

THE LOVE OF KARLOVNA

A play by

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DO NOT TREMBLE said the star on the right.
DO NOT LOOK AROUND said the star on the left.
NOW FORGET EVERYTHING added the sparkling star in front of him who
then gazed at him with a deep, endless sorrow.
- from an old folk tale.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

*Night. Holly and Gornotsvetov are
returning home from a party. They run
and dance along a wide street.*

GORNOTSVETOV

You are beautiful today, your legs are springtime bare

HOLLY

Laugh

GORNOTSVETOV

The time of a novel by Françoise Sagan, cold Moscow and blue Paris

HOLLY

Train stations, a cheerful Jewish fiddle, tears

GORNOTSVETOV

Men - an accordion and dances

HOLLY

Eyes, hands, words-like-kisses, - how do you know all that

GORNOTSVETOV

I hear through the walls

HOLLY

Liar

GORNOTSVETOV

Ask anybody

HOLLY

I don't believe anyone

GORNOTSVETOV

Neither cat nor mouse

HOLLY

Nor the neighbors Vitya and Nadya with their summer-long romance

GORNOTSVETOV

They're nice people though

HOLLY

Or are we just drunk again? Gornotsvetov, when are we going to have a sober conversation?

GORNOTSVETOV

Never. That is stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid....

HOLLY

Gornotsvetov leads me along the street. He shows me the way.

Gornotsvetov has his secrets, I have mine.

Our apartment is number ten, on the sixth floor.

Gornotsvetov has two suitcases under his sofa and nothing else.

Gornotsvetov and I talk.

Our faces are serious, we all have very important business and problems.

Gornotsvetov has his, I have mine.

LET IT ALL BURN TO HELL

MOSCOW IN 1812

NATASHA ROSTOVA CAN TEND TO THE WOUNDED

THE NOBILITY CAN ABANDON THE CITY

SO WHAT IF THERE'S TYPHUS

SO WHAT IF THERE'S CHOLERA

GORNOTSVETOV, WHERE'S THE BEER?!

SCENE TWO

Holly and Gornotsvetov drink beer.

HOLLY

I was haunted by the music of saxophones, trumpets, sad songs, death, farewells, the voices of men, of freezing temperatures and snow sprinkled with green leaves. It was the time of Françoise Sagan's novel, of cold Moscow and blue Paris, of train stations, a cheerful Jewish fiddle, tears, shame or conscience – Maybe that wasn't all one and the same.

Three days of madness, mine or someone else's or maybe it was much more than three maybe going on forever of tender morning milk or tender arms, of morning muss, a morning chill, of happiness (for a minute), of fear.

An accordion, dances, men. Eyes, hands, words-like-kisses, tears of pity – I am so, so unhappy...

Sun and heat. The windows in Holly's apartment are open, the curtains flap in the breeze. Holly wears a damp kerchief on her face.

You're not mad at me because of yesterday, are you? I got so scared.

GORNOTSVETOV

Want to go to the movies?

HOLLY

I thought if I sit in the big chair everybody would lose me and they wouldn't be able to find me. Or if I went out on the balcony, nobody would see me at all and they all would leave. Then I would just lie there and not move.

GORNOTSVETOV

Two, four, six and ten p.m.

HOLLY

And my heart would beat once every hundred years – in between the beats I'd have plenty of time to think.

GORNOTSVETOV

Eternal Love.

HOLLY

The policeman on the street stared at me for the longest time and I didn't have the strength to ask him what for. I was afraid I'd take a breath to ask a question and my heart would burst.

GORNOTSVETOV

If we go to the four o'clock show we'll still have time to go drop in on somebody

HOLLY

All day long I walked the paths along the walls of China Town. The wheels of the metro car clattered only three times all that whole endless time I rode.

GORNOTSVETOV

On the way we'll stop at a store so we don't show up empty-handed.

HOLLY

I think it must really be a nightmare when you hear an answer and you've already forgotten the question.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Laughs) Love's Final Call.

HOLLY

Only my heart's not beating...

GORNOTSVETOV

Let's go.

HOLLY

It's always 'on and on and on' – a cat-drawn chariot.... What will happen when I see wrinkles and fear – will I die?...

GORNOTSVETOV

We're going to the movies.

HOLLY

Will I die?...

GORNOTSVETOV

(Tired) You will not die because right now we are going to the movies and you're going to live for a very, very long time and everything is going to be all right.

HOLLY

Really?

GORNOTSVETOV

You know I never lie. Your Ivanov will come and you'll have a pile of kids for him and you'll live like two peas in a pod, nestled there together comfy and warm.

HOLLY

(Weeps) Really?

GORNOTSVETOV

What do you think? Of course, really. But right now we're going to the movies. We're going to watch a happy film about love and then we're going to go see a girl I know. All right?

HOLLY

Okay.

GORNOTSVETOV

That's better.

HOLLY

(Laughs) I don't know what to do about them. They come here and talk nonsense and then start laughing. How can I lose them without hurting their feelings?

GORNOTSVETOV

Who?

HOLLY

On top of that, this man has never been here before. Last time it was someone else.

GORNOTSVETOV

Why lose 'em? Men don't just drop in on everyone. Let's leave them some beer. What do you say?

HOLLY

You think they drink beer?

GORNOTSVETOV

You think your men are any different from others?

HOLLY

I don't know, I've never offered them anything before.

GORNOTSVETOV

Good for you. Otherwise you'll spoil 'em. Come on, let's go.

They leave.

The figures of a Man and a Woman appear. They walk about the room, the walls, the furniture, the ceiling.

They seem to be playing a game.

WOMAN

I'm here I'm here I'm here

MAN

That's good that's good that's good

WOMAN

Why do I repeat everything you think up

MAN

It's not me thinking it up

WOMAN

Who did then

MAN

There was this *histoire d' amour*

WOMAN

Oh my

MAN

Not in that sense

WOMAN

You mean a book?

MAN

And there were these beings that said, "I'm here I'm here I'm here"

WOMAN

(Laughs) That's good that's good that's good

MAN

You're splendid

WOMAN
Tomorrow you won't remember me

MAN
That's quite possible

WOMAN
That's good

MAN
I'm here

WOMAN
I believe you I believe you I believe you

MAN
I'm an artist

WOMAN
Ah

MAN
I paint wooden horses. What about you?

WOMAN
I'm nothing special, just a woman

MAN
What more do you need?

WOMAN
Your wife was a baroness and you liked that

MAN
Terribly. I bragged about it on every corner

WOMAN
There, you see

MAN
How silly you are

WOMAN
And you're loathsome and nasty

MAN
(Laughs) You only say that because you didn't like it when I said I love my wife and not you

WOMAN
Then get out of here. What are you doing here if you love your wife

MAN

You know why – it's a fluke. A coincidence!

The Woman laughs. At first the Man stares at her in surprise and then laughs too.

WOMAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

MAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

The Woman falls on the sofa, bent over with laughter. The Man falls on the floor. Neither can stop laughing.

Holly and Gornotsvetov set the table for the man and woman but nothing was touched.

SCENE THREE

A small room. A table and three chairs. On one of them sits Gornotsvetov with Holly on his knees. On the other two sit two women, a Blonde and a Brunette, between whom stands a man.

HOLLY

(Bending as if to turn her head upside down) If you look at them like that it looks like they're on the ceiling and they're going to have a fight.

Gornotsvetov leans over to kiss Holly but they lose their balance and fall on the floor.

BRUNETTE

I hate it when people kiss around me. If they have to kiss, you'd think they could go somewhere else to do it.

Holly and Gornotsvetov lie on the floor.

HOLLY

Was she talking about us?

GORNOTSVETOV

Well, if those two aren't kissing, she must mean us.

HOLLY

(Shakes her finger threateningly) No, Gornotsvetov, I distinctly remember that we were not kissing.

GORNOTSVETOV

What of it?

BLONDE

(To the Man) Why so late, darling?

MAN

Are all women like that – first they sit on one man's knees and then on another's?

BLONDE

Did you bring me any bread and milk? I have absolutely nothing to eat.

BRUNETTE

Not all. I'm not like that.

MAN

Oh you, you're something special.

BLONDE

I boiled some rice, but I ate it all.

BRUNETTE

Yes, I'm special. *(She reads a book)*

HOLLY

We probably ought to get up. This is a little embarrassing...

GORNOTSVETOV

He still hasn't said whether he brought the milk and bread or not.

HOLLY

What's that have to do with it?

GORNOTSVETOV

Why get up if he didn't bring anything?

MAN

(To the Blonde) You look nice today.

BLONDE

Thank you.

BRUNETTE

(To the Man) And you're flat-out handsome.

MAN

Thank you, too.

HOLLY

Which one of them is good-looking?

GORNOTSVETOV

I'd rather you ask did he bring anything to eat.

HOLLY

Hey! Hey!

MAN

You mean me?

HOLLY

Give me a hand. I want to get up.

(The Man helps Holly get up.)

Did you bring anything to eat?

MAN

No, it didn't occur to me.

HOLLY

(Discouraged) That's one against you.

The Blonde pours herself a glass of wine and drinks it.

GORNOTSVETOV

Pour one for me too.

BRUNETTE

Get up and pour it yourself.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Gets up and sits next to the Brunette) You're quite rude of late.

BRUNETTE

You mean vulgar.

GORNOTSVETOV

And vulgar.

BRUNETTE

(Cursing) As if you remember what I used to be like.

GORNOTSVETOV

I remember. And don't pretend you're reading. What are you so angry about?

