mum wasn't here. In her absence, we found this other trunk, and underneath it was her red dress. It was your dream. One morning we woke up and it was all real.

ACTOR: We woke up? *(Looks sideways, then to the audience in despair.)* So are we awake then?

ACTRESS: Now your dream is repeating. This time, it's my bedsheet underneath that other trunk which doesn't yet exist, but which, perhaps very soon, will occupy a space in this desolate place.

Pause.

ACTOR: *(Who has been looking up at the sky again.)* Nothing!

Pause.

ACTRESS: We'll have to wait. Maybe nothing will happen.

Pause.

ACTOR: *(The same, disappointed.)* Nothing!

Pause.

ACTRESS: I'll stay awake.

Looks from side to side.

ACTOR: How?

ACTRESS: I can't sleep.

ACTOR: It's about time!

ACTRESS: No. You don't understand. I can't sleep, not because I can't, but because I know I can't. Do you understand now?

ACTOR: Not at all.

ACTRESS: Never mind. Now I'll have to think of something to distract you, to keep you awake.

ACTOR: I'm not sleepy.

ACTRESS: You will be.

ACTOR: (*Angrily.*) Where did the fortune-teller lady leave her crystal ball?

ACTRESS: Some poofster took it.

ACTOR: (*Stands up, vehement.*) You always think you know everything, don't you?!

ACTRESS: All I know is what happened yesterday, that's enough for me to know what will happen tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and.... (*Stops herself.*) And so on and so forth.

ACTOR: I hate it when you get ahead of yourself.

ACTRESS: I like to speculate.

ACTOR: Shit!

ACTRESS: (*Enthusiastic.*) Maybe in the future I'll become a great stateswoman.

ACTOR: It won't be hard for you in this place.

ACTRESS: You're heartless! Not only have you interrupted my rest and tormented me with your horrible dreams, but now you're destroying my hopes. You're heartless!

*She sits on the trunk and sobs.
The ACTOR goes over to her.*

ACTOR: Sorry. (*Embraces her tenderly*). I just wanted to show you how much I love you.

ACTRESS: (*Moved.*) Really?

ACTOR: Yes. You're all I have.

ACTRESS: What about Mum?

ACTOR: That's different.

ACTRESS: (*After pondering.*) Yeah, sure, it's different.

*The ACTOR is still hugging the ACTRESS; their heads are very close together.
The ACTOR shuts his eyes and falls asleep.
The ACTRESS looks out at the audience, dreamy.
Pause.
The ACTOR snores.
An angry grimace on the face of the ACTRESS.*

ACTRESS: (*Standing up abruptly.*) I knew it!

The ACTOR staggers; struggles to stay upright and not fall over.

ACTOR: Hey!

ACTRESS: You fell asleep!

ACTOR: No!

ACTRESS: I heard you snoring.

ACTOR: I choked on saliva.

ACTRESS: I don't believe you.

The ACTOR pretends to be choking on saliva.

ACTOR: You see?

The ACTRESS takes a few steps to the front, then stops.

ACTRESS: Let's talk.

ACTOR: I'm listening.

*The ACTRESS ponders.
The ACTOR cannot prevent his heavy eyelids from
closing. His head drops to his chest. He sleeps.
Pause.*

ACTRESS: But... What can we talk about?

ACTOR: *(Startled, he wakes up.)* The moon!

ACTRESS: It's round.

ACTOR: Like a big ball.

ACTRESS: When I was little I wanted to go to the moon.

ACTOR: Me too.

ACTRESS: Now I'm grown up I prefer the stars.

ACTOR: *(With admiration.)* I always thought you were
ambitious.

ACTRESS: *(Blushing.)* Thank you.

*The ACTOR nods off again.
He falls asleep.
Pause.*

ACTRESS: And now what?

ACTOR: *(Startled, he wakes up.)* The trunk!

ACTRESS: Which trunk?

ACTOR: *(Stutters.)* Ours...

ACTRESS: We never opened it again.

ACTOR: True.

ACTRESS: *(Animated.)* Let's open it!

ACTOR: We can't.

ACTRESS: Why not?

ACTOR: I'm sitting on it.

ACTRESS: You're right.

*The ACTOR falls asleep again.
Pause.*

ACTRESS: Well?

ACTOR: *(Startled, he wakes up.)* The whores!

ACTRESS: In the brothel. But what's with the whores? Why are you talking about whores? *(Brief pause)*. Have you ever been with one?

ACTOR: *(Embarrassed, very quietly.)* No...

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: *(Slightly louder.)* No...

ACTRESS: No? *(Mischievous.)* But you must have been with some "little friend", haven't you?

ACTOR: *(Embarrassed, very quietly.)* No...

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: *(Slightly louder.)* I said no...

ACTRESS: *(Astonished.)* No? What do you mean no? At your age? *(Mockingly.)* As chaste as a eunuch?

ACTOR: *(Angrily.)* Castrated!

ACTRESS: *(Shocked.)* Castrated?

ACTOR: Eunuchs, I mean; they're castrated, not chaste.

After a pause, the ACTRESS steps forward towards the proscenium.

ACTRESS: Oh! Yes! Now I remember! Mum never wanted you to...

ACTOR: *(Stands up, furious.)* Shut up! *(Pointing at the audience.)* They don't need to know that.

ACTRESS: Why not? If they're interested in us. They've even bought a ticket.

ACTOR: Bah!

*He moves towards one of the wings.
The ACTRESS looks at the audience with curiosity.
Pause.*

ACTRESS: What if we go to the other side?

ACTOR: We can't.

ACTRESS: Why not?

ACTOR: This is our place.

ACTRESS: But we also have the right to...

ACTOR: No! We chose to be on this side. We can't back out now. We'd ruin everything.

ACTRESS: Maybe you're right.

ACTOR: *(Conceited.)* I am. I always am. Let's get back to business.

ACTRESS: You're off the trunk now.

ACTOR: Clearly.

ACTRESS: *(Excited.)* Let's do it then!

ACTOR: Do what?

ACTRESS: Let's open it!

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: The trunk!

ACTOR: Ah.

*They go towards the trunk.
They open it.
They search inside at length.
The ACTRESS takes out a Greek toga, puts it on,
then pulls out a theatre mask.
The ACTOR has taken out a mirror and is looking
into it.
Comic gestures.*

ACTRESS: (*Holding the mask to his face.*) This reminds me of the time I played Antigone.

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: Antigone... Daughter of Oedipus... The King!

