

# DIALOGUES

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## PURELY HUMOROUS DIALOGUE

*From the publication Not Waiting for Godot (Nečakanie na Godota), Bratislava: Tatran, 1968.*

L: It's time to perform a humorous dialogue. I told you to prepare a topic. If you have a topic, I will elaborate. What kind of a topic did you choose for the beginning? Can it be used in a humorous way?

S: If you like, let's talk about a man.

L: A man...? Do you have at least an approximate name, age, position? What does he do?

S: I don't know. That man is standing on a bridge.

L: Is he a clown? Or a scrooge, hypocrite, or pedant? Where is he coming from?

S: He is coming from a factory. He got fired. He is standing on the bridge and thinking. Five hungry children and his wife are waiting for him at home. They all have TB. (*Lasica grows sad and is silent.*) He is standing on the bridge and staring into the river. Suddenly he jumps across the railing and the murky water swallows him.

L: So he leaves five orphans and a widow behind?

S: Yes.

L: They all have TB?

S: Treacherous TB.

L: So what are they going to do without the father, their family provider?

S: I don't know. You told me to give you a topic. That you would elaborate...

L: Don't you have a different topic?

S: Specifically for a humorous dialogue?

L: If it's possible.

S: Twins were born to this man.

L: Were their backs grown together?

S: No. They were two beautiful, healthy boys.

L: No TB?

S: No TB. And their parents were also beautiful and healthy. Peter and Paul...

L: Those were the names of the parents?

S: No, those were the boys. Peter and Paul were growing like weeds in front of their parents' eyes, and before long they turned five.

L: So how long did that take approximately?

S: Approximately five years.

L: I like this as a topic. We can make it into a serious humorous dialogue. Five years! First I thought you wanted to talk about the two boys whose mother tossed them into the river right after they were born. They were saved by a female wolf that happened to be swimming by. Then they said goodbye to the wolf and headed for the city. They're going and going, and no city anywhere. Then when they were approaching their seventies it occurred to them that the city they were going to was not founded yet. So they founded it.

S: No, not those boys. The boys that I have in mind were ordinary little boys. They were five years old and their parents were thinking how to get them into school.

L: And then the earthquake came.

S: No. The uncle came for a visit. By train. Children really loved him. He was a beautiful and healthy man.

L: Was he fired from his job?

S: No. Uncle – let's call him Rudolf – rang the doorbell and they all ran to open the door for him. "Uncle Rudolf came! Uncle Rudolf came!" yelled the twins and threw themselves in his arms with joy. The parents took him into the dining room. Mother quickly went off to fix lunch and father quickly went off to fix the fuse.

L: Rudolf rang and blew the fuse?

S: When he came the fuse was already blown. And the children were also blown.

L: So who blew them?

S: Father. For disobedience.

L: The fuse was disobedient? That's exaggerating!

S: The boys were disobedient, that's why their father blew them. The fuse was blown by the boys. They were playing with an electric train.

L: The train that Uncle Rudolf came with? And right on the tracks?

My God, and the train moved!

S: No, not on the tracks. They were playing on the carpet.

L: What was carpet doing on the tracks? Someone must have forgotten it there. People are incredibly absent-minded. A carpet on the tracks. Or were they expecting an important dignitary at the station? And Uncle Rudolf came instead of him!

S: The children were playing with an electric train on the carpet at home in their room.

L: Well, then, say it right away! A toy train! I'm so relieved. Children on the tracks, my God!

S: You don't think I would be talking about a train accident in a humorous dialogue? So one more time: father was mending the fuse, mother was serving lunch in the kitchen, and Uncle Rudolf couldn't take his eyes off his beautiful and healthy nephews. „My dear Pete, my dear Paulie!“ he cried, moved, „you grew up so much!“ „We want up, we want up!“ yelled the boys. Jolly Rudolf took Pete... (*L wants to interrupt him.*) Don't interrupt me! Rudolf took the boy in his arms. The boy loved it. He was laughing like crazy. Paulie was pulling his Uncle's pants and yelling: "I want to go up too, me too!" He was laughing and cheerfully clapping his hands. Pete was smiling at his brother and happy Rudolf threw him in the air a couple of times. He was laughing till the room was shaking.

L: I'd think so. Ha ha ha.

S: When Pete fell, he remained limp, hanging in his Uncle's arms. His Uncle broke his neck. Ha ha ha.

L: Ha ha ha. That's good. Ha ha... what did he do to him?

S: He broke his neck. But not on purpose! Pete was dead on the spot. Ha ha ha.

L: I suspected that. And this antihuman gibberish is supposed to be a topic for a humorous dialogue?

S: Wait, it continues. The parents ran in. The desperate mother was yelling at her younger brother: „What did you do to him?“ „Nothing,“ says Rudolf. „I tossed him in the air a couple of times,“ says Rudolf. „Like this, look...“ and lifted Paulie, threw him in the air and Paulie remained limp, laying in his arms.

L: I see. In other words, they were conspiring to scare the mother! Ha ha ha.

S: No. A double accident. Pete and Paulie were lying dead on the carpet next to their electric toy train.

L: That tops it off!

S: True. That tops off this humorist dialogue. Do you want to elaborate on this topic?

L: Aren't you ashamed?

S: ...said the brother-in-law to Rudolf. „I'm mending the fuse

here..."

L: You should be ashamed!

S: Me? We can come up with something else. A mother had a daughter. She beat her up cruelly. So cruelly, but so cruelly, that the daughter...

L: Out! (*To the audience.*) Forgive him. He had a very hard childhood....

If you want, we can refund your ticket money. (*Sad, shaking his head, he is leaving.*)

## JOKE

*From the production Cheerful News for Everyone Having Problems With the Bladder (Radostná správa pre všetkých, ktorí majú ťažkosti s mechúrom), 1969. Theater on the Promenade (Divadlo na Korze) - Theater of Lasica and Satinský, Bratislava.*

L: ...And they laughed so hard that they fell off the bed. Wow, that is good.

S: You really don't have to do the same old jokes all the time. Say something serious.

L: What for?

S: So that people wouldn't think that we take everything lightly. There are things happening around us, and you keep kidding around.

L: Something is happening again? You've got some information?

S: Oh, nothing's happening! Our entire life, everything is so cheerless.

L: That is true. Our entire life. Sad, hopeless, the situation is serious.

Here we are, kidding around, and in the meantime, in New Zealand, there's one earthquake after another.

S: I don't give a damn about New Zealand in this situation.

L: Why? An earthquake is not a joke. You know how such an earthquake can really disgust the entire population? People become apathetic, they don't feel like doing anything, they succumb to depressive moods...

S: Who cares? We succumb to depressive moods here even without an earthquake! Talk to the point. Tell me something that directly concerns me, them, you!

L: My sister got eczema.

S: Eczema! What do we care? Say something serious!

L: If you want to know, eczema is a serious thing for a girl her age. Poor thing, she's too embarrassed to go out.

S: Please, stop it. She's too embarrassed to go out! At least she won't get spoiled.

L: Pardon me, but you are making light of it. I can see you've never been in the situation of a young girl who contracted eczema. It is a serious thing, don't make fun of it.

S: I am making fun of it? I don't even have a sense of humor. (*To the audience.*) Tell me, do I have a sense of humor? (*To Lasica.*)

It's you who is constantly kidding around!

L: Excuse me? When have you heard me tell a joke? When? I never remember a joke. For example: Two loonies run into each other... there, and I don't remember the rest!

S: Not so fast! Recently, there was that joke that you were telling me...

L: Which one?

S: About a guy who comes home...

L: So what is funny about that? He comes home. (*To the audience.*) Is there something funny about that? He comes home.

S: Okay then, but what happens at home?

L: What happens at home?

S: His wife is in bed.

L: So what? His wife is in bed. She's sick, coughing, she won't last very long. That is supposed to be funny? That's tragic! His wife is in bed!!

S: But the doctor...

L: Which doctor?

S: The doctor who examined her.

L: Well, yeah. He did examine her. Poor thing. And he was so considerate to her. He says, dear lady, not even a priest can help you now.

S: You're making it up. The joke was that the husband comes home, his wife is in bed, and the doctor...

L: Keeps examining and examining...

S: Not at all. The doctor is also in bed.

L: And what is he doing there?

S: Aha. Well, look, how should I explain it to you so that you would understand? In the last century, forget the last century, even in the century before that... wait a minute, it goes like this: Man is a social creature. He cannot live alone. He needs someone to understand him. And this doctor... you get it?

L: No.

S: *(To the audience.)* Excuse me, is there a doctor here? So that he could explain it to him.

L: What is there to explain? I'm not stupid. His wife is in bed, she's sick. The doctor is in bed, he's also sick. Even doctors can't take just everything. If someone here is a doctor, let us know. What is there to explain?

S: But wait a minute! His wife is in bed, she is sick, and the doctor is in the same bed. See? Get it?

L: Of course. What is there not to understand? He went there to lie with her. Because a doctor is also only a man and a man is a social creature, he can't lie all alone, he needs someone to understand him.

S: Okay, let's say that the doctor went to their place to lie with her. Let's have it your way.

L: But of course, my uncle is a doctor. You're telling me!

S: But what about the husband?

L: What husband?

S: Husband of that wife.

L: That's that doctor.

S: No way!

L: He didn't marry her?

S: Not at all! Husband is the guy who comes home.

L: Aha! That completely changes the whole thing!

S: Well, finally! The husband comes home, his wife is in bed, the doctor is in bed, so what does the husband say?

L: Hello, doctor.

S: And then? What else does he say?

L: Hello, doctor, may I come in?

S: And what else does the husband say? That's the most important thing.

L: Just stay in bed, doctor; don't get up so that you don't catch a cold. And he may add - the heat is not on again, bastards! But he doesn't have to. That's just an option.

S: And what does he say to his wife?

L: The husband? What should he be saying to her?

S: Well, he sees her in bed with the doctor, so he has to say something to her!

L: Well then, he looks at her and says: Sick, are you sick? Should I call the doctor?

S: But the doctor is in the bed! Next to her!

L: That's it! So his wife responds: No need to call, the doctor came here as if he knew we needed him!

S: That's the only thing she tells him? His own wife? To her husband? In a situation like that?

L: No. She also adds: Sit down and make yourself at home.

S: Okay then. So he sits down and says to her: I brought you some preserves, it's raining outside, the boys are alright, only Joey almost got hit by a train. Then he sits around a little bit, and after a while he says: So, I still have to stop by my office, you know, they never give us a break, I'll stop by tomorrow. And then he leaves.

L: No, no. You twisted it completely. What you're saying is happening in a hospital. But this was at home. The husband comes home, his wife is in bed, the doctor is in bed, his wife says to him: Sit down, make yourself at home, how did it go in the office today, and he says: You know, they never give us a break, lots of work. And then he asks her: What are the boys doing? And she says: They're playing in the tunnel; Joey almost got hit by a train. And he says: Oh, yeah, those trains, always delayed. Poor Joey, good thing nothing happened to him. And she says: And even if, the doctor is here, look, he would have put him back together. And he says: Oh, I'm so tired; I'd love to take a nap. And she says: So lie down. So he takes off his clothes, steps closer to the bed and says: Doctor, move over a bit. And the doctor moves over. And all three of them are lying in bed, the boys are playing in the tunnel, it's raining outside, the husband is almost asleep, but he still sighs: Oh, people go hungry in India and here we are, always dissatisfied. And he falls asleep.

S: And then the evening comes, boys come back from the tunnel and see: Daddy is in bed, mommy is in bed, the doctor is in bed; so they say politely, good evening, and mommy asks: So boys, how was it in the tunnel? And the boys say: Good, mommy, we derailed three trains today. And mommy says: Freight, my dear boys, or passenger? And the boys say: Freight trains, mommy. And empty or loaded, asks mommy. Loaded, mommy, say the boys. So what was on them, asks mommy. Tanks, say the boys. I don't know, my boys, says mommy and shakes her finger at them: The moment I get a little bit sick, you're up to mischief, I will have to tell daddy when he wakes up. And the boys are laughing quietly and mommy says: Why are you laughing, my boys? And they say: Daddy is snoring and the doctor is snoring. And mommy grows sad and says: See, my boys, they are both lying around, and I can work my hands to the bone. And she falls asleep too.

