

Gundogdu Gencer

HARD RAIN

A PLAY



H A R D R A I N
A P L A Y
b y
G ü n G E N C E R

Can not be performed without the written permission of the playwright

Any requests for permission to stage the play must be directed to the playwright

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IDEALLY, THERE SHOULD BE NO INTERVAL. BUT IF THERE HAS TO BE ONE, IT SHOULD BE WHERE INDICATED ON PAGE 26. AS ONLY THE MOST ESSENTIAL STAGE DIRECTIONS ARE INDICATED, THESE SHOULD BE ADHERED TO.

CHARACTERS:

1.WOMAN

1.MAN

2.WOMAN

2.MAN

(ALL IN THEIR LATE THIRTIES, EARLY FORTIES)

1.WOMAN: Have you heard his statement?

1.MAN: Whose?

1.WOMAN: That man in charge, what's his name...

1.MAN: Lloyd.

1.WOMAN: Yeah, Lloyd. Have you heard him on the radio?

1.MAN: When?

1.WOMAN: When? In the morning news.

1.MAN: Which station?

1.WOMAN: What the hell does it matter which station?

1.MAN: I want to know which bastard from which corporation, which conglomerate is behind it.

1.WOMAN: Have you heard it or not?

1.MAN: No.

1.WOMAN: How can you judge it, if you haven't...

1.MAN: I'm not judging it.

1.WOMAN: You bloody well are. You'd listen to him -if you did- thinking all along that he is the mouthpiece of this or that government or media boss.

1.MAN: There isn't much difference between them anyway. They're all part of the great conspiracy.

1.WOMAN: Lord too?

1.MAN: Lloyd.

1.WOMAN: Lloyd. Is he, too?

1.MAN: Is he what?

1.WOMAN: Part of the great conspiracy?

1.MAN: Of course. He wouldn't be there, in a position of power, if he weren't.

1.WOMAN: Look who's talking.

1.MAN: What do you mean?

1.WOMAN: Wouldn't you consider yourself in a position of power?

1.MAN: Bull.

1.WOMAN: Of course you are.

1.MAN: In a field that doesn't matter two hoots to anyone.

1.WOMAN: Don't be unfair to yourself.

1.MAN: Maybe you are right.

1.WOMAN: See?

1.MAN: What?

1.WOMAN: That you can be in a position of power without being part of the great conspiracy, whatever that is.

1.MAN: I wish you'd read a bit.

1.WOMAN: I wish you'd listen to the radio.

1.MAN: That's why we get bogged down every time. Every time I make an observation...

1.WOMAN: That was no observation. You were accusing me of ignorance. You always have.

1.MAN: I have not. Not always. I was trying to make... Oh, forget it.

1.WOMAN: The point you were trying to make was that I am ignorant, because I don't read.

1.MAN: Well, you don't, do you?

1.WOMAN: What should I read?

1.MAN: Here we go again. You don't even read the papers.

1.WOMAN: Which papers?

1.MAN: Any papers, for Pete's sake. Well, you don't, do you?

1.WOMAN: Papers controlled by those same media bosses?

1.MAN: All right, all right. But you know what I mean.

1.WOMAN: No, I don't.

1.MAN: How can you effectively fight the system, if you don't have a clue how it functions?

1.WOMAN: But I do.

1.MAN: Yeah, intuitively.

1.WOMAN: I see its manifestations, I observe. I have open eyes, open ears.

1.MAN: And nose?

1.WOMAN: Yes, it stinks.

1.MAN: So what do you do? You spray the latest air-freshener. "Kills all the nasty odours!"

1.WOMAN: Ha, ha, ha.

1.MAN: No, seriously. You've got to find out what causes the stink.

1.WOMAN: Like you do.

1.MAN: Well...

1.WOMAN: Then you get so absorbed in the chemistry of the stink, you forget what it is you're fighting.

1.MAN: Well, there is that danger.

1.WOMAN: But *you* are above that.

1.MAN: I try to be. Look, I agree you have a valid point. One can lose sight of what the fight is for, ultimately. There is that danger.

1.WOMAN: That is what I said.

1.MAN: God! I am agreeing with you.

1.WOMAN: There is a first time for everything.

1.MAN: I wish you stopped using those clichés. I get the feeling that I'm watching some midday soap opera.

1.WOMAN: I don't.

1.MAN: I didn't say... Oh God, why can't we talk? Even when I say I agree with you, you fight it.

1.WOMAN: Because you don't mean it.

1.MAN: I do mean it.

