

REPRESS AND EXCITE

A play by

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Characters:

**Good Actor** - a superb actor who does advertisements.

**Fish** - a classmate of Good Actor's at theater school who now teaches and does administrative work.

**Sveta Two** - Good Actor's wife. A pretty actress.

**Civic Enthusiast** - a female poet and bureaucrat in the city government.

**Visitor from the Sticks** - a naïve, thick-headed young man.

**Bald Youth** - a bald youth.

**Bald Youth's Mother** - a woman who bears a cross.

**Sveta One** - Fish's daughter, a gifted young woman ruined by bad teachers.

**Doctor.**

**Father** - Good Actor's father.

**Miscreant** - a student.

**Preacher.**

**Man.**

**Patient.**

**Visiting Fish.**

*An apartment so small it  
doesn't matter where the  
action takes place in it.*

**Good Actor**

I hate that shithead. I don't like him and I don't want to see him. And you want me to make speeches in his honor.

**Fish**

Please!

**Good Actor**

Why are you asking? Don't ask.

**Fish**

Slava - please!

**Good Actor**

Fish. Fish! Do I deserve some peace and quiet in this life?

**Fish**

You can't imagine what this means to me -

**Good Actor**

I thought I'd get some down time -

**Fish**

Just say a toast. Everybody knows you're short on time.

**Good Actor**

I have time. For friends. He's no friend.

*Enter a woman with wet hair  
from the bathroom. She dries  
it with a towel.*

**Sveta Two**

Do you have to shout?

**Good Actor**

How's the water?

**Sveta Two**

Yury, hair dryer.

**Fish**

Hair dryer? (*Thinks.*) Hair dryer. Just a second. (*Puts on shoes and leaves.*)

**Sveta Two**

What are you looking at? I need a hair dryer.

**Good Actor**

Maybe he doesn't have a hair dryer. You could at least ask him first.

**Sveta Two**

You don't have to be rude.

**Good Actor**

I'm not being rude.

**Sveta Two**

I don't get it. Why couldn't we stay in a hotel?

**Good Actor**

He's an old classmate. It would have hurt him if we stayed in a hotel.

**Sveta Two**

Nonsense.

**Good Actor**

To you, maybe. I've always considered him my best friend.

**Sveta Two**

Better than your wife?

**Good Actor**

My wife is me. I don't differentiate between my wife and me.

**Sveta Two**

Do I have the right to dry my hair properly?

**Good Actor**

*(Growing agitated)* Since when are you on a first-name basis with him? He's three times older than you. Two-and-a-half.

**Sveta Two**

So why doesn't he have a hair dryer, then?

**Good Actor**

Would you sit, please? Have you ever heard the fable about the cross-country bus?

**Sveta Two**

The what?

**Good Actor**

The fable about the cross-country bus.

**Sveta Two**

No. I haven't.

**Good Actor**

Besides airplanes and luxury trains there is also such a thing as the cross-country bus.

**Sveta Two**

That's the whole fable?

**Good Actor**

In cross-country busses people babble all night long. They step on each others' feet going down the aisle and in the morning their clothes are covered in furry little dust balls. Conductors are rude to them.

**Sveta Two**

As if you travel on cross-country busses.

**Good Actor**

I don't. But I haven't forgotten that they exist or that there are people who still ride in them. Like Yury, for example. I think about that, you know.

**Sveta Two**

Well I don't want to think about that.

**Good Actor**

That's what distinguishes you from me.

**Sveta Two**

Yes it does.

**Good Actor**

You ought to think now and then. Because not everyone can afford to fly first class.

**Sveta Two**

Imagine that! Two first-class flights and you're already composing fables about it.

**Good Actor**

Not everybody can afford the simple things you take for granted. There are hordes of decent, cultured people who live in a whole other material ethos -

*Yury returns. He's laughing for some reason. Chuckling, he takes a hair-dryer out of the closet. Gives it to Svetlana.*

**Fish**

*(Laughing)* I went up to the sixth floor. Then I realized you asked me for a hair dryer.

**Sveta Two**

Yes.

**Fish**

I didn't get that at first. I thought you meant a curler.

**Sveta Two**

No. A hair dryer.

**Fish**

At least I didn't ring my neighbor's doorbell. She's a good neighbor. I would have been stuck there for an hour. She's a great talker.

*Sveta turns on the hair dryer. Nobody can talk until she finishes drying her hair. The friends communicate in gestures. Finally, the hair is dried.*

A good neighbor. She's not much of a theater buff. But she saw somewhere you were coming to town -

**Good Actor**

*(Thinks he understands the hint, he's used to it)* I'll get the house to do comps for her.

**Fish**

You don't have to do that.

**Good Actor**

Not even for a good neighbor?

**Fish**

A very good neighbor.

**Good Actor**

Then, why not?

**Fish**

*(Shakes his head)* Oh... don't worry about it. Now.

**Good Actor**

What do you mean, now?

**Fish**

I bought tickets.

**Good Actor**

*(Finding something to get worked up over)* You did what? Are you trying to piss me off?

**Fish**

Why would I want to do that?

**Good Actor**

Then why would you buy tickets? You think I can't afford comps to my own show?

**Fish**

Forget it.

**Good Actor**

Forget it, hell. What is this crap?

**Sveta Two**

He gives comps to everybody.

**Fish**

I'm not everybody.

**Good Actor**

Listen, old man. I've known you a long time. You've known me a long time. You have your principles and I have my own - quirks. But I'm telling you right here and now - the next time you need tickets to one of my shows, don't buy them. Let's make life simple. It's about time, don't you think?

**Sveta Two**

Yury, do you mind if I call you Yury?

**Fish**

I prefer my nickname. Call me Fish.

**Good Actor**

*(Explodes)* Listen, broad, he has a proper name!

**Sveta Two**

You want me to get mad?

**Fish**

If you'll excuse me for a minute -

**Good Actor**

Something burning? Or are you exhibiting your good manners?

**Fish**

I'll be right back!

**Good Actor**

You're going nowhere. Think again if you think we're just waiting for you to go so we can argue.

**Fish**

I'm not thinking anything.

**Good Actor**

And we're not arguing. We talk like this.

**Sveta Two**

Where are we having dinner?

**Good Actor**

Why do we have to have dinner somewhere? Why can't we have dinner here?

**Sveta Two**

You want me to cook?

**Good Actor**

Is that so shocking?

**Sveta Two**

No, why? Nothing you say surprises me anymore.

**Good Actor**

I'm not asking the impossible. Six sandwiches. Two per person.

**Sveta Two**

I don't want sandwiches.

**Good Actor**

Make it four, then.

*His wife goes into the kitchen.*

*(Shouts after her.)* Is that asking too much?

**Sveta Two**

*(From the kitchen)* You think I can hear you?

**Good Actor**

Yes, I do.

**Sveta Two**

*(From the kitchen)* I can't hear you.

*The conversation breaks off badly, lacking a victorious final word. Good Actor's inner director is frustrated. Best to calm down. But how? He can't drink - he has a show tonight. And now Fish is hassling him with some request.*

**Fish**

So, are you going to do it?

**Good Actor**

No, Fish. I said no!

*Fish is offended but remains silent.*

Please don't be hurt.

**Fish**

I'm not hurt.

**Good Actor**

Why did you think I would do it?

**Fish**

Because I've never asked you for anything before.

**Good Actor**

Fish - you are you. You and me - you know it yourself. You're like a brother to me. And those aren't just words. **[Photo 0258]**

**Fish**

You know what I remember? Your grandfather. What a great man he was.

**Good Actor**

He was. Fish, quit blowing smoke in my face. What's he got to do with this?

**Fish**

He just came to mind.

**Good Actor**

No he didn't. You're trying to manipulate me. Sveta! Did you hear what he's hinting at? (*There is no answer, naturally.*) He's not just a manipulator. He's a sadist. My grandfather was a vegetable from the age of 50. We felt sorry for the guy but mom and grandma used him as a doormat. For good reason, too. He was a horrible person. That's why Fish made a point of bringing up grandpa - to appeal to my better instincts.

**Fish**

It's the first and the last time I'll ever ask you for anything.

**Good Actor**

But it's not a favor for you, don't you realize that? I refuse to have anything to do with your pillar of society.

**Fish**

Oh get off your high horse. It's not his fault he chose to stay in the provinces.

**Good Actor**

(*Winces as if he has a toothache*) What's that supposed to mean?

**Fish**

That he never became what you did.

**Good Actor**

(*Winces even harder*) What did I become?

**Fish**

He made the conscious choice to be an honest public servant -

**Good Actor**

Fish, Fish, F-i-s-h! What the hell are you saying, Fish? What public service? He's a horseshit actor.

**Fish**

He's a fine actor.

**Good Actor**

Don't malign me, Fish.

**Fish**

Don't be insulting.

**Good Actor**

Don't insult me. I know something about this profession. He is a horseshit actor.

**Fish**

The whole theater rests on his shoulders.

**Good Actor**

I don't give a damn about his shoulders.

**Fish**

Did you see his Treplev?

**Good Actor**

He played Treplev? What?! He's ten years older than me.

**Fish**

Younger.

**Good Actor**

What's the difference?

**Fish**

Krasilnikov did the stage adaptation.

**Good Actor**

Wait a minute. Krasilnikov? Stage adaptation of what?

**Fish**

What do you -

**Good Actor**

What stage adaptation? *The Seagull*? Krasilnikov adapted *The Seagull* for the stage?

**Fish**

Do you know Krasilnikov?

**Good Actor**

No, I don't. And I don't want to.

**Fish**

I thought you knew him. He had two plays go up in Stuttgart last season.

**Good Actor**

Fish, heart of mine - maybe I'm wrong for not knowing Krasilnikov who had two entire new shows go up in Stuttgart last season. And maybe I'm an ignoramus. But would you please explain to me why anybody would adapt plays for the stage? Good plays?

**Fish**

He doesn't only do plays. He's working on the Old Testament right now.

**Good Actor**

Working on it. Uh-huh.

**Fish**

Rewriting it.

**Good Actor**

Oh, that's better.

**Fish**

Maybe you think it's funny. But he's doing real work for real people in a real theater.

**Good Actor**

Fish, come down out of the clouds. Because you and I are going to have a fight. I don't want to talk to you about theater. And I damn well don't want to talk to you about any real theater for real people.

**Fish**

Well, I realize I probably can't tell you anything you don't already know.

**Good Actor**

Fish. Shut up. Please. I don't have another friend like you. But if I talk to you about theater we're going to break something. And it'll never get fixed. You'll say something stupid. And I'm at an age where I just can't listen to stupidities anymore. Only don't let that offend you.

**Fish**

I'm not offended. So what are we going to talk about?

**Good Actor**

What else? Let's talk about our classmates. I haven't heard anything about anyone for a hundred years.

**Fish**

Did you hear Sultry died?

**Good Actor**

Yeah, I did.

**Fish**

See? There's nothing new I can tell you.

**Good Actor**

All right but let's talk about him anyway. There's thousands of things we can talk about, hundreds of thousands. I just want to shoot the bull with somebody, chew the fat for no reason like anybody else. Who else can I do that with if not you?

**Fish**

Just let me ask this one more time - are you coming?

**Good Actor**

No. (*As if his body goes into uncontrolled convulsions.*) I've told you a hundred times.

**Fish**

He'll think you despise him.

**Good Actor**

But I do despise him. He epitomizes everything that I hate about this profession.

**Fish**

He has a very high opinion of you.

**Good Actor**

He can't possibly have a high opinion of me. He hates me as much as I hate him.

**Fish**

He often reminisces about how you started out together. Did he offend you in some way?

**Good Actor**

He's a pathetic no-count. And that offends me.

**Fish**

You don't take offense at that kind of thing.

**Good Actor**

Well I do.

**Fish**

All right. I understand. I'll tell him you're not coming. Although I don't quite get you. Is it so difficult to offer a helping hand to a colleague? A classmate? A former friend?

**Good Actor**

We were never friends.

**Fish**

He's been very sick. I don't understand.

**Good Actor**

I'll tell you what I don't get - why are you getting mixed up in this?

**Fish**

Because he's the best actor in this town. He elevates the prestige of the profession. He doesn't do TV hackwork.

**Good Actor**

What are you hinting at?

**Fish**

He's done an awful lot for this town. He works with young people. He's a committed campaigner for good causes.

**Good Actor**

Oh, that's lovely.

**Fish**

We run a studio together. That is, he runs it and I help out however I can. I teach a bit of theory and handle administrative duties.

**Good Actor**

He runs a studio?

**Fish**

Yeah.

**Good Actor**

Only don't lie to me here: Did you enroll your daughter with him?