L: And suddenly it's nine o'clock, the boys go to bed too, they're asleep, and then daddy wakes up, nudges the doctor and says: So, we had a nice nap, didn't we? Yes, we did, says the doctor, we deserved it, too. And daddy asks: So then, shall we go and have a beer? Let's go, says the doctor, but watch out so that we don't wake up the patient. But the patient wakes up and screams at the doctor: You stay here! I'll show you, you want to go barhopping; it's not enough that my husband is a drunk, and you want to start now, that's the last thing I need! The husband says: But Martha. You shut up, says Martha, I know this. Go wherever you want, but leave the doctor alone! So the husband goes out for a beer, and the doctor stays in bed with the wife, he lies for a while, he's almost asleep, but he still sighs: Oh, they're hanging people in Iran and here we are, lying around. And he falls asleep.

S: Meanwhile, the husband is sitting in the pub, drinking beer, all blank stares; then a friend sits down next to him, and says: Hey, Frank, are you sitting here? Yeah, I'm sitting here, says Frank. And you know that joke, asks his friend. Which one, says the husband. Well, the one, says his friend, about the guy who comes home and his wife is in bed and the doctor is there, also in bed. I know that one, says the husband, I know that one. So cheers, says his friend, and laughs like crazy. And the husband stays for a while, finishes his beer, pays and leaves.

L: And then he comes home, opens the door, and what does he see? His wife is in bed, the doctor is in bed, so he takes off his clothes,

nudges the doctor and says: Doctor, move over. And the doctor moves over, and they're all lying in bed again, only the doctor asks the husband, very quietly, so that the wife wouldn't hear it: So how was it? Great, says the husband quietly, I heard a good joke. And he tells the doctor the joke about a guy who comes home, opens the door, his wife is in bed, the doctor is in bed next to her, and then they both laugh for a long time, but very quietly, so that they wouldn't wake up the wife.

### **WE'RE SCREWED**

*The dialogue was a part of Waiting for Godot prohibited and unproduced in theater.*

L: Do you remember Godot?

S: Who?

L: Godot.

S: Godot... Godot... you mean that...

L: That one.

S: I remember him. Who wouldn't remember him? Who would dare not to remember him? We all remember. And those who don't remember better start remembering, until it's too late. So who is he, anyway?

L: Who?

S: Godot.

L: Well, that's the...

S: Oh, yeah. I know. I was just asking. Whether you know it too.

L: Of course I know. Who wouldn't know? Who would dare not to know? We all know and those who don't know should watch out so that nobody finds out that they don't know. Watch out! Watch out! And especially: make sure He doesn't find out. By the way, who is he, anyway?

S: Who?

L: Godot.

S: You don't know? He's the one who invented that...

L: That's him? He invented that? He was the one who invented that?

S: He invented this and that.

L: I know he invented this, they wrote a lot about that, this guy and that guy argued about that. But I didn't know that he invented that too... I had no idea! How did he come up with that?

S: What?

L: You know, that... thing that he invented!

S: Oh, that! Well, it jumped at him, so what was he supposed to do then - he invented it!

L: So it first jumped at him and then he invented it!

S: Yes! Or did he invent it first and only then it jumped at him? Now I don't know.

L: It doesn't matter; the most important thing is that it's here.

Let's be happy it's here.

S: What?

L: What - what?

S: What - is here?

L: Where?

S: Here. What is it???

L: Here? What's up?

S: You said: Let's be happy it's here.

L: I didn't say that.

S: You said a moment ago: Let's be happy it's here.

L: I didn't say that. I said (*gently*): Let's be happy it's here!

S: What?

L: You know, that... thing he invented first, before it jumped at him...

S: Who?

L: Him! Godot.

S: Oh, that! Why didn't say that right away? Of course, let's be happy it's here.

L: What?  
S: Well, that thing that he invented...  
L: What did he invent?  
S: This thing that is here!  
L: That's him? He invented that? He invented that too? How did it jump at him?!

S: And what did *not* jump at him? He thought of everything. And whatever jumped at him, he invented that. He invented everything. Everything that exists.  
L: He invented wood, too?  
S: Yes. Wood jumped at him, so he invented it.  
L: He invented snow, too?  
S: Yes. Snow jumped at him. So he invented it.  
L: He invented a cop, too?  
S: A cop jumped at him - he invented him.  
L: But I didn't jump at him. At least not that I remember.  
S: You didn't jump at him, so he didn't invent you! That's clear, isn't it?  
L: Did you say everything has jumped at him?  
S: Everything that exists.  
L: And he invented everything that exists?  
S: Yes.  
L: So everything that exists - has jumped at him?  
S: Everything.  
L: *(With horror.)* I didn't jump at him.  
S: Don't worry; I didn't jump at him either. *(He freezes.)*  
L: *(He realizes they do not exist.)* That's the end. We're screwed.  
S: *(Victoriously.)* We're saved. Screws exist. I saw them. With my own eyes! In a magazine. They exist, which means that he has invented them. They must have jumped at him. Therefore we exist too, since we are screwed, like you said.  
L: That's no consolation. Who can take this? I'd rather not exist. This, excuse me, is an indirect existence. Either I jump at him and exist directly... but to exist through some... basically unreliable... institution... No way!  
S: What are we going to do?  
L: *(Nervously.)* What are we going to do... what are we going to do! Those are stupid questions! What are we going to do! *(After a while.)* What are we going to do?  
S: We have to do something! We can't stay in this...in this situation! Perhaps something will jump at us!  
L: At us! Jump at us! Something will jump at us! The only thing that can jump at us is that we are... you know what we are!  
S: Yes. Nothing can jump at us because... wait a minute! We're saved!  
L: I've heard that before! You already said that once and how did it end?  
S: Wait! Let me finish! Nothing can jump at us! Because it can only jump at him!  
L: Who?  
S: Well, the guy who invented it all. See???  
L: Some idiot, right?  
S: No, no! Who did everything jump at? Wood, snow, cop? Yeah???  
L: *(Understands.)* Oh yeah! Of course! Now I understand. Who did it all jump at? Yeah? Yeah?  
S: Well, Godot!  
L: Right! Right! *(After a while.)* So what?  
S: So let's wait for him!  
L: What for? I don't have the time.  
S: We have to wait for him now that we're... like you said before! Let's wait and see! Something will jump at him! For sure!

**NOT WAITING FOR GODOT**

From the publication Not Waiting for Godot (*Nečakanie na Godota*), Bratislava:Tatran, 1968.

(Two middle-aged men are sitting on stage. They are impatient. When one of them is sitting, the other one paces; when the first one paces, the other one is seated. Then they both pace for a while and sit for a while at the same time.)

L: Can you please let me in on what you're doing here? Are you by any chance waiting for someone?

S: Me? Who should I be waiting for? I only stayed here because if I left and someone actually happened to come here, I wouldn't be here. And I can't run that risk.

L: You think he will come here?

S: Who?

L: You know, that guy...

S: Him? Is he supposed to come here? But someone should be waiting for him then, shouldn't he? And who is it that is supposed to be coming, anyway?

L: You know, that guy... the one that you were mentioning.

S: You mean the guy who invented this? (*Vague gesture.*)

L: Yes. This and that. (*Vague gestures.*) If he came, he could tell us his opinion.

S: On what?

L: You know, the things he invented. For example wood, snow, police - those are all things that are worrying a man today. Just wait and see!

S: Are you waiting here for him? Did you stay behind because of him?

L: Me? I didn't stay behind. I only came back to make sure that he isn't here by some accident. Did you come back too?

S: No. I didn't come back because I never left. And I never left to make sure I wouldn't arrive too late. So why did you come back?

Are you going to wait?

L: No way! I've got so much work I am happy to be able to get to bed, finally. If I waited, if I found the time to wait, I would use one of the plentiful waiting rooms. I'm not going to wait just anywhere when we have waiting rooms.

S: But dear colleague, the times when people had to wait in waiting rooms are long gone. Today you can wait in other spaces. In a cafeteria, or in a library, for instance.

L: I can wait in other places too. Why couldn't I? But I don't care any more. I prefer to wait in a waiting room. (*He pulls out a note pad and reads.*) In my opinion, the widest network of waiting rooms that we ever built needs people well-prepared for waiting. People who are clear about who they're waiting for, and whether they can wait for him during this or that period of time. Just like Godot writes in his remarkable pamphlet „Don't Wait for Me Ever Again.“

S: The thing is - de quoi sagit-il, as they say in Miami, and we agree with them - the thing is, who is the pamphlet addressing? Because we really care about the addressing. "When you're writing a letter, don't forget to write the address, and when you write the address, don't forget to write the letter!" writes Godot in his guidelines for professional postal pigeons. Yes, we do have the widest network of waiting rooms in the world, but we have to consider whether the quantity of the waiting rooms that we built almost from scratch possesses the quality that one would expect. We have to give it some thought how come these days very few waiting people go to waiting rooms, and when they do, they go there very seldom?!

L: I would put the question differently. Yes, the waiting rooms are empty, or at least half-empty. People stopped going in them. But it's not because of the quality of the waiting rooms themselves; after all, the overwhelming majority of waiting rooms are wellheated, supplied with newspapers of both large and medium format,



equipped with drinking water and various modern conveniences that make waiting more pleasant; they quit going to waiting rooms because of their own lack of moral qualities. People forgot the unforgettable words of Godot who said in the waiting room for trolley number 13 on the Mamatej Street: "Every waiting room is a place where people wait; but not every place where people wait has a waiting room." People forgot these words, so no wonder today they sneak around waiting, underhandedly, in a cafeteria, or like you said so eloquently, in a library.

S: I cannot agree with you! According to my official opinion, the flaw will be in the waiting rooms themselves. We did not manage to convince the waiting public that waiting is an integral part of social existence. Godot specified it very aptly in his improvised bus schedule where he suggests 5:26 PM and 6:31 PM, but also 9:44 PM and 4:54 PM. If we think about this speech just a little bit, it has to be clear to us that if we convinced only five people in every village to go and wait in a waiting room, they would be doing it on a national scale... How many villages do we have?

L: (*Looks in his note pad.*) We have tons of villages.

S: There you go! So we would have tons of villages with full waiting rooms. Admit it openly, when was the last time you waited in a waiting room?

L: Me? Well, uhm... a long time ago. (*He is embarrassed.*)

S: I admit it: me too. (*He is embarrassed.*) I personally love to wait at home in my bedroom. One waits until the evening, then he lies down tired and falls asleep. Then he gets up in the morning, brushes his teeth and can do some more waiting... But if one hundred people out of twenty on average use this method to avoid waiting rooms, no wonder the waiting rooms are gradually getting drained.

L: I plead to disagree!!! The individual waiting rooms are sending in their monthly reports, according to which there is a tremendous interest in waiting. So the waiting rooms are fulfilling an important role in each village, and that is - I am not afraid to say it - concentrating the waiting public into the waiting rooms for the purpose of waiting. After all, Godot does mention it in his so far unsurpassed piano excerpt where, among other things, he writes: "Lento... presto... adagio... staccato!"

S: It depends on how we understand this dictum! But in any case, we have to learn a lesson from it. Because he is suggesting to us that the waiting room activity reports distort the situation to a large degree. Because we're usually dealing with organized waiting of the waiting public from the ranks of senior citizens and school-aged youth. The problem is that the school-aged youth is not capable of waiting as patiently as the senior citizens, who are patient, but they do not have as rich a perspective of waiting ahead of them as the school-aged youth any more.

L: But who can blame the school-aged youth that they don't know how to wait properly? We have to lead them from babyhood to get used to waiting, and waiting right in the waiting rooms. Nice, orderly waiting in waiting rooms, instead of aimless pattering around would help our youth find the right goals in life!

S: I would have to fundamentally disagree with you. Remember the words of Godot: "A waiting room is a means, a tool, in which the waiting people wait for each other." And I'm afraid that our youth today doesn't even know how to wait!

L: That is the biggest mistake! They're not waiting! They only charge ahead!

S: They likely don't know what is awaiting them.

L: If they didn't charge, if they always waited like we do, they would learn what is awaiting them...