1.WOMAN: I know your tactics. You start agreeing with something I say, then whooom! Counterattack!

1.MAN: We are not at war.

1.WOMAN: Aren't we? **(PAUSE)** Was it always like this?

1.MAN: What do you mean?

1.WOMAN: Were we always like this?

1.MAN: Like what?

1.WOMAN: Always fighting.

1.MAN: You used to listen before. We could talk with each other.

1.WOMAN: And now I don't?

1.MAN: Do you?

1.WOMAN: Do you?

1.MAN: You see, this is exactly what I mean. You deflect anything that I say, until it becomes totally circular. Like a prison fence... Or a collar...

1.WOMAN: A collar?

1.MAN: Yeah, a dog-collar.

1.WOMAN: Is that how you feel?

1.MAN: Yes, that is how I feel.

1.WOMAN: Since last May.

1.MAN: Oh, come now.

1.WOMAN: Yes, since Wendy appeared on the scene.

1.MAN: What has Wendy got to do with it?

1.WOMAN: You started seeing things differently. **(THE MAN IS SILENT)** You started seeing me differently. **(THE MAN IS SILENT)** Maybe it is a good thing. Maybe you always felt like that, but never said it. **(THE MAN IS SILENT)** Maybe I should thank Wendy for making you more honest towards me. Why can't we always be honest?

1.MAN: Because being honest means having to say things that may hurt others.

1.WOMAN: I'm not hurt.

1.MAN: As long as I honestly say what you want to hear.

1.WOMAN: You're impossible. You're a... demagogue.

1.MAN: Isn't it true?

1.WOMAN: I don't like you putting me down like this. You keep doing it. It's become your hobby.

1.MAN: I was being honest.

1.WOMAN: What's the use?

(LONG SILENCE)

1.MAN: Look at the rain.

1.WOMAN: I can hear it.

1.MAN: I used to like the rain. Walking in the rain.

1.WOMAN: You know I catch cold easily.

1.MAN: Yes, I hardly notice it anymore.

1.WOMAN: I know.

1.MAN: I mean the rain, or the sun, or the wind. I seem to have gone numb.

1.WOMAN: We did things together. Once. It used to be fun.

1.MAN: The joy...

1.WOMAN: We used to laugh together.

1.MAN: It seems to have gone. It's as if I'm watching everything on telly. What I say or do doesn't matter in the least. It's me I'm watching. But I have no control. All I can do is change the channel. If I find the energy to get up. But it's the same on all channels. Other people's stories. Never mine. I'm not even sure anymore if I have a right to my own story.

1.WOMAN: Remember that holiday. It was our second summer together.

1.MAN: Look at the rain.

1.WOMAN: Yeah.

(LONG SILENCE)

1.WOMAN: I still don't know if you've heard Lord's statement.

1.MAN: Lloyd.

1.WOMAN: Well?

1.MAN: No. I told you I haven't.

1.WOMAN: He was saying...

1.MAN: This is the manager, right?

1.WOMAN: Right. He was saying that the effluent had been thoroughly tested, and that it poses no discernible danger to any life form in or around the river.

1.MAN: Discernible, eh? That's a good one.

1.WOMAN: Yes. This species of fish, which is highly sensitive to any form of radiation, even in minute doses, has been tested and found to be totally unaffected.

1.MAN: What about the next generation of little fishies?

1.WOMAN: You mean little baby fish with two heads and that sort of thing.

1.MAN: That sort of thing.

1.WOMAN: He didn't say. I think we should ask him to take a dip in the river.

1.MAN: In his three piece suit. What a sight.

1.WOMAN: What do you think of the idea?

1.MAN: Yeah. Good thinking.

(BOTH LAUGH)

1.WOMAN: Wendy and I thought of it.

(LONG SILENCE)

1.WOMAN: See. No problems. Wendy and I are good friends. Always have been. We can talk. About everything. Well, almost everything.

1.MAN: Who's going to ask him?

1.WOMAN: Ask who?

1.MAN: Whom. Lloyd. To take a dip.

1.WOMAN: We thought Norm should. He looks good on TV.

1.MAN: He can't talk. He has a two hundred word vocabulary.

1.WOMAN: So do the viewers. They can identify with him. He looks like one of them.

1.MAN: Unlike us?

1.WOMAN: Yes. If you went and made a statement, people would learn a lot about nuclear physics, the politics of oppression, and what have you. But they wouldn't have a clue what to do next.

1.MAN: I am a man of inaction.

1.WOMAN: That's not what I said.

