

The Schooling of Bento Bonchev

A true story based on the life of the famous Bulgarian student

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translator.

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I'm in the school of night, and I search for light
Wherever it never was and never will be!*
William Shakespeare

Cast of Organisms

Bento

Sandy

Cecelia

Simone

Tirce

Jeda

Frank

Emma

Sapiridis

Men and Women

Flash 1

Bento

My name is Bento. My ancestors came here from Bulgaria. Whenever I have to specify my sex in registration forms I mark down that I am "male." I believe I have every right to do that because I once took an entire course in the history of sexual behavior.

Flash 2

A bike rack in front of a private college building. Bento sits on the grass next to the rack. A group of students passes by.

Bento

Hello.

They look back at Bento in surprise.

Bento

Hello.

Nobody looks back at Bento anymore. Bento gets up and chases the students down.

Bento

Hello. Is that your bicycle?

He clearly is addressing a girl in a bright windbreaker. The girl stops.

Bento

Is this your bicycle? The green one?

Sandy

I bought it in a second-hand store. Some of them weren't as rusty. But I liked this one best

Bento

It's a cool bike-

Sandy

I've got to replace the brake pads though. I don't know how to do that. Can you replace brake pads?

Bento

It's a great bike-

Sandy

Only it doesn't brake very good. I actually like the fact that it's rusty. It stands out. I can always find it in the bike racks.

Bento

Yeah, it's a great bike.

Sandy

It's really old.

Bento

A nice bicycle. Are you going somewhere now?

Sandy

No, I've got two more lectures today.

Bento

I don't have any. I'm gonna go home.

Sandy

My name is Sandy.

Bento

Sandy. Nice to meet ya. But-

Sandy

What's your name?

Bento

Bento. Bento Bonchev. It's Bulgarian.

Sandy

Nice to meet you.

Bento

Could you-

Sandy

I'm really happy you introduced yourself. I don't know how to meet people.

Bento

Sandy. Could you take the lock off?

Sandy

What lock?

Bento

From your bicycle.

Sandy

Why? It keeps it attached to the rack. So nobody steals it.

Bento

I know. But when you locked it on the rack, you locked it to my bicycle, too. I wanna go home.

Sandy

Oh my God--I'm sorry.

Bento

It's no problem. Just undo the lock.

Sandy

I'm so sorry.

Sandy unlocks the lock and frees Bento's bicycle.

Bento

Thank you.

Bento sits on his bicycle.

Sandy

Bento, do you know how to repair bicycles?

Bento

No.

Bento leaves. Sandy watches him go. Students pass by her.

Flash 3

Bento

I really don't know how to fix bicycles. I've never had any reason to. Doesn't mean I couldn't fix one if I wanted to. You can learn how to do anything. But at that moment I wasn't interested in bicycles. I was too obsessed with sex.

Flash 4

Tirce

Using films to study the intricacies of sexual relations is like drawing conclusions about the Himalayas after riding a roller coaster.

Bento

But you're the one who referred to classical models.

Tirce

I allow that some discrete images reflect reality. The question is: Which ones? No--if you want to be serious about sex, I would not recommend trusting too deeply in that kind of evidence.

Bento

Oh, I'm definitely serious about sex.

Tirce

Then lay off the interpreters and investigate the memoirs of those who actually had first-hand experience.

Bento

Professor, what would you say about--

Tirce

I know what you're going to ask. Proof?

Bento

Yes. Incontrovertible proof. Does it exist?

Tirce

I'm afraid it doesn't.

Bento

What about dynamic pornography? I've seen in the papers--

Tirce

Newspapers are scandalmongers. When I was young I went on expeditions myself. I crawled around basements and attics and tapped on walls. We were sure we would find a cache of old porno films. We had a lot of fun. But, basically, it was just a waste of time.

Bento

I heard someone found something though.

Tirce

The so-called pornography that some put forward is about as convincing as home movies of the Abominable Snow Man or the Loch Ness monster. People see what they want to see. I ran a check on one of those supposed finds--

Bento

You? Yourself? You held one in your hands?

Tirce

I didn't only hold it in my hands, I watched it.

Bento

And--

Tirce

A fake. Indubitably. A pathetic fake. The intentional bad quality was intended to fool us into thinking the recording was old. But it was all so...primitive. It was obviously actors doing it. And bad ones at that. Their voices were phony. Their gestures were exaggerated. Their organs were too big and too distended. It's the way elementary school children imagine it. No scholar worth his salt could possibly believe it. There is no question but that it's a forgery. With the technological capabilities we have at our disposal these days, there's nothing to faking one of these things up.

Bento

So there's no incontrovertible proof?

Tirce

There's no reliable proof that God exists either. But there are still people who believe he does.

Bento

Exactly. They believe what cannot be proven.

Tirce

But that is the very point of the sublime notion of "God."

Bento

I can't do that. I have to have proof.

Flash 5

Bento and Jeda in the student cafeteria. They pretend to be looking over the donuts. In fact, they are conducting one of Professor Tirce's laboratory experiments--they are discussing girls.

Jeda

(Looking at his notes). Look at the organic female nearest to you.

Bento

Okay.

Jeda

(Reads). Evaluate her using a three-star system.

Bento

Zero.

Jeda

No, it has to be from one to three.

Bento

One.

Jeda

(Reads). Determine to which category the given organism corresponds: "Unpleasant," "Rather unpleasant," "Rather pleasant," "Pleasant," "Indeterminate."

Bento

Indeterminate.

Jeda carefully scribbles down the results of the test.

(Reads). Look at the next--

Jeda

One.

Bento

Determine--

Jeda

Indeterminate.

Bento

Next.

Jeda

One. Indeterminate.

Bento

Jeda diligently scribbles.

Everybody here's One and Indeterminate. You do it now.

Bento

Takes the notebook. Jeda casts a glance at all the girls present. They carry trays, select food, talk with one another. They are tall and short, pretty and not very. Just what is their secret? Was there really a time when they were capable of driving someone to distraction? Jeda can't imagine that.

Same here. Three Ones and three Indeterminates.

Jeda

Bento enters the findings in the book.

Do you feel anything at all?

Bento

Nothing. Now we have to examine our reactions to men.

Jeda

Bento

It's pointless. The same thing. Absolutely nothing.

Jeda

This is a weird thing we're doing here, friend.

Bento

You can say that again.

Flash 6

Bento.

