

BALD/BRUNET

A play by

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ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

BRUNET

Yellow lamp. Yellow moon. Winding courtyards. Warehouses.
Barking dogs. Dogs nipping at your heels.

BALD MAN

The sea. Rocks. A lonely cliff disappears into the sea. I
run on it. A man is following me. I try to fly. I fly, but
low and slowly. Somebody grabs my legs.

BRUNET

A wooden pier. Rotted clean through. I dive off it. Summer.
A sleigh. A horse is pulling it. People are everywhere.
Everyone is shouting.

BALD MAN

A coliseum. Covered with a teapot sleeve. I ascend the
steps. I eat a chicken leg. It's night. It's cold.

BRUNET

Mountains. Rock. A bear. He's holding an axe. An enormous
leaf folds around me. A one-legged sorcerer. He leaps like
he's on springs. He sniffs with his long nose.

BALD MAN

An empty house. An empty room. Angular light. I lie on the
floor. I'm wearing a furry hat with ear flaps. A plumber
comes. He's wearing a grubby, padded work coat. He grabs an
ear flap on my fur hat. He drags my hat across the floor.

BRUNET

Train tracks. Grass. Money fluttering in the wind. I stuff
some in a tin box. I stuff more in. The box is empty. I
stuff more in. The box is empty. I open the box. The box is
empty.

BALD MAN

A stairwell landing. Two apartments. Kids hanging out. The
water is going to be turned off. I have a baby. I ask the
kids for a handout.

BRUNET

I hold out a three-liter jar. The kids toss coins in it.
And marbles and prickly plastic wheels.

BALD MAN

The worst thing is, when they turn off the water, you can't

BRUNET

The worst thing is, I can't bathe my baby. I have a baby. I don't want to bathe him in pond water.

BALD MAN

My elementary school teacher comes up and says, "You can't bathe babies in pond water."

BRUNET

Who's throwing things? Those aren't kids. That's a Gypsy caravan. They're dirty. Their money is filthy.

BALD MAN

I hide from her behind the door. Her nose is falling off. It's turned all black. I bet it's gonorrhoea. She might infect my baby.

BRUNET

I hold out a huge, empty jar. I hold it as if it were a baby. I snap a plastic cap on it and begin rocking it.

BALD MAN

My neighbor's door opens. Inside there's a dirty pond with matted grass. The Gypsy caravan makes itself at home and scatters paper all around.

BRUNET

I open my door. I run with my baby to the bathroom. I have to bathe him. I see a yellow lamp in the entryway. I run through the hallways and rooms.

BALD MAN

The Gypsies chase me. They want to take my baby away. I hide in the cupboards and closets. I slip into one of them. I see a street, the night, warehouses, a yellow moon and barking dogs.

BRUNET

I run into one of the warehouses. I crawl up the steps. It's night. It's cold.

BALD MAN

I start rocking and warming my baby. I race through my apartment, looking for the bathroom. I sit in a sleigh. A horse is pulling it very slowly. The Gypsies are gaining on me.

BRUNET

I want to fly. I can barely get off the ground. They grab me by the legs and begin diapering me. Me and my baby.

afraid they'll infect my baby.

BRUNET

I'm afraid my baby will suffocate while they're diapering us. We've got to make it quick with the bath. Or they'll take him and bathe him in that filthy pond.

BALD MAN

I start barking. Dogs come running and nip at the Gypsies. I'm too weak to stand up. Too weak to go bathe my baby. The dogs nip at the Gypsies. They shout and ride in a sleigh. But the horse is slow and the dogs are leaping and biting in a frenzy. I feel sorry for the Gypsies. I rock my baby. I lie on the floor, wrapped in a coarse woolen blanket. I'm wearing an overcoat. The blanket is tucked into a sheet. I'm holding a jar with a plastic top. I rock it, and the coins, marbles and plastic wheels in it rattle and jangle. A dog comes up and lies on my head. A yellow lamp shines above me. I'm wearing a fur hat on my head. A room. Angular light. The plumber bangs on the pipes and then comes up to where I'm lying on the floor. He grabs my fur hat by one of the ear flaps and drags it across the floor. He holds an enormous wrench in one hand. In the other, he's holding my hat by one of the ear flaps. He's in a grubby work coat. I'm in an overcoat. I'm holding a jar, lying on my back and I can see his big iron wrench dangling over my glass jar. He walks with a bouncy gait. Like he doesn't even know he's dragging me behind him on the floor.

(A free-standing closet is situated at center stage. From inside it we can hear the piercing sounds of a saxophone. Enter a balding man of about 50 years of age)

BALD MAN

All right, that's it. I've had it. Enough. Cut it. Calm down. Settle down. *(Hammers on the closet with his fists)* Thatta boy. Cool it, now. Cool it. *(Faces the closet, exhales quickly and forcefully as though mustering courage. Opens the door. A saxophone is hanging inside)* One, two, three—chill out, now. *(Takes the sax and tries playing a few notes. Enters the closet and closes the door)*

(We hear a series of low notes interspersed with long, piercing high notes. The young Brunet leaps out of the

BRUNET

(Wails on the sax) All right, that's it. I've had it. Enough. Cut it. Calm down. Settle down. Tha-a-a-tta boy. *(Exhales quickly and forcefully as though mustering courage)* I don't care if I'm bugging the neighbors upstairs. I don't care if I'm bugging the neighbors downstairs. I don't care if I'm bugging the neighbors next door. I don't care if my neighbors are bugging me from one side or the other, from above or below, from left or right, from up or down or upside down and all around! I don't care if I suffocate in moth balls—God-damned, stinking, sweet, bitter, bittersweet, old-fashioned, retarded, wimpy, dried-out, caked-over, crusted-up, worthless, friggin', floggin', flakin' moth balls. I don't care if I croak and rot.

VOICE OF THE BALD MAN

(From inside the closet) You do too, you liar.

BRUNET

No I don't. I don't care. You're the one who cares. Shut up. Sit there and shut up.

BALD MAN

(Coming out of the closet) Yeah, well I care. I care a lot.

BRUNET

So is that what you almost busted down the closet for?

BALD MAN

Say what you want, but that's what every problem boils down to.

BRUNET

Except for ones of life and death.

BALD MAN

Problems of life and death aren't for mortal greenhorns.

BRUNET

Or mortal Don Juans. Or mortal neurotics.

BALD MAN

Yeah. Or mortal neurotics.

BRUNET

I don't care.

BALD MAN

So tell me, what do you care about?

BALD MAN
You.

BRUNET
You.

BALD MAN
Me?

BRUNET
I care about the solidity and longevity of this closet,
here.

BALD MAN
You're an idiot. I'm sick and tired of you, you know that?
You exhaust me. When are you going to shut your uncool
trap? This bald old man wants some peace and quiet. *(He
sits down next to the closet. Silence)*

*(The Brunet combs the
Bald Man's bald head)*

Get out of here, will you?

*(The Brunet disappears
into the closet)*

I've got heartburn. My feet ache. My ears are stuffed with
cotton. Maybe I'm sick?

BRUNET
(Sullenly, from inside the closet) As healthy as a horse.
Want me to take your blood pressure?

BALD MAN
Forget it. Maybe I'll have some tea.

BRUNET
(From inside the closet) The tea-pot burned up. There
aren't any matches. They turned off the gas. The
electricity exploded. No tea leaves grew this year. They're
rationing sugar.

BALD MAN
Glad to meet you where's your bathroom?

BRUNET
(From inside the closet) Sorry. The weather just isn't
cooperating, is it?

That's all right. That's all right. No problem. I'll just sit here awhile.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) You do that.

BALD MAN

You ought to show some respect for your elders.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Look who's talking.

BALD MAN

Shut up, you numskull. Give me a break.

(Pause. Quiet rustling and muttering is heard from the closet)

Finally. I'm almost asleep.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Here.

(A hand holding a plaid blanket reaches out of the closet. The Bald Man takes it and covers himself)

Rough day, huh?

BALD MAN

(Mutters) I'm sleeping. I'm sleeping. Just like a baby. I'm sleeping, sleeping, just like a baby.

(The Brunet pokes his head out of the closet)

BRUNET

Say what?

BALD MAN

Shhh.

BRUNET

(Whispers) What?

BALD MAN

Shhh. He's sleeping.

BALD MAN

Him. That one.

BRUNET

Where?

BALD MAN

(Sleepily) Over there. *(Waves his hand weakly)*

(The Brunet heads in the indicated direction)

*(The Brunet alone.
Harsh, show-like lighting,
harsh, show-like sounds, a
show-like costume as if he
were a stand-up comic in a
comedy club)*

BRUNET

Our life. Life is a game. A game of tiddlywinks.
Tiddlywinks and canned food. Canned food and barracks. Our
life is an outhouse. Outhouses stink. Stink attracts flies.
Flies attract disease. Our life is a game in an outhouse.
With stinking canned food, flies trapped in jars and
pestilent barracks. Our barracks are teeming with pestilent
life. A true friend. A friend is a brother. A brother's a
bother. A bother's a loser. A true friend is a dog. Dogs
have fleas. Fleas come in millions. A true friend is a dog
and a brother—a flea-bitten bother and human loser. A true
friend is a human loser. A human friend is a true loser.

Those are my latest aphorisms. Oh, yeah. And here's my
latest poem. It's called "Shitting, Not Living."

I've got to quit cussing,
Fucking and drinking.
Knock off smoking and washing,
Shitting and not living.

Here's another one. It's called "From the Summons of the
Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet
Union to the Residents of the City of Samarkand."