1.MAN: You are right. I am. I know that. Sometimes I feel I'm welded to my chair in the office. Tied to the front gate, stuck in the kennel. I don't move. After a while, you start wondering what moving must be like. You forget. You grow roots. That is supposed to be a good thing.

1.WOMAN: Growing roots?

1.MAN: Yes. People respect a man with roots. Solid, reliable citizen. A man with shoes of lead. A man who won't change. A man who can be relied upon, not to change. A man who can not, and will not move away from the rot.

1.WOMAN: Running away doesn't solve anything.

1.MAN: No, not running away. Moving, growing...

1.WOMAN: You can't grow without roots.

1.MAN: Have one original thought for a change, for Pete's sake.

1.WOMAN: Is that better?

1.MAN: Better than what?

1.WOMAN: Better than what's been tried and proven to work. Is an original thought that doesn't work better than that?

1.MAN: How can you possibly know it doesn't work, if it's original? The fact that it's original means that it hasn't been tried before. It means that no one knows yet, whether or not it works.

1.WOMAN: There's nothing new under the sun.

1.MAN: Here we go again.

1.WOMAN: If you come up with an off-beat idea which hasn't been tried before, how can you claim that it will work?

1.MAN: Of course there is.

1.WOMAN: What?

1.MAN: New things under the sun.

1.WOMAN: I wasn't talking about that.

1.MAN: You were, before.

1.WOMAN: How can we hope to make any progress if you question every premise, every step...

1.MAN: D'you mean we can, if I don't?

1.WOMAN: What's progress, anyway?

1.MAN: I give up.

(SILENCE)

1.WOMAN: You used to love me.

1.MAN: Are you saying that I don't, now?

1.WOMAN: Do you?

1.MAN: Is that what you're saying?

1.WOMAN: You certainly don't show it, if you do.

1.MAN: Through acceptance...

1.WOMAN: Yes, through acceptance.

1.MAN: Of anything and everything, no matter how stupid...

1.WOMAN: Did you always find me stupid, or is it the recent comparison?

1.MAN: I'll ignore that.

1.WOMAN: You did, didn't you? You've never accepted me as I am.

1.MAN: To think that I suggested that self-development course. Now we have the jargon regurgitated at the drop of a hat.

1.WOMAN: Acceptance.

1.MAN: Of what, for Pete's sake? Of what you are, what you were, what you will become? Anything? Everything? Unconditionally?

1.WOMAN: / did.

1.MAN: What?

1.WOMAN: Accept you unconditionally.

1.MAN: Yes, until...

1.WOMAN: Until you cheated, you lied...

1.MAN: What was the alternative?

1.WOMAN: You could have told me the truth. You still don't.

1.MAN: The absolute truth... Always the absolute, always the unchanging... That's why I felt dead, tied to some petrified image of myself that you once loved. You want me in the freezer. Quality controlled, always the same, don't you? Take out two pieces, stick them in the oven, 375 degrees for twelve minutes. Freezer to oven. Smiles all around. Munch, munch, munch...

1.WOMAN: You know, they use radiation now, on fruits and things. To stop them from rotting quickly.

1.MAN: Yes.

1.WOMAN: I think it's criminal. No one knows what the long-term effects are.

1.MAN: Who cares?

1.WOMAN: Don't tell me you've lost your social consciousness too, now. That's something we're still supposed to have in common.

1.MAN: Yeah, like two horses under the one harness.

1.WOMAN: What harness?

1.MAN: Why do you think most people don't care, huh?

1.WOMAN: But most people do.

1.MAN: Rubbish. They don't care, because they can't see their little lives, their kennels, their circular racecourse changing. Why should they care if they live five years longer by eating radiation-free, organically grown spuds, huh? It is the *auto da fé* syndrome.

1.WOMAN: You mean, people want to kill themselves?

1.MAN: No. But they don't particularly want to keep living, either. It's not the same thing. It's not that they want to die, but they don't feel their lives are worth fighting for, see? It is an act of faith in the system.

1.WOMAN: There are millions of perfectly happy people.

1.MAN: And they want to keep living the way they do? Consciously?

1.WOMAN: Of course they do.

1.MAN: Whilst being fully aware of the alternatives?

1.WOMAN: What alternatives?

1.MAN: Yes. Of course they do, don't they? That's why they still support politicians who keep spending zillions on weapons, who screw them whilst the rich get away with murder.

1.WOMAN: Consciousness raising...

1.MAN: Yes. I used to say that, didn't I? I don't think I believe in that anymore.

1.WOMAN: What do you believe in?

1.MAN: I don't know. Not anymore.