**Fish**

I think he can help Sveta discover a lot in the profession.

*The Good Actor struggles to keep himself under control.*

**Good Actor**

Fish, you've gone thick in the head. I say that as a friend. You're losing it. **[Photo 0394]**

**Fish**

I know.

**Good Actor**

Really bad.

**Fish**

Sveta is thrilled.

**Good Actor**

How could you do that? Don't you realize this monster fucks children?

**Fish**

Sveta is not a child anymore. And it's not true anyway. (*Almost insulted.*) You're a fine one, aping all the gossip.

**Good Actor**

What gossip? Why do you think Lobanov kicked him out of the theater?

**Fish**

Lobanov kicked him out of the theater because two bears in a lair is one too many.

**Good Actor**

That's what he wants everybody to think. Bear, my ass. He's a cowardly sexual weasel.

**Fish**

In this town he's never done anything of the sort. As for Sveta, I'm not so crazy about that, either. But she didn't ask me.

**Good Actor**

You should have sent her to study in Moscow.

**Fish**

She applied. She didn't get in.

**Good Actor**

Where did she apply?

**Fish**

Everywhere.

**Good Actor**

You couldn't have called me?

**Fish**

She wanted to do it on her own.

**Good Actor**

What do you use your head for?

**Fish**

Slava, I don't do that kind of thing.

**Good Actor**

Don't give me that crap. Right now you just sunk your talons into me like a hawk to get me to go to some prick's anniversary celebration. But you couldn't even make a telephone call to help your daughter?

**Fish**

I can't ask for anything for myself.

**Good Actor**

What the hell do you have to do with it? I hate to tell you this, but you're long since beside the point. I'm in your house now, Fish, but I've got to say this. And then I'll go to a hotel. My wife'll only be too happy. How could you do this, you son-of-a-bitch? Nobody knows any better than you that your daughter, your own flesh and blood, is a truly gifted person. It would have been an honor for me to give her a recommendation.

**Fish**

I thought she'd get in on her own.

**Good Actor**

Somebody's head is going to roll over this. I'll get to the bottom of it. How could you not tell me?

*Enter the Good Actor's wife.*

**Sveta Two**

What kind of bread do you want your sandwiches on?

**Good Actor**

You haven't made sandwiches yet?

**Sveta Two**

I'm not jet-powered, you know.

**Good Actor**

Then forget it.

*The telephone rings.*

I told you not to turn on my phone.

**Sveta Two**

I had to. My battery ran out.

*The Good Actor really doesn't want to answer his phone.*

**Good Actor**

I told you plain and clear - I don't want to hear anybody for two days. Don't I have the right to a bit of self-seclusion? (*Walks around the phone. Picks it up.*) No. I can't. I'm in rehearsal. (*Hangs up the phone.*) I hate lying, Sveta. Will you never get that through your head?

**Fish**

So what do I tell him?

**Good Actor**

Do you have to answer to him?

**Fish**

Why "answer to him"? He just hoped you'd come.

**Good Actor**

I never gave him any grounds for hope.

**Fish**

He's a humble man. He's never celebrated any anniversary publicly. This is the city's doing. He's done a lot for the prestige of the town. The Mayor will be there and a folk dance group, too. It'll be an insult if you don't come. Your name's already printed in the program.

**Good Actor**

They put my name in the program? Without my consent?

**Fish**

I only heard about it yesterday.

**Good Actor**

Listen here, Fish. Here is my final word, my iron-clad, titanium-bound word: I am not attending anybody's anniversary celebration. I don't care who's offended. Fuck 'em.

*The phone rings. It's Fish's land line.*

**Fish**

That's mine. (*Into the receiver.*) This is Fishman. (*Following an awkward pause.*) When? Thank you, yes. I'll be right there. (*Hangs up.*) The ceremony's been cancelled. He's been rushed to the hospital. It might be a stroke.

**Good Actor**

Thank God.

**The Local Hospital.**

*A hospital corridor. Patients and their relatives sit on chairs shooting the breeze. Good Actor sits on the chair at a far end. He tries to think his own thoughts. A woman sits down next to him.*

**Civic Enthusiast**

I am a very interesting person. I'm creating my own site now. I publish all the time and on top of that I have two grandchildren. I'm something of a philosopher.

*Good Actor in no way responds but a young man in winter boots is moved to pick up the conversation.*

**Visitor from the Sticks**

You really ought to be working with young people.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Why do you say that?

**Visitor from the Sticks**

You're very energetic.

**Civic Enthusiast**

You're just saying that, but I -

**Visitor from the Sticks**

Why do you think that?

**Civic Enthusiast**

I mean, you were just making a compliment. But you can't imagine how right you are. At the department I've been entrusted to handle the social sphere. Young people come in all the time. Mostly it's retired people, of course. But young people come in, too. Just last month a mother came in. Looking to get financial support. Three kids and nothing to eat. I tell her, "It's spring. What have you planted? Did you plant potatoes? What are you doing now so that your kiddies won't starve in the winter?" She was really irate. "What am I supposed to maim myself or something?" she says. What's maiming got to do with it? I cultivate potatoes myself. I travel 30 miles to the dacha every weekend to tend my garden. I've got cabbage and all kinds of other things. I'm not too proud for that. So she thinks she's better than me? Why do I have to listen to her lectures? I tell her she ought to raise some squash and quit coming to me using her kids to get handouts. Squash is good fiber. It magically tunes your organism and readily rids your system of all that imported crap we eat these days -

**Visitor from the Sticks**

For digestion?

**Civic Enthusiast**

Not only digestion. The intestines, too. Nobody dances anymore. People used to dance - dancing used to do the job, you know? Nobody had constipation with all that going on. (*Addresses Good Actor.*) I forgot to ask you, sir, am I after you in line? Sir?

**Good Actor**

No. I'm just sitting here.

**Civic Enthusiast**

You don't have an appointment?

**Good Actor**

No, I don't have an appointment.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Are you waiting for someone?

**Good Actor**

Yes.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Because I forgot to ask who's last in line. Are you seeing Doctor Fazlullah?

**Good Actor**

No.

**Civic Enthusiast**

I've been under the care of Doctor Fazlullah for five months. She's a very nice Pakistani lady. Did you know my creative writing activities made it possible for me to spend some time at the Baikonur space center? (*Receives no response.*) It happened just like with you. I met this man waiting in line. Turned out he was a major. When he learned about my creative abilities in writing he asked me to give some thought to the topic of space and the profession of the cosmonaut. I told him honestly that I didn't know a thing about it. Because I'm not a cosmonaut. I have my own baggage, you see. And a cosmonaut has his own. And he says, "That's even more interesting, you might be able to strike a new chord." He gave me his number.

**Visitor from the Sticks**

Did he call you?

**Civic Enthusiast**

No, I didn't give him mine. He gave me his.

**Visitor from the Sticks**

Oh, yeah. I see what you mean.

**Civic Enthusiast**

*(Rather disappointed in her simpleminded interlocutor)*  
 You misunderstood me. *(To Good Actor.)* So I did it. I went home and got out all the literature to take a look in the encyclopedia -

**Good Actor**

What are you here for?

**Civic Enthusiast**

I'm seeing Doctor Fazlullah.

**Good Actor**

Is Doctor Fazlullah going to cut out your tongue?

**Civic Enthusiast**

No, she's in the cancer ward.

**Good Actor**

I'm sorry.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Why should you apologize? You're not the doctor. You can't see inside me to know what's going on.

**Visitor from the Sticks**

What genre do you prefer working in?

**Civic Enthusiast**

Poetry mostly. Even lyrical poetry sometimes.

**Visitor from the Sticks**

How do you do that? Do you think it up on your own or do you read about it somewhere? I just don't get that.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Why do you think I'm telling you? It always works best for me when it's something along the line of spontaneous impressions.

**Visitor from the Sticks**

But I interrupted you. You were telling about the Baikonur space center. I'm fascinated by that - how something like that gets thought up all on its own. I just don't understand that.

### **Civic Enthusiast**

Well take my space adventure for example. This man shocked me so with his suggestion that I started studying everything I could in the encyclopedia. And then this marvelous poem was born as a result:

Like a blooming yellow tulip  
A contrail spread across the sky.  
The captain rose into the heavens,  
A Russian hero, a simple hometown boy.

Now there's a glorious dream!  
To see the earth from up on high -  
While my heart keeps beating faster  
And the whole universe races by!

You see what pretty verses? I wrote a whole book in a month and it was published with the help of our department office. I have copies available for purchase if you wish. (*Pulls several copies of a poetry collection out of her purse.*)

### **Visitor from the Sticks**

(*Looks over the cover*) You're younger in this photo.

### **Civic Enthusiast**

Thank you, I'm sure, for your doubtful compliment. But I didn't get a wink of sleep last night. I sat up until the wee hours discussing painting with my relatives.

### **Visitor from the Sticks**

You take offense, but I mean it. You really do look younger in this photo.

*A bald youth emerges from  
Doctor Fazlullah's office.*

### **Bald Youth's Mother**

Next.

*Visitor from the Sticks goes  
into the office. Civic  
Enthusiast becomes bored. She*

*doesn't enjoy being bored for long.*

**Civic Enthusiast**

I've seen you somewhere.

*Good Actor does not respond.*

You - give me a minute, I'll remember -

*Enter Fish and a doctor.*

**Fish**

*(Pointing at Good Actor)* So here's our -

*Doctor looks Good Actor over with interest. Shakes his hand silently.*

**Good Actor**

*(Speaking too soon.)* Pleased to meet you.

*Doctor silently disappears again. Fish shuffles after Doctor, making signs at Good Actor, as if to say, "Hang on just a moment."*

**Civic Enthusiast**

Do you attend the dances at the textile culture club?

**Good Actor**

I'm just visiting. Please don't touch me.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Ah, a tourist. Have you been to our theater? You must see *Rabid Romance*. Incredible actors. All of us at one of the office meetings decided to get involved. We volunteered to make our department the organizational sponsor for the show. PR, you know. You'll love it. You've got to go.

**Good Actor**

Please, if I may ask you - don't talk to me.

*Fish hurries in.*

*(Leaping up to meet him.)* Is that it?

**Fish**

That really helped. The doctor couldn't believe it was really you in person. I had to prove it to him. He's a big fan.

**Good Actor**

What's he ever seen? Has he ever seen me on stage?

**Fish**

I doubt he's ever seen you on stage -

**Good Actor**

Then how can he be a fan? Maybe he saw me in that sitcom. *(Realizes how stupid this must sound.)* All right, forget it. How's the hero in there?

**Fish**

The right side is paralyzed for the time being. Slurred speech. But his vital signs are good. He's in a good room now and he'll have good care. It's all thanks to you. I told them you are his best friend.

**Good Actor**

You shouldn't have said that. It's not true.

**Fish**

But it worked. You have to do what works.

**Good Actor**

Is my mission accomplished?

**Fish**

Yes! Brilliantly.

**Good Actor**

All right, then. Give him my best wishes. Tell him to get well. I'll go now. Give me the key.

**Fish**

*(Gives him the key)* The doctor wants to talk to you.

**Good Actor**

Why?

**Fish**

I don't know.

**Good Actor**

You're lying, Fish. You're lying.

**Civic Enthusiast**

*(Considers it her duty to enter the conversation)* Did you know that the best actor in the country lives in our city? I hear he's sick right now.

**Good Actor**

Fish. I'll never forgive you.

**Conversation With a Doctor.**

*Good Actor enters the office of Doctor. Sits in the chair offered him.*

**Doctor**

Do you have an emotional life?

**Good Actor**

Me?

**Doctor**

If that's how you want it. Or we can talk about your friend.

**Good Actor**

What friend -

*Silence.*

I'm not well at all.

**Doctor**

Have you tried doing anything about it? Analyzed it?

**Good Actor**

Yes... all the time... using this... it's an ongoing process  
- (*Points to his head.*)

**Doctor**

You have serious complexes.

**Good Actor**

I do?

**Doctor**

What measures have you taken?

**Good Actor**

I drink. Got married.

**Doctor**

Wife young?

**Good Actor**

Like anyone else's.

**Doctor**

That's good.

**Good Actor**

Listen, lay offa me. What are you crawling around my  
head for?

**Doctor**

Good-bye.

**Good Actor**

Now don't start that. Just don't start that.

**Doctor**

Say you're sorry.

**Good Actor**

I'm sorry.

**Doctor**

(*Lights a cigarette.*) Want one?

**Good Actor**

Yeah.

*Doctor and Good Actor smoke.  
Someone enters. It's a man.*

Get outta here, bitch! Can't you knock?

