

MY WIFE'S HUSBAND

(A Comedy)

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Characters:

LUKA

TONY

EVE

ACT 1.

My Wife's Husband

The setting on stage is of an area which serves both as a kitchen and as a living room. The atmosphere is Mediterranean. A fishing net is stretched over one wall, three anchors hang on another, there is a shelf with 7 earthenware wine jugs. A wood stove stands in the corner. A typical Dalmatian wine-vault: amphoras, fish trophies, rough wooden chairs, a bunk-bed. A wedding photograph stands out: Kreša and Eve on their wedding day. As the curtain rises, the audience sees into this area, and to one side a stretched rope with two sheets hanging over it. Someone is behind the sheets, but you can't see who it is. Two feet are visible under the sheets, and a hand at the top pegging them to the rope. The pegging process is slow and lasts a while, and, by the feet, it looks as if a "housewife" is hanging out laundry which has just been washed. A well-known Dalmatian song issues from the radio. Knocking is heard at the door. No-one replies.

VOICE: Anyone home?

The person behind the sheets does not react and continues with pegging up the sheets, obviously concentrated on the muffled music from the radio. The knocking is repeated. Again, no reply. The door is pushed open with a squeaking sound. TONY comes in. TONY is wearing a tidy ready-to-wear suit, with a handkerchief in the breast pocket, and an impressively wide tie. TONY looks down at the female feet, and then at the audience, takes his eye-glasses out of an inside pocket, places them on his nose, and leaning over slightly, examines the feet.

TONY (with a Slovenian accent): Please excuse this intrusion, but could you tell me where I could find the gentleman of the house?

LUKA, obviously not a female, appears from behind the sheets. He is dressed in a striped sailor's T-shirt and underpants, he has sandals on his feet, and a kerchief tied around his forehead; he has obviously slept badly.

LUKA: I'm the boss here.

TONY: Oh, please do forgive me. The feet confused me.

LUKA: Whose feet?

TONY: Your feet, I thought they must belong to your home-help or the neighbour who helps out with your laundry.

LUKA: Which home-help, which neighbour? - if I didn't do my own washing, I'd have nothing to wear.

TONY: I assumed that might be the case.

LUKA: What might be the case?

TONY: That you do your own housework, that you wash your own clothes... It's the same with me.

LUKA: (*Looking suspiciously at TONY, he goes to the table, pulls on his trousers, zips them up, unties the kerchief around his forehead, pushes his sailor's T-shirt into his trousers, buckles his belt, goes over to TONY, and looks him over*): And who the hell might you be, buddy, you know me but I don't know you. You must have me mixed up with someone else.

TONY: But isn't your forename LUKA?

LUKA: My forename?

TONY: Yes.

TONY: I don't know about my forename, but LUKA is what they call me.

TONY: So my information is correct.

LUKA: What information?

TONY: I'll explain it all later.

LUKA: What do you have to explain?

TONY: Calm down, you'll be upset enough when you hear. At this moment you are still a happy man, but in ten minutes time, when I tell you what it is I have to tell you, all your ships will sink.

LUKA: What ships are you babbling about, man?

TONY: Don't fuss yourself, mine sank, too, when I found out. Our ships are the same ships.

LUKA: Who are you?

TONY: I'm TONY.

LUKA: TONY?

TONY: Yes, TONY.

LUKA (*trying to remember, but failing to*): I've never seen you here in Split.

TONY: How could you see me in Split, when I live in Ljubljana, the capital of our republic.

LUKA: And what brings you to Split?

TONY: It's a long story.

LUKA: Well, shorten it. You can see I'm busy with the house. In two hours time, I have to have dinner ready; it's no easy job to peel the potatoes and get the greens ready and set the fire and salt the water. My old lady comes back from Ljubljana in an hour, my house is in a mess, and you've got a long story. I don't have time for chit-chat.

TONY: My friend, I know your monologue is intended to eject my humble self from your home, because you and I know very well that your wife will not be coming here for dinner in an hour's time.

LUKA: How do you know that?

TONY: I just know. (*TONY looks at his wrist-watch.*) It is now exactly seventeen hundred hours and sixteen minutes. Your wife, as you call her, is now in the "Marijan Express" train working as a stewardess, travelling as she works and working as she travels. Her train left Split at fourteen hundred hours and forty minutes, and arrives in Zagreb at one twenty-two. Eve will report to the head of the traffic office, and then transfer to the fast train which leaves for Ljubljana at two twenty. Eve will arrive in Ljubljana at at one hour after midnight. (*LUKA is looking at him in surprise, understanding nothing.*)

LUKA: So you... I mean... you...

TONY: I know everything.

LUKA: You know everything?

TONY: Yes, everything.

LUKA: All of it?

TONY: All of it.

LUKA: So you must definitely be working for them.

TONY: For which them?

LUKA (*apprehensively*): For them - the 'interiors'.

TONY: The 'interiors'?

LUKA: Yes, the 'interiors'.

TONY: What 'interiors'?

LUKA: The interior affairs organs.

TONY: Organs?!

LUKA: That's what they call them, don't they... Look, if...

TONY: Just listen to me, I'll...

LUKA: (*Collapsing suddenly to the floor onto his knees, he is prepared to listen meekly.*) I'll listen to you, I'll listen... It's a lie that I cheat at cards, I never cheat, my enemies do, I never cheated anyone, almost no-one, almost never. Surely you're not going to throw me in the can because I won three bottles of wine at cards last night. Inspector, sir, I've never played cards for money; playing for wine, that's something different, don't arrest me, I'll admit everything even though there's nothing to admit.

TONY: Stand up.

LUKA: Have a heart, please, have a heart...

TONY: Get to your feet, man!

LUKA: Don't throw me into jail, inspector, anything but that...

TONY: I'm not an inspector.

LUKA: You aren't?

TONY: No, I'm not.

LUKA: To hell with it! What the devil am I doing on my knees in front of you if you aren't a police inspector!? (*LUKA gets angrily to his feet.*) Why didn't you say right off that you haven't got a clue about playing cards and about me and about my old lady.

TONY: How could I say that I know nothing about your wife, when I know everything about her?

LUKA: Everything - what do you mean, everything? So she's been taking salted cod fish to Zagreb again? There's not much profit in it, you know, it's only for friends. It's hard to make ends meet if you don't have something going for you.

TONY: I know everything about your wife, but I came here to find out everything about you.

LUKA (*getting down on his knees again*): I've got nothing to do with her fish. I've told her a thousand times: that salted cod will put you right in the slammer, give up the black market, it's not your style. But she didn't want to listen to me. You know what women are like when they get something into their heads, there's no man alive who can get it out. But don't arrest her, what would I do without her, she's everything in the world to me - I'd be like a dried-out old tree if you put her in jail. She didn't do it because she wanted to, she was driven to it, it's hard to survive today without money. Everything I made while I was at sea on those ocean liners has gone forever. Some of it was left in the tavern, and some went on the house. Money runs through the fingers of a man who loves to sing.

TONY: So she's dear to your heart?

LUKA: Of course she is. She is a bit tough, but she beautiful, she's a wonderful woman. When she's here with me, the whole house is full of her. If you lead her off to the slammer, I'd die of grief. I married late, I lived for years like a hermit, like a sailor, until that lovely woman came into my life. Without her, I'd be afraid of growing old. I forgive her every time she yells at me, let her yell, just as long as she's well and happy. You know, our marriage is not ideal - she's at home one day, and gone the next. But I couldn't live with a woman all day every day. I'd go nuts if she was home more than two days at a time. She is my queen, my sunshine, don't take her in if you don't have to.

TONY: I didn't come to arrest her.

LUKA: What about the charges?

TONY: I told you, I didn't come to arrest her.

LUKA: But the charges?

TONY: What charges?

LUKA: For the smoked cod. You're either a market inspector or a plainclothes policeman, or something like that. I can see you know everything, so you work for them.

TONY: I am not any sort of policeman, I'm an honest citizen.

LUKA: So you don't work for the police?

TONY: No!

LUKA: Damn it all again! And here I am kneeling as if you're the Virgin Mary! Listen, how would you like a punch in the nose?

TONY: Keep away from me unless you want to harm Eve, keep your distance.

LUKA: How would it hurt Eve if I belted the daylights out of you?

TONY: It would hurt her, and hurt her a lot. I'll explain it all to you, just calm down, don't rush me.

LUKA (*confused*): Who on earth are you, anyway?

TONY: You'll find out soon enough... (*He walks over to the large wedding photograph of LUKA and Eve, looks at it, and touches the frame with his hand.*) The same frame. The same frame we have.

LUKA: On your wedding photo?

TONY: Yes!

LUKA: My Eve has good taste.

TONY: Yes, she has. (*He looks around the room, examining it. LUKA follows him with his eyes.*) So, this is where Eve lives.

LUKA: Yes, here.

TONY: I would never think so. You know, my flat is tidy, well looked after, no dust. Everything in its place. My wife likes order, comfort...

LUKA: As you can see, mine doesn't pay attention to nonsense like that. My Eve says: LUKA, what's important is that you cook well, while I have got used to this pigsty, even though it used to bother me.

TONY: Yes. Eve likes to eat well, too, and to live comfortably. She finds one thing in one house, and one in another.

LUKA: What are you talking about?

TONY: About our Eve.

LUKA: **Our** Eve ? !

TONY: Yes, ours.

LUKA: I'll kill you, man, I'll choke the life out of you right here and now. (*LUKA grabs the reverses of Žarko's jacket, makes as if to strike him, but holds back.*) Are you perhaps related to my Eve, when you know so much about her?

TONY: Yes, I am. We are from the same family.

LUKA lets go of TONY.

LUKA: Look, she never mentioned you - what did you say your name was?

TONY: TONY.

LUKA: TONY, TONY... As far as I can remember, she never mentioned you. All that I know is that she was left orphaned as a child, and her aunt raised her. She died three years before I met Eve.

TONY: Eve never talked about you either. If I hadn't made the effort myself, I never would have known that you existed.

LUKA: Didn't she tell you about me?

TONY: No, she didn't.

LUKA: When did you last see her?

TONY: The day before yesterday.

LUKA: The day before yesterday?

TONY: Yes, in Ljubljana.

LUKA: In Ljubljana?! She didn't mention any relative today before she left, nor yesterday when she arrived.

TONY: She didn't mention you to me either.

LUKA: Didn't she tell you she was married to me?

TONY: No.

LUKA: Maybe you're some sort of odd relative, if you tried something on with her, maybe, I would fix you here on the spot... To tell the truth, my Eve never cheated on me, and if she even thought of it I would soon show her. Did you, maybe...

TONY: I kept in within the family, as much as our marital relations normally allowed.

LUKA: All right then, what are you to my wife?

TONY: I am her husband.

LUKA: Whaaat!?!

TONY: I knew you'd be surprised to hear it.

LUKA: What did you say again?

TONY: I am your wife's husband, and you are the husband of my wife.

LUKA: You're sick!

TONY: I was out of my wits when I found out about you. My ships all went to the bottom, too.

LUKA: Get out of my house! That's enough of your spitting on the honour of my virtuous and faithful wife!

TONY: I didn't come all this way to leave so easily!

LUKA: (*grabbing TONY's reverses*): You slanderer, if you don't get your arse out of my house this minute, I will throw you out. Liar!

TONY: Wait a minute, I have proof of what I'm saying.

LUKA: Proof of what?

TONY: Proof that Eve is my wife.

LUKA: Let's see it.

TONY: I can't unless you let go of me.

LUKA releases his jacket.

LUKA: What proof are you talking about?

TONY (*He takes of wedding certificate out of his inside pocket.*) Look - in black and white.

LUKA: What is this?

TONY: A wedding certificate. The official paper confirming that Eve and I married five years ago.

TONY holds the wedding certificate in his extended hand. It is as though LUKA does not dare to take the offered piece of paper but he does so, and reads it attentively once, mumbling something at the same time. He raises his baffled gaze to the audience, and then suddenly looks back down at the paper to re-read it, mumbling again. He seems to have become aware just at that moment the full import of what TONY has been telling him. LUKA freezes. His voice is distant as if coming from the grave.

LUKA: I don't understand any of this.

TONY: It wasn't clear to me either, when I first found out.

LUKA: That paper says you have been married to my wife for five years.

TONY: I am afraid you have chosen your words badly. Namely, you have been married to **my** wife for four years. We got married first.

LUKA: Am I dreaming all this? If it's no problem, would you please pinch me so I know I'm awake. Go on, you can pinch me.

TONY: Thank you, but I would prefer not to, you know, I don't like doing that to a man.

LUKA: Just so I know I'm awake.

TONY: It wouldn't make any difference, really. Pinch yourself.

LUKA (*pinching his own cheek and letting out a yell*): Right enough, it's the rough real world. (*LUKA looks once again at the wedding certificate, and then starts wailing.*) Tell me, explain it all... What a poor unlucky bastard I am! Ah, that

faithless whore! And I have been as good and obedient to her as a dog all these years! Hypercritical bith! To shame and humiliate me like this! What about my honour! What about my happiness! I'll kill her, I'll kill her.

TONY: Calm your nerves.

LUKA: I'll kill myself. Why me, I'll kill her. I'll trample her beneath my feet.

TONY: Please, calm down.

LUKA: I'll tear her to pieces with my teeth. I'll break her legs, I'll knock out her teeth, one by one...

TONY: ... I'll bang her head...

LUKA: I'll bang her head against the wall. I'll throw boiling oil in her face...

TONY: ... wine vinegar...

LUKA: I'll throw vinegar in her eyes. I will pull out her hair...

TONY: ... and her eyes...

LUKA: I'll poke out her eyes with my fingers and pour salt into her wounds...

TONY (*in a calm voice*): She is not worth your anger.

LUKA: I'll cut her throat!

TONY (*in a completely calm voice*): That's your first reaction, the first shock. Later you will forgive her, as if nothing had happened.

LUKA: Never! Not as long as I live.

LUKA suddenly moves from shouting to tears, sobbing like a small child, while TONY gently takes LUKA's head between his hands and pulls him to his chest, stroking his hair in a motherly fashion.

TONY: Settle down, my friend, settle down. I know how it feels.

LUKA (*through his tears*): It's tough, it's really tough. My God, I can't believe it.

TONY: There, there.

LUKA: My true love has deceived me, the sun in my sky has deceived me... she's double-crossed, the bitch.

TONY: Calm yourself.

LUKA: (*Crying, wailing and tears. Suddenly he falls silent and pulls out of TONY's arms. He looks into TONY's eyes, drops his gaze, and then looks at him again. In a quiet voice*): How is this possible?

