

L a d i s l a v K e r a t a

ON THE SURFACE

T r a n s l a t i o n : D a n i c a R u p p e l d t o v á

CHARACTERS:

M a n c u š k a

K o l o s k o w a

C a p t a i n

F i r s t O f f i c e r

R i t a

S l a v o m í r

K a r o l

M a r t a

M a n c u š k a : (*Talking cheerfully and expressive l y .*)

I admit that for me personally my presence on this ship is a real miracle. Yet for a number of decades I've been longi n g for this voyage so ve ry much... You are still yo u n g, but I d o n ' t doubt for a moment that you couldn't picture yo u r s e l v e s in my present situat i o n . You know, when a dream is so s o p h i s t i c a t e d and has so many nuances... Ah! It is a ri ver! A ri ver that has thousands of fluxes and affluxes. T h a t dream is now a separate world that lives for itself. And it seems that n o w I can't interfere in it any m o r e , or change any t h i n g, o r for instance wilfully twist anything up... (*Jov i a l l y .*) My dear young fri e n d s , w h a t is really interesting is that when you have this dream absolutely worked out, at that point yo u stop stru g g l i n g, you stop fighting for its practical, t a n g i b l e completion... As if you after all gave up mat e rializing yo u r d i v e r s e dream. It is maybe because you are subconsciously, probably even invo l u n t a r i l y starting to spontaneously resist, yo u 're starting to gain conviction that this dream is more b e a u t i f u l than reality itself , which may be sometimes rough... Hmm, this is indeed an interesting know l e d g e , i s n ' t it? My dear young fri e n d s , I figure that it is not rewa r d i n g to dream and imagine things, right? W h a t do you think?

(*Laughs cheerfully .*) H a , h a , ha... But as you can see, I ' m h e r e . In spite of all that time, I made my dream come tru e .

It is overwhelming! I am here, on this ship! I am sailing!

S l a v o m í r : (*P o l i t e l y .*) M a r v e l l o u s . You must be happy.

M a n c u š k a : (*C o m p l a c e n t l y .*) I am, young man, I am.

R i t a : (*As if repeating something bored .*) J o l l y , e x c i t i n g ...

M a n c u š k a : (*Feels her lassitude .*) I don't want to bother yo u , but after all, the seating order appointed us to sit at one table, and that 's why it is actually our fate to talk for a moment o r t w o . R i g h t ?

R i t a : (*Still coldly .*) Y e s , it is.

S l a v o m í r : (*With interest .*) Go on, keep talking! Keep talking!

M a n c u š k a : I am sorry to be so pers o n a l , but I can't help it... Now I k n o w why I've been ye a r n i n g for this voyage so much.

R i t a : (*Now exasperat e d .*) R e a l l y ?

M a n c u š k a : I t ' s because the sailing of this ship, its quiet rocking on the waves is a kind of reflection of my pers o n a l i t y ...

S l a v o m í r : (*With interest .*) I n t e r e s t i n g . Excuse me, but what do yo u m e a n ?

M a n c u š k a : To be precise: My inside was always rocking, I was always

hesitant; it didn't matter whether it concerned important or unimportant situations... The scales were always balancing inside me and always some kind of engine had to come and tow my junk away. My dear wife used to be that engine later... *(He laughs at his own words.)*

Slavomír: *(Scrutinizingly.)* Didn't you happen to say she was a linguist?

Mancuška: *(With enthusiasm.)* Yes... Why, it's nearly as if she was a musicologist... Listen to her radical, but the more beautiful definition... *(Quoting slowly.)* Human speech is a symphony composed of the tones and rhythms of the spiritual past and present of a nation, which decided to develop its life in this or that particular fauna or flora... *(He is silent for a while, as if waiting for his audience's reaction, then continues.)*

Isn't it beautiful? This definition of hers was even published in a linguistic paper!

Slavomír: *(Still with interest.)* How many copies?

Mancuška: *(With significance.)* A hundred...

Rita: *(She can't hold it back any longer.)* You keep talking as if you found those words in some shabby old book, as if somebody had written them for you. It's so trivial as if they weren't even real words... Your words. Do you actually have a wife? The one that you keep talking about? Are you actually married?

Mancuška: *(Calmly.)* Yes, I am married. Yes, I made it all up, as if in my own study. This is how it may appear to someone. *(With a slight reproach in his voice.)* It's as if my wife was also doing something unimportant, unnecessary. Isn't it? But, mind you, she works with live material...

Rita: *(She doesn't want him to start talking again.)* Okay. Okay.

Mancuška: You, your generation, you all keep rushing somewhere, you know... Don't get me wrong, but in this rush, my dear friends, you don't even have a chance to notice some of the jewels, some of the jewels that the existence of life itself offers us by pure reflection of light. You still have a lot to learn.

Rita: *(Disgusted.)* Jesus!

Slavomír: *(With apprehension.)* Rita, come on!

Rita: I just... Aren't we sitting at the wrong table?

Mancuška: *(Is not off balance, with enthusiasm.)* I am in cabin hundred and twenty-two.

Slavomír: *(Contentedly.)* So we're neighbours then.

Mancuška: *(Ironically.)* A separate table would probably cost you a little bit more, ha, ha.

Rita: *(Offended.)* What nerve!

Slavomír: *(Tries to settle things up, a little bit clumsily though.)* But why, it is nice sitting here with you. Really... Nice. My fiancée, Rita is just a little bit sleepy... She's tired. And, by the way, you really do talk interesting stuff. You're good... You must have read lots and lots of books.

Rita: *(Mockingly.)* Two-hundred-and-seventy-five encyclopaedias about the life of aquarium fish.

Mancuška: *(Doesn't want to spoil the fun.)* Not that many. Not that

m a n y !

R i t a : W h a t t i m e i s d i n n e r ? W h a t t i m e i s b r e a k f a s t , w h e n i s l u n c h ?

I w o u l d r e a l l y l o v e t o g r a s p t h e r h y t h m o f c a t e r i n g o n t h i s s h i p .

K a r o l : (*S u d d e n l y c o m e s a c r o s s f r o m t h e n e x t t a b l e , g i g g l i n g .*) E x c u s e m e ! S o r r y f o r d i s t u r b i n g y o u . W e a r e s o j o l l y . . . W e a r e m a d l y h a p p y , b e c a u s e j u s t a m o m e n t a g o m y g i r l f r i e n d a n d I d e c i d e d t o g e t m a r r i e d r i g h t t h i s m i n u t e !

M a n c u š k a : (*D o e s n ' t b e l i e v e h i s o w n e a r s .*) G e t m a r r i e d ?

K a r o l : (*W i t h e n t h u s i a s m .*) Y e s , t h a t ' s r i g h t ! T o b e h o n e s t . . . w e c h o s e y o u ! W e w o u l d l i k e t o a s k y o u , s i r , w h e t h e r y o u c o u l d m a r r y u s . A n d y o u t w o , y o u n g f r i e n d s , c o u l d b e o u r w i t n e s s e s . S o t h e t h i n g i s . . . w e c h o s e y o u ! (*H e l a u g h s .*) D o n ' t b e s o a m a z e d ! I t ' s a l l r i g h t ! I t ' s f i n e !

M a n c u š k a : W h a t d o y o u m e a n ? D o I r e a l l y l o o k l i k e a r e g i s t r a r , a v i c a r , o r a p o p e ? (*E v i d e n t l y a l s o d e l i g h t e d .*) H a , h a , h a . B u t I , h a , h a . . . B u t I ' m n o t t h e o n e . . . I d o n ' t h a v e , i f y o u p l e a s e , h a , h a , a n y a p p r o p r i a t e c o m p e t e n c y . . . W e l l , I ' v e n e v e r c o m e a c r o s s a n y t h i n g l i k e t h i s b e f o r e .

R i t a : (*A b r u p t l y .*) S t u p i d f o o l s .

M a r t a : (*A l s o c o m e s f r o m t h e n e x t t a b l e , s p e a k s d i r e c t l y .*) W h y f o o l s ? I ' m M a r t a .

K a r o l : (*S t u b b o r n l y .*) W e d o n ' t c a r e a b o u t a n y t h i n g , w e a r e c a r e f r e e y o u n g p e o p l e , s t r a i g h t a n d b l u n t . M a r r y u s ; i t w o n ' t h a r m y o u , w i l l i t ? I n a w h i l e w e m i g h t , a s t h e y s a y , c a s t a n a n c h o r a n d b y t h e n w e ' d l i k e t o b e h u s b a n d a n d w i f e .

M a r t a : (*E n j o y i n g h e r s e l f .*) W e w a n t t o o u t s m a r t o u r p a r e n t s ! T h e y w o u l d n e v e r a l l o w u s t o d o t h i s ! H a , h a .

