

# Summer bees sting in November, too<sup>1</sup>

A Comedy in One Act

Ivan Vyrypaev

(translated by Maksim Hanukai)

– Why do you weep?  
– Because I’m alone.  
– Are you truly alone?  
– I feel and live as if I were alone.  
(Ingmar Bern, *The Dialogues of Solitary Men*, Stockholm, 1986)

## Dramatis Personae:

Elena – 35-50 years old

Mark – 60-70

Joseph – 60-70

On stage are Mark, Elena and Joseph. A long pause. Everyone remains silent for a while.

**MARK.** You know, Sarah, Marcus could not have been at your place last Monday, because last Monday he was at Donald’s place.

**JOSEPH.** Yes, that’s true, last Monday Marcus was at my place, he came to our place late Sunday evening, and he left early in the morning on Tuesday to catch the eleven o’clock train to Stockholm.

**ELENA.** Are you saying that I’m lying, Robert?

**MARK.** I would prefer not to use such sharp language, but you must agree that you need to explain to me what strange man was at our house last Monday.

**ELENA.** Marcus was at our place last Monday.

**MARK.** Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Marcus stayed at my place all of last Monday, and I beg you, let’s finally put an end to this strange conversation.

---

<sup>1</sup> I have decided to translate *osy* as “bees” instead of “wasps” to make it easier for the actors to pronounce this frequently repeated refrain. As a consequence, at the end of the play, *pchely* (“bees”) had to be turned into “wasps.” The literal translation of the title is: *Summer Wasps Sting Us Even in November*.

**MARK.** But I have to straighten this out, dammit! I have the right to know who visited my wife in my absence and why you're lying to me, Sarah?!

**ELENA.** I'm not lying to you, Robert, it was your brother Marcus who stayed at our place last Monday.

**MARK.** Sarah, I beg you to stop, you hear?! Out of respect for me, for our marriage, I beg you to stop immediately!

**JOSEPH.** Robert, I think we should all put an end to this conversation, given that things have gone this far and there's no sensible solution to this question ...

**ELENA.** There is a sensible solution to this question.

Elena takes a cell phone out of her pocket.

**ELENA.** We'll call Marcus and find out.

**MARK.** For God's sake, don't be crazy, Sarah. Why this circus? Why drag poor Marcus into this business? Enough, I beg you?!

Elena is talking on the phone.

**ELENA.** Hello? Hi, Marcus. It's Sarah, your brother Robert is next to me, I think he wants to ask you something, I'm giving him the phone ... What? No, no, your mother's fine, Robert will explain everything to you in a minute.

Elena passes the phone to Mark.

**MARK.** Hello? Hi, Marcus. Ha, ha. Seems summer bees sting in November, too. How's life, old man? What? Oh! No, no. We just don't know what to do with ourselves here. No, we're not at home, and Donald's with us, it's the three of us here, and, to be honest, we're losing our minds, and, it seems, now we want to make you lose *your* mind. Mom? I spoke to her in the morning and she said that she doesn't want to come back yet, so I'm planning to pick her up next week, why, has she said anything to you on this score? Ah, Seylent! Oh, that Seylent. Listen, Marcus, it hasn't even been two years since father died but our mother's spending more and more time with this Seylent. I'm certain that her wish to stay at the rest home until the end of November is connected precisely with this. By the way, Marcus, were you at our place last Monday when it just so happened that I was visiting mother? Aha. Really?! No, what do you mean? What do you mean? She told me about it, it's just that ... ? Hmm. Then you really were at our place last Monday? No, everything's fine, I just wanted to make sure, because ... Well, of course, Sarah told me ... it's just that ... Well, listen ... No, no, nothing ... Too bad we didn't get to see each other, I hope you'll come visit us again this Monday, alright? What? Oh, this Monday you're planning to visit Donald? Aha. He has invited you. But weren't you at his place last Monday, Marcus? What?!

Oh, for God's sake, of course! I'm sorry, I'm not making fun of you, it's just that I'm really not able to think straight today. No, I'm not sick, Marcus. Everything's fine. It was good to hear your voice, my dear, and see you on Monday. Oh, right! Right, I forgot that you're going to see Donald. I'm sorry, to be honest, we smoked a bit of, well, you know what. I can't talk about it over the phone ... well, you know, well, when someone smokes this stuff ... well ... well, they're not ordinary cigarettes but you know what I mean, anyway, we can't discuss this over the phone ... well, I think you know what I ... it also makes you laugh real hard ... Ha, ha ...

Mark starts to laugh. He laughs as if he really is stoned.

**MARK** (*laughing*). I'm sorry, Marcus ... it's hard for me to speak right now because I'm laughing ... I'm passing the phone to Sarah ... she'll explain everything to you ...

Mark passes the phone to Elena and slowly calms down.

**ELENA**. Yes, Marcus. Well, of course, everything's fine. We're just goofing around, that's all. Yes, yes, I mean it, everything's great. You know your brother, he never loses his head completely. We love you, it was nice to hear your voice. See you, Marcus. And Donald says hi, too, he's waving to you as we speak. I'll be sure to pass it on. Bye, Marcus.

Elena puts the phone in her pocket.

**ELENA**. Marcus says hi, Donald.

Pause. Elena and Mark look at Joseph.

**MARK**. What's going on, Donald?

**JOSEPH**. I don't know.

**MARK**. What do you mean, you don't know?

**JOSEPH**. I don't know what to tell you.

**MARK**. But, don't you want to explain to us why you thought all of this was necessary?

**JOSEPH**. What was necessary, Robert?

**MARK**. All of this, Donald. This whole game about Marcus and his mythical presence in your house on Monday. I mean, this isn't some joke, Donald. Because of you, Sarah and I almost got into a fight ...

**ELENA**. We did get into a fight, Robert.

**MARK.** What?

**ELENA.** You just said, “we almost got into a fight,” but I want to clarify that we did get into a fight, Robert.

**MARK.** Well, then, all the more so.

Pause. Everyone remains silent for a while.

**MARK.** Well, why are you silent, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Summer bees sting in November, too.

**MARK.** Damn it, Donald! Have you taken into your head to make fun of us today?! Donald?!

Pause. Mark calms down and looks at Joseph with compassion.

**MARK.** Maybe you’re not feeling well, Donald? Tell us about it.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** You see, I’m tired. I don’t even know how to explain it to you. I’m really tired from everything that surrounds me. From everything, literally everything, that I see. I’m tired of these trees, of the street outside my window. I’m tired of my window, of the blinds on my window. Of the view from my window. I’m tired of the birds flying in the sky and from their songs in the mornings and evenings. I’m tired of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Tired of words, of my dog, of my wife, of the fact that day always replaces night and vice versa. I’m tired of newspapers, of information, tired of the smell of soap in our bathroom, of our neighbors’ smiles, of the color of the walls in my house. Tired of the words that I need to pronounce every day. Tired of the water that I need to drink in order not to die of thirst. I’m tired of everything, you understand? Of everything that surrounds me, and even of everything that’s inside me. I’m tired of my heart, of my lungs and all of my blood, which flows through my veins. But most of all I’m tired of myself, you understand? I don’t even know how to explain this. You see, I’m always alone with myself, wherever I may be, I’m always there. And there’s not a second when I could be without myself, even for a little. And even when I sleep, I still feel my own presence. I’m always alone with myself, and I’ve grown so tired of myself all these years that I can no longer stand my own presence, but, sadly, there’s nothing to be done, and I don’t know how to get rid of myself. I’ve thought about suicide, but I don’t have the courage, and then, I hate the thought of resembling those stupid poets and rock musicians, whom I can’t stand, like that fucking Jim Morrison.