TONY: I only found out for sure two weeks ago, but I became suspicious two months ago.

LUKA: Tell me, tell me as it happened.

TONY: Look, I lived a normal life with her, as normal as any husband does with a wife who is a stewardess on a train. Eve would leave Ljubljana for Zagreb at seven thirty-five with the Arena Business Express. She reached Zagreb at nine forty-four, and was then free until thirteen fifty-five, when the Mediteranean Express left for Split, where I was foolish enough to believe that she slept at the Railway Workers Hostel, and she came back to me the second day on the train which leaves exactly at...

LUKA: Don't nag me with the timetable... I know it by heart, but how did she fool both of us, and what made you sit up and take notice, how did you find out there was somebody else?

TONY: I must admit that I wasn't at all suspicious for four years, nine months and twenty-three days. For exactly four years, nine months and twenty-three days, I thought I was living with the truest, most beautiful and most honest woman on earth. I thought that I was the happiest man in this part of the world, that the God of all Slovenians loved me best of all. I had always been the best gate-keeper in my company, which manufactures screws. I never let anyone take anything out of the factory grounds, no tools, not even a screw, no piece of metal, not even a bar of soap. My manager, Stan Grum, often said that I am the best and most reliable gate-keeper our factory has ever had, or any other factory, for that matter. It was a great honour for me when Eve and her daughter Matilda came into my life.

LUKA: Daughter!?! My God, did you say daughter?! (*LUKA clasps at his heart.*)

TONY: Yes, why?

LUKA: You said daughter but you said **her** daughter, which means she's not your daughter... Isn't she your daughter?

TONY: No, she's not.

LUKA: Oh, Lord, that means that I have a child, and I had no idea. That's enough for a person to kill themselves on the spot!

TONY: What's wrong with you?

LUKA: Just you listen to me, my wife's husband! Everyone in Split knows that I love people, but I don't love children. Even before we got married, I told Eve that there's nothing I hate more than crying children and caster oil. I was the oldest in my family. I have three brothers and three sisters, and my youngest brother was born when I was seventeen, and all my young years were full of shit and pee from all those little sisters and brothers. From when I started to walk until I was twenty-five, I had to look after small children and wash shitty arses while my mother was working at the fish-canning factory. I was already twenty-five when I ran away to sea, only because I couldn't go on living in a house full of kids. Do you understand? But this is what she does to me... She has my child, and I know nothing about it. At my age, I'll have to put up with all that noise in the house all day long!

TONY: The child is not yours.

LUKA: Not mine? Of course it's mine! She must have had the baby about three and a half years ago, when I was on an Israeli ship. I was away from home for seven months, that was my farewell voyage. If she had been pregnant after that, I would surely have seen her stomach growing.

TONY: It's not your child, and it's not mine. Little Matilda was born seven years ago. The two of us are not Matilda's fathers, nor either of us separately.

LUKA: Then who is?

TONY: A certain Nicola.

LUKA: A certain Nicola?

TONY: Yes.

LUKA: The former husband of our wife?

TONY: Well, he wasn't actually her husband, even though it's true he was former - he went before us, that is, he came into Eve's life before we did, and made her a baby before we met her.

LUKA: Bloody fool!

TONY: Please, only the best about the departed.

LUKA: The departed?

TONY: Yes. Nicola died two months after little Matilda was born. It was like this: Eve used to work for Nicola in Nova Gradiška, at the *Black Rose* tavern. Nicola tried to seduce Eve. Eve grew to love him very much. At that time she was washing glasses and serving the guests, and one summer evening she gave in and went to bed with Nicola. Then she found out she was pregnant. She hid it all until she was in the fifth month, and then it all became so obvious that she couldn't hide it any more and Nicola threw her out. So the poor thing went to her aunt who was old and sick, but kept her until she had the baby. Matilda was born seven years ago. Nicola did not want to even hear about his daughter, and two months later, with God's will, he died of a stroke. Then Eve's aunt died and Eve was evicted from the flat which belonged to the local council. She moved with her little girl from one rented room to another - until the day that she met me, and I was the salvation of her and her little girl.

LUKA: So you married a woman with a child?

TONY: Well, I must admit that when I met her she didn't mention that she had a daughter. We went out together, four times to the movies and six times for a drink. Then the sixth time we went for a drink, she asked me if I would have anything against marrying her, and I said I was very happy that she was proposing to me and that I would be good and kind to her until the grave. We got married twenty days or

so after that, and a half an hour later, she said she was going to her room to collect her things.

LUKA: And?

TONY: She went to get her things, and she brought them along with a little girl of two.

LUKA: What did you do?

TONY: I was shocked.

LUKA: What did she say?

TONY: She said: "I hope you don't mind that my daughter will be living with us." And then she said: "Oh, but I have not told you anything about Matilda, I hope you won't think I did that on purpose."

LUKA: And you took in someone's else's child.

TONY: At that moment, Matilda came over to my legs, took hold on my trousers in her little hand, looked up at me with her lovely eyes and said: "Will you be my daddy?". And I said: "Yes, I will". And that is how I really did become her father and took care of her as if she were my own child. I clean up after her, wash and iron her clothes, take her for walks, take her to school. I always go out, summer and winter, to buy her a fresh bread roll for her breakfast. Because of me, Matilda finished the first grade with excellent marks, and I check all her homework and go to talk with her teacher once a month, and I'm sure she'll do just as well in the second grade.

LUKA: I just can't believe it. My Eve has a husband and a daughter, and I now nothing about it. But you still haven't told me how you found out.

TONY: Just as I said, for four years, nine months and twenty-three days I was stupid but happy, and then, one day, I mean one night as we were sleeping, I woke up and had to go to the bathroom. I got up out of bed, didn't turn on the light so as not to wake Eve, went towards the door, but bumped into the small table with a lamp on it. The lamp fell and Eve woke up out of her sleep and said in the dark: "LUKA, what are you doing?". I didn't answer at first, and then she spoke again: "LUKA, turn on the light". I turned on the light and when she saw me she got a

shocked expression on her face, as if she had been expecting to see someone else, and she said: "Oh, TONY, it's you". And I suddenly got a funny feeling in my tummy. I went to the bathroom, but came back quickly. She had called me "LUKA" twice, and was then surprised to find her husband in her bedroom.

LUKA: And what happened then?

TONY: Then, the worm of doubt took hold of me. I didn't say anything about it to her, I didn't ask her anything, but I grew more and more suspicious that there was someone else in her life. I followed her around Ljubljana when she went shopping, I listened to her conversations with our neighbours, but I didn't uncover anything. But that doubt was still gnawing at me, and for the first time in my life I started going through a female's handbag - hers. I read in that Zagreb magazine, *Woman*, that the easiest way to find out if a woman was true to you or not was regularly to go through the contents of her handbag. But, unfortunately, I drew a blank with the handbag.

LUKA: What happened next in the investigation?

TONY: After a month and a half of unconfirmed doubt had passed, I was starting to think that Eve was innocent - but then I examined the lining of her winter coat and found a piece of paper sewn into the lining. I carefully unpicked the lining and found a wedding certificate. At that moment, all I wanted to do was to choke her, to cut her throat, to tear her to pieces. I wanted to throw hot oil into her face and vinegar into her eyes. Luckily, Eve was then in the train and Matilda was at school. After half an hour of rage and tears, I suppressed my feelings and said to myself: "Wait a minute, man, you are a reasonable being, think it all through before you do anything or pull the trigger". I replaced the winter coat and promised myself that I would not do anything for two days, enough time for me to cool down and pull myself out of that feeling of depression.

LUKA: And after two days had passed?

TONY: After two days it was obvious to me that I had been cheated and humiliated, but that I had to think about little Matilda, and about myself and Eve. It was clear that the first thing I had to do was to talk with you, as my wife's husband, without emotion and without anger, but I also knew I could only go to Split when Eve was on the train and when my cousin would be able to look after my little girl, and finally I arrived at today's day. D-Day. The day of the great decision, the day

when I would have to tell my wife's husband that he was a cuckold, that he had been cheated.

LUKA: Ah, Eve, Eve, you wretched woman! Eve, you whore, how you put it over me, how you cheated me, how you shafted me. But I will get my own back on you.

TONY: Revenge!

LUKA: What?!

TONY: My second thought was revenge. I know what happens when a husband finds out. The first thought is anger, the second is revenge, and the third is forgiveness.

LUKA: Forgiveness - never!

TONY: But it is human to forgive.

LUKA: Only in theory.

TONY: The time will come when you will be prepared to fight for her, when you will want her much more than you ever did.

LUKA: Impossible. I won't live even one day together with her in the same room. I wouldn't even offer her a glass of water. As far as I'm concerned, she's dead. She doesn't even exist any more for me. Just a grave which doesn't even deserve flowers or candles. I'll never let her make a fool of me again, I won't even speak to her. I will put the worst curse on her I can think of and wipe her out of my memory. To think she'd double-crossed me, a man of the sea who has never been fooled by any woman. I nurtured her like a drop of water in my hand, I did everything to please her, I gave her everything I have, and this is how she treats me. I don't want to hear anything more about that creature, about that former wife. (*A long silence.*) And why did you come here anyway?

TONY: So that we negotiate and agree.

LUKA: What do we have to agree about?

TONY: About Eve.

LUKA: In what sense?

TONY: We have to agree about whose she is.

LUKA: What do you mean?

TONY: One woman can't have two husbands - it's against the law.

LUKA: Ah, yes. (*Silence.*) You must be very angry at her.

TONY: Not any more, but I was.

LUKA: It's a hard thing to find out about, really hard.

TONY: Sometimes I think it's easier for those who never find out. (*Silence.*)

LUKA: And what do you think now?

TONY: I think it would be better for the three of us if you, my friend LUKA, give up Eve.

LUKA: What do you mean that I give up Eve?

TONY: Simply that you annul this marriage of yours, that you tell her you have found out that she has another husband and that you don't want to have anything more to do with her.

LUKA: What about you?

TONY: I would stay married to her.

LUKA: After all this?

TONY: What else can I do?

LUKA: You would forgive her double-crossing you in such an underhand way with me?

TONY: I would forgive her, but I could never forget what she did. One of our archbishops said: "We Slovenians forgive, but we never forget".

LUKA: And you expect me to break up with Eve and throw her out of the house.

TONY: Of course. How could you live with a woman who has sullied her body in sin with another man, a woman who has been making an ass of you for years? She does not have the right to look you in the eye and say: "Good day, my darling, do you want me to wash your back?" - and so on. Do you agree with me?

LUKA: Yes, I agree.

TONY: Will you throw her out then?

LUKA: Of course I will... but hang on, I have to think about it a bit...

TONY: What is there to think about?! It's all as clear as a sunny day. Did she cheat you? - yes. Are you the sort of man who would be prepared to disregard something like that? - no. It is the most normal thing in the world that you tell her to go to hell? - yes. If that's the way it is - why waste words?!

LUKA: Just a minute, what about you?

TONY: Me?

LUKA: Are you going to forgive her?

TONY: Yes, I am.

LUKA: How can you do that, after all this?

TONY: I'm not a Dalmatian macho.

LUKA: Even so, you are a man.

TONY: Only sometimes. (*Silence.*) Why have you gone quiet?

LUKA: I'm thinking.

TONY: Don't think too much.

LUKA: I feel as if my head is going to explode.

TONY: What's not clear to you.

LUKA: Tell me, why do you want to go on living with her, how can you ignore all this?

TONY: Look: human beings are reasonable creatures. I think, therefore I am. *Coitus, ergo sum*. That reasonable creature sometimes allows feelings to show themselves, but reason is still the dominant factor. And then I allowed myself to think constructively on the theme of my wife Eve and me...

LUKA: Our wife.

TONY: ... our wife Eve and me. And I considered several unpleasant facts among which the most important is that I am already at a certain age: I have problems with my digestion, with my blood pressure, an ulcer, twinges of rheumatism, and so on. Simply put: I cannot expect at this age to go and find myself another wife. I can't go buying flowers, writing love letters and reciting poetry. It just wouldn't do any more. It would not suit a man of my age.

LUKA: Yes, it would be a bit sickening,

TONY: And I don't think I could fall in love again. You have to idealise the entire female gender to be able to get interested in one of its members. On the other hand, I'm too old to start out from the beginning again, getting used to her waking up and complaining, to her ailments, to her fits of PMS. That's a process which requires steely nerves, and I have no nerves and no will left. And then I thought that a mitigating circumstance was that Eve is a stewardess on a train, and is away a lot. I thought how terrible it would be to have a woman beside you every single day saying don't do this or don't do that. And so: through a process of studious contemplation of the newly emerged problem, I came to the conclusion: She is as she is - don't exchange her, because it's twice as easy with the devil you know than the devil you don't.

LUKA: That's an interesting way of looking at the problem... Oh, I really have become forgetful. I haven't even offered you a drink.

TONY: That's all right.

LUKA: No, it isn't, you are in my house for the first time, please have a drink.

TONY: I don't drink, at least I didn't until two weeks ago when I found that wedding certificate. Then, I got drunk.

LUKA: You see, sooner or later a man starts drinking. When I stopped going to sea I stopped drinking, so that now I drink only once or twice a week. What's yours, wine or *rakiya* (fruit brandy).

TONY: Well, if I have to, I'll have a brandy, but in a small glass.

LUKA (*putting a bottle of brandy and two glasses on the table*): Make yourself at home. Sit wherever you like.

TONY: Thank you, thank you very much.

LUKA (*handing TONY a glass of brandy*): There you go.

TONY: Thank you.

LUKA: I raise this glass in spite of the life which has made a mess of both of us.

TONY: In spite of life.

LUKA: Here we go, cheers.

TONY: Cheers.

They clink glasses and then drain them. They put down their glasses and look straight ahead, in a long and concentrated manner. Suddenly they look at each other. LUKA asks TONY a mute question with a twist of his head, and TONY nods in assent. LUKA fills the two glasses again, handing one to TONY.

LUKA: Cheers.

TONY: Cheers.

They both down their glasses again. They place the glasses on the table and both look down at the floor. They remain wordlessly like that for a very long time. Suddenly they both look up and their eyes meet. LUKA again asks the question with

a movement of his head, and TONY nods his "yes". LUKA fills the glasses, and gives one to TONY.

LUKA: Should we stop?

LUKA: No way! We are drinking this - to spite cruel fate.

TONY: If it is to spite fate, that's all right.

LUKA: Cheers.

TONY: Cheers.

LUKA and TONY drink their brandy again, bottoms up. They put down their glasses and start staring at the floor. For a long time, in silence. Suddenly their heads come up and their eyes meet. This time TONY asks LUKA the question with his head, and LUKA nods in agreement. TONY pours the brandy into the two glasses, and gives one to LUKA.

