

LACO KERATA

DINNER ABOUT
A CITY
(Drama)

Translation: Danica Ruppeldtová

CHARACTERS:

Mario, a young man

Maria, a young woman

Viera, a young woman

Barbara, a young woman

Valerie, an older woman

Setting:

A garden restaurant with a view over the town

Valerie: The man lived his whole life in a rock.
One day he took a deep breath,
and all of a sudden he was outside, breathing fresh air.
At first he stood surprised in one place,
had a look around for a while,
but then, hesitating no longer,
went further into the woods.
He hoped he'd find somebody
that he could
have a chat with -
just for a little while.
Looking for someone, the man
meets a beautiful, branchy green tree
and asks him in a friendly voice:
"Hello, my dear brother, you lovable tree,
tell me how is your life, are you doing fine?
But the tree doesn't answer in a friendly manner,
just gives a mighty shake,
so strong that the leaves go flying away,
and the tree turns into a sad, faded stump.
The man is startled and scared,
he doesn't understand what's happening.
The man is trying to save what he can, he picks up the fallen
leaves,
he wants to hang them back on the tree
but the leaves don't obey, they fall off again,
they even crush and fall apart in his fingers.
So the unhappy man sets off again,
thinking that he'll have a look around some other place
where he could have a chat with somebody else
have a cry on their shoulder
or the other way round -
he'd like to listen to somebody else,

see what bothers and hurts them.

He comes up to this beautiful, majestic castle,
he stands up in front of it and asks really very friendly:
“What bothers you, dear castle? Come on, you can tell me!”
Oh, but alas – the castle also shakes mightily
until it becomes a big pile of rubble and its windows fly out,
its stone bricks fall apart
so that there’s only a huge ruin left out of it.

A crying matter.

The man catches the bricks
he catches the roof,
he’s trying to save everything again,
but nothing stays together anymore,
everything in his hands turns
to screeching limestone dust.
He runs away from that place
and feels very uneasy
about the pair of weird acquaintances
and as he runs he accidentally he turns
to his own rock again,
where he lived so far.

He looks at it
and asks with a certain sadness in his voice:
“What does really bother you, rock?”

The rock doesn’t answer
and it doesn’t shake, either,
it simply opens its screeching door
so widely that one can see all its inners
and its big, cold heart.

The man hesitates,
looks around for a little while,
but then he walks back into the cave.
The rock shuts back behind him, rrrrrr...
Now the man inside this rock
knows the answer
to that easy question,

how is he getting on
by himself.

(Valerie slowly and sadly leaves the stage.)

Part Two

MARIO AND MARIA

(Mario and Maria sit at a table in a small garden restaurant. They seem to be calm and quite happy. They made an unusual trip today. Their dates are becoming very important to both of them.)

IA, IO, IA (movement improvisation)

Mario: Do you think that somebody waits around here?
Maria: I don't know but last time there was a tall waiter here.
Mario: Today there's probably a different one.
Maria: Some short guy that thinks about everything else but work.
Mario: That's a beautiful rose you've got.
Maria: You won it for me at a fair.
Mario: I've never won a rose before.
Maria: That's because of me.
Mario: The power of love.
Maria: Incredible. You're not always this thoughtful.
Mario: I am not always with you.
Maria: Maybe that's why we are so dear to each other.
Mario: Maybe.
Maria: Aren't you hungry? Because I am. Very hungry.
Mario: Where are those people? Where are their voices? Their laughter, their look, their touch, and human warmth?
Maria: Hello? Hello?
Mario: I feel as if I was locked up in some cabin-lift, where you can't see anything, just the mountains and snow and nobody else is around. You just want to land. You want to land and have your feet safe back on the ground again.

- Maria: You feel like you're in some magic town, where there's only houses, roads, abandoned cars in the middle of the roads, empty fair-grounds, flying newspapers, lost bits and pieces of clothes. Empty homes, abandoned furniture, chairs, tables with cups of unfinished tea, dessert spoons in disarray, crumpled napkins... On the bottom of a nearly dried up puddle there lies somebody's last letter with the most important message in the world. It lies there dead, without life, there's no receiver and there's not even someone you could send the letter back to... Ooh, ghastly town! Someone has to take me away from there! Someone has to save me! Someone has to take me in their arms! Someone's huge hands, palms, regular breath! Someone has to take me back to safety! Someone whose eyes I'm looking in right now!... Because we are in the magic town!
- Mario: That could be quite interesting.
- Maria: Darling, what's wrong with you? Do you lack everyday adventure? No splendour, lots of silence, no answers?
- Mario: You're avoiding me. That's why...
- Maria: Oh, I see... What would you say if we went for a swim after dinner?
- Mario: A swim? At night? Where?
- Maria: To the beach. We can swim naked at night, can't we?
- Mario: Don't be crazy. Somebody could see us.
- Maria: O, God! So what! Ha, ha, ha! I'm not scared of anything when I'm with you! Of bugs, trees, or people! You will cover me! You will protect me! If it is necessary, and even if it is not!...
- Mario: Your courage amazes me.
- Maria: Darling, don't be so pathetic, don't be pathetic and call that waiter again, I'd like a little bit of pudding.
- Mario: Ok...Waiter! Waiter! Waiter!...
- Maria: Try louder!
- Mario: But it's indecent. Why should I shout here like a shepherd at his goats?!
- Maria: Well he's never going to serve us this way!
- Mario: What is he deaf or something? Is he deaf?
- Maria: Maybe, maybe not.

- Mario: Darling, don't look at me like that, you can wait, you won't starve – lots of people lived on air through their happiest years... And you're overweight. A little bit of fasting won't hurt you.
- Maria: Oh, you! You'd even let me starve to death, just so that you wouldn't lose a feather from your cap. Let's go somewhere else, where they will not be deaf to our calling. Darling, let's go somewhere where we'll be happy together! Somewhere where we'll be the happiest couple! Where it's even more heavenly heaven than in heaven! The heavenest heaven of all!
- Mario: Darling, on our last date we decided that we'd spend the next evening here. I... I'm sorry, but I don't like to change what is already settled.
- Maria: But why can't we? Why can't we go somewhere else? I don't understand. There are so many other nicer places and they're not so far from here. Why?
- Mario: No, let's stay here, please. I've been imagining ever since our last date... how we are going to spend the evening here! How we are going to look at each other, how we'd think, plan, put bits and pieces together, stone to stone and grain of sand to grain of sand... I'm already imagining how... how we are here together, above the town, on a big common sandpit!
- Maria: Really? It sticks!
- Mario: ...How we quietly sit here, at this table. How we smell the perfume of these flowers mingled with the kitchen smell – you know I'm really happy when my dreams come true. There's not so many of them. They didn't multiply and that's why they're so clear and visible and most of all – attractive – only let them come true.
- Maria: Darling, that's all so beautiful, your visions – wonderful, but let's go away anyway. I beg you.
- Mario: Darling, try to understand me. It's very important to me.
- Maria: It's really hard to get along with you. Sometimes... Ha, ha...
- Mario: See? We're only getting to know each other, we only just, just meet freely... I'd hate to call it like this, so it can't be so free any more, we... promised something to each other, and you're already accusing me...

Maria: O please, darling, darling... Stop talking so much! Shut up! Please be so kind and go to the kitchen, open the door and order my menu straight from the chef: Steak Chateaubriand with Roquefort cheese, fried potatoes, Peach Melba and if they don't have it, then I want peaches in red wine and if not, then Brazilians and fresh lemonade with ice! If the chef will be surprised and won't agree, explain to him what's going on – that I'm hungry and I'm dying here and that the waiter is deaf or he's gone! Go on, then!.. After I've eaten, you'll see how much fun we'll have together! You'll see! When I've had some food, I'll drive you crazy, I'll roll you on the floor, I'll hug you so much!... Oh!... Oh, I'm sweating terribly! Sweating! This never happens to me!