BLONDE

This morning I ate a glass of buckwheat. I had no time to boil it and so I just ate it raw – I poured water on it and ate it.

BRUNETTE

Even if he won't sleep with me, I still want to ruin it for them. They might as well be as miserable as I am.

HOLLY

(Climbs onto Gornotsvetov's lap) You're as cushy as a pillow.

MAN

I had boxing practice today. It was a good work-out.

BLONDE

I don't understand why she hates me so, and why she likes everything I do.

GORNOTSVETOV

(To the Brunette) What do you see in him? He's as scrawny as a kid with hepatitis.

HOLLY

Can't they share him?

GORNOTSVETOV

They could have a *ménage à trois*.

MAN

(To the Blonde) I'm going now.

BLONDE

What about me? I'm hungry.

MAN

I'll feed you tomorrow.

BLONDE

When tomorrow?

MAN

In the evening sometime. I've got swim lessons during the day.

BRUNETTE

I can't get him out of my head. He's all I think about.

GORNOTSVETOV

Have another drink.

BRUNETTE

I'll cry. I get hysterical.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Moves her glass away from her) I'm sick of women's tears.

HOLLY

If you look closely, he's not too bad. He seems kind and trustful.

GORNOTSVETOV

These broads have all lost their minds.

HOLLY

But what good's he to me?

BRUNETTE

(Pours some wine and drinks it) It's not like I don't have any friends. I have lots. I've just got no one to drink with.

GORNOTSVETOV

It's like that with my brother and me – whenever we drink, we get all nostalgic and sentimental... Then he lies down under a bush and goes to sleep. "Get outta here, leave me alone!"

BRUNETTE

That's disgusting.

BLONDE

If you love me, tell her so. Tell her you'll never sleep with her. Tell her that – never!

MAN

She knows that anyway, why wreck a good relationship?

HOLLY

(Kisses Gornotsvetov) Who's that they're talking about?

MAN

(Kisses the Blonde) I'm going now.

BRUNETTE

(Wincing) Me too. Will you accompany me?

BLONDE

(To the Man) Only don't you dare start getting her hopes up again. Tell her the whole truth. We've got to put an end to this thing.

MAN

Tell her yourself.

The Brunette and the Man leave.

BLONDE

He's just dying to ruin everything.

GORNOTSVETOV

Back off a bit.

BLONDE

She's my best girlfriend. I can't quarrel with her.

HOLLY

You're best off not having girlfriends at all.

Gornotsvetov laughs.

The Blonde falls on the bed and laughs.

BLONDE

How do you like that – they ate everything and left. I'm hungry.

HOLLY

Is she crying because she's hungry or because she's jealous?

GORNOTSVETOV

Now, now, don't cry. *(Tries to pacify the Blonde)*

BLONDE

He still won't sleep with her, though. He won't do it!

HOLLY

He can't?

BLONDE

He won't!

GORNOTSVETOV

If he won't, he won't. And if he doesn't with her, then he will with you. Only, don't cry anymore.

HOLLY

So it's jealousy.

GORNOTSVETOV

Now, now. We have to go now, too.

The Blonde weeps.

Don't cry, now. There, why don't you get some sleep?

They leave.

How do you like that – they ate everything and left.

HOLLY

What's all the gloom and doom about?

GORNOTSVETOV

Love.

HOLLY

Isn't there someplace else we can go?

SCENE FOUR

Holly and O

Morning.

Holly sits in O's kitchen.

HOLLY

Where am I?

O

My house.

HOLLY

Where's Gornotsvetov?

O

He left last night with some girl. He asked me to look after you.

HOLLY

(Peers out the window) At least this is still Moscow, isn't it?

O

If you're curious about who I am, I am O.

HOLLY

How am I going to get home?

O

I don't know. You're on the edge of the world here.

Holly is frightened. (She probably doesn't believe it.)

O

(He's nervous but he tells Holly some terrible things)

HOLLY

(Laughs and drinks some juice. She thinks she has no idea how she got here)

O

(Lights up a cigarette and says, in fact, there's nothing to laugh about because he is telling the truth)

HOLLY

(Laughs anyway even though she begins to wonder if maybe this really isn't Moscow)

O

(Smokes and thinks what else can I say to this girl? After all, he wouldn't want her to go, he wouldn't want that at all. Why shouldn't she just sit there and laugh? What's the point in rushing off?)

HOLLY

(Smiles and says O has a nice little place. She wonders if maybe she ought to stay?)

O

(Brews some coffee and reminisces how they danced all night. She smiles)

HOLLY

(Drinks coffee and says how good it tastes. She wonders, why is he looking at her so strangely. Maybe something happened last night?)
O. (Lights up another cigarette. Puts on a tape. Remembers what she said to him last night)

HOLLY

(Says that's her favorite music and she has always wanted to sing. Looks out the window and thinks she'll probably have to walk home even now in the wee hours of the morning since she just doesn't know what kind of a guy this O is)

O

(Tells Holly the story about how he sang in a choir when he was a boy and how, during a concert, he once fell off the top platform)

HOLLY

(Laughs, but doesn't say anything)

O

(He's silent and thinks maybe his whole life might be different if she wouldn't leave today, or if maybe she wouldn't ever leave)

HOLLY

(She's dying to sleep and doesn't want to go anywhere. She looks at O and expects him to start telling about a wife he doesn't love and a son he adores. She remembers she seems to have heard that yesterday)

already. She thinks about how she is sick and tired of all this) (*She sighs*)

O

Not feeling so good?

HOLLY

I'm fine. What makes you ask?

O

Some cognac?

HOLLY

Maybe.

O

All right?

HOLLY

(Drinks and smiles) Thanks. I've got to go.

O

So, you're going then? Maybe stay? Why leave so early?

HOLLY

No, no. I've got to go. Work.

O

Let me walk with you awhile.

HOLLY.

(Looks in her purse, rummages around in its pockets, cries out) Ah!
O. What's the matter?

HOLLY

(Alarmed) This is terrible... I lost my wallet. All my money. My whole paycheck was in there...

O

Maybe it's here someplace. Let's look.

HOLLY

My whole wallet, can you imagine that? I've got two kids to feed and a month with no money. A whole month. What a moron I am. What a moron.

They crawl on the floor looking for the wallet.

O

Yeah. It's not here.

HOLLY

What an idiot... I should have left it at work. Now I've lost all my money and my wallet too. This is terrible...

O

Don't worry, I can give you some money.

HOLLY

No, no, no.

O

Why not?

HOLLY

I'm going to work now. I'll find somebody to borrow from there. Or maybe the mutual aid fund can help me. I'm already up to my ears in debt anyway. You know how difficult it is with kids these days... And I'm all alone...

O

Please, I insist, let me give you some money. You can return it whenever you get around to it. It'll be a good excuse to meet again.

HOLLY

I can't do that. I've got to go, now.

O

No. How can you go like this? Please, take it.

HOLLY

I'm going to be late to work.

O gives Holly money.

Oh, there is an AWFUL lot here, I can't...

O

Please, I insist. Take it. For the kids's sake.

HOLLY

Thank you so much. If it weren't for the kids.... You've really helped me out of a tight spot.

They leave.

*O returns home and lies down to sleep.
Holly, smiling, prances down the
street in a fine mood. She stops in
all the stores. Catches a cab.*

SCENE FIVE

Night.

*Holly comes out of some building.
Confused, she stops in the middle of
the street.*

HOLLY

I'm afraid alone
What if something should happen
Lord, I am so unhappy (*Starts to go back where she
came from*)
Oh, forget it... (*Gestures with her hand and stops a
taxi*)
Take me home, please. And quick. (*She gets in the cab*)

DRIVER

Where do you live?

HOLLY

(*Surprised*) The Soviet Union.

*She arrives home and enters the
apartment building entryway. It is
dark, no lights are burning, the
elevator is not working. Lugging an
enormous sack, she barely makes it up
to her floor.*

I'm home and I've kicked off my shoes. I'm walking along and there's a wall there. Shoes too. Which means there's a wall there too, and over here there's a wall. With more shoes... What am I going to do? I'm lost. I shout pitifully

GORNOTSVETOV, WHERE AM I? WHERE AM I?!

*She hugs closely to the wall and walks
slowly down a corridor. She goes into
the bathroom, trips and falls. She
hits her head on the edge of the
bathtub. A huge metal basin followed
by a basket of some kind, some poles
and rags and towels fall on her head.
Gornotsvetov hears the racket and
comes to her aid, followed by a
woman.*

GORNOTSVETOV

(*Turns on the light*) What happened this time? (*Sees Holly buried under the pile. Anxiously begins digging her out. To the woman*) Give me a hand. What are you staring at?

WOMAN

Maybe I should call an ambulance?

They dig Holly out.

HOLLY

(Looks at the woman) Is that who you left with?

GORNOTSVETOV

Thank God, she's alive.

HOLLY

(Laughs) Did I wake you up?

GORNOTSVETOV

No, you were as quiet as a mouse. How's your head?

HOLLY

Who is she?

GORNOTSVETOV

Nothing hurt?

HOLLY

I think I broke my finger.

GORNOTSVETOV

Which one?

HOLLY

I mean my toe.

GORNOTSVETOV

It's come to that, has it?

HOLLY

Maybe I didn't break it.

GORNOTSVETOV

(To the woman) Bring me some bandages.

HOLLY

(Wiggles her toes thoughtfully) No, it's not broken.

GORNOTSVETOV

That's good.

HOLLY

I bet I disturbed you.

GORNOTSVETOV

No. *(Carries Holly into her room and puts her to bed.)*

HOLLY

(Falling asleep) There's a sack in the corridor. I brought you something to eat.