1.WOMAN: Midlife crisis.

1.MAN: Thanks.

1.WOMAN: Don't sulk. It was a neutral comment.

1.MAN: Yeah.

1.WOMAN: You must be involved. That's the only way. Involved, and working hard for... for whatever.

1.MAN: *Arbeit macht frei.*

1.WOMAN: Don't be cynical.

1.MAN: That's what Herr Chancellor said, right? That's what Stalin said, in Russian, of course. That's what everyone's been saying since the start of time.

1.WOMAN: I'm not talking about work work, but working for some commitment.

1.MAN: Hurrah!

1.WOMAN: What do you want?

1.MAN: Why do you ask?

1.WOMAN: I want to know. Perhaps I can help.

1.MAN: You had the chance.

1.WOMAN: That's your idea of freedom. Happiness for you is just screwing around, isn't it?

1.MAN: Your knack to vulgarise everything... You should stand for parliament.

1.WOMAN: Would that make you happy? When you were screwing Wendy?

1.MAN: Now look...

(A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. 1.WOMAN OPENS THE DOOR. 2.MAN ENTERS AND TAKES A LOOK AROUND.)

2.MAN: G'day. What's up?

1.MAN: Hello Norm. Come in. Beer?

2.MAN: Yeah. I got news.

1.WOMAN: Sit down Norm.

2.MAN: No. In a rush. Just have one beer.

(1.MAN POURS A BEER FOR 2.MAN AND GIVES IT TO HIM.)

2.MAN: (TAKES A BIG SIP) Got the test results.

1.MAN: What test results?

2.MAN: The water...

1.WOMAN: We heard it on the news.

2.MAN: Not that. The private lab.

1.MAN: You mean you had the water tested privately?

2.MAN: Yeah, to be sure.

1.WOMAN: And?

2.MAN: It's clear. No problems.

1.WOMAN: Shit!

2.MAN: What?

1.MAN: That solves it then.

1.WOMAN: How stupid can you get? Does Lord...

1.MAN: Lloyd.

1.WOMAN: Does he know you did?

2.MAN: Hang on, hang on. **(TO 1.WOMAN)** What's the problem?

1.WOMAN: I told the committee not to.

1.MAN: Democracy...

2.MAN: If it's clear, that's fine, isn't it?

1.MAN: (STARTS LAUGHING.)

1.WOMAN: (TO 1.MAN) Shut up! **(TO 2.MAN)** Does Lord know?

2.MAN: No.

1.WOMAN: Good. Keep it that way. **(TO 1.MAN)** If this gets out, it's the end. How many people will stay on, how many new people will join in, if this gets out?

1.MAN: Never allow facts to interfere with a good argument.

2.MAN: Eh?

1.WOMAN: You know bloody well what I mean. The issue is not just this leak, just this river. It's the whole bloody nuclear problem.

1.MAN: And?

1.WOMAN: Oh, do shut up. **(TO 2.MAN)** Was the challenge issued to Lord?

2.MAN: Who?

1.MAN: Lloyd.

2.MAN: The TV people are coming over at about seven.

1.WOMAN: Right. Now Norm, listen. Go on as planned. Challenge... Challenge the manager to take a dip in the water. I bet he won't.

2.MAN: The water's OK, Sal.

1.WOMAN: He doesn't know that, does he Norm? Not if none of us tell him.

1.MAN: I'll go get some fresh air.

2.MAN: Hang on, mate. Let's sort this out first.

1.WOMAN: He's got the results of the official tests. But being in the bureaucracy as long as he has been, he won't trust them. He will not take that dip. **(TO 2.MAN)** Make sure all the mums are there, with all the kids. Out of the water.

2.MAN: But it's clean.

1.WOMAN: Now, we don't know that Norm. That test, our test doesn't exist, right? It hasn't been done. And we don't trust the official test.

2.MAN: OK.

1.MAN: Have you met Lloyd?

2.MAN: Yeah. He isn't such a bad bloke.

1.WOMAN: I'll ring Wendy.

1.MAN: What do you think, Norm?

(1.WOMAN GOES OUT.)

2.MAN: It isn't right, eh?

1.MAN: Of course it isn't. We all believe in the cause, right?

2.MAN: Lovely beer.

1.MAN: Home brew. No chemicals.

2.MAN: I'd better be off now. Going sailing with Sarah and the kids.

1.MAN: Who's Sarah?

2.MAN: This new bird. She's great, mate. The kids like her, too. She makes me feel, sort of, good inside.

1.MAN: You always do, anyway.