M a n c u š k a : W e l c o m e .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*E n t e r s t h e d i n i n g r o o m , a n d s p e a k s i n a s t r a n g e l a z y t o n e , a s i f n o t h i n g w a s g o i n g o n .*) D e a r p a s s e n g e r s ! D e a r p a s s e n g e r s ! P l e a s e p u t o n y o u r l i f e j a c k e t s ! P u t y o u r l i f e j a c k e t s o n ! (*H e e x i t s .*)

S l a v o m í r : (*I n p a n i c .*) W h a t ? ! T h e j a c k e t s ? !

M a n c u š k a : (*C a l m l y r e m a r k i n g .*) N o w t h i s r e a l l y i s a s t r a n g e s i t u a t i o n .

S l a v o m í r : (*S c r u t i n i z i n g l y .*) W h y d i d t h a t o f f i c e r s a y t h a t . . . t h a t t h i n g a b o u t l i f e j a c k e t s ? H e s a i d i t l i k e n o t h i n g w a s g o i n g o n . H o w w i l l h e b e . . . s a v i n g p e o p l e , f o r i n s t a n c e ?

M a n c u š k a : (*A s i f t a l k i n g t o h i m s e l f , d r e a m i l y .*) I d r e a m e d o f t h i s , t o o – t o e n d u p a t t h e b o t t o m o f t h e s e a . . .

R i t a : (*A r r o g a n t l y .*) W h a t a r e y o u t a l k i n g a b o u t ? ! W e d o n ' t d r e a m a b o u t a n y b o t t o m s ! S l á v o , I t o l d y o u t h a t y o u w e r e a d a m f o o l !

W h a t d i d w e c o m e h e r e f o r ?

M a n c u š k a : M a y b e I o v e r d i d i t a l i t t l e . . . I ' m s o r r y . . .

K a r o l : (*U n e m o t i o n a l l y .*) O h , y o u s e e ? ! G o o n , m a r r y u s ! Q u i c k l y !

R i t a : (*A l s o s c a r e d n o w .*) B u t n o w y o u d o n ' t h a v e t o b e o u t s m a r t i n g y o u r p a r e n t s a n y m o r e . . .

S l a v o m í r : (*S h e e p i s h l y .*) W h a t d o y o u c a r e n o w ? (*A c c u s i n g l y .*) O h , I a m s o s t u p i d !

M a r t a : (*N e a r l y l a s c i v i o u s l y .*) M y s t i n g y m o t h e r w i l l k i c k t h e b u c k e t w h e n s h e f i n d s o u t t h a t w e d i e d a s a m a r r i e d c o u p l e . . .

S h e ' l l n e v e r f o r g i v e m e t h a t I m a r r i e d s u c h a m a n . A m a n f r o m a p o o r f a m i l y . . .

M a n c u š k a : (*As if talking to himself.*) But you really shouldn't marry a man of no means... Even so...

S l a v o m í r : (*Keeps running around and shouting.*) Where could those life jackets be?! Where are those jackets?! Oh, my God!

According to the guide they should be here somewhere!

T h e r e ' s nothing here. T h e r e ' s nothing here! (*D e c i s i v e l y.*)

Captain! Where is the Captain! (*He runs off.*)

R i t a : (*Shouts after him.*) S l a v o m í r , d o n ' t scream so loud, your nasopharynx will hurt!

K a r o l : (*As if just awake in a dream.*) What kind of jackets were they talking about?

M a n c u š k a : (*As if still for himself.*) O h , o k a y , o k a y , so in God's name, even if I don't have the right competency... Maybe this

very minute asks for extraordinary, everyday decisions.

So... I have decided.

K a r o l : (*Directly.*) What have you decided?

M a n c u š k a : (*Suddenly ceremonially.*) M i s s , do you take this unwed chap without any pressure or outside influence?

M a r t a : (*Exalted.*) This is great! (*Categorically.*) Yes, I do willingly marry him!

M a n c u š k a : So... Do you, young man, chap, take this missy from a well-off family? Something like this...

R i t a : Faster, faster!

M a n c u š k a : (*Finishing.*) ... To be your wife?

K a r o l : (*With enthusiasm.*) I didn't expect this to work so well!

(*Unrestrained.*) My father will be so happy! So happy! He'll be shocked! He kept telling me that I'm such an idiot that

the only woman who'd want to marry me would be some

kind of whore, ha, ha! But everything's different! Everything's different!

h i n g ' s different!

M a n c u š k a : (*With content.*) You see! You see!

C a p t a i n : (*Suddenly appears.*) Anybody called me?! Here I am!

K a r o l : Who are you?

C a p t a i n : (*Determined.*) Well, I'm the Captain. The Captain!

R i t a : (*Abruptly, angrily.*) My fiancée called you. He wanted to ask you where the life jackets were. Where are they?!

C a p t a i n : (*Suddenly loses his determination.*) Life jackets?! Oh God, does your fiancée happen to be... Well, I can't even utter the

words... (*Whispering, secretly.*) Does he happen to be from the Sea Board, mademoiselle?

A l l : What?! From where?

C a p t a i n : (*Louder.*) From the Sea Board, mademoiselle.

A l l : From where?

C a p t a i n : From the Sea Board, from the inspection!

R i t a : No way, since we are probably drowning!

M a r t a : (*Surprised.*) Are we drowning?

M a n c u š k a : (*Dryly.*) Well, this is not much of a party.

C a p t a i n : (*Startled.*) What? You are drowning? (*In dismay.*) Ah!

R i t a : (*Angrily.*) Jesus Christ! Well, somebody came, probably one of your officers, and told us to put the life jackets on, yes, the

life jackets. I think I'm going to have to put things right

here!

C a p t a i n : (*D i s m a y e d .*) Really? Again?! Life jackets? I just took a nap in the Captains' c a b i n . Do you unders t a n d ?

R i t a : (*I r o n i c a l l y .*) O h , we do, we are quite quick to unders t a n d ...

C a p t a i n : I think I should ask somebody...

M a n c u š k a : (*Continues as if to himself .*) W e l l , m a y b e I should say g o o d b y e to e v e r y b o d y .

K a r o l : (*S u r p r i s e d .*) This is so distressing!

M a n c u š k a : (*C o n t i n u e s , a s i f f o r h i m s e l f .*) I don't know what last minute message should I send to my wife, of cours e , only symb

o l i c a l l y , in my mind, h o w e l s e ... But I don't feel like it... I

just don't feel like it... So... I only wish she wo u l d n 't do

a n y t h i n g f o o l i s h . W e l l ... F o r G o d ' s s a k e ... A n y t h i n g s t u p i d .

(*A b h o r r e d .*) O h , my God! I hope she wo u l d n 't fall for that

o l d V y d r o v i c m a n f r o m t h e D e p a r t m e n t o f P o m o l o g y ! Y e s ,

y e s , I m u s t a d m i t h e ' s a s w e l l g u y ... B u t a t t h e s a m e t i m e

w h a t a j e r k , w h a t a t w e e d l e d u m ! I f t h e y s t a r t h a v i n g a n

a f f a i r , h e ' d d e p r i v e h e r o f e v e r y t h i n g ! E v e r y t h i n g ! H e ' l l d e p

r i v e h e r o f a l l t h e n o b l e i d e a l s t h a t I i m p l a n t e d u p o n h e r

d u r i n g t h o s e f o r t y y e a r s o f o u r c o e x i s t e n c e . (*S i g n i f i c a n t l y .*)

W h y , I a l s o b e l i e v e d ! I b e l i e v e d ... A n d a t t h e e n d I a t l e a s t

m a n a g e d t o s a v e s o m e m o n e y f o r t h i s t r i p .

R i t a : (*N e r v o u s l y .*) W h a t d o y o u k e e p r a t t l i n g o n a b o u t t o y o u r s e l f ?

A r e y o u r e v i s i n g t h e b r e e d s a n d f a m i l i e s o f s h a r k s ? !

Y o u s u c k m y b l o o d !

M a n c u š k a : I ' m s o r r y !

S l a v o m í r : (*S i c k l y .*) S h o u l d w e p u t o n t h o s e l i f e j a c k e t s t h e n , o r n o t ?

S h o u l d w e ?

R i t a : Y o u a r e a l l s o i m p o t e n t ! !

C a p t a i n : (*A s i f n o t h i n g w a s h a p p e n i n g , t o M a n c u š k a .*) S i r , y o u h a v e

s u c h a d e l i g h t f u l v o i c e , i t ' s s o r o m a n t i c . Y o u r e m i n d m e o f

t h a t ... t h a t s t o r y t e l l e r w h o r e a d s f a i r y - t a l e s f o r c h i l d r e n o n

t h e r a d i o e v e r y n i g h t ... B u t I c a n ' t s i t w i t h y o u a n y l o n g e r .

P i t y . I h a v e s o m e d u t i e s . I h a v e t o g o a n d s e e t h e o f f i c e r s .