S: ...that we are waiting for them...

L: ...to charge into the waiting rooms together...  
S: ...in which we would bravely wait and not allow anyone to disturb our waiting...  
L: ...and so we would wait in the waiting rooms and not just anywhere, like we're waiting now. Because everyone can see that we're only waiting to be able to wait in the waiting rooms...  
S: ...and we still have some more waiting to do till the waiting public exchanges the waiting rooms for welding tools and builds...  
L: ...newer and more beautiful waiting rooms, in which we'll have a better more joyful waiting experience.  
S: And we won't have to wait in various cafeterias, libraries, or, God forbid, in bedrooms! We're against passivity! We promote active waiting! And that's possible only, and only in waiting rooms!  
L: (*After a moment.*) So you think he won't show up here?  
S: Who?  
L: You know, that guy... the one you're waiting for?  
S: Me? I'm not waiting. If I were waiting for someone it could happen that I wouldn't live to see him. And I can't run that risk.  
(*They both smile with understanding, and sit down in silence.*)

## PHONE

*From the publication Not Waiting for Godot (Nečakanie na Godota), Bratislava: Tatran, 1968.*

S: Hello, is it you?  
L: Yes, it's me.  
S: Are you home?  
L: Yes. What's up?  
S: What's happening?  
L: You know. Same old, same old. What about you?  
S: Nothing. What are you doing?  
L: Nothing. Making preserves.  
S: Making preserves?  
L: Making preserves. And you? Are you also making preserves?  
S: No. I'm just sitting around. I'm bored. Aren't you bored?  
L: No. I'm making preserves.  
S: You're making preserves? You feel like it?  
L: What am I supposed to do? I'm bored. So I'm making preserves.  
S: What?  
L: I am ma-king pre-serves.  
S: Don't yell, I can hear you.  
L: So why are you asking?  
S: I'm asking what kind of preserves you are making.  
L: Why?  
S: Just out of curiosity.  
L: Aha. Anything new?  
S: Nothing. What did you do yesterday?  
L: I was making preserves.  
S: What?  
L: I was ma-king pre-serves!  
S: What kind of preserves were you making, I'm asking.  
L: I don't even know. I think cherries. Or plums? And you?  
S: I wasn't making preserves.  
L: No? What did you do?  
S: *When?*  
L: Yesterday.  
S: Why?  
L: Just because.  
S: Aha.  
L: So...  
S: Yesterday?  
L: Yesterday.

S: Wait... yesterday, aha, now I know!  
L: What?  
S: I went to the movies.  
L: Movies?  
S: Uhm.  
L: What kind of movies?  
S: Regular movies.  
L: Yeah?  
S: Uhm.  
L: What did I want... aha, what were they showing?  
S: Where?  
L: At the movies.  
S: At the movies?  
L: Uhm.  
S: What were they showing?  
L: Uhm.  
S: I don't know.  
L: So is it any good?  
S: It's watchable.  
L: Are they still showing it?  
S: Maybe.  
L: What's the name of it?  
S: Wait... aha... I don't know. Look it up in the paper.  
L: Okay.  
S: Hey... what did I want to... darn it... I wanted to ask you something.  
L: *What?*  
S: That's exactly what I don't know.  
L: You forgot?  
S: Uhm.  
L: So try to remember!  
S: Alright. And what are you doing otherwise?  
L: Me?  
S: Uhm.  
L: I'm making preserves.  
S: What?  
L: I'm making preserves!!!  
S: I know, but what?  
L: Wait, I'll check... plums.  
S: You were making plum preserves yesterday.  
L: Oh yeah? Then cherries.  
S: Cherries? You don't say! How many?  
L: Four.  
S: Only?  
L: That's plenty. I don't like cherries.  
S: We saw each other the day before yesterday.  
L: Where?  
S: Downtown.  
L: Aha. Now I know. That was you?  
S: Yeah, where were you going?  
L: To the store.  
S: To the store? What for?  
L: To do some shopping.  
S: Buying coal?  
L: No. Now, in the summer?  
S: So what then?  
L: I don't know. But they didn't have it.  
S: You can't find anything. And who was the woman that you were with?  
L: A guy I know.  
S: *That was a guy? What does he do?*  
L: He's an engineer.  
S: From your work?

L: Yes.  
S: And the other guy?  
L: That was his wife.  
S: He's married? Since when?  
L: Since always.  
S: To her?  
L: Uhm.  
S: You don't say! I didn't know that.  
L: You know him?  
S: No.  
L: He's from my work.  
S: An engineer?  
L: How do you know?  
S: You can see it right away. Listen, is he Jewish?  
L: Jewish? I don't know. I don't think so.  
S: No? Why?  
L: Who knows. Why are you asking?  
S: Just because. He doesn't look like one. And the guy who stopped by, that was who?  
L: His brother.  
S: An engineer?  
L: No, a journalist.  
S: Aha. From your work?  
L: No. From a newspaper.  
S: From a newspaper? Then I'd say: a journalist!  
L: You know him?  
S: No. That's his brother, right?  
L: Whose brother?  
S: That engineer's.  
L: Yeah?  
S: Isn't he Jewish?  
L: *That engineer? Don't think so.*  
S: I know that. But what about his brother?  
L: That journalist? He probably is.  
S: I would have thought so. But his wife, that's some piece of ass!  
L: She's divorced.  
S: I don't mind. Yup, yup. And how are you doing otherwise, what are you doing?  
L: Nothing. I'm talking on the phone.  
S: You've got a phone?  
L: Yeah.  
S: That's great. I've got to call you some time.  
L: Good. We'll talk. Do you have my number?  
S: Approximately.  
L: So give me a buzz.  
S: What did you do on Wednesday when we had that storm?  
L: Nothing. We walked up and down.  
S: We hid in a Lutheran church.  
L: We are Catholic. We got soaked.  
S: So we're on - I'll call you tomorrow.  
L: I'll wait by the phone.

#### **IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE WHERE I WAS BORN**

*From the production Cherful News for Everyone Having Problems With the Bladder (Radostná správa pre všetkých, ktorí majú ťažkosti s mechúrom), 1969, Theater on the Promenade (Divadlo na Korze) - Theater of Lasica and Satinský, Bratislava.*

*(Lasica is pouring himself a glass of wine, he wants to pour one for Satinský as well.)*

S: No! Thank you, no more for me.  
L: Why not?  
S: It would go straight to my head.

L: Why are you pretending? You're well known as a person who can hold a lot...

S: You think I should have another one? I know myself, if I drink it, I'll be sitting around here until there's nothing left in the bottle!

L: That's exactly what I like about you. That generosity. One bottle more or less, you don't care. I was in London, visiting someone, and there they poured everybody a glass and then they hid the bottle.

S: But at least they have enough of everything there.

L: No, they don't!

S: Sure they do! We are so inept here. We can't do anything. We're sitting here, drinking! You know what Ford would make out of this?

L: What? Another branch. What else can Ford do? And what do we need another branch for?

S: There is something to it. And we, Slovaks, would have to work in that branch.

L: That's exactly the rip-off. And on top of that, they wouldn't pay us in our money but in those dollars! Swindlers!

S: True, they force a man to work. But without work we will never really have anything!

L: That's true. We'll never make anything of ourselves.

S: We don't know anything. We can't do anything.

L: We're all plans, we're always so enthusiastic about everything, and when push comes to shove, we wilt.

S: *We're all about talking!*

L: Like this theater. We could have so many other things in this performance: Bengali fireworks or whatever, and here we are, just sitting around.

S: That's true. So what, let's go home!

L: And what will you do at home? You'll have a bite and fall asleep.

S: I've got work in the morning anyway.

L: You have work?

S: You're surprised? You don't?

L: Of course I do! We also have work tomorrow. In the Committee.

S: Which Committee?

L: The Economic Committee. Man, we have real problems! Some companies are suddenly turning profitable! They don't notify anyone, and all of a sudden, they do a thing like that to us!

S: Like I was saying, we don't know how to go about it. Recently Jožo was reproaching me that I drink too much. And why do I drink?

Because I socialize with people. And why do I socialize with people? Because I drink. Man, last week someone stole a pencil from the Mandate Committee!

L: Did you look for it among the journalists? Oh, people giving us this kind of trouble...

S: Are you happy there where you are? You could come to me. I am the head of a new department. Something with metallurgy, or the navy.

L: But Imro is in charge of the navy!

S: Oh yeah, you're right. But it doesn't matter. Come with us! I'll give you 4,800 Crowns gross or net, altogether. We're a great team: me, Ďuro, Karol, and Ondrej. Only Ondrej is giving us a headache. He quit going fishing with us. But he knows everything. He went through detox three times, and they still didn't get him!

L: I'll see about that. They're offering me the Department of Education too.

S: As you wish. You will never achieve anything there. You can't do it *with us. We don't have the people, experts; it's just the two of us* doing everything.

L: You look overworked.

S: It's all getting on my nerves! Even that Liptov region could be made into a beautiful mining area. We wouldn't have to go as far

as Ostrava.

L: It's hard when you don't have anyone who would organize it for you!

S: One only gets aggravated more and more, and nothing happens. We should really start doing something, for God's sake!

L: There, there, don't use curse words, you'll damage your health.

S: Why shouldn't I curse? Who wouldn't get angry about such idiocy?

L: That's the thing, you curse and you keep repeating only those two curse phrases of yours. What, you have no word stock? We're a cultivated nation. We are one of the most cultural nations in Czechoslovakia!

S: What? What kind of word stock? We have three curse words: idiot, shithead, and I can't say the third one because there are women here.

L: You'll get a heart attack.

S: So what? I'm not supposed to curse? Christ!

L: On the contrary, we need to curse, but we need to do it in a civilized, cultural manner. Look, I'll tell you openly - this is the best time for us to establish the Ministry of Cursing. You will come to the Ministry, fill out a questionnaire, and they will give you a list of curse words, approved by the Language Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. You would never believe how many native and juicy curse words were collected by our Slovak Institute employees. The Institute employees used to go door to door, and when people chased them away with pick-axes as fast as they could, the skilled workers still managed to jot down all of those curse words and sayings. The preliminary proposal for curse words that I am submitting goes like this: No international words, like *idiot, imbecile, or dentist, as they are foreign to our people. But use the cordial ones, such as: spitter; you mother shooter; creeptain; wabblor; miseriac; truncheon; burper; plager; golemgo, with the option of saying: golemgo to hell; weepiss; cracker; snothead; and since we are not neglecting national minorities, here's Hungarian az angyalat! That is the list of curse words for private usage.*

S: But you can only use these in Slovakia. What if I happen to find myself in England? How do you say fartrob in English? The fartrob?

L: Unfortunately, as so many times before in history, we, Slovaks are forced to learn at least the basics of curse words in foreign languages.

S: You're a man as many times as many languages you speak.

L: Can you see that injustice? An Englishman can be a man only once, and he will be understood everywhere. A Slovak must be a man at least twice in order to be able to curse at an Englishman.

S: But it does have advantages for us too! If everyone in our country is at least three times a man, which is not a problem - one will do with Slovak, Hungarian and Czech - then there are three times as many of us then there actually are!

L: In that case we could declare war on the United States.

S: We would destroy it and the poor leftover souls in America that would survive would get the opportunity to come and look for work in Slovakia.

L: And finally we would have the colonies that we so sorely needed. Americans could come here to work and also to study at our excellent universities.

S: But we would regulate immigration! One day we will have to say: Enough! Stay home, Americans, we all won't fit here.

L: We can expect a lot of trouble with blacks.

S: We have to keep them on a short leash. For punishment we will always send them to the Tatras. They have snow there, which can always make a black man feel sorry.

L: Can you imagine those hunger marches from Prievidza to Bratislava? *The banners: "Freedom for our black neighborhood in Trnava!"*

S: Hard times are ahead of us. Many will be against the politics of aggression.

L: We'll lock them up. After all, as of the New Year we only have Slovaks in the Slovak jails.

S: You know what kind of a great feeling it must be for the prison guards to be able to speak with the inmates in their native tongue?

L: Why did you kill Ďuro, Mišo?

S: What do I know? Mister prosecutor will come up with something for sure.