2.MAN: How're you going with Wendy?

1.MAN: I'm not. It's finished.

2.MAN: Why? You had a good thing going there.

1.MAN: I know.

2.MAN: Why then? You know what, mate? You know what your problem is? You try to make everyone happy. You think you know how to make them happy. Well, you bloody well don't. Nobody does. Do you know how to make yourself happy? Just stick to that. That's all you can know.

1.MAN: I guess that's part of it.

2.MAN: You are what you are, mate. If they don't like what they see, bugger 'em. Including Sal.

1.MAN: It's not as simple...

2.MAN: Now, you know I like Sal. I know you like her, too. But... But, look. Are you happy?

1.MAN: I don't know. I guess not.

2.MAN: Well, do something about it mate. I'd better be off now. Make sure you watch the news.

1.MAN: Yeah. Say hello to... Jenny.

2.MAN: Sure. See ya.

(2.MAN GOES OUT. 1.MAN SITS DOWN FOR A LITTLE WHILE, THEN STANDS UP, PRACTISES STANDING ERECT, GOES TO THE WINDOW, WATCHES THE RAIN. HE

PUTS HIS HAND OUT, THEN WIPES HIS FACE WITH HIS WET HAND. A RITUAL ABLUTION. HE LOOKS AT THE CEILING.)

1.WOMAN: (COMES IN) Wendy's coming over. **(NO RESPONSE)** I thought you'd be pleased.

1.MAN: Hmmm?

1.WOMAN: Wendy.

1.MAN: What about her?

1.WOMAN: She should be here in ten minutes.

1.MAN: It's pouring.

1.WOMAN: She has a car.

1.MAN: we don't need the nuclear fallout. This rain will do the job well enough, thank you very much.

1.WOMAN: What are you talking about?

1.MAN: The rain. Never mind.

1.WOMAN: You must be pleased.

1.MAN: I used to like the rain

1.WOMAN: I meant Wendy.

1.MAN: Oh, I don't know.

1.WOMAN: The conquest's over. Is that it?

1.MAN: What conq... What are you talking about?

1.WOMAN: The Don Juan syndrome.

1.MAN: Me? **(HE BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.)**

1.WOMAN: You don't have to be good-looking for that.

1.MAN: Thanks.

1.WOMAN: Just a joke. I didn't mean to...

1.MAN: You never do, do you?

1.WOMAN: I'm sorry. I think you are the best looking guy I ever set my eyes on.

1.MAN: You must have had your eyes closed.

1.WOMAN: What's that supposed to mean? It's only a reflex. I can't help it.

1.MAN: I meant you must have had your eyes closed if you think I am the best looking guy
you've ever...

1.WOMAN: I know what you mean.

1.MAN: You wouldn't know what my face looks like. "Can you give us a description
please, madam?", "I'm sorry, all I can remember is that he had a nose... Yes,
I'm almost sure he had a nose... And eyes, I think..."

1.WOMAN: That should be a relief. I've seen it more than enough.

1.MAN: You never did.

1.WOMAN: Look, what does it matter now?

1.MAN: There must be some explanation.

1.WOMAN: What does it matter?

1.MAN: It matters to me.

1.WOMAN: So, *you* keep your eyes open. You know what? That's part of your problem.
You never let go, never relax.

1.MAN: You are right there. **(PAUSE)** But I wasn't always...

1.WOMAN: No... You weren't. I remember... That summer...

1.MAN: I don't remember.

1.WOMAN: I do. You used to be... I don't know, relaxed. **(PAUSE)** It is over with Wendy, is it?

1.MAN: Didn't she tell you.

1.WOMAN: I don't pry.

1.MAN: That's a laugh.

1.WOMAN: I don't.

1.MAN: Except with me.

1.WOMAN: That's different.

1.MAN: Yes. Of course. It's different. You own me.

(AS LIGHTS CHANGE, 1.MAN DISAPPEARS AND 2.WOMAN ENTERS)

2.WOMAN: That's enough now. As if it's not bad enough that Russ is dead. Whose idea was it anyway? Whose bright idea was it that Wendy should play my part?

1.WOMAN: We're only trying...

2.WOMAN: You're all trying to blame me. Norm, you, everyone... All blaming me.

1.WOMAN: Russ is dead.

2.WOMAN: And you're trying to blame me. You always have.

1.WOMAN: Was there anything in that scene...

2.WOMAN: Russ told you all about it, did he?

1.WOMAN: As a matter of fact...

2.WOMAN: Yes?

1.WOMAN: Yes.