TONY: Cheers.

LUKA: Cheers.

Bottoms up. They place their glasses back on the table. Then they suddenly freeze. The lights go down for a moment and a cheerful musical refrain fills the stage. It lasts for some time. The music quietens, and the lights come up. From that moment, they are both well and truly under the influence.

LUKA: I think it would be best, Mister... wait a minute, we should be on first names... Can I call you TONY? And you call me LUKA?

TONY: Of course.

LUKA: We've got a lot in common, and it would be silly for us not to be on first name terms.

TONY: You know what? I've been thinking a lot about you these last few days.

LUKA: You don't say?

TONY: Yes. I imagined what you would be like. I didn't have a photograph, no indication of what you looked like. Whether you were tall or short, whether you had a moustache or not. Actually, I was very curious, but I was still afraid of this meeting, in case it turned out to be a disappointment. I thought: surely my Eve has not been cheating on me all these years with some idiot, with someone I couldn't respect, with someone I wouldn't even want to wipe my shoes on. Can you understand my concern, my fear?

LUKA: Of course I understand. And are you disappointed?

TONY: In what way?

LUKA: With me. Are you disappointed with Eve's choice? Would you wipe your feet on me or not?

TONY: That's a very direct question.

LUKA: Well?

TONY: Well... I like you. What I've seen so far. I would say you are a good man. You have a soul. Understand?

LUKA: Yes. So, let's drink to that. (*LUKA pours their drinks.*)

TONY: It doesn't matter now, one more glass or one less.

LUKA: Cheers.

TONY: Cheers.

They down their drinks.

LUKA: You know what? Your idea to forgive Eve and to go on living with her as though nothing has happened - that's very interesting.

TONY: You think so?

LUKA: I think so. Y'know what? I completely agree with you. At our age, playing at being in love and starting out all over again doesn't make sense. She is - what she is. What you see is what you get. Half a chicken is better than none at all.

Only God knows what other women are like, maybe better, and maybe much worse.

TONY: So, you agree with my view of the crux of the problem.

LUKA: All the way. You are a clever man. Very intelligent.

TONY: Thank you. Since you see things the way I do, that means we will easily come to an agreement that Eve belongs to me.

LUKA: I'm afraid that is just why we won't agree.

TONY: Why?

LUKA: Because you have helped to understand that it wouldn't suit an old goat to be falling in love again, buying flowers, reciting poetry and - forgive me - having to get used to a new wife. Besides, to me, no woman is as beautiful as Eve. Since she came into my life, I have become the happiest man in the world. What would I do without her? I would be nothing, while now I am the husband of a real princess. When I was sick, she looked after me and petted me, and I was good to her and bought her everything she wanted, and I lifted her up into the stars, the way only a real man can do.

TONY: What are you trying to say?

LUKA: I'm saying that the best thing for the three of us would be if you gave up my Eve and left her all to me.

TONY: Just a minute, just a minute, what do you mean that I should give up Eve.

LUKA: Simply this, you tell her you are angry at her for having another husband and that your Slovenian pride does not allow you to go on living with such a whore.

TONY: But that was my suggestion to you!

LUKA: Well, now I'm making the same suggestion to you: give up that woman, she's below you.

TONY: And what will you do with her?

LUKA: Look, I am a Dalmatian, we don't take women too seriously.

TONY: And you would be willing to forgive her?

LUKA: I would forgive her, but I wouldn't forget.

Silence.

TONY: I feel as if I have been cheated the second time.

LUKA: Why?

TONY: First my wife cheats me, and now her husband wants to.

LUKA: I don't want to cheat anyone. I just think that the best thing for the three of us would be for you to give up my wife.

TONY: But she's **my** wife.

LUKA: She's **yours** from your perspective, but she **mine** from mine. To sum it up, leave our wife alone.

TONY: Listen, friend, that's not at all honest on your part.

LUKA: What's not honest?

TONY: That you are claiming my solution to the problem as your own.

LUKA: You listen to me, pal, nobody has ever told me in my whole life that I'm dishonest, and I certainly won't allow that to someone who turns out to have been sleeping with my wife. Good Lord, you should be ashamed to look me in the eye, rolling in the hay with my wife and then talking about honesty?!

TONY: Excuse me, my friend, excuse me. Let us look at the facts: I married Eve five years ago and you married her **four** years ago. From the legal point of view, my marriage is valid and yours is not.

LUKA: You Slovenians only care about the facts, so it's easy for you to be right all the time. Let's look at the feelings here: the feelings tell us that I fell in love with Eve **six** years ago.

TONY: It was five with me. That means that she was already messing around with you.

LUKA: There, you see.

Silence.

TONY: Let's try to talk straight.

LUKA: Go ahead.

TONY: Will you leave Eve?

LUKA: No. (*Silence.*) What about you? Will you leave her?

TONY: No, I won't.

Silence.

LUKA: What now?

TONY: It looks like a stalemate.

LUKA: Yes, it certainly does.

Silence.

TONY: Do you have any suggestions about how we can decide whose Eve will be?

LUKA: We could arm-wrestle and whoever wins takes her as his wife.

TONY: No, I can't agree to that, I know who would win.

LUKA: Do you want us to play cards, and whoever wins - she's his?

TONY: For goodness sake, LUKA, we are not in the Wild West.

LUKA: Well then, you suggest something.

TONY: I can't think of anything.

LUKA: But you won't accept my suggestions. Let's have another drink while we think of something.

TONY: That's a good idea.

LUKA pours, and they clink their glasses and empty them.

LUKA: You know what? I like you.

TONY: And I like you. I think Eve is a woman with refined taste. The two of us are a special breed of men, we have a particular sensibility.

LUKA: We are a pair of fools.

TONY: What do you mean?

LUKA: I think we are the type they call fools. If we weren't fools, how could she have tweaked our noses for so long.

TONY: Well now, perhaps we are fools with one part of our beings, but good people with the other.

LUKA: According to the rule: a good man and a fool are born brothers.

TONY: I never learnt that rule. What did you say? "A good man plus a fool equals...?"

LUKA: ... two born brothers.

TONY: Very interesting.

LUKA: I would say very sad.

Silence.

TONY: You know, I was very hurt when I found out about you. That day was the saddest day in my life - a day of mourning. That was the first time in my life that I

wanted to commit suicide. I even started thinking about the cheapest way to do it. I started asking around about the price of a pistol, and the price of a meter of rope.

LUKA: Please, my friend, don't talk about suicide, it hasn't come to that.

TONY: I know now that I was just exaggerating. But then, on the day of that bitter discovery, my feelings just took hold of me. The next day I managed to be more rational. On the second day I even said: "It would be better if she committed suicide". So I said to myself: "Whatever, life is still beautiful".

LUKA: That's the way.

TONY: The first day I even thought about how it would be best if I killed that other husband.

LUKA: Me?

TONY: I didn't know then that it was you.

LUKA: You would kill me?

TONY: I didn't know you then, you were an abstract creature drooling over my wife. You understand? My imagination was working overtime and I thought you must be handsome and different, so I became jealous. That's human enough. Later, when I was thinking rationally, I said to myself: I am not crazy. If I kill that piece of shit, even with justification, they will send me to prison for at least five years.

LUKA: You called me a piece of shit?

TONY: No, not you, not now, not the person I know and respect but that other imaginary one, drooling over my wife. You see?

LUKA: Yes, I see.

TONY: I really suffered imagining her in your arms. That's human, isn't it? I think you can understand my feelings.

LUKA: Yes, I can, I can. (*Silence.*) I'd like to ask you something. Something about you and Eve. I hope you won't get angry, I hope you can understand that human frailty we call curiosity.

TONY: What is it?

LUKA: How often did you two...?

Silence.

TONY: How often what?

LUKA: How often did you do it?

Silence.

TONY: Ah, that?

LUKA: Yes, that, how often did you do it?

TONY: Once.

LUKA: Once?

TONY: Yes, once.

LUKA: Once a week?

TONY: No. Once a month.

LUKA: Once a month?

TONY: Yes.

LUKA: Well, you didn't put yourself out much.

TONY: Well... (*Silence.*) It was always at the beginning of the month, after payday. We did that once a month, and the other twice a month.

LUKA: What other?

TONY: You know. The other.

LUKA (*not understanding a word*): Ah yes, the other. (*Silence.*) So you did it three times a month?

TONY: What three times?

LUKA: You did it three times a month.

TONY: No. We did it once a month, and we did the other twice a month. (*Silence. LUKA doesn't understand anything, but does not want to admit it.*) Understand?

LUKA: Yes, I understand - that once, and the other two times.

TONY: That's right. (*Silence.*) It was probably the same with you.

LUKA: Probably. What are you referring to?

TONY: Well, just as often, or just as rarely.

LUKA: Yes, of course, the same as you. (*Silence.*) I'd like to ask you something else, if you don't mind.

TONY: Ask away, don't hold back. The two of us have becoming intimate buddies today.

LUKA: Well, I'm interested in what your marriage was like. How did you get on? In ordinary everyday life? But sincerely.

Silence.

TONY: I'll be very frank with you, if you promise you will tell me, too.

LUKA: Of course - frankness deserves frankness. (*Silence.*) Come on, tell me.

TONY: There's probably not much to tell. You know our Eve: often away, rarely at home. When I ask: why aren't you at home more, she says: why do you even ask, you male pig, don't you know what emancipation is, and you do know, don't you, that my salary is three times as big as yours and that we would have nothing in the house if I didn't work so much?

LUKA: She could never stand being criticised.

TONY: I kept the house tidy, our house was cleaner than a military hospital. Every afternoon I vacuumed, once a week I washed and ironed the laundry. I washed and wiped the dishes. But she wasn't satisfied with that.

LUKA: Why not?

TONY: She said I wasn't a real husband because I didn't know how to cook, and she earned three times as much as me and that we would all have died of hunger long ago on my pay.

LUKA: Don't you really know how to cook?

TONY: I don't know how and I don't like cooking. I tried a few times, but I just don't have a feeling for cooking - everything I make turns out terrible, no colour, no aroma and no taste.

LUKA: And Eve likes to eat well.

TONY: What was worst of all was that she wouldn't let me go to the basketball matches when she was at home.

LUKA: Do you like basketball?

TONY: Ah, very much. There's no sport like it. What about you?

LUKA: I never miss a match when the home team is playing in Split. But if Eve is at home, I can't go. She won't let me.

TONY: When I think about it, I think it's fair to say that Eve has taken the best years of my life.

LUKA: Ah, yes. It's really sad to listen to your story. You really have suffered a lot with that woman.

TONY: A lot. (*Silence.*) Tell me.. how did you get to know Eve?

LUKA: What do you mean?

TONY: How did it happen?

LUKA: Ah, that? Are you really interested?

TONY: Yes.

LUKA: Well, it was a lovely spring day when the blossoms on the trees were fearful of the moment when they would blow off the trees into the abyss. My soul was somehow restless, my heart was fluttering, my left eyebrow quivered from time to time for no reason. I felt the coming days would change my life completely. And it happened. One morning while the rays of the sun were forcing their way to the cobwebby treetops of the sleepy birch trees, finding their way into human hearts, and while the cheerful birds were chirping away and making human lives worth living, that fateful morning I was strolling along, almost hovering over the ground, or taking easy steps, touching the road with the tops of my toes... well, I was passing by a public toilet, feeling so much but thinking nothing, and I suddenly heard a voice: "Hey, mister!". It was a woman's voice. But I paid no attention because I thought: I am certainly not the lucky man a woman would be calling mister, but the voice spoke again, shouting this time: "Hey, mister". I stopped. I turned around, And my eyes saw a still relatively young woman. She was holding an ordinary plastic wallet. It was Eve, whose name I didn't know then. She said: "Hey, mister, did you lose this wallet?" I said: "No, I didn't", and she said to me: "I think you dropped it". I said to her: "No, I didn't. I have never had a wallet like that", and she replied: "So what should I do now, you are my only witness, you have to help me". And then I suggested she take it to the police station, and she said: "Only with your help, you're my only witness, the police could think I took something out of the wallet, if there is anything valuable inside". So we opened the wallet together, and found two bank-notes of not much value inside, and we went to the police station, where the sergeant said we need not have bothered because it was so little money, and after we came out of the police building, she suggested - guess what?

TONY: That you go to the movies.

LUKA: How did you guess?

TONY: Just lucky, I suppose.

LUKA: She suggested we go to the movies, and I thought I would die of happiness. My heart was bursting out of my chest and ready to beat outside of my body, free of all restraint.

TONY: Nicely put.

LUKA: Yes. (*Silence.*) Can I ask you something very personal.

TONY: Of course you can, anything.

LUKA: You know what? When I meet anyone new - man or woman - I want to ask them a very personal question, I start thinking about when and how that person lost their virginity.

TONY: That interests you.

LUKA: Yes, it does. The answers are always interesting, and they are always so funny, and unpredictable, sad or joyful, cheerful, unusual or just banal.

TONY: And that interests you in my case?

LUKA: Especially in yours.

TONY: I have never spoken about it to anyone.

LUKA: I am your best friend.

TONY: My very best?

LUKA: If not the best, then certainly your most special friend.

TONY: You see...

LUKA: Indiscretion and confidentiality - guaranteed. Right from the beginning, with all the details.

TONY: It was at the celebration of the 10th anniversary of our graduation.

LUKA: The 10th anniversary?

TONY: Yes. I am not a very sociable person, I hardly ever drink. But everyone there was guzzling and then I started to drink some red juice. After the 6th glass I realised that it was some sort of liquor. Suddenly I became drunker than I had ever

been. So I asked a former classmate to help me and to take me out into the fresh air. My legs were simply giving way. Mayda weighed more than a hundred kilos and I knew she was someone you could lean on... in moments of intoxication. She put her arm under my arms and around my back and half-carried me out into the garden. But going along the path in the garden she bumped into a rock and fell onto the grass, and since she was holding me up I fell on top of her - and that's how I lost my virginity.

LUKA: With fat Mayda?!

TONY: That rock was to blame.

LUKA: A rock, you say.

TONY: Yes, a rock. And I was drunk. But I fell onto something soft. She was soft all over. To put it simply: I fell into her. (*Silence.*) And what about you? How did you lose your virginity?

LUKA: It was a long time ago - on my twelfth birthday.

TONY: Your twelfth birthday!

LUKA: Yes, my twelfth birthday.

TONY: I read somewhere that you Dalmatians mature on average earlier than us continentals, but you don't have to lie to me.

LUKA: I'm not lying, really...