L: My God, we can't do anything. I can responsibly declare for myself that I can't do anything.

S: Of course you do! You just don't know you can do stuff! What could you possibly be able to do...

L: Nothing. Except... everyone can do that.

S: Don't be so discouraged! You must be able to do something! Do you dress yourself?

L: Of course.

S: There you go. That is very demanding. Which shoe goes on which foot... And when you eat, do you always make it to your mouth?

L: Most of the time. Now and then it happens that I stick the dessert in my ear.

S: That's alright. Not long ago I swallowed a phone receiver. And what about reading and writing, can you do that?

L: Yes, I can.

S: You know how many people in the world can't read and write?

L: How many?

S: I don't know.

L: You don't know anything either.

S: You shouldn't succumb to these depressive moods! I can prove to you that you know a lot of things. Scientifically. A short test. WE ASK - YOU ANSWER. I will start asking you simple questions, and then I will go to the more complicated ones - alphabet, etc. *If you don't know something, just ask me. Are you healthy?*

L: Yes, I am.

S: There you go! We're off to a good start.

L: But sometimes I get spasms here and shooting pain...

S: Aha. Well, then, listen. We have to try it differently. Second question: What are you?

L: Oh, please.

S: Well, m... m...

L: Mon.

S: You can't pronounce "a"? Let's try again. First question: Does the Danube flow? YES gets three points, NO gets two points. You have one minute. (*Lasica is thinking.*) 59, 60. Rrring! The minute's up. Zero points. Next question: Is there a God? YES gets three points, NO gets two points.

L: How many points did I get so far?

S: So far none.

L: Then he is.

S: Three points. Next question: What is the population of China? YES three points, NO two points.

L: Wait a minute... one hundred and twenty-four, one hundred and twenty-five... then there's Chou En Lai... one hundred and twenty-six.

S: 59, 60, rrring, the minute's up. Next question: Eat your veggies, they're good for you!

L: That's not even a question.

S: For talking back to the quiz master you automatically get zero points. Next question. Concentrate. Many contestants lost it at this one. If I were a bird, would I fly beyond the forest? YES three points, NO two points. (*Lasica is thinking.*) 59, 60, rrring, the minute's up, zero points. Are you nervous?

L: A little bit.

S: A little bit... a little bit. Use the whole sentence! Zero points. My

God, how will I ever calculate this! Next question: Are you a minister?

YES three points, NO four points.

L: *Four points?*

S: 59, 60, rrrring, the minute's up. Zero points. You should find out.

And now the last question.

L: I better concentrate.

S: You have 30 seconds... 29, 30, rrrring. You can't cheat the second hand! Did you concentrate?

L: Ask the question!

S: May I have this dance? YES zero points, NO zero points.

L: How many points was YES?

S: Zero points.

L: Then no.

S: Zero points as well. Now I'll count it. I have a minute to do that.

59, 60, rrrring, the minute's up. You have three points, congratulations.

*(The musicians congratulate Lasica too.)* Dear audience, here you can see how much wisdom and understanding there is in our nation. Such a simple, even plain person as Lasica - and here you have it - he gets three points! No one in Slovakia has ever achieved that.

L: Thank you. I thank you all. Please allow me to use this opportunity to thank my homeroom teacher Vojtech Lajoš and other expert teachers, who allowed me to finish my studies, for all of my acquired knowledge. And to you, my dear audience, I'd like to thank for watching me so patiently during this competition. And also to you, dear secret police, I also want to thank for watching me so patiently. And to you, dear mister quiz master, I thank for an excellent hosting of the competition. Have you been doing this long?

S: Yes. *(He writes it down.)* Three points.

L: I also got three points, excuse me, but what is it based on?

S: Three points... small, fat guy with an affinity for profane expressions.

S: So, we're done with that. I hope I have convinced you that you know something!

L: Like I say: I am very grateful to you. And how many people like us *there are in Slovakia! We have talent, we're gifted, and we are not being utilized!*

S: Yes, there are many of us. Indeed, if Štúr rose from his grave right now he'd be proud of his homeland. How many beautiful, wise and useful inventions we have given to mankind: Kempelen invented the chess machine, Pajdušáková came up with the observatory, Melkovič invented brumendo.

L: And that's just for starters. For each nation, the first thousand years of freedom are the hardest. Then it starts working.

S: The most difficult thing will be to surpass the Japanese.

L: But why? We have left them far behind in the production of bryndza sheep cheese! We make three barrels per capita, and they make none.

S: You know, from a distance, from here, Japan seems so automated, electrified, but when you go there - it's not much!

L: One of my friends was so shaken there that he will remember it to his death.

S: And what shook him so hard, if I may ask?

L: Electricity.

S: Oh, I know that. Those Japanese are in an unenviable situation. They made too much electricity and now they don't know what to do with it.

L: Well, that's that famous boom of theirs. They had to divert an incredible amount of power straight to the sea.

S: Yes, the fishermen protested. The international waters are shaking. High time Jožo deals with this problem in the Security Council.

L: And they always listen to Jožo! Last time there was the scandal with Arabs when we delivered those slingshots to them, Jožo



showed them their place. He said, why are you yelling here? Arabs!  
Go home and yell there! Arabs!

S: And he wasn't drunk even slightly?

L: Well, he was, or wasn't, I wouldn't be surprised. That UN is so  
nerve-racking. It's a giant building and it requires steel nerves  
just to make it into the right conference room!

S: *And then, Jožo is in a faraway strange country, he gets homesick*  
for his homeland. Apparently, he recently sang „Házam, házam, te  
drága szép!“ at the Economic Council.

L: Our diplomats don't have it easy there. The Japanese keep provoking  
us, we just have to keep smiling. And they don't let you attend  
the session with your axe!

S: Let's be happy we're at home!

*(Satinský is knitting. The music plays The Old House Where I Was  
Born.)*

S: I am mother Pôstková and every night I go to the train station to  
look out for my nephew who is supposed to be coming back from  
a far-away land. I went this morning too. I fed the swine and  
chickens, and then, off I went by Zuzanka Hraškovie and Ežo and  
Gabo Vlkolinský, straight to the station.

L: *(Singing.)*

Every night a small train stops by our station,  
Is there anyone waiting for me at the station?

S: Of course I'm waiting. We even killed a pig.

L: Waiting for me to one day finish my travels,  
Believing that I can't forget,

That I will come back to the place

Where the house where I was born still stands.

S: Just come back. We'll prepare a feast for you. Adam Šangala will  
have a speech.

L: One night a small train stopped by our station,

S: Oh my God, the train is coming. Oh, it almost hit me.

L: Is there anyone waiting for me at the station?

S: Here I am, my only nephew.

L: Believing that one day I will finish my travels,  
I know that the most beautiful corner of the world

Is there where the old house where I was born still stands.

S: Everyone will be so happy. We will go to Chujava for two days.

L: Where the lips of my loved one are waiting for me...

S: *And Margita is crazy!*

L: ...and my mother who believes me...

S: And your mother has been covered with grass for quite some  
time...

L: ...there where the old house where I was born still stands...

S: And the house burnt to ashes. *(He is crying.)*

*(Lasica grows sad and he is off going abroad again.)*

### **GOD SAVE THE CZAR**

*From the production Cherful News for Everyone Having Problems  
With the Bladder (Radostná správa pre všetkých, ktorí majú ťažkosti  
s mechúrom), 1969, Theater on the Promenade (Divadlo na Korze)  
- Theater of Lasica and Satinský, Bratislava.*

**(Loosely based on Saltykov and Shchedrin)**

L: I often ask myself: Does evolution exist at all?

S: How often?

L: How often what?

S: How often do you ask yourself whether evolution exists at all?

L: Why are you so interested to know?

S: I'm curious for purely professional reasons. What is the maximum  
number of times that a man can ask himself whether evolution exists  
at all?

L: It is difficult to talk to you about important things. You are always

interested in the unimportant stuff!

S: What do you mean? An entire scientific discipline is based on that: the statistics! Otherwise I'd never be able to put together a chart illustrating who asks the question whether evolution exists at all, and how often.

L: But you're not at all considering whether evolution exists at all!

S: I don't have time to think about such fluff. I just wanted to start talking about roasted livers with onions; I had everything nicely thought out, and suddenly you come up with a question that you often ask yourself...

L: I envy you. Everything is clear to you and you can spend the day meditating about things that my brain would be ashamed to think of.

S: Don't believe it! I'm not doing so well! I also envy you. You have willpower, discipline. You can last with no food or drink for days and in such state even ask yourself the question whether evolution exists at all - hats off in front of a man like that. You are the meditating type! Recently I asked myself the question: "Man, where are you coming from?" and I got such a headache that I had to have a shot of slivovitz!

L: I believe you. The question "Man, where are you coming from?" is one of the deepest ones, especially when you're asking it yourself and you haven't been outside your apartment all day.

S: But I still managed to answer it. I had to use a trick. I went to the pantry, then I came back to the kitchen where I usually meditate, and asked the question again: „Man, where are you coming from?“ and the answer was clear to me: „From the pantry.“

L: So, as I'm listening to you - there's definitely some kind of evolution in human thinking...

S: There is. That's a fact. One thinks one thing when he's in the stroller, and different things later. When I was a baby I was so naive that I called everyone around me "mama".

L: Including the hospital personnel?

S: Of course. But then I acquired some experience. Then I knew: This and this and this is daddy, and over there, that's mommy. Sam loves mom. Mom loves Sam. Sam is a man.

L: A man gets to be wisest is in his old age.

S: You don't say?! I've never heard that.

L: An old man is like a book. He has traveled the world, changed jobs, become widowed; he's sitting in front of his own house in the sun, the morning sun is warm; he's puffing his pipe...

S: Move over, my brother.

L: What?

S: (*Yelling into his ear.*) Move over! That side of the bench is in the shade...

L: Aha. Spring is coming late. Too late!

S: My legs won't carry me to church any more. And with no church it doesn't even seem like Sunday to me.

L: You're telling the truth, my brother. Oh, those were the times when we didn't know Sundays, it was wartime. The pope was singing right in the field. (*He is singing.*) "God, have mercy on us..."

S: (*Wants to join in but does not know the lyrics of the religious song.*) The peasants planted the seeds, the earth was fragrant, the army troops came and kneeled in the field. The pope finished his song and in God's name, they charged. When the men screamed "Hooray!" I always woke up, grabbed my rifle and off I went to defend my homeland!

L: We were always pretty smashed... The bells were ringing...

S: May God save the Czar and his entire family. (*They both get up and while saying these words they quickly cross themselves and shake their heads in the Orthodox way.*) We had a good cry and then off we went to France! And it was warmer beyond the Urals...

L: His Highness Lieutenant stopped. The horse was pricking its ears; the fog was coming out of the marsh. His Highness yelled, "Soldiers, over there, that's Europe!"

S: Europe or no Europe, we had to start doing things the new way.

L: I took off the rags from my feet, cheated the shoemaker...

S: We had enough boots. And women too.

L: We were at our strongest.

S: And we walked the streets and looked at houses. You enter a building and there's no ladder! And suddenly a steep pile of stones.

Nicely laid out on top of each other, you could even walk on them.

L: Did you?

S: No, we didn't. But I saw an Austrian walk on them. He was good. He was walking up. One foot on the lower stone, the other foot on the upper stone. He was switching, using his feet, he would have made it to the top. And I aimed my rifle and poof! He rolled down right away.

L: And in one city we even saw a well.

S: Was there a bucket too?

L: No bucket! There were a lot of animals made of stone, and the water was coming straight out of their mouths. We had a drink and laughed like crazy.

S: The women there are stupid. They grab your shirt, pants, and whoops, they slide them in water. And they soak them in water, *and rub them with this slimy kind of bar. The foam is coming out* of the bar, like when his Highness opens champagne. I had to have a little taste. As if the devil got into me - I was spitting bubbles. Colorful bubbles.

L: Well, they had enough food. And candy on a stick. The candy was crunchy, the stick was tasteless.

S: In the evenings me and my brothers used to go to this guy's place.

A complete idiot. He had fabric up to the ceiling. And what he was doing with it! He was cutting it into smaller pieces. But with what! Devil should take him! He had two knives, they were screwed together nicely, and snip, snip - these knives were cutting the fabric!