To tell you the truth, I used to believe all these stories when I was a kid. You know: Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde. Boy and Girl. I believed 'em all. Maybe it's because I was brought up in a liberal household. Nobody was intent on shaping my Weltanschauung, nobody was in a hurry to deprive me of my childhood illusions. So I believed in all those "urges" and "convulsions" and "fatal attractions." But the maturation process did not bring any foggy dreams, yearnings or sorrows. I remained the same as I had always been. Like all the rest of my peers, I might add. And like many, I was disillusioned. But I wanted to make sense of it. So I signed up for a special elective taught by Professor Tirce, a renowned scholar of sexual morality in the ancient world.

Flash 7

Sandy sits on the grass by the bike rack. Bento emerges from the quad of classrooms.

Sandy. Hello.

Bento. Hello.

Sandy. I want to say thank you.

Bento. What for?

Sandy. For not getting angry because I locked my bicycle to yours.

Bento. Forget it.

Sandy. No. That was really nice. I_m really sorry. You might have been in a big hurry. You might have had something really important going on.

Bento. If I had something really important I could have taken a bus.

Sandy. But that wouldn't have been nearly as nice as riding on your own bicycle. You would have been on the bus and you would have been thinking all kinds of bad thoughts about me. You might have missed the beginning of the football game. Or the basketball game, if you like basketball. Or--

Bento doesn't hear Sandy's last words. He's already on his bicycle heading towards the city park. He has some free time today. He's going to put it to good use—he'll shoot a few baskets, go swimming in the pool, go to the movies, and have dinner at an Albanian restaurant. Naturally, the Albanian cook (a purebred Chinese) doesn't do Bulgarian cuisine very well. But it's better than the same old meat pies.

Bento is young. He is decisive and bold. The brakes on his bicycle work perfectly. On the other hand he almost never has to brake. Bento rides quickly on the straight and narrow, like an arrow, along the bike path. The wind whistles in his ears. He has a pleasant evening ahead of him.

Flash 8

Bento sits on the floor in the class quad corridor with a book on his knees. Tirce approaches him with a bold step.

Tirce

I'm sorry I'm late. I don't like being late.

Sits on the floor next to Bento.

Bento

No problem, Professor. I've got a book with me.

Tirce

(Looks at the cover). Weininger? This book raised quite a ruckus.

Bento

Yes, I heard about that. To tell you the truth, though, I don't understand what the ruckus was about.

Tirce

There was a time when the notion that females carry male characteristics and vice versa was pretty audacious.

Bento

But that's obvious.

Tirce

The human race has taken a long time getting used to the idea. It still hasn't succeeded entirely to this day.

Bento

Professor--

Tirce

Yes, Bento.

Bento

I don't want to offend you--

Tirce

What is it? You can't offend me.

Bento

I want to change my thesis topic.

Tirce

Are you no longer interested in the sexual era of civilization?

Bento
No, yes. It's amusing.

Tirce
(Bitterly) Amusing.

Bento
All those myths, the great art, the fascinating stories. Governments brought down by women, sexual morality, perversion _ the perversions especially. That's all very interesting, really.

Tirce
Then what's the matter?

Bento
I don't believe it any more, Professor.

Tirce
You don't believe it?

Bento
No, Professor. I don't believe it anymore.

Tirce is so upset he cannot hide his irritation.

Tirce
You were my star student.

Bento
I know that, Professor.

Tirce
Well...I can't force you. It's a shame you didn't finish grad school. What are you going to do?

Bento
I don't know yet.

Tirce
I don't understand.

Bento
Professor, do you find women interesting?

Tirce
It's an amazing topic of research.

Bento
But as an object of desire?

Tirce
No.

Bento
What do you find interesting?

Tirce
My work, my books, my ambitions. The process of acquiring knowledge. The search for truth. Travel. Sports. After all is said and done, I love good food.

Bento
Then why do you think our ancestors were dumber than we are? Why do you attribute characteristics to them that contemporary people no longer have?

Tirce
Well, circumstantial evidence. Descriptions. Literature. Manuals of love.

Bento
But there are books about levitation techniques. There are books describing life after death. There are books about casting spells and inducing thunder and hail. Why are we bound to believe medieval fairy tales? Let me be direct. Have you ever felt anything resembling the love that is described in the old novels?

Tirce
Personally? No.

Bento
Neither have I.

Tirce
Then I want to introduce you to someone. He's an American.

Flash 9

Simone
It happened when the Cubs beat the Yankees in the World Series for the first time in 100 years. I was watching on a wide screen

in a bar. Drinking whiskey straight up, no mixers. Not even any beer. And there was this woman sitting next to me. She was rooting for the Cubs, too. And when the game ended we suddenly looked at each other. I swear to God _ she had no warts on her nose. Her lipstick wasn't smeared. Her hair was neatly coiffed. Everything was in place. There wasn't a thing that could have attracted my attention. We looked at each other. And we couldn't stop looking. We must have done that for five seconds.

Bento

Five?

Simone

Five or six...It felt like time stopped.

Bento

And then?

Simone

Then I dropped my eyes. No, she did that first.

Bento

Did you feel anything?

Simone

No. I didn't. But she looked at me. And it was terrifying. I'm sure she felt something. I became so agitated that my temperature shot up and I ended up spending several days in bed.

Flash 10

Bento

I was shocked. For the first time in my life I encountered the unknown. My shock didn't last for long, however.

Flash 11

Bento

I'm afraid this story has a logical explanation.

Tirce

Damn you...Okay, what?

Bento

You remember when he said he fell sick after he met that woman?

Tirce

Of course I do. I remember his whole story by heart.

Bento

The fact is he forgot one detail. He wasn't just lying around in bed. He went in for treatment.

Tirce

So what?

Bento

So there was a doctor who examined him. And I found his notes in Simone's medical records. Chicken pox. He had a common case of the chicken pox! That woman was staring at the rash that was already beginning to cover his face.

Tirce

How do you know he fell ill that very day?

Bento

Unfortunately, the Cubs don't reach the Series very often.

Flash 12

Bento

I wasn't very happy myself that I blew away still another of the myths my teacher believed in. Professor Tirce fell into depression and the best he could do was to drown it in alcohol. I had no choice but to replace him at his lectures.

Flash 13

Professor Tirce talks on the telephone with his star grad student.

Tirce

Bento, my boy...If you could stand in for me at my next three lectures I would really appreciate it.

Bento

Of course I can, Professor. I'll be happy to.

Tirce

Considering that you're planning on dropping my course, I don't imagine you'll enjoy it.

Bento

I wouldn't say that. I've never regretted studying with you.

Tirce

Quit coddling an old man. You were my last hope.