TONY: Come on, we're not children.

LUKA: No, truly, it was on my twelfth birthday.

TONY: It might have been on your birthday, but I can't believe it was on your twelfth.

LUKA: All right then - it wasn't my twelfth.

TONY: That's better. And now tell me the whole truth and nothing but.

LUKA: It was on my twenty-fourth birthday, a year before I went to sea.

TONY: What happened?

LUKA: That year I worked a lot. There are plenty of jobs while the tourist season is on. And then, somewhere in autumn, I had a lot of money saved up so a friend and I decided to go to Paris for a week.

TONY: Is that where it happened?

LUKA: Yes, there. As soon as we arrived in Paris I knew that this was going to be something special. That something would make my stay there extraordinary. I felt it was about time that I got to know the female sex, and became a man who knows the secret. And then, on the second day at the pension where we were staying, I met a lovely student from England. She was there with her sister. Everyone staying at the pension ate breakfast together. It was included in the price, of course. That Tuesday I saw her at breakfast and smiled at her, and she smiled back. I could hardly wait for breakfast time on Wednesday. So I looked at her on Wednesday and smiled at her, and she looked at me and smiled at me. Then I could hardly wait for Thursday. And it came and breakfast time came, and we looked at each other and smiled at each other again. Then Friday came, and we smiled at each other, and there was something wild in the air. Something like electricity, something unusual and exciting. Then she finally left her roll and butter and came over to the table where my friend and I were sitting and asked: "Is this place free?" I said: "Yes". And she sat down.

TONY: And?

LUKA: And then she started talking with my friend, and he with her. Then they sent me across the street to buy some cigarettes, and then I had to go again to buy matches. And when I went to buy a newspaper, they agreed to go out in the evening to a disco. That evening, after they came back from the disco, my friend and that English girl asked me to leave the room so that they could... do you understand me?

TONY: I understand.

LUKA: I left the room and went to the nearest whore-house - and that's where I lost my virginity.

TONY: That's sad, really sad.

LUKA: No it isn't: short reckonings make long friends. My friend is still paying child-support to that English girl.

TONY: Ah, I see..

LUKA: Yes. (*Silence.*) Now you tell me how you met Eve.

TONY: I don't think you would find it interesting.

LUKA: Yes, I would.

TONY: No, you wouldn't.

LUKA: Of course I would.

TONY: All right, since you insist. It was on a lovely spring day in Ljubljana, when the blossoms on the trees were fearful of the moment when they would blow off the trees into the abyss. That fateful morning I was strolling along, almost hovering over the ground, passing a public toilet in Ljubljana when I heard a voice: "Hey, mister!" It was a woman's voice. I turned around and I saw Eve with a plastic wallet in her hand. She said: "Hey, mister, is this your wallet?" And I said: "No". Then we went to the police station, and then to the movies.

LUKA: Little bitch, that's the same trick she played on me.

TONY: Without those feminine wiles only one man in thirty would ever willingly enter into matrimony.

LUKA: What about another drink?

TONY: Good idea. (*LUKA fills their glasses. They down their contents in one gulp.*) Can I ask you everything?

LUKA: About what?

TONY: You know.

LUKA: No I don't.

TONY: About that.

LUKA: Ah, that. Go ahead and ask.

TONY: I'm asking you. I'm asking you now.

(Silence.)

LUKA: What is it that interests you?

TONY: How often did you do it?

LUKA: You mean - that?

TONY: Yes - that. How often?

LUKA: Once.

TONY: Once?

LUKA: Yes, once.

TONY: Once a week or once a month?

LUKA: That depends.

TONY: What do you mean "that depends"?

LUKA: Sometimes once a week, and sometimes once a month. *(TONY doesn't understand a word.)* Understand?

TONY: I undersand, on the whole.

LUKA: What's not clear to you?

TONY: Well, it's clear, only...

LUKA: Only what...?

TONY: Did you love her?

LUKA: As much as a man loves his wife. No more, no less.

TONY: You loved her as much as you were supposed to?

LUKA: Yes.

TONY: No more, no less?

LUKA: Yes.

TONY: That's it... I understand you.

LUKA: It's not my fault...

TONY: I'm not blaming you, not at all.

LUKA: All those years behind us.

TONY: Of course. (*Silence.*) And what about everyday life, your marriage? How did you live with her all those years?

LUKA: Look, I did everything I could to make her the happiest woman in the Republic of Croatia. I cooked the best food in the world for her. My fish soup and chowder are the best in Split. A Hungarian friend said my Sacher torte is a natural wonder, better than the original they make. I can prepare rump steak in 16 different ways. There is a Chinese proverb which says: "A man is as happy as the food he eats is tasty".

TONY: The Chinese are a wise people. I knew a Chinese gentleman once, he was a tank driver by profession, a very fine person.

LUKA: I make paprika stew with Argentine sauces that is fit for a king. My pickled cabbage rolls are so skilfully made that the Slavonians can't believe it.

TONY: All that being so, Eve must have been very satisfied with you.

LUKA: Like hell she was! She was always complaining that the house was untidy, that everything wasn't in its place. She used to shout: "If my salary wasn't three times as much as yours, we would be walking around naked!" And I don't like

tidying up. I don't like vacuuming and washing dishes. When I have to do that I come out in a rash, I get little bumps all over me and my face gets red. The doctor says its all psychosomatic. (*Silence.*) It's not easy living with Eve. Lots of strife - not much that's nice. But despite all that, she has to have the last word.

TONY: It's depressing to listen to. Your life story is really sad.

LUKA: I know, I know. But there's nothing for it, it's just endless suffering. That's the cross I have to bear.

TONY: I can't understand Eve not respecting a cook like you. You are a real artist in the kitchen.

LUKA: And I can't understand Eve not respecting your keeping the house so tidy, that she doesn't respect a man who vacuums every day, and does the laundry and washes the dishes.

TONY: Just like the Chinese proverb says: "A man is as happy as the food he eats is tasty." And you make her so happy, and she doesn't respond by praising you. It's hard to believe. And you do deserve her respect.

LUKA: You deserve her gratitude for everything you do. (*Silence.*)

TONY: You know, when I think about it, when I try to rationalise, I have to conclude that our Eve is a very ungrateful person. (*Silence.*) Having examined the issue again, I have a new proposal.

LUKA: What is it?

TONY: I'll divorce Eve, and you can take her.

LUKA: What's this now?

TONY: I am tired of her complaining, of her holding the reins. Can't do this and you can't do that. I want to be able to go like a free man to play chess with my friends at the cafe, I want to go to the basketball matches, I don't want to spend the rest of my life preparing meals I don't know how to cook.

LUKA: Are you serious?

TONY: Very serious. One should listen to reason every day, and to reason and the heart in crucial moments. And my heart tells me that there is no more room there for Eve.

LUKA: Wait a minute, man, surely you aren't going to start writing love letters at your age and wooing some other woman. Surely you are not going to start falling in love again and making a spectacle of yourself?

TONY: No, I'm not. I have had enough of women and a life of misery.

LUKA: Wait. Just when I have put it all in order in my heart, you are destroying it again. Isn't Eve as she is, with all her faults, better than getting used to some new, unfamiliar battle-axe.

TONY: There won't be any getting used to a new wife. I shall never marry again. I love liberty. I have yearned for freedom all my life. I have admitted it. "Oh lovely, oh dear, oh sweet freedom..." I am finally breathing freely, my own man. No force, no pressure. From now on, my life is my very own.

LUKA: That's interesting. If you are right, you have a fascinating way of analysing life.

TONY: Ah, I am so happy, so liberated. If I had wings I would fly, if I had fins I would swim through the ocean. That must make you happy now. Eve will be all yours and that's what you wanted.

LUKA: I have to think about that a bit...

TONY: But you have already thought about it, and you decided that it was better to stay with her than to try to get used to some new catastrophe.

LUKA: I did think about it, but only once. The real thought comes when you think a second time. One has to listen to one's heart every day, but to one's heart and reason on crucial days.

TONY: Don't falter now, we agreed.

LUKA: We agreed on nothing.

TONY: What do you mean, nothing?

LUKA: I can't agree on living with her again, just like that. It's a major decision. I have to weigh everything carefully.

TONY: What is there to weigh? Just a while ago you were trying to talk me into giving her up to you.

LUKA: That was a while ago, but now is now.

TONY: Don't go against our agreement.

LUKA: We didn't have an agreement.

TONY: How can you avoid your obligations and marital duties now?

LUKA: I love freedom, too. I wanted a real life too, cafes and basketball matches. Don't you understand that I enjoy putting my feet up on the coffee table while I'm watching TV, I'm a man of flesh and blood, and I like to have a glass of wine without anybody nagging about it.

TONY: Why are you complicating things? What does this have to do with your feet on the coffee table?

LUKA: I am not complicating anything. It's just that my eyes have been opened.

TONY: And what do you see?

LUKA: I see my life with Eve in the right light.

TONY: Romantic memories, emotions and things like that.

LUKA: No. Nothing like that.

TONY: What is it you want now?

LUKA: I want liberty. I want a new life. Until now, I have been living in conflict with my freedom-loving nature. *Allora*, it's only now that I've seen that the woman has stolen the best years of my life.

TONY: And what's your conclusion?

LUKA: It's simple. I think it would be best for the three of us that I break off the relationship, and that you and Eve go on living the way you did.

TONY: Aha! So that's it?!

LUKA: That's it.

TONY: That's not fair.

LUKA: Why not?

TONY: You have stolen my proposal and turned it around in your favour. I don't agree and I insist that you continue living with Eve.

LUKA: Never, not in a thousand years.

TONY: But you have to.

LUKA: I won't do it.

TONY: You must!

LUKA: Listen, pal, I won't live with her anymore. I have made up my mind. You do whatever you like. You can be with her, or not - it doesn't concern me.

TONY: But it's not all that simple.

LUKA: Why not?

TONY: One of us has to stay married to her. There are three of us, and two apartments. One of us has to stay with her for technical reasons.

LUKA: I didn't think of that.

TONY: I don't want to live with her.

LUKA: I don't want to live with her either.

TONY: So we've got a standoff again.

They sit there in silence, thoughtfully looking at the floor.

LUKA: Listen... let's look at the facts. You have been married to her for five years, and I for only four. Your marriage is valid, while ours is illegal.

TONY: Yes, but you have been with her for six years, while I have been with her for only five. Apart from that, I have definitely made up my mind: I won't live with her any more! That's my decision and its irrevocable.

LUKA: Irrevocable?

TONY: Irrevocable.

LUKA: So we are back to a stalemate again.

TONY: Yes.

Silence.

LUKA: Two men, one woman, two apartments, the men don't want to live with the woman. Where's the solution? Put it as an equation and find the way out, you are the rationalist, come on, think of something.

TONY: It isn't always so easy. (*Silence.*) Two men, one woman, two flats. There is no solution to this equation. It's insoluble. We are tragic creatures, because happiness is impossible in any of the combinations.

LUKA: There must be a solution.

TONY: No, there isn't.

LUKA: Oh, poor me, does my whole life have to remain hell on earth, pain and suffering?

TONY: Ahhh!

They both fall silent. Black thoughts torture them as they stare at the floor. The silence lasts for some time, until TONY jumps up and shouts...

TONY: Eureka!!!

LUKA: What is it?

TONY: Eureka! I've got it!

LUKA: What language is that?

TONY: I have the solution!

LUKA: Really?!

TONY: I've got it!

LUKA: What is it? Tell me!

TONY: Listen. Please listen and don't interrupt.

LUKA: Go ahead.

TONY: Look, you are a good man, a positive, gentle person, isn't that so?

LUKA: Yes.

TONY: You see, you like to cook, but you don't like tidying up, isn't that so?

LUKA: Yes, it is.

TONY: Look, I'm a positive person, too, good and reliable, aren't I?

LUKA: Yes.

TONY: I enjoy tidying the house, vacuuming it, washing dishes, but I don't know how to cook, isn't that so?

LUKA: Yes.

TONY: I need someone like you and you need someone like me. Right?

LUKA: Right.

TONY: Besides that, we both like basketball, we like to sit chatting in the cafe, we like our freedom.

LUKA: My word, it's all true. I think I'm beginning to understand. What you are saying is that the two of us...?

TONY: That's it.

LUKA: And you think that we could...?

TONY: That's what I believe.

LUKA: When I think about it, you're right. The more I think about it - the more ingenious it becomes.

TONY: I like you, there's something noble about you.

LUKA: I like you too, I think you are honest and completely open.

TONY: I shall take care of the house, wash the dishes, I will do all that. You will be pleased with me.

LUKA: I will cook so well that within a year I will have you on your feet and you will look like a real man, instead of a scarescrow. You will be licking your fingers. But you have to wash the dishes for me every day. You can't cook well when everything is messy and dirty.

TONY: It won't be a problem.

LUKA: So all we have to do is to divorce Eve.

TONY: And to decide on which flat will be ours.

LUKA: Y'know what, I think our relationship has every chance of being the most perfect ever between two people.

TONY: And I feel that I have lost a bad wife, and found a good friend.

LUKA: I will be faithful to you to the grave.

TONY: And so will I. My I kiss you?

LUKA: On the forehead?

TONY: On the forehead.

LUKA: You may.

TONY (*kissing LUKA on the forehead*): I hope you won't have anything against little Matilda living with us.

LUKA: Whaat?! Who?

TONY: Eve's little girl, Matilda. Surely you don't mind if the child is with us?

LUKA: That's out of the question. I can't stand small children.

TONY: But she is already seven years old.

LUKA: I can't stand small children, or middle-sized children, or grown children.

TONY: But Matilda would be unhappy without me, and I would miss her. I can't allow her to go to school without her fresh bread-roll and without clean clothes and her homework done.

LUKA: That child will not enter my home.

TONY: There's nothing for it then. (*Silence.*) My brain is bursting, but I can't think of anything else... Let's have another brandy.

LUKA: Good idea.

LUKA fills their glasses and they drink.

TONY: You know what, if you aren't prepared to take little Matilda into your apartment, I suggest that Matilda and her mother Eve continue living with me, and you live alone. What do you think of that?

LUKA: Where did that come from?

TONY: I can't live without Matilda, and Matilda needs a mother and a father - and you don't need Eve anyway.

LUKA: No, that's out of the question.

TONY: Why?

LUKA: It's out of the question for me to be left like a dried-out old tree. I lived alone for long enough and I don't want to be a hermit again. I can see that you are trying everything to double-cross me and to take the wife without whom my life makes no sense.

TONY: But isn't she the same person who forbids you to go to the cafe and to basketball matches?