GORNOTSVETOV

Sleep. *(Closes the door and goes out into the kitchen. Puts a teapot on to boil and lights a cigarette.)*

WOMAN

(Returning with bandages. Whispers) Who's she?

GORNOTSVETOV

(Distracted) Holly? My daughter. See, she brought her dad something to eat.

WOMAN

Your daughter?

GORNOTSVETOV

You don't see the resemblance?

WOMAN

How old are you?

GORNOTSVETOV

Me? Not old. But she's quite highly developed for a fifteen-year-old.

WOMAN

Yeah, right.

GORNOTSVETOV

Look how great it is for me, though. A grown daughter and I'm still rearing to go. *(Empties the sack and puts the food on the table.)* Look at all we've got to eat now!

WOMAN

What about mom?

GORNOTSVETOV

Mom is a woman of ill-repute. We don't live together, as you can see.

WOMAN

Why not?

GORNOTSVETOV

Well, for various reasons... She travels the world and sometimes stops in to see us. She supports us. She has a Ph.D. in the fine arts and she's completely dedicated to the arts and sciences. She has no time for a family.

WOMAN

A-ah. And I thought...

GORNOTSVETOV

Don't think. Have a seat and help yourself. I never expected such bounty today. Strange. Where did all this come from?

WOMAN

How old is she?

GORNOTSVETOV

Curious, aren't you? Not too. We both were kids when we fell in love. *(He is silent)* That was a long time ago. *(He opens a bottle and pours)* Then we had to split up.

WOMAN

I see.

GORNOTSVETOV

That's life.

They clink glasses and drink.

(Sadly) Now you know everything about me.

SCENE SIX

The Return of Begonia

...strawberries, chocolate, ice cream, liqueurs, aperitifs and wines hindered our mournful way. We walked slowly, silently, as two horses in a single harness. We smoked our last "Astra" cigarettes and thought about money.

HOLLY

You should find yourself a good woman to feed you good meals.

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe you ought to find someone yourself.

HOLLY

Well, we wouldn't feed you.

GORNOTSVETOV

You could say I was your brother.

HOLLY

How about my dad. Everybody cracks up when I say you're my dad.

GORNOTSVETOV

What business of theirs is it who we are?

They are silent.

HOLLY

Let's sell your hat.

GORNOTSVETOV

What'll I do in winter?

HOLLY

I'll knit you a cap.

GORNOTSVETOV

That's what we'll sell when you knit it.

HOLLY

It's your turn to sell something.

GORNOTSVETOV

You deprive me of what is dearest to me.

They arrive at their apartment and stop at the threshold. Inside there is noise and music and they hear the laughter of Begonia. Holly and Gornotsvetov shout and run into the room. All squeal and hug and kiss. A young man dances on the table loaded with bottles and food, carefully stepping among the shot glasses and wine goblets.

HOLLY

(Sighs) A transparent powder blue dressing gown hugged his slender body, his legs shining through. Music spun and caressed his neck as if it were a black shawl. His made-up eyes and red lips peered out at me. The silk rose higher and higher, gliding up his white legs until the darkness of his armpits flashed. He had a sly grin and I espied the tips of his shoes...

GORNOTSVETOV

Who is that?

BEGONIA

That's my French boy!

HOLLY

How charming!

GORNOTSVETOV

Where's all the food from?

BEGONIA

Worry not, you sillies. Today everything's in plenty. Today's a holiday. Drink up quick and dance with us, you starving fools! Drink up!

False French boy
Fake French boy
A false boy is no boy
French or not French
But oh, what a cute boy!

HOLLY

Where, oh, where are we racing to?!

FRENCH BOY

Je ne pas je ne pas

GORNOTSVETOV

Je n'un-der-stand pas

FRENCH BOY

Je n'ai pas de l'étoile

GORNOTSVETOV

L'étoile? If he means the toilet – that's in the hall

FRENCH BOY

Je n'ai pas de l'étoile

GORNOTSVETOV

What?

FRENCH BOY

L'étoile

GORNOTSVETOV

Listen here, keep your nose out of my *étoile*

FRENCH BOY

Je jok-ing tu jok-ing

GORNOTSVETOV

Tout le monde est jok-ing

FRENCH BOY

Mais oui, mais jok-ing what?

GORNOTSVETOV

One devil

FRENCH BOY

bien sûr

GORNOTSVETOV

He's right about that. Quite *sûr* and very surreal. And all the more *bien* for that.

FRENCH BOY

Zéparante.

GORNOTSVETOV

Begonia, what is he babbling? What's got into him?

FRENCH BOY

Today. *Zéparante.*

GORNOTSVETOV

And I was thinking, what is going on today? Turns out it's *zéparante...*

HOLLY

Begonia, where are we racing to?

Holly runs down the street followed by Begonia and Gornotsvetov. At first, Gornotsvetov tries to pull the totally drunk French Boy after him, but then he leaves him sitting on a bench and runs after the others.

HOLLY

(Shouts) I LOVE IVANOV

I want Ivanov, but Ivanov eludes my grasp, he twirls around the Eiffel Tower with apples and cucumbers and apricots. He has salt on his shoulders and water in his eyes. Ah, Parisian rain...

Ivanov hides his life from me

WHEN I STARE IVANOV IN THE EYES I AM NOT AMAZED AT WHAT I SEE

Ivanov splits into two

Indecently growing younger by ten years

I know this sweet boy – it's with him I used to love riding the subway. And he used to say to me, "Night-night, sweetie-pie." *(She laughs and teases Ivanov)*

BEGONIA

But the other Ivanov gets older every year you age. He's got wrinkles under his eyes, his hair is going gray and he's almost forty. Imagine that, pretty girl, he's almost forty!

GORNOTSVETOV

That's nothing for a man!

HOLLY

I know he's nothing but a lecher, that Ivanov. Only I don't know who he loves there now in his Paris

GORNOTSVETOV

What's the point of knowing? Let him love somebody. PEOPLE ARE MADE TO LOVE!

They stop and sit on the edge of a fountain.

HOLLY

God, how I loved riding the subway with him.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Lights up a cigarette) If he'd had a car, you'd have loved riding in cars.

HOLLY

How strange June is. There's absolutely no reason to do anything...

BEGONIA

My poor girl, you've grown skinny without me.

HOLLY

...you can be silent, look in dark windows and say nothing at all. Worry about me yourselves, you guys - let that be the strangeness of my life entering yours.

They take turns drinking wine from a bottle.

BEGONIA

Where's my boy?

GORNOTSVETOV

Where's another bottle?

HOLLY

Old Ivanov doesn't like small talk.

BEGONIA

He's just tired of life.

GORNOTSVETOV

Where's our little Frenchie?

HOLLY

He traces his hand on paper - that's his job.

BEGONIA

What happened to the other bottle?

HOLLY

Also, with Ivanov it rains in the winter.

GORNOTSVETOV

The boy's been waylaid somewhere. Without us, somebody'll do something to him.

BEGONIA

(Pulls out a wad of money) Gornotsvetov, quick, buy us something!

GORNOTSVETOV

We could buy all Moscow with a wad like this!

HOLLY

I recall his name once in a blue moon, but...

GORNOTSVETOV

(Shakes his head) Give her something to drink.

HOLLY

I love Ivanov.

They get her to drink from the bottle.

He was so handsome. And so tall.

Holly falls into thought and falls into the fountain. Begonia and Gornotsvetov laugh as they pull her out. They roll with laughter as they catch a taxi.

Where are we going?

BEGONIA

Out of here! We're getting out of here!

The Moscow rat race.

HOLLY

Begonia drummed on drums from Bukhará. She rattled her bracelets and earrings. We spun around in colorful skirts!

GORNOTSVETOV

Drunk with happiness we turned into wandering Gypsies. Our bare feet took Moscow's measure. Our eyes forecast fortune ahead. Lakes

glistened gaily. Roads and streets seemed abandoned to decay. The night became a fairy tale. Its lights shimmered and burst past windshields in mad dashes.

HOLLY

That's our good fairy! – shouted Gornotsvetov – our good fairy!

GORNOTSVETOV

Moscow today smiled upon us, it believed in our tears.

HOLLY

Horses, elephants and monkeys winked and waved to our passing caravan.

GORNOTSVETOV

That tender lover the fog kissed our hands and the city's ponds beckoned to us.

HOLLY

No one wanted it to end. No one wanted to return. Everything was washed and sung in wine, happiness, lawns and love. Everything copulated in this happiness, in Begonia's eyes, in every little piece of her. ALL THE MEN WANTED BEGONIA AND THEY RAN AFTER US, SPRINKLING GOLD COINS IN THE STREET, TRIPPING AND FALLING IN FRONT OF AUTOMOBILES AND DYING THERE HAPPY IN POOLS OF BLOOD.

GORNOTSVETOV

Begonia's laughter held us by the hand. It was our Favorite song. It was the Prettiest song we had!

HOLLY

ONE-THOUSAND DAYS HAVE PASSED, ONE NIGHT IS LEFT

GORNOTSVETOV

Sparrows and pigeons scattered into the black night!

HOLLY

The day Begonia appeared life again seemed beautiful.

SCENE SEVEN

Cats

Evening. Holly, Gornotsvetov and Begonia have a houseful of guests. Noise, smoke, dances and revelry. Gornotsvetov, flushed and excited, tells Holly an exciting story.

GORNOTSVETOV

She sat in the kitchen, small, skinny and pretty. She had tiny little feet and high-heeled shoes like Cinderella.