T h e y h a d m e c a l l e d . B o t h e r i n g m e a g a i n , a l l e g e d l y i t ' s s o m e t h i n g

u r g e n t . A s u s u a l . G o o d b y e f o r n o w ... (*H e e x i t s .*)

K a r o l : (*D i s a p p o i n t e d .*) W h e r e d i d e v e r y b o d y s c a t t e r s o f a s t ? I w a s

l o o k i n g f o r w a r d t o i t , s i r . W e ' l l s t a y h e r e n o w , a t y o u r t a b l e ,

s i r . O k a y ? C a n I c a l l y o u D a d ?

M a n c u š k a : (*D o e s n o t u n d e r s t a n d .*) P a r d o n ?

M a r t a : I t ' s m o r e p l e a s a n t t o s i t w i t h c o m p a n y . O u r t a b l e i s a l i t t l e

a s i d e . A n d t h e r e ' s a d r a u g h t .

R i t a : (*S h e s u d d e n l y b e c o m e s s a d a n d d e s p a i r i n g .*) I ' l l s t a y h e r e

t o o . I ' m n o t g o i n g a n y w h e r e . I a l s o w a n t t o s i t h e r e n o w .

W h a t a r e w e g o i n g t o d o ? W h a t a r e w e g o i n g t o d o ? (*C a l l i*

n g .) S l á v o , w h e r e a r e y o u ? Y o u c a n s t o p l o o k i n g f o r t h i n g s ,

t h e r e ' s n o t h i n g h e r e . (*S h e s u d d e n l y s t a r t s s h o u t i n g a t h i m a s*

i f h e w a s a d o g .) S l á v o , w h e r e a r e y o u ?

M a n c u š k a : (*C a l m i n g l y .*) M a y b e i t w o n ' t b e s o b a d .

S l a v o m í r : (*H e e n t e r s t h e r o o m .*) H e r e I a m , h o n e y . T h e r e ' s s u c h a

s t r o n g w i n d o u t s i d e , I w o u l d n 't l i k e t o c a t c h a c o l d . T h e r e -

' s o n l y a l i t t l e b i t o f t h a t c o u g h s y r u p l e f t i n t h e b o t t l e . W e

s h o u l d h a v e t a k e n m o r e ... (*C h a l l e n g i n g .*) W h e r e i s t h a t

officer?! I want to talk to him like a man to a man!

R i t a : I don't even know now whether I should be angry with you or not. You'll never change any way. I am telling you here in front of everybody that I'm not angry anymore. Sit down next to me. Get a chair.

S l a v o m í r : (*To Karol and Marta.*) You're sitting with us, too?

K a r o l : Yes.

M a r t a : We need company.

S l a v o m í r : (*Resignedly.*) All right.

R i t a : (*Disgustedly.*) Oh, I'm probably going to get laryngitis...

S l á v o , t h a t ' s because I was touching you when you were so cold. Ah, I think that only champagne could save me from this.

K a r o l : (*Daintily.*) Champagne?

R i t a : (*She needs to be the centre of attention all the time.*) Ah, I hope I will come to. It's like... It's like it wasn't even me. No temperament. I am disgusted.

C a p t a i n : (*Entering.*) I thought I heard what you were talking about through the walls. What a beautiful ship! (*To Rita.*) Mademoiselle, didn't you by any chance happen to say that you were tired? Don't you feel like champagne? You would awaken immediately.

M a n c u š k a : (*With appreciation.*) Even the walls here are magical. How dignified.

C a p t a i n : I'll look for some champagne, but I don't have any idea where it might be. I don't know where they put it. I would love to sit around with you, but I can't. (*He exits.*)

K a r o l : (*He calls after him.*) Thank you for being so kind! (*For himself, with enthusiasm.*) Why, everything's perfect! We'll even get some champagne. And for free.

M a r t a : (*She calls after the Captain.*) Thank you!

R i t a : (*She calls after the Captain.*) Hurry up!

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Suddenly appears.*) Have you seen the Captain anywhere?

R i t a : He was here a minute ago.

F i r s t O f f i c e r : A minute ago?

M a n c u š k a : Yes, he went to get champagne.

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Please.*) Champagne? Is anybody celebrating anything?

R i t a : We're all celebrating something.

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Jovially.*) But we're not in harbour yet! That is the right place for a toast!

S l a v o m í r : (*As if he has just awakened.*) Oh, it's you! It's you! Man, but you said... But you were saying something! You were saying something here before!

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Surprised.*) Me?

S l a v o m í r : Why yes, you were telling us to put life jackets on!

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Abashed.*) I said that? Me? (*Ironically.*) You must be imagining things! What a tough childhood you must have had! Pinch your hand!

S l a v o m í r : (*Startled.*) You don't know that you were announcing something?

F i r s t O f f i c e r : O h , s e a - m o n s t e r s ! D o n ' t w o r r y a b o u t t h e m , t h o s e a r e j u s t f a i r y - t a l e s !

R i t a : (S h e s u r p r i s i n g l y s t a n d s u p f o r h i m .) S l á v o , s i t d o w n ! I t m a y b e r e a l l y i s n ' t M r . O f f i c e r ' s f a u l t . (*S l a v o m í r s t o p s a t t a c k i n g h i m i m m e d i a t e l y .*)

F i r s t O f f i c e r : P a r d o n m e ; d i d y o u h a p p e n t o s e e t h e C a p t a i n a n y w h e r e ? (*W i t h s o m e i r o n y .*) M a y b e o u r d e a r C a p t a i n c o u l d m a k e s o m e c l e v e r d e c i s i o n a n d s h o w u s t h e w a y o u r l i v e s s h o u l d t a k e . . . W i t h o u t h i s b e a m o f l i g h t o u r c l e a r a n d i n n o c e n t s o u l s c o u l d b e l o s t . . . H a v e y o u s e e n h i m ? H a v e y o u s e e n h i m a n y w h e r e ?

R i t a : H e w e n t t o g e t s o m e c h a m p a g n e , b u t d i d n ' t k n o w w h e r e t o l o o k f o r i t .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*M a t t e r - o f - f a c t l y , t o R i t a .*) I n t h e f i f t h s t o r a g e r o o m o n t h e r i g h t . I f h e ' l l s t o p b y a g a i n , t e l l h i m t h a t . (*E l o q u e n t l y , t o e v e r y b o d y .*) I h a v e t o g o . Y o u k n o w , i t ' s a l l j u s t t o o m u c h f o r m e , i t ' s a s i f I c a r r i e d o n m y t i n y b a c k t h e w h o l e r o u n d a n d r o t a t i n g w o r l d w i t h a l l i t s r o u g h n i c k s o f g e o g r a p h i c a l l a t i t u d e s a n d l o n g i t u d e s . I j u s t h o p e t h a t I w o n ' t d r o p t h e g l o b e ! N o t a l l s h a r d s b r i n g g o o d l u c k , y o u k n o w ! (*M y s t e r i o u s l y , t o R i t a .*) T h e w o r l d s p i n s ; m a d e m o i s e l l e , a n d I ' l l b e b a c k s o o n . I ' l l b e b a c k s o o n .

R i t a : I c a n h e a r y o u . (*The officer exits .*)

S l a v o m í r : (*C o n t e m p l a t i v e l y .*) E v e r y b o d y h e r e i s s o o d d l y r e s e r v e d .

M a n c u š k a : (*K n o w i n g l y .*) T h i s s h i p i s s o h u g e a n d s p l e n d i d , i t c a n h o l d t h e w e i g h t o f w o r l d s , I a m s u r e .

R i t a : (*Seemingly kind-hearted l y .*) M r . M a n c u š k a , p l e a s e r e c i t e s o m e t h i n g f o r u s ! R e c i t e a p o e m !

M a n c u š k a : (*S o f t l y .*) I c a n ' t . I n m y m o u t h a n y r h y m e b r e a k s . M y t e e t h a r e m u c h t o o h e a v y f o r i t . E v e n m y b r i d g e s w o u l d n ' t h o l d i t . (R i t a s n i c k e r s a t t h i s .)

C a p t a i n : (*G a i l y .*) W e l l , I ' m b a c k . I f o u n d t w o b o t t l e s . I h o p e i t ' l l b e e n o u g h . . . (*A f t e r a s h o r t h e s i t a t i o n .*) I t h i n k t h a t t h i s i s t h e f i r s t t i m e t h a t I f o u n d m y w a y i n t h e d a r k . I n s t r a n g e s i t u a t i o n s p e o p l e o f t e n s u r p a s s t h e m s e l v e s . . . M e p e r s o n a l l y , w h e n I c a n ' t s e e , I u s u a l l y s t o p a n d d o n ' t m o v e , b e c a u s e I ' m a f r a i d t o b r e a k m y n o s e o n s o m e w a l l . . . I f o u n d t w o b o t t l e s . I s a w a t h i r d o n e o n t h e f l o o r a s w e l l , b u t i t w a s n e a r l y f i n i s h e d . I l e f t i t t h e r e .

S l a v o m í r : (*Unusually unemotionally and seri o u s l y .*) A n y t h i n g n e w t h e n ? D i d y o u f i n d a n y t h i n g o u t ? I s t h e r e a h o l e a n y w h e r e i n t h i s s h i p ?