ACTOR: No, no. Before that. What did you say?

ACTRESS: Before (*Thinks.*) Oh. I remember. I said: The Trunk!

ACTOR: No! No! Right after this and before that. Reconstruct the whole sentence.

ACTRESS: Oh! I get it. I said (*Monotone voice.*): This reminds me of the time when I played Anti...

ACTOR: Impossible!

ACTRESS: That's what I said. I'm sure of it.

ACTOR: I mean, you couldn't possibly have played Antigone.

ACTRESS: Really? Why?

ACTOR: Because I don't remember any details of the staging.

ACTRESS: It's obvious: you weren't in it.

ACTOR: I wasn't in it?

ACTRESS: No.

ACTOR: So?

ACTRESS: I did it by myself because you (*Sarcastic.*): were sleeping! (*Remembers*). I was tremendous! The applause was endless.

*She bows, curtsies, as if thanking the audience for their applause.
The ACTOR searches desperately in the trunk, finally finds what he is looking for; he takes out another toga and puts it on, then a mask.*

ACTRESS: I'll never forget it (*She recites in a tragic tone.*) Do you want more than my arrest and death?

ACTOR: (*Slightly hesitantly to start with.*) No more than that. For that is all I need.

ACTRESS: Why are you waiting? Nothing that you say fits with my thought. I pray it never will. Nor will you ever like to hear my words. And yet what greater glory could I find than giving my own brother funeral? All these would say that they approved my act did fear not mute them. (A king if fortunate in many ways, and most, that he can act and speak at will.)

ACTOR: None of these others see the case this way.

ACTRESS: They see, and do not say. You have them cowed.

ACTOR: Are you not ashamed to think alone?

ACTRESS: No, I am not ashamed. When was it shame to serve the children of my mother's womb?

ACTOR: It was not your brother who died against him, then?

ACTRESS: Full brother, on both sides, my parents' child.

ACTOR: Your act of grace, in his regard, is crime.

ACTRESS: The corpse below would never say it was.

ACTOR: When you honor him and the criminal just alike?

ACTRESS: It was a brother, not a slave, who died.

ACTOR: Died to destroy this land the other guarded.

ACTRESS: Death yearns for equal law for all the dead.

ACTOR: Not that the good and bad draw equal shares.

ACTRESS: Who knows that this is holiness below?

ACTOR: Never the enemy, even in death, a friend.

ACTRESS: I cannot share in hatred, but in love.

ACTOR: Then go down there, if you must love, and love the dead. No woman rules me while I live.*

ACTRESS: (*Normal voice.*) Perfect! Nobody could have done it better!

ACTOR: (*Dejected.*) I think I lost it a bit towards the end.

ACTRESS: No. I don't think so. You were great!

ACTOR: It's a difficult scene.

ACTRESS: Of course!

ACTOR: The diction! It was poor!

ACTRESS: No, no. No way (*Pause, then expectantly.*) How was my performance?

ACTOR: I'm telling you! My diction was bad.

ACTRESS: What do you think of my performance?

ACTOR: I should practice with some tongue twisters.

ACTRESS: What about my performance?

ACTOR: She sells seashells by the seashore. The shells she sells are surely seashells. So if she sells shells on the seashore, I'm sure she sells seashore shells.

ACTRESS: How was my performance?

ACTOR: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

ACTRESS: How was my performance?

ACTOR: I'll also need a mirror and a great deal of caution.

* Taken from *Antigone* by Sophocles (translated by Elizabeth Wyckoff).

ACTRESS: (*Outburst.*) Fuck you!

ACTOR: Huh? Did you say something?

ACTRESS: I haven't opened my mouth.

*Takes off the toga.
Throws it aside along with the mask.*

ACTOR: I thought I heard you say something.

ACTRESS: You imagined it.

ACTOR: Maybe.

*He does the same with his mask and toga.
The ACTRESS has sat down in the centre of the
stage.
The ACTOR goes and sits next to her.
Pause.*

ACTRESS: Sometimes I wonder, if you and I hadn't had so much in common, what would our lives be like then?

ACTOR: The sky has gone dark.

ACTRESS: And however hard I try, I can't imagine it.

*She closes her eyes.
Concentrates.*

ACTOR: Maybe it will rain tonight.

*He stands up, goes to the trunk, opens it, takes
out an umbrella, closes the trunk.
He retraces his steps.
He stops, opens the umbrella, looks at it
unblinkingly for a long time.
He sits down a few steps away from the ACTRESS.*

ACTRESS: Habit stultifies.

ACTOR: Did you say something?

ACTRESS: I haven't opened my mouth.

ACTOR: I thought I heard you say something.

ACTRESS: You imagined it.

ACTOR: Maybe.

Long pause.

ACTRESS: This situation has begun to choke me.

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: I'm suffocating.

ACTOR: I don't understand you.

ACTRESS: Exactly!

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: You don't understand me! You never understand anything! *(Melodramatic.)* It's terrible not to be understood.

ACTOR: Yes. *(Thinks.)* I understand you.

ACTRESS: Is it dawn already?

ACTOR: I don't know. The moon has moved a little. A lot. Not at all.

ACTRESS: You keep contradicting yourself.

ACTOR: That's how I show I'm alive.

The ACTOR closes the umbrella, puts it aside.

ACTRESS: *(After thinking.)* That's important.

ACTOR: What is?

ACTRESS: Showing the world you're alive.

ACTOR: Of course.

ACTRESS: And feeling it.

ACTOR: Obviously.

ACTRESS: Sometimes I feel like I'm dead.

ACTOR: When?

ACTRESS: Ever since I was born. I didn't even feel the midwife's spank.

ACTOR: You're lying! I saw you cry.

ACTRESS: Impossible.

ACTOR: Why?

ACTRESS: I was born before you.

ACTOR: Only a few minutes. When they took me out, you were still crying.

ACTRESS: (*Shocked*) Really?

ACTOR: Yes.

ACTRESS: (*Puzzled*). But then how come I don't remember?

ACTOR: You have a bad memory.

ACTRESS: No. No I don't. (*Pause.*) What did I tell you?

ACTOR: (*Imitating the voice of the ACTRESS*) I sometimes feel like I'm dead.

ACTRESS: Oh, yes. Like I'm inside a coffin.

ACTOR: A trunk!