I saw her and knew it instantly – there was a Woman. A divine spark flashed between us. All it would take was for one micron to shift and something would happen between us, between just us two – the kind of thing life is lived for.

“Gornotsvetov, why are you drinking?”

I said, “Come on, don’t cry over nonsense like that.”

She said, “Gornotsvetov, promise me you’ll never drink again. For my sake.”

I poured all the bottles out in the sink and ran into the bathroom. I took a cold shower. I ran into the kitchen and there’s no one there.

She just disappeared silently.

I wanted a drink but all the booze had disappeared too. It was five in the morning. I started feeling pretty punk, so I went to bed. And I dreamed about fifty cats.

They’re all sitting on the bed and I say, “Look here, this cat has blue eyes, this one has green eyes and this one over here has yellow eyes. In turn, I look every one of them in the eye. Every one of them had eyes like a cadaver – terrible, narrow little pupils. Sly cats, every one of them. And every one of these cats has golden shoes on its paws. The cats all look at me and then they join hands and walk out in single file, click-click-clicking the heels of their shoes.

Click, click, click...

Click, click, click...

HOLLY

(Sits in an armchair and smokes) What were you drinking?

GORNOTSVETOV

Can you imagine that? They take each other’s hand just like that, and then click-click-clack on out.

HOLLY

What were you drinking?

GORNOTSVETOV

I don’t remember. Probably some horrible hooch. I don’t remember regretting it when I poured it all out. But then maybe I was just in the grips of passion.

You should have seen them all wearing SHOES...

BEGONIA

(Dancing) They were all broads, Gornotsvetov. All your broads. You’ve got more broads than you can shake a stick at.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Thoughtfully) Then why the eyes like cadavers?

BEGONIA

Because they're all idiots. There's not a single normal one among them, they're all kind of...

GORNOTSVETOV

Why not? What about the one in my kitchen?

BEGONIA

Yeah, that one's missing in action, too.

GORNOTSVETOV

I just didn't see her leave.

HOLLY

Thank God for that.

BEGONIA

(Laughs, falls into an armchair) When I was a kid I was in love with a blue-eyed soldier. We wrote letters back and forth, went to movies and kissed. And then he disappeared.

A couple of years later I met him at a dance.

He came up and asked me if I really didn't recognize him.

Was it really possible I didn't remember how he stood outside my house with a bouquet of yellow flowers.

I laughed.

NOTHING LIKE THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME.

I didn't throw myself on his neck, didn't kiss him, didn't say of course I remember everything and that after that I waited for him a whole year...

I said, what a nice story, and I even said, what a shame it didn't happen with me.

We stood there staring in each other's eyes.

GORNOTSVETOV

You didn't even feel a little bit bad for him?

BEGONIA

You know how much it cost me to say that to him?

HOLLY

Why? Maybe that would have been the great love of your life.

BEGONIA

It would have been the great blunder of my life.

A man invites Begonia to dance. She continues talking as she comes and goes, dancing, disappearing and reappearing through the noise and music.

I've been all around the world and I've been on almost every sea except the Red Sea. When I was seventeen I went out on the road, stuck out my thumb and headed off to chase the wind. I never regretted it. I had a million men when I still needed that and I fed my dissertation to an elephant in the Belgrade zoo before heading off to Italy with a young Spaniard!

GORNOTSVETOV

You mean an Italian.

BEGONIA

(Shouts) I mean a Spaniard!

GORNOTSVETOV

Last time you said you went to Spain with an Italian.

BEGONIA

(Laughs) I was there too.

GORNOTSVETOV

Of course. And maybe you fed your dissertation to an elephant because you don't have any dissertation. As for all the seas except the Red Sea, forget it. There's millions of seas.

BEGONIA

(Having disappeared among the people) I am a great wanderer!

HOLLY

Let's get out of here.

GORNOTSVETOV

Whereto?

HOLLY

The east. Samarkand maybe. Where there's desert sands.

GORNOTSVETOV

Only first I've got to buy two pistols if I'm going to travel with two women like you.

BEGONIA

(Reappearing) There's nothing but camels there!

HOLLY

There must be eastern men in the east.

GORNOTSVETOV

Finally she's got men on her mind and not Ivanov.

BEGONIA

Besides men and camels you don't think anyone will give us trouble?

GORNOTSVETOV

Let's make some money and go!

HOLLY

The more money the better.

Holly sees a man among the guests and approaches him. They talk and then go to dance.

MAN

So how are things?

HOLLY

Pathetic.

MAN

What if really?

HOLLY

I don't know.

MAN

(Gaily) Things are good with me. I'm in love.

HOLLY

Who with? *(Looks around)* You mean...

MAN

Yeah.

HOLLY

You didn't have to tell me that.

MAN

Why?

HOLLY

I don't know.

*She runs out and hides in her room.
The Man follows her. Holly sits on the floor crying.*

MAN

I didn't think that would upset you so. I didn't think you cared anymore. I thought that

Holly cries.

What do we do now?

I don't know.

HOLLY

They are silent.

Why did you leave?

MAN

I don't know.

HOLLY

Why? I loved you very much.

MAN

And now? Now? Now?

HOLLY

Holly cries. The man strokes her head and her arms. He kisses her and calms her.

I loved you very much. (I didn't think it would upset her. I thought she would probably laugh.)

MAN

I should have laughed lightheartedly. But I suddenly thought I would die if I laughed.

HOLLY

I was even frightened – for myself.

MAN

When he wanted to say he didn't love me, I remembered the fairy tale about where you can't say the word "death." Do whatever you want, I thought, only don't say those words to me. I can't bear it.

HOLLY

Begonia and Gornotsvetov tumble into the room. The Man leaves. Begonia is doubled over in paroxysms of laughter as she hangs onto Gornotsvetov.

I'm having convulsions...

BEGONIA

Hey, settle down. You can't say anything to you. I'm telling you they're interstellar...

GORNOTSVETOV

BEGONIA

(Sits on the floor next to Holly) Interstellar convulsions are a serious problem.

GORNOTSVETOV

(To Holly) Do you think if I don't consider myself a space passenger...

BEGONIA

(Corrects him) A passenger on the spaceship Earth. *(Laughs)*

GORNOTSVETOV

...that means I'm too earthbound?

Pause.

BEGONIA

My God! Somebody's hurt our little girl again! *(Wipes the tears from Holly's eyes)* Here's a little glass of booze for our little girl, and here's a little cigarette...

Holly drinks and lights up.

HOLLY

I've totally lost it. I cry at the drop of a hat.

BEGONIA

That's because I was gone for too long. Everything will be okay now. You'll see. Drink up and calm down.

GORNOTSVETOV

What about me?

BEGONIA

Where would we be without you?

They drink and kiss.

HOLLY

I really love you guys. I don't know what I'd do without you.

BEGONIA

Only don't cry. You're all right, aren't you?

HOLLY

Yeah.

BEGONIA

Anyway - if you go blowing the waterworks over men... I'm going to lose respect. *(Reproachfully)* They're not worth it. Not one bit.

GORNOTSVETOV

Why not?

HOLLY

That's not why.

BEGONIA

Yeah, right. And that was Gornotsvetov's girlfriend who just left here and I'm old and blind.

HOLLY

Don't be hurt.

BEGONIA

I can understand it once a year – like on Ivanov's birthday. I can handle that. But this is getting out of hand.

GORNOTSVETOV

You can have any man here you want.

BEGONIA

Want that one?

HOLLY

No.

GORNOTSVETOV

What about that one in the checkered blazer?

HOLLY

No. He looks like a monkey.

GORNOTSVETOV

That guy looks like a monkey? Listen sweetheart, if that one looks like a monkey...

BEGONIA

Maybe you'd like a girl?

HOLLY

No.

BEGONIA

Look – nice short skirt, green stockings, pretty shoes and a hot hairdo...

HOLLY

No. I definitely don't want a girl. (*Coming to life*) I want that boy...

BEGONIA

Which one? In the red sweater? Don't give me that. Look at his stupid face. What do you want with a guy like that? The girl's a lot better.

HOLLY

(Laughs) Then bring me that fat guy over there, the fat one in glasses.

GORNOTSVETOV

What do you want a fat one for?

BEGONIA

You want a fat one, you get a fat one. *(Gets up, prepares to beckon to him)*

HOLLY

(Laughs harder) No, no, I was kidding, Begonia! I was just kidding!

BEGONIA

What's the problem here, Gornotsvetov? I don't get it. Isn't there a single normal man here anywhere?

GORNOTSVETOV

There's always one.

HOLLY

If it's you, I accept.

BEGONIA

Holly!

HOLLY

Don't worry, we'll only last as long as the bottle does.

GORNOTSVETOV

So that's what you think of me.

BEGONIA

Look at that guy over there! A prince!

GORNOTSVETOV

What's your problem with me?

HOLLY

He's got a girl.

BEGONIA

As if that's supposed to stop you.

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe you could make it a threesome.

HOLLY

No thanks.

BEGONIA

Would you get a load of this? This one isn't right, that one's a monkey, the other one she doesn't want. You know what you are? You're a bore!

HOLLY

(Laughs) Me?!

BEGONIA

You.

HOLLY

Give me your French boy.

BEGONIA

(Amazed) What do you want with him? He's...

HOLLY

What do you want with him?

Silence.

BEGONIA

You want to argue?

HOLLY

(Kisses Begonia) No. *(Winks, goes to dance)*

GORNOTSVETOV

See that girl over there?

BEGONIA

(Angrily) What of her?