C a p t a i n : (*Takes it as a joke .*) A h o l e ? ! H a , h a , h a ! N o ! A h o l e ? I f t h e r e w e r e a h o l e t h e s h i p w o u l d s i n k !

S l a v o m í r : W e l l , t h a t ' s w h y I ' m a s k i n g .

C a p t a i n : H a v e s o m e c h a m p a g n e . (*The sound of opening champagne b o t t l e s .*)

A l l : (*C h e e r i n g a n d y e l l i n g .*) C h a m p a g n e ! C h a m p a g n e !

M a n c u š k a : (*U r g i n g .*) P o u r s o m e f o r m e , t o o ! A c t u a l l y , I ' m a t e e t o t a l e r , b u t s i n c e n o w w e h a v e s u c h a n e x t r a o r d i n a r y s i t u a t i o n . . .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Comes r u n n i n g .*) W h a t i s t h i s I ' m h e a r i n g ? W h a t a p l e a s a n t s o u n d ! L u c k i l y , t h i s s h i p ' s l i k e w i t h o u t w a l l s . Y o u

can hear every thing. I'll have some champagne, too!

All: Have some! Have some! Cheers! Cheers!

Mancuška: (*Enthusiastically.*) A good brand. Original French.

No imitation. No way.

Rita: (*Intrusively.*) Mr. First Officer, may I ask you something?

First Officer: (*Flattered.*) Why, Miss, of course you may... (*As if for himself, with a touch of lascivity.*) When you talk to me, it's as if sweet honey condensed on my skin – I hope that you will stick to it, to that natural, sticky... And then a good little spider will come and leg by leg...

Rita: (*Amused.*) I just want to ask something.

First Officer: (*Jovially.*) Ask? Here? Or directly in my cabin? Ha, ha!

Slavomír: Who do you think you are, man! What do you think you're doing?

First Officer: (*Scornfully.*) I can't hear you! I'm deaf! When I see a beautiful lady, I can't see anything else...

Rita: (*Enjoying herself.*) I just want to ask you, whether everything is alright. I'm scared.

First Officer: (*Still lasciviously.*) Be scared! Be scared and I will save you... Ha, ha, ha!

Slavomír: (*He would like to copy him.*) Hey mister! Mister! Hear what is happening! My instinct tells me... (*As if hallucinating.*) Save her! Save her! She deserves it. If you have at least one place left in your lifeboat, then please, save her! She doesn't deserve to die.

First Officer: (*Calmly.*) I have one place left. I'm shipping an elephant, a cat, a calf and a hog. As my name is Noah, I proclaim that I have one place left on board for this lady...

Slavomír: Thank God! Thank God! Oh, at least you will be saved! My dear little Rita, give all my regards at home! Tell everybody that I am curled at the bottom of the sea and that I won't get anything wrong anymore, that I will never ever hurt anybody anymore.

Rita: (*She's somewhat amazed.*) I don't want to go anywhere!

Slávo, what happened?

First Officer: (*Smirking in self-content.*) Ha, ha, ha! I'm going to look for another bottle. (*He exits.*)

Slavomír: (*Calls after him.*) Don't forget, don't you leave her here! Take her on your ark!

Rita: (*Arrogantly.*) Slavomír, you have gone mad! What am I, some kind of... or what? I will probably never get you right!

Slavomír: (*Grievously.*) Oh, no. You don't understand what's happening here.

Mancuška: (*Mercifully.*) Young man, you shouldn't surrender to your affection for the First Officer. It's out of place.

Slavomír: (*Painfully.*) I don't know, I think the pressure is too low.

Marta: I don't like it when men cry. Karol, why are you so quiet?

Mancuška: I also feel the low pressure in my left temple.

Rita: That's probably the only thing we feel together. Low pressure.

(Suddenly an old fat lady appears like a spectre.)

Koloskova: (*Joyfully.*) Aah! Youngsters, ua-lá! ua-lá! I've been

watching you for a while. Ua-lá! I can see that a ve ry pri vate banquet is going on here.

M a n c u š k a : (*G r e a t l y s u r p r i s e d .*) O h , my God! Oh, my God!

K o l o s k o w a : (*T h e a t r i c a l l y .*) I will be glad to join yo u . I am ve ry happy to see yo u .

M a n c u š k a : T h a t i s u n b e l i e v a b l e !

K o l o s k o w a : I am happy to meet yo u . This is excellent!

M a n c u š k a : (*U n a b l e t o r e c o v e r .*) Oh my God! Oh my God, I can't believe my own eyes !

K a r o l : (*S h o c k e d f r o m M a n c u š k a ' s r e a c t i o n .*) W h a t h a p p e n e d ?

S l a v o m í r : (*T o M a n c u š k a .*) W h a t ' s w r o n g w i t h y o u ?

K o l o s k o w a : (*M a s t e r f u l l y .*) D o n ' t w o n d e r t o o m u c h , d e a r f r i e n d s , t h i s g e n t l e m a n h a d e v e r y r i g h t t o b e s u r p r i s e d w h e n h e s a w m e . . .

M a n c u š k a : B u t t h i s i s a b s o l u t e l y u n b e l i e v a b l e !

K o l o s k o w a : Y e s , y e s s i r , y o u c a n s e e w e l l , y e s , y o u r s i g h t i s p e r f e c t l y a l l r i g h t . I t ' s r e a l l y m e ! (*S o l e m n l y .*) E m í l i a M á r i a K o l o s k o w a i n p e r s o n . I a m h e r e i n a l l m y b e a u t y .

M a n c u š k a : (*N e a r l y w r e t c h e d l y .*) Oh my God, this can't be true! It's impossible! This is unbelievable! Don't tell me this! You were supposed to have died on T a h i t i !

K o l o s k o w a : (*A m u s e d .*) N o , n o ! I t w a s M r s . P u d e r s k á w h o d i e d . T h a t a w k w a r d , u n t a l e n t e d z o m b i e w o m a n . H a , h a , h a ! I r e a l l y m u s t p u t i t t h i s w a y . M r s . P u d e r s k á d i e d o n T a h i t i . I a m s a f e a n d s o u n d .

M a n c u š k a : I g o t i t w r o n g . I n e v e r l i k e d M r s . P u d e r s k á .

S l a v o m í r : (*R e s o l u t e l y t o K o l o s k o w a .*) W h o a r e y o u ?

K a r o l : W h o a r e y o u ?

K o l o s k o w a : (*T o o t h e r s .*) Y o u , y o u n g m e n , d e f i n i t e l y c a n ' t k n o w m e . A n d t h e s a m e g o e s f o r t h e l a d i e s . . . I a m E m í l i a M á r i a K o l o s k o w a , o n e o f t h e m o s t f a m o u s s t a r s o f s i l e n t f i l m .

S l a v o m í r : (*E n t h u s i a s t i c a l l y .*) S i l e n t f i l m ? H o w g r o o v y !

R i t a : (*I r o n i c a l l y .*) T h a t m e a n s y o u k e p t y o u r m o u t h s h u t a l l t h e t i m e ? H a , h a . T h a t m u s t h a v e b e e n a w f u l . Y o u r e a l l y e n j o y e d d o i n g t h a t ?

M a n c u š k a : (*S l o w l y r e c o v e r i n g .*) I d o n ' t k n o w h o w s h o u l d I . . . I d o n ' t k n o w w h a t t o . . . W h a t a s u r p r i s e . . . T h e y d o n ' t e v e n s e l l a n y f l o w e r s h e r e . . . I w o u l d n e v e r e v e n d r e a m o f a n y t h i n g l i k e t h i s . . . T h i s w a s n ' t i n m y p l a n s !

M a r t a : (*D o e s n ' t u n d e r s t a n d t h e s i t u a t i o n .*) S i r , a r e n ' t y o u a b i t w e i r d ?

R i t a : (*C a s t i n g h e r o f f .*) F o r G o d ' s s a k e , I h o p e y o u w o n ' t g e t a h e a r t a t t a c k , M r . M a n c u š k a !

K o l o s k o w a : (*T h e a t r i c a l l y t o a l l i n t h e d i n i n g r o o m .*) I s u r p r i s e d y o u , b e c a u s e I l o v e s u r p r i s i n g s i t u a t i o n s . A f t e r a l l , I c a n t e l l y o u t h a t l i f e i t s e l f i s s o b o r i n g , s o s p o o k y , a s i f w e c o n s t a n t l y l i v e d i m p r i s o n e d o n a b a r g e l a u n c h e d o n t h e D e a d S e a s u r f a c e . I l o v e s u r p r i s e s . A f t e r a l l , I c a n s a y t h a t m y f i l m s a l w a y s a b o u n d e d i n s u r p r i s i n g s i t u a t i o n s . T h e y w e r e w h o l e h y p e r s y s t e m s o f s u r p r i s e s b y s u r p r i s e s a s m y c o u r t r e v i e w e r , t h e g r e a s y d o c t o r K r é b l i c h u s e d t o b r i l l i a n t l y c a l l i t . O o h ! I d e d i c a t e d m a n y y e a r s t o t h e s i l e n t f i l m a s a p r o t a g o n i s t . T o t h a t j e w e l , t o t h a t b e a u t y I d e d i c a t e d m y u n b e l i e v a b l e s k i l l a n d

talent. On the other hand, I had to be silent in front of that camera for all those years. I had to be mute. So now you have to kindly understand that I have to talk as much as I can.