**ELENA.** Jim Morrison didn’t commit suicide, Donald, he died young, but he died of natural causes.

**JOSEPH.** What does that have to do with anything? You know perfectly well what I mean!

Pause.

**MARK.** When was the last time you saw your therapist, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** I don't have and never had a therapist, I'm not one of those people.

**MARK.** What people, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** The sort of people that go to a therapist.

**MARK.** And what's wrong with seeing a therapist once in a while? I think, Donald, that if you saw a therapist once in a while, you wouldn't be experiencing the problems that you're experiencing right now. Because a good therapist can always give you advice about what to do so as not to grow tired of the song of birds outside your window. Do you catch my drift?

**JOSEPH.** I'm not sick, Robert. I know perfectly well that I'm not sick.

**MARK.** Fine, but does anyone know about this except yourself?

**JOSEPH.** Of course. My wife knows that I'm not sick. My neighbors know that I'm not sick. Your brother Marcus knows that I'm not sick.

**MARK.** Speaking of Marcus. Why did you come up with that whole story about Marcus, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** I don't know, Robert. I'm really tired, aren't you listening to what I'm saying to you?

Pause. Everyone remains silent for a while.

**MARK.** Seems you really should talk to a good therapist, Donald. I can recommend a very good therapist to you, Donald. Really, a very, very good one.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Robert, I want to tell you that Marcus wasn't at your place last Monday, because he was at my place. He really was at my place, Robert.

**MARK.** That's enough, Donald. I'm not at all angry with you, I can see that you really aren't feeling very well and I want to help you. Why don't I call my therapist friend right now and you'll set up an appointment?

**JOSEPH.** Oh, Robert, Robert! I really don't want to drag my wife into this business, but it seems I have no choice.

Joseph takes a cell phone out of his pocket, presses the call button.

**MARK.** What are you doing, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** I'm calling my wife, I'm calling Martha. I hope you'll believe her, at least.

**MARK.** That's enough, Donald, why drag Martha into this?

**JOSEPH.** But there's no other way to prove it to you. Hello, Martha? Listen, I have Robert here with me and he's got some important question that he wants to ask you. I'm passing the phone to him, darling.

Joseph passes the phone to Mark.

**MARK.** Hello. Hi, Martha. How's it going, how's your leg? No, I have another question for you, but I'm asking about your leg, because I'm worried about your leg, although I have another question for you altogether. But first, tell me about your leg. Are you still going to rehab? Aha. And what does the doctor say, how long will it take? Another six months? Why that long? Oh, stop it, you're not old, it's just that you had a compound fracture, seems you just need to have patience. Well, alright, I'll be sure to come visit you soon. I hope so. Things have been very busy at my bank lately. Oh, and my mother doesn't want to come back from the rest home, so I have to visit her every week. Marcus and I take turns, as if we're on watch duty, one week it's him, and the next week it's me. By the way, Donald says that you guys had a nice time with Marcus last Monday? Donald says that Marcus stayed two nights and one day at your place? What? Oh, you really did have a nice time? I'm sorry, are you trying to say that you spent this time with Marcus? That means he was at your place on Monday?! Are you sure about this, Martha? That is, what I meant to say was, are you sure it was Marcus, that is, what I meant to say was, are you sure it was last Monday and not ... say, Monday two weeks ago? What? No, Martha, of course, nothing has happened. Oh, no, don't pay any attention to me, I'm only joking. I said I'm joking, it's a joke, Martha, everything's fine. Where's the joke? Well, it would seem, in the fact that Marcus was at your place last Monday, I guess that's the joke, Martha. Ha, ha. To be honest, we had a bit to smoke here ... but not cigarettes ... we smoked ... well, you know what ... the same stuff that we smoked once on my birthday about six years ago, do you remember? We all had a bit to smoke then ... you, too, Martha, remember? We were laughing all night, remember, Martha? Well, there you go, we decided to do it again ... What do you mean, who's we? Me, Sarah and your husband Donald. Yes, Donald, too. I'm sorry, we would've invited you, but you have that thing with your leg, you could have tripped, lost your balance and harmed your leg. What do you mean, why did we do it? What do you mean why, Martha, what a strange question? So we could have a laugh, of course. Ha, ha, ha. I'm sorry, I can't talk anymore, I'm simply dying of laughter. Get well, darling, and see you soon.

Mark passes the phone to Joseph. Joseph puts the phone in his pocket. Mark watches Elena intently.

**MARK.** Sarah?

**ELENA.** Yes, Robert.

**MARK.** What do you mean “yes,” Sarah? What does this “yes” of yours mean, Sarah?

**ELENA.** That I’m listening to you, Robert.

**MARK.** No, Sarah, my dear, it’s I who am listening to you!

**ELENA.** I don’t know what to tell you, Robert.

**MARK.** What’s going on, Sarah?

**ELENA.** I don’t know, Robert.

**MARK.** You don’t know? What the hell do you mean, you don’t know?! Why the hell are you saying that you don’t know? Then who does, Sarah?! And Marcus?! That means he lied to me?! Marcus! Who would’ve thought, our Marcus! Ten minutes ago, on the phone, he lied to me?! My own brother lied to me? I want to know why you’re doing this? I want to know what you’re doing this for?! Sarah, I want to know, tell me, what reason do you have to do this, you and Marcus?

**ELENA.** What are we doing, Robert?

**MARK.** This. These lies, these phone calls. I want to know what’s going on, Sarah? And I don’t want to hear you say that you don’t know. You hear? I don’t want to hear you say that you don’t know?! You hear? Do you hear me, Sarah? I don’t want to hear you say that you can’t hear me, Sarah?

**ELENA.** I hear you, Robert, calm down.

**MARK.** Then explain it to me, goddammit!

Pause.

**ELENA.** It’s not so easy to explain, Robert.

**MARK.** I don’t want to hear anything about what’s easy and what’s difficult, I demand an explanation, no matter how difficult it may be! I demand an explanation, and as soon as possible. Or better yet, I’ll call Marcus, let him explain it to me.

Mark takes out his phone, presses the call button.

**ELENA.** You don’t need to call him, Robert.

**MARK.** Why not?! After all, he's my own brother ... Damn! He's unavailable. He's turned off his phone. Well, of course, he doesn't want to explain himself, I get it!

Mark puts the phone in his pocket.

**ELENA.** Marcus is at mass right now, today's Sunday.

**MARK.** Marcus is at mass! I wonder how he'll find the strength to approach the Blessed Sacrament after all this lying?!

**JOSEPH.** Let me explain something to you, Robert.

**MARK.** What do you have to do with this, Donald? I want to hear an explanation from my wife.

**JOSEPH.** Because I'm your friend, Robert. I'm a family friend. I love both of you, you and Sarah, and I want everything to be alright between you, and I think I understand what's happening here, and I think I can explain it. Sarah, Robert, allow me to speak to you frankly. I'm your friend, and no one except me will say to you what needs to be said, say it to your face, you understand? Even your therapist, Robert, won't say everything to you because he's too dependent on that enormous fee that you pay him. No one will say this to you, but I will. Just hear me out. I really do want to help you.