Bento

I'm sorry, Professor. But you must understand that I can't study what I no longer believe in.

Tirce

Naturally.

Bento

Is there any reason for me to conceal my new convictions from the students?

Tirce

None at all. You have every right to present conflicting points of view.

Bento

Yes, that's probably the way to do it. Get well, Professor.

Tirce

Thank you, my boy.

Flash 14

Bento lecturing.

Bento

The theory of human sexual stratification is not new. It has been with us for thousands of years. At times throughout history such notions occasionally have escaped the impenetrable walls of university lecture halls and achieved popularity among the people. At times this respected, though controversial, scientific hypothesis has possessed the minds of the broad masses, thus corroding society and permeating its every level,

including that of the elite social ranks. We can call to memory the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th and, in part, the 21st centuries, eras when so-called "love" was at the height of fashion. Its adherents primarily were marginally adjusted poets and artists, people of unstable psychological balance, neurotics, syphilitics and zealots of exotic religious cults. To be fair, it is worth noting that literary works from even earlier periods were not always free from dalliances with this monstrous deception. Take, for example, the poetry of the troubadours: Love (*holds up his fingers imitating quotation marks*) for the Bella Donna (*holds up his fingers imitating quotation marks*). To this day certain weissenheimers still claim that such texts are not merely encrypted notations of alchemical reactions, but that they actually reflect a certain beastly desire for a flesh and blood object.

Male Student

We came here to attend a lecture in the history of sexology, not to hear a defamation of it--

Bento

You'll just have to wait a couple of lessons. I informed Professor Tirce that I consider it improper to conceal my own personal convictions from you. These are convictions I arrived at following a long and anguishing evolutionary process. Not so long ago I considered the extant proofs sufficiently convincing and I continued searching for new proofs. I believed in love, I discoursed upon (*again makes quotation mark signs*) the eternal enigma of the feminine, on passion and on jealousy. Until quite recently I was no different from you. I wanted to believe. Today, however, I declare to you that there are not only no credible accounts currently on record of the sexual inclination among homo sapiens, but that no such proof exists in all the historical record, aside from a handful of obvious hysterical aberrations inspired by so-called artists and serving the interests of various avaricious charlatans.

Female Student

You have forgotten about the reproductive process. Where do children come from then?

Bento

An excellent question. I'm very grateful for your assistance, although I doubt seriously that you had such a purpose in asking. At present there are over 140 basic reproductive methods. Tell me, what method would you consider the most natural and intrinsic to the human experience?

Students interrupt each other as they suggest various methods.

Female Student

Vaginal intracavitary implants?

Male Student

Reduplication?

Male Student 2

Refetalization.

Bento

All right. That's enough. Next you'll be naming test-tube babies and post-mortal cloning...In fact, the oldest methods we know are no more than 200 years old.

Female Student

But all that proves is that such methods did not exist 200 years ago.

Bento

What it proves is that our forefathers were not fools. If these methods did not exist, others did, of which we know nothing. Minerva was born out of Jupiter's head. Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob. And so on. Venus appeared from sea foam. The list is endless.

Female Student

Those are metaphors.

Bento

Metaphors. Quite so, metaphors. Metaphors for a vital, sacred process. Shrouded in enigma. Kept out of reach of the uninitiated. Accessible only to the chosen who have passed the rites of initiation. Metaphors. That is the whole point, that they are metaphors! Love itself is a metaphor. When a medieval chemist declares that a unicorn loves a salamander, all he actually has in mind is that sulfur is interacting with arsenic. Or something of the sort. As such, when I hear discourses about the magic power bringing males and females together (or worse yet, members of the same sex), when I peruse the endless examples of artistic creation depicting the act of the so-called "Kiss," I can't help but ask the question: What is this? A reflection of loathsome reality? An illustration of an unnatural

ritual? Or is it, after all, a symbol, a sign, the secret significance of which has not come down to us?

Enter Sandy.

Sandy

Excuse me, Professor.

Bento

Professor Tirce is ill. I am replacing him today.

Sandy

If you don't mind I would like to sit in today.

Bento

Please do. Have a seat.

Sandy takes a seat. Bento continues his inspired speech.

Bento

And when I hear my opponents claim that a kiss is not a poetic image, not an emanation of creative imagination, but rather a genuine physical act, I make the following proposition to my opponents: Imagine the wet lips of another human being touching yours, the tongue probing your tongue, wiggling around, pulsating back and forth, protruding deep into your own oral cavity, reaching down into your throat. Can you imagine something like that happening to you? I cannot.

The auditorium is silent. The students are stunned. They also cannot imagine someone else's tongue roving around in their mouth.

Flash 15

Professor Tirce clearly slept badly last night. In fact, he also spent the previous night in a much less than healthy manner. The professor's face shows signs of drinking his whole life long but made even worse by the drinking of the last 10 days.

Tirce

I'm an old tortoise, Bento. I remember the days of my youth when sex was held in esteem. There were conferences by the dozen and there was an enormous number of specialist scholarly journals. True, there were occasional problems with funding even then--

Bento

Has there never been a time?

Tirce

Funding for research is always difficult to find. But we were always able to organize major expeditions and track down the most interesting research data--

Bento

Interesting research data--

Tirce

Yes, very interesting data.

Bento

Why don't we apply to a foundation for a grant now?

Tirce

I do it every year! Fifteen years in a row I have applied for a grant to travel to the Amazon basin. It's pointless. There is no funding anymore.

Bento

As long as we're sharing personal recollections, let me say this... When I was a child, tormented by school and football, I would turn on the television and see the famous Professor Tirce heading off in search of still another lost jungle tribe. I would think--is this guy really going to find savages who engage in sexual diversions? I would let my imagination run wild and it all sounded so possible and so exciting. Then they would report that Professor Tirce had returned from his latest expedition, during which he had recorded remarkable research data. He only needed a little time to interpret it and as soon as he did he would...Then I would wait a month, two months, three months. But the Professor was silent. And he would remain silent until the next year when he would set off again on another expedition. And then the whole story would be repeated. Year after year. We have stunning data! Stunning data! But where are they, these data? They don't exist. Now, of course, I understand perfectly well that all these data were nothing but the fruit of the Professor's imagination, his means of pulling the wool over the

eyes of the foundation.

Tirce

That's not true.

Bento.

It is true. Unfortunately, it is true. And to my regret I only realized that right now.

Tirce

We recorded an enormous number of legends--

Bento

You and your legends! I can't listen to that anymore.