And he was using only his thumb and index finger! And he was sewing those smaller pieces together and making cloaks! That was so funny!

L: Oh, youth is full of foolishness! I wish I could experience that Viennese bed just one more time. I had a bed with a roof! You pull one string, and you'll get covered by the curtains; you pull another string, and a guy in a short coat brings you a jar of wine. And the bed? White, soft. I put some straw under my boots under the blanket so that the white would stay white!

S: May God be praised in his wisdom! I stayed overnight at some doctor's place, I come downstairs for breakfast, and what do I see! The guy put these little pieces of glass on his eyes! He fastened them with a wire behind his ears, crazy nut! He says, I see better. Give it to me, I say, I'll try those glasses.

L: Was he telling the truth?

S: He was lying, the swine. I look through the glasses, I see double!

L: And women were bringing food on the table for us. The first one came, she brought meat with some sauce. Sit down, Louise, I'm telling her. I grabbed the meat and ate. And Louise? Knife in one hand, another little thing with four teeth in the other hand, and she starts to quarter the meat in the sauce on the plate. I say to her: "Why aren't you eating with your hands, Austrian woman?" And she was putting the meat with the sauce in her mouth with *those things. And that knife was weird too. Made of silver. Silverware,* they said. They call it silverware. I say to Louise: „You've got silverware. You are silverwearing. I've got underwear. I am underwear!" I was laughing so hard that I sprayed the sauce all over Vaska the Cannoneer, who was sitting right in front of me, directly

in his face.

S: May God give eternal glory to His Excellency Mikhail Illaryonovich Kutuzov! He could harass us good! We had to wash!

L: Well, the noblemen weren't overdoing it either. Little splash on the eyes, a bit of water on the fingers, and then eau de cologne.

S: But you can't get it out of those Austrians. In many houses I saw a little room with a water pipe.

L: I saw one with two pipes. It was pouring from down there and also from up there...

S: And not only that! The walls in that fart room are laid out with white squares, squeaky clean - not a chicken or a mouse in sight. And in the middle, there's that oval kind of thing...

L: Like a trough.

S: A trough. But deeper than our troughs. And they fill up that trough with hot water, lock themselves in that room, and, apparently, they get into the trough completely naked!

L: I swear on my father's grave! We used that little hole that they have in every door, God only knows why, to watch them. They have no common sense. One of them was lying in that hot water till the evening - for a good hour! When we interrogated him, he wouldn't confess what he was trying to do there...

S: Strange people live outside our province!

L: They abolished slavery, apparently, and they now have two czarinas: Maria and Theresa.

S: They wear glass, gather stones in houses, wallow in water, don't eat raw cucumbers... look, women are coming out of the church!

L: My brother, don't snub your poor neighbor's flask! Have a drink before lunch!

S: Cheers! May God Save the Czar and his entire family!

### **HAMLET**

*From the production Soirée, 1968, Theater on the Promenade (Divadlo na Korze) - Theater of Lasica and Satinský, Bratislava.*

S: *(Running out on stage in a black cloak with a hood, yelling out to back stage.)* Listen, my son, listen! If you ever loved your father, revenge this ugly, perverse murder! Oh, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye! Don't forget!

L: Stop, who is there? Stop, who is there? This is Guildenstern!

S: Ah, it is you?

L: So what's up, dear Rosencrantz? How did it all end?

S: Everything's okay. Hamlet followed me all the way. I'm telling him, "Come, I'm the spirit of your dead father, Claudius poured some poison in my ear, half a liter, look!" And then I vanished into thin air. And how did you sleep?

L: I haven't slept a wink. I kept thinking about that play yesterday. I would have fallen asleep around midnight, when suddenly someone entered my bedroom, leaned over my bed and gave me a hug.

S: Gave you a hug. That's a mystery!

L: He hugged me and said: "Is that you, Gertrude?" And I said: "No, it's me, Guildenstern, 29 Moyzesova Street." Then he said, "Damned!" and he left.

S: Who could he have confused you with?

L: I have no idea.

S: What did he call you?

L: Gertrude.

S: Then he confused you with Gertrude.

L: Who is Gertrude?

S: Gertrude is our Queen, silly!

L: Our Queen's name is Gertrude? But her husband's name is Claudius?

S: She kept her maiden name. So you were confused with the Queen! That's bad!

L: That's very bad!!

S: *You should go after that guy and give him an earful!*

L: I did. I'm walking behind him, in the hallway, candle in my hand, I'm saying to myself, too bad I didn't light the candle, at least I would see something. And suddenly, at the end of the hallway - the King!

S: What was he doing there?

L: He was kneeling in front of the crucifix and murmuring something to himself. And there I see that a shadow is approaching the King.

S: His own shadow?

L: Someone else's. His own shadow was next to him. And suddenly a shadow of a dagger appeared above the king!

S: And no dagger in sight, right? Ha ha!

L: But of course! The King's nephew was holding the dagger.

S: Which one is he?

L: The short blonde guy that you keep scaring in the castle palisades.

S: Ah, Hamlet! I know him. He's the lead character. Very well-read man.

L: That's what I think.

S: And you know that people who read a lot can actually pay for it?

L: You think?

S: For example, me. Recently, I'm walking around the palisades, and suddenly, walking against me is Anna Karenina.

L: Both volumes?

S: I'm telling her, "Annie, what are you doing here?" and only then I realized that she was just a pure figment of my well-read imagination. So I said goodbye to her. She went to the dining room. She was hungry like a wolf.

L: Very hungry, ever since she came out in paperback.

S: So how did it go with that dagger?

L: Hamlet was standing with the dagger above his uncle. I'm saying to myself, my God, he may do something to him. For instance, he could have cut off all of his buttons. I say, I'll prevent a tragedy. So I yelled at Hamlet, very quietly, and we went off to a dark corner. There I was chastising him. "Hamlet, aren't you ashamed?

*Your uncle is praying and you walk around here up and down with a dagger? He won't be able to concentrate!*" And he says that it's nothing, that he's just nervous, and he's coming close to me with that dagger and says to me: „Guildenstern, Guildenstern, go to the monastery!"

S: To the monastery? In the best age of your life?

L: But then, fortunately, the door suddenly opened, and a servant came in. He says to Hamlet: "Your Highness, you are expected by Her Highness!" I knew right away that Queen Gertrude was calling Hamlet to come to her. I said to myself, Guildenstern, don't go to the monastery, go after Hamlet. And I passed him by using a shortcut, I don't know if you're familiar with it: up the stairs into the tower and from the tower down the stairs to the cellar.

S: I know it. Who doesn't?

L: And there's a secret door in that cellar...

S: A secret door? I know it. Who doesn't?

L: I open the secret door and you know where I found myself?

S: In the dry kiln!

L: No! Right in Queen Gertrude's bedroom. Behind a white curtain. So I'm watching from behind that curtain, just with one eye so that Gertrude wouldn't notice me; and she was there by herself. Dressed very lightly!

S: Lightly? (*Laughing very hard.*)

L: She had only a negligee. And she was pacing up and down the bedroom.

S: She was carrying the negligee with her?!

L: Yes. She had it rolled up under her arm. She was pacing up and down, I'm behind her, and suddenly I hear some kind of rustle.

I look back, and you know who entered through the secret door behind the curtain?

S: Me!

L: No, you were on the palisades! Polonius! He also knew the shortcut. So I'm telling him: "Listen, Polonius, both of us won't fit here!" And he says that the Queen knows about him. And he *emerged from behind the curtain and says to Gertrude:*

He's coming right away, tell it to him straight,  
That what he's doing is intolerable

And that only your mercy was protecting him  
And stood between him and great anger.

Now I will be quiet - just give it to him!

Kiss thee hand.

That's how he was urging the Queen to deal with Hamlet! In verses!

S: So what did you do?

L: I'm saying to myself, I'll de-urge her. Also in verses. I prepared a tentative poem: "I'm writing a letter to you, and what can I tell you by this letter?"... when suddenly furious Hamlet entered the room.

S: I don't know why he's been so nervous lately. His hands are shaking and it's been rumored that he dropped Ophelia.

L: Are you surprised that he's nervous when you keep scaring him all night on the palisades?

S: Is it my fault that I like scaring people so much? Boo boo boo, from dusk till dawn, boo boo boo. I always get startled myself.

L: Polonius was behind the curtain. Like I already said, it was very tight there. I'm telling him: "Listen, Polonius, couldn't you stay in the cellar? You can hear everything there just the same!" And he tells me: "You go to the cellar! Idiot!"

S: That's what he said to you? Let's kill him!

L: I gave him an earful, don't worry! I say: „Don't put on any airs, you snake!" He started nudging me, I'm nudging him, then I hit him in the stomach, and imagine - I cut myself. I look closer, and the sneak has my dagger in his stomach.

S: Polonius was carrying your dagger in his stomach? Imagine the audacity some people have!

L: My own dagger! Then he collapsed on the floor. Someone stabbed him through that curtain.

S: Who could it have been?

L: Don't know. It wasn't Gertrude, it wasn't Hamlet, and I also *quickly left. Listen, Rosencrantz, if someone asks you, we spent tonight together.*

S: That's out of the question. Tonight I was by myself.

L: I need an alibi. At the time of the murder I wasn't in my room.

S: That's your fault. At the time of the murder everyone should be in his room. Imagine that they would want to murder you. They've been getting ready to do that for three months and you're not in your room.

L: But it was Polonius who was murdered tonight. They've been searching for his murderer. I'm leading the investigation.

S: You're leading the investigation? Pardon me. May I say during the interrogation that we spent the night together?

L: But you were by yourself!

S: But I need a witness to testify that I was by myself! Murder is a serious thing! Poor Ophelia, poor orphan...

L: Don't even mention Ophelia! She drowned herself again this morning.

S: Again? Very few people can swim in this Danish state. And where did it happen?

L: In the creek under the castle.

S: Were you there?

L: Excuse me!

S: Pardon me.

L: Of course. I had to dip her three times and she just kept on singing. Do re mi fa so la si do.

S: I only heard the do re mi fa, and then Hamlet sent me to fetch some cigarettes.

L: What cigarettes? It was in the middle ages! Cigarettes had not been invented yet!

S: Sure they were! Hamlet smoked like a chimney!

L: You've never seen Hamlet!!

S: Me? I worked in that building on the main street. They used to perform Hamlet every night, and I played those four captains who carry the dead prince off the stage.

L: *Four captains? All by yourself?*

S: Yes, by myself. I was some actor!

L: I would really like to see how you carried him off!

S: Easily. First I grabbed the front of the coffin, then I ran to the back and just like that, I was off the stage. The audience didn't even manage to count me.

L: And then you laid down the coffin with the dead prince backstage...

S: Not at all! Every night I used to bring it to Mrs. Hamlet. After a while she started to get nervous. She says to me: "Why do you keep bringing it here, my basement is getting full!"

L: Seems to me you're a real theater expert.

S: Indeed. I acted in all plays. And I saw the ones that I didn't act in.

L: Are you familiar with the work...

S: Of course, it's a well-written thing.

L: ...like, she comes there, and he's not waiting for her?

S: And then she looked at the door, didn't she?

L: There was no door. It was a staircase!

S: But there was a door above the staircase!

L: There was a window above the staircase! That's where they play the most dramatic part of the entire play. The actress was standing in the front, and you could see that she couldn't take it any more. She was tired of life. And then she decided. She ran up the stairs, opened the window, and said: "It's raining!" And then she looked at the door.

S: You said there was no door!

L: What do you mean, no door? How else could she exit?

S: That's exactly it! She would have left, but she had no way out! She had no means of exiting!

L: That's true! But you couldn't tell by looking at the woman. She could really act!

S: That's exactly the art of acting that you couldn't see anything on her!

L: She was some actress! In the third act, you also couldn't see anything on her. They killed her and she didn't show it at all. She kept *wandering around the stage for three minutes with an axe in her back*. Then the director ran in and yelled: „Fall down already or you're fired!“ So she fell down.

S: You also couldn't see anything on that director. He looked like a plumber.