Mark shrugs his shoulders. Pause.

**ELENA.** Well, if you really have something to say ...

**JOSEPH.** I do have something to say, Sarah. I do have something to say to you, Robert.

A short pause. Joseph collects his thoughts.

**JOSEPH.** Once upon a time a small herd of wild deer was wading across a mountain stream. The stream wasn't very deep, but the current was strong. So strong that all of the deer were having a hard time holding their balance against the current. And so, these deer just weren't able to cross the stream. But they really needed to cross it, because here, on this side of the stream, was a desert, rocks, cliffs and rare trees, while there, beyond the stream: beautiful fields with green grass, magnificent shrubs with their favorite nettles, and, moreover, all around there grew that ... um, what's it called, that round, red berry that grows on those special large shrubs, the one that wolves die from.

**ELENA.** Wolfberry.

**JOSEPH.** No! What are you talking about? It's the other way around, wolfberry makes wolves live longer, that's why it's called "wolfberry." But I'm talking about a kind of berry that deer really



love, but which frightens away wolves. Which is why the deer try to get close to this berry. First of all, it's really tasty, and second, it frightens away the wolves.

**MARK.** Have you lost your mind, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Just wait, Robert, don't interrupt me. Now then, a powerful, rapid stream, and none of the deer can wade across it. None. And all this paradise, all this beauty, all this yumminess that we, the deer, love more than anything in the world – it's all over there, on the other side. While we are here. So there you have it, my dear Robert, there you have it.

Pause.

**MARK.** I must be missing something. Have you really lost your mind, Donald?! What the hell are you talking about?

**JOSEPH.** If you have an objection for me, then please be so kind as to tell me.

**MARK.** An objection?! An objection to what, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** To what I just said, Robert?

**MARK.** To what you just said, Donald? Only a qualified therapist can give you an objection to what you just said, although, in this case, what may be needed is a qualified psychiatrist.

**ELENA.** But why, Robert? I, for one, do have something to say to Donald in response, although I'm not a psychiatrist. The thing is, Donald, that if you follow the stream long enough you're bound to hit upon a bridge.

**JOSEPH.** Wha-at?! What bridge, Sarah, I beg you, where would it, this bridge of yours, come from, who will build it, this bridge of yours?

**ELENA.** God will build it, Donald. God.

**JOSEPH.** Stop it, Sarah, we're all adults here.

**MARK.** What the hell is going on here?! What are you talking about?!

**ELENA.** I'm sorry, Robert, but I can't keep from responding to him. You see, Donald, there's something in your heart that you don't want to notice. And do you know why you don't want to notice it, my dear?

**MARK.** Sarah, I beg you to stop this immediately.

**JOSEPH.** But why, Robert? Let her continue, I'm very interested in hearing what she has to say.

**ELENA.** Actually, there's very little to say here, Donald. You don't want to notice in yourself that responsibility that each of us has for this world. You are responsible for your own life, Donald, but you don't want to admit it, because it's easier to live without responsibility, and that's all there is to it.

**JOSEPH.** Then who's responsible for all those dead children in Libya, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Vietnam, in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Am I responsible for them, too?

**ELENA.** Yes, Donald. That's the thing, my dear, precisely you.

**JOSEPH.** I'm responsible?

**ELENA.** All of us, Donald. I'm responsible, and Robert, and you, and your wife Martha.

**MARK.** I think I'm starting to understand what's going on here! Is all of this just a way of steering the conversation to another subject? Really, do you think I'm an idiot? Do you think that I don't see what's going on?

**ELENA.** There's no reason to get angry, dear. Donald has brought up a very sensitive and thorny subject. Don't you have anything to say about it?

**MARK.** I demand that you immediately put an end to all of this! Out of respect for me, for our friendship, I ask you to immediately put an end to all of this!

**JOSEPH.** Why are you getting so emotional, Robert, can't we disagree for the sake of establishing the truth, and not for the sake of affirming one's own ego?

**ELENA.** Just look at the words he's using now, Robert!

**MARK.** I demand that both of you immediately shut up! Shut up! I demand that you put an end to all of this. What's going on here? I demand that both of you explain it to me?!

Pause. Mark calms down a bit.

**MARK.** I repeat my question, what's going on here right now?

Joseph doesn't respond.

**MARK.** Why are you silent? Sarah?

**ELENA.** It's impossible to shut up and respond to questions at the same time.

**MARK** (*besides himself, yelling*). What?! Have you...?! I'll...! You...! Goddammit...! I don't even want to see the two of you after all of this. I don't want to see you!!!! I don't want to see you, Sarah! I don't want to see you!!!

Mark is angry. Exits.

Pause.

**JOSEPH**. I'm not a child-murderer, Sarah. I didn't vote for the people who're in power right now, and I don't work for any government enterprise. I don't even wear shoes made of natural leather, and, as you know, Martha and I have been vegetarians for many years now, therefore I take no part not only in the murder of human children, but even in the murder of the children of cows.

**ELENA**. You mean calves?

**JOSEPH**. What?

**ELENA**. The children of cows are called calves, I just wanted to clarify.

**JOSEPH**. Why pick on words, Sarah?

**ELENA**. Because when your wife Martha was young and had an abortion, you not only knew about it, Donald, but even, to some degree, insisted upon it, at least that's what Martha told me. That's why I pick on words, my dear.

Pause.

**JOSEPH**. Oh, that Martha! You women really can't keep your mouths shut.

**ELENA**. I hope you're not going to tell me that abortion is not the same as child murder?

Pause.

**ELENA**. Abortion is child murder, Donald?

**JOSEPH**. Well, of course, Sarah. Of course.

Pause.

**ELENA**. Well, then, Donald? Why don't you say something, Donald?

**JOSEPH**. I'm sorry, Sarah, I don't want to talk about this. Let's not continue this conversation. Let's switch to another topic. Let's talk about you, for instance.

**ELENA.** Oh, Donald! I'm afraid I'm not the most interesting topic for conversation.

**JOSEPH.** Nevertheless, I'd be very interested to know who it was that came to your place last Monday, who was the man whose visit you tried to conceal from your husband?

**ELENA.** If you don't want to talk about Martha's abortion, why should I tell you about my personal life? Friendship is built on trust, Donald? If you trust me, then I trust you. If you don't trust me, then I don't trust you. Trust in exchange for trust.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Yes, many years ago I insisted that Martha get an abortion, because I don't like children, Sarah. I haven't liked children since I was a child, and I would've become a bad father. And I always knew that. And I never wanted to have children. And that's why Martha and I have always been extra careful when it came to birth control. But it so happened that, one day, my condom broke, and my damned spermatozoid got into her unfortunate ovum. However, being sensible people, Martha and I came to the conclusion that it would be better for a new person not to come into this world at all than to become the son of a bad father who doesn't love him. That was the decision I made. And Martha agreed with my decision.

**ELENA.** That was the decision you made, Donald? And who are you to decide who should or should not come into this world? Do you think you're God? Haven't you bitten off more than you can chew, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Not really, Sarah. I've bitten off exactly the right amount. Especially since I don't believe in God and think that no one makes any conscious decisions on this planet besides us people. We are the ones who make all the damned decisions. End of story. And now it's your turn, Sarah. Tell me, who was at your place last Monday? Trust in exchange for trust.