**Man**

I'm not a woman.

**Good Actor**

My apologies.

**Man**

Don't think about it.

*Man goes out the door.*

**Doctor**

Tell me everything. The whole truth.

**Good Actor**

I can't.

**Doctor**

Why not?

**Good Actor**

*(Shudders as if an unseen force has whisked him from a June cocktail party to glacier in the North Sea)* Do you realize what's happened to the theater?

**Doctor**

*That's* what's bothering you?

**Good Actor**

*(Frightened)* What did I say?

**Doctor**

Do you realize what's happened to the theater?

**Good Actor**

*(Laughs unnaturally)* See what it's come to? I want to say one thing but I mouth some nonsense instead.

**Doctor**

Is the theater so important to you?

**Good Actor**

Well I can't say it's, like... you know what I mean... See, my grandfather comes to mind. You don't mind my being informal, do you? -

**Doctor**

Not at all.

**Good Actor**

And I start thinking - what is this all for?

**Doctor**

What's your grandfather have to do with it?

**Good Actor**

Because my grandfather knew.

**Doctor**

Silent again. Can't you do without me prompting you? It's not like I'm torturing you. I don't want to torture you. Feel free to continue.

**Good Actor**

I'm not used to talking about myself.

**Doctor**

I thought you were talking about your grandfather.

**Good Actor**

My grandfather. Yes. My grandfather. He worked in a factory. Basically he ran it. Although he wasn't officially the manager. But he was for all intents and purposes. Later, when he was retired... he used to go out on the balcony during those May Day parades. It so happened that the columns of marchers always passed under our window; after they'd gone through the finish on the square. Everybody was still shouting and the bands were still playing but it was only half-hearted revelry by now. Then the marchers from grandpa's factory would come by - it wasn't a small factory - and my grandfather does this. (*Makes a broad gesture of*

*invitation.*) And the whole group would turn into our yard and come up to our apartment. And all the tables were already set. All the women in our family had spent two days cooking.

**Doctor**

The whole group would come up?

**Good Actor**

Well, maybe somebody didn't. But the point is he always invited everybody.

**Doctor**

Why are you telling me this?

**Good Actor**

Because for all that my grandfather was a very bad man.

**Doctor**

Now that's really inconsiderate. Maybe people tell stories like that in the big city. But have a heart. I'm no theater buff. I don't get your metaphors and I have no desire to fill in the blank spots for you. Would you cut the double-speak and tell me what the hell you're talking about?

**Good Actor**

I don't know. But I wanted to tell that story.

**Doctor**

Fine. Take some herbs. (*Writes out a prescription.*) You should have an MRI done.

**Good Actor**

Thank you. I'll pass on the MRI, of course. But I will try your herbs.

**Doctor**

Yes, do that. Maybe that will separate the shit from your brains.

**Good Actor**

Meaning?

**Doctor**

Slava, you ignoramus. Don't you recognize me?

*After a brief moment of confusion, Good Actor rushes to Doctor. The men embrace like old friends.*

**After the Show.**

*Fish and Sveta Two discuss the show they have just attended. They drink cognac. Sveta makes open-faced sandwiches, scraping the pâté out of the can with a narrow knife. In the bathroom Good Actor sings a song.*

**Fish**

A very good show. Did you hear how that one woman was laughing?

**Sveta Two**

Like friends and relatives do at dress rehearsals. To buck up the actors.

**Fish**

You're almost right. That was my neighbor.

**Sveta Two**

Just don't tell him that.

**Fish**

Spectators here are hard nuts to crack. Everybody complains about it. Whenever anyone comes here on tour they always note what difficult spectators we have.

**Sveta Two**

Isn't that ironical. It's quite a theatrical town.

**Fish**

It is, but, how do I say this - very demanding. Nobody ever gets standing ovations here.

**Sveta Two**

And there were some empty seats, too.

**Fish**

That's what I say. It's a tough crowd. TV stand-up comics don't even draw full houses here.

**Sveta Two**

Is that so? (*Pushes a freshly made pâté sandwich into Fish's face.*)

**Good Actor**

(*Enters from the bathroom in a terry-cloth robe. Finishes singing his song*) Did you hear that woman laughing tonight?

**Sveta Two**

(*Sullenly*) We did.

**Good Actor**

Good crowd. Fish, go wash your face.

*Fish goes to wash his face.*

**Sveta Two**

That was his neighbor laughing.

**Good Actor**

I figured it was someone like that. It was totally unnatural. You know who I met in the hospital? That son-of-a-bitch Fish didn't tell me Vasya works there. Wait a minute - you don't know Vasya.

**Sveta Two**

How could I know Vasya? I'm your *new* wife. You've confused me with your *old one*. I can't possibly know all your drinking buddies.

**Good Actor**

You don't have to be sarcastic. He wasn't a drinking buddy. He was also a schoolmate -

**Sveta Two**

Still miss her, do you? I can't do anything right, can I? You constantly compare me to her. Go on back to your old saw horse. I'm sick of this.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, don't do that. Sweetheart. Take it easy. (*Hugs his wife.*)

**Sveta Two**

And your Fish is an ass.

**Fish**

(*From the bathroom*) I'd ask you not to insult me in my own home.

**Sveta Two**

Fuck you and your home if you can't understand the simplest things!

**Fish**

(*Angry, rushes out of the bathroom*) What don't I understand?

**Sveta Two**

You don't understand who's right in front of your nose!

**Fish**

Who's in front of my nose?

**Sveta Two**

You mean you still have to ask?

**Fish**

Yes. I do. The man we admitted to the hospital today - now I know who that is. He's a paragon of virtue in our city and that will be true for all history. He's an era unto himself.

**Sveta Two**

And Slava is not an era?

**Fish**

Your Slava insulted me today like no one ever dreamed of insulting me. I crawled on my hands and knees to get

him to deign to attend the ceremony. To condescend to appear before the rabble. I'll never let him forget that. Oh, he's too big a star now for the rest of us -

**Sveta Two**

No, I want to hear this. You mean Slava isn't an era?

**Fish**

For me personally? He's an era. I hold his work in high regard, especially his early roles. But go out there on the street and ask who he is. If you're lucky they'll say, "Oh, it's that guy who copies the inspector in the detective show."

**Good Actor**

Ladies and gentlemen. Calm down.

**Sveta Two**

How can you stay here, Slava?

**Fish**

Are the cats so fat here you can't even talk to them anymore?

**Sveta Two**

Slava, he hates you.

**Good Actor**

Calm down, Sveta.

**Sveta Two**

He's foaming at the mouth!

**Good Actor**

Sveta!

**Sveta Two**

What?! Calm down?

**Good Actor**

Yes.

**Sveta Two**

No problem.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, please. You know perfectly well I've lost contact with everyone from the past.

**Sveta Two**

Lost contact? I can't keep all your classmates straight. Or your schoolmates. We're surrounded by armies of your old friends and companions-at-arms. Veterans of careers doing walk-ons -

**Good Actor**

Sveta. Now that's just not fair. Since you and I got married I have been in contact virtually with no one.  
**[Photo 0310]**

**Sveta Two**

Is that so? Then who is that you go boozing with on Tuesdays?

**Good Actor**

Now, leave Tuesdays alone. But who came between me and Sergei?

**Sveta Two**

I thought it was you who complained he hadn't paid back a loan. Wasn't that you?

**Good Actor**

Okay, it was. But I did that to make you happy.

**Sveta Two**

Me?

**Good Actor**

Yes. Because you always feel better when I badmouth my friends.

**Sveta Two**

That's your friends for you.

**Good Actor**

No. That's you. In order to satisfy you I have to badmouth my friends. I can feel it coming off you.

**Sveta Two**

Gimme a break. What kind of person are you who slanders his friends at the drop of a hat?

**Good Actor**

You have no right to accuse me of that. I do it for you. You - you're my wife. I love you, if it comes to that.

**Sveta Two**

Fine. So tell me, what do you think of Fish? Only don't say it to please me. Tell it straight.

**Good Actor**

All right. Fish is a pathetic dickhead but he's sincere and he's loyal. You're not going to come between Fish and me because - because you're just not. We've been through too much together. We dreamed together and we matured together. I think he underestimates me. But he's to be excused. He's gone to seed here. **[Photo 0611]**

**Sveta Two**

He says some wheezer geezer is a better actor than you -

**Fish**

What do you know? Did you see him play Ivanov?

**Sveta Two**

No.

**Good Actor**

Fish, are you trying to finish me off? Anybody who plays Ivanov has to be somebody, somebody who can go to the well. Who has a well to go to. Who has eyes that don't know how to fake it. Your friend there -

**Fish**

You have eyes like that?

**Good Actor**

I do.

**Fish**

Why didn't I see that on stage tonight?

**Good Actor**

Because I wasn't playing Ivanov!

**Fish**

Did you know he is the *only* actor in this city who gets ovations?

**Good Actor**

What the hell's that for criteria? There's nothing more pathetic than an actor who turns every phrase into a punchline. That's disgusting. That's not an actor, it's a beggar. I hate beggars like that. You do to.

**Fish**

Go on, go on. Spill it all out. Let's hear everything now.

**Sveta Two**

Tell him!

**Good Actor**

Don't push me... Sveta! Sveta! I want to grow old on my own. I can't do this anymore. I need some peace and quiet.

**Sveta Two**

Punkins. I'm not letting you grow old am I?

**Good Actor**

No.

**Sveta Two**

Punkins, don't grow old.

**Good Actor**

It's high time I do. I can't do this anymore. My heart's gonna pop... my liver... You're driving me crazy. I... I need to spend a month in the country.

**Sveta Two**

Kick me out if you want. But you're not going to the country. You get fat out there.

**Good Actor**

I love you, you silly.

**Sveta Two**

Punkins.

**Fish**

That's all, folks. Night-night.

**Sveta Two**

Nighty-night.

**Good Actor**

Where are you going?

**Fish**

To see my neighbor.

**Good Actor**

You told me you didn't have anyone.

**Fish**

Well, I do now. The sheets are in the closet. (*Takes a bottle of cognac and goes to the door.*)

**Good Actor**

Fish! Good luck.

*Fish nods and goes out.*

### **At the Doctor's Again.**

*Doctor finishes receiving a patient. Writes a prescription.*

**Doctor**

I'll put you on herbs. And you should have an MRI. Get the paper work for that on the second floor.

**Patient**

Okay.

**Doctor**

*(Writes out the bill)* Show this to the cashier for payment.

**Patient**

Okay.

**Doctor**

I'll see you again on the *(looks at his calendar)* - on the 17th.

**Patient**

Okay.

**Doctor**

All right?

**Patient**

Okay. Thank you. *(Leaves.)*

*Enter Good Actor.*

You know, I've been thinking about that story about your grandfather.

**Good Actor**

*(Takes out a bottle of whiskey)* Forget it. That was a bunch of hokum.

**Doctor**

No, I think that's a potentially meaningful tale.

**Good Actor**

Vasya, goddam it. I'm not your patient. You're not my doctor.

**Doctor**

What's that got to do with it?

**Good Actor**

So how's life been? Tell me about it. It's great to see you, Vasya. Well, come on. Start talking.

**Doctor**

Did you know Sultry died?

**Good Actor**

Yeah, I heard. Tell me about yourself.

**Doctor**

My life... I do the best I can. I mostly consult these days.

**Good Actor**

And that's it, huh?

**Doctor**

It's something. Better than nothing. It's all such a hassle... But what am I bitching to you for?

**Good Actor**

Who else are you going to bitch to?

**Doctor**

Forget it.

**Good Actor**

There's no forgetting it, Vasya. Time marches on.

**Doctor**

Marches right on by.

**Good Actor**

Doesn't leave a trace.

**Doctor**

But what are you bellyaching about? I saw you on TV.

**Good Actor**

You're kidding? When?

**Doctor**

I dunno. Long time ago. Saw you last year too.

**Good Actor**

See, Vasya? See how I've been immortalized? Eat your heart out.

**Doctor**

I am.

**Good Actor**

You know what's worse? I have no idea whether I'm still an actor or if it's all over for me. Where's the line that lets you know?

**Doctor**

Only you can say.

**Good Actor**

See, you just said something very stupid. An actor can never determine that. There are no criteria, no little red light comes on. I mean, there's a hundred, but that's not the point. Those little lights and bells say it as plainly as all those people who are saying it too: "You're shit, big boss man." But it's always like that. It's like that even when an actor is still an actor. Things are flashing and blinking and sirens are going off, telling you it's time to hang it up and retire to the country and plant squash. But you're still an actor! Then you get used to it. And when that happens you haven't the foggiest notion anymore what's going on - is that flashing light telling you the truth or do you simply still have a vague semblance of conscience? You don't know anything anymore.