Mario: My darling! My darling! What are you asking of me? I will do everything for you, everything in the world, but I can't do this. It is not polite. To crawl into somebody else's kitchen like a thief, like a crook, like a scrounger that hasn't one bit of sense, tact or consideration. Try to understand – the man who should serve us is surely around somewhere – maybe all this is too much for him, maybe he's tired so let's be a little bit considerate. I'm sorry that you are hungry but a hungry person thinks more clearly and has better ideas, you could say that person flies high.

Maria: If you don't go into that kitchen dear, I'm sorry, but I'll leave or eat you for dinner even if I had to mourn for you after that...

Mario: You're not serious, you can't leave me! How could you?... Now?... Today?... No way! And you can't eat me either... That would be a crime. I would die, but you would be the one who'd suffer. Yes, I know, you would torture yourself mourning for me, torture yourself to death – I know it!

Maria: I probably would, but you just go into that kitchen now! Everything will be different then! I promise!

Mario: Yes, darling, OK, OK, I'm going. You win, I lose – I suppose it has to be that way in a relationship now and then. It has to be! Because you're hungry!... You're hungry, that's all right.

Maria: Oh, you rascal... But a wonderful man he is, I like him. I don't

care about all his girlfriends. I really don't care. He's weird and he's so strange – maybe he's a lunatic – so what. He's alone, abandoned and he wasn't married yet. I'll work on him. I'm looking forward to it... At first I'll tidy that house of his. We'll put the bedroom in the kitchen and the kitchen in the bedroom. The workshop will become a lounge and the balcony will be on the east side and so will the bedroom, so that the sun will wake us up. Every staircase, entrance and exit will be on the south side, so the north wind won't bother us and so that every road will always lead to the south, to warm countries – not to the iceberg north... And all those horses, cows, chickens, ducks – I'll love to look after them, I'd love to!.. We'll have fous, calves, little chickens and then we'll sell them or kill them, eat them and then we'll bread new fous, calves, chickens and then comes the knife again, full stomach and then the new fous, calves will be born and this will go on and on, until all of us including fous, calves, chickens, hens, ants would die forever and ever... No, I won't tell him all this now. What for? Gradually. I don't want to scare him, no way. I have to let him worry for a while, that won't surely hurt him, at least he'll stick even closer to me. And he'll listen to me more... I told my parents about him ages ago, they're happy. A spinster at home is worse than rotten furniture. We're all really happy that Mario has such a big house. When my parents will be unable to take care of themselves, they'll move in with us, too and they'd sell their own house for big money. I'm so happy, happy, so happy I'd eat him, eat him, eat him, eat him.

Mario: Darling.

Maria: What happened?

Mario: Icm very sorry, but there is no one in the kitchen. I searched all of it, and believe me, there's not one soul in there – nobody at all. There's a terrible smell... I'm all dazed from it, it's so strong, in fact it's a stench. Stench from all that food... I'm so carried away and dizzy at the same time. I've never seen so much food in one place. The beauty and horror in one... When I think of all those tastes, titbits, delicatessen, sweets, desserts,

puddings, dips, bites, gourmet foods, masterpieces of master artists from all the masterly masters of all the best gourmet masters in this gourmet-tasting world of gourmet enthusiasts and fanatics... No, that cannot be true.

Maria: (*Opera.*) And why didn't you put some of that food on a plate and bring it to me?

Mario: I couldn't – there wasn't a plate, or a spoon.

Maria: Mario! What's wrong with you?

Mario: I'm really quite sick. It's from all that pleasure. Yes, from that pleasure. The body revolts! When someone feels really well right after that he has to feel really unwell... It's a natural balance. I know that now. That's how it is. I believe all of that stuff now.

Maria: Mario, sit down, please! What are you talking about? My little rascal! Did you eat something in there? Are you sick? Sit down, or I'll pinch or punch you so that you'll wake up!

Mario: Now I'm going to be sick, then I'll be well, sick, well. Maria, I want to take you to heaven with me. Do you believe me?

Maria: I do... To heaven? To heavenly peace of the eternal smell of strawberry puree? And why didn't you bring me any of that kitchen smell then? I'm hungry! How am I supposed to go to heaven – hungry? You rascal! You fool! Am I supposed to starve to death?! What good will that do?! How are we going to have a good time in heaven?

Mario: You will never die! Never! You will live forever! You're eternal!

Maria: Stop it! Are you crazy?

Mario: All through my bachelorhood I ate tin food... Just tin food. I never cooked anything for myself. I have never smelled cooked food so intensively before... What heaven was I missing! What was I missing, like an abandoned beggar on the corner of an inhospitable street. I myself had to be my own pillow to cry on, a blanket to keep me warm, my own mattress, a sofa to rest on when times were worst... Everything was me, for me, from me, to myself and alone, so blank... Oh, how miserable I was, how stupid, blinded, I was my own snake throttling my own neck! Poor me!.. I have never cooked anything for myself, because I was afraid that I'd get food poisoning. Yes, I was

very afraid. I didn't want to die I don't want to die now either, because I only want you now, my dear wife. An evening star, my shining star, reflecting from all sea and ocean surfaces!... From lakes, wells, brooks!... It's so beautiful! This is how it's supposed to be!... I'd like to catch all your star surfaces! My eternal star!

Maria: Not yet. Bring me that food.

Mario: I want you. I'm longing for you so much. We'll have a son. I'll ask your honorable parents if we can have a son. Ha, ha, ha! Maybe your daddy could make you one. It wouldn't matter to me. At least you wouldn't maculate your clan. What do you say?

Maria: At first you have to ask me to marry you! You gilded rascal!

Mario: Take that foot off! Give me your dear little hand, come on!

Maria: Are you drunk again, or what? Ha, ha... O,o,... You can't take much nowadays. At first I'll pinch your hand... like this and now I'm going to get that food myself. Yum, yum. Yum, yum.

Mario: I'm not drunk, darling! I can't drink! Are you crazy? Ha, ha, ha! I never drank in my life, not even when I was in good health, because I didn't want your husband to be an alcoholic! Just imagine – he'd beat you. Some alcoholics are like that... Maria, don't leave! Don't leave me!... Maria! She's gone! She left me! Why?... Is this the balance? Isn't there too much evil? What do you say, you bearded clowns up there?! Is this your balance? Maria! It's not your fault! I'm not blaming you, in my heart you'll stay your true self – immaculate and clean at the same time. Your picture will be framed in ivy and spring flowers, sprinkled with fresh, warm rain... Fatal, romantic!... Actually you had the right to leave me, it's not your fault, Maria!... Your arrogant parents are to blame! Oh, our ancient family misunderstandings! They wanted you to marry a prince. Oh, well. I'm just an ordinary baron. You're beautiful and you'll stay that way, although you're already a spinster with your zenith almost behind you. Truly, you're fat, very fat. But never mind, there's still enough knights in the world. Maybe I'll stay all alone well,

after all, as did many geniuses who found in you the incarnation of the highest earthly beauty.

Maria: (*Opera.*) Are you awake? Are you sober now?

Mario: Maria, you came back to me!

Maria: Yes, I came back.... Why? I told you I was only going to the kitchen. I was hungry as a lion. Should I have eaten you?...

Mario: So? Did you smell all that stuff? Ivy, spring flowers, the eternal sun in the sky that will burn out the eyes of hostile men with its clear, fair rays!... Did you see?

Maria: I didn't see or smell anything. You were right, it's noon there.