ACTRESS: A coffin! In a busy square; people are passing me by. Some of them come up to me and look at me with sad eyes. I try to speak to them, but the words won't come out. I try to get up and none of my muscles respond. Then I wonder, is it possible to be dead and watch life go on without you? And I watch the way people, in their clumsy rush, push aside what's really important. That's when a great sadness comes over me, because I know that I've lived exactly the same way.

ACTOR: But don't you smell?

ACTRESS: No.

ACTOR: (*Thoughtful.*) You have no senses, but you can feel.

ACTRESS: Exactly.

ACTOR: I know many people who have the opposite problem.

ACTRESS: How?

ACTOR: They have their full senses but they don't feel a thing.

ACTRESS: But what does that have to do with what I just told you?

ACTOR: I don't know. (*Angrily.*) You and your bloody mania for finding connections between things!

ACTRESS: I think I'll remain confined to my coffin.

ACTOR: Trunk!

ACTRESS: Coffin! Is it dawn already?

ACTOR: I don't know. The moon has moved a little. A lot. Not at all.

ACTRESS: Another minute has gone by.

Pause.

ACTOR: (*Sleepily, yawns, stretches.*) And now what?

ACTRESS: Let me think.

Thinks.

ACTOR: I'm going to sleep.

ACTRESS: (*Frightened.*) No!

ACTOR: Why not?

ACTRESS: You can't!

ACTOR: Why not?

ACTRESS: I'd be left alone.

ACTOR: So what?

ACTRESS: I don't want to be alone.

ACTOR: Then I'll sleep here, next to you; very close to you.

ACTRESS: It's not the same. You'll be there but you won't be there. Like Mum... (*Distressed.*) Something might happen to me!

ACTOR: Why would anything happen to you?

ACTRESS: Your dream.

ACTOR: What dream?

ACTRESS: The trunk... My bedsheet under it...

ACTOR: Ah. Then I'll sleep and dream that I haven't dreamt anything.

ACTRESS: It's no good.

ACTOR: Why?

ACTRESS: I'll know you dreamt it.

ACTOR: Then I won't dream.

Pause.

ACTRESS: You're staying?

ACTOR: Apparently.

ACTRESS: We'll think of something to keep us from getting bored.

ACTOR: Maybe.

Pause.

ACTRESS: I know! Let's do what everyone else does.

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: Let's tell each other lies.

ACTOR: Excellent idea!

They think for a few minutes, then get up and walk towards the proscenium.

They stop.

They begin to chatter monotonously, adapting their voices and gestures to each of the phrases they are saying.

All very quickly.

ACTRESS: I'm happy!

ACTOR: From now on I'll be a different man.

ACTRESS: I've never been a slave to time and never will be.

ACTOR: I've never been vain, and never will be.

ACTRESS: I'm absolutely certain.

ACTOR: I believe in and respect Freedom.

ACTRESS: Oh, I do it without any interest.

ACTOR: Above all, man is the most important thing.

ACTRESS: We are free!

ACTOR: Oh, I know you so well!

ACTRESS: It's perfect!

ACTOR: I've always told the truth!

ACTRESS: *(Normal voice.)* Oh, very good lie. Well done!

ACTOR: *(Pleased.)* Thanks.

ACTRESS: I have nothing more to learn.

ACTOR: We're all equal.

ACTRESS: Children deserve our respect.

ACTOR: Never ever!

ACTRESS: There's nothing to worry about.

ACTOR: Tomorrow everything will be better.

ACTRESS: Things are moving so fast.

ACTOR: I don't owe anyone anything.

ACTRESS: I'm not selfish at all.

ACTOR: Now, right at this moment.

ACTRESS: I'll be faithful to you until I die.

ACTOR: One word says everything and says nothing.

ACTRESS: (*Waving a handkerchief, between sobs.*) Goodbye!
I'll never forget you!

ACTOR: How time flies!

ACTRESS: I'll always love you.

ACTOR: (*Normal voice, disgusted gestures, repulsed.*) That
was nauseating!

ACTRESS: You think so?

ACTOR: That's the best lie I've ever heard in my life.

ACTRESS: Really?

ACTOR: That's it! (*Angrily.*) No matter how hard I try, I
won't find a bigger lie than that.

*He sits down in the same place he was in at the
beginning of the act.*

The ACTRESS folds her arms.

Long pause.

ACTRESS: Is it ever going to get light?

ACTOR: And what would be gain from that?

ACTRESS: I don't know, another day, perhaps.

ACTOR: And what would we do with another day?

ACTRESS: (*Thinks.*) Well...

ACTOR: (*Stands up, suddenly.*) Nothing!

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: I said, nothing. What we both do, day in, day out in this lousy place. Nothing!

ACTRESS: Speak for yourself. What I'm doing is waiting for nightfall.

ACTOR: What for?

ACTRESS: (*Hesitates.*) To wait for the dawn.

ACTOR: What for?

ACTRESS: (*Hesitates again.*) To wait for another night to come.

ACTOR: What for?

ACTRESS: To... (*Angrily.*) I've had enough of you!

Pause.

ACTOR: It's ridiculous.

ACTRESS: What is?

ACTOR: Our life. It makes no sense at all.

ACTRESS: What do you want? We've never cared about it making sense before.

ACTOR: Can you imagine? A hundred years from now, when we have ceased to exist, no one will know about us. They won't know, for example, that we've been here today, in front of this crowd... Daring to do things that others wouldn't dare... Acting! (*Brief pause, then vehement.*) They will not know your torments, my manias. (*Dejected.*) It's unfair!

ACTRESS: (*Comforting him.*) There, there... Hush now... There, there.

ACTOR: With our... DEATH... we will be... EXTINGUISHED... from the... WORLD... for... EVER...

Pause.

ACTRESS: Unless...

ACTOR: Unless what?

ACTRESS: Someone writes about us...

ACTOR: Someone?

ACTRESS: A person who tells the story of our lives.

ACTOR: That could work.

ACTRESS: Who reveals our fears.

ACTOR: Exactly!

ACTRESS: Our selfishness.

ACTOR: Every one of our vices.

ACTRESS: Who praises our vanity.

ACTOR: Our perversion, our depravity.

ACTRESS: Who is grotesque enough.

ACTOR: Outlandish.

ACTRESS: Pretentious.

ACTOR: Witty.

ACTRESS: Unbearable.

ACTOR: (*Suddenly.*) Me!

ACTRESS: (*Admiring.*) You?

ACTOR: Yes! Yes! Me! It'll be an autobiographical account.

ACTRESS: Oh yes?

ACTOR: A confession, our intimate diary.