LUKA: Come on, for goodness sake, there are no perfect women. I admire Eve because she has her own opinions, and she has strength, because she's a real woman. I like trying to tame her, and, believe me, she likes being tamed. I won't let you have Eve.

TONY: And I am going to the police to report this case. Your marriage is invalid. I will have it annulled in court.

LUKA: You won't dare because if you do they will charge Eve with bigamy and she'll get a long prison sentence, and little Matilda will have to grow up without her mother, and you will be publicly humiliated.

TONY: You'll be publicly humiliated, too.

LUKA: Yeah, you're right... God forbid that my neighbours find out, I would die of shame.

TONY: The two of us will have to unravel this ourselves, otherwise we'll be the ones who will suffer the most. And to be honest with you, I wouldn't like to hurt Eve. You know, that Nicola I was telling you about, the one who made the baby and then threw her out like a dog - Eve really loved him very much. He hurt her badly and I don't want my Eve to suffer again, I don't want her to be unhappy.

LUKA: I don't want Eve to suffer either. I love her more than I love myself, I adore her, she is my little innocent, the balm on my wounds, the comfort of my difficult days. I don't want to hurt Eve. I want her to be happy and I want to be happy with her, and you will never be able to offer her what I can.

TONY: That's possible, but remember, my friend, the warmth of a real home that I give her and her daughter is something she could never have from you, and that is why I will not give her up for anything in this world.

LUKA: And I won't give her up to you, either.

TONY: But we have to decide how we can all remain happy, without hurting anyone. I even wish you happiness, my dear friend, but in the first place I want happiness for Eve and for Matilda - and for me.

LUKA: Just a minute. You said you want us all to be happy and that no-one suffers, isn't that right?

TONY: That's right.

LUKA: Can't you see, pal, that for all of us to be happy, things have to stay the way they were.

TONY: What do you mean?

LUKA: Before you found that bloody wedding certificate, we were all happy, Eve and I, and you, and Matilda, isn't that so?

TONY: Yes, it is.

LUKA: Well, then. You go back to your Ljubljana and don't say a word to Eve, and I won't tell her I know anything about you, and we can all be happy again, just the way we were.

TONY: My goodness, you're right, but...

LUKA: There are no buts! We can't live without Eve, and if your neighbours find out about me, or mine find out about you, we won't be able even to go to the corner store for the shame of it all, and our wife will end up in the slammer.

TONY: You're right. We mustn't even tell her that we have found out. We will turn a blind eye. She has kept her secret, and from now on the two of us will have our secret that she knows nothing about. I am going straight back to Ljubljana. I will have to think of something to explain my absence. Well then, God be with you, my friend, I wish you all the best.

LUKA: As I do you, buddy. And keep our secret safe.

They shake hands. They kiss in the Russian style. TONY turns towards the door.

LUKA: Wait!

TONY: What is it?

LUKA: I have some dried figs and fresh grapes and I thought Matilda might like them.

TONY: LUKA, God bless you.

Act 2.

The Return of My Wife's Husband

Luka is sitting alone in his wine-vault kitchen, peeling potatoes. There is a tape-recorder on table beside him and we can hear the soft, tender sounds of a male klapa-group Dalmatian song. The kitchen is a mess. The front-door bell rings.

LUKA: Who's there?

The bell rings again.

LUKA: Didn't you hear me: who is it?

Toni comes in carrying his briefcase. Luka leaps up from his chair, looking as though he has just seen the Prince of Darkness.

LUKA: You!

TONI: Me.

LUKA: Is it really you? Toni, is it you, my wife's husband?

TONI: Yes, it's me.

LUKA: It must be two years since last time, and I wasn't a 100 percent sure it was you.

TONI: We last saw each other two years and four months ago. I am glad to find you well, you look great, my friend.

Toni holds out his hand to Luka. Luka shakes it briefly, but then releases his hand abruptly and takes a step back.

LUKA: Hang on there - I don't get it, there's something wrong here.

TONY: You're surprised and happy to see me.

LUKA: Well, I am and I'm not. Listen, buddy, didn't we agree never to meet again?

TONY: Yes, we did.

LUKA: Didn't we promise each other that we would live out our entire lives with our wife, just the way we did before we found out she was married to you and to me, and that we would never reveal to her that we know about each other? Isn't that what we agreed?

TONY: That's absolutely right.

LUKA: Then what the devil are you doing coming here without so much as an invitation? Apart from the fact that Eve will be arriving home at any moment. Do you want her to see you here with me, and to find out that I know about you and you know about me?

TONY: Listen, Luka, she's at the Split traffic office now and it will take at least half an hour before she comes home - and when she does, she'll hear what's coming to her from me, and, my god, from you.

LUKA: How do you know where she is now?

TONY: Because I traveled in the same train with her from Ljubljana to Zagreb, and then from Zagreb to Split. I had to disguise myself in the train and run for cover in the wash-room a couple of times when she came along pushing her trolley, offering newspapers and coffee. Luckily, she didn't catch sight of me.

LUKA: You traveled with her from Ljubljana to Split? And took the risk that she'd see you?

TONY: I had to do it for both of us... for our honor and our happiness.

LUKA: What honor are you talking about now? You know as well as I do that we didn't have much honor left from the moment we found out that she was living with both of us. But, there you are... we agreed that everything should stay the way it had been, under the condition that she never found out, and that we never told her that we knew about her secret. And now you turn up here with some story about our miserable happiness... that you have completely threatened by coming here.

TONY: Stop for a minute, Luka, and listen to me.

LUKA: I'm listening, I'm listening, and just make it quick before Eve comes home.

TONY: Luka, you know that when I found out two years ago that Eve has another husband, that she has you, you know it was a terrible shock for me.

LUKA: It was an even bigger one for me; it's an even bigger disgrace here in Dalmatia than it is in Slovenia. You are already part of the West, but they would make a laughing stock of me here in Split if anyone found out that my wife has another husband.

TONY: You see, Luka, when I met you I saw that you were a good man, that you were broad-minded, that you had a positive outlook on life. And I was pleased that **you** are my wife's husband, and not somebody else.

LUKA: I liked you, too, when I met you, and that's why we decided that everything should stay just the way it was, that we don't disgrace ourselves in public, that our wife doesn't end up in jail for bigamy, and that her daughter Mathilda, who you love as your own, does not lose her mother.

TONY: We both agreed on all that.

LUKA: Aha, and we also agreed not to meet again and that both of us would live as if the other one didn't exist... and you are putting all that in danger with your reckless arrival here. Eve doesn't know that we know what we know, and when she finds out we know, we will lose our advantage over her. And that's why...

TONY: Luka!

LUKA: ...I think it would be better for both of us...

TONY: Luka!

LUKA: ...that's you immediately go back where you came from and that...

TONY: Luka!

LUKA: I'm here. What is it?

TONY: Luka, she's cheating on us.

LUKA: She's what? Who?

TONY: She's cheating on us.

LUKA: Of course she's cheating on us... she cheats on you with me, and on me with you. We are already used to it.

TONY: She's cheating on both of us with someone else.

LUKA: What did you say? Take it back! I don't believe it!

TONY: I don't have to believe it. I know!

LUKA: You know?

TONY: It's all checked and definite.

Luka grabs his chest where his heart is.

LUKA: May her mother's milk curdle! I'll trample her! I'll kill her!

TONY: Calm down, calm down.

LUKA: Oh, what a whore! I'll spill her guts on the floor. I'll throw vinegar in her eyes. I'll trample her! I'll kill her!

TONY: Calm down, Luka, calm down now.

LUKA: I forgave her for having you - but she won't two-time me with **two** men... that's too much.

TONY: Calm down, Luka.

LUKA: I can't calm down.

TONY: I was as enraged as you are, but I calmed down. I told myself: hang on there, Tony, a man is a reasonable creature, don't rush in to something today that you'll regret all your life. Be responsible, think of yourself, of Eve, of little Mathilda and think of Luka - after all, he is your wife's husband and he's your friend. This doesn't concern only you; it concerns him, too. It concerns both of you.

LUKA: That's right. You've got it right - she is our wife in common, and the decision has to be made in common, too. Here - I suggest we strangle her and bury her in the garden. *(He raises his hand.)* Let's vote on it.

TONY: Wait, wait. Be calm. Have a shot, you were always more sober when you had something to drink.

Luka pours fruit brandy into a glass. He hands the glass to Tony, and swigs himself straight from the bottle, gives a deep sigh and sits down.

TONY: There, isn't that better? Are you concentrated?

LUKA: Yes, I am. Even though every time I find out she's cheating on me, it's equally painful. Experience doesn't seem to be of much help here.

TONY: Luka, my friend, now we need a clear head more than ever. Suppress those emotions.

LUKA: You're right - I'll suppress them just a little more. *(He tips the bottle and takes a good long swig from it.)* Who is he?

TONY: Her dearly departed Nikola. Little Mathilda's father.

LUKA: The devil it is - surely she's not making out with the dead, with ghosts.

TONY: Unfortunately, Nikola is only dead as far as we are concerned. I've seen him with my own eyes. He's got more life in him than the two of us.

LUKA: How long has this been going on?

TONY: Six months.

LUKA: Holy mother! The husbands are always the last to know. Didn't that Nikola live in Nova Gradiška?

TONY: He used to - now he lives in Zagreb. He has his own tavern and all that...

LUKA: So she lied about him being dead?

TONY: She lied to him, too. Even more than she did to us. I checked it all out. He doesn't know anything about us.

LUKA: Six months? Half a year!

TONY: It's been going on for a full six months, except it's more one of those physical relationships.

LUKA: What does that mean?

TONY: She doesn't live with him the way she does with us. She drops in on him for the monkey business, when she has a stopover in Zagreb, between two trains. As far as I could find out, she's using him to break the monotony of our marriages.

LUKA: I'll smash her head in! While we are going through the motions of a stable family life, she fulfills herself sexually somewhere else... That means she's selling us short, that the two of us aren't good enough for her anymore.

TONY: Maybe we're not.

LUKA: You think so?

TONY: Yes, I do.

LUKA: Of course I don't know about you, but I'm still all a man should be. Everything I have is still in good working order. You know what I'm saying?

TONY: Yes, I understand. But, you know, modern women - it's all different today. Not like it used to be. Women were normal once, but today: they have migraine, menopause, and affairs. Everything's changed.

LUKA: So you know for sure that she's cheating on you with this third man?

TONY: I'm a hundred percent sure.

LUKA: Y'know what?

TONY: What?

LUKA: I'm going to jump out that window.

TONY: What?

LUKA: I'm going to jump out that window.

TONY: Don't do that, please don't.

Tony stands between Luka and the window.

LUKA: I'm going to, don't try to stop me, I've had enough of life and slaving in the kitchen and a woman who two-times me. I have to jump now, while I have the inspiration. Let me go! That window is the only way out of this situation. If I had been cleverer, I would have jumped when I was still a child and I wouldn't have had to have all the pain of life with this woman. How I have suffered. Farewell, Tony, good-bye my kitchen, how many dinners I've cooked here. Give my regards to that floozy of ours and tell her I am happy that I have killed myself and that I'll visit her at night as the most horrible vampire and frighten her when she is in bed with another man. Farewell forever!

TONY: Stop, man, for goodness sake!

LUKA: No, I have to, don't try to stop me.

TONY: Don't do it

LUKA: I will, too.

TONY: Don't.

LUKA: Leave me be, I will. I have to jump.

TONY: Don't be so angry, my friend - we are on the ground floor - two feet from the ground. From that height you can't even break your leg, let alone kill yourself.

LUKA: Aha - yes, of course - I forgot. I've lost my reason at this bad news. Yes, you're right, the ground floor. I'm going up to the attic to jump from there.

TONY: You are not being fair, Luka, you are not a real friend.

LUKA: Why?

TONY: Do you want me to have to collect the pieces from the road. Do you want me to be the on-the-spot witness of your terrible end? If you have to kill yourself, pick a civilized way to do it. Something hygienic. Be a modern suicide - so that even Eve can't say you were a primitive right to the very end.

LUKA: You're right. You know what, you're right... I know! I know!

TONY: What do you know?

LUKA: I know how I'll do it, so that's it has style.

TONY: How?

LUKA: I slice my wrists?

TONY: Come on - that's even worse. Phooey - all that sticky stuff.

LUKA: And it takes so long. A long, long time. But I have another idea. I've got it.

TONY: No more, please.

LUKA: I've got it, yes, I have.

TONY: Tell me.

LUKA: I'll take a nail and push it into the electric plug. And it will all be over. I'll use as much power in two seconds as we usually do in two months - and she'll have to pay the bill. That will be my revenge.

TONY: Pull yourself together, Luka. Why should you die? You didn't cheat on her; she cheated on you. Understand?

LUKA: What do you mean?

TONY: Why should you kill yourself? You're everything a man should be. She's the sinner. I didn't come here to punish us; I wanted us to take a stand against her as the transgressor.

LUKA: Y'know what?

TONY: What?

LUKA: You Slovenians really are clever. She's the one we should throw from the attic, she should have her wrists slashed, and the nail between her fingers should be pushed into the plug. She's the one who should be punished, not me. To trample on her and kill her - that's what we have to do.

TONY: But Luka!

LUKA: What is it now?

TONY: I'm not planning to go to jail for some...

LUKA: ...whore!

TONY: That's right.

LUKA: Neither am I.

TONY: So, as you can see, the situation is quite complex.

LUKA: That's what our politicians say when they're in the shit: "The situation is complex".

TONY: We have to examine our feelings in a sober fashion. We have to be equal to the situation. So that we don't do anything we will regret all our lives. Despite everything, we have to ask ourselves what it is we feel for this wife of ours.

LUKA: It's better you don't ask me what I feel. After all she's done to me, all I feel is angry and offended.

TONY: I'm offended too, and I'm angry, but we have to decide together what to do to her, without losing her. Because I have to be honest with you - I don't want to lose her. I don't know about you.

LUKA: I wouldn't want to lose her, either. I mean, she's dear to me as a wife, despite everything. I wouldn't know how to live without her.

TONY: We are too old to start looking for a new wife and falling in love all over again.

LUKA: That's right. That's absolutely right.

TONY: But still, I'm not prepared to tolerate her having this deceased Nikola.

LUKA: I won't tolerate that either.

TONY: I'm glad we agree. You see: in my opinion this decision, whatever it is... in my opinion we have to make this decision together.

LUKA: I agree and I appreciate you respecting me and treating me like a human being and a friend. I respect you, too.

TONY: We have to come to a common attitude together, to discuss the situation and take our position. So there you are, my friend: let's hear how you see things and your proposal for a solution.