GORNOTSVETOV

I told her we're Holly's parents and that she's overdeveloped for a fifteen year-old.

BEGONIA

You mean, I'm you're wife.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Smiles) Former. A Ph.D. in the arts.

BEGONIA

(Laughs) You should have told her we're a *ménage à trois*.

GORNOTSVETOV

That's probably what she thinks.

BEGONIA

Ask her to make it a foursome.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Thoughtfully) No, she probably won't come.

BEGONIA

We'll see about that...

They laugh.

SCENE EIGHT

Holly and Men

A square room. Night. In the room are Holly and two men. It is dark. We hear whispers.

FIRST MAN

Sweetheart, I didn't know how much I missed you. I thought I had forgotten you ages ago

HOLLY

Yes yes yes yes

FIRST MAN

My God, Holly, Holly

HOLLY

He can hear everything

FIRST MAN

No he can't, no. He's asleep. You can hear him sleeping

SECOND MAN

I pulled the covers up over my head and tried to mind my own business, but her face, her lips, her laughter all made me tremble (hot), I heard every move they made, I heard her kissing him, I heard him whisper "my sweetheart, sweetheart mine," I thought my heart was clanging like a train all over this dinky room. I pulled the pillow over my head.

She said, "I'll turn out the light," although I'll bet she really wanted to get undressed in front of me and get in bed with him, but she said, "I'll turn out the light." She was sitting by the window and I could see everything there was to see. I watched her undress but she didn't see anything.

*Holly reaches for a cigarette and
lights up.*

(Quietly) Holly...

HOLLY

What?

SECOND MAN

Why aren't you sleeping?

HOLLY

I don't know.

SECOND MAN

I lay there and watched how every time she inhaled the burning ashes lit her face up red. She was sitting on the bed with her eyes covered by her mussed-up hair. What might I have seen in them?

His hands and every fiber remembered her body, but I had never known it. One time she and I kissed in somebody's kitchen, in the dark, and she asked, "Who is that?" and then she said, "Just like Chekhov, somebody's hands, somebody's kisses," and then she cracked up and left.

HOLLY

You mean you weren't sleeping?

SECOND MAN

No.

HOLLY

Why not?

SECOND MAN

I asked you not to do that.

HOLLY

Do what?

SECOND MAN

Make love.

HOLLY

It's not love.

SECOND MAN

That's what it's called.

HOLLY

That's not what THAT'S called.

SECOND MAN

You know best.

HOLLY

I'm thirsty.

SECOND MAN

There's only water.

HOLLY

That's what I want.

SECOND MAN

She was drumming some melody with her fingers. Five minutes passed.

HOLLY

Are you going to give me some water?

SECOND MAN

I don't know.

HOLLY

I'm thirsty.

SECOND MAN

I'm hungry. For you.

HOLLY

No.

SECOND MAN

I got up and got her some water. She drank and drops dripped down her chin and ran along her neck to her breasts and kept on running down. I wiped them off with my palm, asking, "You really mean no?" and she said to me, trembling, "no no no no no."

HOLLY

If you stretch out next to his body, his huge body with such tender skin, and you melt in kisses and you sense yourself only through tenderness and ecstasy, and then fall asleep wrapped in his arms - what's so wrong with that?

SECOND MAN

In the morning I woke up early. I went and ordered a cup of coffee and bought some newspapers. When I got back, she was bathing and he smiled at me. He said, "Good morning." I read my papers, he smoked. There was a knock at the door.

Enter the Third Man.

THIRD MAN

I looked for you all day yesterday. I'd been everywhere when I found out you were here.

HOLLY

I was the one who was looking for you all day yesterday. You didn't come.

THIRD MAN

I'm here now.

HOLLY

You're so cold. Is it raining?

THIRD MAN

Yes, it is. Quick, get your things. Let's go.

SECOND MAN

She tossed her things in her purse. She kissed us and she said goodbye and they left. We were left sitting here alone.

FIRST MAN

Is it really raining out there?

SECOND MAN

Does it make any difference?

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Holly is alone in the apartment. She wanders from room to room.

HOLLY

Alien eyes in alien homes
Black cats, black eyes
The gray-eyed calf also is
a cheat, a rake, a sham and a fraud.

You stole figs in Paris – at least you love THEM.

Who are you to reproach me for stealing a bunny when I was a kid? I met that little boy later on the street, I just never told you about that part, and I gave him back everything, even the drumsticks, word of honor, don't laugh... *(She goes into Gornotsvetov's room and finds a flask on the table. Opens it and takes a sip)*

I'm not going to ask you for gifts
I won't dance the tango with you
it's still too early
your passions run high

I am too cautious
skittish
and bored
I won't drink with you anymore
or see through you
or look through your grandmother's monocle (there are three in the
collection, there will never be any more)
or through the leaves on the trees
through the shadows and wind, through your hands, through your
eyes, through your skin, your words...

*Holly goes around the room picking up
all the shot glasses and lines them up
before her. She opens a flask and
pours. Looks out the window. One by
one, she downs every shot glass.
A trolley passes.
A dog barks.
A telephone rings.
Someone talks out in the courtyard.
Children make noise.
Rain begins to fall.
It grows dark.
Cars splatter the water in puddles.
A teapot boils.
Holly makes some tea. (Maybe you'd
like to visit me, you tormented
seagull-like tea leaves?)₁
She turns out the light.*

HOLLY

None of you care where I am or who's side I'm on
Tell me
Kiss me
I want to look at you
I'll say nothing
Maybe I'll leave
Maybe I'll smile
Maybe I'll laugh
or no (yes)

Maybe you today. Me tomorrow. Or perhaps we just never met. Maybe we
didn't understand. And so forgot it all. It's not hard. It's all so
exhausting...

SCENE TWO

The Midgets and Their Invasion

*Holly rummages through her medicines.
A vial falls out and rolls on the*

floor. Holly picks it up and opens it. It has a pleasant smell. Something painfully familiar and sweet makes her lift the vial to her nose. She inhales deeply, tormenting herself as she tries to remember what, who and where this reminds her of. Holly sits at the table and closes her eyes. The vial shatters in her hand and shards fly. A stream of blood runs along her arm but Holly feels nothing anymore.

HOLLY

I stared at the back of his head and thought, What big, flappy kid's ears he has. How could I not like him?

For a second everything about his face seemed disgusting and hideous to me. I even felt sick to my stomach. I closed my eyes and made myself think that maybe I was wrong and then I looked only in the direction of the window. I did not turn my head. Why wasn't he leaving?

A Man sits across the table from Holly. He smiles and says something. Holly looks at him carefully, the Man suddenly begins to shrink and shrink until he becomes quite tiny.

Ooh, what a nasty little shrimp.

She squishes the Man with her foot. The man squeals.

Where did he come from?

*A sport coat hangs on the back of the chair.
On the floor is a puddle.*

Then I wasn't imagining it. Strange.

The door opens, the man enters.

MAN

There's no champagne anywhere. Only cognac. And here are some flowers. *(Pulls a bouquet out from behind his back)* This is for you.

HOLLY

(Looks him over carefully) I thought I squished you.

MAN

What? *(Laughs)*

HOLLY

You shrunk and I squished you under my foot.

MAN

What are you talking about?

HOLLY

I think it's as plain as day.

MAN

You must drink a lot.

HOLLY

No.

MAN

(Moves toward Holly) I suspect.

HOLLY

I suspect something too.

MAN

(Hopefully) And what's that?

HOLLY

That you keep shrinking and shrinking.

The Man laughs at first and then begins shrinking. He sits on the chair quite small.

You see? *(She takes a fat book from the table and swats the man)*
Take that.

*There is a puddle on the chair.
The door opens, the Man enters.*

MAN

There's no champagne anywhere. Only cognac. And here are some flowers.
(Pulls a bouquet out from behind his back) This is for you.

HOLLY

Why do you come back so quickly?

MAN

Why so quickly? I...

HOLLY

I thought I squashed you.

MAN

(Laughs) You can't leave you alone for a minute.

HOLLY

You don't get it yet?

MAN

No.

HOLLY

The third time I'll kill you.

MAN

Now, now. I love you, Holly. Why would you do that? You'd best not have anything more to drink. And go to bed.

HOLLY

What about you? Are you going?

MAN

No.

HOLLY

Why not?

MAN

I've got nowhere to go.

HOLLY

Are you that alone?

MAN

Lonely as a polecat.

HOLLY

Where are you going to sleep, then?

MAN

That's for you to decide.

HOLLY

Well, you won't take up much room.

MAN

(Reproachfully) Holly, Holly.

Takes Holly by the hand, but begins to shrink. He squeals something. Holly

puts him in a matchbox and closes it.

HOLLY

(Listening carefully) How is it in there?

*Throws the matchbox out the window.
Opens the bottle of cognac. Begonia
enters, followed by the Man.*

BEGONIA

Whose our visitor, here?

HOLLY

Nobody.

BEGONIA

What are you drinking?

HOLLY

Me? Cognac.

BEGONIA

Whose jacket?

HOLLY

I don't know.

BEGONIA

(Laughs) Come on, you can tell me.

MAN

There's no champagne anywhere. Only cognac. And here are some flowers.
(Pulls a bouquet out from behind his back) This is for you.

HOLLY

Ah, hello-hello. If this keeps up, we're going to drown in your cognac.

BEGONIA

This is Holly.

MAN

I know.

HOLLY

This guy of yours is a wacko.

BEGONIA

He's not mine.

HOLLY

Well, to your health. *(Drinks)*

BEGONIA

I called Lara and get a load of this — her husband was electrocuted yesterday.