ACTRESS: Of course!

ACTOR: Written in the first person.

ACTRESS: Obviously.

*They go over to the trunk.
The ACTOR opens it, takes out a megaphone, closes
it again; climbs on top of it.*

ACTOR: Silence! I will begin. *(He puts the megaphone to his mouth.)* My father and my mother met one beautiful evening in the immeasurable twilight...

ACTRESS: Hey! Why?

ACTOR: How should I know? I wasn't there.

ACTRESS: No, I mean, why are you starting there?

ACTOR: We will need to mention our parents, won't we?

ACTRESS: Please, think about it. Does *(Derogatory.)* "that gentleman" deserve to be mentioned in our biography?

ACTOR: Our father? *(Thinks.)* He left our mother...

ACTRESS: Uh-huh! After possessing her...

ACTOR: He denied his involvement in the deed...

ACTRESS: Exactly!

*The ACTOR puts the megaphone to his mouth again,
melodramatically.*

ACTOR: Our mother, sad and abandoned...

ACTRESS: That's better.

ACTOR: Carrying in her lacerated womb...

ACTRESS: Much better.

ACTOR: The seed of a scoundrel.

ACTRESS: *(Applauds, thrilled.)* Bravo! Bravo! I like it! I like it!

ACTOR: *(Disappointed.)* Not me.

ACTRESS: Why's that?

ACTOR: I've put a lot of emphasis on her. What about us?

ACTRESS: That's right.

ACTOR: Let's see. Let's practice.

*He gets down off the trunk.
Places the megaphone on the floor.
Walks to centre stage, then to the proscenium.*

ACTRESS: I'm listening! I'm listening!

Goes and sits on the trunk.

ACTOR: You and I... (*Thinks.*) No! (*Thinks.*) She and I... (*Thinks.*) Yes! That's better. (*Thinks.*) I remember that day well. We were all going through that dark, wet, acetous tunnel. I didn't know her then. We were moving vigorously against the current. (*The ACTRESS, standing on the trunk, arms close by her side, legs tightly together, making undulating movements like a snake, or a sperm*). A hostile journey. Undoubtedly. Only the strongest would make it. (*Pause*). Perhaps half an hour later - three quarters of an hour, perhaps - we caught in that acrid drizzle. (*Sad.*) Many died. (*Energetically*). But there was no time for regrets! We survivors had to go on. (*Pause.*) Finally we reached our destination. (*The ACTRESS gradually increases the speed of her movements*). I realised... by the substance that propelled us towards those transparent spheres... It was the turning point of the journey. No doubt about it. Only one of us could go through them. (*With emphasis.*) Quickly, she and I, we strove to get there first. (*The ACTRESS' movements are very fast*). She went through one of the spheres and I went through another. (*The ACTRESS stops.*) From then on, we knew we would be what we are. Half an hour later, the usual divisions began: two, four, eight... (*Indifferent.*) Anyway, I lost count. It was the same with her. (*Pause.*) Then we began to go down. (*The ACTRESS begins to contract her body, very gently.*) We had to look for a safe place to take shelter and try to grow in that hostile immensity... Day one, day two, day three... and... and so on... On the seventh day: we found it (*The ACTRESS remains huddled over the trunk.*) The rest would be easy. The work of a parasite. (*Pause.*) Month one: I feel the heart that would beat inside

of me until the day I die. My eyes, ears are sketched out; a budding brain. I feel arms and legs growing. *(Pause.)* Month two: I go from tadpole to man - I still have my doubts today - I feel my face adjusting, my mouth, nose and eyes forming. Ribs. Sternum. Sweat glands. My brain develops - I still have my doubts today -. My head is too big. *(The ACTRESS slowly lifts her head, with effort, moves it, as if weights a lot)*. The same happens to her. *(Pause.)* Month three: I am able to react to external stimuli. *(Gestures of the ACTRESS: sad, upset, scared, etc.)* I swallow this liquid in which I float. *(Grimace of displeasure)*. Aaaggghhhh! It tastes like seawater. I excrete it through my... kidneys. I feel my vocal cords forming, with which I will never stop talking shit for the rest of my fucking life. I can move my arms and legs. *(He does so, flexing gently. The ACTRESS does the same.)* The same happens to her. *(Pause.)* Month four: Our mother can feel us. From then on, we start to bother her. *(Pause.)* I feel that little fuzz that will be my hair and eyebrows. Also my fingerprints. The ones that will set me apart from the rest of the people - I still have my doubts today-. My skin is red and wrinkly. When I'm old I'll remember this state. The same happens to her. *(Pause.)* Month five: my muscles are stronger. My skin is thicker. From the outside you can hear my heartbeat. One hundred and twenty. One hundred and thirty per minute. *(Pause.)* I sleep at times. I hear noises from outside. Screams! Moaning! Crying! Nothing else. The same happens to her. *(Pause.)* Month six: I have that thin layer of adipose tissue. I open my eyes. Aahhh! At last I see her. Until then I had only heard her heartbeat, which was mingled with mine. She is there... so close... but... at the same time so far away. She is also looking at me. *(Pause.)* Month seven: We have decided to come out. Anyone else would have waited. But not us. We are in a rush! We're in a hurry to get out. We want to see the world! On the other hand, survival conditions in here have deteriorated considerably. Food is scarce... Oxytocin! Oxytocin! *(The ACTRESS moves abruptly)*. Get out! See the world! See the light! Breathe! Aaahhh! The contractions are starting. *(The ACTRESS' movements on the trunk become more violent.)* Pain. Pain! Pain tied to life... Always! *(Vehemently)*. Oxytocin! Oxytocin!

Help us to get out! We want to see the light!
Breathe! She will be born! I will be born! We will
be born!

Blackout.
The crying of babies.

ACT TWO

The ACTRESS is sitting in the same place where the ACTOR was when the curtain rose on the first act. She looks up at the sky, gestures: she is counting stars.

The ACTOR, curled up in a foetal position, sleeps beside her, facing the audience.

ACTRESS: Ten thousand nine hundred and forty-nine, ten thousand nine hundred and fifty, ten thousand nine hundred and...

She stops. She looks around, dumbfounded. She stands still for a moment. Wearily, she leans her body forward, rests her hands on the ground. On all fours, she crawls over to stage left, a few metres, stops, looks into the distance, shading her eyes with her hand, retraces her steps. Thinks. Same to stage right; retraces her steps. Thinks. Looks towards the lights, shading her eyes with her hand. Thinks.