Mancuška: (*Emotionally.*) Yes, yes, yes.

Koloskova: (*Theatrically.*) Oh God, how hard it is! Everything is so hard!

Mancuška: That's right. That's right.

Koloskova: Until you manage to express all those nuances, squalls, all those rive rs, the little affluxes on one's own feelings.

Mancuška: (*With satisfaction.*) Yes, yes, yes.

Rita: (*Vexed.*) For God's sake, where did she copy that?

Koloskova: (*Continues.*) That outright tragedy of imprisoned, unspoken thoughts. So I just thought that you're the adequate company I could talk to. You are also stuffed here on this stage, in a nutshell... I can see, because I keep my eyes wide open all the time, I have an open soul, I have emotions for everything that lives and breathes, stretched like Cupid's bow. I can feel that you're still not studded enough with those verbal skills which are vital; which can bring to life what might be already silenced in you... I decided to make it up for you and also for myself, that missing thing, which you secretly long for deep down in your souls. With my eloquence, my dear little babies, I can make your lives longer.

I am sure about that! I have so much energy, and you will definitely come to appreciate it. Ah! Now I need to take a

short break. Let me take a short breath – until my servant Tomáš brings me my megaphone so I can talk to the whole ship, the whole wide-open sea. The energy in my voice would bring joy to all sea creatures; it would caress and bless the sea level that still has to bring us to the safety of the shore...

Now, during my short break you can applaud, or you could also shout bravo, bravo. Thank you for now. Just for now.

We'll continue later. This was just a very short entrée... Oh, it really itches underneath this wig. (*We hear just one person applaud and only Mancuška is shouting bravo, bravo, Koloskova thanks him.*)

Slavomír: (*Overlapping, pained.*) I think my headache is getting stronger.

Rita: What language was she speaking in?

Karol: (*Unemotionally.*) Well, I didn't understand. There were too many foreign words in that speech for me.

Marta: My Mom also talks a lot sometimes; and she has never been a silent film actress.

Karol: Where are those people with the booze? I'm actually at a wedding. And I'm actually more sober than Miss actress here.

Mancuška: (*Suddenly gets up from the table, with determination solemnly declaims to Koloskova, disregarding the others.*)

Mama, with your kindest permission, please forgive me in advance...

Rita: (*Bored.*) Oh, Jesus!

Mancuška: (*Solemnly and with affection.*) Mama, you know, in this festive moment I am surprised by my own self. If you please,

maybe for the first time in my life I feel inside me a counterpressure as if I had two contradictory tendencies. On one hand I would like to be gallant, to emphasize with all respect your virtues and your talent, to highlight your huge cultural gift to the whole mankind... And on the other hand, I'd like to abuse this opportunity and, I apologize, to get you involved by a very personal, although I confess, for me a very special declaration. Oh, I don't want to be intrusive! No way! I would love to stay gallant, but, but...

K o l o s k o w a : (*She likes Mancuška's behaviour.*) Well, what, dear sir...

R i t a : (*Laughs uproariously.*) Ha, ha, ha! What happened to you?

What's that you found?

M a n c u š k a : (*He doesn't take notice of Rita, hesitates for a while, then takes a breath again.*) I'm sorry! Excuse me! I kiss most respectfully your dear little hands, my dear miraculous lady, but

I have to... (*He's dumbfounded, hesitates and afterwards continues proclaiming.*) I loved you! Adored you! And, to be

honest, when I see you here, live, in your full beauty, I think that I'm not honest and open enough when I describe my

feelings so... as if... (*Struggling.*) As if they were... in the past tense! (*Emotionally.*) But I can't possibly dare, if I

want to continue... and I have to continue... but I have to continue... in the past tense. (*Excited.*) I desired... I desired...

I can tell you now. I can tell you now! Now, in this

situation I can tell you! Ah! I wanted to. (*As if giving away some guilt of his.*) I wanted to sail the sea on a steamer with

you... Yes, with you... You were living in my imagination...

You were alive... I used to materialize you from those moving Lumière's pictures into a concrete physical form, with which as if I communicated directly. (*With enthusiasm.*)

This is amazing! On a steamer across the sea, in one

restaurant, and, I beg your pardon. Hmm, I think I'm going to be a bit blunt and rude... but now when we're in a situation

like this I think I can actually tell you... You don't mind,

do you...? (*Emphatically, word by word.*) I even wanted to share a cabin... with you. I've always dreamed of that. (*He finishes festively.*) I apologize, I longed for you!

R i t a : (*Very amused, applauds, ironically.*) What a show! Like in a

fairytale!

M a r t a : Sweet.

K o l o s k o w a : (*In her element.*) How marvellous! How marvelous!

K a r o l : The old man has scored!

K o l o s k o w a : (*Unexpectedly, unemotionally, in front of everyone.*) Ha, ha! Are you here with your wife?

M a n c u š k a : (*Sheepishly, as if he hadn't recovered from the previous experience.*) No, ma'am. I'm not here with my wife... Why?

K o l o s k o w a : (*As if wanting to convict him in public.*) So your wife is quite a long way away.

M a n c u š k a : (*Even more sheepishly.*) Yes, ma'am, my wife is a really long way away.

K o l o s k o w a : What's your cabin number?

M a n c u š k a : (*Slowly pronouncing, as if suspecting that something extrao*

r d i n a r y is going to happen.) One hundred and twenty one.

K o l o s k o w a : (*S o l e m n l y , w i t h a p o i n t .*) One hundred and twenty one?!

W e l l , I ' m s u r e y o u d i d n ' t e v e n s u s p e c t t h a t t h i s w o u l d h a p p e n t o b e y o u r l u c k y n u m b e r !

M a n c u š k a : My lucky number?

K o l o s k o w a : Y e s . I ' l l i m m e d i a t e l y o r d e r m y s e r v a n t T o m á š t o f e t c h m y t h i n g s i n t o y o u r c a b i n .

M a n c u š k a : (*S t a r t l e d .*) I n t o m y c a b i n ? Y o u r t h i n g s ?

R i t a : (*I r o n i c a l l y .*) H o w t h r i l l i n g !

S l a v o m í r : R i t a , s t o p i t !

R i t a : I ' m e n j o y i n g m y s e l f .

M a r t a : H o w s w e e t .

K o l o s k o w a : (*C o n t i n u e s , c a l m l y p r o n o u n c i n g e v e r y w o r d .*) Y e s , m y t h i n g s i n t o y o u r c a b i n .

R i t a : (*I r o n i c a l l y .*) Y e s , t h a t ' s r i g h t , t h e y d o n ' t m a k e s i l e n t f i l m s a n y m o r e .

M a n c u š k a : (*S t i l l s t a r t l e d .*) I d o n ' t k n o w . . . I ' m h o n o u r e d . . .

K o l o s k o w a : (*T o a l l .*) S o , s i n c e y o u ' v e a l l b e e n w a t c h i n g o u r p u b l i c w o o i n g , w h o ' s g o i n g t o o r d e r a b o t t l e o f c h a m p a g n e ? W h o ' s g o t t h e c a s h ? !

M a n c u š k a : (*W i t h h i s v o i c e t r e m b l i n g , b u t s t i l l s c r u p u l o u s l y .*) B u t , y o u k n o w , m a d a m , m y c a b i n i s a m e s s . I t i s n o t a i r e d . D o n ' t b e m a d .

K o l o s k o w a : O h , d o n ' t b e s o n a r r o w - m i n d e d , m y T o m á š w i l l t a k e c a r e o f t h a t . H e ' l l a r r a n g e e v e r y t h i n g p e r f e c t l y .

R i t a : C o u l d n ' t h e t i d y u p o u r r o o m , t o o ?

S l a v o m í r : R i t a !

M a n c u š k a : O h , I ' m n o t u s e d t o s t r a n g e r s t o u c h i n g m y p e r s o n a l t h i n g s .

K o l o s k o w a : T a k e i t t h i s w a y : i m a g i n e t h a t I a m t h e o n e t i d y i n g i t u p .

T h a t t h e a r r a n g e m e n t o f t h i n g s i s s o m e t h i n g l i k e m y h a n d w r i t i n g . I s e e t h a t y o u r d r e a m s c a n c o m e t r u e a l w a y s b y s o m e b o d y e l s e . L i f e w i t h y o u i s n o t g o i n g t o b e e a s y . H o n e s t l y .