Tirce

Bento, please...I've looked upon you as a son..I can't deliver my lecture tomorrow, I have to pull myself together. I've got to make sense of my thoughts, I've got to spend some time--

Bento

Drowning in whiskey.

Tirce

Yes, that too... (Almost cries.) Please, don't destroy everything I spent my whole life creating.

Bento

I promised you I would deliver three lectures. One is done-- there are two to go.

Tirce

Yes, but I had no idea you would be so ruthless.

Bento

All I'm doing is providing an alternative point of view.

Tirce

Bento. The topic I study cannot endure any more points of view.

Bento

Then it_s no longer a science.

Tirce

It is a science. It's just no longer fashionable.

Bento

That may be so, Professor. But the time for pity has passed. I now am an enemy of everything you believe...I no longer see any reason to cover your red monkey's ass--

Tirce

You have no doubts?

Bento

I have no doubts.

Tirce

I would like to introduce you to an aged couple I know--

Bento

Wood and Kowalski?

Tirce

How did you know?

Bento

That's not hard to guess. Only I don't understand the point of meeting those old imposters.

Tirce

They aren't imposters. You have to see everything yourself. For my sake.

Bento

I'm afraid I don't--

Tirce

For the sake of truth.

Bento

All right. I'll spend an hour on them. But I warn you—I'm not going to play your straight man. I have no doubts that this is just another big scam.

Tirce

A lifelong scam?

Bento

A scam spanning two pointless lives.

Flash 16

Bento

In truth I was worried. I was not nearly as sure of myself as I let the Professor believe. The heroes of my past still held sway over me. Frank Wood and Emma Kowalski were the most famous "lovers" in the Western world. Twenty years before they had been at the peak of their glory. Stories about their "feelings" were plastered all over the covers of popular magazines. You couldn't turn the television on without seeing them making the rounds of the shows. A few journalists cast aspersions on their integrity, but nothing was ever proven. Nevertheless, even though Frank and Emma had avoided the big scandals, their time in the sun had passed.

Flash 17

The living room in the home of a pair of once-popular freaks. Bento and Tirce sit in old-fashioned transparent armchairs. Frank (a clean, withered old man with freckles) offers drinks to his guests.

Frank

The lady of the house will be down in a moment. Whiskey?

Tirce

Whiskey.

Bento

No thank you--

An oppressive pause.

Tirce

You have a comfortable place here.

Frank

Emma puts great store in atmosphere. She did the design herself.

An oppressive pause.

I can see that.

Bento

The oppressive pause becomes unbearable.

Frank

We can't live without one another.

Tirce

Tell about the time she got held up in the store _

Frank

She got held up in the store. I thought I would go out of my mind. And then I--

Bento

You ran out in the street in nothing but your underwear.

Frank

You know this story?

Bento

Everybody knows this story. You told it a thousand times on all the talk shows.

Frank

But you don't know the most interesting part. I didn't even close the door behind me. I completely forgot about that. That is how badly I needed to see her. And here is my love now.

Emma comes down the stairs. She is an unpleasant old woman trying to look young. Bento and Tirce stand. Frank and Emma kiss demonstratively. Tirce looks on affectionately. Bento--with scorn.

Frank

Sweetheart, we shouldn't. We have guests--

Emma

Oh, darling--

Bento

Yes, darling. You drive me mad.

Emma is silent. Obviously that's exactly what she intended to say.

Bento

You could at least mix up the repertoire. *(To Professor.)* I warned you, I have a photographic memory. That is the usual opening of their show. Only, if they're in the studio Mr. Wood usually waits until after the kiss to say, "Sweetheart, we shouldn't. We have guests."

Emma

A spiteful boy, isn't he?

Emma sits in a chair.

Tirce

Bento, what is wrong with you?

Bento

I don't want people to think I'm an idiot.

Tirce

Nobody is planning on thinking you're an idiot. You are in the presence of two loving people. They kiss without repulsion and they sleep in the same bed--

Frank

We only have one. You can verify that if you wish.

Bento

Do you think I need to verify nonsense like that?

Tirce

Bento, these people have lived a long life...Why would they torment themselves if they don't love one another?

Bento

Emma, I see you are seriously ill. You will die soon--

Frank

How dare you!

Emma

Shut up. *(Addresses Bento.)* You are quite observant, child. Yes, I will die soon. What of it?

Bento

I promise you that nary a soul outside this room shall ever learn.

Emma

Learn what?

Bento

The truth.

Emma

What do you care about the truth?

Bento

This is my teacher. (Points at Tirce.) He ruined my life--

Tirce

Bento!

Bento

And many others before I came along. We are a lost generation. We were raised in deception. But I don't blame the professor. He believes what he teaches. Won't you help free him of his delusions?

Long pause. Finally the woman laughs.

Emma

The worst thing isn't the smell or the snores. The worst thing is when another person in your bed begins crying in his sleep. Those are the moments when I hate Frank.

Frank

For that reason in recent years I have slept on an inflatable mattress in the living room. It's very easy to put away.

Emma

As for kisses, they aren't nearly as disgusting as people say. You just don't feel anything.

Frank

Oral hygiene is of the utmost importance.

Long pause.

Emma

I presume you'd like to know why we go through with all this.

Bento

No.

*Bento and Tirce stand and leave.
Emma and Frank remain seated in
their transparent old-fashioned
chairs. They are silent. They are
hopelessly alien to one another.*

Flash 18

Lecture No. 2.

Bento

Mankind is conservative. We maintain traditions and participate in pointless rituals. So why aren't we attracted to one another? At least out of habit. There is only one explanation. We do not need one another because--we have no need. And we never did.

Flash 19

*The same old meeting place--the
bike rack.*

Sandy

I bought a new bicycle.

Bento

Glad to hear it.

Sandy

That was an interesting lecture today. You are a very good lecturer.

Bento

Sandy--Your name is Sandy, isn't it?

Sandy

Yes.

Bento

Why do you need a new bicycle? Your old one was a good one.

Sandy

It was rusty. And it had bad brakes. The brake pads were worn out. I couldn't replace them.

Bento

Shame. Your old one was a good bicycle. A very good bicycle. Rusty. But good.

Sandy

I didn't throw it out. My girlfriend has room in her garage. So I'm keeping it in her garage. If you want I'll give you my old bike.

Bento

I'll think about that. Thank you for the offer.

Flash 20

Lecture No. 3.

Bento

If we suppose that there actually did exist some form of attraction between the key human components, then how do you explain why it disappeared?

Female Student

Ecology.

Male Student

Overpopulation.

Female Student 2

Professor Tirce attributes it to changes in the legal code--

Bento

Meaning?