Mario: What? Noon? An abandoned kitchen full of food? It was noon there? There wasn't even a single proudly grown up spring flower? Nor a palm from the Easter Islands? Or an ice rose of a mysterious, beautiful princess of Antarctica?... Curious!... Let's devour everything earthly!... Then I guess you won't be talking about food so much!... Darling!

Maria: There was nobody there and besides that, all the food that was being cooked in there was mostly burned or overcooked. Disgusting smell-like in a crematorium.

Mario: Isn't all of this some kind of a secret code? A code which we don't understand at first?

Maria: Yes.

Mario: What is it then?

Maria: That we should never set foot back here again. No waiter, no chef, a burned dinner. I found a paté and a piece of bread. I'm hungry, I have to eat. I'd eat everything. And then we'll go for a swim.

Mario: Go on, have some, eat! My little fatty. Just stuff yourself, maybe you won't need to eat anything else for a long time now. God knows to which restaurant we'll go to tomorrow. Oh! Maybe there won't be anyone there either. We're completely alone. Alone among thorns, among strawberries, alone in flour, in sugar and alone in spicy salt. Like lonely scarabei in the middle of the dessert who cry without tears but the louder and more penetrating is their cry. Oh!... Yes, even some of the helicopter

researchers talk about it, apparently their head bangs from the scarabei cries.

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Maria: Don't exaggerate, darling!

Mario: When you eat just a little bit of something, you smile. You're so beautiful.

Maria: I'm your little fatty but I'm beautiful, right?

Mario: You're gorgeous. If only your parents...

Maria: What if only my parents?

Mario: Wouldn't be so family afflicted!

Maria: Oh, come on, what are you afraid of – that you're not human? Or what?... They will soon find out that you are a human being.

Mario: Will they actually give you away? Do you think they will let you marry me, since I've already eaten three people?

Maria: Surely. Do you want some bread? It's good. The paté is spicy, but otherwise it's great.

Mario: No, I don't want to... I don't want to share it with you! Take the bread away from you. This belongs to you and something else belongs to me.

Maria: What are you babbling on about? This is mine and something else is yours?... Have some! Take a bite!.. Go on!

Mario: It smells weird.

Maria: It's normal. Why?

Mario: Are you enjoying it, dear?

Maria: My stomach started to ache a bit. It's probably because I didn't eat anything for a long time. I'm probably not feeling well because of that. Have some.

Mario: Your face is of a weird colour. You look even prettier than a while ago.

Maria: Where are all those people? It's as if they left for some other place and left us here. They left, and didn't even say anything, or ask anything.

Mario: I have to admit dear that you are so beautiful and so nice that I don't miss anyone else's company.

Maria: People get on my nerves sometimes. I mean – really get on my nerves, but now I'm starting to miss them.

Mario: But darling, you wanted to go swimming naked. It's noon here

so you can eat naked, too. So much freedom. Go on, take your clothes off, don't be shy!

Maria: Isn't it weird that for all this time we've been here, nobody came in? Didn't anyone else want to have dinner here?

Mario: Some people don't like the smell here and some people do. I think it both stinks here smells nice here – what a feeling, what a feeling.

Maria: Oh, hell! I feel sick! Am I pregnant or something? That paté stinks somehow. Weird. I don't want to be pregnant yet.

Mario: Life brings us joys and sorrows at the same time. Smells and stench.

Maria: Maybe that kid would come in handy after all. Well, what? At least my parents would let me get married soon. Oh God, who's going to change this kid's nappies? Me? Everybody's gone! Oh!

Mario: Darling! I would like to become a man with you. I feel like I'm becoming a man now.

Maria: Oh! Oh, God, I am really feeling very sick, even my feet feel so heavy. That bread tastes disgusting now. Am I always going to be this sick? Nobody told me that it gets like this. Not even mum talked about it this way. Impossible!... We're not going anywhere else! Nowhere! Do you understand?!

Mario: Nowhere, nowhere, my dear, as you wish!

Maria: We're staying here. I can't imagine that we would get up from our chairs now and stroll down the city streets to the beach. I would surely drown. Surely. We are not going swimming! I am staying here. Forever. I am not leaving this place.

Mario: Darling, you can't sleep here! Darling, don't fall asleep! I know that you enjoy your nap after a good meal, but you could wait a while longer... Wake up, dear! We could talk about our wedding. You said you'd like to make some changes in my house. But what?... Yes, yes, you said that a woman is missing in there. But when you move in with me, everything's going to be different. And I'll surely make friends with your parents, I'm quite an intelligent man, don't you think?.. Are you sleeping? Look, you didn't even finish your bread... What is this!... It

smells weird somehow...It smells like oil... It's some kind of vaseline...Oh no, no, actually it's some kind of marmalade or something! What have you been eating darling?! What did you spread on that bread? Marmalade... paté... or vaseline? I can't smell anything anymore!... Fire. The kitchen's on fire. Everything is starting to be on fire. Where is everyone? Who set this on fire? We should go and have a swim. We better go and have a swim right now... naked...

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Part Three

A BALLAD ABOUT A WALL

Valerie: Four drenched walls stand
in one house, where all the windows got lost:
A prince came and fell in love with the drenched wall
instead of falling in love with the princess.
The prince came with the princess,
the one he loved before
but not anymore,
because he fell madly in love with a drenched wall.
Inside the house the princess went pale
and until now nobody knows why,
it could have been because she saw that the prince is in love
with one of the drenched walls,
or because the windows there got lost.
The prince loved a wall and he kissed it, too.
The princess didn't understand, she cried,
but she herself couldn't, as much as she wanted,
fall in love
with any of the remaining walls.
She couldn't understand how the prince can love the wall.
Has she, the princess, gotten so ugly?
And the prince even wanted to marry the wall,
because it was about time that a real, beautiful bride came

into the kingdom.
But even when the prince loved the wall, he was upset and
couldn't
imagine,
how he's going to put the wedding ring
on to the drenched wall's finger.
Neither the princess could help him solve this problem.
The prince kissed and kissed the wall,
until his tongue wore off, and the drenched wall – nothing.
It didn't come alive,
nor did it turn into anybody,
the princess cried and went paler
and the wall was getting more drenched, and started to get
mouldy,
and the prince loved the wall,
until he was overgrown with mould, too.
The princess was secretly kissing the prince,
even if it was only on the back of his head,
because she couldn't bring herself to leave him,
because she only loved him.
After some time the princess turned green, too,
she didn't even know that she was mouldy as those two.
The mouldy prince was getting pale,
and so was the princess.
Not much time and water ran by,
even not enough to form a pool,
and in the house with four drenched walls
and lost windows
there were now six walls.
Nobody ever saw
the loving prince and the unhappy, disappointed princess
come out of the house
it was as if they completely disappeared.
Maybe even one of us one day will fall in love with one of
those walls
but nobody will ever know

whether we fell in love
with the right one.

Part Four

MARIO AND VIERA

(Improvised dialogue)

Viera: I am so happy.
Mario: I am happy, too.
Viera: You told me about yourself so much...
Mario: I am glad I did ...
Viera: I'm glad that we're finally here.
Mario: Me too. It's quiet here.
Viera: My stomach was sick from all those people in town, and here...
Mario: There's nobody.
Viera: You know, I have a strange personality... I need one place
where nobody can set foot in.
Mario: Really?
Viera: I need to have my own... secret chamber.
Mario: That's natural.
Viera: A place where nobody can come, only maybe...
Mario: Who?
Viera: The bathroom is the place.
Mario: Oh, the bathroom.
Viera: Nobody dares to come in there.
Mario: And what if, somehow... I don't want to scare you...
Viera: Then I will scream really loud.
Mario: Does it help?
Viera: I didn't have to do it yet.
Mario: Thank God, right? Ha, ha, thank God!
Viera: Thank God.
Mario: Then it's good that you have a loud voice...
Viera: I do when I want to. When I don't want to, I don't have it.

