

“NEXT-EX”

JULIUSZ MACHULSKI

Translated by E. Carter

ACT I

The set – a living room in a contemporary apartment – circa 12 thousand złoty per square meter. In the centre; is an upstage entrance door leading to the living room. On the left and right a hall leading to other rooms. The living room is on two levels: the higher one, on which on the left there is a table set for a celebratory dinner (candles, flowers, etc) and the lower one with two steps. The room is comprised of: a sofa, a coffee table in front of it and an armchair on the right side.

ZYTA (46) An elegant woman in a cocktail dress exits from upstage. She has a vase with roses in her hand. She speaks to somebody we do not see.

ZYTA Today is the day. I am so nervous... I would like to ask you, that this time, when Marysia at last dared...

when at last she trusts us to a degree... confided in us and that she really cares about our acceptance, that you... Karol!? Are you here? Don't stress her out with your interrogations. Not her, and especially not her...

Karol?! Karol!!! Where are you?!

Telephone rings. ZYTA looks where the ringing comes from. She cannot see it.

ZYTA Karol!! Karol! Where is that damn telephone? Where have you put the receiver? Who keeps on calling us incessantly?

ZYTA looks through some newspapers on the coffee table in search of the telephone. At last she finds the receiver of the telephone, which is bookmarked in thick magazine. ZYTA answers the telephone.

ZYTA (irritated) Hello?! Mother??? What do you want?! I know what time it is? What? She hasn't come home yet! I know, where my daughter is! I mean Marysia! She's twenty! She will be in at seven... I know! I know! Yes, she's coming home with the new one... how do you know? She confides in you? She doesn't tell us anything! She doesn't tell Karol anything, that I know, but she doesn't even tell me anything. She is afraid of her father?? You're exaggerating! Why would she be afraid of her own father? Karol loves her more than both of us put together! She confided about this new one, probably as she had no choice! I don't know if she has eaten anything today? She usually eats in town. Yes, at the college! There is a canteen there. Yes, canteen!!! Canteen!!! Mary doesn't drink too much coffee! What do you mean what is a canteen? A place where students eat! For students! Students don't know how to cook?! They don't cook. They eat there! They eat very well! I have been in one once... Mother... What are you talking about? She doesn't have anaemia. She is naturally slim. Slim! Not thin! Ok, she is thin. You do some tests! Tests on your head! I am not shouting, you're always

provoking me... She'll come home by bus, so...? I don't know, if the new one has a car? He has? He hasn't??? Hasn't she told you?! Well then, by bus! No, she won't be alone! At night at the bus stop? How can she be raped? Firstly: it's still daylight at half past seven, and she won't be alone... She didn't tell you his name? No? She hasn't told me either! She told me he was a new friend who she cares about a lot. The TV reported a rape?! On the bus? Last year? Ah, that one! Well, it was at night after some disco or some do outside of the city in the forest... I know that in the capital there are rapes as well! Mother, you can't foresee things... I can't talk, Karol has disappeared, Karol isn't here! He isn't lost, but I can't find him anywhere... I won't call the police. He has disappeared in the flat!

I can't find him in the flat! I can't, it's too big. Why did we buy such a big one? Because we had enough of living in a small one! Mother! I can't talk. Marysia will come home any minute now, I have to prepare myself! Bye! Kisses! Bye!

ZYTA disconnects and then we hear the loo being flushed. From the right, from the hall exits KAROL (50) with a book.

ZYTA I've been calling and calling and you aren't responding! You're deaf as a post! Why haven't you been replying?!

KAROL How many times have we agreed that when I'm in the loo, it means I am not to be disturbed!

ZYTA I wanted to talk to you...

KAROL When I'm with you all you do is read all those women's magazines, and when I go to the loo, bingo! You call me shouting across the whole flat! (imitates her) Karol! Where are you? Husband darling? Are you here? Are you alive!? Where are you!?

ZYTA How was I to know, that...

KAROL The bathroom is the only place where I can concentrate! We had an agreement that the loo is off limits! No mans land! A solitary utopia! One who is in the loo is in a state of grace and cannot be disturbed! My father, during the war, when he worked in that German's car workshop...

Zyta joins his rant and they speak over and together for a few seconds.

ZYTA and KAROL ... when he went to the loo he felt free! Even the allies couldn't force him to leave! And even that stupid German knew that the occupation couldn't reach as far as the loo.

KAROL (taken aback) If you remember it so well, so why do you, each time, yell across the whole flat... looking for me?

ZYTA Yell? It is a big flat, and I never know where you are! I don't know whether you are in the bathroom or whether you are in your room? How am I to know, if I can't see you!? Besides...

KAROL So should I get GPS!?! Besides, we've agreed that we don't shout in the flat. We don't live on a trading floor? How many times do I have to tell you?

ZYTA ... when I begin to say something you are next to me and when I finish it you are gone, you disappear! You wander around the rooms, you look at the books on the shelves, you pick up something or sit in the loo...

KAROL Because you talk!

ZYTA And you interrupt me all the time!

KAROL 'Cause your sentences are too long!

ZYTA If you had good manners you'd wait for a lady to finish her sentence.

KAROL Even when men and women are equal?

ZYTA Even more so!

KAROL Even if the sentence is very long?

ZYTA If you had been better brought up...

KAROL which takes up two pages of A4?

ZYTA If you had been well brought up...

KAROL I would get problems with my digestion every second day!

You always use the longest sentences when I am about to go to the loo!

ZYTA Have you finished?

KAROL I have not even started!

ZYTA Can I say something at last?

KAROL Go ahead.

ZYTA I wanted you to listen to a message our daughter left on my mobile.

KAROL Can't you just say it out loud.

Zyta dials the voice mail number and listening to the message repeats with slight delay the recorded words.

ZYTA "It's me... I'll be home at seven... I mean we will be home at seven, I won't be alone... I would like you to meet someone... but please tell dad not to mess around this time... This time it's somebody I really like... I hope you'll accept him... Please don't let me down this time...Bye, bye! Kisses! Marysia."

KAROL I am not to mess around? When do I mess around?

ZYTA Every time Marysia brings home somebody new.

KAROL Who?

ZYTA A new boyfriend!

KAROL New boyfriend every time? That's such an over exaggeration! Ok, maybe only two!

ZYTA Twice? Marysia is only twenty! She's only had two boyfriends! Would you prefer her to have more boyfriends than hot dinners?

KAROL No. But those two were... you know... a bit of a waste of time... you saw them...

ZYTA I don't think so. They were different. Both were ok. Besides I didn't have time to get to know them – you freaked them out.

KAROL Freaked them out? What did I do? I only started a civilized conversation with them: cat caught their tongues!

ZYTA How could they compete with you when you're a TV personality? You speak with such authority.

KAROL Isn't there merit in being cultured in all aspects of life and know a bit on all subjects?

ZYTA Sometimes "a bit" is obviously too little.

KAROL It really isn't my fault that I am a respected writer and I get invited to speak on TV!

ZYTA Of course it isn't your fault. There are idiots on television as well.

KAROL Let's not talk about me, let's talk about our daughter's boyfriends.

ZYTA Potential future husbands.

KAROL Exactly. Right, so how did I apparently chase them away?

ZYTA Your bravado and cynicism.

KAROL It was an intellectual dual.

ZYTA Intellectual dual? When you asked that poor boy to name America's fifty states/

KAROL He said he studied at the American faculty!

ZYTA He did study there!

KAROL Aha, studied... He could only name twenty four!

ZYTA I don't know any. Maybe California... and Florida.

KAROL Excuse me! Any fan of baseball can name at least thirty US states!

ZYTA You're crazy!

KAROL If he had good intentions, I wouldn't have been able to intimidate him.

ZYTA The boy was alright. He simply forgot. Besides why does he need this kind information? For crosswords!?

KAROL He forgot? If somebody has a head like a sieve, no wonder he forgets everything.

ZYTA Ok. Let's leave his head in peace.

KAROL Well, Marysia should find somebody whose head is working properly!

ZYTA So why did you tell him to join a gym?

KAROL He was a bit weak. And a weak specialist on America! What kind of job does he want to get in the US?

ZYTA He didn't want to go to the States.

KAROL And how would he protect Marysia when coming back from a disco late at night?

ZYTA Marysia doesn't go to discos.

KAROL Maybe she will!

ZYTA He was a nice, slim boy.

KAROL Puny.

ZYTA An intellectual!

KAROL Pretentious daydreamer!

ZYTA Not everyone can be an athlete! The most important thing was that he was in love with Marysia. You saw how he treated her?!

KAROL One hour of lifting weights and he could have more strength for love!

ZYTA This is exactly what Marysia was talking about!

KAROL What?!

ZYTA Your jokes!

KAROL My witty jokes?

ZYTA Crap jokes!

KAROL Do you think that if you use modern slang you'll become cooler?

ZYTA Exactly! Your stupid jokes are all you care about. And not your family!

KAROL Zyta, I was only joking!

ZYTA This time I am begging you too. Don't be crude.

KAROL Me, crude...? Since when?

ZYTA Since always.

KAROL Now I'm offended.

ZYTA I am used to your one liners, but please don't be crude, at least, in front of Marysia.

KAROL I am never crude in front of her.

ZYTA Don't show off like an alpha male.

KAROL If she brought a boy home with balls, I wouldn't have any problems. I expect Marysia's future partner to cope even with crude alpha males such as me!

ZYTA What!?

KAROL He could have answered back.

ZYTA You must be kidding! To tell his girlfriend's father to behave himself?

KAROL Yes. Why not?

ZYTA On his first visit?

KAROL I wasn't afraid of yours!

ZYTA My father is an embodiment of good manners and goodness. You didn't have to be.

KAROL But I was a bit nervous.

ZYTA Could you imagine him answering back to you, you a media respected, witty writer?

KAROL So what?

ZYTA You are not so hot on psychology.

KAROL Don't defend him, don't. He had a whiff of hippy about him.

ZYTA What's wrong with being a hippy?

KAROL Let me think... Everything!

ZYTA Everything? We were hippies.

KAROL We weren't hippies.

ZYTA We were.

KAROL There weren't any hippies in Poland. We were only fakes.

ZYTA Everything was fake then. Including jeans.

KAROL Exactly! It was all logical.