Our unity, strivings and friendship
Make our enemies rattle sabres and shields!
People of Samarkand! Out to the fields!
Harvest all those old dried potatoes!!!

happiness? Me? What about me? Do you know? Do I know? You. Me? M-e-e-e-e? You. Me. I know. Family life is when you have a wife and family happiness is when she's at work. No! Family life is when you have a wife and a mother-in-law. And family happiness is when you're at work, your wife's at a school meeting, your mother-in-law lost the keys to the apartment and her neighbor friend is out buying groceries. Hi there. Hi there. You from the housing committee? No, I'm your wife's nephew from the country.

If you grew up in the country, you'd better love tractors and dung.

If you grew up in the city, you gotta sniff smog and read papers.

If you like philosophy, you're best off not being born.

First I had a tick. Then I got an ulcer. Then I got a mother-in-law and now they're taking me to my grave. If the grim reaper breaks his scythe, all he has to do is grab one of the sickles off one of our hammers. If we didn't have electric ovens, we'd have electric chairs. If we didn't have gas ovens, we'd have gas chambers. And since we have uranium deposits, then that gives us a chance to at least hope that they won't replace our steam heating with atomic space heaters. My advice to foreigners: Count to 73. And at every single number, cut off a beefy piece of your own flesh. Then, maybe, you'll understand what our country went through. My advice to women: If you want to know what it's like to be a sexually frustrated man, plug up every hole in your body and try to sneeze. My advice to children: Don't be like your parents. Otherwise, your kids will be like you. My advice to myself: Think before making wisecracks. And now, my latest poem. It's called "About Life."

I feel like cussing a blue streak,
I haven't the foggiest notion why.
But the reason couldn't possibly be simpler:
'Cause life is just like that, that's why.

*(The Brunet sleeps under
the plaid blanket. For all
intents and purposes, the
Bald Man is alone)*

BALD MAN

Rockabye baby, on the tree top.
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall.
Down will come baby, cradle and all.

the pillow. I love sleeping when it's raining or snowing outside. Most of all, I love sleeping in a country cabin with a crackling fireplace, or in a train with lights flickering past the window. The lights flicker, the train sways and I always get wherever I'm going. I walk out of the train station, and the town greets me with its emptiness. Especially if it's one that you came to for just a day or two, or if it's the one you grew up in and you've returned to it, knowing in advance that you're going to forsake it and leave it again. In trains, you have to ride in the upper berth. And you have to take cold fried chicken wrapped in aluminum paper. You have to travel light. And you have to see to it that nobody meets you. And when you're at a country cabin, it's got to be wet and damp, and the bed has to be really springy—with two mattresses. And there has to be a morning fog. It should be somebody else's cabin and all the things around you should be old and alien. The smells should be unfamiliar and the blankets should be made out of coarse wool. The fireplace crackles, a snowstorm is whipping and it's deathly silent.

Rockabye baby, on the tree top.

A Christmas tree, decorations and toys made out of cotton wadding are a child's Yuletide dream. Bread, a bottle, sardines and cigarettes are a grownup's Yuletide dream. My Yuletide dream is a bottle, Christmas tree decorations, sardines and somebody else's country cabin. My dream is fried chicken wrapped in aluminum wrap, some soap, a toothbrush and a train. My dream is cigarettes, some dried, pressed flowers, a rough wool blanket and autumn. My dream is a quilt, some pencils, a bottle and winter.

When the wind blows, the cradle will rock.

The morningtime city isn't conducive to people. It's conducive to stone lions and bronze horsemen. Well, then, I'm a stone lion. I'm a gilded gryphon. I'm a morning sphinx. The morningtime city isn't conducive to people. It's conducive to the clackety-clack of a tram car, the rat-a-tat-tat of ice clattering down a drain pipe, the wham! wham! slamming of doors. Then, I am a drain pipe. Then, I am a tin roof. Then, I am the filigreed railing of a bridge across the river. The morningtime city is conducive to the damp scent of the river, the damp scent of wooden girders, the damp scent of bricks, the damp scent of smoke rising from a burning pile of wet leaves, the astringent scent of oil on the tram tracks. Then, I am the scent of leaves. Then, I am the scent of smoke. Then, I am the scent of mist.

When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall.

I love sleeping on my stomach with my hands stuffed under the pillow. Daytime, nighttime, morningtime, evening. Only, there shouldn't be anybody around. There should be nothing

winter I dream eternal dreams. Autumn dreams are a water drop, winter dreams are the rattle of ice. Autumn dreams are a lovely sound, winter dreams are a droning hum. When autumn dreams become winter dreams—that's what I call a miracle.

Down will come baby, cradle and all.
A-a-a-a-a!

BRUNET

(Steps up) Nah, nah, rockabye baby. Listening to you makes me sick.

BALD MAN

Yeah?

BRUNET

Sick to my stomach. You make me wanna puke.

BALD MAN

Listen. I... you... uh...

BRUNET

What? Well, what? You look like a kindergarten rug-rat who crapped his pants. Only I'm not your nursemaid. God, I hate it when you start sniffing and whimpering! Wah-wah-wah.
(He disappears behind the closet)

(We hear the sound of running water and somebody washing up. The Bald Man sits up. The Bald Man sits absentmindedly. The Brunet enters in a tee-shirt, shrugging his shoulders. His face has red blotches on it from having washed in cold water. A damp towel is tossed over his shoulder and he's holding an electric teapot)

Here. (Gives the Bald Man the towel and goes to plug in the teapot)

(The Bald Man goes behind the closet to wash up. The Brunet mutters like a baby—wah-wah-wah!—and moves around the table and chairs. He puts teacups and breakfast on the table and starts cutting up some salami. The

Brunet, comes out from behind the closet in a tee-shirt. He sits down and watches the Brunet with a blank expression on his face. The Brunet pours some tea, sits down and starts wolfing down his breakfast)

(With his mouth full) Go on, eat. I feel like I tied one on.

BALD MAN
I'm eating. *(He eats)* Flick it on.

BRUNET
Huh?

BALD MAN
Flick on the radio.

BRUNET
(With his mouth full) What a bore.

BALD MAN
Huh?

BRUNET
I said, the radio is a roaring bore.

(The Bald Man turns on the radio. They both eat silently and listen to a silly, old-fashioned children's program)

This is really stupid.

BALD MAN
It reminds me of my happy childhood. Especially in summer camp.

BRUNET
There he goes whimpering again!

BALD MAN
God dammit, this is my home you know! I'll say what I damn well please.

BRUNET

BALD MAN

You're a retard.

BRUNET

A what?

BALD MAN

A retard, an inhibited, spiritual retard.

BRUNET

(Howling with laughter) Finally! That's the stuff! That's more like it. We ought to write that one down. Go on, write it down.

BALD MAN

You write it down.

BRUNET. I will, I will. *(Goes to the closet, writes on the side wall)*

BALD MAN

Yeah, that's not bad. You could do a show out of that: The Spiritual Retard.

BRUNET

And his sidekick, the sexual muffball.

BALD MAN

That's me, I suppose.

BRUNET

Nah, you're a sexual pinhead.

BALD MAN

Thanks.

BRUNET

Any time. Bon appetit. Happy listening. The main thing is to avoid constipation.

BALD MAN

Carry on, carry on, my little moron.

BRUNET

What I carry is a hot stick of salami in my mouth.

I grabbed my thing and made it hard.
Hey, hey baby, wanna drive my car?

BALD MAN

BRUNET

I love you for your wit
And all your hifalutin shit.
But every time you spill your guts,
You know, you only drive me nuts.

BALD MAN

With your brain like a poison snake,
Go on, walk tall, big dude.
You may be young and wimpy,
But you got a talent for being rude.
But, go try it in the streets,
They'll kick your face, big kid.
And then maybe you'll see
The sufferings of this ol' bald head.
And if you still don't get the point, son,
Watch you don't get slipped some poison.

BRUNET

Period. Morning's a bad time to be writing rhymes.

BALD MAN

I agree. What were you doing crawling in the closet
yesterday?

BRUNET

A simple case of despair.

BALD MAN

Looking for your socks in pairs?

BRUNET

I thought we were through with that.

BALD MAN

O.k., o.k., o.k.

BRUNET

All right. So, what do you have to offer besides a closet?

BALD MAN

Why don't you go down to a museum and take in some great
art?

BRUNET

Jesus! How come it is you always make me want to put out a
cigarette on your teeth?

BALD MAN

Take in a ballet. Go to the theater.

Too many people.

BALD MAN

I don't know, I don't know. Well, do something, for godsakes. Conceive a kid. Plant a tree. Write a book.

(Pause)

BRUNET

A little baby boy is born. O, happiness! O, diapers! O, baby crib!

BALD MAN

Baby powder, diapers.

BRUNET

Then comes kindergarten.

BALD MAN

Nah, I'll educate him myself.

BRUNET

What about your job? Where you gonna get the time?

BALD MAN

So what's a wife for?

BRUNET

Can you imagine yourself with a wife?

BALD MAN

No.

BRUNET

Me neither.

BALD MAN

Then it looks like we can forget the kid.

BRUNET

What were the other possibilities?

BALD MAN

Plant a tree.

BRUNET

Earth, seed, rain. A little sprig. It grows into a thick trunk. Then comes autumn and then comes winter. And then your little tree withers.

BRUNET

Then some jerk'll cut it down.

BALD MAN

Well, it looks like it's "write a book."

BRUNET

Oh no. That's your specialty.

BALD MAN

No thanks.

BRUNET

In that case, plant a tree, cut it down, saw it up, make a coffin and use it.

BALD MAN

You mean there's no other alternative?

BRUNET

You're a dead man.

BALD MAN

Now, wait a minute. Let's go back to the first choice. A woman.

(The Brunet laughs)

What's so funny, pinhead?