2.WOMAN: Just when I was trying to save our marriage.

1.WOMAN: There was nothing left to be saved.

2.WOMAN: Thanks to you. **(PAUSE)** You made me appear like an idiot in that scene.
(NO RESPONSE) That's what you always thought about me, isn't it?

1.WOMAN: Be honest with yourself.

2.WOMAN: I loved that man.

1.WOMAN: And he is dead now.

2.WOMAN: Why couldn't *you* do anything about it? **(PAUSE)** God! **(PAUSE)** It was an accident.

1.WOMAN: That's what I've been trying to convince myself since that Sunday. I keep trying.

2.WOMAN: It was. Even *he* is entitled to an accident. Just one thing unplanned, unintentional... One accident...

1.WOMAN: He is dead. For both of us now.

2.WOMAN: I never had him anyway. Not totally.

1.WOMAN: He gave you so much.

2.WOMAN: Oh, he did, did he? And I didn't?

1.WOMAN: Without any fuss...

2.WOMAN: I am his wife. I was.

1.WOMAN: So it was your entitlement. What about me?

2.WOMAN: For you it was only having a good time.

1.WOMAN: Only! Yes, we did have some good times together.

2.WOMAN: When I was at home, knowing that the two of you...

1.WOMAN: Were enjoying ourselves. Yes, I think we both deserved it.

2.WOMAN: Would you accept it, if you were in my position?

1.WOMAN: But I wouldn't be. I would not put myself in your position.

2.WOMAN: Is that why you broke up? **(NO RESPONSE)** Because you wouldn't accept the responsibility? I know you...

1.WOMAN: I don't want to talk about it.

2.WOMAN: Of course you wouldn't. **(PAUSE)** Sorry.

1.WOMAN: I'll get the drinks. The usual?

2.WOMAN: Yeah, thanks. Sorry.

1.WOMAN: It's all right. We're all a bit tense.

(AS LIGHTS CHANGE, THE TWO WOMEN DISAPPEAR, 1.MAN ENTERS. HE IS FLYING A KITE.)

1.MAN: No... No, it can't go through the clouds. The clouds are so high. So much higher than our kite. **(PAUSE)** Of course we can build a bigger one. Look how it sways. But a bigger one wouldn't go any higher anyway. **(PAUSE)** No, it wouldn't fly away, I've got the string. **(PAUSE)** Yes, you're right, the clouds must be coming to meet our kite. Look at that one. What does it look like? **(PAUSE)** No. No, you tell me. Look at those ears. **(PAUSE)** A rabbit! Of course. A white, fluffy rabbit. And it's not running away from us, it's not running away from our kite. Maybe it thinks that it's a bird, our kite. A colourful bird, pink and green, with a long tail, swinging in the wind. **(PAUSE)** No, it's not a stupid cloud. It *is* a bird and we made it. Look, it soars. We have to release more string. **(PAUSE)** No, it won't disappear. You have to. If you hold on tight, and not release the string when it wants to go up higher, it'll come tumbling down. **(PAUSE)** Of course it likes us. Well, maybe not me so much, but you... You are the loveliest boy who has ever made a kite. But we must release the string. That's the way. See, it's nodding at you. **(PAUSE)** Why? We don't know what the wind is like up there, do we? We must trust it. When it wants more string, we must let it have it. **(PAUSE)** No, we've got plenty more. **(PAUSE)** Sure. It would be unhappy if we didn't, and come down crashing. **(PAUSE)** No, the wind wouldn't stop it. It can use the wind to climb up, but the same wind can also bring it down. **(PAUSE)** No, it's not a bad wind. Winds