ZYTA (suddenly dreamily) It was beautiful...

KAROL In Poland hippies didn't appear because of antiwar ideology only from poverty and snobbery for everything American.

ZYTA We were so young...

KAROL Besides the idea of free love is attractive across all time zones.

ZYTA Since time began.

KAROL Whatever... To be a hippy is so passé. A beard and a guitar isn't enough to solve the world's problems.

ZYTA But it is nice when somebody plays a guitar beside a camp fire.

KAROL Yes. All you need to do is to play a song singing "I like to look at the fire" and all girls are in your pocket!

ZYTA But at least they can sing.

KAROL Losers in ripped jeans.

ZYTA Let me remind myself. And how did you try to pick me up?

KAROL With my irresistible charms.

ZYTA “Are you aware that real events during the II world war in Poland have been totally falsified?”

KAROL You bet! Then it was very important!

ZYTA For whom?

KAROL What do you mean? For me!

ZYTA But not for me!

KAROL For all of our generation!

ZYTA Yes? For me it was more important to have Zeppelin’s records and for my parents to go away for the evening and leave me a free house.

KAROL Do you really remember our times together? I remember it was like trying to get into a nun’s knickers.

Karol a bit irritated changes the subject.

KAROL Let’s go back to Marysia’s boyfriends. They have to have a touch of class!

ZYTA And cash!

KAROL It wouldn’t be so bad! Is there anything wrong with a little money? Hello? We live in the 21st century.

ZYTA “To be” and not “to have”!

KAROL To have! First of all: something in your head!

ZYTA I agree with you.

KAROL And they don't contradict each other. You can be and have!

ZYTA They are only starting out. They are fantastically talented young people with a real future.

KAROL Excuse me, who are you talking about?

ZYTA About Marysia's potential future partners.

KAROL For now they are all next-exs to me.

ZYTA Quit with your tired jokes.

KAROL Future ex!

ZYTA There is something seriously wrong with your head.

KAROL It is most important that they cope in life.

ZYTA So they have to be wise?

KAROL And poor?

ZYTA Clever – more important. But of course I know what you're about to say: "If you are so clever why are you so poor?"

KAROL Was I to say that? Zyta, perhaps you are mistaking me for somebody else!

ZYTA Ok. No. For me it's more important that they know how to cook, in case...

KAROL In case what?

ZYTA In case Marysia is sick.

KAROL Why would Marysia be sick?

ZYTA She may get a flu or a cold. Do you remember last year when I had a nasty flu and was sick as a dog?

KAROL When?

ZYTA When Marysia went skiing?

KAROL ... only two days!

ZYTA Five!

KAROL Don't remember.

ZYTA I dreamt of a bowl of hot soup!

KAROL I wanted to order Chinese!

ZYTA Chinese!? It would be the last thing I could have swallowed. And even if I had managed it, it would have come straight back up. It can only be good old chicken soup!

KAROL Chicken soup! Marysia is a strong and healthy girl. She can cook. That's why she should have a handsome manly boyfriend!

ZYTA Her first boyfriend was tall, sporty, played basketball, and you didn't like him!

KAROL Give me a break! You like those muscular types! Did you notice the chain on his neck?

ZYTA It was a holy medallion. So what?

KAROL He could easily pull a jeep out from the mud with that chain!

ZYTA (doesn't get it) What jeep?

KAROL Did you see when he pulled his sleeves up?

ZYTA You were envious of his biceps? Biceps that you don't have.

KAROL What biceps? Tattoos!

ZYTA What tattoos? That small butterfly? That little tiger?

KAROL He had tattoos like a Maori!

ZYTA Maori??

KAROL What was he? A prisoner? A sailor?

ZYTA Nowadays young people get tattoos to show their...

individuality... uniqueness? Originality?

KAROL Maybe he should prove it with a degree or an impressive social status or a nice car in which he could drive our daughter around in. And he? He came riding a bike!

ZYTA He's a sportsman.

KAROL A sportsman is Louis Figo! He was a meathead on steroids.

ZYTA But both were in love with Marysia.

KAROL And why not? Forget it! Show me one who wouldn't be in love with our Marysia?

ZYTA You behaved like a brute!

KAROL Why?

ZYTA And who asked him if he spoke foreign languages?

KAROL For him a foreign language is Polish. I gone, I taken!??

ZYTA You exaggerate. He was nervous...

KAROL “It was tomorrow very hot outside”, “I see on the telly”, “I dress my shoes”?

ZYTA And you remember all that?

KAROL As you know linguistics and purity of spoken word is my forte. But there is something else the matter.

ZYTA What?

KAROL Attitude towards life! Of course it isn't important to know the names of all US states. Even Bush had problems with that. But when somebody says that he is an expert on something that should mean he is an expert! Biceps or a six pack don't matter. It's good he looks after his body. Somebody who can't discipline his body can't discipline his head either. What is important is: harmony, consistency and responsibility! Let's presume that the guy has learnt to fly a plane and wanted to take Marysia with him. He'll say “I remembered how to take off but completely forgot how to land...” If you say “A” you have to say “B”. That's what I want to say. Inner concentration!

Karol only now notices that Zyta is looking at him with pity.

ZYTA Listen to yourself! One day I'll record all the nonsense you spout.

KAROL You are very welcome to. A few golden thoughts on tape wouldn't do anybody any harm.

ZYTA From what you are saying probably an ideal partner, our daughter and our future son-in-law...

KAROL What son in law! Marysia is only twenty years old. Nowadays people don't get married so young.

ZYTA You would prefer her to experiment? With various men?

KAROL Of course not! Of course I'd prefer that Marysia finds her soul mate!

ZYTA Naturally, with your help?

KAROL And you don't care about our child's happiness?

ZYTA As much as you do. But I don't love her conditionally.

KAROL And I do, yes?

ZYTA So from what you are saying an ideal partner for our daughter is someone handsome, intelligent, sporty, rich, creative and philosophical?

KAROL (nods) So much and so little...

ZYTA But not some off their face rock star. No! And not an avant-garde artist!

KAROL Well, no...

ZYTA A world famous architect?

KAROL Well... possibly?

ZYTA A writer?

KAROL (winces) A writer?

ZYTA Oh, sorry. Competition. One writer is enough. A composer?

KAROL Yes. Why not? That Jan A P who recently won an Oscar...

ZYTA Maybe a film director?

KAROL Oh no! Film directors are all broke!

ZYTA So not a film director!

KAROL Or maybe someone off the telly. A journalist. Sankiewicz? I

think Jakub. The one who was a foreign correspondent in Madrid?

Always well dressed!

ZYTA The one with the neckerchief?

KAROL I don't like that neckerchief...

ZYTA But he looks so good in it.

KAROL One is immediately impressed by his intelligence. He doesn't

have to parade around in it.

ZYTA I saw him once in a delicatessen. He was really elegant,

handsome, with his wife and two grown up children. I reckon he's a bit

older than us.

KAROL Well? Look at that! It doesn't show!

ZYTA Well, you're looking for a partner for yourself. To chat with at

Sunday lunches. But would he be a partner for Marysia?

KAROL (wonders) Maybe. So what? It would be nice. What's wrong if

he's a bit older ?

ZYTA A bit yes, but not more than eight or ten years.

KAROL You would prefer him to be poor?

ZYTA I would prefer for them to begin life together. And be of similar age to develop each other. As partners.

KAROL That doesn't happen.

ZYTA And us?

KAROL We're an exception.

ZYTA Each time I dream it may happen to Marysia too. Each time when she brings somebody new, I keep my fingers crossed. So today I beg you... Let's be positive. They'll be here any moment now.

KAROL Our daughter's new lover?

ZYTA (angry) Damn it, you're starting again, you crude pillock!

KAROL If I wanted to be crude I'd say... (thinks) sexual partner.

ZYTA Now you're being obscene.

KAROL Sex for you is obscene?

ZYTA You know Marysia. Sex is of no importance here, they love each other.

KAROL You're saying that they're not sleeping together?

ZYTA I don't know. Perhaps yes. Maybe. That isn't important. Something else is more important.

KAROL Maybe for you!

ZYTA Listen! You are becoming a bit obsessed with all of this. Marysia isn't your little girl any more. Each father subconsciously is in love... exactly as a man is in love.

KAROL I beg you, please spare me that psycho-babble.

ZYTA I think that maybe you should study psychology a bit more. This time, listening to her voice I'm only guessing it's something more important than usual.

KAROL I wish nothing more than to meet my daughter's friend who is hopefully well educated

ZYTA You should listen more and speak less.

KAROL If I don't speak who is going to speak? You? Those guys never say a word.

ZYTA It's your fault. They are scared of you! I and Marysia know that you're a pillock with a big mouth, but for them you're, unfortunately, a famous writer and a TV chat show guest.

KAROL Because they're all losers! They're not even good looking.

ZYTA Even if Hugh Grant turned up...

KAROL For Marysia? Hugh Grant? That old man...

ZYTA (raises her eyebrows) Of course such a cultured Englishman with good manners...

KAROL Cold.

ZYTA And you with your intellect and handsome looks are far more superior than them, aren't you?

KAROL In Hollywood they caught him with a prostitute in a car!

ZYTA At least in Hollywood! And not in a park in Warsaw.

KAROL What do you mean?

ZYTA Nothing. He likes Polish girls. (with pride) His girlfriend was Polish.

KAROL He's about sixty. Do you want a son-in-law like that?

ZYTA Not sixty, only... (counts) oh, forty seven! (to herself) How time flies!

KAROL (suddenly alert) Just a minute! When did you go to London? Before we met?

The door bell.

ZYTA Please behave yourself.

Zyta goes to the front door, looks at her husband, smiles, points at her face as if asking him to do the same. Karol, reluctantly smiles a little.

Zyta opens the door.

MARCEL, 23, slim with a rucksack stands before them.

MARCEL Good afternoon, I am Marcel, I've come to see Marysia.

ZYTA Nice to meet you. I am Zyta, her mother. (looks into the hall) And where is Marysia?

MARCEL She has asked me to come round at seven. Well... She isn't at home?

ZYTA Typical her. She must have forgotten.

MARCEL She called. She wanted me to come at seven, so I thought...

Karol comes up and shakes his hand.