HOLLY

Oh my God! I'll have to call her.

BEGONIA

What are you going to say? Congratulations?

HOLLY

What won't you say next?

BEGONIA

And then tell her he lost 500 rubles to me the day before and that he spent the night with me? In your room, by the way.

HOLLY

Where else could you have stayed? There isn't any other place.

BEGONIA

Then on the next day...

HOLLY

My God.

BEGONIA

So how come you're not calling? *(Steps on something on the floor. A quiet sob is heard. She takes a whisk broom and pan and sweeps the floor. Empties it in the trash)*

HOLLY

How did he get electrocuted?

BEGONIA

What, did you have other orders? You wanted him shot and now you're disappointed he got it by electricity instead?

HOLLY

Why did you tell me this? Now I'll never get to sleep.

The door opens, the Man enters.

MAN

There's no champagne anywhere. Only cognac. Here are some flowers...

BEGONIA

Wow, this guy's nimble — he's already back with a bottle.

HOLLY

He's got nowhere to spend the night. So he keeps running back and forth.

BEGONIA

Ah, another one of those. Then, let him spend the night if he's not afraid. Remember Vladimir Palych? Hilarious. He just up and died. He wasn't sick, he didn't suffer. He just up and kicked the bucket. God rest his soul. Let's say a little prayer.

They pour some cognac.

And then...

HOLLY

Of course. I remember all of them.

BEGONIA

All men might just start croaking one after the other. *(Thinks)* Or, when it comes down to it – let 'em all die. Just don't bring 'em home. You just start getting used to a guy and then he goes and keels over. It upsets me every time.

They are silent.

Both look at the Man.

The Man is motionless. He looks at them fearfully.

A long pause.

HOLLY

All he needs is some sweetbread and booze.

BEGONIA

Then here's some sweetbread and cognac.

MAN

Thank you.

BEGONIA

Are you a doctor?

MAN

No.

BEGONIA

Then what's the deal?

MAN

I don't know. I don't quite understand what is happening.

BEGONIA

And I don't understand what you're doing here if you're not a doctor.

MAN

Okay-okay. I'll go. Goodbye. Thank you.

BEGONIA

Don't mention it.

*Holly throws a big vase at the Man.
Shattering sounds are followed by dust
as plaster chips from the wall fly
everywhere. The lights go out.*

BEGONIA

(Roars with laughter) How did you get mixed up in that one?

HOLLY

I'm always getting mixed up in something.

BEGONIA

Took care of him good, didn't we?

HOLLY

Men keep getting pettier all the time.

BEGONIA

If only they just wouldn't get so petty so quick.

*The doorbell rings. Holly opens the
door.*

HOLLY

There's some man here with flowers. Must be for you.

BEGONIA

I'm not expecting anyone. If he's got flowers, it must be for you.

HOLLY

He muttered something about champagne and cognac.

BEGONIA

Maybe we ought to invite him in?

HOLLY

How come the lights are out?

BEGONIA

How am I supposed to know?

HOLLY

(Lights a candle) My God, what a mess. Somebody's been drinking cognac. And look, they busted the vase.

BEGONIA

It was a nice vase.

HOLLY

Whose flowers are these? Look at 'em all.

BEGONIA

How would I know? I just got here.

HOLLY

I wonder if that's how you go out of your mind? It's like there are at least ten other people living here with us but we are chronically incapable of meeting up with them.

BEGONIA

The floor is all gummed up with something.

HOLLY

I am so tired...

SCENE THREE

An Apparition of Love

HOLLY

It's sunny this morning.

The window has the look of a disheveled-haired girl.

And you have raised eyebrows.

Your arm thrown upward imitates their contour.

I sit beside you and look at your face.

You open your eyes.

You look at me and see nothing.

Now it all comes clear. I'm sleeping in another room.

I go back and see myself wrapped in a blanket.

I probably dreamed you, I think, and sleep on.

It's sunny this morning.

And still very early.

Only crazy, noose-like black loops hang around everything in the room, they slide over mirrors and handles. Like snakes they wink back and forth among themselves and their black skin shines. Most important is that they don't get in bed with me. I'm terrified.

I tuck the blanket under me from every side and I duck my head under it too. The main thing now is for them not to get in my eyes. I start crying because I can't do anything about these black loops. I run far away into the garden and you shake me by the shoulder. You say I was crying in my sleep.

It's entirely possible I was walking down the street and I went in the wrong gate. There's a garden there and big trees. All the leaves are like carved monograms. What an artist! I think, and what was I crying for? It's so beautiful and there's nothing frightening about it.

I sit at the table and spill tea on my dress. Its colors slowly run, the pigments mixing leisurely, pouring one into the other, violet, green, white. I think I ought to get up but I can't move at all. I sit and watch the colors blending into each other, turning into black blots. They hurt my eyes and rustle, rustle, rustle... *Holly screams and awakens. On the edge of her bed sits Lyubov Karlovna who holds out to Holly a glass of water. Holly drinks.*

It grew dark all around and everything was spinning. The water (if it was water) was sweet, with a hint of grape flavor. I suddenly became a silk thread and slipped out of my body as if I were slipping out the eye of a needle.

The wind blew me higher and higher and there Lyubov Karlovna caught me by the hand. She squeezed it tightly and whispered something. She dug into me with her fingers so, that I began giving off a ringing sound. I never would have known that I sound so beautiful.

Do you hear that, Lyubov Karlovna? Do you hear that? How beautiful is that little bit that is left of me! I've come to resemble a violin or a harp. What a pity I know nothing about them.

I became a syrup, sweet beet juice and I dribbled down her arms, her wrinkles and veins. I flowed down and down her body, my head spinning. I sat on a hot rock as if I were a fat lizard and the heat spread through me as if it were boiling mercury. How wonderful it was...

I looked down and saw my poor body, all its defects and crags. It flamed up in a cold, blue fire and in the space of a second all that was left was its shape in ashes. I laughed and blew on it with all my might as I might a birthday cake in order to extinguish each sorrowful year of mine as if they were candles.

Now my loving body is white as snow, thin and transparent. I was afraid to touch it. I couldn't believe my eyes. I looked at Lyubov Karlovna and asked, "Why are you so old, then?"

LYUBOV KARLOVNA. I've no one left to wait for.

HOLLY. "I've no one left to wait for," said Lyubov Karlovna and she disappeared. And then there were dances.

Dances, because that's the way I want it, because that's what I want, because I - I began walking on something slippery, noisy and fragile. Lyubov Karlovna's beads had broken and spilled on the floor. I scooped them up onto the bed - one, two, three, four. Where are these beads from, I wondered? Why didn't I notice them on Lyubov Karlovna? How did that happen?

That's when that transparent pair appeared. At first I thought they might help me and I was happy to see them. But they started kicking the beads with their feet as if they were balls. And they laughed.

MAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

WOMAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

MAN

I'm here I'm here I'm here (*Kicks a bead*)

WOMAN

That's good that's good that's good

They laugh and run.

HOLLY

I tried to catch up with them to kick them out. It was only when I grabbed the man that I realized I had a knife in my hand. He noticed it too and he began to tremble. I gazed into his stupid eyes and cut off both his ears.

So there, I said and dropped him on the floor.

The woman saw that and burst into laughter.

WOMAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha – you're so funny. Follow me quick, let's go quick!

MAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha

HOLLY

Holding hands, they ran away. I put the ears in my pajama pockets. There was no blood on them. I never would have thought I could do something like that. (*She lies down to sleep*) When I went out to have breakfast in the morning, Begonia was the only one at the table.

BEGONIA

Good morning!

HOLLY

Good...

BEGONIA

Oho! Where did you get that?

HOLLY

What?

BEGONIA

Those beads and bracelet.

HOLLY

I looked at my hand and then in the mirror and saw that the beads had joined together on my neck and wrist.

BEGONIA

Nice looking!

HOLLY

For the love of Karlovna. Lyubov Karlovna.

BEGONIA

Aren't you lucky.

HOLLY

I reached into my pocket and pulled out the ears. I put them on the table.

Begonia chokes and coughs.

BEGONIA

(Getting a grip on herself) My God, where are those from? It's not Gornotsvetov, is it?

HOLLY

No.

BEGONIA

But Gornotsvetov could use having something else cut off...

HOLLY

Begonia!

BEGONIA

So who's are they, sweetheart?

HOLLY

I don't know myself. I woke up and there they were.

BEGONIA

(Looks at the ears) Look at that, will you. All pink.

HOLLY

And no blood at all.

BEGONIA

Yeah...

Holly shrugs her shoulders.

Throw 'em out the window. Why worry about it?

Holly throws the ears out the window.

Did you wash your hands?

HOLLY

I will now.

BEGONIA

You never can tell...

Holly washes her hands.

You know, the worse off your head gets, the better you look. Aren't you a beauty!

*Gornotsvetov enters from the street.
He takes off his hat and raincoat.
Sits at the table.*

GORNOTSVETOV

I'm hungry, folks. Better yet, mesdames, I'm ravenous.

HOLLY

Good morning.

BEGONIA

Gornotsvetov, are you trying to say your ladies don't feed you breakfast?

GORNOTSVETOV

Breakfast? Are you kidding? All those ladies are too greedy for that.

BEGONIA

Sluts.

GORNOTSVETOV

By the way - there's two ears out there on the street floating in a puddle. Can you imagine that? I'm walking along and I even thought about picking them up. But the puddle was filthy.

HOLLY

It rained all night.

BEGONIA

Big deal, some ears. I could see it if it was something else.