BRUNET

I remember that wondrous moment¹
When you appeared before me,

BALD MAN

Imbecile.

BRUNET

Like an ephemeral vision,

BALD MAN

Knock it off.

BRUNET

Like a spirit of pure beauty.

¹This poem by Alexander Pushkin may be the most famous in the Russian language. Hardly a Russian does not know it, and there certainly is no Russian who has not had it shoved down his or her throat in school. It is infinitely more beautiful than can be shown by any translation. The

BALD MAN

Shut up!

BRUNET

In the languors of hopeless sorrow,
And the excitement of the daily race,
I hearkened your voice so tender,

BALD MAN

Shut — Up!

BRUNET

And dreamed of your beautiful face.

*(The Bald Man hammers on
the closet with his fists.
The door swings open and he
slams it shut. The Brunet
keeps reciting the poem and
the closet door keeps
swinging open. The Bald Man
angrily keeps shutting it.
The Brunet triumphantly
recites the poem, the Bald
Man angrily slams the closet
door)*

The years passed. My dreams
Were scattered by violent gales.
I forgot your voice so tender,
The divine features of your face.

In grim, obscure confinement,
The days were long and slow:
No faith, no inspiration,
No tears, no life, no love.

Then again my soul awakened:
And again you appeared to me
Like an ephemeral vision,
Like a spirit of pure beauty.

My heart now beats in rapture,
Again it is teased and moved
By faith and by inspiration,
By tears, by life...²

BALD MAN

Get outta here!

What a bore! *(He disappears into the closet and closes the door behind him)*

(The Bald Man begins cleaning things up. He washes the dishes, sweeps up crumbs, hangs his jacket in the closet, waters the flowers. The doorbell rings. The Bald Man opens the door and returns with the Young Woman)

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me, but may I sit down? Maybe you could bring me a glass of water.

BALD MAN

Aren't you feeling well? Wait a second, I'll be right back.
(Leaves)

(The Young Woman sits and smiles enigmatically. The Bald Man returns with a glass of water)

Here you are. *(Gives her the glass)*

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you. *(Drinks)*

BALD MAN

What's wrong? Should I call a doctor?

YOUNG WOMAN

No, no. That's not necessary. I'll just sit here a bit. It'll pass. *(She smiles)*

BALD MAN

Maybe you'd like some more water?

YOUNG WOMAN

No, I feel better now.

BALD MAN

Perhaps you're hungry?

YOUNG WOMAN

No, it wasn't from hunger. *(She smiles)*

YOUNG WOMAN

I doubt you would understand. You're a man.

BALD MAN

Ah, so it's something strictly female, is it? Oh, I'm sorry. That was a tactless question.

YOUNG WOMAN

Don't worry about it. You really haven't guessed, have you?

BALD MAN

No. What was I supposed to guess?

YOUNG WOMAN

You remind me of my father. Don't you notice anything? (*She smiles*)

BALD MAN

You were a little bit dizzy and sick to your stomach.

YOUNG WOMAN

Are you married?

BALD MAN

No.

YOUNG WOMAN

(*Laughs*) Then you won't be able to understand.

BALD MAN

Why?

YOUNG WOMAN

I haven't interrupted anything, have I? If you were doing something, go right ahead with it. I'll just sit here awhile.

BALD MAN

Please do. You just sit right there. It's been a long time since I had guests.

YOUNG WOMAN

I can see that you are lonely.

BALD MAN

You can?

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course.

Strange. *(Pause)* You are a brave woman. All by yourself, you just walk right into a strange man's apartment.

(The Young Woman stares intently at the Bald Man)

YOUNG WOMAN

On the other hand, you are extremely trusting.

BALD MAN

I think maybe I ought to be afraid of you.

(The Young Woman smiles. Pause)

I get the feeling that you're someplace else.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh? Where am I?

BALD MAN

Someplace else.

(Pause)

What?! What's wrong? Are you feeling ill again?

YOUNG WOMAN

Calm down, calm down. Everything's all right. *(She smiles)*

BALD MAN

Are you talking to me?

YOUNG WOMAN

Of course not. I'm talking to it.

BALD MAN

To what?

YOUNG WOMAN

Shh, calm down. Sleep, sleep, little one.

BALD MAN

Who are you talking to? There's nobody here.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes there is.

BALD MAN

(The Young Woman smiles)

YOUNG WOMAN

There you go. Sleep, sleep. That's my little sweetie. You're going to be smart. And wise. And beautiful. Your mama loves you. And your mama is waiting for you. Don't be afraid. Mama will be there to help you. There you go.

BALD MAN

Oh, I didn't get it at first. *(Smiles)*

YOUNG WOMAN

But now you do?

BALD MAN

Yes.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's sleeping again. Goodbye now. *(She leaves)*

VOICE OF BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Sorry. I got carried away.

BALD MAN

Ah, forget it. I did, too. I'm the one who's sorry.

VOICE OF BRUNET

Man, we live a drab life.

BALD MAN

Yeah. Thanks for keeping quiet while she was here.

VOICE OF BRUNET

No problem, my man. I understand.

BALD MAN

You and I fight a lot.

VOICE OF BRUNET

It's just the generation gap.

BALD MAN

Generation gap? What the hell are you talking about?

VOICE OF BRUNET

There you go again. *(He comes out of the closet)* Wanna sit for awhile?

BALD MAN

BRUNET

You wouldn't be able to live with her, anyway.

VOICE OF BALD MAN

(From inside the closet) Why not?

BRUNET

You're too egotistical!

VOICE OF BALD MAN

How do you figure?

BRUNET

The closer someone is to you, the more demands you make on them.

VOICE OF BALD MAN

You think so?

BRUNET

Yeah. I consider that natural for an artist.

VOICE OF BALD MAN

And?

BRUNET

That's all. I don't want to put it in words. Otherwise the whole thing falls apart.

VOICE OF BALD MAN

I'll invite her to come visit me.

BRUNET

What for?

VOICE OF BALD MAN

We'll drink tea and talk.

BRUNET

What if she comes with her husband?

VOICE OF BALD MAN

What husband?

BRUNET

You don't think she's a single parent, do you?

VOICE OF BALD MAN

I didn't think about it.

the newspaper in his slippers.

VOICE OF BALD MAN

What do you think she'd have a husband like that for?

BRUNET

What the hell difference does it make what kind of husband she has? A husband is "a thing unto itself." Once you've got one, you've got one forever.

BALD MAN

(Flinging open the closet door) That's it! Forget it! She's an idiot!

BRUNET

There you go!

BALD MAN

And you're a jerk! You ruined everything! What the hell did you have to go bring up her husband for? Idiot!

BRUNET

Oh, shut up. We'll see yet which one of us is the idiot.
(Goes into the closet and slams the door shut)

*(Pause. The Bald Man
knocks quietly on the door)*

(From inside the closet) Leave me alone!

BALD MAN

I'm sorry.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Get outta here!

BALD MAN

All right! *(He goes into the closet and closes the door)*

VOICES

(From inside the closet) Get out of here! Get out of here yourself! I was here first! I don't give a damn! I don't give a damn if you don't give a damn! The hell with you! The hell with you, too! Quit drooling on me when you shout! You think that was me drooling on you!? What do you think this is, then!? Pigeon droppings! What pigeon!? The one you let out your ass! Look who's talking! Speak for yourself! Keep your hands off me! Then quit shoving! I'm not shoving anybody! And I'm not talking to you! Me either! Ape!

*(A long silence,
followed by hysterical
laughter)*

What's your problem? I started thinking about a fat, hairy parrot.

*(The second voice begins
laughing hysterically)*

O.k., I'm getting out. It's stuffy in here.

*(The Bald Man comes out
of the closet)*

BALD MAN

But you're an ass, if I ever saw one.

BRUNET

(Coming out of the closet) What did you say?

BALD MAN

I said, "hee-haw!" You ass.

BRUNET

Which one of us is the ass if it's you going around hee-hawing? You're sick.

BALD MAN

Whose sick? I'm sick?

BRUNET

Write it down, nurse: "Beastomania." Plus paranoia and brain damage. Put him in an isolation cell.

BALD MAN

You're the one who's sick!

BRUNET

Hello! How are we today? How's your schizophrenia doing? Is it behaving itself like a submissive wife? Doing the shopping, washing the clothes and fixing lousy dinners? I see. Hey nurse, get this man a divorce and we'll fix him up like new. And who are you?! Yeah, you. Who are you?! Oh, I see. Run-of-the-mill epilepsy. Hey, nurse, get me a pot, quick. I can feel an involuntary urge to urinate coming on. Hello, are you next? Put everything out here, now. Nice and easy. Take that key out of your mouth. Take my glasses out of your nose. Give the nurse back her wig. I can't help it

patient?

BALD MAN

What the hell is your problem?

BRUNET

Are you in a psycho ward or not?

BALD MAN

I'm at home.

BRUNET

And I say you're in a psycho ward.

BALD MAN

You're the one in a psycho ward.

BRUNET

Patient! Don't talk back to me like that! I'm old enough to be your father. Otherwise, it's off to the isolation cell with you. With no mail privileges.

BALD MAN

All right, all right. What do you want from me?

BRUNET

Nothing at all. The point is, what do you want from me, patient? What's your problem?

BALD MAN

Nothing.

BRUNET

Nothing? Let's have a look at your record.

BALD MAN

What's wrong with me?

BRUNET

It says here you're suffering from l-l-l-o-g-o-r-r-r-h-e-a.

BALD MAN

What the hell is that?

BRUNET

Th-th-th-th-at's wh-wh-wh-en y-y-y-ou c-c-c-on-stantly re-p-p-p-eat ev-v-v-erything.