A long silence follows. Luka is in a tough situation, confused by all he has heard.

LUKA: You have always been constructive.

TONY: That's true.

LUKA: You have had more time to think about all this...

TONY: True enough, but still...

LUKA: And you must have come here with some opinion, with some good proposal.

TONY: Yes! That's quite right!

LUKA: Well then, say something!

TONY: I didn't want to be pushy, I thought you should go first.

LUKA: Come on, what's your opinion.

TONY: Well then... my opinion is that, despite everything she's done - my opinion is that her daughter Mathilda need a father and a mother. And that there should be no staff changes in our apartment in Ljubljana. Our family functions very well. It's also my opinion that there are no particular problems or differences of opinion here in Split in your family, and that you are satisfied with your wife.

LUKA: Yes, I am that. You know what our Eve is like - she's got an unfortunate nature, but there is no sweeter woman in the world as far as I am concerned. If she were to walk out of my life, I would become a real hobo.

TONY: So, there it is. She suits the both of us, and we agreed two years ago to carry on together.

LUKA: What else could we have done?

TONY: But I am not prepared to accept this third one!

LUKA: Neither am I. So what are we going to do?

TONY: Here's my suggestion! We will let her know that we know about each other, and we will scold her for it. But we'll tell her we are prepared to tolerate each other. And then we tell her we know about Nikola, but that we are not prepared to tolerate him, and that we demand she breaks it off with him immediately.

LUKA: Yeah, but what if she refuses?

TONY: If she refuses, we can easily report her to the police for bigamy... We hold all the trumps.

LUKA: You're right! You know what, I'm glad that Eve married you... you are always so constructive and clever. Just now, you said what I think, because, in my opinion...

The front-door bell rings.

LUKA & TONY: She's here!

LUKA: Hurry up, get in there (*pointing at the utility room door*).

TONY: Isn't it better that we both wait for her here?

The bell.

LUKA: No way. You listen behind the door, you won't be sorry. She'll get what's coming to her.

TONY: All right.

Tony goes behind the door leading to the utility room, and Luka goes to open the front door for Eve. He opens the door and Eve comes in holding her travel bag in on hand and some plastic bags in the other.

LUKA: There you go. Welcome, sweetheart.

EVE: Hold these things, will you. My arms are falling off, I'm loaded up like a donkey.

LUKA: Here.

EVE: And it takes you have an hour to lift your butt and open the door. I had to press the bell with my head - and you just take your time. Nothing bothers you, you lazy Dalmatian. I have had enough of trains and travelling. I do enough work for three people so that things are better for us, and he can't even open the door. (*Eve sits down and takes a deep breath. She notices the bottle of fruit brandy.*) What this - you've been drinking again?

LUKA: I had a guest.

EVE: As soon as I'm not here, you have guests and exchange visits with the neighbors. While I work and bleed, you treat yourself.

LUKA: It wasn't me, it...

EVE: Maybe you even brought some women here. Maybe you had a yearning for your old slags. Maybe your own wife isn't good enough any more. I wouldn't be surprised to open the door one day to find an orgy going on here.

LUKA: Come on, my dear wife...

EVE: Don't 'my dear wife' me. Genuine, honest women like me are always the ones who come to grief.

LUKA: I...

EVE: But just you remember, you lazy Dalmatian, if I ever find any woman here, if I ever find out that you have had guests of the female sex here - I'll break both your legs. If you return my fidelity and love with treachery, you'll regret it to the grave.

LUKA: But I...

EVE: Stop interrupting me! Don't lecture me. He always has something to say. Be quiet! You know that you are smartest when you say nothing. I can't get a word in edgeways in this house, he always knows better than me.

LUKA: I think that...

EVE: There he goes again! He has something to say again, something to add! Did I ask you anything? Can I ever have a chance to say something in this house? To say something about all my woes, about my problems, about my feelings? Other women have masseurs, tennis, riding lessons... And what do I have? You! First prize in the lottery! Dear God, how could you marry me off to a sailor? An ex-sailor? Why does it always happen that gentle, subtle women like me have to end up in the paws of Neanderthals? Why has God punished me, why does this cross have to be carried on the innocent shoulders of an honest woman?

LUKA: You see, I...

EVE: Don't you know any other word except 'I'? It's always 'I'! I'm glad your parents taught you to talk, but I would be even happier if they had taught you to listen. To listen to your wife when she comes home worn out from her journey - that's the the very least of good manners and tolerance I expect from you, ask and demand from you... In any case, you can help me take off my shoes.

LUKA: It wouldn't ...

EVE: Come on, what are you waiting for? You know I can't bend over because of this pain in my back. (*Luka kneels down in front of her.*) Be careful. Gently. Oh, how my feet hurt. (*Luka removes her left shoe.*) Ow! That hurts! Idiot! You don't even know how to take off a shoe. You're so rough! Come on, take off the other

one, but be careful this time, understand? (*Luka takes of her left shoe.*) Ow! How that hurts! Ow! You have ruined my feet, you brute. You have no feelings. You know nothing, you haven't got a clue in the world. All you know is how to sit in Ante's tavern and drink wine and gape. Gape, gape, gape... I can't stand people who spend their lives squatting in taverns and gaping at the vulgar waitresses. I can't stand those primitive seamen who don't know how to appreciate a woman's soul, a woman's tenderness and subtlety. As a girl, I felt sorry for all those women who married sailors. But now I know there is something worse than being married to a sailor.

LUKA: What that?

EVE: Living with an ex-sailor. There is no more miserable human creature than an ex-sailor. Come here and massage my back, I have a crick in my neck, only a massage can save me.

LUKA: I wanted to talk about something with you...

EVE: What is it with you today? You have something to say all the time. You behave as if you are the president at a press conference. Can't you keep quiet. You seem much cleverer then. When you say nothing, you seem to really have something to say. Only when you actually say it, you ruin that impression. But no, he has to chatter on and on and on. Well then, can you make me a gift of just one minute of your silence? Let's see, can you keep quiet for a whole minute? Come on, let's see.

LUKA: All right. I agree. One minute of silence for my wife!

EVE: There, I knew it! I knew you couldn't hold out for even one minute. Come on, massage me. (*Luka approaches her from the back.*) Here around my neck and shoulders. (*Luka starts massaging her.*) That's it, that's it. Gently, you idiot. Why have you stopped? That's it. Ow, that hurts! Careful, a woman is not a football! Yes, that's it, that's it, that's better. Cretin! No, stop! Can't you do anything right? What was I thinking of, I should have married some refined soul, and not you, throwing pearls before swine.

LUKA: Or the other way round.

EVE: What do you mean, the other way round?

LUKA: Swine in front of pearls.

EVE: Why are you talking nonsense?

A short silence.

LUKA: How was your journey?

EVE: How would it be? Since when are you interested? You have never asked before.

LUKA: I'm asking now? How was it?

EVE: Terrible; you know what it's like in a train.

LUKA: And in Ljubljana?

EVE: What in Ljubljana?

LUKA: How was Ljubljana?

EVE: Even worse! Can you just imagine what's it like for a woman, a lady, to sleep in the Railway Hostel, alone, far from her home and her husband. You know the worst thing for me about this job is having to sleep so far away from my home and my husband.

LUKA: Yes, yes... it must be terrible in Ljubljana. You know what? I have an idea. Tomorrow, I'll travel with you to Ljubljana to keep you company, and sleep with you at the Hostel so you won't be so lonely.

EVE: No way.

LUKA: Why not?

EVE: Why should you go to Ljubljana?

LUKA: To make it easier for you, to keep you company.

EVE: Come on, you have work to do here.

LUKA: I'd like to see Ljubljana.

EVE: That's just silly.

LUKA: When the receptionists and the staff see me at the Hostel, when they see your husband, then they will behave much better towards you.

EVE: What are you talking about, Luka - you know my boss doesn't like us to mix our business and private lives.

LUKA: Well, if that's the way it is, I won't go to Ljubljana - although I had thought it would be a good idea to come by bus and to surprise you. Before you go to bed, I knock on your door, and when you say who's there, I say: your little husband. And that would mean at least one night in Ljubljana when you would not have to sleep alone. I'm sure you'd be pleased if I did something like that for your birthday.

EVE: Well yes... although you know I like another type of present... The house is untidy again. As if a bomb fell here!

LUKA: Oh, listen...

EVE: You are the untidiest man in the world. I wouldn't put up with you for two days if you weren't such a good cook.

LUKA: That's how it is... one man is good at one thing, another one at something else, and that's...

EVE: And what has my husband cooked for my lunch?

LUKA: Guess.

EVE: Zuchinni?

LUKA: Nope.

EVE: Fish stew?

LUKA: Nope.

EVE: Fried whiting?

LUKA: Nope.

EVE: Will you just tell me what you've made for lunch.

LUKA: Something completely different. The biggest surprise ever.

EVE: Is it fried or baked?

LUKA: Both fried and baked.

EVE: Aha! Some new delicacy! You know, you old coot, you won me over with your cooking. There's nothing nicer than to come home and find you waiting for me with something tasty to eat. So what is your little wife going to have today?

LUKA: Today my little wife will be having a large, baked and fried NOTHING.

EVE: Whaat?

LUKA: There, that's it!

EVE: Are you joking?

LUKA: No, not at all. I had a guest and I didn't have time to cook lunch.

EVE: Am I supposed to go without lunch because of some idiotic guest?

LUKA: First of all, that guest is no idiot, I even think he's dearer to you than I am, and secondly, even if that guest had not been here, I wouldn't make you lunch.

EVE: What are you talking about? Since I came into the house, you have been acting strangely and speaking nonsense. I have completely spoiled you, and now... And why won't I be getting any lunch?

LUKA: Because you don't deserve any.

EVE: I don't deserve any? You mangy old sea lion... the one I made a man of, you would be nothing without me, and you dare to say I don't deserve any lunch! After I have ruined my stomach in those trains. And why don't I deserve any lunch, in your considered opinion?

LUKA: Because I have become suspicious that you might perhaps have someone there in Ljubljana with whom you do all sorts of things.

EVE: You... think... Are you saying... Where's your proof?

LUKA: I don't have any proof, but I am suspicious.

EVE: Of what... suspicious on what grounds?

LUKA: Well, on the grounds that you did not want me to travel with you to Ljubljana.

EVE: Listen!

LUKA: I am listening.

EVE: Shame on you!

LUKA: Why, when I...

EVE: Shame on you! No-one has ever offended me the way you have just now.

LUKA: But I only...

EVE: That is so low and senseless... You have hurt my female pride, my honour, my good name. For something like that to happen to me, who have been faithful to you from the very first day, and even avoid saying hello to men so as not to hurt your feelings. All you Dalmatians are the same: jealous and lazy. You have gone down in my estimation. If you only knew how much.

LUKA: How much would that be.

EVE: To the very bottom. As a human being and as a man. I have always been disgusted by jealous men whose jealousy was based only on their filthy imaginations... Surely you should know that what we have together is so sacred and worthwhile. How much I care about you, my little teddy bear. I would rather kill myself than even thinking of cheating on you. Our marriage is so.. so...

LUKA: Pure.

EVE: Yes, that's it, pure. From the first day we have been...

LUKA: The ideal cosmic combination.

EVE: Yes, exactly that. As soon as I saw you, I said to myself...

LUKA: ... this is the man I could be faithful to until the grave.

EVE: Yes, that's what I said... Why do you keep on interrupting me?

LUKA: Because I know all your phases and shams by heart.

EVE: How can you speak like that about me? All because I don't want to take you to Ljubljana, because I don't want you to suffer with me in the Railway Hostel, because I don't want my colleagues to think you are just another jealous husband, and that I have to mix my business and private life because of your jealousy. How can you talk about me like that without any proof whatsoever? You know your pussy-cat loves you more than anything in the world, and you know I wouldn't hurt my teddy bear for anything.

LUKA: You really love me best in all the world?

EVE: How can you even doubt it? I really do.

LUKA: And you would do anything I asked you to?

EVE: I would do anything my teddy bear wanted or even thought of.

LUKA: If you really love me so much, then take me with you to Ljubljana.

EVE: There you go again, Luka. I do love you, but I don't want to mix business with pleasure.

LUKA: You don't want to?

EVE: No, I don't. And apart from that, if you ever say that you doubt my honesty again, I shall never speak to you again... never.

LUKA: All right, don't be angry.

EVE: It's easy for you to say: don't be angry. You have no idea how an innocent woman feels when she is falsely accused.

LUKA: All right, forgive me. It was a small fit of jealousy. That only proves I love you. Forgive me. Will pussy-cat forgive her little teddy-bear?

EVE: Well... maybe... if teddy-bear cooks somethings tasty, and if he does it very quickly, because I'm very, very hungry.

LUKA: I'll get something ready now - enough for three!

EVE: Why for three?

LUKA: I told you we have a guest.

EVE: Which guest?

LUKA: A relative of yours has come to visit us.

EVE: My relative! I don't have any relatives.

LUKA: He introduced himself to me as your relative.

EVE: My relative!?! He said we were related?

LUKA: Yes. He told me that he is your husband.

EVE: Whaat!?! You... you... you are joking.

LUKA: No, I'm not. If you have forgotten about him, I can introduce you.

EVE: But, but I...

LUKA: Come out, old buddy, the masks have fallen. *(He opens the door to the utility room, and Tony comes into the kitchen. Eve screams and collapses to the floor.)* She's fainted.

TONY: I would, too, if I was in her place.

LUKA: Quickly, let's give her some water to help her to come to.

TONY: *(taking the glass of water from Luka's hand)*: Wait, my friend, wait. Take it easy. You have just had the pleasure of talking with our wife, and now allow me the same pleasure. When she comes to, I want her to see my face.

LUKA: But maybe...

TONY: Allow me a little chat with my wife, just as you had with yours. Do you agree?

LUKA: All right, of course.

Tony sprinkles water on Eve's face, she lets out a scream and regains consciousness.

EVE: Tony, what are you doing here?!

TONY: Whore!

EVE: I, I...

TONY: You damned whore, you miserable bitch!

EVE: Forgive me, let... let me explain...

TONY: You moral freak, you nymphomaniac, liar, cheat, discard of the female gender...

LUKA: Floozie!

TONY: You don't have to add anything, Luka, because everything I am saying is for both of us.

LUKA: Go right ahead then - in my name, too.

TONY: Serpent, contemptible wretch, good-for-nothing!

EVE: Forgive me, you... you must forgive me, I am no embarrassed.

TONY: And so you should be.

EVE: I am dreaming! This is not really happening! I must be dreaming. You are not really here! Tell me that you aren't...

TONY: No, we're not, we are ghosts!