L: And do you recall that guy in the fourth act who came to avenge the actress that got killed? You couldn't see anything on him either.

S: Yes. He was missing an ear and kept listening.

L: You know what? Let's re-enact the climactic scene. Like the artists say, let's try to evoke the mood of the sequence. You wouldn't believe how important evoking the atmosphere is for dramatic arts.

S: I know. During the war they evoked entire families.

L: So you be the murderer, here's the axe. You're standing above your victim.

S: Is she still bleeding? I hate blood.

L: In the art of acting the most important thing is to identify with the soul of the character. You're a common murderer. But you

can't show it! You're standing above your victim. I am the avenger; I'm standing behind the door. Let's play. *(He goes behind the door and knocks on it.)*

S: Listen, someone's knocking on the door!

L: That's me!

S: What do you want?

L: I want to play the scene! You're the murderer, you're standing above your victim, I am the avenger, I'm standing behind the door. When I knock, you say "come in".

S: And what am I supposed to be doing until then?

L: Just shut up till then! When I knock, you say "come in" with a premonition. *(He goes behind the door and knocks.)*

S: Come in! Jesus Christ, I've got a bad hunch!

L: *(Enters.)* Can you see anything on me?

S: *(Inspects him.)* No.

L: There you go. You can't see anything on me and I came here to kill you.

S: *What do you mean, kill me? You don't mean for real?*

L: Why not? You killed my mother, after all, look! *(Points at the floor.)*

S: But we just agreed to pretend!

L: We agreed that you will marry her.

S: But I'm already married!!!

L: Aha! You bastard! You disgusting, perverse murderer!

S: Have you gone crazy, Lasica?

L: Are you calling me crazy? After all those things you did here? After that malicious and treacherous murder? *(He throws himself on the floor.)* My dear mother, lying here on the floor in her wedding gown.

S: *(Walking around him.)* Pull yourself together, There's no one there!

L: Don't step on my mother! Don't worry, mommy, I will avenge you!

S: Mr. Lasica, here's a pill for you...

L: What?! It's not enough that you killed my mother; you want to kill me too? You'll pay for that! *(He is choking him.)* Can you see anything on me? Can you see anything on me?

S: *(With his last ounce of strength.)* No, no, I can't!

L: *(Calmly.)* There. And that's the art of acting. *(Satinský is ecstatic and is clapping his hands with respect.)* And now let's try it the other way around. I'll be the murderer and you be the avenger.

S: I don't know about that, I've never had a real opportunity to act. I only played Vassa Zheleznovova.

L: That's good enough. I am the murderer, I'm standing above my victim, you're the avenger, standing behind the door. *(Satinský goes behind the door.)* Wait a second! *(He takes away his imaginary axe, stands above the victim and waits. Satinský enters with an evil expression in his face.)* What's up?

S: What should be up? You're supposed to say "come in".

L: But you didn't knock.

S: So what if I didn't knock? You just killed my mother! And I'm supposed to be knocking?!

L: What the hell, what mother? You were supposed to knock!

S: *(Pointing at the floor.)* And this is what? This is my mother!

*Don't worry, mommy, I will avenge you! Blood, Yago, blood!*

*(Choking Lasica, he is singing.)* Old man river...

L: *(Dying.)* I hate racism!

S: Stains from my hands, go away!

L: Stains can be removed with the cleaning agent Pinesol! *(Turns to Satinský.)* Július!

S: Et tu, also, Brutus, my son? *(Lasica stabs him with a dagger from the side.)* Oh, we're not likely to go to the Senate today...

L: Romeo!

S: Juliet!

L: Let's die together!!



S: Alright. *(He drinks the poison and dies.)*

L: Ha ha, I really fooled her!

S: When you roasted me, you might as well eat me! Woo hoo hoo hoo! *(He jumps on the gallows and dangles for a while.)* So, are you happy now? Did I do a better job pretending?

L: Well, you weren't doing so great in the beginning, but now it was bearable. You do belong on the gallows.

S: I belong in the theater. I absolutely love theater.

L: Me too. Theater, that's the only place where the pretending makes at least a little bit of sense.

*(Lasica and Satinský wave to the audience, and, completely sweaty, fall behind the stage.)*

### **THE MAN**

*From the production Cherful News for Everyone Having Problems With the Bladder (Radostná správa pre všetkých, ktorí majú ťažkosti s mechúrom), 1969, Theater on the Promenade (Divadlo na Korze) - Theater of Lasica and Satinský, Bratislava.*

L: Listen, do you like theater?

S: Which one?

L: I don't mean any particular theater, I mean theater as such.

S: Oh, you mean theater en gross.

L: Excuse me?

S: You mean theater en gross?

L: Why?

S: That's what you were saying.

L: I was asking whether you like theater as such. In general. Theater at all. Theater as a whole.

S: En gross. Everything that you took so long to explain to me the French can say with one phrase: en gross.

L: They're crazy.

S: Why? They're saving words. They say: en gross, and you know right away what you're talking about.

L: You shouldn't save words. On the contrary, words should be used. Always and again, new words, new phrases, new nuances...

S: There you go. Nuances, that's also a French word.

L: In Slovak you would say shades. New words, new shades and shadows, ances and nuances. The words are beautiful.

S: There are ugly words too.

L: I wouldn't know about that. But even ugly words have to be beautiful in their own way. Like the French, using that famous word...

S: Maybe not that. Let's not use vulgar expressions here.

L: Why not? Maybe people would be interested to hear how such a word sounds on stage translated into French.

S: You can't know whether they would like to know that. Maybe they would get offended.

L: *I don't know if everyone would get offended, but I have a bunch of friends here, and they definitely wouldn't get offended. So, how do you say it in French?*

S: What?

L: That most common phrase.

S: Now I really don't know which one you mean.

L: Well, the one... when someone sends you somewhere... en gross...

S: I don't know what you're trying to say.

L: Jesus Christ, how should I explain it to you... you understand... go to en gross.

S: You can't go to en gross. You can go somewhere in particular.

L: So in particular, go to hell.

S: That is the expression?

L: No. Wait, let me explain it to you. Man...

S: I know. Man is a social creature...

L: He socializes with people, lives among them, needs them. But

from time to time...

S: He needs to be alone.

L: Exactly. And then he says to other people – en gross – or he says it in particular to some people – go to... and now say that in French.

S: What?

L: The place where they're supposed to go!

S: Oh! I see! I'm sorry, I was looking at the whole thing from a political aspect. I didn't know you meant it so humanly.

L: Excuse me! If I meant it politically, I wouldn't be sending you there.

S: Well, that expression, in French, that is... you think there are no French here?

L: So what if there are? At least they will understand something.

S: I just thought, so that they wouldn't take it personally. So in French, you say... I'm embarrassed.

L: You said it in Slovak.

S: I know. But I'm embarrassed to say it.

L: *Get out of here! People should get used to the big world!*

S: Well then, in French you say... merde!

L: Merde?

S: Yes. Do you like it?

L: I don't know yet. I have to experience it. Merde. Merde. Well, you can't deny it. French, that's some language! It has a sound! Merde! Compared to that, our ass sounds like shit! Jesus Christ! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say that but somehow it slipped out. Where were we?

S: You were asking me whether I like theater.

L: So, do you like theater?

S: What do I know? Which theater?

L: For instance, this one.

S: Well, it's a bit small.

L: But we should be happy. It's just the two of us on stage, no one is bothering us, we can say whatever we want, like you just heard only a minute ago; no one is telling us what to do, ordering us, threatening us. And we can even think whatever we want.

S: *(Pointing at the audience.)* They can do that too.

L: Yes, they can think that. But we can even imagine it.

S: Yes, that's beautiful. We can even imagine whatever we want. We can imagine the unimaginable. We don't have a stage, we don't have a curtain, no set design, but if we want to, we can imagine a beautiful stage, 15 by 25 meters...

L: 15 by 30. What an image! We can even imagine a beautiful velvet curtain, which is being pulled apart...

S: I am imagining it's being lifted.

L: ...which is being lifted, and when it's completely up, what do we see?

*(That very moment a Man dressed in a coat and a hat comes on stage, and sits on a chair behind their backs. He is sitting quietly, looking ahead.)*

L: *(Notices him.)* What do we see?

S: *(He continues describing his fantasy.)* We see gorgeous scenery, depicting a medieval castle; we can see the bedroom of the lady of the castle. The lady of the castle is sitting in front of a mirror, enjoying the view of the magic curves of her young body.

L: *(To Satinský.)* Do you have an agreement with him? I wasn't told anything.

S: Don't interrupt me; can't you see I'm captivated by my own thoughts? The lady of the castle is looking and looking, and her body is all curves, all curves...

L: I'm just curious if the two of you are up to something. Nobody tells me anything.

S: ... and suddenly a chamber maid enters the room, also completely naked, she is bringing breakfast, but the lady of the castle does not even touch the food...

L: It is supposed to be a surprise, isn't it? So that I would be startled, right?

S: What kind of a surprise? I'm making it all up! The lady of the castle is sitting in front of the mirror only in my fantasy, you understand?

L: Aha. And somebody is sitting at the table here, in out theater. And he doesn't look like much of a castle lady.

S: (*Notices the Man.*) Who is he?

L: You don't know?

S: No.

L: So imagine it, you're so smart. I thought it was supposed to be some kind of original scenic illustration of your imagination.

S: Who is he? What does he want?

L: That's what I'm asking you. Who is he, what does he want? This is what we get because just a moment ago you were so enthusiastic about how great it was that it was just the two of us here.

S: I wasn't being enthusiastic, you started with: It's just us two here; no one is disturbing us...

L: And who started with the curtain? The scenery of a medieval castle, naked butler? And the lady of the castle does not even touch him? That's not even true. We don't have a curtain, let alone a medieval castle! *This is a regular basement. You can't say stuff like:*

It's just us two here; no one is disturbing us...

S: But it is just the two of us...

L: That's our business. You don't have to be spilling it to everyone.

You don't have to spread it around. On the contrary, we have to keep it a secret that it's just the two of us. We have to claim that

there are more of us here, that there are so many of us that we don't even fit here; that some of us have to stand in the yard until

some room is made by those who have fainted. If you keep announcing that it's just the two of us, they will send someone here to be with us for sure.

S: They already did. Look. He's sitting and staring. What does he want?

L: I'm looking at him and I can't remember where I've seen him before. What does he want? We should ask him, shouldn't we?

S: That's an idea! There are particular moments when you know exactly what to do. Ask him.

L: Why me? I didn't invite him here. You ask him. You are older.

S: Since when am I older? Besides, you look more dignified. Look at me. Do I look dignified? He wouldn't even answer me. I look so pitiful.

L: And I don't look pitiful? I can't even breathe through my nose!

S: You can breathe through your mouth, but I will never look different.

L: You can get plastic surgery; I have a friend who's a surgeon.

S: Plastic surgery? Me? You know how much money that'd cost? I'm not going to ask him.

L: Then we have to draw.

S: Okay, let's toss a coin. (*He takes out a one crown coin.*) You're the eagle, I'm the virgin!

L: Wait, let me toss the coin.

S: Why?

L: Because I'm older and I look more dignified. (*He takes the coin.*)

You're the eagle, I'm the virgin!

S: *You're the eagle, I'm the virgin!*

L: Don't say silly things, you can't be the virgin. That would be disgusting.

You're the eagle. I'm the virgin! (*He tosses the coin.*) Virgin.

That's you. You're going to ask.

S: That's invalid. You cheated. I'll toss the coin. Give me that crown.

L: Get your own, if you're so smart.