BALD MAN

Yeah? Very interesting. Good. Th-th-th-ank you, d-d-d-oc-tor.

(Also stuttering) Wh-wh-wh-at's wrong, p-p-p-atient? You af-f-f-raid of s-s-s-omething?

BALD MAN

N-n-n-o.

BRUNET

Wh-what is it, th-th-en?

BALD MAN

I've g-g-g-ot the h-h-h-i-ccups.

BRUNET

Th-th-at's not the h-h-h-iccups. You're st-t-t-uttering.

BALD MAN

Y-y-eah? W-w-ell that's wh-wh-why I'm saying "h-h-h-iccups" and not "st-t-t-uttering."

BRUNET

O.k. We'll say you're h-h-h-i-ccupping and not st-t-t-uttering. It happens to lots of people. Don't be af-f-f-raid.

BALD MAN

(Stops stuttering) O.k., doctor. I won't. Only tell me honestly, what do I do if sometimes I feel like putting on a noose instead of a tie?

BRUNET

(In amazement) So that's it? However, what's the difference? *(Stops stuttering. Begins speaking rapidly and writing down the answers to his questions)* Do you urinate?

BALD MAN

Yes.

BRUNET

Blue?

BALD MAN

Yellow.

BRUNET

Hot?

BALD MAN

Yes.

No.	BALD MAN
None?	BRUNET
Yes.	BALD MAN
For long?	BRUNET
Yes.	BALD MAN
Good! Women?	BRUNET
What?	BALD MAN
Women, yes?	BRUNET
Yes. What women?	BALD MAN
Yes, what? Women, yes?	BRUNET
What women yes?	BALD MAN
Yes, women yes, or yes, women no?	BRUNET
Yes, women yes. What do you mean, no? No, women yes.	BALD MAN
Yes or no?!	BRUNET
No.	BALD MAN
So is it yes or no?!	BRUNET
	BALD MAN

Men?	BRUNET
No.	BALD MAN
Men, yes?	BRUNET
No!	BALD MAN
Good! Give me a number!	BRUNET
Five.	BALD MAN
Color?	BRUNET
Black.	BALD MAN
Scent?	BRUNET
Smooth.	BALD MAN
Taste?	BRUNET
Sour.	BALD MAN
Lenin?	BRUNET
Bald.	BALD MAN
Stars?	BRUNET
Red.	BALD MAN
House?	BRUNET

White.

BRUNET

Smoke?

BALD MAN

Pipes.

BRUNET

Fights?

BALD MAN

Home.

BRUNET

Knock?

BALD MAN

Door.

BRUNET

Teeth?

BALD MAN

Dentist.

BRUNET

Butter?

BALD MAN

Cheese.

BRUNET

Bread?

BALD MAN

Crumbs.

BRUNET

Fleas?

BALD MAN

Roaches.

BRUNET

Window?

BALD MAN

Rain.

Cops. BALD MAN

Cops? BRUNET

Rain. BALD MAN

Rain? BRUNET

Cops. BALD MAN

Cops?! BRUNET

Rain. BALD MAN

Rain? BRUNET

Cops. BALD MAN

Cops!!! BRUNET

Caps. BALD MAN

Caps?!! BRUNET

Cops. BALD MAN

Cops? BRUNET

Caps. BALD MAN

Cups? BRUNET

BALD MAN

Cups!!!	BRUNET
Cops.	BALD MAN
Vodka?	BRUNET
Disgusting.	BALD MAN
Yes.	BRUNET
No.	BALD MAN
No?	BRUNET
Yes.	BALD MAN
Full steam ahead, hurrah!	BRUNET
Slogans.	BALD MAN
Slogans? That's interesting.	BRUNET
Red.	BALD MAN
Red?	BRUNET
Stars.	BALD MAN
Stars. Of course. Stars?	BRUNET
Torso.	BALD MAN
Torso? Very interesting.	BRUNET

Naked.

BRUNET

Aha! Naked?

BALD MAN

Woman.

BRUNET

Woman?

BALD MAN

Grandpa.

BRUNET

Grandpa?

BALD MAN

Prince.

BRUNET

Prince?

BALD MAN

Bedtime story.

BRUNET

Bedtime story?

BALD MAN

Bird.

BRUNET

Bird?

BALD MAN

Flip.

BRUNET

Flip?

BALD MAN

Money.

BRUNET

Money?

BALD MAN

Taxi.

BALD MAN
Home.

BRUNET
Home?

BALD MAN
Closet.

BRUNET
Closet?

BALD MAN
Loneliness.

BRUNET
Loneliness?

BALD MAN
Rain.

BRUNET
Rain?

BALD MAN
Cops.

BRUNET
GOOD!

BALD MAN
S-s-o, wh-wh-at's m-m-y p-p-problem, d-d-doctor?

BRUNET
A cut and dried case, p-p-p-atient. You've got to deep-six that cop who's trailing you, or, better yet, emigrate somewhere.

BALD MAN
Hell no. I don't even want to hear about it. What the hell would I do there?

BRUNET
Where? In prison after you get convicted of murder?

BALD MAN
No, in some foreign country. Those aren't joking words, you know.

question. What's wrong with emigration?

BALD MAN

It's not so bad here... *(Scratches his neck)*

BRUNET

I don't need you to tell me what's good and what's bad here. What I want to know is why you think that things here are better than they are worse?

BALD MAN

What makes you think I think things here are better than they are worse?

BRUNET

Because you're a numskull. A manure bug. A dissident. A half-wit with masochistic tendencies. Where in the hell else would someone like you live? And then, of course, as they say, your roots are here.

BALD MAN

That's right. They are. Right here. Right here. Right here. I never knew that before. If I wound up in one of those fat, self-satisfied, over-fed countries, do you think a local girl would come up to me and say I remind her of her father? I can picture it now. The doorbell rings. I open the door and—what do you know—there's some sleek creature in a designer gown standing there.

"Hello," I say.

"Hi there," she says. "How are you?"

"Fine," I say.

"Hey baby," she says, "I was at one of your concerts."

"Is that so, tootsie?"

"Pour me a glass of whiskey," she says, "I've gotta talk to you."

"I've got nothing but vodka, baby," I say.

"Oh, yeah," she says, "they told me you were Russian. Well then, pour me a glass of the stinking juice. Only make mine with soda water."

"Have a seat," I tell her, "and drink up. You've got a great pair of legs."

"Thanks," she says, "I know. Hey, you know what, baby? You remind me of my old man."

"You don't say? How's that?"

"He was gay and he used to look at women just like you do."

"You think I'm gay? There aren't any gays in Russia."

"Don't lie to me, hotstuff. There was this one Russian guy I wanted to sleep with, but he stole my boyfriend before I could get him into bed. But I can tell you're not

sweetheart."

"Yeah, that's what happens to kids whose daddies spent their whole life kissing their boss's ass."

"What can I say, baby? Sorry to hear it."

"The worst part is that he dumped me and my old lady when I was seven. So I ended up hanging out with druggies."

"You poor baby."

"Yeah, and then the whole narco squad started taking an interest in me."

And on and on and on. And then she asks me to become her father—says she wants me to give her fatherly caresses. But I refuse. So she threatens to sue me and write a letter to *Time Magazine*. I give in and start caressing her. Then, before you know it, I drag her into bed. I drag her into bed and we spend the whole night tripping the light fantastic. When I wake up, she's in the bathtub. And when she comes out, she says, "Hi, baby."

"Mornin', tootsie."

"You're really hot, baby. Thanks."

"It was nothing, tootsie. Here's some money for a cab."

"Hey, baby, knock it off," she says. "I can drive myself home in my Lincoln."

"So, you're a millionaire, are you?"

"Nah, it's my old man who's the millionaire. The Lincoln was a birthday present."

"Gave it to you for your seventh birthday, did he?"

"No. Last year. I was just lying about all the rest. See ya."

"See ya later, sweetheart."

And after that I spend a couple of months in detox trying to recover from the trip.

BRUNET. Bravo! That's a great story. You ought to write it down.

BALD MAN. *(Suddenly exploding)* I'm never going to write down nothing anymore! I am telling you that if I'm going to live in shit, I want it to be my own! I can't live anywhere but here! The shit I need's right here and I can't live without it! If I wrote all that down and read it to those morons, they'd never understand jack. They'd just laugh at me, the pathetic jerks. Stinking swine!

(The Brunet goes into the closet from which we can hear Louis Armstrong singing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child." The Bald Man calms down slowly)

I'm going for a walk. *(Puts on his coat)* Autumn is here.

*above and the wind blows them
around the stage. The Bald
Man walks among them)*

Hello, hello, hello. I'd like to begin with a poem called
"Dissident Lyricism":

If shit didn't stink
And tasted like sugar,
No one would dare compare
Shit and the U.S.S.R.

*(Opens up a notebook and
writes lazily)*

Very good. What's so good about it, sir? What's good, my
good sir, is that we still haven't lost the ability to
distinguish between the taste of shit and the taste of
everything else. *(Writes in his notebook)* Say, have you
been through some terrible ordeal? Yeah, I was just reading
my passport. It says right there in black and white:
"Citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." And
following that is my name. *(Writes in his notebook)*

A brick climbed up the wall
And another followed it there.
Who cares where bricks will crawl?
Maybe their nest is up there.

(Writes in his notebook)

What do you do if your wife is a lesbian? Sleep with
her AC/DC.

*(Writes in his
notebook)*

What does a soldier kiss? — The flag.
What does a student kiss? — The teacher's hand.
What does a General Secretary kiss? — His mother-in-
law.

What if he's not married? — Then he kisses his own ass
for having sat through so many congresses and meetings.

What does a minister need a chair for? — So he'll have
something to stand up from when his boss enters the office.