**ELENA.** Alright, Donald. Trust in exchange for trust. It's been several years now that I've been seeing another man. I love another man. I'm happy and miserable at the same time.

**JOSEPH.** And you see him in your husband's house? But how did you manage to convince Marcus to confirm your lie? I mean, to my knowledge, Marcus never lies.

**ELENA.** That's very strange of you to say this, Donald. Since you know perfectly well that, last Monday, Marcus really was at my place. And he didn't need to lie.

**JOSEPH.** That's enough, Sarah. Last Monday, Marcus was at my place, and you know this perfectly well. Why keep up this charade when Robert isn't here with us?

**ELENA.** Exactly, Donald, why keep up this charade when Robert isn't here, since you know that Marcus wasn't and couldn't possibly have been at your place last Monday. However, I was struck

by the ease with which Martha's able to tell lies. I must confess, I never thought she was capable of that.

**JOSEPH.** Oh yeah?

**ELENA.** Oh yeah.

Pause.

**ELENA.** My goodness?! Who would've thought that Martha was capable of that!

**JOSEPH.** Yes, Martha's capable of a great deal, a very great deal, Sarah. It even turns out that she's capable of eating her own finger.

**ELENA.** What sort of strange metaphor is that, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** It's not a metaphor, Sarah. It's an experience that Martha and I once shared. Hasn't she ever told you about how we ate her finger?

**ELENA.** Wha-at?

**JOSEPH.** But you know perfectly well that Martha's missing a finger on her right hand. She's missing her index finger. She lost it when she was young. It was the result of an unfortunate incident at her work ...

**ELENA.** I've heard this story, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** You've heard the story about how we ate her finger?

**ELENA.** Oh, for God's sake, of course not! I've heard the story about how Martha lost her finger.

Elena watches Joseph intently.

**ELENA.** What are you saying, Donald?!!

**JOSEPH.** You see, when this unfortunate incident occurred, Martha was taken to the hospital, and they amputated her finger. Well, Martha asked the surgeons to give her the amputated finger. I don't know why she did this, probably because she was in shock? So she came home from the hospital with her amputated finger. Not knowing yet what she wanted to do with it, Martha put it in the fridge. Which is where I discovered it. And, you know, when I saw this finger lying there, two thoughts came to me. The first thought was that this was an ordinary piece of meat, and it's lying there next to another piece of meat, we weren't yet vegetarians then, and lying right next to the finger in the fridge was a frozen piece of beef. Well, so I thought, here's a piece of meat from a cow, and here's a piece of human meat. Meat is meat. And then a second

thought entered my mind, namely that I'll live out my whole life without ever tasting human meat. I mean, how would I get the opportunity? Where would I obtain human meat? I'm not a murderer. And then this comes along. It's right there. And no one had to give up their life, no sins have been committed. And so I got the idea of tasting a human being, since the opportunity presented itself in the shape of a finger. And so I told Martha about it, and, to my surprise, she immediately agreed. And so we boiled this finger then and there, after which, having separated the meat from the bones, we ate it. Each of us got only a bite-size piece, I mean, what do you expect, a woman's finger, especially since, at that time, Martha was a slender girl and not the baggy pillow she's become today. So that's what we did, and by the way, right afterwards we decided to become vegetarians, and ever since then we've stopped eating not only meat, but fish, too, so there you have it.

Elena looks at Joseph in horror.

**ELENA.** Why did you do that, Donald?!

**JOSEPH.** To gain experience. Have you ever eaten a human being, Sarah?

**ELENA.** Of course not.

**JOSEPH.** Well, I have.

**ELENA.** But what about God, Donald? What about God?!

**JOSEPH.** There is no God, Sarah. And besides, you'll have to forgive me, but eating your own finger isn't much of a sin compared to a certain someone I know cheating on her husband in his own house ...

**ELENA.** First of all, we don't meet in our house, but in a hotel. And second, it's love, Donald. Don't you see the difference between sin and love? This man and I love each other, do you understand? However, I forgot, you don't know what love is.

**JOSEPH.** Why do you feel the need to insult me, Sarah? I'm much older than you and don't deserve such treatment. I love my wife, and we've been together almost forty years, while you and Robert have lived together less than ten and there are already cracks in your marriage. Therefore, which of us knows better what love is, my dear.

**ELENA.** I do! Because I love this man, but you don't love your wife, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** How do you know that, Sarah? I love Martha.

**ELENA.** Martha told me. She told me how, on your wedding night, you confessed to her that you don't love her and that you only married her for her father's money.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Which, by the way, we never got, because her father, that ninety-year-old bag of garden fertilizer, is still smoking his stinking cigars on the veranda of his magnificent villa. And I think he'll outlive all of us.

**ELENA.** Martha told me that you even refused to make love to her on your wedding night, because you didn't have condoms. And that when she started crying, you didn't even try to calm her down, but simply went to the other room and calmly fell asleep there. Not that she was complaining to me, Donald, it's just that sometimes Martha feels very lonely and she wants to talk to someone about her difficult life.

**JOSEPH.** Oh, that Martha. I guess it's true what they say, summer bees sting in November, too.

Mark enters.

**MARK.** I've spoken to Marcus. I went to his place. I went straight to him. Mass had just ended and Marcus was coming out of church. We had a serious talk, face to face. And, naturally, all of my doubts have vanished. Marcus really was at our place last Monday. He was with Sarah. You don't need to explain anything to me, Donald. I don't want to know why you did this and why your wife, Martha, took part in it. I still love you both. And I repeat: if you want, Donald, I can put you in touch with a very, very decent therapist.

Pause.

**MARK.** Sarah, I beg you to forgive me, I got too worked up. I really did behave very badly, forgive me.

**ELENA.** Never mind, Robert. Everything's fine. Kiss me.

Mark kisses Elena on the cheek. Elena puts her arms around Mark's head and pulls it to herself. Mark puts his arms around Elena's waist. They stand holding each other tight.

**JOSEPH.** Life never ceases to amaze me. Just a moment ago this woman was telling me about her lover, about how much she loves him, about how it's the real thing, and now, just a few minutes later, she's melting from joy in the embrace of her hubby, who doesn't even suspect that he's a cuckold.

Mark approaches Joseph.

**MARK.** What did you say, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Ask your wife about it, Robert. By God, direct all of your questions to her, my friend, and not to me.

**MARK.** What is he saying, Sarah?

**ELENA.** I don't know what he's saying, Robert. Can't you see, our Donald isn't feeling well.

**JOSEPH.** But you told me yourself about your lover. About him being at your place this Monday.

**ELENA.** Marcus was at my place this Monday, Donald, and I think our conversation is no longer funny.

**MARK.** It was never funny to *me*. Donald, my friend, what's wrong with you? How are you feeling, my dear?

**JOSEPH.** I'm feeling worse by the minute. I'm in utter despair. I'm really tired from this whole world that surrounds me. I'm tired of the desert in which my soul dwells. I live without love, without God, without hope for salvation. And without understanding, Robert. Without any understanding from anyone whatsoever. I'm alone in a lonely world.

**MARK.** Donald, my dear. My dear boy, Donald.

Mark gives Joseph a hug, holds him tight.

**MARK.** You're not alone, old friend. Aren't we here with you, pal? We're your faithful friends – me, Sarah, Martha and Marcus, we all love you. Believe me. We love you, our dear Donald. And we'll help you, we'll cure you, we'll enlist the help of the best doctors, the best therapists, the best psychiatrists.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Robert, your brother Marcus was at our place last Monday.