Mario: Yes, you scream, or you just mumble it through your little teeth and everything is just as you wanted it. It has to...

Viera: Yes... Quiet!... Why is it so quiet in here?

Mario: It's a sad place. I didn't want us to be sad together.

Viera: When it's quiet here, it doesn't mean that we're witnessing the end of the world.

Mario: No, no, why? Why the end of the world? Only there isn't anyone here to serve us.

Viera: Maybe all you need to do is call or put your hand up... Or are those waiters invisible? Is that why we can't see them?.. Hello?! Hello?!.. You impolite dorks, show yourselves! Serve us! Come on!

Mario: Do you think they are here, but they're invisible?

Viera: Let's not hurry. Let's have a cigarette. Take out that pipe from your pocket.

Mario: I don't have a pipe.

Viera : Go on, smoke, smoke!... Maybe I'd have a snuff, too, even when I know that you do not snuff a pipe. But it's fine if you drink some liquor afterwards!

Mario: Viera, for God's sake...

Viera: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!... Oh!... I'm sorry, my dear gentleman... Read something, think, meditate. Don't talk, you don't have to say anything... I would be happy with you, even if... even if I was, say, absolutely deaf or blind. I can settle for being able to feel you, for knowing that you're here, that you're breathing, that you are silent, that you just move your nostrils. Ha, ha... You're here, right? Didn't you leave yet? Didn't you get lost in the crowd?... Oh, how wonderfully quiet this place is!...

Mario: Don't worry, I'll leave if you want me to...

Viera: I'm not worried and you're staying.

Mario: This place reminds me of a strange story.

Viera: Quiet, quiet.

Mario: I'm a bit agitated.

Viera: It will get to you in a minute, if you don't stop!

Mario: But I didn't say anything.

Viera: Yes, but if you continue, it will grab you. You can easily get a fit.

Mario: Oh my God! Can you see anything?

Viera: Oh, no, no.

Mario: Did you notice anything? Say it! Sometimes my face just goes red, without a reason, just like that! It doesn't necessarily mean it's serious. Come on, tell me!... There usually isn't any reason!... I just go red!... I change colour!

Viera: You're not red at all.

Mario: Really?! I thought that I went red!... Didn't I go red?

Viera: You're pale like a ghost...

Mario: Pale? Without any reason?

Viera: Well, you have to be some kind of colour...

Mario: But pale?... I am not sick. O God, believe me. That would show differently... I go red because of ... because of chastity. So I go red again...

Viera: You little bastard.

Mario: What? What did you call me?

Viera: Shut up, you dumb statue.....

Mario: Statue.....?

Viera: You go blue, and then pink, then you go purple, brown and finally you go blue again. You have black-and-white squares on your nose and green stars on a pink background... What are you bragging on about? Little, little...

Mario: But I didn't say anything. I'm quiet.

Viera: Silence! Why are you in a hurry?

Mario: I'm not in a hurry, really.

Viera: Shut up! You should have eaten something downtown, when you're so agitated, wicked, aggressive you little splinter, a simple chip. I know everything. You're hungry, that's why you're so uneasy...

Mario: You know everything?

Viera: I can read you like a book, from the left, from the right, I recognise everything on you, even fear and joy, everything, everything, you're just a spot, spot, spot, spot, spot.

Mario: A spot?

- Viera: Spot. A bug, just offering itself to be trampled on.
- Mario: Do you think so?
- Viera: You're afraid, you're always afraid of something. You're afraid to go forwards, or backwards, to the left, and to the right, to the red and to the green...
- Mario: Oh God, the rose you're holding...
- Viera: You won it for me at a fair.
- Mario: What a tender coincidence. A beautiful rose.
- Viera: Ooh, don't be so poetic. Don't bother me with your little verses! It is no way a coincidence that you shot down a rose at a shooting-stand! You won it personally for me. And it's no coincidence that you met me, either! It was only natural that we had to meet. Maybe it's just an inscrutable matter of circumstances that I'm a woof and you're a miow... But the fact that woof and miow have met is by no means a game of coincidence. It had to be that way! That's nature! You and me are an ideal couple. We can live forever. Even in this part of the world, among invisible waiters!
- Mario: I want a drink. I want something, tell them, give them a hint, you can do that!...
- Viera: What do you think I am?!
- Mario: For goodness sake, you know that I never drink nearly anything, I don't eat much, it's just now, exceptionally...
- Viera: When you see a bottle you instantly become – an exclamation mark, question mark, question mark, exclamation mark!...
- Mario: Don't talk like that! Goodness!...
- Viera: You need some warming up, you're too melancholic. Like you weren't even ready to face this world... Like a small miracle, that hasn't the ability to survive, but despite of that gets through everything. A funny child. A wrapped-up baby that survives floods, cyclones, plane crashes, ship wrecks, but... But it can happen that another time you won't survive a fight with an ant as tiny as a straw... I'm here for you so that you never ever become a chocolate gift wrapped in cellophane...
- Mario: Oh, God, Viera!
- Viera: I'm here to teach you how to survive!... So that it won't matter

whether you meet an ant or a mammoth, whether there'll be a flood, or it will just drizzle!... Did you understand that?! You have to survive, do you hear?! Even if you don't want to, because I said you will survive. With me. In this world. Everything! Even the disasters!

Mario: You think that...? Don't exaggerate, please, I'd rather...

Viera: Do not resist!

Mario: You speak in a way that those who don't know you could easily get scared!... I didn't mean it literally, of course...

Viera: Oh yes, this is just your style!... "I didn't mean it literally!... I could get scared of you!... I don't know – exactly – scared!"

Mario: But I know you...

Viera: ... I could get, if... it would... and that would... if... and if it did... would it then, but not exactly!... Yuck!... My dear organic partner, my earthly brother. I went through so many things in life! What do you know about that?... How many lectures I got! I wasn't protected in a big house, under a big tree, in a fenced flowery garden, like you!... All my life it rained on me, snowed, blunt axes were falling on me!

Mario: What?

Viera: Exactly!... Oh God! What did I have to go through!

Mario: Don't worry, please...

Viera: But you didn't experience it, you wouldn't know...

Mario: I apologise, but I...

Viera: We didn't come here so that you'd have to apologise to me... Not for that. And you don't have to, either... But you could... should...

Mario: Darling, I will apologise to you. But what do I have to apologise for?

Viera: I assumed you knew that. Let's leave it.

Mario: Oh God, there isn't a waiter here... I'm thirsty and hungry and you must be, too.

Viera: A bit of fasting won't hurt you. As a child you must've been fed all the time, if not overfed.

Mario: But we came here to eat. Actually, I didn't really want to come here...

Viera: Smile! Smile!

- Mario: What for?... I wouldn't come here if you didn't want to so much...
- Viera: People didn't ask me what I want, what I wish for. They didn't ask me whether I was hungry or thirsty.
- Mario: Yes, that's terrible, but...
- Viera: What's terrible?! That nobody serves you around here?! What do you mean?! Nobody here begs you for anything?! Is that terrible?!... What's so terrible about it?!... Hold this! I'll get the napkins.

(Textual improvisation – Western.)