Can a communist be impotent? — Yes, if his wife stops
singing revolutionary songs to him at bedtime.

A man listened to the radio and decided to go deaf. A
man watched the television and decided to go blind. A man
ate in a cafeteria and decided to go hungry. A man went out

neighbor was a Stalinist, he cut off both hands. A man thought about all these things and went out of his mind.

What's left to bury when he dies? - One great big ass.

Do you want to die? - I want to die politically unaligned.

How do you envision the future? - As a flourishing garden.

You mean here in our country? - No, throughout the whole world.

What will our country be like? - A manure pile to fertilize the world's garden.

Do you agree with the proverb: "Reap as ye shall sow"? - Yes. We sowed socialism and communism and now we are reaping famine and military dictatorship.

Love, equality and brotherhood was the slogan on the French revolutionary guillotine. Peace, labor, May was the slogan on many Soviet buildings.

What color is a Soviet citizen most afraid of? - None, because he's color-blind. He peers into the future and sees nothing there but emptiness.

Would you want to be Lenin? - No, because after I die I don't want them to stuff me with sawdust so that endless hordes of people can walk past me and think to themselves, "You son-of-a-bitch."

Tell me, what time is it? - Past curfew.

This is me, this is my wife, and this is an x-ray of my dog's left leg.

A policeman stopped a diplomat's car and asked for his license. So the diplomat said, "I have license to do what I damn well please."

Hello, I'm calling about your ad. Are you the one who wants to exchange an apartment with a ghost in it? - Yeah, only you should know that he's a drunkard and isn't legally registered to live here.

How much does a Soviet condom cost? - A ruble a pack and fifty rubles for the abortion.

I love big-breasted women
There can be no doubt about it.
When I come home battered and broken
I like sleeping on a soft, loving tit.

*(The Bald Man sits down
next to the closet, leans
against it and falls asleep.)*

BRUNET

A small operating table for newborns. He lies on it naked

his legs, peek in his ears and squeeze the backs of his knees and the folds of his arms. They ooh and aah with silly little smiles and then they pull out a syringe and give him shots. The needles sink into him as if he were boiled meat—there's a small jerk, but it's painless. As though it were someone else's body. Then, there he is lying on the same table, his long legs cocked up over his buttocks and his shoulder blades hanging over the edge. He's naked again and his bald head looks just like a baby's. His body is all tensed up because the table is too small to hold him. The more he strains, the redder his face gets. He thinks his belly-button is going to unravel, but, instead, a small lizard crawls out absolutely painlessly and runs across his bald head before falling on the tile floor with a damp, slapping thud. His skin is white and his broad-boned body is covered in birthmarks. His body is tense and he is freezing cold in the rays of light from the operating lamp. Two very young, but probably very silly, women lean over him, blowing coldly and lightly on those parts of the male anatomy which are most prone to excitement. The girls are dressed in crinoline and Turkish hats. His immature male parts lay helplessly in a flaccid heap. The Turkish hats fall on the tile floor and roll around on it. The women laugh and blow.

Obviously, this is a dream. Please, turn out the lights.

END OF ACT I

ACT TWO

(The closet is at center stage. Sounds of the saxophone are heard from inside. The Bald Man appears. He is frail and appears to be ill. He leans heavily against the closet. The saxophone continues to play for a moment, and then there is silence. The saxophone plays again, and then there is silence. A knock comes from inside the closet. The Bald Man lifts his head and there is another knock. The Bald Man drops his head again. There is a sudden, loud bang on the inner wall of the closet. Pause. The Brunet

BRUNET. What's wrong?

(The Bald Man is silent)

What? You mean those bums finally got to you?

(The Bald Man is silent)

Forget the bums. Grab your sax.

(The Bald Man is silent)

All right. *(He comes out of the closet and tests the temperature on the Bald Man's forehead)* Everything o.k. there. *(Opens the Bald Man's mouth and peers down his throat)* Everything o.k. there. *(Tests the mobility of the Bald Man's knees)* Healthy as a horse. What he needs is a woman. You want a woman?

(The Bald Man is silent)

Listen, maybe you've lost your potency?

(Pause)

BALD MAN. Maybe.

(The Brunet whistles gaily as he sits in the open closet)

Who needs it?

BRUNET. There's a question for you.

BALD MAN. More to the point is, what do I have to offer?

BRUNET. Now, that almost sounds like a joke: What do I care about impotency, and what does impotency care about me? Sounds like the first line of a poem, to me.

BALD MAN. You want to write a poem?

BRUNET. Go ahead. It's better than lying around like a used condom.

(The Bald Man is silent)

Want some tea?

BALD MAN. I'll fix it.

BRUNET. Yeah, you got it bad.

BALD MAN. No, I'll fix it later.

BRUNET. *(Speaking to the closet)* I'll just sit here mum and quiet. I'll pretend I'm not here. Just like he's all alone here in this room and he's talking to himself. As if,

happened. *(He sits and whistles as if he doesn't notice anybody)*

(A short pause)

BALD MAN. Maybe I'm in the wrong line of work.

BRUNET. *(Whispers loudly to the closet)* Here we go! Now we'll find out what's wrong.

BALD MAN. And maybe sometimes I don't behave so good.

BRUNET. *(To the closet)* Pay no attention. He's talking to himself.

BALD MAN. A little bit too uncouth.

BRUNET. *(To the closet)* Well, that's something we'd already noticed, now, isn't it?

BALD MAN. Maybe I oughta change my act.

BRUNET. *(To the closet)* Listen to this guy go.

BALD MAN. Kick it all to hell.

BRUNET. *(To the closet)* I don't know about you, but I can't take this anymore. *(He plugs up his ears)*

(The Bald Man is silent. The Brunet sits, plugging up his ears. Pause. The Brunet unplugs his ears and talks to the closet)

Did he say anything? No? *(He's amazed)* In that case, he's working up to the stupidest thing he could possibly say. *(He plugs up his ears again)*

BALD MAN

I'm exhausted. And I'm getting too old. Who needs it, anyway? I mean, maybe I should start up a family? Ha. There's a good idea.

BRUNET

(Unplugging his ears, speaks to the closet) What did he say? Yeah? Are you kidding? I don't believe it! O.k. I got you. Thanks. *(To the Bald Man)* Are you nuts? Did you lose your marbles? Are you wacko? I'm telling you, you're an inflamed abscess on the body of the Soviet family.

BALD MAN

Maybe I should take up music again.

BRUNET

What? What did you say?!

BALD MAN

You know, hook up with some little band as second sax.

(With interest) And then what?

BALD MAN

Or maybe not. Maybe I'll go solo. I'll call my act, "A Saxy Monologue."

BRUNET

Go on, go on, go on.

BALD MAN

For a long time I've been wanting to...

BRUNET

For a long time you've been wanting to write with sounds instead of words.

BALD MAN

(Happily) Yeah.

BRUNET

Yeah, that would break down the barriers and give you the emotions you're looking for.

BALD MAN

Yeah!

BRUNET

Yeah, and then you could skip around all those inner contradictions.

BALD MAN

(Jumps up and starts pacing) Yeah!

BRUNET

Yeah! And what you'd get is milk-toast music, pabulum pop.

BALD MAN

Yeah! I've been wanting to go public with my secret closet-music for a long time!

BRUNET

Yeah! But who gives a damn what you play in your lousy closet?

BALD MAN

(Suddenly cooling off. Grimly) Nah. That saxophone already almost killed me once. To hell with it.

BRUNET

BALD MAN

(Louder) To hell with it.

BRUNET

It's all for the best.

BALD MAN

(Muttering under his breath) To hell with it all.

BRUNET

(To the closet) Still, the old neurotic got wound up there for a minute. Just like a little kid.

BALD MAN

It's all for the best.

BRUNET

Yeah, you're probably right. Anyway, I already said that. But then, all your jokes are ass-backwards.

BALD MAN

If only thirty years ago...

BRUNET

Twenty-six years ago.

BALD MAN

If only they hadn't told me I didn't have any coordination...

BRUNET

And if only they didn't tell you that you got no musical ear, no sense of rhythm and you can't improvise your way out of a paper bag—in other words, if they hadn't told you that you were a no-talent—then you would have been a great musician. Bullshit. You just got lucky man. Everybody was doing it and you just did it a little bit better. That's all. Even if everything they told you was a pack of lies.

BALD MAN

I'd still be doing what I'm doing now.

BRUNET

(To the closet) Looky there. This man's nobody's fool.

*(The closet door opens
on its own with a creak)*

See there? Even you agree with me.

Shut your trap, you heap of trash. (*Kicks the door closed*)

BRUNET

Hey dude, what are you doing kicking around your best friend?

BALD MAN

If I ever get around to starting a new life, the first thing I'm doing is selling this closet.

BRUNET

First they betray their friends, and then they betray their country.

BALD MAN

Do you remember when was the last time I had guests?

BRUNET

Yeah, it was when you told a whole crowd they were impotent. Artistically speaking, that is.

BALD MAN

I think we were discussing whether theater, in particular, is a waste of time, and art, in general, is a sin.

BRUNET

Yeah, you said that art reminds you of some greasy bum who gets ahold of a killer broad, undresses her and then doesn't have the foggiest notion of what to do with her.

BALD MAN

I still say art is nothing more than vanity.

BRUNET

Uhuh, and you said that artists don't do anything but beg the public to kiss their ass.

BALD MAN

I don't understand how somebody can say, "I can't help but write," "I can't help but compose music," "I can't help but produce plays." People are born to expiate their sins and struggle against temptation. Everything else is self-indulgence and hypocrisy.

BRUNET

You called 'em all a bunch of hucksters.