**MARK.** Alright, alright, calm down, my dear, it'll pass, believe me, it'll pass.

**JOSEPH.** But listen, Sarah, you just told me yourself that you have a lover, trust in exchange for trust, Sarah.

**ELENA.** I'm here, Donald, I'm here. Robert and I will do everything in our power to cure you, you just have to trust us and everything will be well. Trust us, Donald, trust in exchange for trust, my dear.

**JOSEPH.** I know who can prove it to you! Mrs. Gertrude, our neighbor. It just so happened that she stopped by to see Martha last Monday, to get a recipe for goulash, and she not only saw Marcus, but they even had a conversation about the essence of Christian confession. I'll call her. I'm sure I have her number.



Joseph takes out his phone and searches for Mrs. Gertrude's phone number in his address book.

**MARK.** Come on, Donald. Cut it out, you hear.

**JOSEPH.** You won't suspect Mrs. Gertrude of lying, will you?

Joseph presses the call button.

**MARK.** Donald, for God's sake, cut it out, there's no need to disturb a poor woman.

**JOSEPH.** She's not poor, Robert. Hello? Good afternoon, Mrs. Gertrude! This is your neighbor Donald.

**MARK.** Good Lord, I didn't think it was this serious, I'll call my friend today, he's a psychiatry professor in Copenhagen.

**JOSEPH.** Forgive me for calling you on a weekend, but I have my old friend, Mr. Robert Joachim, next to me and he has a question for you. No, no, he's not a member of our congregation. But he is my best friend. What's that? No, I don't know why he's not a member of our congregation. Yes, he's a Catholic. Yes, despite his last name. Of course, he goes to church. You know his younger brother very well ... but it would be better for you to speak to Mr. Joachim directly, I'm passing the phone to him. Have a wonderful Sunday, Mrs. Gertrude.

Joseph passes the phone to Mark.

**MARK.** I won't talk to her, Donald. Please excuse yourself right away and tell her that we'll call her back later.

**JOSEPH.** The woman is waiting, Robert. Talk to her, she's an ardent Catholic, the president of our Catholic congregation, you can count on her to speak only the truth, talk to her. It's not nice to keep the woman waiting, Robert.

Mark takes the phone.

**MARK.** Hello? Good afternoon, Mrs. Gertrude. My name is Robert Joachim, as my friend Donald has already informed you. You see ... What's that? No, I don't belong to any congregation, I just attend a Catholic church on Sundays. What? Um-hum. Well, alright, I'll consider your proposal. You see, my brother ... What's that? Oh, you know me? What's that? You know my brother? Of course, that's not surprising, he sometimes visits Martha and Donald. What's that? Oh, you spoke to him last Monday? Wha-at?! Which Monday was it that you spoke to him, Mrs. Gertrude? Are you sure? Are you sure it was last Monday? And are you sure it was my brother? What did you speak to him about? Oh, about the essence of confession, um-hum. How old are you, Mrs. Gertrude? Oh, forgive me! It just slipped out. Oh, I didn't mean to ask about your age, it just

slipped out. I'm not sure how it happened. Please forgive me, Mrs. Gertrude, I want you to know that I didn't mean to ask you about your age, it's just that I'm a bit out of it, I, well, I had a bit to smoke, though not cigarettes, Mrs. Gertrude, but, you know, different sorts of cigarettes altogether. What's that? You don't know what I'm talking about? Well, of course you don't know what I'm talking about, because you most certainly don't smoke "different sorts of cigarettes." What's that? Oh, you don't smoke at all? And that's for the best, Mrs. Gertrude. What? Why am I calling? I don't know, Mrs. Gertrude, lately I feel like I no longer understanding anything at all. Good day!

Mark hangs up and passes the phone to Joseph.

**MARK.** I really don't understand anything. Sarah, can you explain it to me?

**ELENA.** I don't know, Robert.

**MARK.** How about you, Donald, do you know?

**JOSEPH.** Summer bees sting in November, too, Robert.

**MARK.** Maybe you're all just messing with me? Maybe you're all in on it: Marcus, Martha, and even Mrs. Gertrude.

**ELENA.** You're a bastard, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** I'm just tired, Sarah, that's all.

Pause.

**MARK.** Why is life such a pathetic joke? Why is it so worthless? Why is there so much lying, hypocrisy and filth? So much filth all around us. So much filth all around us. So much filth all around us. A filthy, mutilated world. What's it all for? Why did God create a world that is so monstrously cruel? Why did he send his son into the world only for the world to crucify Him? He sent his son into the world only for the world to crucify Him, but, I'm afraid, it didn't help the world in any way. This sacrifice didn't save the world, no matter what we think.

**ELENA.** What are you saying, Robert, come to your senses?!

**MARK.** This sacrifice was in vain, the world is still mired in lies and sin, and every day it only gets worse and worse.

**ELENA.** Don't say such things, Robert. Don't take on yourself such an awful sin as blasphemy.

**JOSEPH.** Say whatever you want, buddy, and don't be afraid of anyone. The world is a filthy puddle of shit, there's no God, and there's no one to punish us for all the horrible things that we do here. And there's no one to save us from ourselves either, for that matter. We're all doomed.

**MARK.** Filth under our fingernails, filth in our souls, filth in our families, filth in our churches. Filth, filth, filth, only filth all around us.

**ELENA.** Get a grip on yourself, Robert, Marcus wouldn't have appreciated what you just said.

**MARK.** Marcus?! And who is this Marcus? Isn't he the same man who lied to his own brother twice in one day?

**ELENA.** Marcus didn't lie to you, Robert. He really was at our place last Monday. Don't listen to Donald, don't you see, he's not himself.

**JOSEPH.** But Robert isn't listening to me, Sarah, but to Mrs. Gertrude. Or will you say that she's lost her mind, too, like I did?

**ELENA.** I don't know, Donald. I can't explain yet how you've managed to turn all of this around. I don't know why these two perfectly nice women – your wife Martha and your neighbor Gertrude – why they have agreed to encourage your sick fantasy, but I won't let this matter drop and will see it through to the end. I'll do it for the sake of family, for the sake of love, for the sake of faith. And for the sake of the Holy Sacrifice that was delivered for all of us. Marcus was at our place last Monday, Robert, because Marcus and I love each other. Two weeks ago, Marcus and I began an affair. We couldn't find the strength to tell you, we tried to break up several times, so as not to sin, but we couldn't hold back our feelings. We genuinely love each other, and we've decided that love will redeem our sin. Because love redeems all. We love each other, Robert. I know it's probably hard for you to hear all of this. But it had to happen sooner or later. I'm not at all trying to justify myself, but let our feelings be the only justification for me and Marcus. Love redeems all if it is love. And it *is* love, Robert. And forgive me for informing you about it only now, forgive me.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** But that doesn't prove that Marcus was at your place last Monday?

**ELENA.** What else is there to say, Donald? It's perfectly clear.

**MARK.** But it's impossible, Sarah?

**JOSEPH.** It's perfectly possible, Robert. But I continue to insist that Marcus was at my place.

**ELENA.** I was with Marcus last Monday, Robert. I was with him in our bed.

**MARK.** But it's impossible, Sarah?

**JOSEPH.** It's perfectly possible, Robert, any day except last Monday.

**MARK.** Sarah?!

**ELENA.** Forgive me, Robert.

**MARK.** Donald?!

**JOSEPH.** I'm sorry, old friend.

Mark, in despair, looks at Joseph, then at Elena, then suddenly turns around and walks out very quickly.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** I don't understand, Sarah. If Marcus is your lover, then who was at your place last Monday?