- Mario: Darling, put this back!... I invited you here... I invited you... Put it away! I invited you for dinner. We'll have something warm... We didn't come here to eat your food... Go on, keep it for dinner, give it to the children.
- Viera: My children are not starving.
- Mario: I didn't say that.
- Viera: My children always had everything. I suffered a great deal but... my children always had everything.
- Mario: I'm sorry. I personally would like to put everything in this world straight for everybody... Everything... But that's probably not possible anymore. We can't look back.
- Viera: You couldn't do it anyway... Put everything straight!
- Mario: Right, only a strong personality...
- Viera: My mother prepared me for life well... My mum. She suffered so much... My dear mum... But I suffered a great deal, too.
- Mario: You're right, I couldn't cope with all that. I am sure about that.
- Viera: Sure you couldn't!... Neither could our father... He wasn't able to cope then either, that's why he left us. He always got scared. He was scared of my mother, and he was scared of me! He kept saying that we're insatiable witches, barracudas, giant whales and shrews. And we ... suffered so beautifully.
- Mario: He left you?
- Viera: Sure he left us. And my husband left. He wasn't reluctant... Although he left me the house, the garden, whole property...

he was scared.... But he left me with kids, too! And ten Angora cats!

Mario: Ten Angora cats? (*Repeating a few times.*)

Viera: Do you know what it means to look after ten cats? You can't even imagine.

Mario: Yes.

Viera: To brush them every day, stroke them. They need love and affection, too.

Mario: Love.

Viera: We really wanted them with my husband.

Mario: You wanted them.

Viera: We wanted cats.

Mario: Cats.

Viera: We wanted them mainly for breeding. Beautiful cats. Angora.

Mario: Angora.

Viera: What's wrong with you?

Mario: Nothing.

Viera: I was wondering whether there was something wrong with you when you're repeating everything after me. Whether something in your head wasn't stuck.

Mario: I'm hungry and thirsty.

Viera: Have something then.

Mario: I'm imagining how ten Angora cats are walking around in here.

Viera: A beautiful vision, isn't it? You see, we wanted them for breeding, we wanted to sell them but then we changed our minds. We got attached to each and every cat, they were our daughters – we weren't able to sell them. And they multiplied and multiplied... They suffered. They suffered terribly, they cried, licking each other's tiny, invisible tears. When he was raging again and he left, they suffered so much. You can't even imagine that! Sit down!

Mario: No, I can't imagine it. You see, I wanted to...

Viera: No, don't apologise to me. It won't solve anything now. You didn't experience anything.

Mario: I'm hungry and thirsty. I would like to go to the kitchen and

ask for something. I know it's silly. To bother them like this, to be a nuisance. What kind of a person am I?... But I would like to go...

Viera: You're agitated, you're never satisfied.

Mario: I'm sorry, that's just my personality.

Viera: Well, something could be done about that! Did you see your doctor?

Mario: No I didn't.

Viera: Well, you should! He would prescribe a medicine!... Something to settle your craving! Something against greed, gluttony and robbery.

Mario: I don't need a doctor, I'm just hungry...

Viera: Spare your efforts!... You, you! Just you and yourself! But what are my dear cats doing now? What are they doing now?

Mario: And the kids? How many are there?

Viera: What about the kids?

Mario: Well, what about the kids?! I'm asking about your children. Are they home now? Alone?

Viera: They're alone for a few days now. But they don't suffer, they've got everything. Even that rageous man used to say that I'm a good mother. Yes, even when he was the way he was... He always said I'm a good mother.

Mario: But if you leave them alone for so long...

Viera: Then what?

Mario: Doesn't it matter? Don't they mind?

Viera: You selfish jerk!... You psycho!... They suffer because of you! Because of you! I want to take you out from behind that plaque, out of the solid shell! I won't allow you to suffocate in your pink pillow! I don't want your kind to be extinct! And you reproach me for something you don't even have anything to do with?!... Jerk! Who do you think you are?! The only living human – you and your sterile reliability and kindness?... Think that everyone should be like you?! That we should die out? That we shouldn't live to the full like normal people, and turn into loitering butterflies that everyone can crush anytime? Whenever they want to? Like this?! Where did you get all that

from? Where did you find it?!... Which one taught you that?! Which woman was the irresponsible one?!... When you were hatching she should have made you break your own egg-shell so that you could feel that not everything is warm and cosy but damn sharp, coarse and dangerous! You bet! Who prepared you for life?!

Mario: I'm sorry.

Viera: Who did you inherit it from?

Mario: I didn't mean it like that.

Viera: Show me the irresponsible one! Show her to me!

Mario: I'm sorry about that.

Viera: You're so primitive! Like the whole of your family!

Mario: You're so amazing! Amazing! Take it as it is! You can't change it!

Viera: Stop it, you're repulsive!

Mario: You know, I'm so alone in that abandoned house... So I just thought...

Viera: I wonder what you'll come up with now.

Mario: That I could help you somehow... I thought, I wondered, some time ago, whether I couldn't look after those cats of yours since there's so many of them. I would brush them every day. I would stroke them every day and they would play and play, pet and pet, multiply and multiply, they wouldn't cry, wouldn't cry... You see, I have a great urge to be useful. I really want it. Simply just to be useful.

Viera: You have lots to learn then. Lots and lots. Only the one who can handle himself can handle animals. Catharine the Great, the zarina. Go on, have some cake! Have some! Have a bite!

Mario: No, thank you very much.

Viera: Have some. Animals are very sensitive and perceptive. They can feel right away if a person is not in the right place. They try to control their territory and then they're horrible. They are even able to eat a person. Go on, have some cake!

Mario: I can't deprive you of your cake. After all, I invited you here. For dinner!

Viera: Can't you behave normally? You want to mess around with

cats and you don't even know what to do with yourself. Now you see cats and you don't see yourself. You can't even look at yourself properly.

Mario: I can't. I don't think so.

Viera: Have some cake. Go on, have a cake! Don't you like me? You know how it is, love goes through a man's stomach. While eating, imagine how much you love me.

Mario: You're right. I don't know how... I just know that something needs to be done differently...

Viera: This marmalade is great. It mingles nicely in between your teeth. It fills up all the holes and crevices. Ha, ha, ha! That rageous man knew it... You are not even half like him, you little puppy. You're just a sad toy that needs to be smashed when the play is over. .. Funny! Funny like hell!

Mario: I won't stand in your way... I wouldn't want something to happen to you. Let's finish it... That's the way it is and that's the way it should be... Maybe I could look after those cats, those innocent creatures, but...

Viera: I seem to be dozing somehow. I always doze after I've eaten a lot.

Mario: Vera? Are you OK?... Did you fall asleep? What's wrong, Vera? My little Vera... My little girl... Why are you sleeping? Don't sleep!... Vera, what are you dreaming about? Who are you playing with in your dream?... I'm so helpless. I can't even protect you. You're right... Everyone's a bit different. Some can protect themselves, some can't. Some survive, some don't. Some over-gorge, some don't.

(They repeat the lines from the beginning of the scene into music.)

Valerie: That mysterious, beautiful woman
stroked her hair
and looked in her palms
and in one of them
she found one single grain,
only a single grain was left in her palm...
“Oh, if only there was a hundred times more of your kind
a thousand times more
a million times more!”
The woman talks to her palms:
“If only there was more of you,
you wouldn’t be a single grain,
just a single, lonely grain...
“I love chateaus, manors, ancient castles
I’m ready to travel the whole world
because there are palaces in it!
Oh , those roofs, balustrades, balconies!
When you lean from them you feel like
you can fall out of them and fly
to the bottom of the ground, to the kernel of a nut, to the seed,
to the middle of all waters of all seas and oceans!...
Oh, how I love castles
from which you can fall to a kernel!...
And those lounges, huge dining rooms
with long, never-ending, decorated tables...
and behind one of those tables
only the two of us are sitting,
he and I...
Sweetie, it doesn’t matter
if you get lost in the castle for a while”,
says the woman suddenly,
nearly as if happily,
but so happily

that you can feel it's only the hurting pain inside her speaking,
the one that she hides so sturdily from everyone else.