S: I only have a hundred crown note.  
L: I don't have change.  
S: Let's toss the hundred crown note. You're the eagle...  
L: I'm the virgin.  
S: That's what I'm saying. You're the eagle, I'm the virgin.  
L: I'm the virgin.  
S: You're the virgin, I'm the eagle.  
L: You're the virgin and I'm the virgin too.  
S: So who will be the eagle?  
L: It doesn't matter. We'll talk about that later. Do the drawing.  
(*Satinský throws the hundred crown note in the air, but before it falls back again, the Man in the hat grabs it and puts it in his pocket.*)  
There goes the eagle.  
S: Excuse me, but this is too much. This is my money, I borrowed it in all honesty, and now I don't have it. Give me back my hundred crowns.  
L: Don't yell at me, I didn't take it.  
S: So at least lend me a hundred crowns. I have to give it back.  
L: How can I lend it to you when I don't have it? I would have to go ask him for that money and then I can lend it to you.  
S: Great. Go ahead, I'll wait here.  
L: But don't go away. (*He approaches the Man.*) Hello. (*The Man is silent.*) He's not answering.  
S: Wait, leave it to me. (*Kindly.*) Good morning. (*The Man is silent.*)  
Nothing.  
L: Of course nothing, it's evening now.  
S: But he didn't respond to hello either.  
L: Why should he respond, we weren't asking him anything.  
S: Ask him.  
L: What?  
S: What does he want here?  
L: Isn't it going to be a bit rude?  
S: Why rude, this is our theater and he came here, and nobody called him, and now there are so many of us on stage here that we won't fit, others are standing in the front yard waiting for someone to faint. And he just keeps sitting around, quite content; I'll see about that if we can't even ask him what it is that he wants here. He should be happy we are so polite to him, we should kick him out of here immediately... (*The Man stomps on his foot.*) ... well, maybe we don't have to throw him out right away, maybe he likes it here, or he got here by mistake and now he doesn't know what to do.  
L: I'll ask him. (*To the Man.*) Good evening. Not that we are trying to get you out of here, not at all, we are kind-hearted people; we have a pretty small theater, but you can fit in many good Slovaks here... (*The Man twists Lasica's nose.*) He's not Slovak.  
S: Then we have to choose a completely different way of establishing contact. I'll find out who he is and what he wants. Wait for me here. (*To the Man.*) Buona sera... Buona sera... (*To Lasica.*) Nothing.  
L: Continue. But carefully. Should anything happen, we don't know each other.  
S: (*To the Man.*) I don't mean to impose, I'm disgusted myself, I'm sure you have your own problems, but we would like to know what's happening. It is so unexpected, I'd almost even say surprising, this visit of yours. We're a hospitable nation, that's a fact, but one could say you owe us an explanation.  
L: Not only an explanation but you also owe us a hundred crowns. (*The Man stomps on Satinský's foot.*)  
S: A hundred crowns? I don't remember it, and it was my money. Don't mind my friend, he's nervous, he can't breathe through his nose, poor soul. (*To Lasica.*) Are you crazy? Can't you see we have to tiptoe around him?

L: *What tiptoeing? Who's at home in this theater? He or us? What is this supposed to mean? Why is he sitting here? Why is he staring? (The Man gets up.)* Alright then. Tiptoe.

S: Now you. I have to take a break.

L: It's always me. *(To the Man.)* Do you like it here? It's nice, isn't it? We built it ourselves. If you allow me, I'd love to sit down next to you. Okay then. I'll stand. This is a theater, you know? Do you understand? Theater! That's a thing – how should I explain it to you – it's a room, you understand, and in that room, there is a stage. And on that stage, there are actors, you understand? The actors walk around on stage, they are acting, but not just like that, for themselves, but they're acting in front of the audience, you know? And the audience is also sitting in the same room, only not on stage, but in the auditorium, and they are looking at the actors how they're walking around the stage, acting for people, who are sitting in the audience, and looking at those actors walking around the stage. Do you understand?

S: *(Whispering.)* Actresses!

L: What?

S: Mention actresses. That will work.

L: *(To the Man.)* Aha! Now I remembered – the actresses walk around the stage too. An actress, that is – how should I explain it to you – that is a woman, she can even be a mother, who has decided, really... she said to herself: what shall I do with my free evenings? I'm not going to walk around the streets; I'd rather walk around on stage. So she walks around the stage and the audience is looking at her. And there are women in the audience as well, but they are not actresses, and they may not come up here on stage, that's the way we have it set up here. Everyone is where they belong. The actors are on stage, the audience is in the auditorium, and the rest are at home. That is a hundred-year old tradition, you understand. So, respectfully, if you're a spectator, could you please go sit in the auditorium; or if you're an actor, then start acting; and if you're the rest, then please go home. *(The Man is silent.)*

L: *(To Satinský.)* He's not an actor.

S: *(To the Man.)* You're not an actor? That's almost impossible. One would think you were born on stage. Based on your appearance, according to your facial expression, your natural elegance, one would judge that you already have a good number of dramatic roles under your belt. For instance, Othello. I don't know what your relationship is with the colored people, but the role of Othello is as if it was created for your exterior. I personally hate racism. *(To Lasica.)* Give me some other dramatic characters.

L: Cohn and Rosenbaum.

S: Get out of here, those are Jews. *(To the Man.)* So you're not an actor? That's okay. Maybe you're an upholsterer, that is also a very nice profession. Ever since I was a little boy I wanted to be an upholsterer – and it didn't work out. Should I kill myself? *(To Lasica.)* Quickly, give me another profession.

L: A harp player.

S: Something else!

L: My God, I can't remember anything. I can't remember!

S: Don't yell so much, he's staring.

L: Listen, how come he's not saying anything?

S: He doesn't feel like talking. You can see.

L: Is he a deaf mute?

S: You think? *(He comes to the Man, imitating the sign language. The Man is giving out an intimidating stare.)*

S: He's not a deaf mute.

L: He's not an actor, he's not an upholsterer either, he also isn't a deaf mute. I'm not into this any more. In a moment people will start noticing. He's not in the playbill; he's not on the poster either.

S: Perhaps he doesn't even exist.

L: So kick him out. If he doesn't exist, he shouldn't be here.

S: *(Comes to the Man, and barks. The Man takes out a note pad and writes something down.)* I blew it. He took my name down.

L: So why are you barking at him? Who told you to do that? Can't you see he got offended?

S: *He took my name down. Oh, my God. Please don't leave me now, we've known each other for so many years.*

L: Well, we haven't known each other for that long, don't exaggerate.

S: But you are my partner!

L: And why? Because you forced me! I never wanted to be an actor, I suffer from stage fright. *(To the audience.)* I don't know if you noticed, but I suffer from a terrible stage fright. When I come out in front of the audience, my knees start shaking, my voice isn't okay, can you hear me? I'm saying my voice is faint! Not to even mention my enunciation. I can't even pronounce some words. For example, DRUDGE. I can't pronounce it no matter how hard I try.

*(To Satinský.)* If it weren't for you, I could have been working as a deep sea diver. One does not need to be pronouncing words like DRUDGE there.

S: I'll teach you. Just don't leave me here alone. DRUDGE. First, you have to spell it out, D-R-U-D-G-E, and then together. DRUDGE. Try it.

L: *(Spelling out loud.)* D-R-U-D-G-E.

S: There you go. Now say it together.

L: I can't. Fridge, I can say that, but I can't do drudge.

S: Fridge will do. I couldn't say fridge if you threatened to kill me.

L: That's not difficult. You just have to spell it out first...

S: I'll learn it, but what am I supposed to do now? He wrote down my name.

L: Ask him to erase it.

S: Can't you do that? I don't like to get involved in my own business. I'll teach you to pronounce drudge and even give you rubber shoes.

L: I'll try. But I'm not promising anything. *(To the Man.)* My friend over here is a bit concerned that you wrote down his name. Not that he would mind, but he's a bit concerned. Forgive him, he got carried away. If you'd kindly erase his name, I'd go find an eraser, if you don't happen to have one on you. *(To Satinský.)* He's not responding.

S: Maybe he wants a bribe. Offer him the rubber shoes.

L: *I think maybe he's hungry. Look at him.*

S: I'm telling you, he doesn't even remember the last time he ate. That's why he's staring like that! I know that. I know what hunger is. What shall we give him?

L: I have cookies.

S: Cookies, you think? Hope he doesn't get offended.

L: If he's hungry, he won't. If he's not hungry - God help us. *(He comes closer to the Man.)* Cookies. They are like... how should I explain it to you... *(The Man takes the cookies and starts eating.)* He took them.

S: Thank God.

L: Now something to drink. After the cookies, he will want something.

S: Pour him a glass. *(He pulls out a flask from his pocket.)*

L: *(He pours him a glass; the Man takes the whole bottle.)* He drank it.

S: Let's give him something else.

L: I have more cookies.

S: He already had that.

L: A sausage.

S: You have some? Where did you get it?

L: It's home-made. Try some.

S: *(He takes a bite, the Man stands up.)* I'm sorry; I didn't mean that, I don't even know how this happened. I've been very greedy ever since I was a child. *(He hands the sausage to the Man.)* He took the

knife, too.

L: Who cares about the knife. As long as he's enjoying it. Look at him eat, I'm feeling a bit sorry for him.

S: Maybe now he'll erase my name, what do you think?

L: Maybe. He likes the food; he'll be in a better mood.

S: Do you have an onion?

L: No, I don't.

S: Too bad. Guys like him love onions.

L: So what happens when he finishes eating?

S: We'll see.

L: *He should explain what he wants here.*

S: Maybe it's us who should be explaining to him.

L: What should we be explaining to him? We are here and that's that.

S: And what do we want here?

L: What should we want here? We are employed here.

S: Maybe that's exactly what he doesn't like. That we are employed here. Maybe he wanted to be alone.

L: Then he should say it if he doesn't like it.

S: Maybe he's being considerate of us. So he's just quietly sitting.

L: Or maybe he's disoriented.

S: Then we have to give him the location. Latitude, longitude, city, country. Brief information.

L: Is he possibly from another planet?

S: Who knows.

L: He doesn't look like he's from Mars.

S: He's likely from around here.

L: From where?

S: From Earth. We need to find out which part he's from so that we can explain to him where he is.

L: *(To the Man.)* Pardon my interrupting your meal, it's bad manners, but where was I supposed to get good manners? My parents drowned during their early childhood. *(To Satinský.)* So what next?

S: The location!

L: *(To the Man.)* What do you say, we'll draw you a small map, just for the fun of it. And on that map we will mark who comes from where. At least we'll have some laughs. *(To Satinský.)* Nothing.

S: Try to get out of him where he came from.

L: *(To the Man.)* Where did you come from?

S: Careful! *(To the Man.)* I can see that you eat sausage. Good appetite. This sausage is excellent. It is a home-made sausage.

Sausage is one of our national foods. Our nation is small, but we can make big sausages. The sausages are made... *(To Lasica.)*

What are sausages made of?

L: I don't know.

S: *The sausages are made under very difficult conditions. When making sausages, frequently it's a matter of life and death. It is a dangerous profession, but we have people in our nation who hold this job close to their hearts, just like our nation holds these sausages close to their hearts. These people are not afraid of danger and they make sausages while risking their lives and the lives of their loved ones, and they get paid extra bonus for it. Our nation has sausages. And you? (The Man burps.)*

L: It didn't work out with the sausage. And it almost worked.

Let's try it one more time with the geographic location.

S: Careful about the directions.

L: *(To the Man.)* We know one thing for sure - the Earth is round. *(The Man looks at him.)* Well, maybe it's not completely certain. We only assume it. *(The Man looks at him.)* To tell you the truth, I personally don't believe that. They only keep deceiving us; round, they say; but who can prove it? Maybe it's square. *(The Man is looking at him.)* No, it's not going to be square. *(The Man is still looking at him.)* The Earth does not really exist. Thank you

for your attention. *(To Satinský.)* This wasn't the best idea. He doesn't even know that the Earth is round.

S: And has it been proven?

L: Of course, a long time ago Giordano Bruno...

S: He was burned at the stake. So don't say that it's proven.

L: Everybody says so.

S: People say a lot of things. And suddenly you find out that's not the way it is.

L: So how do we find out who he is? What is he looking for here?

S: How do you know he's looking for something? He came here to sit around, have a bite, contemplate.

L: Why did he come here?

S: That's his business. A man has the right to choose freely where he wants to sit around, have a bite, contemplate.

L: Have a bite. Our sausage. Why didn't he bring his own if he's so hungry?

S: *And do you even know whether they have sausages where he comes from?*

L: So he should have brought something that they have.

S: Maybe they don't have anything, poor folks.

L: I'm sure they have something. Look at his hat. Pretty suitable accessory.

S: And his coat is quite tasteful, together with the hat they create a very becoming ensemble.