EVE: What about me, am I alive, am I real, or...

TONY: For the moment, you are real and alive. Just for the moment.

EVE: Why are you two together, why are you together?

TONY: And why are you with the two of us?

EVE: It can't be true, tell me this is not happening.

LUKA: You are the one who is going to tell us if it's true or not, you whore!

EVE: I'll.. I'll... I'll explain everything.

TONY: You'll explain everything?

EVE: Yes, if you let me.

TONY: Come on, then, let's see how you will explain that you married the both of us. Go ahead, explain the motives, the reasons, the causes, the emotions... go ahead.

Silence.

EVE: I don't know where to start.

TONY: How about from the beginning?

EVE: From the beginning?

TONY: Exactly - from the beginning. Explain, if you can, how it is that one husband is more than enough for all the women of Europe, but that you need two. Come on, tell us.

EVE: Well, you see... It's not so easy to explain.

LUKA: And even harder to understand.

EVE: I didn't want... I didn't want to hurt you... either of you. Do you understand?

LUKA: Aha, here it comes. The only a little bit pregnant variant.

TONY: Tell us, Eve, why did you do this to our lives? Go on, tell us.

EVE: I think... I... you know... it wasn't intentional.

TONY: Wasn't one husband enough for you?

EVE: I was sure... I thought you would never find out.

TONY: Well you thought wrong.

EVE: You have to listen, you have to give me a chance to explain.

LUKA: We don't have to do anything. If we want to, we can throw you out into the street, this minute; we can do that, but we don't have to.

EVE: Forgive me, Luka, forgive me. Don't you know how dear to me you have been all this time?

TONY: And me? What have I been to you all this time?

EVE. You've been dear to me, too. Won't you forgive me, too?

TONY: You have disappointed us, both of us.

EVE: Life was against me. Everything was against me. If you had been in my place, you would have acted the same way.

TONY: I certainly wouldn't have.

LUKA: Neither would I.

EVE: You have to forgive me... I mean, you don't have to, but I beg you to forgive me.

TONY: Both of us?

EVE: Well, I have injured you both. My heart aches. But let me explain it all to you.

TONY: Go ahead!

LUKA: Let's hear it!

EVE. You both know, you both remember how unhappy my childhood was. No father, no mother, just my aunt. That leaves a scar on the psyche, on the soul. All through my childhood, I lacked someone to lean on.

TONY: And now you have two of us!

EVE: It was as if I was always unprotected and surrounded by coarseness. Nobody loved me, and I was so alone and poor. Those are all mitigating circumstances, they caused me mental trauma. If you read any of the popular women's magazines - you would know what I'm talking about. The female is a very complex creature. Particularly women who grow up without a family to provide support, without any clear future. I know you both think I am guilty, I know that in your eyes I maybe made a mistake - but the female psyche is no simple matter. A woman is like a Swiss watch in which every little wheel has to function perfectly. That mechanism has to be lubricated and cared for.

LUKA: Hang on a minute. Are you going to discuss Swiss watches with us, or are you going to tell us why all of this happened?

EVE: I am trying to speak figuratively.

TONY: Let her go on so we can see if she has anything at all to say. I am amazed at her conviction that there is really anything she **can** say about all this.

LUKA: The whole situation is very clear.

TONY: Exactly. But let her get it all off her chest. I am really interested to hear what she is going to tell us.

EVE: A human being is not always a reasonable creature. There was one major sentence, one great thought, in the film *Splendour in the Grass* - but I won't go into that now. Our situation is much more complicated because there are three of us - and you expect me to try to explain my view of life to you, to explain all the fateful things which defined my behaviour and put the three of us in this situation. Here we are, all in the same room, having a painful conversation which should provide answers to the many questions which are bothering you. And I shall try to show you that it is all much simpler than it might seem to you. If you could look into my soul, if you could peer into the room of my childhood, or as Francet Prešern wrote in his *Sonnet Wreath* - somewhere there at the beginning... if you understand what I am trying to say... my soul and my childhood, it has to be observed as a single process. I never wanted, never in my life, to cause pain to anyone, least of all to the two of you. I was raised with the strict, classic patriarchal worldview, I was always shocked by even the idea of unfaithfulness, of adultery... of behaviour contrary to that laid down in the Bible and the Ten Commandments. That was always my starting point: honesty, love, I always tried to be consistent and morally pure, but life is not so simple and words just can't express all I must say for you to understand what you must understand. I have a clear and simple explanation for all that has happened, and I can tell you about it if you want me to, if you insist.

TONY: That's what we are expecting and want to hear just like a dying man wants the last rites - exactly like that. Everything has gone to the devil, all that is left is the final anointment, even though that doesn't change things very much, death still comes along but the dying man is given hope for better treatment in the world to come.

LUKA: Tony, for the love of God, enough already of that literary mumbojumbo stuff, we have said enough, let her say what she has to say, and then we will decide what we should do.

TONY: All right. Go on, tell us what you have to tell us.

EVE: Yes, I will, but before I start, could you please give me a glass of water, Luka.

LUKA: Not me. Get it yourself. I have been serving you all my life.

TONY: That's right. You tell her.

Eve pours herself a glass of water and drinks it.

EVE: I have to be honest with you, for seven years I have been afraid that this day would come - and here it is. And I was afraid because I care for both of you.

LUKA: Oho!

TONY: Are you saying you love us both equally?

EVE: That's exactly what I'm saying. If it wasn't like that, long ago I would have left one of you to live with the other. But, instead - I am like a mother who has two children and loves both of them equally, if you can understand what I am trying to say. There it is, I grew to love one and then the other and I love you both equally, and now I feel like a mother who has two children and someone comes along and says: you must give up one of them. And it's quite clear that doing that would hurt one of the children, and the mother would not agree to such a thing, for the sake of the child and because of her own feelings.

TONY: Come on, leave that story about mothers and children and get down to our story, straight from the shoulder without any ornamentation.

EVE: That's what I'm trying to do. I am trying to say that I have loved you both and didn't want to hurt either of you. I know it's even against the law, I know you both have the right to be angry with me - but I don't think either of you has lacked for anything.

TONY: What are you trying to say?

EVE: I am saying that I gave myself completely to both of you, and that neither of you ever felt that he was sharing me with anyone else. I don't think either of you ever felt that he was being neglected. Isn't that so?

TONY: Well, er...

LUKA: True enough...

EVE: There you are, you see. I felt that, I knew that you were both satisfied and happy with me as a wife. And I knew that one and the other would be unhappy if I left him. Isn't that so?

TONY: Yes, that's true.

LUKA: I admit it, I would have been unhappy without you.

EVE: Well then, that is my explanation. I did it all for the sake of your happiness. And if I am to blame for anything in this situation, I'm to blame for wanting you both to be happy.

TONY: And that is all you have to say to us?

EVE: That's all.

TONY: Did you ever think how much it would hurt us if we found out you had two husbands?

EVE: I think it would have hurt you much more if you had to part with me. And don't forget, it's not just that I loved you both, in some way I was always faithful.

TONY: You were always faithful to us?

EVE: Yes, of course.

TONY: How could you possibly be faithful in a situation like this?

EVE: I mean faithful to the two of you together. If you are considered as a single entity like... like my husbands, then it can be said that I have been faithful. What was between the three of us was so sacred to me. Our marriages were the best possible cosmic combination.

TONY: So sacred and pure.

LUKA: I think I'm going to throw up.

Silence.

TONY: And what are we going to do now?

LUKA: You suggest something.

TONY: Either we will both give her the boot out of our homes, or we will forgive her and carry on living with her as if nothing has happened.

LUKA: Exactly, we have to decide together. Her destiny has to be decided by us together. My heart is telling me that it would rather throw her out.

TONY: And my civil conscience is telling me we should report her to the police for bigamy - she has broken the law, in Croatia and in Slovenia.

EVE: Don't reject me, my dear husbands... don't do that... I promise to be faithful and good to you as I have been until now, just let me stay with you. Without you both, I would wither away. You are the whole world to me. Don't throw away my life, my fidelity.

TONY: Well, as far as little Mathilda is concerned, it would be best that we stay married, but she must never find out about Luka, that would be a great blow, to realise that her mother is a ...

EVE: Allow me to love you both just the way I always have - and let everything remain as it was. That would be best for all three of us.

TONY: Maybe she's right.

LUKA: Maybe she is.

EVE: Believe me, I will be better than ever, I will be faithful the way I have always been. I will love only the two of you and no-one else in this world.

TONY: And what if the two of us won't be enough for you, and you desire another man?

EVE: That could never happen. I would rather kill myself than cheat on the two of you. Our marriages have been sacred to me. When I saw you, I said: I could be faithful to these men to the grave.

TONY: Whore!

EVE: What?!

TONY: I said, whore!

EVE: But why?

TONY: We know you are cheating on us with Nikola.

Eve screams and faints to the floor.

LUKA: There she goes. She's fainted again.

TONY: And a good thing, too. I almost fainted myself because of Nikola.

LUKA: Can't you see, old pal, what the two of us are living with, can't you see who we have been spending our time with?

TONY: I can see it, how could I not see it. As soon as she walked in the door, she started nagging you. You could hardly get a word in. She has got you trained better than she has me.

LUKA: Why do you say that?

TONY: You even take off her shoes. You are not just pussy-whipped, you are also her valet. I have never taken off her shoes, never.

LUKA: It's only because of her bad back.

TONY: What bad back, she's lying; she has no problem bending over.

LUKA: She's always complaining to me about how her back hurts, because of riding in the train - from the vibrations.

TONY: Perhaps it hurts from the vibrations, but it's not the vibrations of the train, it's Nikola's vibrations... She really is something.

LUKA: I would rather kick her out into the street. And forget about her. Forever.

TONY: So would I. But I am afraid that would be the end of married life for the two of us.

LUKA: Why?

TONY: I told you before. You and I are past the stage of serenades and weddings. We're past it, understand?

LUKA: Of course I understand that, but I don't want to go on living with a whore. And then, she has found her way into my heart and I can't get her out. Whatever... but she is still our beauty queen. What would the two of us be without her? - nothing. She has her faults, of course, but she has her good points, too.

TONY: Tell me about those qualities.

LUKA: Well, let me see... I can't think of them just like that, I need time.

TONY: Ok, then. Just one.

LUKA: Just one?

TONY: Yes, mention just one of her qualities - if you can.

LUKA: Well... she...

TONY: Tell me... tell me.

LUKA: She's a woman.

TONY: And that's a quality as far as you are concerned? That's her greatest fault. We would cope with her much better if she wasn't a woman.

LUKA: Y'think so?

TONY: One hundred percent. Maybe we wouldn't even have married her.

LUKA: Well, that's true... But tell me something straight, does she mean something to you? If she doesn't, let me have her.

TONY: Let you have her?

LUKA: Yeah.

TONY: No way.

LUKA: Well you were the one who said she has no qualities.

TONY: As if other women are any better than our Eve.

LUKA: At least they don't have two husbands.

TONY: Who knows. Perhaps they have four lovers each.

LUKA: So you are still interested?

TONY: Well... yes, I am. What about you?

LUKA: I am, too. What can we do? I would be happy if things were better, but they're not. There's nothing else for it.

TONY: That's the way I feel.

LUKA: You have to do the best you can with what you've got.

TONY: Hang on, there. We should work out a strategy.

LUKA: OK. Let's hear it.

TONY: Look, I don't want her cuckolding us any more.

LUKA: Neither do I.

TONY: She has to give us a guarantee that she will leave Nikola, and another guarantee that it will never occur to her to two-time - or is it three-time - us again.

LUKA: How do you think she can give us a guarantee?

TONY: We'll tell her that we'll report her to the police if she ever so much as thinks of another man.

LUKA: Right! That's to our advantage.

TONY: Go on. Wake her up.

Luka takes a glass of water and pours it over Eve's face.

EVE: Ouw... ouw...

TONY: Well then, our true little wife, what can you tell us about Nikola?*

EVE: He... he... isn't worth mentioning. I didn't even **marry** him.

TONY: That would have made out bliss complete.

LUKA: Floozie!

TONY: Slut! How could you do this to us?

LUKA: Weren't the two of us good enough for you?

TONY: Not enough for you perhaps?

LUKA: The way she's started, she will end up with a whole harem, or whatever it's called when one woman has a pile of men.

TONY: Could you explain, my little innocent, how it is that if you love only the two of us, you could have had anything to do with Nikola.

EVE: I... you see, it's not that.

TONY: You told me he died after Mathilda was born, that he threw you out when your tummy was reaching your nose, and that he then died.

EVE: Well... there it is, he's alive.

TONY: Yes, he's alive! That's your explanation. I take care of his daughter, I have made her the best student in her class, thanks to me that child has order, discipline and love in her life. I make her sandwiches every morning for her to eat during the morning recess. Every afternoon, I check through her homework. While my wife and the child's father - are having it off. And it's being going on for six months now.

LUKA: I told you she's a common floozie and that she should do some time in the slammer so that she comes to her senses.

TONY: I also think that's the best solution for all of us. And let's see if her Nikola comes to see her while she's in jail and brings her food and love stories to read.

EVE: This is not happening, it's all a bad dream. This is the worst day of my life.

LUKA: Tomorrow's going to be even worse. And the day after, worse again, because you are going to go through life alone, without the two old fools who have been your greatest support in everything.

TONY: And now the lady, our faithful little wife, can explain why she has a lover. And explain it quickly, while we are still prepared to listen.

EVE: Anyone can make a mistake. To err is human, to forgive divine.

LUKA: Now you are staring with the proverbs and sayings. This wasn't just a small transgression, it's been going on for six months. It's fornication - with malice aforethought!

TONY: The husbands are always the last to know.

LUKA: That's logical.

TONY: I feel so sick. I feel so dirty. Just at the thought that not so long ago I caressed that pale viper face. I would rather have bitten off my own balls.

LUKA: That wouldn't be so easy to do.

TONY: I know. That's just a way of expressing it.

LUKA: I still don't know why she cheated on us.

TONY: Because we are a pair of idiots.

LUKA: Why are we still wasting time here - let's call the police, and she can explain it to them.

EVE: Don't, please don't. Let me tell you, let me explain, let me try to make amends.

TONY: Come on, Luka, let's give her one more chance to explain.

LUKA: All right.

EVE: The two of you, you are... you are two of the greatest men on the face of this earth. The two most generous souls I have ever met. The two most gentle men of my life.

TONY: You don't say!

EVE: Yes, it's true. You are wonderful, you are both so dear, manly and childlike, tender...

LUKA: We are two old donkeys, two idiots that you have made pussies out of.