KAROL Karol Sulimirski. I'm her father.

MARCEL Marcel. Nice to meet you. I recognize you from TV. Marysia talks about you a lot. I've always wanted to meet you.

KAROL Really...? (smiles nicely) Marcel? What an odd name?

MARCEL My mother called me that.

KAROL Perhaps it's Marcelli?

MARCEL They call me Marcel. Mother liked that name a lot. She was in love with...

KAROL With Marcelli Nowotko.

MARCEL Marcel Proust.

ZYTA Karol! Give him a break! (to Marcel) It's a lovely name: Marcel! Marcello! Mastroianni! A beautiful name!

KAROL What is with you and all those actors?

ZYTA Please ask the guest to sit down...

KAROL Please sit down! Please, sir.

MARCEL Please call me Marcel. Please...

KAROL Sit down, Marcelli.

The three of them sit down on the sofa near the coffee table. There is an awkward moment.

Zyta and Karol look at Marcel, who sits politely with his eyes down. At last Karol speaks.

KAROL Your mother liked Proust, hm? And you?

MARCEL I...?

KAROL Which French authors do you like best?

MARCEL Excuse me?

KAROL Do you have any favourite French authors?

MARCEL Aha! (pause) Frankly speaking, I don't like French writers.

KAROL Bravo!

ZYTA Why bravo? I don't know... maybe Camus? Zola?

KAROL As far as Camus is concerned, I prefer cognac!

Karol laughs at his own joke. Zyta looks at him icily.

It was a joke, of course. My wife is right. Albert Camus is an excellent writer and his "The Stranger" is a masterpiece.

MARCEL Especially in French.

ZYTA Do you know French?

MARCEL I mainly read newspapers. As I said earlier, I am not too keen on French writers.

ZYTA If you don't read you can't like them, naturally...

MARCEL No, why? I recently read three novels by Houellbeck, but all of them, in my opinion, are... f... too fashionable.

KAROL (cannot hide his admiration) Three novels?

MARCEL Yes. Do you like any of them?

KAROL Well, maybe one of them... I've forgotten the title... Who did you say he was? Wellbeck? I don't like him.

MARCEL I prefer English writers.

KAROL Me too. Heller? Vonnegut?

MARCEL They are classics. I prefer the younger generation: Martin Amis, Tom Wolfe, and particularly, the female writer A. M. Homes.

KAROL Holmes?

MARCEL Homes. "Music for Torching", "This Book Will Save Your Life".

KAROL You think so? Is it such a good book?

MARCEL It's the title. "This Book Will Save Your Life".

KAROL Somehow I've not heard of it. Who translated it?

MARCEL It hasn't been translated. I bought it on the Internet. If I waited for translations of all the new books... I like reading the originals. In Polish it isn't the same.

KAROL And what do you think of Spanish literature?

MARCEL Javier Marias, he's a genius! The best European writer today. And from Columbia I recommend...

KAROL I know, I know! Of course Marquez. Who doesn't know Marquez?

MARCEL Marquez? He's so last year. Today it's all about Fernando Vallejo.

Karol's face shows he heard the name for the first time. He tries to be ironic.

KAROL I have to write all this down. And of course you read them in original version as well?

MARCEL Claro quo si! Como no?

KAROL Excuse me?

MARCEL Naturally!

KAROL Yes...

Karol is a bit uneasy. Zyta changes the subject.

ZYTA We'll have chicken soup for dinner. Is that ok, sir?

MARCEL Marcel, please.

ZYTA Ok. Do you like chicken soup?

MARCEL Of course. I know that you cook very well, but...

ZYTA It's nothing. Everyone can cook chicken soup.

KAROL Exactly. (looks at Zyta) Do you know how to cook, Marcelli?

ZYTA Leave him alone!

MARCEL Why? It's dead easy.

KAROL Oh? And how would you cook it?

MARCEL Really? Would like me to tell you how I cook chicken soup?

KAROL Yes. Why not?

Marcel looks at Zyta and Karol. He can see they are not joking. He smiles and makes himself comfortable in the armchair.

MARCEL I buy half a chicken, wash it thoroughly under running water, put it into a pot. Then I peel some vegetables, lots of carrots, so the broth will be sweeter...

Marcel notices that Zyta keeps her fingers crossed for him and happily nods. Karol sceptically looks first at Zyta then at Marcel.

... add two litres of water and start cooking. Then I skim off the scummy foam from the broth and put in all the vegetables and spices: pepper corns and allspice, a little salt, if I add a Knorr cube I don't add any salt, and then I simmer on a low heat. It's best to cook for three hours. Of course I check it from time to time and put the lid slightly aside. (to Karol) Cooking broth tests our patience, if you are hungry and eat it after an hour and a half, you wouldn't know the true taste of chicken broth. The same with bigos or plum marmalade. (Zyta nods knowingly) When the broth is ready, we put spaghetti onto the plates, best home made, I can give you a recipe, add a little dill to your taste and voila... It's a good recipe for people who don't eat red meat, like Marysia. But the broth is best if you use different kinds of meat. The best is if you use a piece of stewing beef, a piece of thick rib and a piece of chicken, also you could add a piece of veal. Then the taste is much better!

Happy Zyta claps her hands.

KAROL (after a while) A piece of thick rib? Yes... it's easy! Everyone can cook chicken soup.

ZYTA (to Karol) Everyone except you.

KAROL You... are studying with Marysia?

MARCEL English philology? No, I study philosophy.

KAROL Philosophy? And why does one need philosophy nowadays?

MARCEL I study for pleasure.

KAROL Of course. And let the parents worry about the children until they are forty.

MARCEL Naturally, I help my parents. I also graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts so I do manage.

ZYTA Just a minute... I heard that after studying art it's very difficult to get a job?

MARCEL That's true but I was lucky.

KAROL And what job do you do?

MARCEL Various things. Graphic design, but I earn my money dealing property.

ZYTA and KAROL Doing what?

MARCEL I work in an estate agents. Just in case...

KAROL Just in case?

MARCEL In case I can't make a living from design.

ZYTA Bravo!

KAROL Well done, Marcelli.

MARCEL Who?

KAROL You are a cool guy, Marcelli. I have to say...

An awkward pause. Karol starts humming "The last Sunday"

MARCEL I liked your latest book a lot, terrific title "Vomit".

KAROL Yes? That's nice. I don't like it that much.

ZYTA If I dare say that...

KAROL I don't really know if something I write is good or not. I wrote "Vomit" because my publisher was on my back. Maybe if I had more time to work on the last chapter...

MARCEL But I liked the last chapter the best! You don't take into account what a reader may think...

KAROL Yes...

MARCEL ...that premeditated mess...

KAROL Yes!

MARCEL On the border of impudent talentless writing...

KAROL (suddenly serious) Wait a minute... Why talentless writing?

MARCEL and plagiarism...

KAROL (angry) Plagiarism? It depends on the point of view. You call it plagiarism I call it tradition.

MARCEL Such intellectual vomit...

The telephone rings. Zyta receives it. She goes aside to be alone.

ZYTA Hello? Mother? What do you want? She hasn't come home yet.

Since when is she punctual? Exactly... Nothing happened. Her friend is

waiting so she'll be home any minute... Pleasant, nice... yes and handsome too.

Marcel can hear the conversation so tactfully goes inside the apartment pretending to view the paintings.

MARCEL Oh, you have Walkiewicz? I like him very much too.

KAROL Yes? My wife had it before we got married...

ZYTA (still talks) Be careful? Pretends? What? That he's handsome? Stop it, will you? I can't talk any more. Excuse me? (sotto) Yes. Bye. I'll call you when Marysia comes home. I have to go.

Zyta replaces the receiver and points at it, smiles broadly to Marcel.

ZYTA Her grandmother! She is crazy about Marysia.

KAROL Would you like a drink, Marcel?

MARCEL Water, please. No gas.

KAROL And what shall I put into the water? Whisky?

MARCEL No, no. I don't drink alcohol.

KAROL (worried) What happened?

MARCEL I just don't drink!

ZYTA I like it! Being assertive.

Karol is humming the same song "The Last Sunday"

MARCEL Is it "The last Sunday"?

KAROL Do you know the song?

MARCEL It was a hit before the war. Did you like those times?

KAROL Well... everything was simpler.

MARCEL You know best.

KAROL What?

MARCEL What was it like back then?

KAROL Marcelli! My God! I am only fifty. I wasn't even born then.

MARCEL Oh, yes, of course. But you're interested in those times.

KAROL I just hum it. I like it.

MARCEL Me too. My grandmother used to sing it to me.

KAROL And you like it?

MARCEL It's so romantic. Apparently suicidal people listened to it before their deaths.

ZYTA They did? And that's romantic?

MARCEL Yes. Poor boy. A girl left him for another and he couldn't take it.

KAROL Let's be precise, Marcelli: she left with someone richer and better than him. A better one! That's what that loser is singing...

MARCEL Mieczyslaw Fogg?

KAROL No... the one in the song. The lyrical subject. In my opinion, Marcelli, it's the whimpering of a loser.

MARCEL A loser?

KAROL Just listen how it goes... "today here comes the other guy, the richer, better one than I, and along with you he stole my happiness..." So

he admits that he himself is worse and more stupid, as he let the other steal his girl!

MARCEL Well, he had a hard time...

KAROL Not really, he begs for her love... She didn't want him?! If he had some self-worth, he would say to himself: "Too bad for her!" and leave with dignity. But not him! Only: "look at me tenderly, for the last time..."! Get lost!

ZYTA You're exaggerating, Karol, he only wants to meet her one more time...

KAROL Oh, no, Zyta. Let's analyse the text. The girl chose a more suitable partner. A better and a richer one. Those are his own words. He admits it himself, that he's worse and poorer. So he should get lost! And leave her alone! In the States when someone follows an ex it's called stalking and it's punishable by law.

MARCEL I know what stalking is. But "The Last Sunday" isn't about stalking, is it?

ZYTA Exactly! I think so too. This song is about something completely different?

KAROL What about?

MARCEL The anguish of love.

ZYTA Exactly!

KAROL Excuse me! He had plenty of time to make her feel special. Yes, he did. But he was a bit of a woos and she couldn't stand the pillock...

MARCEL Excuse me, who?