GORNOTSVETOV

I'm telling you they were human ears!

BEGONIA

So what do you care? Everything on you's in place.

HOLLY

I'm out of here. *Bon appétit.* (*Leaves*)

GORNOTSVETOV

(*Watches her go*) Wow, doesn't she look good this morning? Hot.

BEGONIA

Yeah... Go on, salivate, pretty boy. But you won't lay hands on our girl that easy.

GORNOTSVETOV

You neither, huh?

BEGONIA

Me neither.

SCENE FOUR

Holly and Ivanov

Holly's room. She sits in an armchair smoking.

HOLLY

A telephone call awoke me in the middle of the night. It was Ivanov.
(*Around three or four, thought Holly*)

IVANOV

I love you.

HOLLY

The next morning I couldn't remember if it had really happened or if I had dreamed it.

IVANOV

Holly

HOLLY

There can be no conversation
Until I'm certain he exists
What if he crawled into my head where he
does anything he wants - he dreams himself to me

IVANOV

Holly

HOLLY

When I saw him the first time there was nothing I wouldn't have done to save myself, but I couldn't do a thing. I looked him in the eyes and felt him rummaging around in my brains.

IVANOV

Holly

HOLLY

And that piece of paper, I came home and burned it. Who knows what he might have encoded on it. I burned it immediately, flushed it down the toilet and washed my hands. I didn't answer the telephone. What if he guessed my phone number or somehow read my thoughts through my eyes...

Do you remember Tamara's birthday party?

We ran into each other on the street and arrived together. You taught me to dance. Strange to think now, but before that I'd never danced with a man. Tamara - she was so beautiful - pushed me on you and said nobody could teach me to dance better. I fell into your arms and closed my eyes. I clammed up as though it was my entire frightened soul squeezing into a ball.

I was wearing a warm sweater. You embraced me and I was horrified. What if you thought I was fat. *(Laughs)*

I don't believe these cities, these conjectural specters, pictures, neon lights, cardboard houses and roads -

AND IF YOU ASK ME TO SING WHAT I HEARD IT WON'T WORK - NEITHER SOUNDS NOR SMELLS WISH TO BE KNOWN

Today the wine is sweeter. Today my cheeks are red. It's not flirtatiousness, it's shame, embarrassment. The shroud of curiosity carried me off to the edge of the earth.

Holly looks at the ceiling where she sees two shadows - Holly and Ivanov. Streetlights flicker and the two shadows begin to come to life, moving their hands and arms. Ivanov wears a tall helmet on his head. Holly sits quietly, not moving, so as not to frighten the figures. She listens to their endless conversation which has been going on non-stop for years. "Why didn't I notice them before?" Holly wonders in surprise.

IVANOV

I can't figure out whether you're crying or not
whether you're laughing or not
whether you're looking or not
all you do is say nothing
That's bad - say something

HOLLY

About what?

About an October day?

About *The French Lieutenant's Woman*?

About violin chamber concerts?

IVANOV

Can it be we'll never again

HOLLY

Maybe it seems I'll die then – but of course not

IVANOV

There are no shadows on a chair crawling up your legs, slipping under your light skirt, higher, higher – I want to crawl on my knees, seize your legs and kiss them. Become that shadow wandering over your body

HOLLY

Take my hands in yours and look into my eyes

IVANOV

I love you

SCENE FIVE

A room with a huge window. Holly and a man sit by the window at a round table. They dine and talk.

The man says something.

Holly leaps up and throws a spoon at him.

The man does not stop eating, he says something in response.

Holly runs out of the room, slamming the door.

The man eats.

Holly returns, sits at the table, picks up her knife and fork and eats.

The man is silent.

Holly says something to him as she stares at her plate.

The man looks at her and responds.

Holly jumps up, knocks over the table. Everything falls and breaks.

Holly runs out of the room.

The man shouts something after her.

Holly returns, approaches the man and strikes him in the face.

The man strikes Holly, she falls and lies on the floor, weeping.

The man paces around the room, kicking at broken shards of things. Holly gets up, goes to the mirror. She wipes the blood from her face, smearing it with tears, and says something to the man. He answers. She turns around and shouts something at him. The man strikes Holly again and she falls. She picks up a knife from the floor and strikes the man several times with it. The man stares at her in amazement. He slowly sits down on the floor.

SCENE SIX

Striking Flints

Evening. Begonia and Gornotsvetov sit in the kitchen drinking tea.

BEGONIA

My broach disappeared.

GORNOTSVETOV

Which one?

BEGONIA

The silver one, with the lizard.

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe you lost it yourself.

BEGONIA

I didn't lose it. It was there and then it wasn't.

They are silent.

GORNOTSVETOV

Well, even if she did take it, what about it?

BEGONIA

I don't care about the broach. I want to figure out what is going on.

GORNOTSVETOV

You don't get it yet?

BEGONIA

No.

*The door slams, they go out into the corridor.
Holly sits in the darkness. She can't get her shoes off to save her life.*

GORNOTSVETOV

Let me help.

HOLLY

Don't.

BEGONIA

What happened to your face? *(She turns on the light)*

GORNOTSVETOV

(Shouts) My God...

HOLLY

No big deal. I fell.

BEGONIA

You're all bloody.

HOLLY

I fell and got a bloody nose. It's no big deal.

BEGONIA

Where were you?

HOLLY

I was out walking. On Tverskaya Street they're cutting down pine trees. It must be the end of the world. They've been growing there a hundred years and now they up and just start cutting them down. *(Goes into the bathroom)*

BEGONIA

I do think it must be the end of the world.

GORNOTSVETOV

Why?

BEGONIA

(Whispers) What pine trees?!

GORNOTSVETOV

What other pine trees? The ones on Tverskaya Street.

BEGONIA

Have you ever seen a pine tree anywhere on Tverskaya Street?

GORNOTSVETOV

(Thinks) No.

BEGONIA

Then what are they cutting down?

GORNOTSVETOV

Trees maybe?

BEGONIA

What a bunch of nonsense.

They go to the bathroom door and listen.

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe we should knock?

BEGONIA

What for?

GORNOTSVETOV

Just in case.

BEGONIA

I think she's crying.

GORNOTSVETOV

She's always crying.

BEGONIA

She's going to do something to herself.

GORNOTSVETOV

Naw, no way.

BEGONIA

(Knocks) You going to be there long? I need to come in.

HOLLY

I'll be right out. *(She comes out of the bathroom)*

BEGONIA

Your face is all banged up.

HOLLY

I fell. No big deal.

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe you should put something on it?

HOLLY

I'd rather go to bed. Good night.

She leaves. Gornotsvetov and Begonia exchange glances. They go back to the kitchen.

BEGONIA

Where do you think she's been?

GORNOTSVETOV

Maybe somebody hit her.

BEGONIA

Who?

GORNOTSVETOV

I don't know.

BEGONIA

We've got to do something. We can't keep track of her all the time.

GORNOTSVETOV

We've got to get her out of here.

BEGONIA

Did you see the way she was walking? Hugging the wall as if she couldn't see anything?

GORNOTSVETOV

We could go to the seashore, or out there to Samarkand – she wanted to go.

BEGONIA

I'm scared. Something's going to happen to her. And we've got no money.

GORNOTSVETOV

We could borrow some.

BEGONIA

There isn't a soul in this town who'd give you a kopeck. You owe everybody.

GORNOTSVETOV

I'll think of something.

BEGONIA

Sell your hat.

GORNOTSVETOV

What do you keep picking on my hat for?

BEGONIA

Sorry.

GORNOTSVETOV

I don't know what to do.

BEGONIA

I don't either.

*They sit and say nothing.
Begonia goes to bed.
Gornotsvetov sits alone for a long
time.
He smokes.
He approaches Holly's room and stands
by her door.
He turns around and goes to his own
room.
He opens the window.*

GORNOTSVETOV

She told me that she dreamed Ivanov and I got in a fight. We were holding flints. We were standing in the middle of a wet plaza and Ivanov was wearing a yellow scarf.

Holly said, "I was afraid you'd kill each other. You butted heads and sparks flew in all directions from the flints. There were sparks everywhere! It was beautiful." She told me that and laughed. Silly girl. She just didn't get it.

SCENE SEVEN

Lyubov Karlovna Returns

Night. Holly sits in her room in the dark.

HOLLY

In a silver dream (beyond the wind and ocean) it might be tears or foolishness, it might be rainstorms of passion, poetry, music or deer-like men...

This is time beyond the dotted line, beyond the void. Nothing in it is remembered except for vague trains and noise – walls, curtains, ceilings doors, hands, eyes and hair all burn... I've got to walk a little faster, I don't think anyone noticed. There was just a little blood on my cheek (my hand). There's something I don't understand, something I don't remember... something I don't want...

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

Come here.

HOLLY

I'm coming, but there is a girl with red cornflowers in her pigtails standing by the road. She has a sly look in her eyes. She threatens me with her finger. I approach her and ask, "What do you want, girl?" But she says nothing, she doesn't answer.

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

Don't believe anyone.

HOLLY

Neither cat nor mouse.

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

You were frightened, frightened of yourself and of me, you said

HOLLY

THIS FRENCH SONG IS TOO LONG

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

Come on, let's go.

HOLLY

But life is so tender and endless. It is so strange, seductive and sad. How am I ever going to make it to the mysterious East...

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

Why would you

HOLLY

It's my dream, how can you not understand! Those planetary desert dances - of yellow sands, a series of hallucinatory clouds... they are full of arrogance, shamelessness, bells, pipes, enigmas

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

(Sadly) You don't understand.