L: Why doesn't he take off his hat when he's visiting?

S: Maybe he's cold.

L: Doesn't he know he's visiting? Does he think he's sitting at home?

S: Out of the question. He's not going to sit around his house in a coat and with his hat on. We forgot to greet him. *(To the Man.)*

We are very happy that you came here to see us. To tell you the truth, we didn't even dare to hope. We had no idea you would find a free moment, when your work day is so busy for sure. We are truly happy. I'm running to give the news to the others. That will bring a lot of joy to workplaces! In the meantime, please, sit down, make yourself comfortable, I'll help you with your coat... *(The Man looks at him.)* ... or if you like, you can keep it on. You're right. Why should you be taking your clothes off all the time, putting them on, taking them off, putting them on.

L: *(To the Man.)* Cigarette? *(The Man takes one, Lasica lights it up with a lighter.)* This is a lighter. It's an invention. Click - it's burning, click - it's off. Here, try it, please. *(The Man tries it, he burns himself, and writes something in his note pad.)* There. He wrote my name down now too. Now we're both in it.

S: Why both of us? It was your lighter. Why were you forcing it on him? Matches would have been good enough.

L: How could I have known he has never seen a lighter?

S: And what kind of a miracle is this lighter? They didn't have lighters in Ancient Greece, and that was some culture!

L: I'll be careful now. Really, these modern inventions can only get one into trouble. Lighters, handkerchiefs, socks, what is it all for? *Why do I need socks? As if I couldn't walk around barefoot! The Romans came barefoot as far as Trenčín! Only I have to have socks. I should be ashamed.*

S: That's the way it starts. You put on socks. You use a handkerchief. You light your cigarette with a lighter! And one of these days you will start wearing ties! And then nothing can save you!

L: Oh, don't even mention ties in front of him. That would really make him angry. Let's recite something to him instead.

S: Do you know anything by heart?

L: No, but I can read something.

S: No reading! That would provoke him. It has to come straight from the head.

L: Then be my prompter! *(Satinský is prompting him from a book, Lasica*



*is reciting.)*

Once I went through a wood,  
I saw a beast there, real good.  
I was alone, and all around  
Darkness was spreading above the ground.  
Up there on the rocks, all along,  
The owls hooted a midnight song.  
What kind of a beast is in this mood,  
Praise the Lord, if the beast is good.  
It stomped its feet forlorn,  
And hooked me on its horns.  
Is that so? I'll show you here,  
I grabbed it by its ears,  
I threw it on the boulder,  
I may have crushed its shoulder.

He likes it. We should add some more. Prompt me.

S: *(Prompting him.)* Greetings, forests, wood, greetings from the bottom of my heart...

L: Greetings, forests, wood, greetings from the bottom of my heart...

S: And greetings from me, too...

L: And greetings from...

S: *That's not prompting any more. I'm saying that as an epilogue. As a conclusion.*

L: That was successful. We should sing to him too.

S: *(Singing.)* One, two, three.

L: Maybe something else. Do you know any folk songs?

S: I do. But they're real dirty.

L: Go ahead. *(Singing.)* He was looking for it behind my ear...

Let's add something, he's falling asleep.

S: *(Louder.)* And it was under the bottom of my gear.

L: Don't make things more intense! Let's add another song.

S: *(Singing.)*

Sleep, my dear, close your eyes

You pink blossom of mine

Sweet dreams, sweet dreams

My pretty child

Sweet dreams, sweet dreams

Close your eyes

Ta da da da da...

L: He fell asleep.

S: He fell asleep.

L: You think it's for real or is he just testing us?

S: Let's curse at him. If he's not asleep, he won't be able to take it.

L: But quietly. If he's not asleep, he won't be able to take it.

S: *(To the Man.)* Are you asleep, stupid?

L: If you're not asleep, tell us, idiot.

S: If you're asleep, then sleep, jerk.

L: Did you like the sausage, creep?

S: And where is my hundred crowns, you stinking thief?

L: And why did you write my name down, you stinking stinker?

S: And why me, you beef tail?

L: What do you want here, you swine snout? *(The Man moves, Lasica and Satinský start singing Sleep, my dear, close your eyes.)*

He's asleep.

S: Are you asleep, you goat?

L: *He's asleep.*

S: Now what?

L: Let's run away.

S: That's out of the question. He'll find us.

L: No, he won't. I know a hideout ...

S: He'll find us. And if not, he'll wait for us here.

L: We won't come back.

S: So what are we going to do there?

L: We'll be robbing people.

S: That's silly. It's illegal.

L: Then let's run away just like that.

S: People would curse at us.

L: People will forgive us. (*To the audience.*) You'll forgive us, right?

You understand, he appears from nowhere, no one knows what he wants here, he sits around, looking, takes a hundred crowns, eats the sausage, writes our names in his note pad... Let's run away together.

S: But quiet, so that we don't wake him.

L: You keep on singing while I organize the escape. (*Satinský is singing.*) Let's do it this way: I'll escape first and then you also somehow get out of here. Okay?

S: That's not fair. We're all in the same boat. There are women, mothers here, maybe even children. Let's do it this way: I'll leave first and then you, quietly...

L: No way. You're staying here. We'll go together. Let's do it this way: the two of us leave first, and when we're in the street, we start running.

(*To the audience.*) In the meantime, you count to hundred and twenty and then start leaving one by one, so that it doesn't look conspicuous. The people sitting in the back should leave first, and then gradually, when it's your turn, the people in the front rows. Don't linger in the coat room; it would slow down the action. Forget your coats, you'll buy new ones. Goodbye. (*He wants to leave.*)

S: He's waking up.

L: *Sing!*

S: Sleep, my dear, close your eyes...

L: (*To the audience.*) Remain in your seats! We are canceling the action until further notice.

S: He's asleep again.

L: He's asleep.

S: Listen, what if we did him in...

L: (*Horrified.*) Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ! (*Matter-of-factly.*) But with what?

S: We'll find something. I just wanted to know whether you agree.

L: Of course, I disagree. It's inhuman. So what should we use on him?

S: Yes, it's inhuman. Terribly inhuman. Shivers are running down my spine. Do you have an axe?

L: I could never do that, hit a man with an axe, I am ashamed to even think about such an atrocity. Unfortunately, I don't have an axe.

S: Imagine that he has children, they would be left fatherless...

L: And without a mother too. She would certainly kill herself out of grief. Should I borrow an axe?

S: And the children, poor things, orphans, who would take care of them? Don't go anywhere; I'll whack him with a microphone.

L: They would have to live in an orphanage, it would be sad there; maybe they wouldn't even feed them. Don't waste a good microphone on him.

S: Oh, those poor children, growing up, not knowing their father, not knowing their mother, that would be a horrible ordeal. What do you say about this chair?

L: No. I am not capable of committing such an atrocity, even though I may not be a saint. It would break, we need something harder.

S: We would be blaming ourselves till the end of our lives, our consciences would suffer, we wouldn't be able to sleep. Let's throw him down the stairs.

L: We wouldn't be able to look each other in the eye. Where do you have a staircase around here?!

S: *Maybe you would be able to bear it better, but I would never forgive myself.* Do you have a rope?

L: Then you don't know me very well. To kill a man... I would die of shame. I have scissors.

S: I have always been against violence. We can't do it with scissors.

L: Violence is disgusting. One has to respect another man. Let's plug him into a power socket.

S: I would never hurt a fly, let alone... We have very weak power here.

L: A fly, I wouldn't say anything; it's a pest, but a man... Let's drop a piano on top of him.

S: I couldn't hurt even a fly. We'll never be able to lift a piano.

L: I could hurt a fly, yes, it's a pest. I'll whack him with a guitar.

S: Okay. It's not going to be so drastic with a musical instrument.

L: I think so. The strings will make a sound, they will ease the sorrow.

S: Of course, you will have to hold the guitar with the right grip, so that a nice harmony comes out of it. I suggest G7 Minor.

L: In a way, it will be a short requiem.

S: He deserves it, poor soul.

L: I'm feeling a bit sorry for him. I got used to him.

S: Perhaps the pain will go away. Time heals wounds.

L: He was a nice guy.

S: Good guy. Modest, inconspicuous.

L: Yet full of energy.

S: We will remember him for a long time.

L: I will never forget him.

S: And he was so hungry, if we didn't feed him, perhaps he may have starved to death.

L: Indeed, we saved his life. I hope I hit him right.

S: You have to aim straight at the head.

L: Couldn't you hold it for me a little bit.

S: I will. Just don't break my arms.

L: *(Takes a swing.)* Goodbye, my friend. Wait, but what do we do with him then?

S: Aha! We didn't think of that.

L: *We can't leave him here. That would be awkward.*

S: We can seat him in the audience and say that he died of laughter.

L: That would be suspicious. This isn't that much fun, you know.

S: I know.

L: What then?

S: Let's stuff him in the piano.

L: You think he will fit?

S: That's alright. We can stuff the rest in the drum.

L: In the drum? It's very uncomfortable there.

S: He won't care anymore.

L: That's true.

S: So let's go. *(He holds the Man's head, Lasica swings the guitar.)* Just a minute! Try that harmony. G7, Minor. *(Lasica plays the harmony, the Man wakes up and notices that Satinský is holding his head.)*

Play, or this will turn ugly!

L: *(Still holding G7.)* Sing!

S: *(Singing.)* Sleep, my dear, close your eyes...

L: Once I went through a wood, I saw a beast there, real good...

S: Close your eyes...

L: I was alone, and all around, darkness was spreading above the ground...

S: Up there on the rocks, all along, the owls hooted a midnight song...

L: What kind of a beast is in this mood, praise the Lord, if the beast is good...

S: It stomped its feet forlorn, and hooked me on its horns. Sleep, my dear, sleep.

L: Is that so? I'll show you here, I grabbed it by its ears. Close your eyes.

S: I threw it on the boulder, I may have crushed its shoulder. You

pink blossom of mine, sweet dreams, sweet dreams.

L: Greetings, forests, wood, greetings from the bottom of my heart...

S: Me too, me too. (*The Man is sitting and looking.*)

L: The worst is over.

S: *It's good that he didn't write down our names. Two write-ups, that would be the end of it. Do you have any sausage?*

L: I only have cookies now.

S: Give him cookies. (*Lasica hands him the cookies.*) He took them.

L: I knew it. He's a decent guy.

S: He's sitting, looking, not disturbing anyone.

L: (*To the audience.*) I don't understand why you were so upset when he doesn't bother us at all.

S: We don't mind him. We can say whatever we want... say something.

L: Drudge.

S: There you go. We can say whatever we want, we can move whichever way we want.

L: Look - I get up, I sit down, lift my arm, as if he weren't here.

S: He's sitting so modestly, as if he weren't here. And maybe he isn't here. Who knows.

L: So what shall we talk about? Give me a really good topic.

S: The weather.

L: Well, the weather, that's some mischief. Now it rains, then the sun shines, you wouldn't believe. Like the other day, it rained and everybody in the street got soaked to the bone. Ha ha ha. And those who were at home did better. They stayed dry. Rain can't get into an apartment. An apartment is in a building, the building has a roof, and the roof does not let the rain get through even if hail is falling.

S: But some roofs have holes. When the janitor does not take proper care of the roof, then the rainwater trickles down to the basement. And water in the basement, that's a real disaster. It covers everything, does not spare anything, and if you can't swim, you better not even go home.

L: (*To the audience.*) You see. Such a delicate topic and he's letting us have it. I don't know why you were panicking so much. Nobody's limiting us here.

S: On the contrary. We have too much freedom.

L: *But that's the way we are. It's in us.*

S: So calm down. You can see that nothing's happening.

L: You can leave easily.

S: And you can even get your coats from the coat room. Orderly! This way to the coat room, and then take the stairs to the street.

L: And you don't have to go straight home. Take a walk. Sit in a café.

S: And then go straight home!

L: And if you find a stranger at home, sitting at the table and staring, ignore him.

S: Go to bed, you won't miss anything.

L: When you wake up in the morning, he will be still sitting there.

S: Don't forget to give him onions. You'll see how good he'll be to you.

L: Goodbye.

S: Goodbye.