**Doctor**

Doesn't craft come with experience?

**Good Actor**

Sure it does. Turn on the tube - look at all that craft. Everybody's got craft. Makes me puke, Vasya. Puke my guts.

**Doctor**

Have you seen *Rabid Romance* at the theater here yet? I think that's first rate stuff.

**Good Actor**

That's not what I'm talking about.

**Doctor**

Then I don't get you.

**Good Actor**

You're a good doctor. And you're a good doctor forever.

**Doctor**

And you're a fool if you believe that.

**Good Actor**

But you can't deny it - even if you've gone rotten to the core you're still not going to do any harm. Because you're a doctor. You took the Hippocratic Oath. I didn't take anybody's oath. Who am I going to swear to? A dead seagull? The Slavyansky Bazaar? Give me a break. What that means is that a bad actor can do more harm than a bad doctor. Admit it.

**Doctor**

I don't admit that.

**Good Actor**

But it's true.

**Doctor**

Whatever pleases you. (*Thinks.*) But really, why not swear an oath to Chekhov?

**Good Actor**

People do that, by the way. That's the whole point. They do. They swear and they swear and they swear and they swear. And things just keep getting worse and worse. (*As if recalling a nightmare.*) Listen, how do you cure someone like me? How do you snap people out of delirium?

**Doctor**

What do we do? Repress and excite. Everything else - all those pills? - that's just a money-making scheme.

**Good Actor**

You mean I'm incurable?

**Doctor**

I don't think so.

**Good Actor**

Then let's have a drink.

**Doctor**

You can't drink. You're an actor.

**Good Actor**

Aren't you a comedian.

**Doctor**

That's why we're a nation of alcoholics - because people look to you for guidance. And all actors are alcoholics. Your faces show it in an instant - a professional sees it instantly. Young people don't see that, though. They just get the subliminal message that women all want men like that. And then the whole destructive cycle kicks into motion. All things being equal, actors shouldn't drink.

**Good Actor**

A lot of them don't.

**Doctor**

Then they're shit and not actors. Or maybe they've already drunk so much they can't anymore. Or maybe they're such alcoholics at heart that they never let themselves start. You can't fool me. I can tell by looking at the lower lip.

**Good Actor**

How's that? (*Concerned, looks in the mirror.*)

**Doctor**

I'm not saying. You want to come to me for treatment - then we'll talk.

**Good Actor**

That's what I'm here for.

**Doctor**

You came here to drink.

**Good Actor**

(*Looks at his lip again*) Nothing wrong with my lip.  
(*Pours drinks.*)

*They drink.*

**Doctor**

You still shouldn't drink.

**Good Actor**

I can't not drink. I love people. I love my wife.  
**[Photo 0589]**

**Doctor**

Meaning?

**Good Actor**

It lowers the levels of my demands. I have excessive demands for people, for wives. They're unbearable, inhuman. The demands. If I didn't drink, nobody could stand me. My attitude towards people -

**Doctor**

Is merciless?

**Good Actor**

Is merciful. I'm telling you. I love people, I pity them. But I don't respect them. I pity them. But I see right through them with a sober eye. It takes all the strength I've got to squint hard enough to blur the focus on this foul picture of humanity -

**Doctor**

No, you don't love people -

**Good Actor**

What an idiot you are.

**Doctor**

Say what?

**Good Actor**

I'm sorry, Vasya. That just popped out. Don't take it to heart. I'm the one. I'm an idiot. I'm sorry.

**Doctor**

Forget it.

**Good Actor**

You sure?

**Doctor**

Forget it.

**Good Actor**

The thing is that I love people. And you say... you hit below the belt. I am charmed by the notion of mankind! I'm a fanatic about that, believe me.

**Doctor**

Want some meat balls?

**Good Actor**

Yeah. I could kiss 'em. You know?

**Doctor**

Who?

**Good Actor**

People.

**Doctor**

You're getting sentimental in your old age.

**Good Actor**

You shouldn't have said that. Now why would you want to twist around what I'm saying? You should be giving me "Full speed ahead!" Instead you're giving me "Full speed reverse!" Why would you do that?

**Doctor**

I don't want to think thoughts like that. You've got it all twisted around. Very fuzzy and oh so pretentious. If you say something badly, I'll tell you you've said it badly. But you know that I love you.

**Good Actor**

And I love you, too. But I don't respect you.

**Doctor**

Now we're down to the nitty-gritty.

**Good Actor**

I respect you as a friend. As a doctor. As a good man. I respect you endlessly. But in a human sense - who are you?

**Doctor**

If you loved me you'd respect me.

**Good Actor**

Who ever said such a stupid thing?

**Doctor**

The classics.

**Good Actor**

They couldn't have said anything so stupid.

**Doctor**

They did though. Classics are classics because they -

**Good Actor**

Shut up!

**Doctor**

- are classics.

**Good Actor**

I won't listen to this. Spare me. How could you? Go wash out your mouth! Words like that... Vasya. You and I were the biggest snobs in school. How could you utter such empty, stale words? How could you form them inside your mouth? Go wash your mouth!

**Doctor**

Do you mind if I don't go?

**Good Actor**

Then at least wash out your mouth.

*Doctor doesn't object. They pour drinks and drink.*

**Fish in His Glory.**

**Fish**

I hate actors. They have phony voices. They speak too confidently. They move with too much confidence. Where's the human being in an actor? Take me, for instance. Where am I - Yury Fishman. I have no sincerity. The spark of individuality is gone, lost. Everybody wants a fresh image.

**Good Actor**

How's your, uh, stroke victim? Your hero?

**Fish**

That's another question. He has his own inner theme. He's an entire era.

**Good Actor**

Yeah, but it's a pretty shabby era.

**Fish**

It's a shabby era.

**Good Actor**

Well now! Aren't you feisty today?

**Fish**

Who cares about the era? There will be other eras. I'm a contemporary of those who are yet to come. We're young. We just have to remember that.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, you hear this? Fish is on a roll.

**Sveta Two**

That's the spirit, Mr. Fishman!

**Good Actor**

Mr. Fishman, hell. He's Yury.

**Fish**

Yuroon. My grandmother called me Yuroon.

**Good Actor**

So, Yuroon, a good neighbor?

**Fish**

Fine woman.

**Sveta Two**

Do you mind if I don't stick around for this? I'm not interested in hearing your sexual details.

**Good Actor**

Is that really so unpleasant?

**Sveta Two**

I don't care. Talk about whatever you want. (*Busies herself with something.*)

**Good Actor**

Fish has no secrets from you. Isn't that right, Yuroon?

**Fish**

That's right.

**Sveta Two**

(*Breaking off what she was doing*) No secrets? All right, Yury. Why didn't Slava marry Sveta?

**Good Actor**

What the hell are you doing?

**Fish**

What Sveta?

**Good Actor**

That's paranoia.

**Sveta Two**

Your daughter.

**Fish**

That little girl meant nothing to him. He blew smoke in her eyes and disappeared.

**Good Actor**

Fishman! There was never anything between your daughter and me.

**Fish**

Of course there was -

**Good Actor**

Don't listen to him, Sveta.

*Sveta leaves to cry in  
another room.*

You're a scum and a damn trouble-maker. You... you have  
no idea -

**Fish**

I just know you well.

**Good Actor**

You know what you are after that?

**Fish**

What?

**Good Actor**

I'll tell you what.

**Fish**

Tell me.

**Good Actor**

I will.

**Fish**

Do.

**Good Actor**

I will. (*Says nothing.*)

*Fish starts losing it.*

**Fish**

I am not a beggar! I want you to know that. I am not a  
beggar! **[Photo 0303]**

**Good Actor**

I didn't say you were a beggar.

**Fish**

I am not a beggar!

**Good Actor**

That's not what I wanted to say.

**Fish**

I am not a beggar! (*Shudders. Goes into convulsions.*) I am not a beggar! I am not a beggar!

*Sveta, eyes red with tears, hurries in.*

**Good Actor**

Do something.

**Fish**

You're animals. I'm not a beggar, y'understand? You guys have - I'm not a beggar! How long can you -

**Sveta Two**

*(In an unbearably loud, harsh scream)* Shut up!

*Fish falls silent.*

*(To Fish.)* You and your friend. You slayed me. You have no right to shout in my presence.

*Fish calms down. Sveta Two goes into the next room, shutting the door tightly, but not slamming it.*

**Good Actor**

*(To the door)* I didn't even say anything to him yet. That's not what I meant. *(Realizes there's no point talking to a door. To Fish.)* Yura, my man. You're getting all worked up for nothing. I just wanted to say - you're a prick.

**Fish**

*(Calmly)* But I'm not a beggar.

**Sveta One.**

*On a park bench.*

**Good Actor**

What incredible good fortune. That was, I don't know...  
Somebody ought to put up a statue to us.

**Sveta One**

What for?

**Good Actor**

For the fact there was never anything between us. I  
don't know... Maybe I just got a little smarter. But,  
what am I saying, smarter? Not even close. Don't listen  
to me. I don't have a brain in my head.

**Sveta One**

You were very smart. I fell in love with you.

**Good Actor**

You did? You see -

**Sveta One**

How could I not fall in love with you?

**Good Actor**

But admit it - we're lucky that nothing happened -

**Sveta One**

Yes, we were.

**Good Actor**

There aren't very many, I mean, there aren't any people  
I can talk with like I can with you. It's probably an  
illusion. It must be an illusion. But it always seems  
like if I have something important to say I'll find you  
wherever you are so I can say it... You know? It's good I  
didn't reach out to you. Very good. Because more...  
Because what is, is more, you know? We didn't ruin  
anything. That's important. We didn't ruin anything.

**Sveta One**

But it's still too bad.

**Good Actor**

No, not for me. (*Catches himself lying too clumsily.*) I mean, how do you say it? Of course it's too bad. It's enough to make your skin crawl. You know? To give you the shakes. I've dreamed about you my whole life. If you just try to imagine that someone somewhere was made especially for me - that would be you, Sveta. Everything, everything. Your hands. The way you walk. Your breasts. (*Thinks.*) Your thoughts. You - you don't have to do anything. Just you as you are. You fit me perfectly. One thousand percent. The first time I saw you, my God! Fish's daughter! And look at her! I couldn't imagine it. I thought I'd go out of my mind.

**Sveta One**

Why are you saying this now?

**Good Actor**

Because I... trust you. I can say anything to you. And so I do.

**Sveta One**

You should have said it then.

**Good Actor**

I was afraid of ruining it. And I'm so old. What could there have been?

**Sveta One**

Have you been drinking?

**Good Actor**

Yes. But that's not the point.

**Sveta One**

You're probably right. It's good nothing happened.

**Good Actor**

Nothing happened.

**Sveta One**

I was even angry with you.

**Good Actor**

I was angry with myself.

**Sveta One**

But in the end everything works out.

**Good Actor**

Yeah, there's something right about it. (*Trying to convince himself.*) I have the feeling I did the right thing. That's important. Very important. **[Photo 0613]**

**Sveta One**

Otherwise I would never have met him.

**Good Actor**

(*Too naturally*) How is he?

**Sveta One**

The worst is behind him.

**Good Actor**

Can anything be done for him?

**Sveta One**

You've already done everything.

**Good Actor**

But is there anything else?

**Sveta One**

No, no. Don't worry.

**Good Actor**

Wait a minute. (*It's now obvious he's very drunk.*) If there's anything else that can be done, we've got to do it. Because if we don't do it, that will turn out to be the one thing that should have been done. So if we do it... um...

**Sveta One**

Nothing more is needed. He's got good care. He talks about you all the time. He only has the best words for you. He considers you his teacher.

**Good Actor**

Just what I wanted to hear.

**Sveta One**

I'm so happy you are here with him now -

**Good Actor**

Sveta, I want to know I've done everything I can for him.

**Sveta One**

*(Affirmatively)* You most certainly have.

**Good Actor**

No, I really want to know for sure that I've done everything I can for him.

**Sveta One**

*(Sincerely)* You have done everything for him.

**In a Café.**

*Good Actor, Sveta Two and Fish sit at a table. Fish eats with an appetite. Good Actor talks with his wife. They pay no attention to Fish.*

**Sveta Two**

Couldn't you have said no?

**Good Actor**

How?

**Sveta Two**

I don't get it. Why do you have to take him to Moscow?

**Good Actor**

I don't have to.

**Sveta Two**

Then don't do it.

**Good Actor**

The doctor said he needs to be treated in Moscow.