HOLLY

What?

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

He's standing behind the door.

HOLLY

Does he love me?

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

He's afraid to come in.

HOLLY

I dreamed they were fighting with flints.

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

He left.

HOLLY

Ivanov was always a coward.

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

(Extends her hand) I love you.

Holly laughs.

*Two figures appear, a Man and a Woman.
They walk on the ceiling, singing and
dancing.*

WOMAN

I'm here I'm here I'm here

MAN

That's good that's good that's good

WOMAN

In my time, time easily dispersed like cats and cocks

MAN

Like flashy feathers and flowers

WOMAN

Young years are always short

MAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

WOMAN

She asks us, are you in love?

You say: No.

She says: No?!

Talk on, keep on talking

MAN

No no no no no

WOMAN

But why? Why?

MAN

That's out of some other old play, it's time to forget that now.

I'll kill you

WOMAN

Villain

MAN

Sloven

WOMAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

MAN

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha

WOMAN

They laugh. Their faces grow heavy. Their skin begins to droop and become wrinkly. Their eyes meet and they look each other over. They laugh again and then begin coughing. They fall on the floor, choke and die.

HOLLY

So there. They won't come back anymore.

Ivanov appears.

Little people in nightcaps walked out the door and began walking around him in spirals. At first they wound around his legs and then they rose higher and higher. All that was heard was a crack, and they slowly dripped downwards along his body. When all of them had disappeared down to the last, Ivanov began swaying and fell. His breathing came to a halt.

A red dragon slipped out of his hands and swam away along the waves, like a dolphin, its red, toothy fin flashing from time to time. *(Weeps)*

I don't believe you. I've been waiting for you to write me for a hundred years, a hundred *(She steps over Ivanov lying on the floor and backs up towards the door. In the corridor she falls, gets up and walks out of the apartment with an unsteady gait)*

Morning.

BEGONIA

(Wakes Gornotsvetov) She's not anywhere around. She's gone.

GORNOTSVETOV

What time is it?

BEGONIA

Eight. Have you ever heard of her getting up that early?

GORNOTSVETOV

I don't know.

BEGONIA

Look, my hands are trembling.

GORNOTSVETOV

Nerves...

The doorbell rings. Begonia runs to open the door.

BEGONIA

(Returns) It's a policeman!

GORNOTSVETOV

What's he want?

BEGONIA

He came to see her. He's waiting in the kitchen.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Gets dressed) Now things are getting interesting.

BEGONIA

I don't know what to say to him.

GORNOTSVETOV

Is he asking anything?

BEGONIA

Not yet.

GORNOTSVETOV

I'm a neighbor, you're my wife and she's our neighbor. Let's get that straight.

BEGONIA

Come on.

GORNOTSVETOV

Did he ask for us?

BEGONIA

No.

GORNOTSVETOV

Then why talk to him?

BEGONIA

What if something happened to her?

GORNOTSVETOV

If something happened to her, he would have said so and he wouldn't be sitting there waiting.

BEGONIA

I'm afraid.

GORNOTSVETOV

You'd better go look in the bathroom or her room for the clothes she was wearing yesterday – with the blood on them.

BEGONIA

My God...

*She goes out. The doorbell rings.
Gornotsvetov goes to open the door.
Enter a Woman in a white robe and a
white nightcap. She holds a large pot.*

GORNOTSVETOV

You...

WOMAN

Let me through. *(She boldly marches into the kitchen. To the policeman)* I've got the borscht here.

POLICEMAN

Borscht? That'll hit the spot.

WOMAN

Where are the bowls? How am I supposed to serve it?

*They set bowls on the table. They see
Gornotsvetov.*

POLICEMAN

You don't mind if we set things up, here, do you?

GORNOTSVETOV

No, no. Go right ahead.

POLICEMAN

I like mine good and thick. I haven't eaten all night long.

WOMAN

(Serves the borscht) I forgot the main course.

POLICEMAN

Hmm, where are you going to put that pot? Just leave it there.

The Woman sets down the pot and leaves. She bumps into Begonia in the doorway.

WOMAN

(Angrily) Watch out, there!

BEGONIA

The nerve of her!

POLICEMAN

(Thoughtfully) Quite a woman, that – she was just here and now she's gone. *(Eats his borscht)*

BEGONIA

I washed a few things. You don't mind if I hang them out, do you?

POLICEMAN

Pay me no mind. Hang out your laundry.

BEGONIA

Aha, thank you.

Hangs out Holly's newly-washed clothes on a clothesline. They drip on the Policeman's cap. Begonia smiles and leaves. Gornotsvetov makes a phone call.

GORNOTSVETOV

I can't for the life of me figure out what happened.

BEGONIA

Maybe she killed somebody.

GORNOTSVETOV

Yeah, right.

BEGONIA

What about the blood?!

GORNOTSVETOV

She fell and cracked her nose.

BEGONIA

Yeah, and then stood by watching them saw down pine trees on Tverskaya Street.

The doorbell rings. Begonia leaps up and runs to open the door. Gornotsvetov runs after her. Enter the Woman in a white nightcap and a white robe. She carries a large pot.

WOMAN

Don't lock your door anymore. Somebody may have to get in.

BEGONIA

(To Gornotsvetov) Are you kidding? Did you hear that?
The Woman goes into the kitchen.

WOMAN

Main course.

POLICEMAN

Thanks. Want to have a bite with me?

WOMAN

House rules. We don't eat on the job.

POLICEMAN

Just thought you might like to sit awhile.

WOMAN

Can't do it. Enjoy your meal.

The Woman serves food to the Policeman and leaves. Begonia and Gornotsvetov go back into the main room and sit at the table.

BEGONIA

What, did this guy come here to eat?

GORNOTSVETOV

All these people are so weird.

POLICEMAN

(Peers into the main room) You don't mind if I make a quick call, do you?

GORNOTSVETOV

Not at all.

BEGONIA

He wants to make a quick call...

They listen to the Policeman's conversation.

POLICEMAN

(From the corridor) Well... the inclination is you don't have to live like that... what you're saying is that the territory ends up in a pretty asinine predicament... yeah... yeah... now there we've finally hit on a concrete fact! Of course, of course... *(Shouts)* Then don't go mixing apples and oranges!

BEGONIA

Asshole.

GORNOTSVETOV

Are we going to have breakfast?

BEGONIA

I'll bring it in here. *(She brings coffee and open-faced sandwiches)*

GORNOTSVETOV

Here's something to go with the coffee. *(Pulls out a bottle of cognac)*

BEGONIA

If all this crap doesn't end soon, you're going to have to go out for another.

POLICEMAN

(Returns the telephone) Thank you kindly.

BEGONIA

You're quite welcome.

GORNOTSVETOV

What do you think, could I hit him up for a loan?

BEGONIA

Try it.

The Policeman paces in the corridor, whistling.

He's whistling up a storm in there.

They open the cognac and drink.

Well, good morning.

GORNOTSVETOV

G'mornin'.

BEGONIA

Got cognac, a stash of cigarettes and coffee...

GORNOTSVETOV

It's called the good life.

BEGONIA

Then how come I'm not happy?

GORNOTSVETOV

Everything's going to be all right. You'll see.

BEGONIA

You think so?

GORNOTSVETOV

You know I never lie.

Evening.

Gornotsvetov's room. The table is covered with empty bottles, ashtrays full of cigarettes and coffee cups. Begonia lies on the sofa staring at the ceiling. Gornotsvetov sits in the armchair next to the telephone and smokes.

In Holly's room the Policeman plays the piano.

A woman accompanies him, singing a song.

BEGONIA

I can't take this anymore.

GORNOTSVETOV

Get off it. If she's gotta sing, she's gotta sing.

BEGONIA

My head is pounding – bam! bam! bam! bam! And that stupid idiot in there...

GORNOTSVETOV

Let her sing her song.

BEGONIA

I'm gonna die.

GORNOTSVETOV

You'll still have plenty of chances for that.

BEGONIA

Why doesn't she go? She got the dinner, now get outta here. No, she's gotta sing!

GORNOTSVETOV

Work day is over. They're out on the town.

BEGONIA

Yeah, well why do they have to be out on the town in our apartment? I don't get it.

GORNOTSVETOV

All these people are weird.

They are silent.

BEGONIA

Listen, they're not going anywhere. They're going to be here all night.

GORNOTSVETOV

Could well be. He's on duty.

BEGONIA

(Groans) Gornotsvetov, do something about them.

GORNOTSVETOV

(Gets up and paces the room) I would...

The phone rings. Begonia grabs the receiver.

BEGONIA

Yeah... yeah... yeah... yeah... all right...

GORNOTSVETOV

(Sits on the sofa) What's up?

BEGONIA

She's in the hospital in critical condition.

GORNOTSVETOV

What did she do?

BEGONIA

She got hit by a car last night.

GORNOTSVETOV

Last night?!

*In Holly's room the Policeman plays the piano.
The Woman accompanies him, singing a song.*

Night.

*The hospital. Begonia and Gornotsvetov
sit by Holly's bed.*

HOLLY

I used to have a dog, a long time ago. I dreamed he was dead.

GORNOTSVETOV

Everything is going to be all right. You know I never lie.

HOLLY

Mama... oh, that's you, Lyubov Karlovna... where's Begonia?

BEGONIA

(Takes Holly by the hand) I'm here.

HOLLY

(Smiles) Why me, of all people?

LYUBOV KARLOVNA

Holly.

HOLLY.

LYUBOV. LOVE. How funny that sounds.

END OF PLAY