Female Student 2

The laws regulating advertising changed.

Bento

Go on. Do I have to pull it out of you with tweezers?

Female Student 2. They banned all advertisements that exploited sexual images--

Professor Tirce staggers into the auditorium. He is drunk. Dirty. Unshaven. His voice sounds horrible. First he wheezes then he howls. Then he whispers.

Bento

Professor, perhaps you ought to go home?

Tirce

Traitor!

Bento

Professor, I would ask you to leave the auditorium.

Tirce

Goddam Bulgarian! Traitor! I just asked you to stand in for me.

Bento

If you don't leave then I will.

Tirce

Three measly lectures. Was that so hard?

Bento

You're drunk.

Tirce

Judas!

At first Professor Tirce and his graduate student Bento Bonchev begin spitting at each other. Then they roll on the floor as they grapple and scratch and hit each other.

The students watch their teachers fight with great interest. Sandy

*covers her face with her hands.
She can't watch.*

Flash 21

Bento

After the fisticuffs we ordered chow mein and continued our discussion in the park.

Flash 22

Bento, Tirce, the students and Sandy sit on benches or on the grass in a park. They eat chow mein with chopsticks from carton boxes, they drink beer and continue the discussion. Tirce and Bento look horrible. Their clothes are torn, their faces are covered in bruises and scratches.

Bento

(In a mocking tone) Okay, so advertisements exploiting sexual images were banned...Then what?

Shows quotation marks with his fingers.

Tirce

Only don't give me this crap. (*Makes quotation marks with his fingers.*) Yes. Advertisement employing images provoking human sexuality were banned. Without any quotation marks at all.

*Bento takes a long sip of beer.
There are many empty bottles
around him already.*

Bento

So sexuality without quotation marks ended without quotation marks?

Tirce

Exactly. Deprived of its financial underpinnings, sex fizzled out.

Bento

Very funny.

Tirce

Quite.

Bento

Hilarious.

Tirce

It isn't funny at all. It's tragic! It's a tragedy. It's a tragedy! A tragedy! A tragedy! A tragedy! Humanity was deprived... It was deprived...Humanity was deprived...It's a tragedy--

Bento

What a wimp.

Tirce

Who's a wimp?

Bento

You're a wimp.

Flash 23

*Bento and Tirce sing and embrace:
"It Must be Love," "When I'm 64"
and so on. Many of the students
have left. The most curious Male
Student and Female Student
(Cecelia) are still here. Sandy is
right with them.*

Cecelia

(Drunk and therefore very informal) Tirce, you shouldn't be drinking anymore. Let me take you home.

Tirce

I'm not drinking because I'm drinking. I'm drinking because I want to understand. Because when I'm drinking I think I believe what I believe in when I'm not drinking.

Cecelia

So when you're drinking do you believe what you believe in?

Tirce

When I don't drink I believe. But not nearly as much as I do when I'm drinking.

Cecelia

Let me take you home. You need to go home.

Tirce

Where's my beer?

Cecelia

You've had enough.

Tirce

That's not enough for me.

Cecelia

Professor, listen to me.

Tirce

Who are you anyway?

Cecelia

I'm Cecelia. You should listen to me.

Tirce

Cecelia. I like your name. Get off my back.

Flash 24

Bento

I can't say that the content of my conversation with Sandy went any deeper.

Flash 25

Sandy

I don't know how it happened. I was just locking my bike to the rack and then it turned out I locked it to your bar handles. I didn't mean to do it.

Bento

And?

Sandy

And now I kinda think it came out pretty neat that I did that. I mean, because you became acquainted with me. Otherwise you would never have gotten to know me. But I didn't mean to do it. I didn't do it on purpose. You do believe me?

Bento

Sandy. Let's have a drink.

Sandy

I don't drink.

Bento

Why not?

Sandy

I don't, that's all. I don't feel like it.

Bento tries to look at Sandy. It's not working. She's not in focus.

Bento

Gimme a beer.

Sandy obediently gives Bento a beer.

Flash 26

Bento

My head hurts.

Sandy

That's because you didn't take any aspirin when I offered you an aspirin. If you take an aspirin your head doesn't ache so much in the morning.

Bento is amazed at the sight of Sandy, who is half-undressed and who brings him juice and hot toast. Bento himself isn't even half-dressed. He lies on the only bed in this room where he has never been.

Sandy

Would you like scrambled eggs and bacon?

Bento

A little later.

Sandy

Then you can make it yourself.

Sandy puts on a T-shirt. Now she is sufficiently dressed to go attend her class.

Sandy

Would you like an aspirin now?

Bento

No.

Sandy

If you want coffee or something, you can get it in the kitchen. I'm late to my class. I don't have a second key, so if I'm not back by the time you want to leave, just make sure to close the door after you.

Okay.

Bento

Sandy leaves. Bento lies in the unfamiliar bed and tries to remember what happened last night.

Flash 27

Bento has grown a beard. True, it's not coming in very well—it's in patches all over his face. But Bento is undeterred. He needs a beard. He is now a full-fledged teacher.

The bicycle rack.

Sandy

Hey.

Bento. Hello.

Sandy

Is it true that Professor Tirce died?

Bento

Yes. I'm now teaching in the department.

Sandy

What did he die of?

Bento

He just died is all. He probably drank more than usual.

Sandy

He drank a lot.

Bento

Yes. Unfortunately.

Sandy

I haven't been here in ages.

Bento

It's been at least a year since I last saw you.

Sandy

I was gone more than a year. I took a leave of absence.

Bento

That's what I thought. But now you've got a baby.

Sandy

Yeah.

*An infant wriggles in a baby
harness hanging on Sandy's breast.*

Bento

Kids are funny.

Sandy

Yeah. This one particularly. Bento, show how you can laugh. He doesn't want to.

Bento

Bento is a Bulgarian name.

Sandy

I like it.

Bento

My name is Bento, too. It's also a Bulgarian name.

Sandy

I know. That it's a Bulgarian name. I like everything Bulgarian.

Bento

Bulgarians have a holiday named after Anton Zarezçn. It's a day when they drink young wine. Whoever drinks the most wins a great big handmade medal.

Sandy

Do you have a medal like that?

Bento

I was born in America. But one of my uncles has one. He lives in Bulgaria.

Sandy

If you were born in Bulgaria you'd have one of those medals, too.

Bento

Probably so. Listen, I've got to get to class. It was good seeing you.

Sandy

Yeah, really nice.

Flash 28

Bento and his students study pornography.

Bento

What do you think of this?