are not good or bad. Winds don't think one way or another. They just blow. But the kite decides what to do with that wind, and you must help it. There. See how happy it is. It's going to meet the rabbit. Have you given the kite a message for the rabbit? No, I haven't either. I forgot. Sorry. But the kite would know what to say. Because it is happy. It'll make the rabbit very happy, too. You're not cold, are you? No, it's beautiful weather. Just the right breeze, too. You wish Mum was here?... Hold it, pull it back!... Pull it!... Phew!... That was close. **(PAUSE)** Of course we had to pull it back. It was in danger and needed our help. Look, it feels a lot better now. It knows it can rely on us. We let it go when it wants to, but hold tight to it, and pull it back when it's in danger. You have to be alert all the time. Just because it's a kite, just because it can fly, you shouldn't expect it to take care of itself all the time. **(PAUSE)** You can't just tie the string to a tree and not worry about it. Why? Don't you like your kite? Look at that pretty tail. **(PAUSE)** Getting tired? But you can't have a kite that flies by itself. Well, maybe you could, but it wouldn't be your kite then. No. You must take care of it. **(PAUSE)** But you must let it breathe in the wind, say hello to the rabbit, too. Look, it's changing. It's not a rabbit anymore. Let's see what it'll change into. You know what? I think it feels that our kite left the rabbit, deserted it. It's heartbroken. But it'll pull itself together. Maybe. I don't know, maybe not. Probably not as a rabbit again. **(PAUSE)** No, you can't. It was a rabbit. A fluffy, white rabbit, yes. But that was before. And we loved it, didn't we? **(PAUSE)** No, you can't have it back. You have it. You have it, anyway. How? Don't you remember the rabbit? You have it. In your head. And mine. It's our rabbit. And that's a lot better. Believe me, it is. Nobody can take that away from us, it's our rabbit. Then, some other day, we'll perhaps have a gray cat, a cuddly teddy bear. All thanks to our kite. And it's all ours. **(PAUSE)** So what? It doesn't really matter, does it? Well, if Sean saw it, it's his as well. Oh, come on. Do you have less of it, if Sean saw what we saw? Of course not. It's still there, it's no less. There, in that beautiful head of yours. All there. The fluffy white rabbit. **(PAUSE)** Are you hungry? I have the picnic basket here. We'll climb up the hill. **(PAUSE)** All right, all right, I'll carry you. On my shoulders, all right. But we must bring the kite down first. **(PAUSE)** But I have to, if it's to fly again. Of course I love it as much as you do, but... **(PAUSE)** It can't fly by itself. What if it comes straight down? **(PAUSE)** No, it

won't be the same. It's never the same. **(PAUSE)** Sure we can. But a new one will be a new kite, it won't be the same. Come on, bring it down. Gently now. Right. Make it understand that it's just a rest. That it will fly again. That it needs a rest to fly again. **(PAUSE)** Sleep with it? You don't need to. Just reassure it, make it feel that it's only a rest. **(PAUSE)** Of course it does. Do you think it's easy to keep flying so high, for so long? With all sorts of winds around you? That's the way. Down two pulls, then let go a little. Right. Right. **(PAUSE)** All right, we'll go to the creek. **(PAUSE)** I don't know if that duck is still there. Sure we can find out. That's the way. Careful now. The last bit is the most important. It must not think you're trying to capture it. Gently... With love... That's the way. **(PAUSE)** All right, hop on my shoulder now. Ah, one condition! You must carry the picnic basket. I can't carry both you and the basket. It's not fair. **(PAUSE)** Yes, aren't you smart? Come on now.

(AS LIGHTS CHANGE, 1.MAN DISAPPEARS, 2.WOMAN ENTERS.)

2.WOMAN: I couldn't trust him. No, not that... I'm sure he would have made a very loving father. But, how could I, when he... All right, maybe I wasn't sure either. Running away from responsibility... I don't know. Oh, he always had been a very responsible person, boringly so. Perhaps I felt he'd become even more boring, or I would have... I don't know. I just didn't think we were the right kind of people to be parents. What kind of a world is it anyway, to bring innocent children into, we both used to say. Innocent, helpless little children who may not grow old. Little, helpless creatures that need you for half your life. Your life. My life. This was something we'd agreed on, anyway. It never was a cause for our fights. We had enough fights all right, but what I mean is that children, or rather, the lack of them was never an issue. He was a little child himself, and maybe I loved him as my little boy, and my maternal instincts were satisfied that way. What does it matter? Instincts? Who determines what we should have as instincts anyway? Just because baboons have it?... No, I'm quite positive that the question of children had nothing to do with it. With... His death... It was an accident. I know people keep saying that he never did anything by accident. Always planned, always intended. No surprises, no spontaneity. True. That's what really got to me in the end. The ultimate manipulator. I felt totally naked with him, totally vulnerable. Of course I never