BALD MAN

You know, it occurs to me: Maybe art is one of the great temptations?

Something tells me you're getting serious on me. Let's try a new tack. *(Disappears behind the closet and then reappears looking like a Roman philosopher)* Tell me, Aquinius, memento mori? Or perhaps, after all, vita brevis, ars longa?

BALD MAN

(As if suddenly coming to his senses) What did you say, pinhead?

BRUNET

Hurrah! I would engage thee in a philosophical dialogue about the eternal problems. Thou shalt be Aquinius. I shall be Thermostocles. Wouldst thou don your laurel wreath?

BALD MAN

You know, I'm in the mood for a good talk.

BRUNET

Didst thou hear, Aquinius mine, whose wisdom is all-embracing,
That, only yesterday, as the sun settled into the omnipotent sea,
I created an aphorism of blinding wit and revery?

BALD MAN

I did. For, as thou gazed upon the sea that gently kissed the sandy shore,
I heard thou sayst with all the splendor of a bold, swift box upon the ear:
"If boundless reason gives form to each and every possibility,
And if the body, au contraire, is trapped in eternal captivity,
That means my paltry body and its blood that flows within are but a lie.
That means mine intellect is that great flood of pow'r that lets me fly."

BRUNET

Bright Eos then emerged out of the clouds and lightly bent her step
Toward that place where ancestor Cronus had spread for her a bed.

BALD MAN

And in thy madness, thou continued: "Eos is body and Cronus is reason.
Eos gave us pleasure, but one day she, together with her rosy fingers,

Rules over all that can be thought or can be done."

BRUNET

What does this mean, Aquinius, who is so filled with wisdom?

BALD MAN

Mine answer, Thermostocles, shall be a simple aphorism. Cronus is a eunuch, mark thee well, indifferent to all. He deals out equal lots to everyone, big or small.

BRUNET

Aquinius, friend of candor! How right thou art! Though Cronus is barren, his reason bears fruit. But answer me this, thou, whose wisdom knows no end: How can my body be wracked with the hunger for truth, If flesh be but a forgery of reason?

BALD MAN

O, pitiable son of Bacchus, heed what I say to thee: Flesh is life. But Life is there where flesh is not yet born And there where flesh has died already.

BRUNET

O, wise man! Thou hast led this sheep from darkness. Shouldst thou order it, I shall serve thee, And shall anoint thy feet with unction. For with thine unction thou hast soothed my heart. Thou hast filled my imbecilic brain with honey-laden harmony.

BALD MAN

Praise me not, Thermostocles. Cast not so easily the pearls of thy words, Lest they be fouled in filth and dirt.

Enough. I'm pooped. I'm making some tea. (*Removes his laurel wreath*)

BRUNET

No! Don't do it! Don't fade away into eternity with your teapot!

'Twould be best to imbibe some young wine...

BALD MAN

Yeah, you would like to poison me, wouldn't you?

BRUNET

(The Bald Man puts the teapot on the stove and spreads a tablecloth on the table)

Hey, the fancy one! What is it, a holiday?

BALD MAN

Almost, yeah. You could say it's a holiday.

BRUNET

What's the occasion?

BALD MAN

On this very date of this very year, I finally came to the conclusion that I am sick and tired of everything.

BRUNET

Sick and tired of what? Living? Then what you need is a bar of soap and a noose.

BALD MAN

Most of all, I'm sick and tired of you.

BRUNET

Fathead.

BALD MAN

Speak for yourself.

BRUNET

All right, all right. What did I do?

BALD MAN

What didn't you do? But specifically, who knows?

BRUNET

Oh, no you don't. I want you to be specific.

BALD MAN

Specifically, I don't know. *(Sets the table with tea service for two, cookies and jam)*

BRUNET

Well, you've intrigued me now. However, I don't feel like tea.

BALD MAN

I didn't offer you any.

guest. Seeing as how you burned all your bridges with your old friends, I presume it's a new guest. Pass the jam. Wait a minute, it's not that broad that stopped in here for a glass of water, is it?

BALD MAN

None of your damn business.

BRUNET

So you finally gathered up the nerve. *(Gesticulates)* THAT'S MY MAN! Only you'd better put on a clean set of sheets. It's been a month since you changed the bed.

BALD MAN

Cram it.

BRUNET

Say, did you fix dinner yourself? *(Gesticulates)* Or is she bringin' with?

BALD MAN

Stuff it, jerk.

BRUNET

All right. Let's return to the previous topic. You came to the conclusion that you're sick and tired of everything. What new conclusions can you draw from that?

BALD MAN

First of all, I want people to quit looking at me as if I were a mangy dog.

BRUNET

Since when did you start worrying about what other people think? That's a very interesting turn of events.

BALD MAN

I refuse to continue this conversation. *(Looks around to see that everything is in order on the table and that the room is tidied up. Stares heavily at the Brunet, who stares back at him. The Bald Man tosses a teaspoon on the table and plops down in a chair)* Forget it. It's no good. *(Slinks into the closet and closes both doors behind him)*

BRUNET

(After a pause) Little kids always have it tough. But it's a hell of a lot worse for big, bald little kids. *(Somehow, he finds himself sitting on top of the closet)*

"How many times have I told you, son: Don't eat in your school uniform." - "Mama! Weave me awone. I'm

cigawettes."

"Mama, don't sing! Papa, cut it out!"

"Gwamma, once upon a time Jesus wived on ewth." - "Eat your oatmeal, son." - "Wait a minute, gwamma! Once upon a time Jesus wived on ewth and he was a vevy kind doctow." - "I'm listening. Eat." - "O.k., gwamma. Jesus, he heaved evwybody." - "Yes, he did, sweetheart." - "And then along came a weaw bad Piwate." - "Pirates are very bad, sweetheart." - "Not piwates, gwamma! Piwate." - "Pirate, honey. Pirate." - "I don't want my oatmeal, gwamma. Take it away! Piwate was weaw bad. And he asked evwybody, should we cwusify him ow wet him wiv? And evwybody said, cwusify him. And then they naiwed him up with naiws. And when he asked fow something to dwink, they gave him vinegaw. And then he fwew away to heaven to be with his papa."

When his parents come home from work, they shout:

"Grandma! Who's been reading him the Bible?!"

"How old are you, sonny?" - "Shut up, wady. You have cwoked teeth."

"Mama, do we have enough money to buy this toy?"

"Mama, what does p - r - i - c - k mean?" - "That's a man's dinkle, son."

"I'm not talking to you anymowe. I'm gonna go dwaw on the miwwow."

"Weave me awone, ow ewse I'w go cut aww the buttons off youw coat!"

"Stand back, evwybody! I'm gonna jump off the cwoset on the bed."

"Gwanpa, could I sit in youw cwoset?"

Thank you vevy much, evwybody. I'm gonna go bye-bye, now.

(The doorbell rings. the Brunet jumps down off the closet and quickly disappears inside it. The Bald Man comes out of the closet, suddenly stops, turns around and heads back to the closet)

BALD MAN

O.k. O.k. That's enough. That's it. All right. Calm down. Calm down, now. That's right. Calm down. That's the way. Easy does it. *(Closes the closet doors)* One, two, three: Here we go. *(Goes to answer the doorbell. Silence. He returns with the Young Woman)* Let's not say anything at all. Let's just sit silently and drink tea.

(They both sit down and drink tea)

dipped in poison!

(The Bald Man chokes on his tea and begs the Young Woman's pardon. Teatime continues. The Young Woman serves herself some jam)

If I'm not mistaken, I think it was in that jam jar that we found a bloated cockroach.

(The Bald Man chokes)

BALD MAN

Excuse me. Something seems to have fallen in the closet.
(Goes up to the closet and slightly opens the door. He spits through the crack)

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) How many times have I told you: Don't spit in the well.

BALD MAN

(Returning to the table) I guess I was mistaken.

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) Hey baby, are you sitting there with your legs spread under the table?

BALD MAN

Nope. I definitely heard something fall in the closet.
(Goes back to the closet and whispers) Shut your goddam trap!

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) Well then, tell her to close up her legs. This is embarrassing, you know.

BALD MAN

(Whispers) Shut up!

YOUNG WOMAN

What did you say?

BALD MAN

Oh, nothing. My sport coat just fell off the hanger.

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh.

once in awhile I start acting a little strange. There: Did you hear that?

YOUNG WOMAN

No. Did you?

BALD MAN

Yes.

YOUNG WOMAN

What?

BALD MAN

(In confusion) A voice. A voice, of course.

YOUNG WOMAN

What did it say?

BALD MAN

I couldn't possibly repeat it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Come on, you're the one that started it. What did it say?

(Pause. The Bald Man starts laughing)

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) What are you howling about, scumbag?

BALD MAN

It was just a joke! Get it? I was just teasing you!

YOUNG WOMAN

(Laughs nervously along with the Bald Man) Oh, now I get it. You were teasing me.

BALD MAN

You're the one who said I'm strange. I'm just trying to live up to your expectations.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. You are rather unpredictable.

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) Wait 'til you see what he's like in bed.

(The Bald Man spins around and gives the closet a hard kick)

What are you doing?

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) He's a strange-o. A psycho. You've got to keep your distance from his kind.

BALD MAN

What am I doing? I'm just trying to prove that I'm unpredictable.

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't need any proof. I can see that on my own.

(The Bald Man returns to the table and sits down)

BALD MAN

Listen... What I wanted to say was that your last visit caused enormous changes in me.

YOUNG WOMAN

I think...

(In the closet, the Brunet bursts out laughing)

I think you're imaging things. You don't...

BALD MAN

Just one second, please. *(Flies over to the closet and flings open the doors. It is empty)* There. I'll feel better that way. Sorry.