The students, huddled around Professor Bento's desk, are horrified: "Oh, my God!" "Oh, no!"

Bento

Now you see why this is nothing but a staged reproduction of someone's sick, surrealistic imagination. There is no way it is a reflection of reality. People obviously can't do things like this with each other.

The students are stunned. The last remnants of their belief in a sexual period of human history are destroyed.

Flash 29

Sandy

I forgot to tell you.

Bento

What?

Sandy

That bicycle...the old one. The one you liked...It's still standing in that garage.

Bento

That old rusty one?

Sandy

Yeah, the rusty one. You liked it. All it needs is some new brake pads.

Bento

Yeah, those brake pads. They've gotta go.

Sandy

Because otherwise everything else about it is fine.

Bento

Yeah, it's a really old bike, but a really good one. Quite a rarity.

Sandy

It's still there in that garage. You can come and take it any time you want to.

Bento

Thank you.

Sandy

I just wanted you to know that.

Bento

Thank you.

Sandy

It'll be there for you as long as you want.

Flash 30

Cecelia

Bento!

Bento

Cecelia, good to see you. How are you?

Cecelia

Are you in a hurry?

Bento

I am. It was good seeing you. Stop by more often.

Cecelia

Do you have a lecture right now?

Bento

Yes, and I don't like to be late.

Cecelia

The professor always hated being late, too.

Bento

I remember that.

Cecelia

Did you see the news today?

Bento

I don't watch television.

Cecelia

An ancient tribe was discovered in the Amazon basin _

Bento

Don't believe it. It's just more legends. Or old wives-tales.

Cecelia

It's no legend this time. The Indians do it.

Bento

Don't be so naive, Cecelia.

Cecelia

The expedition crew spent two months living with the tribe. They shot all kinds of film. The Indians do it.

Bento

What tribe is it?

Cecelia

It's a tribe of total savages. They still use stone axes. They get their fire by rubbing sticks.

Bento

So? Just like in all the books--

Cecelia

That's not all. There's no mistaking it. The Indians do it.

Bento

Why have you come here, Cecelia?

Cecelia

Tirce asked me to.

Bento

Tirce is dead.

Cecelia

He asked me to come see you on the day incontrovertible proof was found.

Bento

Why?

Cecelia

To look at you. Just to look at you.

Flash 31

Student

Nobody else is coming.

Bento

Maybe class was cancelled and they forgot to tell me.

Student

I don't think so.

Bento

Then why is nobody here?

Student

Nobody gives a damn about classes anymore. Everybody's paired off making up for lost time.

Bento

Oh, my God. Insanity. Mass insanity. So, what are you here for?
 Couldn't find a mate?

Student

I'm gay.

*The student gives Bento a big,
 innocent stare. Enter Sandy.*

Bento

Sandy, am I ever glad to see you...Where is your baby?

Sandy

Down at the police station. It's too dangerous to leave a kid
 out alone on the street right now.

Flash 32

Bento

Four days passed before everybody began to realize that children
 should not be dragged into this so-called love thing. It was a
 week before students began returning to class. It took a month
 for the world markets to stabilize. And it took a year before my
 class was cancelled--

Flash 33

Professor Sapiridis

You're a good teacher, Bento. It would be a shame to lose
 you.

Bento

I'd regret it myself.

Professor Sapiridis

But for a whole year you only had two students--Sandy
 and that guy. I think he's gay.

Bento

The so-called gay.

Professor Sapiridis

Bento, you've got to learn to accept reality. I'm horrified by the new situation, too. But the scholar's strength is in his ability to face the truth head on.

Bento

I'm not going to argue with you--

Professor Sapiridis

Indeed. Why should you? So let's put our heads together and come up with a class you might teach next semester. What about "Contemporary Sexual Morality." It doesn't have to be that. You can suggest something else.

Bento

Either I lecture on "Criticism of the Sexual Theory" or I don't lecture at all.

Professor Sapiridis

Don't you realize how silly that sounds? You mount professional attacks against sexual attraction and your lectures are attended by two students, at least one of whom has a crush on you.

Bento

Where did you hear such idiotic rumors?

Professor Sapiridis

Everybody knows it.

Bento

I reject the notion of "crushes" in principle.

Professor Sapiridis

Bento. You only live once. Who in the hell knows how many years it will be before this frenzy dies down. Be wise.

Bento

I don't want to.

Professor Sapiridis

Will you prepare a new course?

Bento

No.

Professor Sapiridis
I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.

Flash 34

Emma and Frank sit in front of a video camera. They take care not to touch.

Emma
And then we stopped talking altogether.

Frank
Entirely.

Emma
We had nothing more to say. We hated each other.

Frank
We'd had to kiss too many times.

Emma
Yes, we kissed too often. That has its consequences.

Frank
Emma. Have you said all you wanted to say?

Emma
Yes, I think so. I want to thank everyone who has believed in us for all these years. Thank you. Maybe you'll have better luck than we did. Frank, say what you want--

Frank
What I want to say I have never said before... But I have wanted to say it for fifty years _

Frank prepares to say what he has wanted to say for fifty years.

There is no such thing as love.

Frank stands and goes to the video camera.

Turn it off?

Emma

No. First you've got to give me my medicine.

Frank

Oh, I forgot about that.

Emma

It's important. Otherwise the blame could fall on you.

Frank

Yes, that's true.

Emma

You see how smart I am? I've got it all figured out.

*Frank brings Emma wine and pills.
Emma dissolves a packet of strong
sleeping powder in her glass of
wine.*

Emma

Here's to all those we deceived!

*Drinks, paying no attention to the
fact that she spills half the
goblet of red wine on her white
blouse.*

Emma

You can turn it off now.

Frank turns off the camera.

Emma

They'll pay you good money for that tape.

Frank

Huge money, Emma. Huge money.

Emma

You can take a cruise. You always wanted to travel.

Frank

That's just what I'll do.

Emma

You're a good friend, Frank.

Frank

I was once. Once upon a time I was a very good friend to you.

*Frank begins reading a newspaper.
Emma goes to sleep.*

Emma

(Sleepily). You know what we're not going to do now?

Frank

What?

Emma

Have a good-bye kiss.

Frank laughs gaily. Emma smiles as she falls asleep. Continuing to chuckle, Frank continues reading his newspaper.

When Emma is dead asleep, Frank removes the cassette from the recorder and meticulously tears the tape to shreds. Then he burns it in a ceramic urn. Then he removes his sock from his right foot. Then he takes a rifle and heads into the bathroom.