**Sveta Two**

Then let them treat him.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, take a look around you, would you? Nobody is going to send him anywhere for treatment. Money, you got that? He has no insurance. Nothing.

**Sveta Two**

Let the city take care of it. He's hot stuff here.

**Fish**

The city can't do it. The best they can do is send him a bouquet.

**Sveta Two**

*(To her husband)* Why you?

**Good Actor**

Who else if not me? *(Trying to downplay the bathos of his previous statement.)* If you think I'm enjoying all this, you're seriously mistaken.

**Sveta Two**

What's in this for you?

**Good Actor**

Nothing.

**Sveta Two**

But you're doing it. You're taking responsibility for an idiot with restricted ambulatory capabilities. That's a very serious step.

**Good Actor**

I know. Goddamit, I know.

**Fish**

Incidentally, the doctors say his mental capacities are undamaged.

**Good Actor**

There was nothing there to be damaged.

**Sveta Two**

Then why are you doing this?

**Good Actor**

You wouldn't understand.

*A young woman approaches the table. It is Sveta One.*

**Sveta Two**

Sveta!

**Sveta One**

Sveta!

*The women kiss and embrace. They are friends. Sveta One sits on an empty chair next to Good Actor. Rests her hand on his.*

Thank you.

*Good Actor mumbles something incoherently. Sveta Two shoots a long, penetrating stare at him.*

**Madhouse .**

*Good Actor lies on his sofa at home.*

**Good Actor**

*(Talking on the telephone)* I've never asked any favors of you. Listen. Listen. Listen to me, please. Up yours, too! *(Calmly leafs further through his phone book.)* Hello, Inga? Yes. It's Slava. Yes, you guessed. How are you feeling? You don't say? No! And how long will you be out? Oh my goodness. That's terrible. I just wanted to see if you were interested in a bit of a cultural soiree. No, I don't have a new show. Just a bit of a private party. That's too bad. Too bad. No, I won't even trouble you with it, then. You get better now. *(He*

*can't conclude the conversation. Inga won't let him.)*  
 Now you get better. Yes, you get better, you hear? Yes.  
 Get better now. Definitely. Definitely. Tell your  
 husband hello. (*Dials the next number from memory.*)

*Enter Father.*

**Father**

Do you have another Philips screwdriver?

**Good Actor**

That's the only one.

**Father**

You should have said so. I would have brought my own.

**Good Actor**

Dad, just leave it. I'll call somebody in and they'll  
 do it.

**Father**

If we had a decent screwdriver we could do it  
 ourselves.

**Good Actor**

ive me five minutes. One call.

**Father**

Go ahead. I'm not bothering you. Only, maybe you have  
 another screwdriver somewhere.

**Good Actor**

No, I don't. (*Finally able to talk freely. Listens.  
 Speaks.*) Hello? Sergei, I'm sorry you can't come to the  
 phone right now. I need your help. Call me back,  
 please. (*Hangs up. Leafs through his phone book.*)

*The phone rings.*

Sergei. Thanks for calling back. Fish? Shit, is that  
 you? Didn't recognize you. Would you tell me what's  
 going on?

*Enter Sveta Two who hangs  
 over Good Actor.*

Why didn't you say they were discharging him today? You said tomorrow. Can't they do it tomorrow? Why am I the last to know? Yes, I'll send it. No. Never got it. Take a taxi. Fish, don't get on your high horse. I let my driver go today. Take a taxi. I'll pay for it. When will you get here? Can't it be any later? For Chrissakes. For God's sake, I said. Bring it on. (*Hangs up.*)

**Sveta Two**

Is there nothing you want to run by me?

*Good Actor scratches his neck. For a very long time. Scratches.*

*(Approaches her husband. Sits on the back of the sofa. Scratches his neck. Calmly.)* Punkins, I don't have anything ready. You wanted me to invite a small crowd.

**Good Actor**

How could you possibly gather a small crowd in Moscow in two hours?

**Sveta Two**

There won't be anybody.

**Good Actor**

He wants it to be... he wants it to be...! (*Gestures with his hands to indicate something big and ceremonious.*)

**Sveta Two**

Screw him.

**Good Actor**

It's too late.

**Sveta Two**

Do it tomorrow. He was supposed to get out tomorrow.

**Good Actor**

If we do it tomorrow they'll only leave the day after tomorrow.

**Sveta Two**

So they leave the day after tomorrow.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, I told you explicitly - I can only handle this guy one night. One night is one night. Not two, not one-and-a-half. You know what that means when I say something explicitly?

**Sveta Two**

Them.

**Good Actor**

What?

**Sveta Two**

Not handle him, handle them. Fish's daughter comes in the bargain, too.

**Good Actor**

Oh, yeah, well -

**Sveta Two**

You forgot.

**Good Actor**

No, I didn't forget.

**Sveta Two**

You just didn't say it.

**Good Actor**

What are you driving at?

**Sveta Two**

Nothing. It's just that you didn't say Sveta would be with him, too. Although you remembered it.

**Good Actor**

I didn't say anything about Fish either.

**Sveta Two**

Fish kindly found himself a room at the Moscow Art Theater dormitory. So he's beside the point.

**Good Actor**

What are you getting so picky about?

**Sveta Two**

Nothing. Just so you'll be more explicit about what you say.

**Good Actor**

That is exactly what I plan to do. To be very explicit in what I say.

**Sveta Two**

I would ask you to do that. To be very explicit in what you say.

**Good Actor**

I promise you I will be very explicit in the words I choose, the actions I take and the choices I make -

**Sveta Two**

Oh, aren't we so fearsome.

*Enter Father.*

**Father**

Are you watching?

**Good Actor**

What?

**Father**

Turn on Channel One quick.

**Good Actor**

I'm not turning on the television.

**Father**

*(Irritated) A-h-h. (Leaves.)*

**Good Actor**

I'm not going to let them spend more than one night here.

**Sveta Two**

Where's your logic? Wherever there's one explanation, there's two.

**Good Actor**

You wouldn't understand.

**Sveta Two**

What are you counting on? You think I'll believe it that you don't want her staying here with us?

**Good Actor**

I don't. That's right.

**Sveta Two**

I see how much you don't. If you had your druthers you'd have her move in here and stay.

**Good Actor**

Now that's mean. You know I can't turn away a person who has nowhere to stay.

**Sveta Two**

Aren't you complicated.

**Good Actor**

Yes, I am. You could have seen that I've been doing this for you because I understand it might create an unjustifiably difficult situation -

**Sveta Two**

Unjustifiably - there's the key.

**Good Actor**

Unjustifiably. I know what you've dreamed up in your head. But it has nothing to do with reality. I can't turn them down; I wasn't brought up that way. Thank God Dad has come. That at least gives me a shadow of a justification for turning her down.

**Sveta Two**

And how did you picture this all to yourself? Was she going to be coming and going under your nose for a month?

**Good Actor**

Let me put it another way. Whoever it was, based on the present circumstances, they would have lived here for as long as necessary. Even if it was the wicked witch of the North.

**Sveta Two**

That's the whole point, that she is not the wicked witch of the North.

**Good Actor**

No it's not. The point is I didn't offer her our hospitality. And she had to stay in a hotel.

**Sveta Two**

Which you have also paid for.

**Good Actor**

This is a pointless conversation.

**Sveta Two**

It's not pointless. You are implying that I am getting in the way of you running a little whorehouse -

**Good Actor**

What the hell! What the hell kind of superhuman brain must someone have to twist my words around like that?

**Sveta Two**

Don't give me that. You're saying it straight out -

*The doorbell rings.*

Will your dad get that?

**Good Actor**

Dad will get that.

**Father**

*(From the hall.)* I'll get that. *(A few seconds later.)*  
A student's here to see you.

**Good Actor**

*(To his wife)* I'm not finished with this yet. *(Goes to meet the student.)* This is no student, Dad. He's a miscreant. What are you here for, miscreant?

**Miscreant**

I called. You promised to sign off on my exams.

**Good Actor**

Why didn't you pass your exams when you were supposed to?

**Miscreant**

Meaning?

**Good Actor**

Meaning. Come in here.

*They enter the room.*

If you're such a flunkey ass, tell me why I should waste my personal time on you?

**Miscreant**

I dunno.

**Good Actor**

Give me five reasons and I'll let you take your exam.

**Miscreant**

You're the course head.

**Good Actor**

You could suck up a little better. You could have called me the course master.

**Miscreant**

Master.

**Good Actor**

Doesn't count. I gave you that one.

**Miscreant**

If you don't let me take it now I'll come back again.

**Good Actor**

One!

*The doorbell rings.*

**Father**

*(From the hall)* I'll get it.

**Miscreant**

You encourage the establishment of acting dynasties.

**Good Actor**

Somehow I don't recall any dynasty with your name on it.

**Miscreant**

I'm its founder.

**Good Actor**

Old joke. But I'll give it to you.

*Miscreant pulls out his test papers.*

Hold on there. That's only two I've given you. There's three more.

*The student thinks. Enter Father.*

**Father**

Give me a thousand rubles.

**Good Actor**

Here.

*Father leaves.*

**Miscreant**

They won't give me a scholarship.

**Good Actor**

So what?

**Miscreant**

Otherwise I'll be borrowing from you.

**Good Actor**

Good point. Two left.

**Miscreant**

My girlfriend's pregnant.

**Good Actor**

Why should I care about that?

**Miscreant**

Because she's a student of yours, too.

**Good Actor**

Who?

**Miscreant**

Natasha.

**Good Actor**

Natasha? Mmm, not bad -

**Miscreant**

Does that count?

**Good Actor**

Goddam you. Yes. What's your last one?

**Miscreant**

You pass everybody.

**Good Actor**

Listen, you really are a miscreant.

**Miscreant**

But you do, don't you?

**Good Actor**

Yes. But you've got a lotta nerve to come in here and say that flat out. I'm going to have to have a serious talk with you.

**Miscreant**

Okay.

**Good Actor**

Right now I'm busy. But I don't like the idea of passing you in your exams and you going off gloating about getting off scot-free with murder.

**Miscreant**

I won't.

**Good Actor**

You will. I know you. I want you to suffer awhile.

**Miscreant**

I'm suffering now.

**Good Actor**

What are you going to do?

**Miscreant**

A classical monologue.

**Good Actor**

Shoot.

**Miscreant**

Right here?

**Good Actor**

What the hell did you come here for? Of course, right here.

**Miscreant**

*(Does a marvelous reading of Nina Zarechnaya's monologue)* "No, no, don't see me out. I'll go alone. My horses are nearby. So she brought him here, did she? Oh, what's the difference? Don't tell Trigorin anything when you see him. I love him. I love him more than ever. A plot for a short story. I love him. I love him passionately. I love him to distraction. How good it was before. Kostya! Do you remember? What a clear, warm, joyous, unsullied life we lived. What feelings we had.. feelings that were like tender, exquisite flowers. Do you remember? 'People, lions, eagles and partridges,

horned deer, geese, spiders, silent fish living in the water, starfish and everything invisible to the eye... in a word, all lives, all lives, all lives completed their sorrowful cycle and were extinguished. Thousands of years have passed since the earth bore a single sign of a living being and the poor moon continues to light its pale lamp. No one awakens in the meadow to the cry of cranes and there is no sound of May Bugs buzzing in the limeleaf wood...' "

**Good Actor**

Tell me, couldn't you find any male monologues in Chekhov?

**Miscreant**

Yes. But they were even stupider than that.

**Good Actor**

You know what? Don't tempt the devil. However informal we may be at the institute is one thing, but I wouldn't advise you to be so informal with Chekhov. After they forget us he'll still be here. No, you know what? I don't think I can pass you right now. Come back again another time.

**Miscreant**

*(Whines)* Professor.

*His wife's cries are heard from the hall.*

**Sveta Two**

Slava! Slava!

**Good Actor**

*(To the student)* Stay here a minute.

*Goes into the hall to find Sveta Two blocking off the exit from the apartment. Next to her stands a man with his arms crossed on his chest. He's smiling. Father is*

*trying to say something to  
Sveta Two.*

**Father**

Sveta, I am capable of answering for my own actions.

**Good Actor**

What is going on here?

**Sveta Two**

Call the police.

**Father**

Sveta, let him go.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, what is going on here?

**Sveta Two**

This person talked your father out of a thousand rubles.

**Good Actor**

Dad, did you give him a thousand rubles?

**Father**

I did. And I knew what I was doing.

**Good Actor**

*(To his wife)* Let him go.

*Sveta Two abandons her post  
and goes to cry in her  
bedroom.*

*(To the man.)* Please excuse us.

**Man**

Oh, no problem. I'm sorry for the intrusion.

**Good Actor**

Good-bye, now.