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't have to apologize. *(Smiles)* I got the feeling that I frightened you when I mentioned my father.

BALD MAN

You know, you are a very sensitive person. After you left, I couldn't formulate what had happened to me. But that's not because I thought you are really my daughter. I've never had a wife or a daughter. I was never married. I mean, I lived with women from time to time—a couple of times for several years. But I have a terrible disposition. It was especially bad when I was young. I don't deny it.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Smiles) Yes, a bad disposition doesn't facilitate a smooth family life. But I can see you're an excellent friend. I'm sure of it.

You know, I always thought so too!

YOUNG WOMAN

(Smiles) I'll tell you a secret. Sometimes I behave terribly with people, too. And afterwards, I'm always ashamed. Sometimes I'll just be sitting there and, out of the blue, I'll remember something so embarrassing I want to cry.

BALD MAN

I can't imagine what you must look like crying.

YOUNG WOMAN

If you and I become good friends, maybe I'll feel comfortable enough to let down and have a good cry.

BALD MAN

I used to cry a lot at night when I was young. But that stopped when I turned twenty-eight or so.

YOUNG WOMAN

Seeing as how you and I are so much alike, I guess I have another seven years to go on my weepy period.

BALD MAN

You're that young?! Oh, I'm sorry. That was tactless of me.

YOUNG WOMAN

(Laughing) Don't worry about it. I try to look older on purpose.

BALD MAN

Yeah, I would have said you're about twenty-five.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you.

BRUNET'S VOICE

(From the closet) Thatta boy. You honed in like a champ on the age hint.

BALD MAN

I'm very happy that you were at my concert. But don't you think that I'm rather crude, spiteful and profane?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. But that's just what makes you unique and charming.

BALD MAN

My spitefulness torments me much more than my crudity and

YOUNG WOMAN

I agree with you. That's why I don't like Lermontov very much. But you have a kind of painful, naive harmony about you.

BALD MAN

Pain, yeah. And how nicely you said that—"naive harmony." You know, I've been working on my childhood memoirs. If I ever get around to publishing them, I'll call them "Naive Harmony."

YOUNG WOMAN

(Smiles) That's a risky undertaking. I wouldn't want you to read them to me. I think things like that should remain personal secrets. It would be a shame to publish them. It would be better if someone found them in a dusty trunk after you die. Or even better yet: Burn them.

BALD MAN

How easily you talk about my death. Although I don't deny that I've already tipped past the half-way mark. I don't expect to live to a hundred.

YOUNG WOMAN

I find it very easy to talk about death. *(Smiles)* The only thing I am sure of in my life is that I'll die. Are you afraid of death?

BALD MAN

You know, I made up an aphorism just like that! There is only one law which has no exceptions: Every man is physically mortal.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) What is all this about death? Ask her about her husband.

BALD MAN

When I was young I used to think about death all the time. But I was never afraid. My faith in God is unshakeable.

YOUNG WOMAN

Strange, but you are constantly talking about your youth as if you are trying to narrow the age gap between us.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) I wonder what her husband is up to right about now? Probably soaking his feet or washing his underwear.

of giving it an inner illumination.

YOUNG WOMAN

You mean, you perceive death as darkness? What good is your unshakeable faith in God, then?

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) She's sitting here while he's at home scrubbing his boxers. You've got the perfect chance to score. Only you'll have to adopt the kid.

BALD MAN

Ha! And I thought you didn't pick up on what I said.

YOUNG WOMAN

Not at all. Only it didn't sound sincere the way you said it. I couldn't refuse catching you up on it. I warned you that sometimes I behave terribly. But, we were talking about death...

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Talking about hitting up on strangers' wives, I'd say it's about as easy as a heavyweight decking a flyweight. The only difference is there's no blood.

BALD MAN

Talking about death, I have to admit there was a time when I had nightmares about waking up in a coffin. Like Gogol. I was terrified of suffocating. The most horrible thing was that I couldn't lift the top off the coffin because it was covered with six feet of dirt. I have a vivid vision of the blackness and claustrophobia that will seize me at that instant when I open my eyes in my coffin...

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Go on, go on. You've hit on a very interesting thought.

YOUNG WOMAN

All that means is that you're afraid of physical suffering.

BALD MAN

I am amazed at the exquisite simplicity of your thoughts and the ease with which you understand everything.

(The Brunet appears in the closet. He closes the doors)

themselves.

BALD MAN

It's my ghost.

YOUNG WOMAN

Joking again?

BALD MAN

Would you like some more tea?

YOUNG WOMAN

No, thank you.

BALD MAN

What were we talking about?

YOUNG WOMAN

Death.

BALD MAN

Basically, if you look at it abstractly, it's a rather disconcerting topic. Maybe we could find a topic more suitable for an evening chat between a man and a woman?

(The Young Woman laughs, gets up and walks around the closet)

YOUNG WOMAN

(Laughing) What do you suggest? Surely not love?

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) Yeah.

BALD MAN

No. Anything but that.

YOUNG WOMAN

What then?

BALD MAN

I know what! Sit down. I'll read you some of the stuff I've written only for myself. I've never shown it to anybody.

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't think you'll regret it?

BALD MAN

(Falling into thought) Maybe I will. But sit down anyway.

Are you sure?

BALD MAN

I'm sure. No more questions. Sit down.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm sitting.

(The Bald Man goes into the closet and pulls several sheets of paper out of the far corner. Closes the doors)

BALD MAN

I won't read everything, of course. Just a few excerpts. A lot is really obscene. And you and I don't really know each other that well yet. Still, I can read some of it to you. *(Bursts into laughter)* No, I'd better not read that one. Here, I'll read something from my cycle, "Thoughts of a Bald Man, Having Seen His Reflection in a Black Marble Column."

My bald spot in black marble
Shines like a copper coin.
While all that reflects in my bald spot
Looks wonderfully fine!

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) What I want to know is what things look like reflected on your ass.

(The Bald Man angrily spins his head towards the closet, then pretends nothing has happened. He continues)

BALD MAN

What is the point of life? — In understanding that it's pointless.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) So what's the point of your idiocy?

BALD MAN

Who doesn't need eternity? — He who knows what it means.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) And who doesn't need me? Tee-hee, tee-hee, tee-hee.

Can the means justify the ends? - My answer is a question:
Is anybody capable of seeing anything through to the end?

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) What I want to know is,
afterwards, will you ever be able to justify yourself to
yourself?

BALD MAN

There are three laws of dialectics: The unity and struggle
of opposites; the transformation of quantity into quality;
and the negation of negation. And I came up with three
more: The struggle of quantity with opposites; the
transformation of quality into negation, and into the unity
of negations. But I suppose those are the laws of
degeneration.

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) If I'm not mistaken, you're
getting ready to score.

BALD MAN

I can't read what I wrote here. Oh, yeah. *(Speaks quickly)*
"Do you work in a morgue?" - "No, I just got back from
the theater."
"Did you take your kid to the circus today?" - "No, we
were at the mausoleum."
"Did you eat something sour?" - "No, I was thinking
about my mother-in-law."

BRUNET

(From inside the closet) I hope you didn't forget to buy
condoms.

*(The Bald Man spins
around quickly and flings
open the closet doors. The
Brunet stands there smirking.
A short pause. The Bald Man
turns to the Young Woman)*

BALD MAN

Sorry. I'll feel better that way.

BRUNET

He'll feel better that way, see? And don't you dare try
closing these doors, sweetie.

BALD MAN

"Some people kill time, some people kill people. Some

BRUNET

Yeah. But I'd rather have some ice cream.

BALD MAN

"Who believes in man? Our Lord God. He's the only one who cares about man."

BRUNET

Who said so?

BALD MAN

Shut up. I'm sorry. "What is self-esteem?" - "Camouflaged self-love."

BRUNET

So when are you going to jump her bones?

BALD MAN

Shut up! I'm sorry. I wasn't talking to you. "What is pride?" - "The result of attributing to yourself qualities you don't have." "What is arrogance?" - "The result of attributing to yourself every quality you can possibly think of."

BRUNET

I'd say it's more like the result of an erection.

(The Bald Man turns toward the Brunet)

BALD MAN

That is silly and disgusting. *(Turns around again)* "Do you eat bread and butter or butter with your bread?" - "Yes, I do eat on occasion."

BRUNET

You eat shit.

BALD MAN

(Spins around furiously) Speak for yourself! *(Turns around again)* My God, I'm sorry. "Socialism is possible in a specific given state. But is it possible in a huge, specific mass grave?"

BRUNET

I think he's working up to socialism in a huge, specific bed.

BALD MAN

(Losing his temper) I'm going to strangle you! Sorry about

nose in other people's business, you'd better know their business too."

BRUNET

And if you stick your nose in her...

BALD MAN

Shut up!!! I'm sorry! Get outta here! I'm not talking to you! You animal! You son of a bitch! You worm! Sit down. Please sit down. You whore! Sit down! *(He chases the Brunet in circles around the table so that several of his remarks are addressed in the direction of the Young Woman)* Scum! Trash! Sit down! Come here, you snake! Sit down, I said! I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to him! Come back here, you freak! Beast!

YOUNG WOMAN

(Speaks while the Bald Man continues to shout) Shhh. Shhh. Calm down. Calm down. Go to sleep, now. There's nothing to fear. Everything's all right. Now, now, now. Calm down and go to sleep. You just had a little fright. There's nothing to be afraid of. Shhh. Shhh. Don't kick mommy, now. Don't kick mommy. That hurts, sweetie. Calm down, my little love. Everything will be all right.

BALD MAN

I'll kill you!!!

(The Young Woman jumps up and leaves. The Bald Man freezes while he's deciding whether to run after her or keep chasing the Brunet. Finally, he collapses in a chair. Pause)

What's going on? Have I really gone out of my mind?