EVE: No, that's not true. Believe me, you aren't. Your generosity and goodness have always been a leading light to me. I always knew, always, that I could lean on both of you, because to me you are not ordinary men, you have always been supermen to me, because you have both managed to preserve the soul of a child and a goodness which is really rare in modern Europe.

TONY: Well, that really does sound like us.

LUKA: What can we say, we are both so sweet you could spread us on bread and leave out the butter.

EVE: And I am sure that two such gentle and sweet men would never, never do anything to hurt me. I am sure that you both wish your Eve real happiness - despite everything.

TONY: Yes, we do wish you that.

LUKA: Much more than you deserve.

EVE: There, I knew it. And that's why I am a hundred percent sure that you couldn't, you wouldn't report me to the police, because that would ruin my life. I would end up behind bars because of that senseless law on bigamy, and would be so far away from my squirrel and my teddy bear, too. Isn't that so?

TONY: Yes, it is. But you still haven't explained why you have a lover! Explain that instead of telling fairy tales about us.

LUKA: We know that we are the best husbands you could ever find. We know that. I would be pleased to have a wife who had no objections to me having a second wife... But, in addition to these two fine husbands... why did you have to have something on the side? Come on, hot pants, explain if you can why you are having an affair with that Nikola of yours!

EVE: But it's not that with him.

LUKA: What?

EVE: It's not that with him.

TONY: What are you trying to say?

EVE: It's not that with him.

TONY: Will you stop saying that! What 'that'?

EVE: There's none of that between Nikola and me that there is between me and the two of you.

LUKA: Explain.

EVE: This business with Nikola is not a real relationship - it just, you know, physical. We ran into each other by chance in Zagreb six months ago. After all, he is the father of my daughter ... he asked me to have a drink and I could hardly refuse. And then, he seemed to think he had some rights as far as I was concerned. I lost my virginity to him, I bore his child, you understand... he thought he had some rights, and that we could take up where we left off...

LUKA: But what did you think? If you thought at all?

EVE: Look, after all I am only a woman, I gave in.

TONY: And cheated on us.

LUKA: She really deserves to be thrown out.

EVE: No! Wait, forgive me, I am so sorry. I really repent. I will never do it again. He means nothing to me. You are my life and my happiness. I don't want to have anything to do with a tavern-keeper. This business with him was only an infatuation, and ordinary excursion into the unknown which helped me to reinvigorate **our** marriages. Even American sexologists recommend it - a short affair of limited duration to avoid the monotony of marriage. Would the two of you be prepared to forget it all and to throw out the window everything that the three of us have built together over the years, just because of an brief fling, because of an affair with a man from my past which was so unimportant and insignificant? It's only with the two of you that I have become a fulfilled woman. Realised completely in all my female essence. Would you allow those measly six months of recklessness to throw a shadow over all that is so sacred and pure which we have built in our lives together? I admit it, I admit that I have made a mistake. And admitting something is surely half-way to forgiveness, and so I am begging you both, accept my dual apology. Believe me, if I had had any inkling that it would hurt you so much, I would never have done it. If I had thought that you could find out, I would never have done it... And even though I know how difficult it is for you to accept my plea for understanding and forgiveness, because you think there can be no excuse, I will explain how it all came about.

TONY: So you do have some sort of explanation?

LUKA: I am really curious...

EVE: I never spoke about it with either of you - I didn't want you to worry - but now I will tell you about the source of this misfortune, this shameless situation I find myself in. A year ago I... a year ago... I...

LUKA: You what?

EVE: It is so embarrassing to say it but... a year ago... or a little more... I started to enter the menopause. You surely know what the menopause means to a woman and know what a sensitive time it is... and so, I started to worry that you didn't love me any more, that I was no longer attractive and beautiful.

TONY: Come on now, you haven't changed at all.

LUKA: You're indestructible, like the sea.

EVE: I simply lost confidence in myself as a woman. I was afraid I would lose your love, and that you would turn to other women. I became unsure and jealous, and then... while I was in that state... that damned Nikola appeared. And so I tried to see with him whether I was still a woman in the full meaning of the word. I tried to prove something which needed no proof, but, alas, it's too late now.

Eve starts crying.

TONY: Now she's even crying.

LUKA: Wipe your tears, you know I don't like it when anybody cries, it upsets me.

TONY: You have disappointed us.

LUKA: Completely.

EVE: Forgive me. I am guilty and I admit it. I will never do it again. I promise to be true to the both of you until the end of my life - may every hair on my head fall out if I ever cheat on you again.

LUKA: Careful now, you could be bald by winter.

Silence.

TONY: What do you say?

LUKA: I don't know. I really don't know.

TONY: Should we turn her in to the police?

LUKA: Well, we could... although, we should consider whether it would be better to give her one more chance, and then...

EVE: Give me another chance, please, you won't regret it.

TONY: Listen, I'm for it. We'll give her a chance to clean up her act, but if she messes up again, we go straight to the police and report on her for bigamy.

LUKA: That's a good idea. Listen, Eve, and listen well! Remember this all your life! First of all, you are lucky that both your husbands are stable, good men.

Second of all, you deceived us miserably and you have to pay for it. Thirdly, if it ever happens that you even look at a man in the street, we will pluck out your ears by the roots and hand you over to the police. Fourthly, we will continue to live as we have until now; none of our neighbours in Split or Ljubljana must ever find out that you have two husbands. And fifthly, I have said all I had to say.

EVE: I agree, I agree to everything.

TONY: You can forget about Nikola for all time.

EVE: I already have, I already have.

Silence.

TONY: Luka, I can tell you that all this talking has made me pretty hungry.

LUKA: I'm hungry and thirsty, too.

EVE: So all three of us are hungry. It would be best that Tony tidies up a bit, while you, Luka, cook up something, before we all die of hunger.

LUKA: You think I should rustle up something quickly?

EVE: Yes. Surely you don't mind if Tony eats here... with us.

LUKA: I don't have anything at all against Tony. In any case, the two of us have become great buddies - but I do object to cooking for **you**, and I do object to Tony tidying up for **you**. After everything you have done to us, you dare to ask us to wait on **you**.

EVE: I just... I just thought...

LUKA: I'll give you forty minutes to tidy up the kitchen and to cook us some lunch, to at least start to make up for all you have done to us.

TONY: I couldn't have said it better myself.

LUKA: It was about time.

EVE: All right, all right, I'll get to it at once.

LUKA: And we, Tony, are going across to Ante's tavern to have a drink.

TONY: We'll be back in about forty minutes.

EVE: OK, fellas, OK. Just you rest and relax.

THE END

[Or is it? Alternatively, carrying on from Eve's 'OK, fellas, OK. Just you rest and relax':]

EVE: Wait a minute! Stop!

Luka and Tony stop in their tracks.

LUKA: What is it now?

EVE: Perhaps we should still think everything through carefully once again.

LUKA: Since when have you been interested in thinking things through carefully. You haven't thought at all for eight years, and now, all of a sudden, you want 'to think everything through carefully'.

EVE: That's just it. We haven't been doing any real thinking, and the time has come to avoid doing anything without due consideration.

LUKA: What do you mean by 'we haven't been doing any real thinking' - as if the two of us were to blame for your double... no, that's triple... life.

EVE: Well, in a way you **are** to blame.

LUKA: I see - collective accountability for individual mistakes. It will soon turn out that the two of us are to blame for you cheating on us and having two husbands.

EVE: Well, you certainly can't claim that you have no responsibility in all of this.

TONY: What are you saying?

EVE: If it hadn't been for the two of you, I wouldn't have had two husbands. You see?

LUKA: No, I don't see.

EVE: It takes two to tango - as the saying goes.

LUKA: With you, it seems to take three.

EVE: You need two boxers for a boxing match. Without you saying 'yes', I wouldn't have become the wife of either of you. You both married me of your own free will, you weren't forced into it. Isn't that so? And lived with me of your own free will. So you are both accountable.

LUKA: What on earth are you talking about? We married you of our own free will, but neither of us knew anything about the other husband, not to mention that lover of yours.

TONY: There's no point in wasting any more time. We have already come to an agreement - and the two of us are going to Ante's place for a drink. Don't you bother your head any more, just make lunch and tidy up.

EVE: Ah, it's not all as simple as that.

LUKA: What's not simple?

EVE: I am bothered by the moral dilemmas.

TONY: Up until now, we haven't noticed that you suffer from morals.

EVE: I just can't go on like this. Everything in me has shattered.

LUKA: What do you mean, shattered - you are a woman, not a crystal goblet. Why don't you just stop badgering us!

EVE: You don't know what it's been like for me all these years, living in a chasm - torn in two directions. For a long time now - for a very long time - I have known that everything that has happened to me, almost without any fault on my part - I have felt it is all so immoral. It's a great responsibility for a woman to have only one husband, let alone two.

LUKA: If you could just tell us briefly and simply - what it is you are telling us?

EVE: I am trying to say that I don't want to live immorally and illegally any more. I am trying to say that it hasn't been easy for me living with the two of you all these years, and I am trying to say that I am tired of it all and that I don't want to have two husbands any more.

Silence. Luka and Tony are confused.

LUKA: You want to leave us?

TONY: You want a separation from both of us?

EVE: Actually... not from both of you.

LUKA: But?

EVE: Only from one of you.

TONY: Which one?

Silence.

EVE: That's what I don't really now. From the one you loves me less.

LUKA: You would leave me for this one here?

EVE: I don't know.

TONY: Does he mean more to you than I do?

EVE: I don't know, I really don't know. It will be hard for me to decide between the two of you. I know that I shall suffer for months and pine for the one I will be breaking it off with today, but that is the only way to solve this moral dilemma. To rid myself of this burden.

LUKA: Surely you are not just going to throw away the happiness I have given you.

TONY: Be careful what you decide. You might regret it later.

LUKA: And anyway... how do you intend to make this choice?

TONY: What criteria are you going to use in deciding which husband you want to keep.

EVE: I don't know, my dear husbands, I just don't know. I am an ordinary weak woman. I think the two of you will have to help me. You have to help me decide.

TONY: All right - here, I'll help you. I think it would be better for you to live with me and leave Luka.

LUKA: Aha, old buddy - the good old knife in the back. I can help her that way, too. Believe me, Eve, it will be better for you with me. Marry me... I mean - divorce him and live with me.

TONY: But I am a much tidier and more reliable person than you are. She can lean on me.

LUKA: But I am a better cook. In her place, I would marry me. Tell us what you've decided, Eve, so that we know where we stand.

EVE: It's not so simple. I would not want to have any regrets. I don't want to rush into anything. You are both dear to me, I love you both. But when I have to tell myself which one of you means more to me, it's hard for me to weigh it up. You both have so many good points... and so many faults. Tony, you for instance, your behavior often gets on my nerves, and then I ask myself why I put up with it.

TONY: I can always improve, just as long as you tell me what the problem is.

LUKA: You are too old to improve and too old to change.

EVE: And as for you, Luka, you do not always behave the way a responsible husband should. You often forget that I am a frail, gentle, subtle woman, that it hurts me if I cut my finger chopping onions, you often forget that my eyes need to weep when sadness presses down on my soul.

LUKA: I have never seen you cry.

EVE: No, you haven't, because my emotions are suppressed in your presence - and that is not good. I read about it in a magazine and almost contacted the psychologist who wrote the article. I wanted to ask him why I don't cry like all the other creatures on this earth.

TONY: If you stay with me - you can cry every day if you want to. I promise.

EVE: That's not the whole of it, Tony, you don't understand me the way you should either. You are both so far away from the essence of my being. No woman is neglected the way I am, with two husbands to my name. All that's happened today - all these shocks and attacks have worn me out, and I would prefer not to live with either of you any more.

TONY: Not even one of us?

EVE: That's almost the way I feel.

LUKA: This is all your fault.

TONY: My fault?

LUKA: Always acting the detective. Why did you have to mess around with the lining of her winter coat, why did you have to trail after her. I will lose my wife because of you. I will be living like that old dried-up old tree stump we talked about. Just so you know! I won't let you have her! I will fight for her to the last drop of my blood if I have to.

TONY: Just you go ahead and fight as much as you want to but, from the legal viewpoint, my friend, she's mine.

LUKA: There is no law saying that a woman has to live with a man she does not love. She will choose me because I am prepared to do much more for her than you are.

TONY: Excuse me, I always did whatever she wanted. Everything.

EVE: I seem to remember that when I asked you to tidy up this apartment, you refused.

TONY: Forgive me. He drove me to it. He's to blame - until I met him I never said no to you. Here - I will tidy it up now.

EVE: That's what I call a real husband.

LUKA: But I am much better than he is.

EVE: Much better? You wouldn't even make me lunch.

LUKA: Of course I'd make you lunch! This intruder here stopped me. Can you remember me ever not wanting to make you lunch?

EVE: True enough. It never happened before.

LUKA: Give me a chance to make it up to you.

TONY: Give me a chance to prove myself - and choose me.

EVE: It's not easy to make up one's mind in half an hour. That's why I think that it would be best that I go over to Ante's place for a drink - to rest a bit from the two of you and to think things through. Tony, you tidy up - you know how I can't stand a mess, and you, Luke, make lunch before I die of hunger.

TONY: Yes, right away.

LUKA: I will, right now. You know nothing is any trouble for me as far as you are concerned.

TONY: While you are thinking things through and deciding - remember our first days together, remember how happy we were. Just make up your mind quickly.

Eve walks towards the door, and then pauses.

EVE: Please... without any pressure, as the politicians say.

LUKA: Just you tell him.

EVE: I will do everything I can to decide today, right away, in half an hour or an hour. But...

LUKA: But what?

EVE: But I am so strained emotionally today - perhaps it would be better not to make a hurried decision.

LUKA: That's what I think, too.

TONY: Nobody's trying to pressure you, I just thought it would be best for all of us if we found out about your decision as soon as possible. But I'm not laying down any conditions.

EVE: I will rest at Ante's tavern, and think deeply about our situation. But... I wouldn't be surprised if I couldn't make my decision, my final decision, for a month... or even two. That would give you both a chance to show yourselves in the very best light. I want to be fair and just towards you. You understand that, don't you?

LUKA: Yes, of course.

TONY: We understand.

EVE: Well then, get to work. And we'll see each other at lunch in about forty minutes.

Eve goes out, and Tony and Luka are left alone - in silence.

LUKA: Ah, fuck it all - she's screwed us all over again.

TONY: Shut up and start cooking. We could have done worse.

LUKA: How's that?

TONY: She could have left us both and moved in with Nicola.

LUKA: Yeah, you're right - so we may as well celebrate with a good lunch.

TONY: The best idea I've heard all day.

THE END