Flash 35

Bento

This is our last meeting. My class has been closed.

Sandy

That's not fair. They can't do that.

Bento

We can still meet once a week. Or twice. In the park. Or at my place.

Sandy

Or at my place.

Bento

That's fine.

Sandy

We can meet more often.

Bento

More often won't work. I got a job. The university theater needed a consultant.

Sandy

I could get a job in the theater, too. I hear they need executive managers.

Bento

Fine. What do you think?

Student

I met a guy.

Bento

I meet guys all the time. Sandy does too.

Student

This is different. He's moving to St. Louis. Shit. I know it's silly. But I'm going with him.

Bento

That's all right. In a world where people are fascinated with other people's sexual organs, St. Louis can't be any worse than any other shitty town.

Flash 36

Bento

I'm glad my student left me. Even if I don't acknowledge the existence of love, there are a few people who sincerely believe in it. I find it quite unpleasant that I could be capable of encouraging such a morbid behavioral condition.

Flash 37

Sandy

I'm glad I remained Professor Bonchev's only student. Very glad. I never thought that boy who went to St. Louis believed very strongly what the professor was teaching us.

Flash 38

Bento

Sandy. Sandy. Don't call me "professor."

Sandy

All right.

Bento

You know...We've known each other a long time. Just call me Bento.

Sandy

Bento. That's wonderful. I like that name.

Bento

Just like your son.

Sandy

The very same.

Flash 39

*Bento is overwrought and unkempt.
He has just been in a fight with a
man and a woman.*

Sandy

Bento, you shouldn't react like that.

Bento

But they were kissing.

Sandy

So what? That's their business.

Bento

I don't want Bento to see that. I don't want your son to be raised on examples of public hypocrisy.

Sandy

And I don't want him to grow up a basket case. I can't shield him from reality.

Bento

What do you call reality? These disgusting, hypocritical games?

Sandy

The games of this world. If people are swept up by them, Bento has to see it.

Bento

Why?

Sandy

To know. And to know how to _

Bento

To know how to imitate interest in an alien piece of flesh?

Sandy

Bento. The boy will make up his own mind whether he wants to play these games or not. It has to be his choice.

Bento

You're talking like someone who thinks these bastards on the street might be right.

Sandy

I don't think that.

Bento

You talk like someone who believes in love.

Sandy

I...You're a goddam asshole! Traitor! A rotten piece of Slavic shit! After all this. After all these years!

Bento

Sandy--

Bulgarian! Shithead!

Sandy

Sandy--

Bento

Sandy

How could I possibly believe in love? I have been taking your horseshit class for five years! I am your best student! Your only student! Shit! Shit! Shit! I hate love! Because of this goddam love I can't live like everybody else does. I hate you. I don't even want to see you. Stick your fucking class up your ass...I don't ever want to see you again!

Bento

I was only thinking of Bento.

Sandy

You don't have any right to think about Bento. Bento is my son. You don't have anything to do with him.

Flash 40

Hello.

Bento

We already said hello today.

Sandy

Bento

I know...But that was in the theater...You won't talk with me.

Sandy

Why do you say that? I said hello to you today. Yesterday too.

Bento

You haven't talked to me for half a year.

Sandy

Is that so?

Bento

You don't attend my lectures anymore.

Sandy

I'm finished with your lectures. They cost me too much.

Bento

I just...I just unearthed some new material. A very interesting phrase of Oscar Wilde's. It proves I'm right.

Sandy

I don't care about that anymore.

Bento

But it proves I'm right.

Sandy

I know you're right.

Bento

Everybody is wrong.

Sandy

I know.

Bento

Do you...are you with someone?

Sandy

No. I'm not.

Flash 41

Bento

Hello!

Sandy

We already said hello at work.

Bento

I wanted to ask you--

Sandy

We can talk tomorrow at the theater.

Bento

I won't be there tomorrow. They don't need consultants anymore.

Sandy

Why not?

Bento

They say they know better than me how to play lovers now.

Sandy

That's silly. They can't possibly know better than you. You've studied the topic for ten years.

Bento

Yes, but they say they don't need my knowledge anymore.

Sandy

That's silly. Nobody knows more about love than you do.

Bento

They say I'm too ironic. All I really tried to do was disseminate information.

Sandy

You could sue them. You can't fire someone for his convictions.

Bento

I'm not going to do that.

Sandy

Whatever. I'm in a hurry. I've got to pick Bento up at school.

Bento

How is he?

Sandy

He's fine.

Flash 42

Bento

Hello!

Sandy

Hello!

Bento
Sandy, I don't want you to think--

Sandy
What don't you want me to think?

Bento
I don't want you to think I'm stalking you--

Sandy
Why would you be stalking me?

Bento
You didn't think I was stalking you?

Sandy
Of course not.

Bento
That's good. I--

Sandy
I'm in a hurry. Can we talk another day?

Bento
Of course!

Sandy
Good.

Flash 43

Bento
Sandy!

Sandy
Oh, for God's sake!

Bento
Aren't you happy to see me?

Sandy

It's just you always show up everywhere when I'm busy.

Bento
I'm sorry. We can talk another time.

Sandy
Thank you.

Bento
Thank you.

Flash 44

Bento
Excuse me, but this is probably a bad time again, huh?

Sandy
As always.

Bento
I'm sorry. We can talk another time then.

Sandy
Talk to me now.

Bento
But you're in a hurry.

Sandy
I'm always in a hurry.

Bento
You remember what you said about that bicycle?

Sandy
What bicycle?

Bento
The rusty one.

Sandy
What rusty one?

Bento

Your old bicycle. The one if you change the brake pads it'll be good as new.

Sandy

Oh, yeah--

Bento

It's just that... While I don't have a job... I could use a good bicycle. I could ride it. My bike is broken.

Sandy

I think I threw it out, Bento.

Bento

You threw it out! Oh, that's great. I'm so sorry I bothered you about it.

Sandy

No problem.

Bento

It's just that you told me once I could have it whenever I needed it.

Sandy

But I threw it out.

Bento

Sorry.

Sandy

No, I'm sorry.

Bento

G'bye.

Sandy

G'bye.

Flash 45

Sandy

Hello!

Sandy!

Bento

Sandy

So, do you believe in love now?

Bento

Why should I believe in love?

Sandy

What do you mean? All these years have passed. Everybody does it now. Turns out it's incredibly convenient.

Bento

Are you married?

Sandy

Are you kidding? (Laughs.) I'm your student. It's just that everything all around is so...so filled with love.

Bento

Yeah, it's a huge industry.