M a r t a : (*J o y f u l l y .*) Y o u ' r e p r o b a b l y g o i n g t o h a v e t o o r g a n i z e a w e d d i n g a s w e l l ! I t ' l l b e a d o u b l e w e d d i n g ! A l e a s t K a r o l a n d m e w o n ' t b e s a d a n d l o n e l y .

K a r o l : Y e s , t h a t ' s r i g h t . (*C l u m s i l y .*) M h m , m a d a m a c t r e s s ! M a d a m . . . p e r f o r m i n g a r t i s t ! S i t a t o u r t a b l e ! L e t u s a l l b e t o g e t h e r . H e r e y o u g o ! W e s h o u l d c a l l t h e C a p t a i n a s w e l l .

R i t a : A n d t h e F i r s t O f f i c e r .

K a r o l : Y e s , s i n c e t h e r e ' s g o i n g t o b e t h a t w e d d i n g .

M a n c u š k a : (*F r i g h t e n e d .*) W h a t w e d d i n g ? B u t I ' m m a r r i e d . M a r r i e d ! I h a v e a w i f e . L a u r a i s a g o o d g i r l . (*A p o l o g i z i n g l y .*) A l t h o u g h s h e l o o k s l i k e y o u , a l t h o u g h , d e a r m a d a m , y o u ' r e s i m i l a r t y p e s .

K o l o s k o w a : (*U n e x p e c t e d l y o r d i n a r i l y .*) N o w e d d i n g . W e ' l l j u s t l i v e t o g e t h e r , w i l d s t y l e .

M a n c u š k a : (*S t a r t l e d .*) E x c u s e m e ? W i l d s t y l e ? (*H e ' s u n a b l e t o p r o t e s t .*)

K a r o l : (*A s i f w a n t i n g t o s a v e s o m e t h i n g .*) W e l l , c h e e r s t h e n ! L e t ' s m o i s t e n t h o s e d r y t h r o a t s !

K o l o s k o w a : C h e e r s ! (*T o M a n c u š k a .*) I h o p e y o u w i l l l e t m e s l e e p b y t h e w i n d o w , m y d e a r s a d k n i g h t .

M a n c u š k a : (*B u r s t s o u t a l i t t l e , w e c a n f e e l l o v e a n d h a t e i n h i s t o n e a t t h e s a m e t i m e .*) Y o u ' r e t h e s a m e ! Y o u ' r e e x a c t l y t h e s a m e a s t h o s e c h a r a c t e r s i n y o u r f i l m s . Y o u ' v e a l w a y s o n l y p l a y e d y o u r s e l f . O n l y y o u r s e l f ! I ' m n o t w r o n g !

K o l o s k o w a : (*D o e s n ' t g e t d i s c o n c e r t e d .*) N o , y o u ' r e n o t w r o n g ! I ' v e n e v e r b e e n a f a k e . I ' v e n e v e r b e e n a f o r g e r y . N o f o r g e r y ! T h a t ' s w h y I a c h i e v e d s o m u c h . M r s . P u d e r s k á , t h a t c o w , c o u l d p r e t e n d w h a t e v e r s h e w a n t e d ; a n d s h e a l w a y s l o o k e d l i k e f a d e d m o u s e a n y h o w . (*V u l g a r l a u g h .*) H a , h a , h a !

M a n c u š k a : O h .

K a r o l : (*C l u m s i l y a g a i n , a s i f t h e c h a m p a g n e h a d a l r e a d y d a z e d h i m .*) C h e e r s ! T o w h a t e v e r . . . e v e n t o n e w . . . H o w c a n I c a l l i t . . . a l l t h o s e f r i e n d s h i p s . . . e v e n w i l d o n e s ! T h e o l d a r e a l s o y o u n g a n d t h e y o u n g a r e a l s o y o u n g !

M a n c u š k a : (*T r y i n g t o c a l m d o w n .*) C h e e r s !

K o l o s k o w a : (*T o M a n c u š k a .*) C h e e r s , m y d e a r l i t t l e b a f f l e d d r o n e .

M a n c u š k a : (*A s i f t r y i n g t o c o n f o r m t o h e r .*) Y e s , y e s . I ' m s o r r y , d e a r m a d a m . . .

K o l o s k o w a : (*A s i f w a n t i n g t o e n c o u r a g e h i m .*) S t o p b e i n g s o s t e r i l e !

K a r o l : (*J o y f u l l y .*) H e l i k e s y o u ! H e l i k e s y o u a l l !

S l a v o m í r : I s a n y t h i n g w r o n g ?

K o l o s k o w a : I ' m g o i n g t o t e l l m y d e a r T o m á š . . . I ' l l b e b a c k . (*S h e e x i t s , s i n g i n g a t u n e .*) L a l a l a , l o l o l o ! L a l a l a , l o l o l o !

M a r t a : (*S u d d e n l y s u r p r i s i n g l y s e r i o u s .*) S h e i s a n e x p e r t .

M a n c u š k a : (*S u r p r i s i n g l y u n e m o t i o n a l l y .*) S h e i n t e r p r e t s e v e r y t h i n g h e r w a y .

M a r t a : O h G o d , w h a t a d i s t r e s s . . . W h y i s m y t h r o a t s o s q u e e z e d . . .

K a r o l : Y o u r t h r o a t ?

M a r t a : Y e s , a n d m y h e a r t a l s o s t a r t e d t o a c h e .

R i t a : O u r b r i d e s h o u l d n ' t h a v e g o t t e n m a r r i e d . S h e ' s a b i t i l l a t t h e m o m e n t . I h o p e s h e w o n ' t g e t a h e a r t a t t a c k !

(*T h e C a p t a i n a n d t h e F i r s t O f f i c e r e n t e r .*)

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*S e l f - c o n f i d e n t l y , j o v i a l l y .*) O h , e x c u s e u s ! E x c u s e u s f o r b u r s t i n g i n h e r e , a s i f w e w e r e t o r n o f f . . . t o r n o f f f r o m a c h a i n . B u t M r . C a p t a i n c o u l d n ' t w a i t a n y m o r e . H e h a d t o t e a r o f f a n d n o w h e h a s t o h a v e a d r i n k , b e c a u s e o t h e r w i s e h e w o u l d n ' t b e a b l e t o b e a r i t a n y m o r e . I t i s s o r o m a n t i c t o s t e e r a s h i p . S o r o m a n t i c ! B u t s o h a r d ! A n d I h a v e t o f o l l o w M r . C a p t a i n a s h i s o n l y l o y a l s u b o r d i n a t e . W e l l , h o w e l s e ! H a , h a , c a n w e h a v e s o m e c h a m p a g n e , t o o ? C h e e r s ! (*C l i n k i n g o f g l a s s e s .*)

R i t a : C h e e r s , s i t d o w n !

S l a v o m í r : T h e r e y o u g o !

K a r o l : W e ' r e c e l e b r a t i n g h e r e . G o o d a n d s o l i d r e l a t i o n s h i p s .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : I w i s h y o u g o o d l u c k !

C a p t a i n : G o o d l u c k !

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*T o e v e r y b o d y , a b i t t h e a t r i c a l l y .*) I ' m s u r e t h a t C a p t a i n w o u l d l o v e t o h a v e a d r i n k !

C a p t a i n : O h , b u t I , b u t . . .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*W i t h a s m i l e , w i t h a h i n t o f i r o n y .*) H a v e a d r i n k , C a p t a i n ! I t ' l l b e o v e r ! I ' m s u r e y o u ' l l m a n a g e t o s w a l l o w i t .

Slavo m í r: (*St a r t l e d a b i t a g a i n , t o t h e C a p t a i n .*) Did you find something out?!

C a p t a i n : (*B e c o m e s e v e n m o r e u n e a s y .*) O h , n o , w e l l , a c t u a l l y , y e s . . . (*T o S l a v o m í r .*) But don't worry ; it has nothing to do with you . Not in the least . . .

Slavo m í r: I hope not, I hope not.

R i t a : I don't like my s t e r i e s either.

M a r t a : G o d !

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*T o R i t a .*) M i s s y , w o u l d y o u l i k e t o g o f o r a w a l k w i t h m e ? R i g h t n o w t h e r e d s u n r i s e s f r o m t h e s e a d e p t h s .

R i t a : (*C a n ' t h i d e t h e j o y , a l i t t l e a m a z e d .*) W e l l , b u t . . . O n l y f o r a l i t t l e w h i l e . F o r j u s t a w h i l e . A l l r i g h t ? I r e a l l y l i k e s u n s e t s . . .

I m e a n s u n r i s e s . Y o u n e e d t o s e e i t ; y o u n e e d t o e n j o y i t . Y o u n e e d t o e n j o y i t n o w .

Slavo m í r: (*T h o u g h t f u l l y .*) R i t a , t a k e y o u r c o a t a n d p u t a s c a r f o n y o u r h e a d , y o u w i l l b e c o l d .

R i t a : D o n ' t y o u w o r r y a b o u t m e ! D o n ' t y o u w o r r y !