**ELENA.** Marcus was at my place last Monday, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** But Marcus was at my place last Monday, Sarah.

**ELENA.** You know perfectly well where Marcus was last Monday, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** He was at my place.

**ELENA.** You know perfectly well where he was.

**JOSEPH.** He was at my place.

Joseph and Elena stare at each other. More than a minute passes while they intently look each other in the eye.

**JOSEPH.** What do you believe in, Sarah?

**ELENA.** In salvation, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** Who will save you, Sarah?

**ELENA.** God will save me, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** You believe in God?

**ELENA.** Yes.

**JOSEPH.** And who will save me, Sarah?

**ELENA.** God will save you, Donald, if you ask Him to.

**JOSEPH.** But I don't believe in God, Sarah, so what should I do?

**ELENA.** Ask God to give you faith.

**JOSEPH.** I can't ask God for anything, Sarah.

**ELENA.** Why's that, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Because you can't ask anything of someone in whom you don't believe.

**ELENA.** Why's that, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** What do you mean why's that?

**ELENA.** Why can't you ask of someone in whom you don't believe? When what you're asking Him is precisely for His help in making you believe.

**JOSEPH.** Well, alright, and can I count on salvation without God?

**ELENA.** And what do you mean by "salvation," Donald?

Pause. Joseph reflects.

**JOSEPH.** When it stops raining.

**ELENA.** What? Forgive me, I don't understand?

**JOSEPH.** Haven't you noticed that, for the third day in a row now, it's raining?

**ELENA.** Are you joking, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** No, Sarah, I'm not joking at all. It's just that I can't stand this damned rain any longer. All these drops that fall to the ground. Millions upon millions of drops fall to the ground, fall on our rooftops, fall on our heads, fall on our children's heads.

**ELENA.** Well, and so what, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** It's just that I hate all of them. All of these drops collectively and each drop individually. I hate the flight of the drop from the sky and the sound of it splattering on the asphalt, or on the roof tiles in my house, or, even worse, on my metallic window ledge. Splat, splat, splat.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Splat, splat, splat.

**ELENA.** Well, in that case, maybe you really do need to see a therapist.

**JOSEPH.** But the problem is that I believe in therapy even less than I believe in God.

**ELENA.** And is there anything in which you do believe, Donald, even a little?

**JOSEPH.** Yes, Sarah. I believe in the fact that Marcus was at my place last Monday.

Mark enters.

**MARK.** I've spoken to Mrs. Gertrude. Or rather, I tried to speak to Mrs. Gertrude. I drove to your house, Donald, to speak to your neighbor face to face. But, it turns out, you don't have a neighbor by the name of Mrs. Gertrude. To your right lives Mr. Helmut, an old bachelor, to the left, a young family, but there's no Mrs. Gertrude, not on your street, not even in your settlement. Just as there's no Catholic congregation to which you supposedly belong, Donald. I don't know who that poor woman was to whom I spoke on the phone, or how you even managed to organize this whole spectacle, and more importantly – why? What for, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Yes, it would seem that summer bees really do sting in November, too, Robert.

**MARK.** Indeed.

**ELENA.** And did it by any chance enter into your head to drop in on Martha?

**MARK.** Of course, it did. But the problem is that Martha didn't open the gate for me. I stood by the gate and rang her, but she didn't open it for me. Even though she was at home, because her car stood in the yard and there was smoke coming out of the chimney pipe. I'm one hundred percent certain that she was at home. I mean, of course, I understand her, in a way, after all, it was hard for her to look me in the eye. But I'm not angry with her, I know that it was Donald who made her lie to me. I mean, we both know how much she fears her husband.

**ELENA.** And is it true, Donald, that you once spent several hours straight forcing Martha to fall out of love with you?

**MARK.** What for, Donald?!

**ELENA.** Martha told me that he was pressing her to stop loving him, that he wanted Martha to find him repulsive and to admit that she no longer loves him. In this manner he wanted to prove to her that love is something that passes. But it ended with poor Martha losing consciousness, not having admitted a thing.

**MARK.** How awful. Poor Martha!

**JOSEPH.** Oh, that Martha.

**MARK.** I'm sorry, Donald, but I have no choice but to report everything to the local psychiatric hospital. Forgive me, but your behavior is becoming unsafe for those around you.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Summer bees sting in November, too.

**MARK.** Yes, summer bees sting in November, too.

**ELENA.** Indeed.

Pause.

**MARK.** Once, when I was a little boy, my father made a little ship for me out of tree bark and attached a paper sail to it. It was so pretty, I was simply overjoyed. I ran with this little ship to the river. And, dying of joy, I lowered the little ship into the water. I still remember every second of that day. I remember with what joy I ran along the trail to the forest, how I wanted to get to the river faster and how I got to the river. And how I lowered the little ship into the water with hands trembling from joy.

Pause.

**ELENA.** Well, and what then, Robert? What happened to the little ship?

**MARK.** It sailed away.

**ELENA.** Robert?

**MARK** (*yelling at Sarah*). Why are you looking at me as if I'm mad?! It sailed away, get it, it sailed away? The most valuable things we have, the most beautiful things we have, they all leave us. They sail out of our hands. I stood there, by the river, and I begged it to return, but it sailed away, further and further down the river. And I stood there weeping. And I begged your God, Sarah, to return that little ship to me. But the river took it forever. God doesn't have the power to change the direction of the river. And if God doesn't have the power to change the direction of the river, then what need do I have of such a God? I wanted this ship to sail on the water, but I didn't want

it to sail away from me forever. And I understood, then and there, that everything that sails will one day sail away from you. And everything that flies will fly away from you. And everyone who's able to walk will sooner or later walk away from you. And everyone who loves you will sooner or later fall out of love with you. While we, we always remain standing by the river. We always watch our love and our joy sail away from us down the river.

Pause.

**MARK.** I didn't go to see Mrs. Gertrude, Sarah. I didn't go anywhere. I just sat there and sat there on a bench and tried not to think about anything. Forgive me, Donald, I believe you that Marcus was at your place last Monday. It's just that I'm afraid of facing the truth. I'm afraid to live. That's all. My therapist isn't helping me. And I'm just as tired as you are, Donald. And I'm still standing there, by the river, just as I did when I was little, watching my little ship sail away from me further and further. And I know that God can't stop the river from flowing. Forgive me, Donald.

Pause.

**ELENA.** Robert, it's been three years since I started seeing another man. But, of course, it's not Marcus, Robert. I couldn't find the strength to tell you.

**MARK.** I didn't think it was Marcus, Sarah. To be honest, I haven't thought about it at all.

**ELENA.** And what *have* you been thinking about, Robert?

**MARK.** I don't know. Probably about the fact that summer bees sting in November, too.

**JOSEPH.** And what does that mean, Robert?

**MARK.** I don't know.

**ELENA.** Forgive me, I feel so guilty.

**MARK.** Do you love this man, Sarah?

**ELENA.** I don't know, Robert. I don't think I even know what that word means.

**MARK.** Why were you silent these three whole years?

**ELENA.** Because I kept waiting for it to end. After each of our meeting, I thought it was the last meeting. Every time he left me, I was sure that he wouldn't call again. And just yesterday we had a serious conversation, and we decided to end our relationship. That is our final decision. I've thought it over thoroughly and cannot go back to the way things were, and he won't come back either, he has chosen his family, because he's married and has children. And so he's decided to go back to his family. And that's the end of it. I don't know if you'll be able to forgive me or not?