Sandy

Yes. It's had a very positive effect on the economy.

Bento

Boy, I'll say! Love is a great reason to spend money.

Sandy

How's the job market?

Bento

I'm a box boy at a grocery store. I even have a new bicycle.

Sandy

Brand new, huh?

Bento

Brand new. Cheap. But brand new.

Sandy

I'm happy for you.

Bento

You, uh...Did you want to give me your old bicycle?

Sandy

Me? No. I told you. I threw it away.

Bento

You could have given it to your son.

Sandy

I bought him a new one long ago. He just bought himself a new car.

Bento

A car...That's great...So what's up?

Sandy

I don't regret that I dropped your class back then.

Bento

You were my best student.

Sandy

That was a long time ago. Still...I don't think turning forty is any reason to quit learning.

Bento

You're right. I think a person should keep learning all lifelong.

Sandy

My son is grown. And now I'm taking acting classes.

Bento

That's great. You think you'll perform in the theater where you work?

Sandy

No. I'm no professional actor. I just want to know more about it. I thought maybe you could help me.

Bento

In what way?

Sandy

You could consult me. I have real difficulties playing women in love. I don't know what it is they feel.

Bento

You could ask the other women in your class.

Sandy

I don't believe them. They always talk in clichés. All they know about love is what they see on television.

Bento

But I--

Sandy

It doesn't matter that you don't believe in it. You still know more about it than anyone else.

Bento

I can try.

Sandy

I could pay you 10 dollars an hour.

Bento

Fourteen.

Flash 46

Sandy recites a monologue.

Sandy

Everything I wanted to say to you...Everything I've said in my dreams. All the words, all the signs, everything that has been created for the expression of thoughts. All of that is so... inadequate. When all the vocabularies have been used up and when everything is said and done, I just want to be with you. There is nothing else beyond that.

Bento

Not bad.

Sandy

Really?

Bento

Let's go over the typical mistakes. What do you think; is your character young?

Sandy

I don't know. Probably not.

Bento

What about the person she's addressing? Is he young?

Sandy

No, he's not young anymore.

Bento

But you pronounce it as if it is impossible to determine his age. Age is a very important thing. Even Ovid said that age is the body of love. You've got to rehearse more. You have to feel it. You have to believe in your love. Right now you don't believe it.

Sandy

But there is no love.

Bento

Your heroine doesn't know that.

Sandy

That's true. Let me do it again.

Bento

Shoot.

Sandy

Everything I wanted to say to you...Everything I've said in my dreams. All the words, all the signs, everything that has been created for the expression of thoughts. All of that is so... inadequate. When all the vocabularies have been used up and when everything is said and done, I just want to be with you. There is nothing else beyond that.

Bento

That's better.

Sandy

Let me do it again.

Bento

And again and again. You have to rehearse it over and over to make this nonsense sound convincing. At this point I would even suggest you let go of the text and let yourself improvise. Say it in your own words. Who wrote this, by the way?

Sandy

Oh, some, uh, contemporary writer. You wouldn't know him.

Bento
All right. Go ahead.

Sandy
Everything I wanted to say to you _

Flash 47

Sandy
Did you see how they applauded?

Bento
Yeah. The crowd loved it.

Sandy
Did you like it?

Bento
Yes, I did. Yes.

Sandy
It's all thanks to you. You told me what my heroine was supposed to feel.

Bento
You can still do better, though.

Sandy
I can do better. I just need to rehearse more.

Bento
Yes, it's all in the rehearsals.

Sandy
You could come live with me for awhile. My son Bento is away at college.

Bento
We could do immersion rehearsals.

Sandy
Oh, yes...That would be marvelous for my career.

Flash 48

The living room of a popular theater actress. Sandy sits with journalists on old-fashioned transparent easy chairs. Bento (having aged) offers drinks to the guests.

Journalist

You have a comfortable place here.

Sandy

People used to pay much more attention to atmosphere in the past. They called it "fluffing up the home nest." We have no choice but to observe this stupid ritual.

Journalist

It's become fairly popular again.

Sandy

But there's no sincerity in it. People merely play at love. It's shot-through with hypocrisy. They spend enormous sums on interior design in order to convince themselves they actually have feelings.

Journalist

So you don't believe in love?

Sandy

We don't believe in love, do we, Bento?

Bento

Love is something that was invented to improve Christmas sales figures.

Journalist

But you really do have a comfortable little love nest here.

Sandy

I need it for my work. It helps me understand the people I have to play.

Journalist

In all your interviews you say you owe your success to your friend and teacher Bento Bonchev. But our readers want to know

if you experience feelings for him that go deeper than mere gratitude.

Sandy

Bento has done a great deal for me. But most of all I am thankful to him for allowing me to live a life free of hypocrisy and self-deceit. He gave me the strength to recognize and accept my own personal solitude.

Journalist

Bento, you are famous as a fierce critic of contemporary morality. How is it that your pupil is so able to express the nuances of love?

Bento

Sandy is a true professional. I have endless admiration for her. We rehearse a great deal. I play the foil to all of her characters. We spend an enormous amount of time in rehearsals.

Little children run around the room playing Cowboys and Indians.

Journalist

You have lovely children.

Sandy

They require a great deal of time and energy. Bento occasionally becomes upset when I neglect rehearsals for the children.

Journalist

But children, they're wonderful, aren't they?

Sandy

Of course.

Journalist

How many do you have?

Sandy

Six. Bento is the eldest. He recently became a partner in an international law firm. Then there is Gosha, Sofia, Vassil, Vassilka and Anton. Six in all. There may be a seventh. It's all quite simple considering modern medical technology.

Journalist

What is the method you use? I know many actresses prefer refetalization.

Sandy

I hadn't even thought about that. Somehow it happens on its own. But you'll have to excuse me now. It's time for our rehearsal--

Journalist

Yes, of course. Thank you so much for your time.

Journalist leaves. Bento sees him out and returns.

Bento

You mean you don't use refetalization?

Sandy

I don't even know what that means--

Bento

It is a common method of reproduction, based on--

Sandy

Bento, we have to rehearse. You don't want me to lose my edge, do you?

Bento

Yes, you're right. The damn journalist took up an entire half an hour.

Sandy

We haven't rehearsed for a whole hour.

Bento

A whole hour.

Sandy

A whole hour.

Bento

We'll just have to make up for lost time.

Sandy

And see to it that we don't lose any more.

Bento

We already lost a whole hour.

More than that. A lot more.

Sandy

*Bento and Sandy kiss. It's obvious
they are good actors.*

The End