ACTRESS: Here we are again!

She shakes the ACTOR.

ACTOR: *(Sits up, startled.)* Hey!

ACTRESS: Break time's over.

ACTOR: *(Rubbing his eyes.)* Is everything still the same?

Stretches his arms, yawns.

ACTRESS: Nothing new. How are you?

ACTOR: Refreshed. *(Squats, flexes his arms and legs)* There's nothing more invigorating than sleep, right?

ACTRESS: Huh!

ACTOR: How are you?

ACTRESS: I haven't slept a wink all night.

ACTOR: What have you been doing all this time?

ACTRESS: Counting stars.

ACTOR: Wow! Great entertainment.

ACTRESS: Did you dream?

ACTOR: Maybe. (*Thinks, angrily.*) But I don't remember.

ACTRESS: You'll remember.

ACTOR: What's all this mess?

ACTRESS: We made it a while ago.

ACTOR: We?

ACTRESS: Who else?

ACTOR: My mind has gone blank.

ACTRESS: Don't worry, it'll fill up with all our crap again.

The ACTOR gets up, walks around, and starts picking up the things strewn about the scene: he picks up the togas and the masks. He looks at one of the masks at arm's length. Laughs. Puts it on.

ACTOR: (*Energetically.*) I, Antonio!

Laughs.

ACTRESS: What are you doing?

ACTOR: Remembering the old days.

ACTRESS: (*Absent-mindedly.*) The good old days.

ACTOR: That's what they say.

ACTRESS: Remind me to include that in our lies.

The ACTOR carries on picking things up: he picks up the umbrella, opens it, puts it over his head, takes it off, looks up.

ACTOR: It's clear. It's not going to rain.

*He closes the umbrella.
Goes on with his business.*

ACTRESS: What are you doing?

ACTOR: I'm trying to tidy up. I hate mess.

ACTRESS: Oh!

*The ACTOR keeps picking things up: he picks up the megaphone.
He puts it to his mouth.*

ACTOR: Women and children first!

ACTRESS: What are you doing?

ACTOR: I'm playing at sinking a boat. (*Puts the megaphone to his mouth.*) The captain and the sailors will go down with the ship...

ACTRESS: You could at least try to be true to the times and adapt the text to the era.

ACTOR: How?

The ACTRESS goes to him, takes the megaphone from him, and puts it to his mouth.

ACTRESS: Captain and sailors first! Women and children... (*Cruelly.*) They can sink to the bottom of the damn sea!

ACTOR: (*Excited.*) Such a faithful adaptation.

ACTRESS: Thank you! There's a reason I consider myself a citizen of the world.

ACTOR: You have a splendid imagination.

ACTRESS: Someday I'll write a book.

ACTOR: (*Suddenly.*) That's it!

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: (*Uncertain.*) Write! (*Reflects.*) I had to write something...

ACTRESS: Of course.

ACTOR: But what?

ACTRESS: Our biography.

ACTOR: (*Immensely pleased.*) That! Our biography! Yes! Yes! I remember! I've remembered everything! Everything we did a while ago! I'll never forget it again! I'll never forget it again!

ACTRESS: Yes, of course. Until you get another good night's sleep.

ACTOR: Right! Until...! (*Impassive, to the ACTRESS.*) You're detestable.

ACTRESS: It's always the same with you. I don't know why you take such delight in remembering things. I'd be so happy if I forgot everything. Everything! It would be like... (*Thinks.*) It would be like being born again!

ACTOR: (*Eager.*) Being born again...

ACTRESS: Exactly! Maybe I wouldn't do the usual stupid things.

ACTOR: But we would be here.

ACTRESS: Who cares! We'd be playing another role. (*Pause.*) Aren't you sick of all this?

The ACTOR looks around at the audience, bewildered.

ACTOR: I like this.

ACTRESS: I know, I know, I know. Me too. But sometimes we come to loathe what we love, even if we feel the same feeling as we did at the beginning. (*Pause.*) "Love and hate are horns of the same goat."
(*Pause.*) Don't you get sick of all this?

ACTOR: I told you I like this.

*He turns, takes the megaphone from the ACTRESS and walks over to the trunk; when he gets there he stops. He leans over it and tries to open it. He doesn't succeed as his arms are full of the things he's been collecting. He stands up. Thinks. Smiles. He lifts his right leg, staggers, finally manages to open the trunk with his leg, throws the things in his arms into it and then lets the lid drop.
He smiles, satisfied.*

ACTRESS: There's no point arguing with you.

ACTOR: Sometimes I'm surprised at the things that come into my head.

ACTRESS: Let's change the subject.

ACTOR: Pardon?

ACTRESS: I'm suggesting we talk about something else.

ACTOR: That seems reasonable to me.

ACTRESS: Let's see... Let's talk about our biography.
Sound good?

ACTOR: Okay.

ACTRESS: How's it going?

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: Our biography.

ACTOR: Oh, great, great: getting there.

ACTRESS: Oh yes? Have you written lots of pages?

ACTOR: None.

ACTRESS: What do you mean, none?

ACTOR: Nothing down on paper. But I have several in here.

Points to his head.

ACTRESS: How many?

ACTOR: Seven hundred and seventy-seven...

ACTRESS: Bravo!

ACTOR: (*Scowling.*) However, I've been checking...

ACTRESS: And?

ACTOR: I've run into a bit of a problem.

ACTRESS: What is it?

ACTOR: I've thought about it... I've pondered...

ACTRESS: And?

ACTOR: It's still there.

ACTRESS: (*Almost hysterical.*) So?

ACTOR: It's terrible.

ACTRESS: So?

ACTOR: Really terrible!

ACTRESS: So, then?

ACTOR: It involves...

ACTRESS: (*Outburst.*) Fuck! Spit it out now!

Silence.

ACTOR: After the first page, all the other pages are the same.

ACTRESS: Shit!

ACTOR: They're identical. Seven hundred and seventy-seven identical pages. Can you imagine? What publisher is going to want to publish and distribute a book with seven hundred and seventy-seven identical pages? (*Pause.*) It's disappointing!

He drops to the floor.

ACTRESS: It's hopeless. (*Steady. Pause, then encouraging.*)
But there must be some alternative... some way...
a way out...

ACTOR: Being born again and doing things differently, day
after day.

ACTRESS: Damn! That's too much!

ACTOR: Let's just resign ourselves to the fact we won't
go down in history.

ACTRESS: Too bad! I'd already got used to the idea.