"It won't matter if I don't hear your voice
in that castle for a minute!...

Because the little page will come
nearly as lovely and pink in the face
as you are. And I'll tell him:

Dear page, please find that little, sweet master -
walk through all those

two-hundred and seventy-three chambers,
take him by the hand and bring him here!

Tell the young master

that I made him a pudding with apricots!

After he's eaten it, he can sleep by my side quietly!

He'll eat it and I'll guard him, after that he'll sleep
and I will fan his face

so that the hot air that blows all around here
will never ever devour it.

So that age will never harm his face

and he will stay handsome and good-looking forever,
the young master...

Quickly find him, hurry up!...

Run! Run! Flee!..."

The beautiful woman stops for a minute

she realizes that what she's saying

she's only speaking to herself

and that nobody even watches her and nobody listens, either.

Just answer me! Answer me!

Calls the strange, sad and beautiful woman from her last breath
and slowly walks away. Where are you? Answer me!

Where are you?

Mario: No, no, no! Once more – no!... Be quiet! Shut up! We'll go straight to my house! You're going to pack your stuff right away! So! You're not going to say anything to anyone and especially not to your wonderful parents! You don't need anything! You won't take anything from home, do you understand?!...

Barb: I think so.

Mario: And no buts!

Barb: None.

Mario: And don't forget your toothbrush!

Barb: Yes.

Mario: Do you understand what I just said to you?!

Barb: Yes.

Mario: I don't want to wait, I don't want to tolerate anything. I've had enough of that!

Barb: Yes.

Mario: Do you understand?

Barb: Yes, I understand.

Mario: You will do every single thing I tell you to! Every single one!...

Barb: Yes. What are you pretending, Mario?

Mario: I'm not pretending anything! OK?

Barb: OK, if you're not pretending anything, then it's OK.

Mario: What am I trying to pretend? Nothing... I'm satisfied with myself, that's why. My little chicken, ducky, kitty, prawn, turtle.

Barb: Who?

Mario: I'm satisfied with everyone but I have to be even more satisfied... With you, too. You giant tortoise. You centenary jubilee.

Barb: Who? What?

Mario: I said that I'm satisfied with you, you smacked sponge! That's why I'm inviting you to my home! I want to have you in my house!... I want to hold your... buttock in my house! To bite your earlobes, crush your back, legs and breasts!

- Barb: Pardon?!... Mario, please, you'd better call the waiter, I'd like some...
- Mario: You have to come to my house! You have to cocoon in there. You are going to walk around the house naked! Understand?
- Barb: You, just listen, who are you actually?! Why are you rushing me like this?!... We don't even really know each other yet! Walk around the house... I'll catch a cold and... Who do you think you are?! Who do you think you are ?!
- Mario: But I'm not rushing! I just want us to quickly skip... those... few steps of getting to know each other, checking each other out, sniffing each other and I don't know what else... It always ends the same anyway!
- Barb: What ends the same way?!
- Mario: Everything!... I'm simply not patient enough. I want my dream to come true! I've dreamt about you coming to live with me for a long time!
- Barb: But we've only been together for a short time.
- Mario: So what?!... What's wrong with that?!
- Barb: Oh, OK, OK. It's nice to know you're dreaming. I like that.
- Waiter: Yes? Can I help you?
- Mario: Where did you come from all of a sudden? Oh God!
- Barb: You know each other?
- Waiter: Can I help you?
- Mario: Oh, we would like something to eat and drink... You are not invisible?
- Waiter: No sir, I'm not invisible, I'm real... What's it going to be? We can offer you a speciality, the menu of the chef: Steak Chateaubriand with Roquefort cheese, fried potatoes, Peach Melba, and if you don't wish this kind of peach, we can recommend you peaches in red wine, and if you don't fancy those either, then we offer you Brazilians and fresh lemonade and ice to go with it. Of course, we have other delicious food too, like grandmother's home-made jam dumplings. Which is it going to be?
- Barb: Well, order something, darling!... I don't know! I don't

understand these expressions at all. I don't even know what it is, what those things mean. Ha, ha, ha.

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Mario: Me neither.

Barb: Go on, darling, order, order because Mr. Waiter will leave!

Mario: I don't even... I can't choose. You named so much stuff. Could you do it again?

Barb: For God's sake Mario, what for – the gentleman here won't bring anything – he'll leave! Choose!

Mario: O, Jesus Christ, I can't choose!

Barb: But Mario, you have to, you have to!

Mario: Leave me alone! Stop pressuring me! I don't know – open the gates or throw me out of the window, throw me across a river, shove me under a train, mount me up on a horse, a donkey, a two-humped dromedary, anything!

Barb: Mario!

Waiter: Yes, sir, that's claustrophobia.

Mario: Leave me alone! I'll be... alright.

Barb: Mario, choose something at last! Go on!

Mario: But I don't know what!... You choose!

Barb: You should choose!...

Mario: You should!...

Barb: Choose!

Mario: I don't know!

Barb: Order! Order!

Mario: What?! What?! What?!

Barb: But he'll leave!

Mario: What?! He'll leave?!

Waiter: I'm sorry sir, I'll come back later... I'll leave but I'll be back, sir.

Mario: He left.

Barb: He left.

Mario: God knows whether he'll ever come back...

Barb: God knows.

Mario: Wait! Wait! I didn't mean it! You know, I didn't want you to leave... You came at last and I've waited for you for years, I've been calling you, I thought you were invisible – but then you came at last and you left again at once. Visible at first and then

see-through again, made of wood one minute and then of plastic glass the next... He left... He came, that fool. Fool. Absolute idiot... What are you, an idiot or what?

Waiter: Oh, not at all sir, you didn't offend me at all. And excuse me, what did you say a minute ago, sir? What are we supposed to be? I'm sorry, so you didn't say anything... Nothing, sir... Excuse me.

Barb: He said that you're a fool, a fool and an idiot. Ha, ha...

Waiter: Yes, I'm sure... Take your time. Choose from our wide variety... We have lots of time today, we are at your service... The chef doesn't hurry home today... He tidied up, cooked, darned, changed nappies, walked the dog. He's done all the daily chores. There's no problem with us staying here today, not even till morning... As you wish, you young and beautiful people. Everything will be as you wish. There's no closing time... Yes?

Mario: What? The chef's here, too?

Barb: Have you gone crazy today?

Waiter: Yes, the chef's here today. He's absolutely at your service. He'll prepare anything you wish. Well, I won't disturb you anymore.

Barb: I'd order something, but I'm shy... I've gone red right down to my knickers. Ha, ha, ha. I'm sorry, sir, I'm sorry for those words, for those blackouts, for those impolite looks, ha, ha. I hope I'm not going to get slapped.

Mario: What are you talking about?

Barb: I'm sorry, sir...

Mario: I told you, you were going to move in with me, you silly goose!... I won't allow you to be under the influence of your stupid parents! Because then you're stupid and dependent! You don't even know what you want!... You can't even order from a waiter!... That's what he's here for – so that you can ask him for what you want! But you don't know how to do that! Well, did you ever see this?! You're going damn right crazy!... Look how you're acting! Is this how an adult woman acts?! You can't act like this! Not like this!