KAROL A loser. No one can blame her, that she chose to live with someone who could secure her future financially.

ZYTA I think that that girl wasn't worthy of his love, if she chose money over real love.

KAROL And how do you know? How do you know that that other one, the better, richer one didn't love her truly and madly? Maybe she loved him too?

MARCEL Exactly. Those were the times. Ruthlessness. Poverty. Capitalism. The class struggle...

KAROL The class struggle? Capitalism? Just a minute? Those were the times of Gorky and Zola, yes? What are your political views, Marcelli?

MARCEL Moderate.

KAROL It means? Leftist?

MARCEL Moderate.

KAROL Are you a socialist?

MARCEL A socialist is someone like Karl Marx. No. But I'm sensitive to, let's call it, social injustice.

KAROL Extraordinary! In the 21st c.? Where have you been living, son?

ZYTA Stop it, Karol! He's young, he's a right to an opinion.

KAROL Yes? "Who isn't a socialist when young is a bastard when old..?"

MARCEL That is what Bismarck said and I agree with him.

KAROL With Bismarck? Who hated Poles? You are lucky you're young. What do you think about the whole hippy movement?

MARCEL Do you mean real hippies who met at the corner of Haight and Ashberry streets in San Francisco, at the end of the sixties during the time of the Vietnam war?

KAROL Hmm... Yes... More or less. Them too.

MARCEL They thought it out perfectly. They didn't want to fight. Hippies were sons of WASPS and rebelled. Their idea was "Make love not war". They played flower children, took LSD, and such frivolities while normal boys, usually black from poor families died in the jungles of Vietnam. Generally, in my opinion, the movement was overrated and unrealistic. You can't change the world with a beard and a guitar...

Karol looks at Marcel with an open mouth, completely mesmerised.

KAROL Yes. From what you are saying I gather you don't like the States?

MARCEL I don't like their arrogance in politics.

KAROL If somebody is in the right, a bit of arrogance or nonchalance does wonders.

MARCEL I think we shouldn't give in on everything.

KAROL You and I?

MARCEL The world. First of all Europe.

KAROL But... Not to give in just for the sake of it? But what if they are right?

MARCEL They aren't right.

KAROL It seems to me they are. Do you know, Marceli, that the US is the only country, which has idealism in their constitution?

MARCEL And now they think that's enough. But practice doesn't care about theory! That's why they destroy everything.

KAROL Excuse me, Marceli, I shouldn't have started this conversation.

In this house you won't find anti-Americans!

MARCEL Marysia thinks the same...

KAROL Yes? Just you wait when she comes home!

ZYTA What will you do to her?

KAROL I'll give her a piece of my mind.

ZYTA I think that we should end this discussion. There are lots of more interesting subjects than politics.

MARCEL I agree. Ecology for example.

KAROL Oh no! Don't tell me you're a member of the Green party.

MARCEL I participate a bit in the alterglobalist movement. Marysia suggested we go to the G-8 summit in Davos.

KAROL Oh no, Marcelli. My daughter won't be throwing bits of pavement at policemen.

MARCEL There are other forms of protest.

KAROL Chain yourself to an F-16?

MARCEL If she wants to, I'll take her.

KAROL (with aggression in his voice) You bet!?

ZYTA I can see you have more subject in common to discuss!

KAROL You know, Marcelli, I wonder... What will happen when our generation dies out? Then the world will be made up of metrosexuals and alterglobalists like you? Who is going to earn towards pensions? Not you generation of layabouts, hedonists surgically attached to their mobiles?

MARCEL I think it won't be so bad. In general we won't cope any worse than your generation of photocopiers and black and white TVs.

KAROL Zyta! You can take one plate away. Marcelli is leaving...

ZYTA Stop it! (to Marcel) Please don't take any notice of him! It was a stupid joke!

A door bell rings.

ZYTA At last! Marysia!

Zyta rushes to open the door. Marysia is at the door, (20) smiling. She is a very pretty girl. She is surprised to see Marcel.

MARYSIA Marcel! Completely forgot!

ZYTA Typical!

MARCEL You said seven so I came at seven!

MARYSIA So sorry. Have you met my parents?

KAROL I had some time...

ZYTA Let's have dinner...

MARYSIA What? Just a second. We have to do something.

ZYTA (understanding) Yes, of course... Don't worry.

Karol looks at his watch.

KAROL Well, I'm hungry and would like to eat something.

Zyta looks at him icily, Marysia kisses Marcel on the lips, takes his hand and pulls him towards her room

ZYTA So, do you like him?

KAROL Marcelli? I was impressed with what he said about the hippies.

But as far as the rest, I can see serious irreconcilable differences.

ZYTA Luckily, he's not your boyfriend.

KAROL And he doesn't drink.

ZYTA And that's a fault?

KAROL It depends. What if he is trying to give up?

ZYTA A teetotaller for you is a dried out alcoholic?

KAROL Well... perhaps he doesn't drink for religious reasons? That would be even worse!

ZYTA What if he's a sportsman and he doesn't like alcohol?

KAROL Maybe he is ill and is forbidden to drink?

ZYTA Stop it. He is a nice boy. I think Marysia is crazy about him.

KAROL So that's why she completely forgot they were to meet?

ZYTA Yes. It's strange. Even for her being a scatterbrain. But he's clever, isn't he?

KAROL I don't know. I didn't have time to check him out.

ZYTA I like that he's polite but he's not afraid to express his opinion. Even to you!

KAROL Maybe he's gay?

ZYTA Because he's polite?

KAROL Because he can cook.

ZYTA I think it's wonderful.

KAROL And his arrogant opinion on literature?

ZYTA You're thinking about your novel?

KAROL (shocked) Of course not! He's rubbished most of the famous authors. He doesn't like this one, he doesn't like that one... Wellbeck is useless, Camus old fashioned?

ZYTA (with irony) Old cognac, that's ok. Isn't it?

KAROL I think he's a big mouth!

ZYTA You always wanted someone that stood up to you!

KAROL But not in such a crude way!

ZYTA Crude? I don't think so.

KAROL 'Cause you're a woman. You like his looks and hey presto!
You stop thinking rationally!

ZYTA Really... That wouldn't explain why I married you. I didn't fancy you...

KAROL Ok. If we had a son and he had a string of girlfriends, you would say: this one's lips are too big, she's going to be unfaithful, that one's legs are too long, she's wears too much make up. Her complexion is too dark, she's going to leave the country...

ZYTA But we have a daughter!

KAROL And that's why I'm a fair judge.

ZYTA Hmm... Like Paduranu!

KAROL (change of atmosphere) You remember Paduranu? How he let us down in Stara Zagora?

ZYTA I remember. He changed 0:1 to 3:1 for Bulgaria and threw Lubanski off the playing field.

KAROL But that was in seventy seven! Forty four years ago!

ZYTA I lived in this country too. We're the same age.

KAROL And I love you for it.

ZYTA Yes, the same age. And now... I warn you, if Marysia asks me tonight what I think about Marcel, I shall say thumbs up, yes.

KAROL Yes?

ZYTA Yes!

KAROL Straight away? You are making a big mistake! I know his game!

ZYTA Yes? Me too, he's a nice boy.

KAROL A bit of a woos.

ZYTA Cause he's polite? You don't know anything!

KAROL I have a few more questions to put to him....

ZYTA But not at dinner, ok? I think he's the one.

KAROL Yes??

ZYTA Yes. A woman's intuition.

KAROL And my man's intuition says I should show him the door.

ZYTA Let's just agree that it's not your decision.

KAROL I don't care that Marysia is under his spell. It's normal at her age. Hormones, etc. She will thank us for it later.

ZYTA Not us! I'm not on her side.

KAROL Look at it rationally, Zyta. You have to ask yourself the fundamental question: is this a final port or is it a pit stop?

ZYTA You can ask yourself but you won't find an answer.

KAROL I wouldn't like to leave things as they are. Let's have a vote.

ZYTA We... the problem has been solved. And you have been voted out.

KAROL Did we take a vote? When?

ZYTA I am “for” and Marysia for obvious reasons is “for” it too. It doesn’t matter what you think.

KAROL The result has to be unanimous.

ZYTA No. It isn’t a jury.

Enter Marysia and Marcel.

MARYSIA We’ve finished. Marcel is a genius.

ZYTA We know...

MARYSIA He repaired my laptop.

Marcel modestly adjusts his rucksack on his shoulders.

MARCEL I’m a bit of a technogeek.

ZYTA Fantastic! Let’s sit down to dinner.

Marysia is a bit taken aback, looks at her watch.

MARYSIA Now?

ZYTA Supper as in dinner.

KAROL “Guess who’s coming over for dinner tonight?” Does it remind you of anything, Marceli?

MARCEL “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” directed by Stanley Kramer?

KAROL Yes. This time you have guessed...

ZYTA I don’t understand...

MARCEL It’s an American classic film from sixty seven. A daughter of a white, rich family invites her black boyfriend for dinner.

KAROL Excellent film!

ZYTA And what's the connection? (understands now) Well... let's sit down at the table!

MARCEL Ok. I have to go. (gives Mary a kiss on her cheek) Take care, Marysia.

MARYSIA Ok. See you tomorrow.

Zyta and Karol are half frozen.

ZYTA What? You won't stay for dinner?

KAROL Dinner?

ZYTA Supper?

MARCEL I don't want to intrude. And I have to drop in to the library and give the books back. The day after tomorrow I am going to Canada, I've got a scholarship, so I have to pack...

KAROL (taken aback) The library?

ZYTA (worried) To Canada?

MARCEL Yes.

ZYTA How long are you going for, Marcel?

MARCEL A year.

ZYTA (cannot hide her disillusionment) Shame!

MARCEL Yes, it was really very nice.

KAROL In a way...

Zyta embraces and kisses Marcel.

ZYTA Take care of yourself out there.

MARYSIA He'll be ok.

MARCEL Thank you. Marysia is lucky to have parents like you.

ZYTA (glad) Do you think so?

MARYSIA Stop sucking up to them!

ZYTA Marysia, don't rush your friend. Let him speak.

MARCEL I am really honoured to have met you.

KAROL That's obvious.

MARCEL Thank you again. Seeya, Mary!

Marcel exits. Zyta and Krol who are upset turn to Marysia.