ACTOR: It's the only thing we know how to do.

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: Getting used to things.

ACTRESS: That's true.

Long silence.

ACTOR: Are we just going to sit around here twiddling our
thumbs for the rest of the night?

ACTRESS: What can we do?

ACTOR: I don't know. I mean, anything. We can't waste our
time like this. Let's think of something.

Thinks.

ACTRESS: Sometimes we waste our time thinking about how not
to waste it.

ACTOR: Did you say something?

ACTRESS: I haven't opened my mouth.

ACTOR: I thought I heard you say something.

ACTRESS: You imagined it.

ACTOR: Maybe.

Pause.

ACTRESS: I think it's time for our exercises.

ACTOR: Really?

ACTRESS: The moon is in the right spot.

ACTOR: That's true!

ACTRESS: So?

ACTOR: Let's begin.

ACTRESS: Right.

They get up.

Both walk towards the trunk.

The ACTOR opens it and takes out a small box from which, in turn, he pulls out a pack of cards.

The ACTRESS tries to take them from him.

ACTOR: No! I chose last time. It's your turn to choose this time.

ACTRESS: All right.

The ACTOR carefully shuffles the cards, then hands them to the ACTRESS. The ACTRESS, covering her eyes, takes a card from the fan-shaped pack and hands it to the ACTOR, who snatches it and turns his back to her. The ACTRESS, uneasy, tries to look over his shoulders. She jumps up and down. The ACTOR quickly returns the card to the pack without letting the ACTRESS see it.

ACTOR: Exercises seven, ten and eleven.

The ACTRESS trudges towards centre stage. She stops. Progressively, from her heels to her head, she tenses her whole body as she breathes in. She relaxes her neck; her chin against her chest, then successively loosens her shoulders, waist, knees and feet, until she falls to the floor, all the while exhaling the air contained in her lungs. Pauses. Lifts her head lazily. Looks towards the audience. Anxious gestures. Rises abruptly. Runs to stage left. Stops. Looks around in great bewilderment. Runs to stage right. Stops. Repeats the same gestures. Runs towards backstage. Stops.

Defiant gestures. Hands clasped to her chest, she extends them sharply forward. She pleads fearfully. She squeezes her arms wearily. Confused, she steps back. She stops. She covers her face with her hands. She lets herself slump down until her head touches the ground. Raises her head. Looks towards the audience. Resentful gestures. Gets up quickly. Runs to stage right. Stops. Crosses the stage from one side to the other while looking at the audience. Reproachful gestures. She stops when she reaches stage left. Suddenly runs towards the centre. Stops. Looks around, upwards. Arms outstretched, defiant gestures, lets herself fall. Lifts her head. Laughs. Runs to stage left. Stops. Looks out at the audience. Laughs. Runs to stage right. Does the same thing. Laughs. Violently paces the stage like an experienced dancer. Laughs. Stops in the middle to turn on her left leg: six, seven turns. Laughs. Collapses to the floor. Face up, she stretches out her arms. Laughs. Obscene gestures. Laughs. Gets to her feet. Scared gestures. Backs away. Runs across the stage like she is lost. Goes towards the ACTOR, who has stayed, impassive, in the same place. She falls at his feet.

Long pause.

ACTRESS: *(Looking up into the ACTOR's face.)* How did I do?

ACTOR: *(Distracted.)* Huh?

ACTRESS: My exercises seven, ten and eleven, how did I do?

ACTOR: Your... *(Indifferent.)* Sorry. I wasn't paying attention. Silly me! *(The ACTRESS stands up, immensely angry.)* I got distracted remembering my dream from earlier: I was sitting in a place like this. Mum where she always was, and you...

ACTRESS: *(Vehemently.)* You bastard!

She tries to hit him.

The ACTOR runs away.

She follows him.

They circle slightly around the trunks and stop on opposite sides.

All as in the first act.

ACTOR: You weren't there. In your absence, I found that other trunk with strange inscriptions on it, and underneath it, your...

ACTRESS: Wait til I get my hands on you, you prick. You asshole!

*They circle again.
They stop.*

ACTOR: ...bedsheet. Did I tell you that this time I managed to open it, to look inside, to see through the darkness?

ACTRESS: Shut up!

*They circle again.
They stop.*

ACTOR: Ashes! That's what! Inside the trunk I found only ashes...

ACTRESS: *(Covering her ears.)* Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

*She slumps dejectedly onto the larger trunk.
Sobs.
Long pause.*

ACTOR: *(Moves closer to comfort her.)* I'm sorry.

ACTRESS: You're heartless.

ACTOR: I was just trying to show you how much I love you.

ACTRESS: *(Moved.)* Really?

ACTOR: When you leave me, I'll miss you. I might even cry a little.

ACTRESS: Will you really?

ACTOR: Of course.

ACTRESS: How much?

ACTOR: It might flood this place.

ACTRESS: *(Fascinated.)* That much?

ACTOR: Well. I think so.

Pause.

ACTRESS: And will you bring flowers to my grave?

ACTOR: (*Puzzled.*) Your grave? (*Angrily.*) Don't you think you're asking too much?

ACTRESS: Sorry. (*Pause.*) Will you put flowers on my trunk?

ACTOR: That's better. But where am I going to get flowers for your trunk?

ACTRESS: I don't know. You could make them. Out of paper. You'll find plenty of it in our trunk.

ACTOR: Perhaps. (*Thinks.*) Yes! I'll put paper flowers on your trunk.

ACTRESS: Thanks!

ACTOR: Anything else?

ACTRESS: (*Suddenly commanding.*) When you open my trunk, you must be very careful. I wouldn't want the wind blowing some of my ashes around, like it did last time with Mum. Poor thing! She's always been careful about hanging around with inferior people, and now who knows what kind of riffraff she's mixed up with.

ACTOR: Anything else?

ACTRESS: Keep my trunk clean and tidy. I don't like the thought of my personal appearance being neglected.

ACTOR: (*Annoyed.*) Anything else?

ACTRESS: No. Nothing else. That's all.

ACTOR: Right! (*Cruel.*) Then may you rest in peace!

*He goes to the other side of the trunk.
Takes a penknife out of his trouser pocket.
He uses it to remove the dirt from under his fingernails.
Long pause.*

ACTRESS: Antonio...

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: Are you afraid of death?

ACTOR: Death... (*Stares at the penknife, almost in a morbid way.*) It's just a step. Life on the other hand...

ACTRESS: Life! (*Unsure.*) Does it really matter?