- Barb: You think so? I'm sorry...
- Mario: I don't know what those parents want out of you! They are not preparing you for life at all. And I don't want you to be just an ordinary chick. I want you to become more manly...
- Barb: To become what?
- Mario: I mean, to finally become an adult... Well, what are you looking at? Didn't I tell you that? We won't just play around! We'll do it! Right now! Do it, that's the right expression...
- Barb: Do what? What are you talking about?
- Mario: We'll carry it out! I've already decided!
- Barb: For God's sake, just don't shout, or I'll get hiccups from all this fright.
- Mario: We'll do the deed!
- Barb: Oh God, what do you want to do? What's wrong with you? Please don't get us into misfortune! I'm scared!
- Mario: I've decided! We'll forget about everything! You'll get your stuff! You won't say anything to anyone! Not to your Daddy, or Mummy, or to your little brother or sister. Nor to the doggy or kitty, or your cuddly teddy! Do you understand? And you'll come to my house, you silly cow!
- Barb: Oh my God. But that's not necessary. (*Hiccups.*)... What about my parents?... (*Hiccups.*)...
- Mario: They hate me! To death! They wouldn't let you go, that's for sure! They underestimate me all the time, but I'll show them who's the boss! I'll show them who's an underdone chap, a raw core, an unhatched yellow chicken!
- Barb: No one ever said that about you...(*Hiccups.*)... They haven't even seen you yet!...(*Hiccups.*) No one from my family ever called you those names! You always hide away from them like some fugitive or something!
- Mario: What the hell was that?! What sort of a man was that? Wasn't that your father?
- Barb: But Mario, it was only the chef – he probably just wanted to say hello... Mario, Mario, come out!
- Mario: Outside, but also in here there's so many bloody bastards spying

on you! They'd all like to lick your body, am I right?! And you are loving it so much, right?!

Barb: Mario, for God's sake, what are you saying? Where did you get all this from?

Mario: You smile and grin because all of this perfectly suits you!

Barb: I'm not smiling at all!

Mario: That lewdness, infamy and nastiness of this place!

Waiter: Excuse me, please...

Mario: Nasty, lewdly, disgusting. You are the fruit of this marasm.

Barb: Mario, my dear boy, what are you saying? Why, I could run away, I should... Let's order something then or let's go away if you don't like it here. What exactly do you want?!...

Mario: I hate those words about hunger!

Barb: Mario!... Darling! Darling!... I'm going to order something, I won't be shy anymore! I promise you that! I'll call the music band, too! They'll play something and we'll dance! We'll sing, rock and jump! I want us to get a rest!... One-two-three, one-two-three, one-two-three, on-two-three. One-two-three, one-two-three... I want you to get a rest!...

Mario: Stop it! Stop swaying around here so dumbly! Aren't you ashamed? Everyone can see you! Yuck! I don't need a rest!

Barb: Mario, don't shoot everything around you! What do you want to hit? Our floating love? Love with a big heart?

Mario: I couldn't shoot down anything! I would miss! I could never hit anything. Never!

Barb: Mario, don't be sad! Why are you acting so strangely? I don't recognize you anymore! What has gotten into you?!...

Mario: I don't know. Maybe I've matured... Really... Maybe I'm finally adult. Oh, how that maturity hurts... How I looked forward to it and now this...

Barb: *(Singing and dancing.)* But I don't want you to be mature. I want you to stay our child...

Mario: You don't want...?

Barb: No. I don't want you to become an old serious jerk who has

everything in his head stored in squares and in them he's got old smelly worn-out socks! I don't want that!... No way!

Mario: You don't want me to be mature? Did you think it over?

Barb: You're so funny!

Mario: Enough of those jokes.

Barb: Yes, enough.

Mario: I wanted to change a lot of things, but when I see the final result, I taste the sugar. That sweetness.

Barb: What do you taste? What sugar?

Mario: Sugar, sugar candy and candy. Sugar candy everywhere, even in the mouth, in my ears, inside my head instead of my brain, instead of feelings!...

Barb: What?

Mario: Sugar candy is death!

Waiter: Would you like a dessert?

Barb: Want something?

Waiter: Excuse me, I didn't want to disturb you. I only wanted to ask whether you wanted a dessert. We have jam tarts, young lady-sir.

Mario: Jam tarts! No way! Surely not!

Barb: But I'd like some.

Mario: You can't eat jam tarts, you'll gain weight!

Waiter: They're delicious, young lady-sir.

Chef: Yes, young lady-sir, madam-sir... those jam tarts we made are delicious, young lady-sir... Delicious, madam, young lady – sir, sir...

Mario: Stop it! Don't disturb us, or I'll kill you!

Waiter: We won't disturb you anymore. We apologise, madam-sir, young lady-sir, dear madam-sir, dear sir...

Mario: I didn't mean it like that. Actually, I haven't got anything against you... I didn't want to offend you! To hurt your feelings!... Barb, you would like some tarts, wouldn't you?... Would you like some? I really never wanted to hurt anyone.

Barb: I don't know. I don't even know what to say anymore. I can see, dear, that this evening will be finally beautiful and peaceful.

.. You calmed down, put your spirit straight. And I'm glad... Everything seems different now... I'd like to dance for you, have some wine, and eat some cakes... Sing for a while. After all that's happened today, I very much feel like... trying everything, relaxing... I've never felt such a great desire... When we've had some fun, then we can maybe go to your house. Why not... If you want, we can, but not so tragically, fatally. What good does it do? What? I want to finish school, finish, to be ready.

Waiter: Here you are!

Barb: I want to please my parents. What would I have them for? I love them and they love me. And I adore the geography teacher.

Mario: Who?

Barb: Hecs a great person and...an expert.

Mario: The geography teacher?

Barb: He understands his subject perfectly. Super... When he points his pointer at the map... He always hits the place that he wants to hit...

Mario: The geography teacher?

Barb: Yes, my geography teacher...

Mario: Your...?

Barb: Stanford, Cleveland, Vladivostok, Tokyo...

Mario: Vladivostok, Tokyo?

Barb: Indus, Labe, Danube, Latorica...

Mario: Latorica as well?

Barb: Ken-tuc-ky, Cin-ci-na-ty, Ro-deo, Copenhagen, Mal-mo!

Mario: Ken-tucky? Rodeo?

Barb: Yellow river, Jang-c-tjang, Oosaka...

Mario: Oosaka?

Barb: Red Sea and sea...

Mario: Sea?

Barb: Did you hear me? We'll have children after that. When I'll be ready, finish school, I'll know everything.

Mario: Where did all this sea of jam tarts come from?! Should I poke my eyes out, or what?!

Barb: But I want to be happy! Happy! I want to choke with happiness,

I want my lips to always stay in the shape of a smile! To catch all the viruses of laugh in this planet! I want the giant laughing virus, African virus, Indian, Guinean, Barman virus of laugh... American, French... Finnish, Chinese, Japanese laughing virus! I want to be infected with laugh!.. And all the people should be, too! They'll be so sick from it, that they'll become healthy! Forever!... We'll all live forever! The earth will be full of laughing people! The earth will shake from all the guffaw! Then the moon will catch the virus, too, and when the sun also starts having laughing cramps, it won't be the end of the world, but the start of the new, happy, hilarious world!... I want to be happy! I want it!... Like my geography teacher used to be happy! He loved his wife, geography and children. And his wife loved geography, him, and his children.

Mario: His?

Barb: From his first and second marriage... They loved each other! They really did! Adored each other! And when he started to have a small bald patch...

Mario: Small bold patch?

Barb: She was a bit chubby but very nice otherwise...

Mario: Nice...

Barb: They really loved each other!...

Mario: I never liked alcohol. Why? I always felt sick after it. I don't understand this...

Barb: Our maths teacher didn't drink either...

Mario: Maths teacher? I hope he didn't have a small bald patch!...

Barb: No, he just couldn't say "r".

Mario: For God's sake, couldn't say "r"? Poor, man!