(Falls fast asleep as if after an epileptic attack. The Brunet approaches him and caresses his head. He covers him with a blanket, goes into the closet and closes the doors behind him)

THE BALD MAN'S DREAM

(The sounds of early morning. Autumn leaves are falling)

How does it feel?
I'm my own man,
Say what you will.

My hour has come?
Well, then I'll die!
We'll shoot the breeze,
Sweet death and I.

All your life long
You walk with death.
You'll never cheat
Its last short breath.

Death is grace.
Greet it with taste.

BRUNET

Hey son, what are you doing here?

BALD MAN

(Continues to lisp) Sitting.

BRUNET

You ought to go home. It's late.

BALD MAN

I'm writing poems. What are you doing, mister?

BRUNET

Ha! I'm writing poems, too, kid.

BALD MAN

Two people can't write poems in the same place. They get in each other's way.

BRUNET

Well, run on home, then. Where do you live? I'll walk you home.

BALD MAN

I was here first. I always write poems here.

BRUNET

How old are you, boy?

BALD MAN

Six. *(Holds up six fingers)*

BRUNET

BALD MAN

That's my professional secret.

BRUNET

(Laughs) Well, it's still time for you to get home. Your parents will be worried.

BALD MAN

Isn't anybody worried about you at home?

BRUNET

No.

BALD MAN

Do you have a wife?

BRUNET

No.

BALD MAN

Me neither.

BRUNET

But you have parents and they're probably very worried about you.

BALD MAN

You have parents, too. Everybody has parents.

BRUNET

But I don't live in the same apartment with my parents. I'm already grown up. I can do that, see?

BALD MAN

Every person is grown up only insofar as his view of the world allows.

BRUNET

(Amazed) Where did you read that, boy?

BALD MAN

I don't know how to read yet.

BRUNET

But you can write?

BALD MAN

I don't know how to write yet. I'm still little.

BRUNET

BALD MAN

You mean you write your poems down? What for?

BRUNET

Well, I don't know. So I don't forget them.

BALD MAN

Whenever I hear pretty, long words, I always memorize them right away.

BRUNET

You can hear your own poems?

BALD MAN

Yeah. But they aren't only mine.

BRUNET

Why? What do you mean? Whose are they, then? Wait a minute, what's that you said?

BALD MAN

It's simple. I have a little friend who isn't born yet. And while he's getting ready to get born, he lives in my head. We talk together all the time. He tells me about everything, because he is older than me. Sometimes I ask him to recite me poems and he does. But, since him and me are almost just alike, they're my poems, too. Because when I grow up, I'm going to think up poems, too. Sometimes he shows me movies. One time I saw a man lying in bed. His face was real pale and dark. He kept chewing ice and there was a whole bunch of people outside the window. There was so many of them that a few people almost got knocked off the pier into the river. Then the man died and everybody cried a lot.

BRUNET. Say, have you ever had a doctor look at you?

BALD MAN. No, but a nurse examined me once when I had a stomach-ache.

BRUNET

And you never went to see her again?

BALD MAN

No. I like talking to you, only you're kinda stupid. You don't understand anything. You ask about one thing and then you start talking about another. I think you have spiders in your head.

BRUNET

What do I have in my head?

eats them. You know, explains them. Or sometimes it traps everything in webs. I have lots of spider webs in my head and there's a spider sitting on every one. But I think your spiders are blind. They're afraid of everything and they run real fast but they can't catch anything. All they do is bump into each other.

BRUNET

So that's it! Thank you.

BALD MAN

Well, go on, now. You're bothering me. But you can come back tomorrow. Only not for long. Wasted time is an awful crime.

(Amazed, the Brunet leaves. Autumn leaves keep falling. The closet looks like a small hill. The Bald Man sleeps. The Young Woman appears. She approaches the Bald Man, sits down next to him and caresses his head)

Who are you?

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm your great-great-grandmother.

BALD MAN

You mean the one with the music box?

YOUNG WOMAN

That's right. Here, look. *(Opens the music box; it begins to play)*

BALD MAN

Mama has one just like that in our closet.

YOUNG WOMAN

That's right. It's mine. I'm your mama's great-grandmother.

BALD MAN

Great-great-gramma, is it true that when you die you go live in this music box?

YOUNG WOMAN

It's true. That's where I live.

BALD MAN

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes. I was born a long, long time ago.

BALD MAN

Does that mean if I was born just a little while ago, I won't die for a long, long time?

YOUNG WOMAN

Yes.

BALD MAN. Where am I going to live when I die? With you in the music box?

YOUNG WOMAN

(Smiles) No, sweetheart. I live in the music box with your great-grandmother and your grandmother. And when your mother dies, she will live with us, too. You'll live in the closet with your great-great-grandfather, your great-grandfather, your grandfather and your father, when he dies.

BALD MAN

But since the music box is always in the closet, that means we'll all live together. I love you great-great-gramma.

YOUNG WOMAN

I love you, too, sweetheart.

BALD MAN

Great-great-gramma, how come your music box plays music but my closet doesn't?

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't know. But your closet smells so sweet of perfumes and soaps.

BALD MAN

Yeah, I like it a lot. I love the way my closet smells. But who lives in the sewing machine?

YOUNG WOMAN

Nobody lives in the sewing machine. It's cold there.

BALD MAN

What about the clock?

YOUNG WOMAN

That's where uncle Death lives. When he comes to see you, don't be afraid. Just ask him what you're supposed to do. He'll tell you everything and show you how to live in the

BALD MAN

I thought death was a woman.

YOUNG WOMAN

Auntie Death only visits bad, guilty people who are afraid of death. Uncle Death comes to those who die peacefully. Uncle Death lives in the clock, but Auntie Death is terribly restless and she flies around in the cold skies.

BALD MAN

Why is Auntie Death restless?

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, I'll tell you, but it's long past your bedtime. Listen carefully, now. A long time ago, Auntie Death and Uncle Death lived together.

BALD MAN

In the clock?

YOUNG WOMAN

No, there didn't used to be clocks. Go to sleep now, or I won't tell you the story. There now. Everyone lived together like brother and sister and nobody ever died because they had each other and didn't need anybody else. But many people liked Auntie Death because she was very pretty. One day, a man who had taken a liking to Auntie Death snuck up on Uncle Death and poked out his eyes. Then Auntie Death went to her father and asked: "How can I take revenge on that man?" And her father said: "Embrace him and kiss him, but no one besides your beloved blind brother should hear you do it." Well, that's what she did and the man fell on the ground and never moved again. But Uncle Death was blind, and he could only hear the kiss. So he went to his father and asked: "How can I take revenge on that man?" But his father said: "You have already been avenged." "No, I haven't," said Uncle Death. "All right," said his father, "then go take his brother by the hand, even though he is guilty of nothing." And Uncle Death went and took the man's brother by the hand. Then the brother fell on the ground and never moved again. But that was Auntie Death's very first embrace and kiss and she became intoxicated by it. So she embraced and kissed the next man she came upon and he fell on the ground and never moved again. But she didn't like that kiss. Suddenly she saw a man who was looking at her in fear because every time she embraced and kissed someone, they fell on the ground and never moved again. She flew after the frightened man and when she caught up with him, she kissed him and embraced him. This kiss was even sweeter than the first, and when

and guilt. Just then Uncle Death, who had heard both kisses, came up to her. He recognized his beloved sister by the rustle of her hair. He knew she was deceiving him. And, not realizing what she was doing, she started to kiss and embrace him, too. But he grabbed her by the hand and stopped her. Suddenly she flew into a terrible frenzy and was consumed by the desire for more kisses. But by now, many were afraid of her because she had become horrible. She was insatiable and began swooping restlessly through the heavens, planting kisses on every fearful and guilty man she found. Gradually, she even stopped noticing those who weren't afraid. Uncle Death sat down and listened to the earth creak on its axis. He knew it was a steady, eternal sound. That is when he built the first clock and went to live there to escape the terrible cries of all the frightened people. The din of their voices drowned out the measured ticking of the earth as it turned on its axis. He sat for a long time, contemplating the sound it made. Then his father came to him and said: "There are people without guilt who do not fear your sister. I am not angry at them, and I love them as I love you and your sister. But the lives of all creatures should be as equal and even as the rhythmic sounds of the turning earth. Now, when you think it is time, go to these people and take them gently by the hand so that none should live eternally. Their death may be determined by the pains they have suffered or by the good they have done. But no one ever must twice hear the sounds of the spinning earth."

(The Bald Man sleeps)

(A free-standing closet is situated at center stage. It is covered in autumn leaves. From inside a melody can be heard. The closet doors open on their own and we see the Brunet and the Bald Man sitting face to face. Both are playing saxophones. It is early morning and a janitor can be heard sweeping in the courtyard. We cannot see him, but we see leaves being swept to left and right behind the closet. Unseen, he slowly moves upstage. The Bald Man

seems to be in his own world. The music, which should continue for a long time, is neither gay nor boisterous. The Bald Man finally stops playing. The Brunet continues on, but there is no longer any sound coming from his saxophone. The Bald Man comes out of the closet and puts his saxophone in its case. The Brunet continues to play silently. The Bald Man puts his saxophone case in the closet and removes a music box from there. He puts on his coat and hat and leaves, banging the door quietly behind him. The Brunet continues to play silently as the doors of the closet close slowly on their own. From inside the closet we hear the long, screeching cry of a saxophone. A silent pause. Suddenly, the closet explodes into pieces)

VOICE OF BRUNET

Abuduh, abuduh, abuduh, that's friggin' all, folks!

CURTAIN
END OF PLAY