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*T o R i t a .*) C o m e o n , b e a u t i f u l l a d y . (*T h e F i r s t O f f i c e r a n d R i t a e x i t .*)

Slavo m í r: (*A b i t r e s t l e s s , c o n f u s e d .*) I a m k n o c k e d o u t . D o n e u p l i k e a h o r s e . I t h i n k . I ' m g o i n g t o l o o k a t s o m e t h i n g i n m y c a b i n , t o r e a d s o m e t h i n g . A f t e r a l l , I h a v e a s u i t c a s e f u l l o f b o o k s .
(*H e e x i t s .*)

M a n c u š k a : (*S a d l y .*) I t h i n k I ' l l g o , t o o . B u t I c a n ' t g o i n t o m y c a b i n . M a d a m K o l o s k o w a i s t h e r e , h e r l a d y s h i p K o l o s k o w a .

C a p t a i n : (*S a d l y , t o M a n c u š k a .*) C o m e w i t h m e , s i r , c o m e a n d h a v e a l o o k a t m y C a p t a i n ' s c a b i n , I h a v e a l i t t l e b i t o f b r a n d y h i d d e n s o m e w h e r e . I d o n ' t r e a l l y f e e l l i k e b e i n g a l o n e r i g h t n o w . T h e c r e w g e t s o n m y n e r v e s a n d I ' m g e t t i n g o n t h e i r n e r v e s t o o . C l a u s t r o p h o b i a o n a c r u i s e s h i p . B u t y o u d o n ' t h a v e t o w o r r y a b o u t t h a t . R e a l l y n o t . I ' m s u r e a b o u t t h a t .

M a n c u š k a : M e t o o . . . I ' m s o a g i t a t e d , t o o . I d o n ' t d r i n k m u c h . I h a v e s o m e h e a l t h p r o b l e m s , b u t n o w ' s t h e t i m e f o r a d r i n k , m a y b e f o r t w o . . . A n d m a y b e e v e n f o r . . . H a , h a .

(*T h e C a p t a i n a n d M a n c u š k a e x i t . M a r t a a n d K a r o l r e m a i n a l o n e .*)

M a r t a : I ' m s t a r t i n g t o r e g r e t i t . . .

K a r o l : (*W e c a n f e e l t h a t h e h a s b e e n d r i n k i n g a l i t t l e .*) W h a t ? W h a t , d a r l i n g ? (*H e l i c k s h i s l i p s .*) W o n ' t t h e t w o o f u s , h a , h a , g o t o t h e c a b i n ? (*P o i n t e d l y .*) N o t f o r a d r i n k ! W e c a n h a v e a d r i n k l a t e r , b u t b e f o r e t h a t . . .

M a r t a : (*S h e r e f u s e s h i s e x c e s s i v e c o n f i d e n c e .*) L e a v e m e a l o n e ! L e t m e g o !

K a r o l : D a r l i n g , a r e n ' t y o u m i s s i n g i t ? I a m r e a l l y m i s s i n g i t . . . I c a n ' t w a i t ! I r e a l l y c a n ' t w a i t . . . D a m n i t !

M a r t a : (*S u r p r i s i n g l y a c c u s i n g l y .*) Y o u a r e v u l g a r !

K a r o l : D a r l i n g , w h a t ' s t h e m a t t e r w i t h y o u ?

M a r t a : (*S u d d e n l y .*) I r e g r e t t h a t I m a r r i e d y o u .

K a r o l : (*D i s b e l i e v i n g l y .*) W h a t d o y o u m e a n ?

M a r t a : Y e s , i t a l l h a p p e n e d s o f a s t .

K a r o l : M a r t a , w h a t a r e y o u t a l k i n g a b o u t , I g o t m a r r i e d b e c a u s e o f y o u .

M a r t a : (*W i t h d i s g u s t .*) B e c a u s e o f m e ?

K a r o l : (*As if not believing his own ears.*) Yes , I wanted to. I wa n t e d to help you to get rid... of your parents. So that you could... b r e a t h e . T h a t ' s what you were saying... Huh, I could've had somebody else!

M a r t a : I t ' s all a bit different.

K a r o l : (*An gry.*) We l l , n o w , I can really... W h a t a smasher... A smasher like hell! We l l , look at this! For God's sake! You were the one who said that you couldn't stand their spying a n y m o r e ! T h a t you get distressed from it or what . You said t h a t ! Not me! I didn't say anything like that! Tss! Oh, g r e a t !

(*B u r s t s o u t .*) My father is a blockhead but otherwise he's actually a proper man. If necessary, he'll beat up any b o d y . E v e n you! He can even beat you up!

M a r t a : (*T e r r i f i e d b y h i s s a v a g e n e s s .*) I'm even distressed now when I'm talking to yo u !

K a r o l : H o w is it possible?

M a r t a : (*C l o s e t o t e a r s .*) I t ' s all the same. I'm afraid of you the same as I am of my spying fat h e r .

K a r o l : For God's sake, w h a t a m I some kind of a mad rag or what ?

M a r t a : (*T r i e s t o d e f e n d h e r s e l f , a c c u s i n g .*) You were afraid! You w e r e afraid that the officer would choose me and will go for a w a l k with me. Come on, cards on the table, w e r e n ' t you afraid?

K a r o l : W h y do you mention him?

M a r t a : (*A f t e r a w h i l e , s h e s p e a k s s l o w l y .*) I just did. For no special r e a s o n .

K a r o l : (*T h r e a t e n i n g l y .*) He caught your eye !

M a r t a : (*H y s t e r i c a l l y .*) See! See! Yo u 're jealous! You are selfish! Yo u 'd like to lock me in a cage like some kind of a hamster!

K a r o l : W h a t ? I'm not jealous, but yo u 're my wife, then why are yo u so interested in that officer?

M a r t a : (*R a d i c a l l y .*) K a r o l , I want a divorce! Do you hear me? I d o n 't want to be your wife any m o r e . To be your wife is t e r r i b l e ! It's as if you handcuffed me. I was so free before! So free! (*W i t h s e l f - r e g r e t .*) O h , Jesus! Oh, J e s u s !

K a r o l : (*A l s o n e r v o u s .*) But you said... We l l , I have stepped barefoot into a trap!

M a r t a : Yo u 're jealous! Yo u 're jealous! Yo u 're jealous of my fat h e r ! Yo u 're jealous of that officer!

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*E n t e r s t h e d i n i n g r o o m w i t h R i t a , h e s p e a k s t o h e r p e r s o n a l l y .*) Did you hear all those sounds from the depths of the sea?

R i t a : (*H a p p y , s e d u c t i v e l y .*) O h , h o w beautiful it is on that deck. Thank you... (*S h e s t a g g e r s a t h o w t o a d d r e s s h i m , t h e n i r o n i c a l l y .*) Dear Mr. O f f i c e r , dear Mr. N o a h , the living l e g e n d , thank you for showing me around your beautiful a r k . (*S w e e t l y .*) You saved my life, and also all those lives of good and nice animals...

F i r s t O f f i c e r : It was my pleasure, M i s s .

R i t a : And now I'm going to take a hot showe r , since there wa s such a cold wind blowing out there... (*T o M a r t a , i r o n i c a l l y .*) Young lady, you seem to be somewhat pale... Do you know where Slavomír is?

M a r t a : H e 's reading.

R i t a : I'll kick him out! I'll kick him out of my cabin. S n o t t y - n o s e d idiot! Bye , Noah! Bye , darling! (*She exits.*)

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Condescendingly.*) Kindest regards, m a d a m .

M a r t a : (*Unexpectedly, trying hard to be charming.*) Will you take me on the deck, too? I would like to go for a w a l k , too! I want you to save me, t o o , to show me around your ark. I want it too! I want it too!

K a r o l : (*Shocked.*) M a r t a , I'll kill yo u !

M a r t a : (*Abruptly.*) S ave me, M r . O f f i c e r , from this jealous man! You have beautiful eyes! The most beautiful eyes I've eve r s e e n .

F i r s t O f f i c e r : (*Ironically.*) M a d a m , but you have just marri e d .

M a r t a : S o , w h a t ? Is it some kind of disease?

K a r o l : (*Flabbergasted.*) M a r t a . . . but . . . w h a t 's this? Am I supposed to fight? Do I have to, e ven here? I don't really feel like it!

But w h a t 's this? Is this some kind of fun? W h a t kind of a life is this? W e l l , this is really amusing!

M a r t a : Karol dear, you don't have to. You don't have to do any t h i n g .

K a r o l : B u t , w e l l , b u t . . .

M a r t a : You seem to be somewhat tired, Karol dear.

K a r o l : The champagne seems to have gone into my head. I shouldn't h ave washed it down with beer!

M a r t a : Yo u 're probably tired, d a r l i n g .

K a r o l : Go on then, go for a w a l k , but you better be back in ten minutes! (*Stops talking abruptly.*)

F i r s t O f f i c e r : W e l l , as you w a n t , madam Mart a . I think your husband fell asleep on the table.

M a r t a : (*Flirting.*) It was too much for him today. You know how it is when a guy gets marri e d ; it really w e a r s him out.