Most likely you won't, and our marriage is over. But, either way, I ask you to forgive me for everything, and believe me, I've always been very fond of you, I've always respected you as a man. Did I love you? In a way, I did. Did I love you the way a wife should love her husband? Probably not, Robert. Although, I don't know. I don't know anything anymore.

Pause.

**ELENA.** But I swear, Robert, it was Marcus, and not this man, who was at our place last Monday. I had asked Marcus to come because I wanted to tell him about my relationship with this man. I needed to tell someone, I needed advice about what I should do. And Marcus and I spoke until late at night. And when he was leaving, he advised me to tell you everything, Robert, because one shouldn't live a lie. Marcus said that even if you won't be able to forgive me, you'd still understand. One can't live a lie. Forgive me, Robert, I've been living a lie, I lied to you, I acted cruelly towards you. But now you know everything, Robert. Now you know the whole truth about everything. About my having a lover, about us breaking up, and about the reason for Marcus coming to see me last Monday.

**JOSEPH.** Then how do you explain Mrs. Gertrude, who spoke to Marcus about the essence of confession last Monday? And how do you explain my wife Martha, who also confirms everything.

**ELENA.** Donald was very clever in setting it all up, Robert. I'm certain that he has put these two poor women up to it, and maybe even threatened them, after all, he's capable of such things. Marcus was at our place last Monday, I swear, Robert, I've already told you everything, I mean, think about it, what reason do I have to lie?

Pause.

**MARK.** Yes, that's true, no reason at all.

**JOSEPH.** And what reason do I have to lie, Robert?

**MARK.** Also true.

Pause.

**MARK.** There's no reason to any of this. This whole world completely lacks reason. That's all there is to it.

Pause.

**ELENA.** Woman must submit to man – this is her only salvation, this is her only purpose. Woman must belong to another. She must not have freedom of choice. In the past, for example, a woman would be married off against her will, and then she'd spend her whole life serving her husband. Even now these customs are preserved in some countries. But things have long been otherwise

in our civilization. It's as if we women have choice, it's as if we're free. But, in fact, this freedom that has been granted to us is not true freedom, because the essence of woman, her purpose, is to belong to another, to give her freedom to her man. It doesn't matter if we want it or not, if we agree with it or not, but our female being is constituted in such a way that we must give ourselves. Woman gives, man takes. God has created woman out of man's rib and commanded her to listen to him and revere him as her master. And maybe I would've consented to this, but the thing is, I'd like to belong to and serve a man who's worthy of ruling over me. And that's the problem with contemporary society, and that's the problem with our so-called "democratic society." We've decided that we can choose what's best for us. And as soon as we decided that we can choose, from that very second, we lost the capacity to choose. We choose what's best for us – and that's our problem. Because it's God who must decide what's best for us. That's our whole problem, do you understand? And that's why as soon as woman decided that she'll choose her man herself, from that very second, she began searching for the right man, she began searching for the man whom she'd be willing to serve. But such men don't exist. Such men don't exist. It's very hard to find a man whom I'd be willing to serve. It's very hard, in our day and age, to find a man before whom I could bow my head in submission. I've searched far and wide and still haven't found him. I haven't found a single man to whom I'd be willing to give myself with my whole being and to whom I'd want to belong. And that's the problem. I mean, men must've been even worse in the past than they are today, but women didn't choose then, they loved the one that God gave them. But today I want to choose, and that's why I'm not able to find my master. I'm not able, because I know what he must be like. And that stands in my way. I know what he must be like. And it's the same with God. I know what He must be like, and that's why I can't find the right God for myself, a God whom I could serve. Because I'm choosing him myself. And what sort of servant is it who chooses her own master? And that's why there's no happiness for women in this world. Because we've decided to search for our men ourselves. It's no longer God who gives us the one we deserve, but we ourselves who search for the one deserving of us. But if no one would bother to ask us, like before, if we'd be married off against our will, if we'd revere and serve any man who became our husband, if looking at our husband's face we'd see our Lord, see the image of our Creator, then a woman's happiness would be possible and we women would be chaste, wise and modest, as before. That's all.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** Are you serious?

**ELENA.** Absolutely.

**MARK.** And doesn't the real issue consist in the fact that the world is a monster that devours its own children, and that's all?

**ELENA.** The issue is that we have no one but ourselves in this world, we live by ourselves, we're alone with ourselves. We're alone. That's the problem.

**JOSEPH.** You seriously think so?

**ELENA.** Absolutely.

**MARK.** But we're intelligent, and there's nothing to be done about that. I know a few things about this world that prevent me from believing in and agreeing with what you've just said here. And therefore if we're going to speak about the main problem, then it consists precisely in the fact that we're intelligent. Not everyone, but many of us. And he who's intelligent is unhappy. But I'm not to blame for the fact that I'm intelligent.

**ELENA.** Who's to blame, then?

**MARK.** Well, if it's come down to this, then it's you women. Eve is to blame, that same Eve who persuaded Adam to eat the apple of knowledge. We ate the apple. And now we're intelligent. And we know that everything you've just said here isn't really true. Or not true at all. And that's why we suffer, because we know everything, and if there's something we don't know, we have a hunch about it. That's all.

**JOSEPH.** And isn't there any way for us to become stupid again?

**MARK.** I don't think there is, because I can't unknow what I already know.

**ELENA.** And what do you know?

**MARK.** I know everything. That's my main problem – the problem is that I know everything. I know everything, and that's why knowledge is closed off to me, I can't learn anything new, because I already know everything. And that, I think, is the cause of that catastrophe that has befallen the world. We know everything.

**ELENA.** And do you know everything, too, Donald?

**JOSEPH.** Unfortunately, I do.

**ELENA.** That means you know where Marcus was last Monday?

**JOSEPH.** Of course, I know. Marcus was at my place last Monday.

**ELENA.** But that's not true, Donald. And you know it's not true. And you know that Marcus was at my place last Monday.

**JOSEPH.** Marcus was at my place, Robert, believe me.

**ELENA.** He was in our house, dear, so believe me.

Pause.

**JOSEPH.** It's best if you believed me, Robert.

**ELENA.** No, it's best if you believed me, my dear.

**MARK.** Oh, why is this world such a monster? A monster that devours its own children? Why is this hideous world so blood-thirsty, why does it bite off the heads of its own children? What have we done to deserve this, how have we sinned? What is it all for? What is it all for? What for?

**JOSEPH.** Didn't you vote for the current president, Robert? Of course, you did. And doesn't your current president express his support for the bombing campaign in Iraq, didn't he support the president of the United States who ordered his pilots to bomb cities with peaceful Iraqi civilians, and much more. And didn't someone's children die from these bombs? And didn't the mothers of these children, running outside with dead children in their hands, cry "What is it all for? What have we done to deserve this?" Don't they think the world is a monster that bites off the heads of their children, Robert? Who's to blame for it? The ones to blame are: the pilots who dropped these bombs, the US president, who gave the order, your president, who supported this bombing campaign, and you, who voted for your president.