ACTOR: I don't know.

ACTRESS: Maybe to others...

ACTOR: Maybe.

ACTRESS: ... who find themselves outside this little labyrinth...

ACTOR: Intricate labyrinth!

ACTRESS: ...in which we find ourselves immersed...

ACTOR: Up to our asses!

ACTRESS: ...without finding any possible way out. (*Pause.*) Habit stultifies...

ACTOR: Holy shit!

ACTRESS: What happened?

ACTOR: Shit! Shit! Shit! I cut myself!

*The ACTOR turns his head away so as not to look at the injured finger.
Gestures of pain.*

ACTRESS: Let's have a look... Come closer! (*The ACTOR moves closer to the ACTRESS without getting down from the trunk*) It's nothing!

ACTOR: Is it bleeding?

ACTRESS: No way!

ACTOR: Let me see!

*Looks at his finger.
Cautious.*

ACTRESS: (*Disdainfully.*) You've fucking pricked your finger!

ACTOR: (*Resentfully.*) Of course, because it's not your finger... (*Tragic.*) What if I'd severed my finger? (*He shows his hand as if part of a finger were missing.*) Or the whole hand? (*He hides his hand inside the sleeve of his sweater.*) Creepy, isn't it?

ACTRESS: (*Stands up suddenly.*) Is it dawn already?

ACTOR: I don't know. The moon has moved a little. A lot. Not at all.

ACTRESS: The minutes are ticking away.

ACTOR: It's so stupid!

ACTRESS: What?

ACTOR: Your obsession with time-keeping.

ACTRESS: What do you expect? I am living now; in this very moment; that's why I need to count every second.

ACTOR: No! You're wrong! We lived before! We will always live before!

ACTRESS: (*To the audience, annoyed.*) Here we go again.

*The ACTOR leaves the trunk and walks towards the audience.
He stares; takes measured steps.*

ACTOR: (*Monotone.*) Every moment that passes is a moment lived. Every minute that passes is a minute lived. Every second that passes is a second lived. Every microsecond that passes is....

ACTRESS: Enough!

The ACTOR pauses for a moment and then continues.

ACTOR: At this very moment, my WORDS are inevitably remaining in the PAST. So we lived before. What I am saying, I'm saying yesterday. The day after tomorrow is the day before yesterday.

ACTRESS: (*To the audience, annoyed.*) Now comes the hole in the boat.

ACTOR: It's like sailing in a boat with a hole in it. The water comes in and we bail it out so we don't capsize. (*Reiterative gestures*) The water comes in and we bail out the water comes in and we bail out the water comes in and we bail out the water comes in and we... (Pause.) But without realising that we water we bail out is the same water that, at every moment, seeps into the boat. (Pause.) Exactly the same.

Long pause.

ACTRESS: Understanding each other is hard.

ACTOR: So hard.

ACTRESS: Maybe one day we'll get there.

ACTOR: Possibly.

ACTRESS: Without any effort on our part.

ACTOR: That's right.

ACTRESS: For now, we'll have to make do.

ACTOR: As always.

ACTRESS: Feeling that we understand each other without understanding each other.

ACTOR: Indeed.

ACTRESS: But will that be enough?

ACTOR: That's the great dilemma.

Long pause.

ACTRESS: Well, what now?

ACTOR: God knows.

ACTRESS: Can't you think of anything else?

ACTOR: I've used up all my resources.

ACTRESS: So have I. (*Pause.*) The end seems inevitable.

ACTOR: Indeed.

ACTRESS: Too bad! I like being here. I enjoy it.

ACTOR: So do I.

ACTRESS: (*Looking out at the audience.*) Watching people watching me...

ACTOR: How nice!

ACTRESS: Although there's something about this place that doesn't quite fit, that I hate...

*The ACTOR approaches the ACTRESS.
Looks around.*

ACTOR: But it's not that ugly.

ACTRESS: I don't know. It's something that disgusts me.

ACTOR: What is it?

ACTRESS: A presence.

ACTOR: Your ideas!

ACTRESS: Sometimes I feel it is so close to me... (*The ACTOR, who beside her, instinctively moves away.*) Then far away. (*The ACTOR quickly returns to the ACTRESS's side.*) Suddenly, however, I feel her glued to me again...

ACTOR: Shit!

ACTRESS: What's wrong?

ACTOR: I said shit. Let's talk about something else.

ACTRESS: But I was telling you about my...

ACTOR: (*Cutting in.*) Let's just talk about something else, shall we?

ACTRESS: Okay, I'm listening.

Silence.

ACTOR: The old man looked like you.

ACTRESS: What old man?

ACTOR: The one in the story.

ACTRESS: Which story?

ACTOR: The dog looked like me.

ACTRESS: Which dog?

ACTOR: The one in the story.

ACTRESS: Which story?

ACTOR: (*Angrily.*) Fuck! The story! A story! Any story!

ACTRESS: (*Inquisitive.*) Its name.

ACTOR: It doesn't have one.

ACTRESS: (*Amazed.*) It doesn't have one? What do you mean it doesn't have one?

ACTOR: Not at all. It doesn't have one.

ACTRESS: Come on! It must have a name!

ACTOR: Why?

ACTRESS: All things do. (*Gestures*) You have a name, I have a name, they have a name.

ACTOR: Well this story doesn't have one.

ACTRESS: Then how can you recognise it among so many *other* stories?

ACTOR: (*Syllogistic.*) Others have a name, this one doesn't, so it's perfectly distinguishable among the others. I'm going to continue.

ACTRESS: (*Covers her ears, stubbornly.*) I refuse to listen to a nameless story!

ACTOR: Shit! Shit! Shit!

ACTRESS: Don't get angry. It's a very human attitude. It's impossible to resist the temptation to give names to things that don't have names. This, how shall I say...? It subordinates these things to our vanity. Do you understand now?

ACTOR: Good.

ACTRESS: Let me help you: who are the characters in the story?

ACTOR: (*After reflection.*) The dog and the old man.

ACTRESS: Perfect! (*Thinks.*) Let's see... (*Thinks.*) Old man... Dog... (*Thinks.*) Dog... Old man... Come on, you think too, give me a hand.

ACTOR: Let's see... (*Thinks.*) Old man... Dog... (*Thinks.*) Dog... Old man... (*Thinking.*) No! Nothing! I can't think of anything.

ACTRESS: Keep thinking! Keep thinking!

ACTOR: I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking.

They think.