ZYTA What are you doing?

MARYSIA Sorry?

KAROL Yes, what was all that about?

MARYSIA What?

ZYTA You asked for us to be at home. I made dinner, went to the hairdresser, dressed up!

KAROL And I missed out on playing bridge!

ZYTA And then he says: "Seeya, Mary, I am going to Canada".

MARYSIA I don't understand. What's the matter? Is it because I was a bit late? I'm sorry. Besides there is no point to rush, Eustachy hasn't arrived yet.

KAROL and ZYTA Who hasn't arrived yet?

MARYSIA Eustachy! My boyfriend.

ZYTA So Marcel isn't your boyfriend?

MARYSIA My boyfriend? No. Marcel isn't Eustachy. No.

ZYTA What's his name again?

MARYSIA Eustachy?

ZYTA And who is Marcel?

MARYSIA A friend who knows a bit about computers.

KAROL Gott sei dank!

MARYSIA Stachu will call when he arrives.

ZYTA Did you say Stachu? He's coming over?

MARYSIA I call him different names... Stachu, Stachy, Eustek.

ZYTA Aaaa... Yes. And where is he, I'm a bit lost... You said he will call when he arrives. Where from?

MARYSIA From Paris. He'll call from his mobile.

ZYTA Why from Paris? What is he doing in Paris?

MARYSIA He had a lecture there. He's on his way back.

KAROL A lecture? On what subject?

MARYSIA Finance or something? I'm not sure.

ZYTA Finance? Well... well..

KAROL (to himself) What kind of names are these? Marcel...
Eustachy.

MARYSIA Pretty cool, hey! I'm just boring Marysia.

KAROL It's quite rare nowadays. Do you want to be a Karina, Beatrice, Hermiona?

MARYSIA I like Rebecca.

KAROL Why Rebecca?

MARYSIA I like it.

ZYTA We wanted to give you a name that is used in all languages.

MARYSIA Rebecca is cool.

KAROL Marysia is cool too.

MARYSIA Stachy likes it too.

ZYTA Stachy?

MARYSIA Eustachy, Stachy...

KAROL To tell you frankly I started to warm to that other guy.

MARYSIA Reallly? That's incredible. You warmed to another man?

ZYTA I liked him a lot. Pity he's flying to Canada.

MARYSIA Marcel? He isn't flying.

ZYTA He said that tomorrow he's taking a plane to Canada.

MARYSIA Marcel is afraid of flying.

KAROL So how is he getting there?

MARYSIA Marcel is going by motorcycle.

ZYTA By sea?

KAROL The ocean?

MARYSIA No. Via Russia, Siberia, Kamchatka, Bering Straits and then Alaska and so on.

KAROL But why?

ZYTA Doesn't he have any money? I can lend him the fare.

MARYSIA Well, he wants to be like Che Guevara in "Motorcycle Diaries".

KAROL It is only Russia and mostly Asia! Are there roads in Kamchatka?

ZYTA Yes, roads... And food?

MARYSIA Listen. You don't know Marcel. If he wants to do something, he'll do it.

KAROL Stubborn!

MARYSIA Exactly!

ZYTA And that's what I like about him. Cultured, well mannered and head strong.

MARYSIA In the long run it would get annoying. I need a man who panders to me.

KAROL And Stachy panders to you?

MARYSIA Oh yes!!!

KAROL That's good. That's how it should be. You're the most important.

MARYSIA I am all up for partnership but when there's a draw my vote counts as double.

KAROL And that's how it should be.

ZYTA Well... I'm not so sure...

MARYSIA Excuse me. Are we going to stand here and discuss what my boyfriend should do?

ZYTA No! Of course not!

KAROL And why not? You're our only daughter!

MARYSIA Daddy... let it go. Everything is under control.

KAROL Let's hope so.

ZYTA You know, Mary, you're always going to be our little girl, and your future is the most important thing for us.

MARYSIA (to Zyta) You used to say to me that "a child is like a suitcase. However much you pack in, you'll get the same back out." You don't have to worry about me any more.

ZYTA I know... but you know what parents are like...

MARYSIA Have you ever had any problems with me? Have I done anything stupid? Have I ever let you down? Have I not passed my exams?

ZYTA No. Never!

KAROL And that's why I'm worried. I don't want you to make a mistake.

MARYSIA That won't happen. I am happy that you're not only my parents but also my friends.

ZYTA We value your trust too.

KAROL But you know there should be some distance. Even in the best of relationships. We are your parents, not your mates.

MARYSIA I always preferred to go on holidays with you than my silly mates from school.

KAROL There'll always be a place for you in our tent.

MARYSIA So you can trust me in the matter of heart as well.

KAROL Yes? Ok.

ZYTA We know, darling! We know!

MARYSIA I knew you'd agree!

ZYTA To what?

MARYSIA To me marrying Eustek!

Zyta and Karol froze.

ZYTA i KAROL Marriage???!

KAROL Not so fast! What marriage?

MARYSIA We love each other?

ZYTA We better hope so.

KAROL But why marriage?

MARYSIA Are we supposed to wait until the wedding?

ZYTA But... my darling, you're too young to get married.

MARYSIA I'd like to move in with Stachy? I want to cook for him and iron his shirts?

KAROL You can cook and iron for him but why do you want to move out?

MARYSIA Exactly.... I knew you wouldn't let me live with him without getting married first?

KAROL We don't even know him!

MARYSIA You'll meet him in a minute. He's coming over! Remember?

KAROL Is that a question?

ZYTA Are you pregnant?

MARYSIA Excuse me? (she gets a text message, she looks at it) Speak of the devil! He's arrived. (she looks at the text again) Oh! Something happened. I have to call. (punches the number, speaks to the mobile) Hi, Stachy! Arrived? Come over! We're waiting for you. And hurry, you're a bit late. The address? You don't know the address? What...? Speak clearly! Speak clearly! Do you remember the address.... What? Stop mumbling and speak louder... What are you saying? (to her parents) Sorry, but I have to collect him! (to the mobile) Stachy. Tell me exactly, where you are! Describe it. Describe the place... Yes, yes... I get it. Now find the nearest bench and sit down. I'll be there in a sec... Wait for me!

No. Don't talk to them. Wait for me! Yes! (switches her mobile off) I've got to get him... I'll be back in fifteen minutes...

ZYTA With Stachy?!

KAROL In fifteen minutes? In rush hour? You'll be in a traffic jam for two hours before you get to the airport.

MARYSIA What airport? Stachu has come by train? He's waiting on the train platform, it's only five minutes from here?

ZYTA Why not by plane?

KAROL A train from Paris? We're in the 21st c!

MARYSIA Stachy doesn't like flying? You'd be happy? I'll be back in a second?

Marysia picks up a set of keys lying on the table near the door and exits.

Zyta sits on the sofa. She looks at Karol. Both of them look at each other looking terribly worried, expecting the worst.

KAROL Damn it! I have to eat something, I'll go mad I'm so hungry.

Karol enters the kitchen.

ZYTA Wait! I'll make you something, you'll just make a mess!

Zyta runs after him.

Curtain.

End of Act I.

ACT II

Karol paces around the room. In one hand he has a sandwich and in the other a glass of beer. Enters Zyta. She sits down on the sofa and takes out a packet of pills. She takes one and drinks some water.

KAROL It's becoming unbearable! I knew it would be a difficult evening, but so damn difficult?

ZYTA I have a strange feeling, Karol. I didn't like how they talked to each other on the phone.

KAROL Why are they so late? I'm done with waiting!

ZYTA Calm down.

KAROL It seemed that Stachy was drunk.

ZYTA Really...? Marysia doesn't like drunks. She remembers how her grandpa used to drink.

KAROL My poor dead father?

ZYTA He had a hard life so he drank from time to time. Marysia didn't like it.

KAROL Dad lived under constant stress. He had a difficult childhood. Hard times before the war, German occupation and then the Soviet one. And after that it wasn't much easier!

ZYTA Marysia would never go for someone who drinks. She's had a good example at home.

The telephone rings. Zyta looks at her mobile.

ZYTA Oh no! It's her again!

KAROL Marysia?

ZYTA Mother! She's gone mad! (receives her call) Yes! What again? No! We're still waiting. It wasn't the one... It wasn't the right one... Oh God! He was ok but not Mr Right... no, I liked him a lot... Karol liked him less... Marysia is with someone else... No, she isn't being unfaithful to Marcel.... She's with someone else... Oh God! (tries to stay calm) Marysia doesn't love Marcel. Why doesn't she love him? No.... He didn't do anything to her! She never loved him, as he wasn't her boyfriend! Never has been... We thought he was but he wasn't... He only came to repair her laptop! Not laktop! Laptop! Computer! What are we doing? Nothing. We're waiting for Eustachy... it's a name... her new boyfriend's name... Marysia went to pick him up... he couldn't find his way...

The front door opens.

ZYTA I have to go... they're coming... I'll call, will call later. Bye!

Zyta switches it off. Enters Marysia to the living room, holding on to somebody hiding behind a huge bunch of flowers.

MARYSIA This is Eustachy, Eustachy, these are my parents.

MARYSIA takes the flowers from him and shows her guest in. Surprised Zyta and Karol look at Eustachy: greying, forty something man, in glasses, double breasted jacket and a foulard tie. Light colour trousers

and moccasins with a tassel. Eustachy is close in age to Karol and Zyta. Eustachy seems to be a bit tipsy. Eustachy, with a big gesture, gives Zyta the flowers, then kisses her hand and bows low. Then turns back to Karol and shakes Karol's hand with some force.

EUSTACHY (mumbling) Very nice to meet you. Eu! (hiccup) stachy!
Ch... (hiccup) ski with pleasure!

Obviously upset Zyta moves away.

ZYTA Oh, what beautiful flowers, I'll get a vase!

MARYSIA No. I'll go!

Marysia takes the flowers from her mother and exits.

KAROL Yes...

Eustachy stands staggering and though nobody offers him a seat he goes up to the sofa and sits down.

ZYTA (whispers to Karol) Pinch me...

KAROL (with a delay) Please sit down. Naturally!

Eustachy sits and appears to fall asleep. Karol goes up to him and slaps him on his shoulder.

KAROL Eustachy! Don't sleep! Too much Dutch courage, old chap?