**Man**

Have a pleasant day.

*Good Actor closes the door  
after Man goes out.*

**Father**

He explained everything to me, you know -

**Good Actor**

Dad. You don't have to answer to me.

**Father**

Are you done in there yet? Maybe we can get that screw in before your guests arrive.

**Good Actor**

Give me five minutes.

*Goes to his wife in the other  
room. She's sitting on the  
sofa in tears.*

Sveta, it's not your fault.

**Sveta Two**

(*Howls.*) What?! My fault?! Go to hell, you ass!

**Good Actor**

Sveta. Sveta my sweet.

**Sveta Two**

Don't call me that! Are you trying to do me in altogether?

**Good Actor**

I'm just trying to be affectionate. You always liked to be called that.

**Sveta Two**

Last night at dinner you called Sveta that three times.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, stop this. It's going nowhere. I don't have any feelings for Sveta.

**Sveta Two**

What a liar you are, Slava. A liar and a monster.

**Good Actor**

Listen. There would be signs of some kind. There just aren't any.

**Sveta Two**

Slava. Slava. I see everything.

**Good Actor**

What do you see?

**Sveta Two**

I'm tired of this. Thousands of signs. You're behaving like a tom cat in heat.

**Good Actor**

Oh, come on, Sveta. What can I do to calm you? I understand this is all outside of logic.

**Sveta Two**

Only don't you start treating me like I'm crazy. I can sense everything.

**Good Actor**

I understand there are times in a man's life, even a married man's life, even a married man who isn't all that young anymore, when the desire arises for... for inspiring encounters. Something spontaneous. A renewal of some kind -

**Sveta Two**

Go on.

**Good Actor**

Sveta my sweet. (*Stumbles.*) Sveta punkins. I - (*nearly in tears*), it's been a long time. A very long time. You'll be amazed at how long it's been since I realized that I desire inspiring encounters with only one person. That person is you. (*A tear does roll down his cheek after all.*) I know it's stupid to tell you this. You're not going to love me any more for it. Nothing will change. But I am compelled to say it. I love you. (*Really breaks down now.*)

**Sveta Two**

What a hypocrite. God, what have I done to deserve this?

**Good Actor**

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

**Sveta Two**

Slava, cut the theatrics. I'm a smart woman. Your actor's tears can't fool me.

*Good Actor wipes his eyes dry, regains composure.*

What are we going to do for the party?

**Good Actor**

I don't know. Just have a quiet sit around the table with some wine?

**Sveta Two**

Wine? He just had a stroke.

**Good Actor**

God, how I hate that man. Whoever could have imagined this?

**Sveta Two**

You know what? I'll tell you the truth. I've begun taking a liking to him.

**Good Actor**

Now you, too.

**Sveta Two**

He's even a little like you -

**Good Actor**

Exactly. And I can imagine how he'll be pissed off that instead of a banquet in his honor we arranged a little home soiree. I know these people.

**Sveta Two**

If only we'd known he was being discharged today.

**Good Actor**

Yes.

**Sveta Two**

It just isn't possible to do it right in half a day.

**Good Actor**

Where there's a will there's a way.

**Sveta Two**

Aren't you a fount of wisdom? You mean to say I don't cook the way you're used to it?

**Good Actor**

I didn't say anything about the way you cook. I just meant you don't cook at all.

**Sveta Two**

Listen. Go off to your sweet Sveta. Or anybody else, for that matter. Don't you dare tell me I don't cook.

**Good Actor**

But you don't. And that's no problem. We can order a pizza.

**Sveta Two**

Did you hear what I said? Don't you dare.

**Good Actor**

*(Aggressively)* Listen to me, here... Chief. I love you. But that doesn't mean I'm going to call black white. If you never cook anything I don't give a damn how much I love you - I'll never convince myself that you cook.

**Sveta Two**

You're a failure, that's what.

**Father**

*(From the hall.)* Sla-va. Someone here to see you.

*Good Actor flies into the entryway. He runs up against the man who conned Father out*

*of 1000 rubles. This man is  
Preacher.*

**Preacher**

Your door wasn't closed.

**Father**

We forgot to shut the door.

**Good Actor**

You want to see Father?

**Preacher**

It's actually you I want to see. I have a personal question for you. What do you think about the Bible?

**Good Actor**

Good-bye.

**Preacher**

Thank you.

**Father**

You should hear the man out first.

**Good Actor**

Dad. Go away.

*Father is offended. Leaves.  
Sveta appears in the  
entryway. Watches events  
unfold with her arms folded  
across her chest. Miscreant  
peers in from the other room.  
He's bored sitting there  
alone.*

*(To Miscreant.)* Get outta here! *(To Preacher.)* I don't mean you. However, on your way out I would like to wish you a pleasant day.

**Preacher**

As it says in the Good Book, "Their faith was tried by fire and the Lord cleansed their souls." God's house

perished in flames. You have the opportunity to confirm your love of God.

**Good Actor**

I let you go because I thought you were a petty crook. I see now I should have called the police.

**Preacher**

Adam possessed sincerity, a triumphant spirit, courage, virtue, a quick mind and 100% mental awareness. How do you think Adam would have acted in your place now?

**Good Actor**

But you do want money?

**Preacher**

Of course I do. Our meeting house burned down. And we must bear our burden to the end. We must be cleansed. Collect money. And build a new house of God better than the previous one. We need bricks, paint and pay for the workers.

**Good Actor**

That doesn't move me. Now what do we do?

**Preacher**

I don't know. It's your problem. What would Adam have done in your place?

**Good Actor**

Adam? Do I have time to think? [Photo 0926]

**Preacher**

A little.

**Good Actor**

Good. Sveta, give our guest a cup of tea. What's your name?

**Preacher**

Roman Romanov.

**Good Actor**

Fix tea for Mr. Romanov here.

**Sveta Two**

Maybe I should call the men in white coats?

**Good Actor**

It's still early for that.

**Sveta Two**

I think it's time. Slava, you're losing it.  
(*Nevertheless, she leads Preacher into the kitchen.*)

**Miscreant**

(*Appearing from behind the door*) Professor . Are you almost done?

**Good Actor**

Yes. Get lost. (*Goes to Father.*)

*Father sits on the floor next to a bookcase and struggles to fix a loose screw on a crooked door with a screwdriver that is clearly the wrong size. He is completely involved in what he is doing. And very hurt.*

Dad, let me try that.

**Father**

You knew I was coming. You could have asked me to bring the right screwdriver.

**Good Actor**

(*For the first time lies so obviously it can't be hidden*) You know, I was sure mine was the right size. It occurred to me how great it was you were coming to visit and you could fix this thing for me.

**Father**

Well you should have looked and checked. Doors aren't meant to hang loose.

**Good Actor**

Dad, I don't know anything about them. You're the carpenter. I figured you'd take care of it all. (*Takes*

*the screwdriver from Father and tries to screw in the screw even though the instrument is clearly the wrong size).* Here, hold onto this. Just hold it. No, grab it from below. So that it hangs there.

**Father**

Is it taking?

**Good Actor**

It will in a second. Just hold it.

**Father**

I couldn't have done it alone.

**Good Actor**

Yeah, this is a job for two.

**Father**

Where are your guests?

**Good Actor**

They'll be here soon.

**Father**

It's good we got this done. Otherwise somebody would open it and it would fall down again.

**Good Actor**

Yeah, a good job done.

**Father**

You're darn tootin'. Somebody might think you're a slob.

**Good Actor**

See? Well nobody'll think that now.

**Father**

Nope. Not now. You go on. I'll put away the tools.

**Good Actor**

Thanks dad. What would I do without you? (*Gives Father a kiss.*) Dad, remember that time with the belt?

**Father**

No.

**Good Actor**

The first time I ever came back home on tour.

**Father**

I don't remember that.

**Good Actor**

You and mom were getting ready to go to the show. And I saw you putting on an old belt. All cracked and worn out.

**Father**

I don't remember. But I remember you telling about it later.

**Good Actor**

And you had a new one in your closet. The point being that going to the opening of a new show starring your son was not an occasion requiring a new belt. You were saving it for something more important. And the fact that I was starring in a new show in the best theater in town, that wasn't enough for you to put a new belt on your pants.

**Father**

I don't remember that, of course.

**Good Actor**

Dad. Why do you think I told you that? In case you should remember it some day - just keep it in mind. Don't ever let that bother you.

**Father**

*(Laughs)* Okay.

**Good Actor**

Because that was wonderful. And you are, too.

**Father**

That's a funny story.

**Good Actor**

When I've got you... You could... You can... (*Fights back tears.*) You can do anything you want. Thank you for being, for being so utterly foolish. Thank you for being you. (*Kisses Father's hand. Goes into the kitchen.*)

*In the kitchen Preacher drinks tea. Sveta Two leafs through a cookbook.*

Sveta, you've got to understand. About those 1,000 rubles. Dad has to feel like he can make a decision. He's got a complex about that. His dad was a nuthouse by the age of 50, my granddad. Nobody paid him any mind. They moved him around the apartment like a potted plant. Who gives a damn about the money? What's important is that he felt like he was doing something.

**Sveta Two**

I don't think it's his problem. I think it's yours. Why can't we just kick this creep out?

**Good Actor**

Sveta, everybody's a creep. I'm a creep, he's a creep. I've got a student in there waiting. He's a creep, too. He knocked up a girl in his class.

**Sveta Two**

Oh, for God's sake!

**Good Actor**

A very pretty little girl. But she'll never be an actor. She'll make a good wife.

**Sveta Two**

No matter what you say it always boils down to the fact that you have a bad wife.

**Good Actor**

Oh, let's not start this in public -

**Sveta Two**

Call your student in here to tea.

**Good Actor**

He can live without it.

**Sveta Two**

Call him in here. Yesterday's cake is going stale.

*Good Actor goes to get  
Miscreant.*

**Preacher**

*(Sipping tea)* Come join our meetings. We have dances and techno parties.

**Sveta Two**

Thank you.

*Enter Good Actor and  
Miscreant.*

Do you take sugar with your tea, Yegor?

**Miscreant**

If you have cake, I'll pass on the sugar.

*All drink tea.*

**Sveta Two**

Call and invite somebody. You promised you'd gather a crowd.

**Good Actor**

Nobody wants to see him. You get that? Nobody. They're all so holier-than-thou. It's disgusting.

**Sveta Two**

I think they don't want to see you.

**Good Actor**

Oh, get off it.

**Sveta Two**

No, I'm telling you. After your last show nobody even called from TV Guide. First time that's happened.

**Good Actor**

Fortunately, I don't set myself the goal of indulging others.

**Sveta Two**

I don't think you have any goals left.

**Good Actor**

What are you trying to say?

**Sveta Two**

You have given up. Entirely.

**Good Actor**

I have given up?

**Sveta Two**

Well I certain haven't.

**Good Actor**

What are you talking about?

**Preacher**

Thank you for the tea. Can we get back on topic?

**Good Actor**

Wait a second. (*To his wife.*) What are you trying to say?

**Sveta Two**

Slava, you know I've been against this whole thing all along. I'm very happy that you helped a colleague and that your colleague got better. I'm very happy about all that. But I just want to say I was against it all along.

**Good Actor**

I recall that quite clearly.

**Sveta Two**

And I'm not hiding it. I think that under the present circumstances you should not be taking on any added responsibilities.

**Good Actor**

And what are the circumstances?

**Sveta Two**

You know yourself.

**Good Actor**

No, I don't. Tell me.

**Sveta Two**

You had a bad show.

**Good Actor**

*(Jumps up from the table so quickly that he nearly knocks over all the teacups)* You yourself said it was a great show!

**Sveta Two**

I did.

**Good Actor**

And so?

**Sveta Two**

But everybody else says it's crap.

**Good Actor**

I don't give a damn about anybody else. I believe you.

**Sveta Two**

I'm your wife.

**Good Actor**

And what is that supposed to mean?

**Sveta Two**

You know.

**Good Actor**

You mean to say that no matter how bad I perform you are going to say I performed great?

**Sveta Two**

That's not what I said.

**Good Actor**

*(Laughing nervously)* It's divorce. It's over.

*Enter Father.*

**Father**

Mind if I join you for tea? I'm thirsty.

**Sveta Two**

Sit down. I'll pour you a cup.

**Good Actor**

Sveta, complete your thought.

**Sveta Two**

Why? We're divorcing.

**Father**

*(Calmly)* You're getting divorced?

**Good Actor**

Nobody's getting divorced. You want some cake? *(To his wife.)* Sveta, I'm begging you on my knees, finish what you started to say.

**Miscreant**

I think I'll go.

**Good Actor**

Sit still.