F i r s t O f f i c e r : Come on then, I have some room for yo u , too among those other little animals on Noah's ark. Would you like to s t a y with animals that have longer or shorter tails?

M a r t a : (*With enthusiasm.*) M r . N o a h , the longest ones! (*They exit, laughing.*)

K a r o l : (*Wakes up.*) Oh God! Oh God Mart a , where are yo u ?

M a r t a , where are you? I think I'll smash up eve ry t h i n g around here! I'll smash eve rything into pieces. Where is some more champagne? I need some courage. (*Shouts.*)

E ve rything into tiny pieces!

(We hear an energetic opening of the door.)

K o l o s k o w a : (*Offensively.*) So I have found you! This is where yo u 'r e hiding! I knew yo u 'd be here, with the Captain in his cabin!

You dumbheads!

C a p t a i n : (*A little bit start led, but tries to keep his decorum.*) Let me welcome you . . . hm . . . I have the honour to welcome you in the Captains' cabin . . . This cabin. You know, this cabin has i t 's own history.

K o l o s k o w a : (*Stops him decisively.*) Stop it, you fool! (*Mockingly.*)

S o , dear Mr. Mančuška! I only came to inform you that I am not moving in with you since there is a terrible stench in your cabin. E ve rything there smells of mothballs, if yo u

really want to know, of carcasses, there you have it. My dear Tomáš tried to get rid of this smell, he did every thing possible, but it is of no effect. It is useless! And it made me so angry! You keep telling me crap here, make things up... At the same time you openly keep seducing me... And for all that... For all that, you dumbhead, you chose such a desolate cabin! Did you really think that I could stay in that pigsty for the rest of the trip? What a monster you are!

Captain: (*He stops her unexpectedly and resolutely.*) Excuse me, please, excuse me! Excuse me again, dear ma'am! But you yourself...

Koloslkova: (*Arrrogantly.*) I myself what?

Captain: You alone offered yourself to this honourable gentleman! You wanted to move in with Mr. Mancuška on your own account! I am sorry, but I have to... I have to stand up for this passenger now. As I know, he was only talking about his personal dreams and feelings; he didn't insist on you in any way, there wasn't even a hint. It's no go; you wanted to move into his cabin on your own account. He didn't even have time to say anything, to express himself in any way, whether he was eventually for or against it. (*Challengingly.*) If you please, madam!

Koloslkova: (*Touched and offended.*) What's this... What's this supposed to mean? Let's have a look what hatched out here!

What a good team you two make! (*Shouting.*) Captain, Captain! You call yourself a Captain?! Who do you think I am, some kind of... a bitch? Some kind of a goose? Do you actually know what you're saying? That I forced myself into his abode? Onto this shivery grandpa? (*Aggravated, snaps for breath.*) You'll regret this, Captain! You'll really regret this boldness of yours. I am not surprised, Captain, that the whole crew is sick of you. Turn the ship around at once! This is your last voyage! Turn the ship, because I immediately want to go back to the harbour we set off from. I don't intend to travel any longer with a gang like this. Why, you could easily hurt me! Even physically! Since you've done this, nothing will stop you! That's terrible! It's hatched from a rotten egg! It hatched! (*Addresses Captain.*) Captain, I'm going to complain. Turn the ship and I guarantee that I will complain! And if you two threaten me once more, you will pay for it. I may not live through to that day... But even then you will still pay for it! (*She leaves the cabin and slams the door.*)

(Mancuška and the Captain keep quiet for a while.)

Captain: (*Submissively.*) Mr. Mancuška, tell me, but honestly! Break it to me! Tell me, do you also think that as a Captain I am incapable? Do you think that, too?

Mancuška: (*Gently.*) No, why? I don't think that you're incapable. I don't think that.

Captain: (*Slowly, submissively.*) First Officer told me today in front of the whole crew that he cursed the moment when he found out that I will be the Captain of the ship that he'll be working

on... (*With self-pity.*) Allegedly I am an uncertain, shallow
brained, slow drone; and Noah should have rather forgotten
to take me onto his ark on purpose. That's what he told
me... He says, why didn't I become a confectioner, that's
what would suit me. (*Self-ironically.*) It's funny. It's funny
that he told me this. Originally I really wanted to become a
confectioner. How could it actually occur to him? I became
a Captain by pure, pure chance... But it really got to me
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what he said. It really hurt that he said it to me this way ...
And in front of everyone... He could've at least... Or I don't
know ...

Mancuška: (*Tries to cheer him up.*) Oh, I understand... I understand...
I sympathise with you... But, you know, Captain,
that First Officer of yours, he is a nice young man indeed, I
have nothing against him, but, Captain, he's a gambler
though. He's a gambler. I can see it in his eyes... (*A timid
knock on the door.*) Who can that be? (*Timidly.*) Who's that
again?

Captain: (*Disgusted.*) Oh, God! (*Decisively.*) Come in!
Slavomír: (*Comes in, speaks slowly and nervously.*) I'm sorry, Captain.
I apologise, I'm sorry to disturb you ...

Mancuška: (*Relieved.*) Ah, Mr. Slavomír, welcome! Welcome among
us!

Captain: (*Warmly.*) Come in!

Slavomír: (*Continues nervously.*) My fiancée... Actually, to be precise,
to tell the truth... My ex-fiancée simply doesn't wish to
share the same cabin with me anymore. (*He is silent for a
while, then continues.*) She's radically against it. I wanted to
explain it to her. I wanted to explain to her that even if she
decided to break her vow, I think we can continue sharing
the same cabin... I told her that after all we don't have to try
any so-called love rapprochement for example. I explained
to her that I admire her, that she's an excellent and practical
woman and that I would be exceedingly happy if we
could stay friends. I would really like to have a chat with her
sometimes. She could advise me in many things... So...
(*Matter-of-factly.*) She threw me out. She kicked me out
now. I apologise... Captain, please, do you by any chance
happen to have a spare cabin or something where I could
crash?

Captain: (*Directly.*) You're welcome to stay here. I have three beds.
There's enough room here.

Slavomír: Won't I be of any interference?

Captain: Not at all. Join us.

Slavomír: Thank you. (*To Mancuška.*) Will I not bother you either,
noble sir?

Mancuška: What kind of noble could I be, for God's sake, what are
you saying, dear nice young man. I am happy that we sit at
the same table.

Captain: (*Flattered.*) Oh, I am deeply honoured, gentlemen. I am
deeply honoured. (*To Slavomír.*) Can I offer you a drop of

brandy?

Slávo mír: Yes, yes, that would be nice.

Mancuška: I've just been telling the Captain what an excellent seaman he is.

Slávo mír: (*Warm-heartedly.*) Yes, yes, I am sure about that, as well.

I am sure he is... (*Looking for the right words.*) I'm sure he is... very responsible and deliberate. No stupid dictatorship.

I'm sure you have to be popular with your subordinates because of your indulgence and humanity. (*To Mancuška.*)

And you, too, dear sir, must be popular with your nearest.

You too.

Mancuška: Oh, thank you. Thank you. (*Sits up.*) I have a feeling that the ship somehow tilts to one side.

Captain: Yes, yes, I have the same feeling.

Mancuška: Maybe we are coming back to our mother harbour after all.

Captain: You think so?

Slávo mír: You think we are returning?

Mancuška: (*Amused.*) Yes, I think that madam actress' wish came true. Like in a film. In every film all her wishes always came true. Ha, ha. And after all, it was always quite surprising. I'm sure was. Even the ship is tilting quietly, like in a silent film.

Ha, ha.

Slávo mír: It's good that we're going back. It's good. Rita might be different back home. She might be different again back home.

Mancuška: Don't worry! She'll come to appreciate you one day. She'll come to appreciate you! She's a good girl.

Captain: I would feel better on the shore as well.

Rita: (*In her own cabin.*) That Slávo could've left me some change. At least some change! That greedy, skimpy skinflint! Like his mother, they are identical as two peas...

Kolosa: (*As if from another room, with fatigue.*) Oh, Tomáš, dear Tomáš, switch the lights off now and cover me gently with a blanket. That was enough for today. I have talked enough for today. I have to sleep tight so that my batteries could get recharged. Tomorrow I'll have to put on another show again. Oh, good night.

Karol: (*Also as if from another room, drunkenly.*) Well, what am I gonna tell my father? What am I supposed to tell him? That I got married, but my wife flew off on an atmospheric balloon?

What am I supposed to say to him? He's gonna tell me, well, why didn't you watch her? Why didn't you fight for her?

How could you allow it? There you have it, that's what he'll say. I won't tell him anything. I won't tell him anything, that'll be the best... I won't tell him anything; otherwise he'd break my jaw. That would be great. I won't tell him anything. Nothing happened...

Mancuška: (*In the Captains' cabin.*) In spite of everything, my dream came true. My dream came true and maybe I even got something in addition.

Captain: We'll all feel better on firm land. We'll be better. But when...?

The end.