Barb: But he was sweet...

Mario: And his wife?

Barb: She was sweet, too!

Mario: I hope they weren't in love with each other...

Barb: Sooo much! And the science teacher was in love with the gymnastics teacher but the German teacher loved the science teacher and the gymnastics teacher fancied the French teacher, and she was in love with the deputy of the second year students,

but he didn't believe it and secretly loved the principle. She rather fancied the tall, slim students and on the contrary, small and fat students – every single one of them – loved the Russian teacher who had long legs and wore short skirts. The Russian teacher didn't like anyone but she started a relationship with everyone and at the end she punished them. She didn't care at all. She was with older, and younger, with fat, skinny, with freckled and tanned, with teachers and truck drivers and everyone in the whole school was punished because of her. She only loved herself and her long legs. She started a relationship with everyone, though...

Mario: And you... who did you love?

Barb: Daddy and mummy, my little brother and little sister and a squirrel Cinny that was drawn on a picture pinned on grandmother Rosie's kitchen wall.

Mario: A squirrel? And what about boys?

Barb: Oh! Jerks! Bastards!

Mario: And men – teachers?

Barb: What?

Mario: Nothing, nothing. You also probably only love yourself and your...

Barb: What?

Mario: Nothing... I can't eat those jam tarts! I get indigestion from jam! I would be sick! You could eat everything and I would be sick just from the smell!...

Barb: I'm sorry, I didn't know that... But it's good that you can't drink alcohol, that's very good.

Mario: I think I'm going to have to go. I've always had diet food, without bacteria and sugars – simply without everything. My mother cooked that way. My poor mum, she was afraid of me getting sick... Mother believed, father believed and I always believed myself that I'm careful. Always. And maybe I'll keep on believing, or maybe not... So that I won't hurt anyone...

Barb: It's good that you believe yourself, that's really good... Go

now!... So that you wouldn't be sick! Go and be careful!... Say hello to your mum!

Mario: Yes, I'm going. And then we can go to my place or... You were right... Eat, so that you'd be strong! Have an aperitif, dance, have fun!... Don't worry, everything will be alright... Alright. Just don't worry and stop by sometimes... I didn't mean it like that, say hello to your wonderful parents, because they're right, yes, yes... If you want, stop by sometimes, but only if you'll really want to...

Barb: Yes, only if I'll really want to.

Mario: Only if you want to.

Barb: Yes, if I want to.

Part Six

MARIO AND VALERIE

Valerie: Whistling, young man? Whistling?

Mario: Me?... I'm not whistling...

Valerie: It seemed to me you were whistling a sweet, sad melody...

Mario: It could've been someone else...

Valerie: Who?

Mario: I don't know... Really... It wasn't me. I swear.

Valerie: You don't have to swear because of such silly thing.

Mario: That's right. I don't have to. ... I went for a walk.

Valerie: You were walking now?

Mario: Yes, now.

Valerie: And where did you go for a walk?

Mario: Just here... Up there... There was nobody there.

Valerie: You didn't meet anyone? And who were you expecting?

Mario: I like to think on my own... About all sorts of things...

Valerie: Do you talk to yourself?

Mario: Sometimes...

Valerie: Really? That's strange...

Mario: Why?

Valerie: You talk to yourself like a mad man?

Mario: Why mad?... Actually... After I actually meet somebody, I know what and how to say it to them.

Valerie: Like a gramophone... You keep saying the same things over and over again...

Mario: What gramophone?

Valerie: And where did you leave your friends?

Mario: I was alone.

Valerie: Don't you have friends?

Mario: I'm sorry to say I don't.

Valerie: And what kind of a ghost are you? No friends and no... Oh! *(Laugh)* What's going to become of you, what kind of a man?...

Mario: I've stopped growing... I'm not a boy.

Valerie: Oh! Maybe that's the problem...

Mario: But it's not that I've never talked to a woman... But never so seriously... About those things...

Valerie: Really?

Mario: I know all sorts of girls, we even went to school together...

Valerie: Ooh?

Mario: But I didn't... I didn't say anything to any of them yet... There was... nothing...

Valerie: That's how you are.

Mario: But nothing's over.

Valerie: Nothing?

Mario: No.

Valerie: I'm going to ask you: With those girls – didn't you poke?...

Mario: Excuse me?!

Valerie: Don't interrupt me!... Your hand in their sleeves?

Mario: My hand in their sleeves?!

Valerie: You put your hand in a girl's blouse, the one she's just wearing. And she'll be glad and will start laughing. When you push your hand to the armpit area and fumble around in there, it will get her even more happy... She laughs so beautifully!... Beautifully! And you can survive like this till the end of time! Till the end of time!...

- Mario: I didn't try that yet.
- Valerie: You just talked like a gramophone, am I right?! Round and round again!... You talked to all the girls at school about the boring tower, how it makes it's way through the depth of the earth and how wonderful and useful it is!...
- Mario: What boring tower?!
- Valerie: And all the girls must have felt like crying after your speech about the boring tower, seeing it's an extremely boring topic. They didn't expect to have a researcher for a classmate!... It must've sounded wonderful on your lonely walks, as you were preparing your speech, getting started up – the boring tower makes it's way from the surface to the bottom of the earth lava!... Wonderful! A beautiful, gramophonic picturing of beauty, romance, searching for the substance of being, living, surviving, dying, unliving, not-living!... Wonderful!
- Mario: But I'm not a geologist, I don't understand those things!
- Valerie: It's just stupid gossip about stones and stuff. What is it for?!... Where is a simple man behind all of this? Where are human relationships? Where is love?...
- Mario: I don't know. I don't understand you.
- Valerie: That "d"! You still say that "d" quite unintelligibly. Young man, you should pronounce it in front of a mirror a few times, learn to listen to your own "d"s!... That "d" is very important in your words!...
- Mario: "D?!"
- Valerie: That "d" is still quite out of tune! Once more!
- Mario: What do I have to say "d" for? "D"!
- Valerie: Once more: "d"!
- Mario: For God's sake, what am I su-ppo-sed to-d?!... "D!" (*Applause*)
- Valerie: That was it! A beautiful "d"!
- Mario: What's so beautiful about it?!
- Valerie: He doesn't know what's beautiful! He's asking me, what's so beautiful!... Tell me, young man, who's going to look after you when you're old? Tell me! Who's going to take you to bed when you'll be an old man, unable to stand on your own feet? Who's going to put a warm blanket on your dry bones? Who's

going to listen to your repeating nonsense? Who'll moisten your lips? Who'll pull down the blinds so that the sun wouldn't take up to eternal universe the last signs of your conscience? Tell me, who?!

Mario: How am I supposed to know what's in the universe?

Valerie: Don't you know that?

Mario: I really do not know that!

Valerie: Don't you know what sort of whisper spreads around in there? What hustle? It's the stars in there, living and breathing. They're silent and sometimes whisper something to each other and when it's really necessary, they whistle. You never heard about this sort of universe?

Mario: No, no.

Valerie: Why are you whistling, then?

Mario: But I'm not whistling.

Valerie: You're not whistling?

Mario: No!

Valerie: It must be whistling in my head.

Mario: No, it must've been someone there, or something...

Valerie: It must be me... So goodbye then. I have to go now. The star's calling. My star is calling me back to the land of the eternal fairy-tales and myths. Look, how beautifully it shines. You're shining beautifully... I'm coming my dear, I'm coming. Don't worry, I'm coming to you. I'm coming, I'm coming.

Mario: Goodbye!

Valerie: Goodbye!

Mario: I don't even know how to do it, I can't... The boring tower is the essential tool of geological research today... There are three types... A tall, small and a medium one...