EUSTACHY (awoken) I am very sorry. Do you think I am drunk? I can assure you I am not. I suffer from hyperventilation...

KAROL What?

EUSTACHY Hyperventilation.

ZYTA I know what it is. I had a patient with a similar illness.

KAROL Old, drunk and ill. (towards Marysia) Marysia? (sarcastically)

Nice one, daughter!

EUSTACHY (shortens words like a drunk) This ly loks awful y. It's real only a slight proble. Hyperventilation. When I am too lon on the trn the outside change terrib fat.. My brai doest kno what is happe and react in defence... I start breat fast and fat and I giv an impresson I drunk. I'm ver sory. I shoul'n't travl by trains. But I don't like planes. Excuse me for a minute.

Eustachy leans forward and suddenly starts to breathe into a paper bag.

He tries to calm down his breathing.

KAROL (to Zyta) Is he going to vomit?!

ZYTA No. He's had too much oxygen. (to Eustachy) Yes... You really do have a problem with travelling. You should try cars or ships.

EUSTACHY I don't do ships. Cars, yes, only when I drive.

ZYTA Well, that's a relief!

EUSTACHY But I don't have a driving licence.

KAROL You don't have a driving licence? How can you not drive a car in the 21st c.?

EUSTACHY I can drive but I don't have a driving licence. But I have a driver. I'm feeling a bit better...

Eustachy starts breathing properly.

EUSTACHY I didn't have time to apply for one. Constant lack of time.
Only work and work.

KAROL But you had time to pick up our daughter?

EUSTACHY Well, sometimes I do need a break.

ZYTA What did you say? Marysia is a break to you?

EUSTACHY Sorry, I didn't mean it that way... From time to time I
need some light relief. I met Marysia in a cafe.

KAROL Lucky girl!

EUSTACHY Thank you. (looks about the flat) Very impressive
apartment? How much did it cost? At least 12 thousand zloty per square
meter?

ZYTA Oh, no. It was a long time ago. Before the prices went up.

Eustachy nods in appreciation.

EUSTACHY Nowadays you could sell it for at least 15 thousand zloty
per meter. I can help you sell it...

KAROL We don't want to sell it. We like our flat.

EUSTACHY Some of my friends are developers. I know the market.
You'd get a good price.

KAROL You work in property?

EUSTACHY No, but I've started renovating a palace for Marysia and
I... that's why I know the best developers in town.

KAROL You know... at the moment we don't intend to invest in property.

ZYTA (didn't get it) Renovation of what...?

EUSTACHY Of the palace. Marysia hasn't told you yet?

KAROL About palace renovation? No.

EUSTACHY It was supposed to be a surprise! It just slipped out, sorry! I've spoiled everything! Please sit down. I feel awkward. Please do.

ZYTA Thank you very much.

Karol and Zyta sit down smiling as if they have forgotten they are at their own home.

EUSTACHY Please call me Stachy.

KAROL We'll think about it.

ZYTA Somehow I can't bring myself, you're... a grown up.

EUSTACHY Well, if you don't want to... You have a wonderful daughter, my congratulations!

KAROL We know, we know!

EUSTACHY A real modern woman.

ZYTA I still see her as my little girl.

KAROL She still is a young girl. Don't you think that she is still a bit childish?

EUSTACHY Of course not! It's me who's childish. She is so witty. Young but so mature!

ZYTA And how did you meet?

EUSTACHY Thanks to the internet.

ZYTA You said in a café...?

EUSTACHY That was later. But thanks to the internet.

KAROL Marysia is a young and beautiful girl. She doesn't need the internet to meet men on blind dates!

EUSTACHY I think so too. But we got to know each other in the chat room.

ZYTA Hmm. She thought you were younger?

EUSTACHY No. Why do you think so?

ZYTA Marysia has only had... friends in her own age group, from school and university.

EUSTACHY I understand. Only work and work. No time to go out to town! Look around. And then you settle for whatever is on offer.

ZYTA But you said you met through the internet?

EUSTACHY Because of the internet. My computer broke down, so went out to an internet café. Marysia was throwing a birthday party.

KAROL and ZYTA Birthday party? In an internet café?

EUSTACHY Next door in the pub. Her eighteenth.

ZYTA Her eighteenth? So you've have known each other for two years? You said something about a chat room...

KAROL Yes...

EUSTACHY We've been chatting for two years but we only recently got acquainted closer... You know what I mean...

KAROL Please spare us the details.

EUSTACHY Ok. I can assure you it was all very proper...

KAROL There really is no need to continue...!

ZYTA Please tell us something, Eustachy. Have you ever been married?

EUSTACHY Yes...

KAROL Yes? Well... How many times?

EUSTACHY Once.

ZYTA Thank God. And what happened?

EUSTACHY Well... legally I am still married...

ZYTA Do you hear that, Karol? For God's sake?

KAROL Well, if you're now with Marysia you better divorce immediately!

EUSTACHY I want to but I don't know where my ex wife lives. And without it I can't get a divorce.

KAROL (happy, whispers to Zyta) You see! Yes! We're in luck. Marysia won't be able to marry to him!

EUSTACHY I have sent letters, text messages, emails... She is completely untraceable. But I still hope that one day I'll find her and she will give me a divorce.

KAROL Nowadays it's not so easy.

ZYTA Maybe she still loves you and doesn't want to think about divorcing.

EUSTACHY When I meet her I'll persuade her otherwise.

KAROL I presume we know how.

Enters Marysia with flowers in a vase. She puts it on the side table.

Looks at her parents worried faces.

MARYSIA I can see you're getting to know each other...

Karol goes up to her, takes her by the arm and hisses into her ear.

KAROL Marysia! Have you gone mad?

MARYSIA No!

KAROL (whispers) Don't even go there.

MARYSIA What?

KAROL (whispers) A wedding!?

ZYTA We've just found out that Eustachy is still married.

MARYSIA His marriage is history. Pity about the children though.

ZYTA Children? (to Eustachy) You have children?

EUSTACHY Yes, I have children.

KAROL How many?

EUSTACHY Only three...

ZYTA (to Marysia) And you know about that?

MARYSIA Of course! I am good friends with Misa, Zuza and Bruno!

ZYTA How old are they?

MARYSIA Nineteen, fifteen and ten. Stachy brought them up on his own! He's a great dad! Pity I didn't have one like him.

KAROL Thank you very much.

ZYTA And you had time to look after the children?

EUSTACHY Oh no. I had lots of nannies, au pairs and maids. I personally didn't have time.

KAROL And what do you do?

EUSTACHY I read a lot. I travel.

KAROL Professionally...

EUSTACHY Finance. Stock exchange. And so on...

MARYSIA Stachy is very modest but he is very successful!

ZYTA And the children... You must live in a cramped flat?

EUSTACHY That's why I started renovating the palace.

MARYSIA There will be a lot of room there. 70 rooms!

ZYTA What are you talking about? A palace... seriously?

MARYSIA 18th century!

KAROL Oh yes... Eustachy... You mentioned some palace, didn't you?

EUSTACHY I would like Marysia, my princess, to live in a palace where her every need will be tended to. No worries, only happiness and love.

KAROL Who wouldn't like that?

EUSTACHY I can give her all that.

ZYTA But why a palace? Aristocracy live in palaces. Wouldn't it be better if you put your personal life into some kind of order?

EUSTACHY I'm working on it. I have managed to get my family place back after many years of struggle.

ZYTA Your place? Family place? What do you mean?

KAROL What do you mean by place? You used to live in a palace?

EUSTACHY Not I. My grandfather.

ZYTA Grandfather?

EUSTACHY I was born in exile.

KAROL In London?

EUSTACHY In Spain. In Madrid.

MARYSIA In Calle Mayor!

ZYTA Your grandpa was a count?

EUSTACHY No, he wasn't a count...

KAROL A merchant who bought a palace from an impoverished noble family?

EUSTACHY Not that, either.

KAROL (with irony) You won it on the stock exchange? I mean roulette?

EUSTACHY No. He was born in it.

KAROL Born in it?

EUSTACHY My grandpa was a prince.

Karol and Zyta look embarrassed.

ZYTA Can you tell me your surname again, I missed it...

EUSTACHY Please forgive me, I should have said it more clearly but because of the hyperventilation... I was mumbling a bit...

KAROL Your name, if you please...?

EUSTACHY Eustachy Czartoryski at your service.

Silence. Zyta and Karol don't say a word. They look silly.

ZYTA The Czartoryski family?

EUSTACHY I don't think there is another...

KAROL Ah, so that's why your face, prince, seemed familiar to me...

ZYTA (shy, curtsies) Well... prince, sir, can I invite you to the table...

KAROL High time! Children to the table! Les enfants a table!

Marysia, who for some time is looking at her parents listens to the conversation with amusement, claps her hands.

MARYSIA Eustek! Mother cooks like a dream! I'm starving.

EUSTACHY Me too! It's normal after hyperventilation. Where can I wash my hands?

ZYTA In the hall, first door on the right.

Eustachy bows and exits. When he is gone, Karol speaks to Marysia.

KAROL (whispers) What have you done?!

MARYSIA What have I done?

KAROL Who have you brought here?

MARYSIA You wanted a fairy tale prince? So there you go!

ZYTA But Marysia... we didn't mean it literally...

MARYSIA I am bored with this all! Every boy I have brought back to meet you, was for you immediately "my next ex", "next-ex" (to Karol) It was your joke you always told your friends, wasn't it?

KAROL Well... I'm famous for my sense of humour. But don't turn this on me! But... with this... with this guy who hyper... (looks for a word) aristocrat ventilator... you've gone too far!

KAROL But what don't you like about him? He's rich, he loves me, he wants me to live in a palace. I'll be a princess! I feel looked after.

ZYTA What? Looked after?

MARYSIA No financial worries. That was the most important thing for you, wasn't it?

ZYTA The fact that he's a prince isn't a problem. But he's too old for you!

MARYSIA Young princes are much harder to find! He was the youngest I could get!

KAROL Impossible! Firstly, he is our age. Secondly: we would feel inadequate for the rest of our lives!

MARYSIA But why? Stachy is a cool guy. He never mentions his title, only when he's angry.

MARYSIA We made him angry...?

MARYSIA You behaved a bit like peasants...