**MARK.** And is that why my wife is cheating on me with another man in my own bed? What is this, God's punishment for participating in the elections?

**ELENA.** I never slept with this man in our bed, Robert, we always met in a hotel.

**MARK.** Fine, then I'll rephrase my question: is there anything sacred in this world? Is there anything sacred in this world or not?

Pause.

**MARK.** Donald?

**JOSEPH.** I don't think there's anything sacred, old friend.

**MARK.** And what about you Sarah, what do you think?

**JOSEPH.** Just wait, she's going to say: God.

Pause. Elena shuts her eyes.

**MARK.** Sarah?

Elena opens her eyes and looks at Mark.

**ELENA.** For this rain to stop.

**MARK.** Are you serious, Sarah?

**ELENA.** Of course, I'm serious, Robert.

**MARK.** Then you believe that the main cause behind the tragedy of our life is this rain, which has been falling for three days now and can't seem to stop?

**ELENA.** Yes, I think the problem consists precisely in this, Robert. And Donald thinks so, too, he recently told me himself.

**JOSEPH.** I see the problem precisely in this rain, Robert. The rain has been falling for three days already and doesn't pause for a minute. These drops! They keep falling on my roof and on my window ledge, and I can't reconcile myself to it, I can't accept it, Robert. Splat, splat, splat.

**MARK.** Then you're serious? Then I'm not the only one who thinks so?!

**ELENA.** Wha-at? You think so, too, Robert?

**MARK.** Well, of course. It's just that I was afraid to admit it, afraid to admit it not only to you, but also to myself. When this rain started falling three days ago, I thought, it can't be for long, I mean, after all, it's the end of November, and it's high time for snow to fall in our northern regions. But when I woke up this morning and saw that it was still pouring in buckets, I felt that something cracked inside me, something snapped inside me, somewhere very, very deep inside, in my innermost depths, something snapped or, rather, shattered to pieces because of this rain. There, inside me, something irreversible happened today, it was as if there, inside me, a very expensive vase fell from a cabinet and shattered to pieces. Something shattered inside me because of this relentless rain, because of all these drops, which, as Donald has rightly observed, keep pounding and pounding on my window ledge. I felt hundreds of tiny fragments scatter all over my soul, all over my heart, and it was as if I, too, became cracked and warped. And then I thought that this damned rain is to blame for everything that's happening to me, that it's probably because of this rain that my whole life has gone sideways. But then I thought it was scarcely possible that a whole life can shatter to pieces because of ordinary rain, it's highly unlikely, or maybe I'm failing to grasp something? Maybe I'm failing to grasp something about this life? And then I decided that, no doubt, there's something else going on here, that maybe there are more profound causes for all of this than this rain? And I started to look for these causes. But I couldn't find them. The causes of my tragedy turned out to be hidden from me. I couldn't locate them. And so the causes of my tragedy remain unknown to me.

**JOSEPH.** It's that damned rain, Robert.

**MARK.** Yes, now I finally understand, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** Well, I'm very happy that you understand, dear friend.

**MARK.** Yes, now I understand one hundred percent. And it's all thanks to Sarah.

**ELENA.** It's all thanks to Donald, Robert. He was the first to speak openly about it.

**MARK.** Thank you, Donald.

**JOSEPH.** Not at all! It's not even worth talking about. Deep down, we all knew it.

**ELENA.** As for me, already three days ago, as soon as the first drops started falling from the sky, I immediately thought, my life's about to get a little more complicated, and that's exactly what happened.

**JOSEPH.** It's a good thing we're all friends and can support each other in this difficult situation.

**MARK.** Yes, yes, it's so important to be with each other, to argue with each other, to disagree, to challenge, but to still love each other. I love you so much, my friends. Sarah! Donald!

**JOSEPH.** Robert, Sarah.

Mark, Elena and Joseph embrace each other. They stand, embracing, like three schoolfellows.

**ELENA.** God, it's so nice to have friends who are older and wise than you, who can teach you something, who can pass on to you their life experience, who can teach you wisdom. Robert, Donald, I love you so much.

**JOSEPH.** Something inside me is tickling me like a sparrow, something there, inside me, tickling and twittering like a little bird and trying to break out, some bird flying hither and tither inside me, in my heart, rushing about like a sparrow, but unable to break out. What is it that I feel inside me, so wonderful, but so restless, eh?!

**MARK.** Oh, and there's something scratching at me, too, from the inside, as if a cat has climbed into my stomach and now scratches its paws there. What is that scratching there inside me, what is that burst of joy there inside me, eh?! Eh!?

**ELENA.** It's as if someone inside me is washing the floor and tickling me with his mop, and singing, to boot.

**MARK.** Oh! You don't say! Singing his lungs out! Who's that suddenly singing his lungs out inside me?

**ELENA.** And even dancing whole dances inside me!

**JOSEPH.** Birds, whole flocks of birds flying inside me and tickling me with their wings. Oh! Come now, you birds! Come now, stop tickling me this instant or I'll...! I'll...! Oh, I'll...! Oh, you birds! Oh!

**MARK.** Singing inside me in such a way that my heart is dancing and, any minute now, will burst out. Still, my heart, still, it's only a joke, it's only, oh, a joke, it's a joke, oh, oh!

**ELENA.** Oh, don't tickle me. Aw!

**MARK.** I can't do anything about it, my hands are reaching for your hips on their own accord, in order to tickle them.

**ELENA.** Oh, what are you doing, it tickles, stop. Aw! Aw! Aw!

**JOSEPH.** Tickle me, too, please tickle me, too.

**MARK.** Look out!

**JOSEPH.** Aw, it tickles, Oh! Stop, I beg you, sto-o-op! Aw!

**MARK.** You asked me to tickle me yourself, old friend?!

**JOSEPH.** Oh, I'm only saying "stop," because that's what you're supposed to say, but actually sting me, old chap, as soon as you can.

**MARK.** These summer bees sting in November.

**ELENA.** Aw! A-a-aw!

**JOSEPH.** Summer bees, aw! A-a-aw! Oh now you look out, old chap. Summer bees are moving on you.

**MARK.** Wow! A-a-aw! It tickles!

**ELENA.** And here are my summer bees coming to his aid!

**MARK.** Oh! It tickles! Oh, oh, oh! Stop it, there are two of you, it's not fair!

**JOSEPH.** Summer bees sting in November, too. Bzzz, bzzz, bzzz.

**MARK.** Oh that's how it is! In that case, both of you look out. Here are the sacred summer bees falling upon you, beware!

**ELENA.** Oh how painfully they prick!

**MARK.** That's because these aren't ordinary bees, but sacred summer bees! That's what's truly sacred in this world – sacred summer bees. Which sting in November, too!

**JOSEPH.** Oh! Oh, it really does hurt! So that's how it is! In that case, sacred summer wasps are moving on you! Help me with your bees, we'll move on him together!

**MARK.** Ouch, that hurts!

**JOSEPH.** Well, what did you expect, they're sacred wasps?!!

**MARK.** You think I'm afraid. Well, look out!

**ELENA.** A-a-aw! Aw!

**JOSEPH.** Ow, o-o-ow!

**MARK.** Aw! Aw! Aw!

Mark, Elena and Joseph tickle each other and laugh.

**CURTAIN.**