**Sveta Two**

It was a very simple thought. If you can't do something, don't take it on.

**Good Actor**

A simple thought is a wondrous thing. Only would you now please interpret that for me?

**Sveta Two**

If you take on a job, if you promise someone that you are going to organize a party for him... If you take on that responsibility... You've got to do it. You know perfectly well I don't give a damn about him.

**Good Actor**

I know.

**Sveta Two**

To say nothing about his Sveta.

**Good Actor**

Understood.

**Sveta Two**

But if you promised. Nobody made you promise. But if you promised -

**Good Actor**

How can I organize this party if nobody wants to hear his name spoken?

**Sveta Two**

You're wrong, my friend.

**Good Actor**

I'm not your friend.

**Sveta Two**

Then whose friend are you? Sveta's?

**Good Actor**

She... Did she tell you?

**Sveta Two**

*(In hysterics)* What a Neanderthal, you are, Slava. What a buffoon, what a -

**Good Actor**

Tell me, did you two talk? About me?

**Sveta Two**

No, we did not talk about you. I don't have to talk about you with every flirty skirt in town to know how you talk to flirty skirts. There, did I nail that?

**Good Actor**

Nail what?

**Sveta Two**

You talked to her about being friends.

**Good Actor**

I never said anything of the sort.

**Sveta Two**

What a Neanderthal. God, I hate you. You have destroyed me.

**Good Actor**

I know you hate me. You haven't told me anything new.

**Sveta Two**

And to think I had my doubts. I kept thinking you've got to maintain the presumption of innocence.

**Good Actor**

As if you know what that is.

**Sveta Two**

Then I thought, my God, who is this we're talking about? If someone were to think the worst possible thing about you, you'd have to multiply that by a hundred to make it come out about right.

**Good Actor**

There is an optical term - to see everything in the worst possible light. Your eyes are like that, your contacts are like that, your glasses are like that -

**Miscreant**

Binoculars.

**Good Actor**

Shut up, wiseacre. If I flunk you the army will draft you and they'll send you off to kill people.

**Miscreant**

I won't go.

**Sveta Two**

I knew it instantly. You answered the call to care for the sick. It's not that easy. You don't ever do anything for nothing.

**Good Actor**

Allow me to continue your simple thought for you. Do you think I have done this for Sveta?

**Sveta Two**

No and not because Fish asked you too, either.

**Good Actor**

No-o-o! Not for that.

**Sveta Two**

Obviously not for that. You hate him.

**Good Actor**

Who? Fish? I hate him! Because he has impeccable taste and yet he still buried himself, he entombed himself in the aura of this pathetic little friend of ours. I hate everything marginal. I hate myself. I hate Fish -

*Enter Fish.*

Fish, you're drunk.

**Fish**

I'm drunk. I'm a drunkard.

**Sveta Two**

That explains a lot.

**Fish**

You hate me -

**Good Actor**

Fish. Look me in the eye. I love you. I love you, you son-of-a-bitch. People - look at Fish. He is a rare sight. Come on, Fish -

*Fish understands what Good Actor is up to. The two of them dance an old dance together. None of those present join in.*

Where did you lose our hero?

**Fish**

We caught a taxi and then, get this, he went to buy a suit. Yesterday I gave him some change for antibiotics.

**Good Actor**

I gave you money.

**Fish**

You did. Forget it. Then today I find out he's ordered a suit. And I could tell - if I went with him, that would be the end of our friendship. My whole life, from top to bottom, all for this... artist. Girls! Sweethearts! Cuties! Smarties! Don't waste your life on actors! Please.

**Good Actor**

What girls, Fish?

**Fish**

There's no girls? That's too bad. (*Reaches for a bottle.*)

*Good Actor takes away his glass.*

He went to buy a new suit. A new suit?! What for? I didn't go with him because it's all nothing more than dancing with death. I didn't want to see it how they picked out some suit, my daughter and that, that, old man! He's a God damned old man! (*Gestures as if he's going to be sick to his stomach.*)

**Good Actor**

He's ten years younger than me.

**Fish**

He's a wreck, you know what I mean?

**Good Actor**

He's no wreck.

**Fish**

Why are you saying nice things about a man you only think bad things about?

**Good Actor**

*(Angrily because Fish hit a nerve)* I don't think about him at all. For me - he doesn't exist! He's nothing! Somebody do something. Pour Fish some tea.

**Fish**

What tea!? Gimme vodka!

**Good Actor**

Don't give him vodka.

*Sveta Two pours Fish some vodka.*

**Sveta Two**

Tell me the whole truth, Fishman.

**Fish**

About what?

**Sveta Two**

You know what.

**Fish**

Svetlana. What do you want from me, Svetlana? Why do you persecute me? You're sick, Sveta. Life isn't that hard. You don't know your own strength. You don't realize how you live in the clutches of fear. You shouldn't do that.

**Sveta Two**

Fish. Sweetheart. Look at me. I'm healthy. I can still have babies. I want to experience joy. I can't go on like this. I don't want to suffer. Nobody else around me suffers. Everyone is always okay. Everybody's happy.

**Miscreant**

I suffer.

**Good Actor**

Clam it.

**Sveta Two**

I just want to know where I stand. Do you realize what he does to me?

**Fish**

Dump him.

**Sveta Two**

What kind of answer is that?

**Fish**

I don't know anything. Nobody tells me anything. I stay out of my children's lives.

**Sveta Two**

How can I dump him? He'll fall apart completely and be like you.

**Fish**

Somebody'll scrape him up.

**Good Actor**

That's not what you're afraid of, that I'll fall apart and stagger out unshaven in the morning to buy milk and alka seltzer. What you're afraid of is that people will tell you how I stagger out unshaven in the morning to buy milk and alka seltzer. That's what bothers you - what people will say! Don't worry. Fish is right. Somebody'll scrape me up.

**Miscreant**

Four of the girls in my class are in love with you -

**Sveta Two**

Girls... a senator asked me to marry him.

**Good Actor**

Is life so bad with me?

**Sveta Two**

I want to live a simple life. How come everybody else lives so simply and we live in a madhouse?

**Good Actor**

Wait a minute. Who lives simply?

**Sveta Two**

Everybody. Your colleagues. Our friends. They have dogs. They attend festivals. People live their lives.

**Good Actor**

Fish, have you understood a single word? This idiot watches the television. (*To Sveta.*) Who are you comparing us to? Are you comparing me to all those telemorons?

**Sveta Two**

Why don't we ever go anywhere together?

**Good Actor**

What you really mean is why aren't we on television all the time. That's it, isn't it? "Welcome to our humble abode." Am I wrong? "And now the lady of the house will play the piano for us." So everybody can see and hear what a marvel you are! "How did you happen to meet?" "Who does the dishes?" That's your world. That's your element. "Right here we planted a fruit bearing cockspur." "And over here is our guest room." Is that what you want?

**Sveta Two**

I want to be normal.

**Good Actor**

You can't be normal. Despite everything I know about you I still have hope you couldn't possibly like yourself the way those people love themselves.

**Sveta Two**

You're wrong.

**Good Actor**

No I'm not.

**Sveta Two**

I can. I do like myself. I like myself and I want others to see that. That I like myself. I like my curtains. The wine glass I drink out of. I take pleasure in myself. And I want others to see that I do. Only you keep getting in the way.

**Good Actor**

How could I do otherwise? I love you. I don't want you broadcasting your idiocy all over the country. And mine along with it -

**Sveta Two**

How come there was a special about the Zalepins and not us?

**Good Actor**

Because Zalepin feeds on that. Anyway, leave Zalepin alone. He's a good actor. That's his choice - spending time on the shit tube. I'm not going to judge him.

**Sveta Two**

What about the rest of your friends?

**Good Actor**

Money! Do you know what money is? I earn money by working in the theater. So they have another way of doing it -

**Sveta Two**

Slava. Remember last Saturday? You said some amazing things. Really insightful. Why don't you say that for everybody to hear?

**Good Actor**

What did I say?

**Sveta Two**

I don't remember. But it was really interesting. You're capable of that.

*There is no point to  
continuing this discussion.*

**Good Actor**

Fish. What are we going to do about our so-called friend?

**Fish**

Throw the fucker a banquet.

**Good Actor**

We've gotta go to the store. (*To Sveta, hysterically.*) Why do we still not have a woman here to help in situations like this?

**Sveta Two**

Yeah, right. You know perfectly well why.

**Good Actor**

Then go yourself.

**Sveta Two**

No, you go. I'm not lifting a finger. This is your baby.

**Fish**

I'll go.

**Good Actor**

You sit still. We'll get somebody. (*To Miscreant.*) Do you mind?

**Miscreant**

No problem.

**Good Actor**

(*To his wife*) See? I can organize things.

**Sveta Two**

Give me a break.

*Preacher gives Sveta Two a brochure.*

**Preacher**

God helps build families. (*Gives her another brochure.*) Here, give these to your single girlfriends.

**Sveta Two**

(*Not thinking*) Thank you. (*Squeals.*) I don't have any unmarried girlfriends! (*Throws the brochures in her husband's face.*) Why, why, why did I marry you?

**Good Actor**

I'll tell you why I married you. I remember perfectly well. (*To Preacher.*) How did that go? Adam... Adam had -

**Preacher**

Adam had sincerity -

**Good Actor**

No. After that.

**Preacher**

A quick mind and 100% mental awareness -

**Good Actor**

That's it. I have 100% - 200% mental awareness. I am astronomically clear on why I married you. Dad. Do you remember Vika?

**Father**

Your wife?

**Good Actor**

Yes, my ex-wife. The one I divorced like a pathetic scum. What was there wrong with Vika?

**Father**

She was too old for you.

**Sveta Two**

I'll strangle you right here and now.

**Good Actor**

Just try. I'm not afraid of you anymore. I loved Vika and I still love her. I'll love her as long as I'm alive, as long as there is sincerity and life left in me. I've chewed my pillow to shreds. I dream of her every night. I close my eyes and I see her. She's my other half, out wandering the world. I don't know where.

**Miscreant**

She's playing downtown in *Three Sisters*.

**Good Actor**

I know.

**Sveta Two**

What a scum you are.

**Good Actor**

Yes, I'm a scum because I betrayed her. But I'm not a scum because I know why I betrayed her. I'm like Adam with his 300% whatever the fuck that is -

**Preacher**

Mental awareness. [Photo 0438]

**Good Actor**

Mental awareness. I betrayed her because I pitied her. Unlike all of you, she was absolutely defenseless. I would have destroyed her and she would have thanked me for it. No matter what, she always took the blame, always. There was someone who defended me, someone who loved me. And the only worthy gift I ever gave her was to be such an asshole that even she realized she wasn't the asshole - I was. I cast her off but I saved her. Because I am a monster! Because I would have annihilated her. Because I can only live with monsters like you - who come begging for exams and money for churches and speeches at dinners and hospital bills to be paid.. Because you are all 100% Adams all of you, fucking superhumans. Gimme, gimme, gimme. The only adequate response to people like you is to be a monster. We're birds of a feather. Only my dad doesn't count. I'm not talking about you, Dad -

**Father**

I know that.

**Good Actor**

I methodically destroyed her and she had no defense against me. I'm destroying her and she's *afraid to cry* because she doesn't want to upset me before I go on stage. She knew every line I ever spoke. She worked out

all my nuances for me. I owe her for everything I've ever done well. She was utterly vulnerable. You aren't.

**Sveta Two**

It's brain cancer.

**Good Actor**

I married you because you are my retribution, my misfortune and my love. My integrity! (*Weeps.*) Sveta, I love you very much - (*Crawls to Sveta Two on his hands and knees, trying to grab her feet.*)

**Sveta Two**

Don't touch me.

*Good Actor catches Sveta Two and embraces her.*

**Good Actor**

You don't cook for me. You don't understand me. You don't love me. We are bound together forever. **[Photo 0471]**

**Sveta Two**

Fuck off.

**Good Actor**

No. I won't.

**Sveta Two**

Lord Almighty. Why do you punish me so?

**Fish**

The theater is a very, very bad thing.

*Enter Sveta One. She holds bags full of things and clothes from the hospital. Cries.*

**Sveta Two**

What happened?

**Good Actor**

What's wrong? Did something happen?

*Sveta One weeps louder.*

**Father**

Sveta -

**Fish**

I'd like to say -

**Good Actor**

Say it later.

**Fish**

No, I'll say it now.

**Sveta Two**

Can't you see what's happening?

**Fish**

I want to say something.

**Good Actor**

Don't you see your daughter's crying?

**Fish**

So let her cry! I want to speak about youth and the insults of the world -

**Sveta Two**

Shut him up.