KAROL And everyone is beneath his highness, yes?

MARYSIA Neither I nor Eustachy hold it against you. Everything can be put right.

KAROL We won't put everything right. The prince will have dinner and then he'll leave.

The door bell rings.

KAROL Who the hell is that now?

ZYTA (to Marysia) Have you invited anybody else?

MARYSIA Of course not! Only us!

Marysia goes to the door, opens it and lets in an older lady (65) in a hat – it is Krystyna (Kika) Zyta's mother.

MARYSIA Grandma! How nice!

Marysia kisses Kika and Zyta looks up.

ZYTA Oh no! What, her?

KIKA Not "her"! I'm your mother.

ZYTA Mother! We agreed that you should stay at home! I've really had enough!

KIKA I didn't want to. I wanted to be with my granddaughter on this important day. (she looks around) Where is he?

Karol greets her by kissing her on the cheek.

KAROL Good evening, mother. How are you?

KIKA What a journey! There was an accident on the way. Where is Mr. Right? Hasn't he arrived yet?

KAROL He has arrived alright. He's in the bathroom, washing his hands.

ZYTA (to Karol) But... what is he doing in there. He's been a while.
From the bathroom we hear the toilet being flushed and gargling. Zyta and Karol look at each other uneasily.

KIKA Is it him?

MARYSIA Yes.

KIKA The one who repaired you laptok?

ZYTA Laptop!

MARYSIA No. That was my friend, Marcel, and this one is my boyfriend Eustachy.

KAROL A boyfriend! Huh! A big boy!

KIKA I'm not after your opinion only my granddaughter's: are you happy, Marysia?

MARYSIA Yes, grandma! Very! Stachy loves me very much. He's wonderful!

KIKA Has he any vices?

MARYSIA Vices? None. Maybe one.

KAROL I wonder what?

MARYSIA He gets very jealous!

KIKA That's rather a virtue!

Kika realises that Eustachy has been in the room for a few minutes, drying his hands with a silk handkerchief. He must have heard the conversation.

EUSTACHY Excuse me, but I couldn't help but overhear. It's true.

With Marysia I feel as if Othello has been awoken in me! (to Kika)

Please let me introduce myself. Eustachy Cza...

Before he says anything Karol speaks over him.

KAROL Cza cza cza!

ZYTA This is Eustachy, mother!

Kika looks at Eustachy from top to bottom. She turns to Marysia.

KIKA Marysia, is this man your boyfriend's father?

MARYSIA Sorry? What are you saying, grandma?

KIKA I understand that your boyfriend came with his father for his first visit...? And now he is washing his hands, isn't he?

MARYSIA You don't understand, grandma. (points at Eustachy) He is my boyfriend!

For a moment Kika looks disorientated at Marysia, Zyta and Karol.

KIKA He is her boyfriend?

Zyta and Karol nod.

KIKA You're kidding me. But he's an old man!

Marysia goes up to Kika, takes her by the hands and looks into her eyes.

MARYSIA Grandma, I am twenty. Nearly twenty one years old. I'm a big girl now. You have always respected my decisions, haven't you?

Kika wriggles free.

KIKA What? What do you know about life, Marysia! (to Eustachy)

Don't make a fool of yourself and leave the kid alone.

EUSTACHY Madam, I wouldn't dare...

KIKA Stop this nonsense! Enough of this circus! Or I'll go to the police!

MARYSIA Grandma, Eustachy is a good man. You should really be happy that we are together!

KIKA But he is too old, Marysia! (to Zyta) I knew this would happen! This one is too short! That one too fat! Other too stupid! And now you have him: a tall, slim, wise old git!

ZYTA Mother! Behave!

EUSTACHY (with a broad smile) Oh no! I like an eccentric sense of humour! Almost on a border of a faux pas!

KIKA Oh! What a nice smile! Are those your own teeth?

EUSTACHY I love them like they were my own!

KIKA (to Marysia) Do you want your children to be brought up without a father?

MARYSIA We don't want to have children.

EUSTACHY For the time being, my honeybee!

ZYTA For the time being?

KAROL Honeybee?

KIKA Soon he won't be able to have children! (to Eustachy) How old are you, my dear!

EUSTACHY I just passed forty, madam.

KIKA Hmmm! Forty! Ten years ago!

ZYTA Mother, watch what you are saying!

KIKA I won't allow some pensioner take advantage of my granddaughter! Don't you see? He is a paedophile!

ZYTA Eustachy is a prince!

KIKA A priest? Well, it all seems logical. God forbid!

KAROL A prince! Not a priest!

KIKA You should be ashamed of yourself, father!

ZYTA Mother! What will the prince think?

KIKA Prince, pull the other one!

EUSTACHY Dear madam, the only thing I dream of is your granddaughter's and my happiness. And your whole family. I'll compensate all your moral losses...

KIKA What losses?! We'll have this dinner somehow and then you can return to your principedom and Marysia to her room!

KAROL Excuse me, mother... please let me... We, as her parents have a say.

KIKA Oh no! You didn't look after her properly so now you have nothing to say.

MARYSIA Grandma, enough is enough! (takes Eustachy by the hand)
Eustachy! We are going!

Eustachy hurriedly takes her hand and both of them move towards the door. Kika, with a speed of light follows them and bars the door with her body.

KIKA Ok! Father can go! But Marysia stays!

MARYSIA Grandma, don't be so silly!

ZYTA Stop this! This is crazy! We're in front of aristocracy!

KIKA Kiss my ass!

Marysia bursts out laughing.

MARYSIA I love you, grandma! I knew I could always rely on you! But now give us a break and let us go. Stachy and I are starving and want to go to eat.

KIKA When he goes, I'll make you your favourite soup...

EUSTACHY I understand, I am not welcome.

MARYSIA It's cool, Eustachy...

KIKA Let him leave! Let him leave now!

KAROL Mother, I am the host here and I shall decide when my guest leaves my home!

ZYTA Mother, please go home. It's none of your business. I'll call you tomorrow.

KIKA Not my business? Just you wait! I looked after her my whole life and now she is about to ruin her life...

MARYSIA Grandma, pipe down.

EUSTACHY Ruin? Why? As far as her future is concerned, she'll be well looked after.

KIKA And what do you want in return?

EUSTACHY In return I want absolute loyalty from Marysia. I get jealous easily, you see. I have already mentioned that, haven't I?

ZYTA Yes, you mentioned that.

KIKA I ask, what do you want to leave my granddaughter alone?!

EUSTACHY Madam, please look at this from a different angle...

Kika holds on to the door frame even harder. Points at Eustachy with her finger.

KIKA Marysia and him? Over my dead body!

EUSTACHY I don't understand what I have done to offend you.

A mobile rings. Everybody including Kika looks for theirs but this time it is Eustachy's mobile.

EUSTACHY Excuse me, I think it's mine...

Eustachy stops speaking and takes out a mobile from his pocket. Looks at it and smiles broadly.

EUSTACHY Well... at last! I have very good news! I have just received a message that Betty... my ex wife, well, legally still my wife, has been found! My lawyer has just written to me!

KIKA He has a wife?! Thank God, that solves everything!

Kika gets up from the threshold. Marysia wants to help her but grandma doesn't want her help and gets up on her own. She brushes off her hands.

KIKA I didn't know that you are married.

EUSTACHY But Betty has just agreed to a divorce. At last I am free to marry Marysia.

KIKA Betty will take you to the cleaners. And your most attractive asset, your money, will disappear!

EUSTACHY I can assure you that nothing like that will happen. I signed a prenuptial. Betty will be happy with a million or two.

KAROL Polish zloty?

EUSTACHY Zlotych? No, euro. I'll just pay her off.

KIKA Pay off? Piss off!

Marysia bursts out laughing again.

KAROL Anyway until you get an official divorce as her father I forbid you to date Marysia!

EUSTACHY Please don't worry. I would never dishonour your family.

ZYTA My husband was only concerned that... (suddenly realizes) Just a second! You will be divorced and as a divorcee... Marysia won't be able to have a church wedding!

KIKA There won't be a wedding in church or in a registry.

ZYTA And I imagined you, my darling, in a white dress with a veil...

MARYSIA Nobody wears that any more...

ZYTA But you loved grandma's antique lace dress? (stamps her foot) I want a dress with a veil!

MARYSIA Don't be stupid, I'd never wear that dowdy rag!

EUSTACHY But madam... There will be a church wedding. We'll have the sacrament of marriage. On the day that I get my divorce I'll get on the train to Rome and get another divorce from the Pope. Joseph... Pope Benedict is a good friend of mine from the time when he was still just a cardinal... I can't see any objections. Besides the ceremony will take place in the Vatican. And the Pope might wed himself.

KAROL Marysiu? What about that? We could have a photo with the Pope.

MARYSIA I don't care about a church wedding and photos with the Pope. It's Stachy who insists on it.

KIKA There won't be a wedding! Understand?!

The door bell rings. Zyta and Karol look at Marysia accusingly.

MARYSIA Don't look at me like that! I really don't know who that could be!

Kika who is closest to the door, opens it. It's Marcel.

KIKA Who do you want to see, young man?

MARYSIA Leave it out, nan! He's my friend. Come in, Marcel!

KIKA Is he the one who repaired your lap tok?

ZYTA Laptop!!

KAROL Please, come in. Marcelli, come in!

ZYTA Please!

Marcel comes in closing the door.

MARCEL Excuse me, I don't want to disturb...

KIKA No, no!

MARCEL I left some documents here...

MARYSIA If they are here we'll find them!

Marysia goes up to Marcel and kisses him on the lips. Then takes him by the hand and leads him into the apartment.

MARCEL A folder with my passport and my Canadian visa.

MARYSIA Let's go and look for it!

Eustachy looks upset. He gazes grimly at her and Marcel. Kika goes up to Zyta and Karol.

KIKA (whispers) Oh, that one looks suitably nice. Not that decrepit old man.

EUSTACHY Who was that?

ZYTA Marcel. Her friend...

KAROL To be precise it's her ex!

Zyta looks at Karol with astonishment. Karol seizes the opportunity that Eustachy is looking in the other direction, puts his finger on his lips letting her know not to speak.

KAROL Marysia didn't tell you about her passionate romance with Marcelli?