ACTRESS: (*Suddenly.*) That's it! I've finally got it.

ACTOR: Do you have a name?

ACTRESS: "The Story of the Dog and the Old Man".

ACTOR: Sounds good.

ACTRESS: Perfect. Go on, fetch the champagne.

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: The champagne... There's going to be a christening, isn't there? So there must be champagne.

ACTOR: Right!

*He runs to the trunk and opens it.
He takes out a bottle and two glasses.
Returns to the ACTRESS.*

ACTRESS: We should also get dressed up for the occasion.

ACTOR: Right! *(Leaves the bottles and glasses on the floor. Goes over to the trunk. Opens it. Takes out two frock coats and two top hats. Returns to the ACTRESS. Hands her one of the coats and a hat. They put them on. He picks up the bottle and glasses.)* Well?

ACTRESS: Crack it open!

*The ACTOR hands the glasses to the ACTRESS.
He opens the bottle. Pours out two glasses.
Places the bottle down on the floor.*

ACTOR: And now what?

ACTRESS: My speech. *(Raises her glass.)* By the infinite powers conferred on me by this or that investiture, and so on. Since it is well known that names are not just names, hence "The importance of being Ernest", and so on. And adding to all this the increasingly depressing situation in which today's world is sinking, and so on and so forth. I am happy to christen the story, a story, any story, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Thank you!

She downs the contents of her glass, then throws it away.

The ACTOR imitates her.

Pause.

ACTOR: A very short speech.

ACTRESS: To the point.

ACTOR: Unintelligible.

ACTRESS: Like any other speech.

ACTOR: Clearly.

Pause.

ACTRESS: Well?

ACTOR: What?

ACTRESS: The story!

ACTOR: Right. Right. *(Thinks.)* Let's see... *(Thinks.)* Of course... *(Thinks.)* Unless... *(Thinks.)* I don't think... *(Thinks.)* Wait a minute! Wait a minute! *(Thinks.)* However... *(Thinks.)* No! No! *(Thinks.)*... Mmmhhh... Shit!

ACTRESS: What's the matter?

ACTOR: I've forgotten it.

ACTRESS: You've forgotten the story?!

ACTOR: Yes. For fuck's sake!

ACTRESS: Bravo! That's great! Before we had a story without a name and now we have a name without a story. It's great! It's not everyday things like this happen to us

ACTOR: *(Remembering.)* A dog...

ACTRESS: If we go on like this, our days may become different...

ACTOR: *(Idem.)* An old man...

ACTRESS: And you could continue with our biography...

ACTOR: *(Idem.)* The dog and the old man...

ACTRESS: Then there would be a clear testimony of our passage through the world, and we would be more than just lousy bastards...

ACTOR: *(Overjoyed.)* That's it! That's it! Lousy bastards! Lousy stinking bastards!

ACTRESS: What?!

ACTOR: The old man spent his life shouting at the dog
(*Sententious.*) "Lousy, stinking bastard!"

ACTRESS: You've remembered the story?

ACTOR: (*Satisfied.*) From start to finish.

ACTRESS: (*Disappointed.*) You've ruined everything.

ACTOR: How?

ACTRESS: For the first time, I felt like something had changed in our lives, but you've remembered the story. Everything is the same. Nothing will change. What difference does it make?

*She takes off her frock coat and folds it up.
She goes over and tosses the coat and hat into the trunk.*

Returns to the ACTOR.

ACTOR: (*To the audience.*) The story, in short, is this: the old man and the dog live cooped up in a small room, alone. By living together, they come to look like each other. But they hate each other. Every day, the old man takes the dog for a walk. With a collar and a lead, and always in the same place. The dog, excited by the smells of the street, pulls the old man along until he stumbles, then the old man hits and insults him: "Lousy, stinking bastard!". The dog trembles in fear. He looks up at his master. The old man looks at him with hatred and pulls him the rest of the way. The dog soon forgets and starts pulling the old man again, who stumbles again and insults him: "Lousy, stinking bastard!". This goes on every day. When the dog decides to pee, the old man doesn't give him time and pulls him along; the dog dribbles a trail of droplets behind him. (*Pause.*) One day, on one of these walks, the old man gets distracted and the dog escapes. The old man is inconsolable. He insults and curses the animal, "Lousy, stinking bastard!" (*Pause.*) At night, whenever he hears another dog barking, he thinks it is his and looks around the huge, empty room and weeps uncontrollably.

Silence.

ACTRESS: That's a sad story.

ACTOR: Like any good story.

ACTRESS: I'm glad you remembered it.

ACTOR: Thank you!

Pause.

ACTRESS: In a moment the lights will go out.

ACTOR: That's right.

ACTRESS: Tomorrow everything will be better.

ACTOR: Isn't that one of our lies?

ACTRESS: Is it?

ACTOR: I think so.

*He goes to the trunk.
He takes off his frock coat and hat and throws
them into it.
He sits in the same place where the ACTRESS was at
the beginning of the act.
He looks up as if searching for something.*

ACTRESS: Habit stultifies. *(Pause.)* Everything ends to begin again. The roulette wheel continues on its inexorable course, and with it so do we, since we are all just another number on the roulette wheel. *(Pause.)* It's all a matter of pure chance.

ACTOR: A star! A shooting star!

*The ACTOR closes his eyes.
Fervently makes a wish.
The lights begin to dim.*

ACTRESS: Someone has used us an excuse to exorcise his fears, his manias. To put in our mouths what their mouths don't dare to say. And as every borrowed object must be returned to its owner, our fictional existence is coming to an end.

ACTOR: Come, Lucía! Let's make a wish!

ACTRESS: There's nothing to be done. The end is here. It's impossible to avoid it any longer. We have tried to prolong its coming, but now it's inevitable, we've come to the end of the text, and we have nothing else to work with.

*She picks up the bedsheet, which is exactly where she dropped it during the first act.
She unfolds it and spreads it over herself.*

ACTRESS: It's awful not knowing why we sometimes do the things we do, why we repeat the same words, the same gestures, the same useless thoughts. Hating with the same intensity with which we love, always, loving and hating, over and over again. Over and over again. Over and over. Over and over. (Pause.) "Love and hate are two horns on the same goat". Without a doubt. (Scolding.) Won't we ever get tired of retracing our steps? (Pause.) "Curious how the act of living can become mere acceptance."

*She turns and walks over to the trunk.
She lies down where the ACTOR was at the beginning of the act.
She pretends to go to sleep.
Blackout.*

END