**Good Actor**

No. He's never said anything his whole life. Let him talk. Go on, Fish. Say it!

**Sveta Two**

Does it have to be now?

**Good Actor**

Right now. Go on, Fish. Talk!

**Fish**

There is youth. And there are the insults of the world.

**Good Actor**

Very good. And what else?

**Fish**

There is youth. There is old age. There are the eternal insults of the world.

**Good Actor**

And -

*Fish is silent.*

**Father**

Say, did I ever show you my photographs? I was cleaning out a closet last year and I found my high school photo album. When you have the time I'll show you how we looked when we were young.

**Good Actor**

Go on, get it.

**Father**

Some other time.

**Good Actor**

No, go on and get it now.

*Father goes to get his photo album.*

Fish, are you going to say what you have to say?

**Fish**

There's no point talking to you people.

**Good Actor**

Jesus Christ -

*Everybody remembers Sveta One.*

**Sveta Two**

Why are you crying? Is he all right?

**Sveta One**

Yes.

**Sveta Two**

Then why are you crying?

**Sveta One**

He's so handsome in his new suit. (*Pause.*) He used to be so distant. He had secrets and secret admirers. He was very independent. It was like I was living with a stranger. But everything is so serene now. He's with me all the time. We talk. He's so helpless and tender. I know it's a sin to say it, but I'm so happy this all happened. His cheek is just a little twisted. It's even rather touching.

**Good Actor**

So when do we get to see this paradigm of male beauty?

**Sveta One**

He wants to be alone. To walk the streets and prepare himself.

**Good Actor**

Prepare himself for what? Does he think his fan club is waiting for him here?

**Sveta Two**

I guarantee you that's just what he thinks.

*Good Actor snorts.*

You're the one got his hopes up.

**Good Actor**

Is there anyone here would ever give me hope?

**Sveta One**

What are you so deprived of?

**Good Actor**

Sveta, sweetheart. How can you -

**Sveta Two**

Sveta sweetheart?

**Good Actor**

I didn't mean that.

**Sveta One**

Haven't you gorged yourself enough?

**Good Actor**

Sveta.

**Sveta One**

Isn't it enough for you that we depend upon you entirely? You want to add insult to injury?

**Good Actor**

When did I ever insult him?

**Sveta One**

Why did you bring him to Moscow?

**Good Actor**

You think that was my idea?

**Sveta Two**

I never doubted it.

**Sveta One**

He knows everything. He says, "Why did they bring me here? So this guy could lord it over me."

**Good Actor**

Oh, so I'm "this guy" for him, am I?

**Sveta One**

Don't pick at words.

**Good Actor**

All right. Who's lording what over who?

**Sveta Two**

You love it when people are beholden to you.

**Sveta One**

Sveta, will you ever be able to forgive me?

**Sveta Two**

You don't owe me any apologies. It's all his fault.

*The two women embrace and shed tears.*

**Good Actor**

The hell with all of you. (*He towers over Preacher.*)

*The two Svetas continue talking. They have a few things to discuss.*

What do I do now?

**Preacher**

There are those who believe you can love God without having to pay a price. What do you think?

**Good Actor**

No.

**Preacher**

Then make good on your convictions. [**Photo 0663**]

**Good Actor**

Dad already gave you a thousand. Here's another hundred.

**Preacher**

I could have collected 5,000 in this time. Or I could have continued working on your father. But you see, I restrain myself.

**Good Actor**

Where's Dad? (*He is genuinely worried.*)

*Enter Father holding his finger between the pages of a photo album.*

Dad, we lost track of you.

**Father**

Look at this handsome devil.

*Good Actor and Preacher take a look. Miscreant leans in too.*

**Preacher**

Which one is you?

**Father**

Take a guess.

**Miscreant**

Is this you?

**Father**

That's right. (*Leafs through the album.*) I'll just show you one more then leave the rest 'til tomorrow. (*To Good Actor.*) I guess we should leave it 'til tomorrow, huh?

**Good Actor**

Dad. If you've got the time and you want to show us your photos, we'd love to see them. (*To Miscreant.*) Wouldn't we?

**Miscreant**

Oh yes.

**Father**

(*Disappointed*) No, let's wait until tomorrow.

*The doorbell rings.*

I'll get that.

**Good Actor**

Thanks, dad. (*Walks over to the Svetas.*) Are we harmonizing now?

**Sveta Two**

I'll talk to you tomorrow. Go get the door.

**Good Actor**

Dad's getting it.

**Sveta One**

(*To Sveta Two*) Sveta, I feel so sorry for you, too.  
(*Goes to greet her husband.*)

**Good Actor**

What did you tell Sveta?

**Sveta Two**

Wrong question.

**Good Actor**

What's the right one?

**Sveta Two**

"What did Sveta tell me?"

**Drawing Conclusions.**

*Good Actor sits on the sofa,  
a blank look on his face.  
Everybody is at the table,  
including Civic Enthusiast.*

**Civic Enthusiast**

And what is really so amazing is that it is all so totally real. It's like they'll all start flapping their little white kerchiefs and they'll fly away like birds. The music is just incredible. Mozart. Tchaikovsky.

**Sveta Two**

(*To Good Actor*) Why haven't we been to see *Rabid Romance* yet?

**Good Actor**

We'll go next time.

**Civic Enthusiast**

When I heard there was going to be an evening honoring him in Moscow I never hesitated. I immediately put in for vacation. At my own expense. You don't know my boss, do you?

**Good Actor**

I haven't had the pleasure.

**Civic Enthusiast**

A tremendous manager and a man of rare qualities.

**Miscreant**

*(Pestering)* Professor -

**Good Actor**

Buzz off.

**Civic Enthusiast**

*(Severely)* I believe I was talking, no?

**Good Actor**

Pardon me.

**Civic Enthusiast**

That's all right. I work with young people. I have nerves of steel. *(Returns to a sing-song narrative intonation.)* So what does my boss do? He says, "Are you joking? I wouldn't consider it. We'll make it an official business trip, all expenses paid. Only make sure you personally pass on the best wishes of everyone in the city administration. Please tell the great Vershinin and Ivanov that everyone here loves him and wishes him well."

**Father**

Vershinin who?

**Good Actor**

You mean he played Vershinin, too? That shit face -

**Civic Enthusiast**

He's considered the greatest Vershinin ever to have performed in the dramatic theater. Not counting the cinema, of course.

**Miscreant**

Who says so?

*Good Actor whacks Miscreant up the side of the head.*

**Civic Enthusiast**

There was a survey done at a conference on cultural policy. But that's beside the point. You interminably are interrupting me.

**Good Actor**

Yes, yes. Do please get to the point.

**Civic Enthusiast**

And so he says to me, "Write your own ticket. All expenses paid." Although I always prefer paying my own way so that nobody will go asking questions about it later. "Write your own ticket and give our very best wishes to our famous actor from city hall and from me personally. And videotape the whole evening so we can include it in our next social roundtable." He gave me a video camera - I hope someone here can help show me how to use this contraption later. Basically I've already figured it out but I just can't get it to record sound yet. I'm really curious to hear what people will say about our city. In short, he says, "write your own ticket and then before you come back, stop into the federal offices and see if you can't get them to give us some of the new computer programs." Although that isn't the main thing since sooner or later they'll send us those by courier. Basically, he says, "the main point is to videotape the ceremony."

**Good Actor**

So there we've arrived at the main point. I wonder who informed you about this gala evening?

**Sveta Two**

Oh, there was something in the papers. *The Evening News*. No, *The Observer*. There was a very nice piece in *The Observer*.

**Good Actor**

Your work, Fish?

*Fish doesn't answer.*

Your work.

**Civic Enthusiast**

I went to the community center and asked when the evening would be. They said, "We know your actor and we wish him a happy anniversary."

**Good Actor**

Anniversary of what?

**Civic Enthusiast**

"We love your actor and wish him a very happy anniversary, but the ceremony won't be here. We wish it was - we would be happy to host it. You might go ask that actor who plays the detective in the TV series - you know who we're talking about."

**Good Actor**

That's me, I gather.

**Civic Enthusiast**

Of course. They gave me your address and phone numbers. They were very helpful. But there was no need to call since I found you so easily. Sveta, have you put those flowers in a vase?

**Sveta One**

Yes.

**Civic Enthusiast**

You've got to clip the ends and pinch them a bit. They'll last longer.

**Miscreant**

Professor. Come on, pass me on my exam.

**Good Actor**

What exam? You came here with what? You came here with Chekhov. But that wasn't Chekhov you came here with because you came here empty as a drum and started playing con games with me. Maybe you think you came here in the guise of Nina Zarechnaya, filled with her dilemmas and her grief. But you didn't come here as Nina, either. You came here looking to get your kicks by turning everything helter-skelter. You jumped on the corpse of a great text and you humped it. You mocked it and you defiled it. You came here to put on some stupid

show. Tell me this, why did you get your girlfriend pregnant? Do you have no conscience?

**Miscreant**

It just happened.

**Good Actor**

Don't leave her now. She's your ray of hope, your future. Take care of yourselves. Have your baby. We'll get you a scholarship to tide you over.

**Sveta Two**

A walking, talking aid society.

**Good Actor**

Sveta! You can't imagine how I love you!

**Sveta Two**

I do now.

**Good Actor**

No you don't.

**Civic Enthusiast**

You know who you remind me of?

**Good Actor**

No. And I don't want to.

**Civic Enthusiast**

You remind me of someone. I'll remember in a second.

**Good Actor**

I don't doubt it.

**Civic Enthusiast**

I'll remember who you are.

**Good Actor**

While she's remembering who I am - what can she possibly remember? While our Actor with a capital A has not arrived, and while I still don't know what Sveta told Sveta and what it all will add up to - while everything remains completely up in the air, I think I'll have my say.

**Sveta Two**

Haven't you said enough already?

**Good Actor**

I haven't said a thing yet. I've done nothing but hold my tongue! If you really had been paying attention, you would see I have said absolutely nothing. You're the only one who could have missed seeing that. So I'm going to have my say.

**Sveta Two**

Only don't do it like Fish.

**Good Actor**

Maybe any old fish can say it better than me. That's not the point. (*Picks up a plate for some reason.*) I thought when the year 2001 came they weren't going to let everybody in. Not that I really thought that, but I had this feeling. That they wouldn't let mediocre actors in, that there would at least be some kind of checks and balances. The little people, the parsimonious people would be left back there. But they weren't. They're right here, with us. Nobody filters them out at the entrance. They let everybody into my future. You got a thought-and-a-half in your head? Go right on through. You have no heart but you have a blood-pumping organ? Go right on through. You insult old women? Go right on through. You corrupt children? Go right on through. They let everybody in. Slobs, snitches, professional stool pigeons, thick-headed brutes and bullies with heads on their shoulders. I thought the future would be like the eye of a needle, but it wasn't - it was like a trash pit. And that's why I don't love the world or the future we are living in. And I love it for the same reason. Because if it was up to me, the only people I would let through would be the snobs, the sickest of them all, the people who are bewildered and frightened by life. Rejoice, all of you, because if it was up to me, I wouldn't even have let me in here. Because all of the great offenses I have committed against you - intending to or not - that is merely one percent of my nature, just one percent of all the offenses I have committed, and it's only a fraction of a percent of all the offenses I can imagine

here in this potent, graying melon of mine. So be ye not unhappy. Rejoice. And I shall, and do, rejoice. For this is very good news for all of us. The world is free. I no longer hold it in my grasp.

**Civic Enthusiast**

I know who you are.

**Good Actor**

Then say who I am.

**Civic Enthusiast**

I'm not telling you.

**Good Actor**

Who will you tell?

**Civic Enthusiast**

Nobody.

**Good Actor**

*(Kisses the Civic Enthusiast)* Ladies and gentlemen, at any moment now we are expecting the arrival of a friend of mine. He will come in a suit. He is a classmate of mine and my friend. He is like a brother to me and I loathe him because I understand him like I understand myself. Together we bedded down blondes, brunettes and redheads. He is my mirror. I have destroyed him ten times and once I did save him. He is no different than I. He is not a whit better or worse than I. I despise him for everything he has done while I could not bring myself to do it. And for everything he has done just like me. And for everything he abstained from doing, from which I could not abstain myself. Ladies? Gentlemen? Beasts! Ye who understand theater and ye who understand nothing of it. Go and seek. Find a word that can describe. One word, which after all of this... After all of this... everything will come together. After all the unpredictability of life, after everything in life that negates life itself... Miscreant, bring me that grade book. Let me write in it this word: *YES*.  
*(Carefully sets the plate back on the table.)*

**Curtain.**