EUSTACHY A passionate romance? No? With him?

KAROL It was a steamy "9 ½ weeks" affair! You didn't know?

EUSTACHY (sulking) I knew there was somebody before me...

KAROL It was that young stallion over there!

EUSTACHY But Marysia swore it finished a long time ago!

KAROL Dear prince, you saw it.

KIKA Old flames don't just die!

ZYTA Only get older.

Eustachy looks sadly towards where Marysia and Marcel disappeared to.

EUSTACHY I think I told you that as far as loyalty is concerned, I am very strict in my views.

ZYTA As all of us here.

EUSTACHY Why is Marysia still flirting with her ex boyfriend?

Embraces! Kissing on the lips? Rather unnatural!

KIKA My dear man, youngsters are governed by the laws of attraction.

EUSTACHY But I was told I was the only one.

KAROL Marysia is an adult.

EUSTACHY I don't think I can take it. One time, in Gibraltar I was so jealous over Betty that I killed a man. I strangled him with my bare hands!

KAROL I suppose there are times when a man should stand up for himself.

Marysia and Marcel return with the folder containing his passport.

MARCEL I found it!

ZYTA Maybe you will stay for dinner? Since you are here...

MARYSIA Oh, stay! Please stay, Marcel!

Eustachy buries his face in his hands. Marcel looks at his watch.

MARCEL Well... why not? I am free at the moment, and if you insist...

Eustachy looks up and with increasing animosity starts looking at Marcel.

EUSTACHY This place is too small for the both of us. (to Marysia)

Marysia, choose which of us is to stay and which one to go?

MARYSIA Choose! Stop it, Stachu! Both of you stay.

EUSTACHY Both of us? Never!

KAROL (hastily) Well, what a pity! I shall see you to the door!

EUSTACHY You know, honeybee, you could spare me all this... You know my past! You know how much Betty made me suffer! Remember Gibraltar! You don't want a repeat, do you? !

MARYSIA Don't threaten me, Stachy. You haven't killed anyone.

EUSTACHY I haven't? I did! I killed him!

Eustachy starts pacing around the room and breathing faster and faster.

MARYSIA You know, I really hate your outbursts of jealousy! Stop it or you'll start hyperventilating again!

EUSTACHY I put you on a pedestal. You were a goddess to me. And this is how you repay me, honeybee?!

KAROL Your highness, are we leaving or not?

EUSTACHY It is stronger than me! Aaaa!

Eustachy takes his glasses off, puts them on the coffee table and with outstretched hands, attacks Marcel. Both of them end up on the sofa.

Then on the carpet. They start fighting. Kika happily claps her hands and laughs.

KIKA How nice! Now we know his true colours!

ZYTA, frightened, starts running around the pair.

ZYTA Karol! Don't stand there like that! Stop them!

KAROL How?

MARYSIA Stachu, stop it! Marcel!

Marcel in the meantime slips out of Eustachy's clutch and hits him hard in the face with his elbow. Eustachy screams, touches his nose, and falls on the floor. Marcel, breathing heavily gets up. Marysia goes up to him.

MARYSIA Marcel? Are you ok?

MARCEL I'm all right... I am very sorry... I don't know what got into that man?

KAROL Don't worry, Marcelli. We are all witnesses you were just defending yourself.

MARCEL I feel stupid. This man is old enough to be my father...

ZYTA He's not worth it.

Kika leans forward to look at the lying Eustachy.

KIKA I think he's not breathing.

Marysia presses her ear to his chest.

MARYSIA He really is not breathing!

ZYTA Let me see to him. I am a doctor.

Zyta kneels beside Eustachy. She checks his pulse.

ZYTA Sometimes after hyperventilating people faint. It's nothing serious.

MARYSIA Eustek, can you hear me? Enough! Get up!

KIKA Has he kicked the bucket?

ZYTA Mother!

KIKA What a woos!...

Zyta lifts up Stachy's eyelid and nods assuring.

MARYSIA It's alright, he is alive.

KAROL Luckily!

Marcel kneels and starts slapping Eustachy's face.

MARCEL Hey! Wake up!

Eustachy slowly opens his eyes.

EUSTACHY Where am I?

MARYSIA Do you recognize me?

EUSTACHY (smiles) Marysia? My honeybee. I was just snoozing.

MARYSIA In a way...

EUSTACHY I'm getting up!

ZYTA And do you recognize us, your highness?

EUSTACHY You, too. Yes.

Eustachy sees Marcel and turns sour.

EUSTACHY Is this awful man still here? I remember everything now.

Starts getting up from the floor. Marysia and Zyta help him.

ZYTA You gave us a real fright...

EUSTACHY I am very sorry, It won't happen again, I am just leaving. I would have given you the world, Marysia, but you prefer this...

Eustachy points his finger at Marcel.

EUSTACHY I don't even know what to call him!

MARCEL I am Marcel.

MARYSIA Your jealousy is ridiculous! What is the matter with you?

Marcel is only my friend! Your strange behaviour is starting to worry me.

EUSTACHY Please let me answer with a poet's musings: "They have parted. It is finished. Horror. Love becomes a memories colour..." If you guess who wrote that I shall stay.

KAROL Krasinski!

ZYTA Norwid!

KIKA Brzechwa!

Marysia comes up to Eustachy and takes his hand.

MARYSIA Do you really want to base our relationship on a poem?

EUSTACHY You give me no choice.

MARCEL And it depends on my A- level Polish if we are together or not?

EUSTACHY You know me. I'll take my chances.

Marysia thinks a minute.

MARYSIA Ok. If you want.

EUSTACHY So who said that?

MARYSIA Mickiewicz?

Eustachy smiles and nods his head. Karol, Zyta, Kika and Marcel, sad, look down. Eustachy takes his glasses from the table and puts them on.

EUSTACHY It was Slowacki.

MARYSIA Ha! I was close!

EUSTACHY I bid your farewell.

Eustachy bows gallantly to Marysia and exits. When he closes the door

Zyta and Karol embrace each other.

ZYTA Thank God!

KAROL You can't even imagine, Marcelli... I mean Marcel, I'm so grateful you turned up.

MARCEL Really?

ZYTA Me too! Pity you're going to Canada... Do you have to go?

Why?

MARCEL I am leaving as Marysia doesn't love me. There is nothing for me here...

MARYSIA What? Were you trying to woo me?

MARCEL You didn't notice?

MARYSIA That was supposed to be a pick up?

ZYTA She was always a bit scatty.

KAROL Don't go, Marcelli! You won't like the States!

MARCEL I like Canada! (to Marysia) But if you want me to stay I can still call the whole trip off.

Zyta and Karol and Kika turn towards Marysia.

ZYTA, KAROL and KIKA: Yes! Yes! Yes!

ZYTA Well?! What are you waiting for?

KAROL You're really going over the top.

KIKA Ask him not to go!

KAROL Now!

MARYSIA Marcel, don't go to Canada!

MARCEL If you really don't want me to go, I won't go.

KIKA Hurrah!

ZYTA Yes, hurrah!

KAROL Hurrah! Bravo, Marcelli... Marcel! Excellent!

ZYTA Let's sit down and eat, Marcel, because of that prince we have wasted a lot of time!

KIKA Mainly Marysia.

KAROL Yes, let's sit down.

MARCEL And you won't hold my political views against me?

KAROL If everybody thought the same way, the world would be very boring! I can't wait to discuss literature, politics, ecology, sport and I hope religion too...

MARCEL Really?

KAROL Well... Do I talk without reason?

ZYTA and MARYSIA Never!

KAROL I can't wait to meet your old folks...

ZYTA Wanted to say parents...?

KAROL Of course, parents.

MARCEL Super! Mother is now abroad, she'll be back in a week, but father is waiting in the car downstairs.

KIKA Really?

ZYTA What!?! You left your father in the car??? That's really not on!

KAROL Go and get him!

MARCEL Now?

KIKA Now! Yes, now!

MARCEL Would you like to meet my father?

ZYTA Naturally, and later your mother too!

KAROL When she is back! But since your father is here, of course ask him to come upstairs.

MARCEL (happy) I'll call him in.

Marcel takes out a mobile, in the meantime Kika goes up to Marysia.

KIKA You see, Marysia? All's well what ends well.

MARYSIA If you say so, grandma. Parents weren't too fond of Marcel! Especially dad...

KAROL What are you talking about, Marysia?

ZYTA Who wasn't fond? Of Marcel? I think you're mistaken, my dear.

In the meantime Marcel talks on the phone.

MARCEL It's me. Please come up for a minute, if you can... Third floor. Number 11. The Sulimirscy are inviting you. We're waiting.

ZYTA Wonderful! We shall dine together though it must be cold by now...

Karol, Marysia, Marcel and Kika sit down at the table upstairs the stage, Zyta goes to the kitchen.

ZYTA I'll serve in a minute!

MARYSIA (to Karol) Do you really like Marcel?

KAROL Listen, Marysia, don't push it. He's a great guy. You chose him! And it's good to talk to him...

MARCEL I also like talking to you, sir.

KAROL Even though we argue sometimes.

Karol pours some wine into a glass.

KAROL Call me Karol.

MARCEL An honour for me...

KAROL Karol, to friends, Lolek.

MARCEL And I am Marcel.

KAROL I know!

They drink. The door bell. Marysia goes to open the door.

MARCEL It must be my father!

Marysia opens the door. It's Eustachy, no glasses, foulard and jacket. He is dressed in a cool suede jacket and jeans. Zyta comes out of the kitchen with a tray.

ZYTA Oh? Prince Eustachy, back again?

KAROL (hostile) Has the Prince forgotten anything?

KIKA Look... He went to change!

EUSTACHY Good evening once again.

KAROL Don't worry, Marcel. He'll go in a minute. Really, you're pushing it! In the States it's called stalking!

Karol gets up to push Eustachy out. Marcel holds his arm.

MARCEL This is my father.

ZYTA, KAROL and KIKA: What?! Never!

KAROL Your father is a prince?

MARCEL A small charade on our part.

ZYTA But why??

MARYSIA Why? You ask why? Perhaps now you know why, don't you?

Zyta and Karol look at each other and after a while they start laughing.

In a moment they are joined by Kika. Then Eustachy, Marcel and at last Marysia.

Curtain.

The End.