accepted it, but deep down I always felt he knew me better than I know myself. And kept planning things, manipulating. Unbearable. What's the use of getting rid of God, if someone else plans the whole thing instead? Might as well have God, at least he is, well, supposed to be, impartial. **(PAUSE)** I can't remember when it snapped. What Wendy showed in the first scene wasn't really that far off the mark. I mean, as far as the relationship goes. Me?... Of course what you saw was as Wendy saw me. Weak, lazy... Lazy to think... That's what he used to say: "Lazy to think", "Too lazy not to use second-hand, cliché emotions". You can make things just too complicated, you know. As Russ does all the time. Did. To me, they're not. They shouldn't be. Well, most things... I mean, if I love someone... If I tell you that I love someone, you understand me, don't you? I don't mean love, as in other things, as in "I love lasagne" or "I love horses", but man and woman... That sort of love. Of course you do. We can't keep arguing about the definition of everything we say. Talking is hard enough as it is. But this was exactly what he kept on doing. The definitions, the rules of the game... They kept changing. I couldn't keep up. I didn't know where I stood. The ground I was standing on was constantly shifting, and there was no predicting in which direction... **(PAUSE)** Wendy was not the problem. Honestly. I know her well. I'd known Wendy for years before I even met Russ. No, I don't feel betrayed by Wendy. It was him. Even sexually. I know for a fact that Wendy's no competition. She's so uptight, so controlled, measured. She always has been. So I felt as if he was trying to insult me. Yes, I did feel insulted more than anything else. Out of spite. He wasn't always like that. He wasn't always spiteful. I can't understand. The change. Why? Why did he have to change? Towards me... He has... There was a warm, loving person there, once. It all changed. I don't know when it started, it was almost imperceptible. Why has he?... You meet someone, you love him, give him everything you're capable of... Then he changes. You are the same. The same loving person. He changes and starts treating you differently, as if it's you who's changed. Aren't the promises, the vows, the contract and all that worth anything? What can one rely on? Trust? Why?

1.MAN: (ENTERS) It was the search.

2.WOMAN: The search? For what?

1.MAN: I don't know. What was there wasn't it, what had become of me, my life... Just wasn't it.

2.WOMAN: A loving wife, a home, a good job...

1.MAN: Wasn't it.

2.WOMAN: It wasn't children.

1.MAN: No. It was all the things that made us decide against having children. You, me, the world.

-INTERVAL (IF NEED BE)-

1.MAN: It was the Saturday night. We'd all gone to the meeting. **(EXITS)**

2.WOMAN: After the meeting supported our proposal, that is, the proposal made by the two women to challenge Lord, to take that dip in the river, he'd stayed on with Norm, to coach him for the TV interview. We were just having drinks, the two of us, waiting for the men to come home.

(1.WOMAN ENTERS WITH TWO DRINKS, HANDS ONE TO THE 2.WOMAN.)

1.WOMAN: Do you know if it'll be Richard?

2.WOMAN: Richard who?

1.WOMAN: The interviewer?

2.WOMAN: Oh, I guess so. **(TAKES A SIP)** We shouldn't have tried to keep the test secret. He's sure to ask Norm.

1.WOMAN: And Norm will say in his naïve, innocent voice: "No, we never thought of that. That's not our business, is it? Let the Government prove it to us. Prove that it's

clean." It's an unbeatable combination, his beer-gut, ruddy face, and those little twinkling eyes...

2.WOMAN: It makes me feel uneasy.

1.WOMAN: For the greater good...

2.WOMAN: That makes me even more uneasy. We've started sounding like politicians.

1.WOMAN: I know it sounds corny, but it *is* for the good...

2.WOMAN: Do you think no politician sincerely believes that? Do you really think that they are all hypocrites? I'm sure some of them would have started like us, out of concern...

1.WOMAN: And look where they are now.

2.WOMAN: Exactly.

1.WOMAN: We're not going into politics, so that's all right for us.

(SILENCE)

2.WOMAN: His heart didn't seem to be in it.

1.WOMAN: Norm's?

2.WOMAN: Russ's.

(THEY SIP THEIR DRINKS)

2.WOMAN: How is it going to finish?

1.WOMAN: You know that. He'll drown in the river tomorrow, one of us will be killed in a car crash six years later, the other one will live until the ripe old age of eighty-two, and die of natural causes in a nursing home, not far from here. As for Norm... I don't know, it's hard to keep track of all the little Normas and Normans...

2.WOMAN: Finished?

1.WOMAN: Somewhat.

2.WOMAN: What I meant was...

1.WOMAN: You asked me how it's going to finish.

2.WOMAN: I meant... Norm's interview.

1.WOMAN: Oh.

(1.WOMAN GOES OUT, GETS FRESH DRINKS, BRINGS THEM IN. THEY SIT DOWN AND SIP THEIR DRINKS.)

2.WOMAN: How is it going to finish?

1.WOMAN: With Norm challenging Lloyd to take a dip in the river.

2.WOMAN: If he doesn't?

1.WOMAN: He said he would.

2.WOMAN: Who're you talking about?

1.WOMAN: Norm.

2.WOMAN: I meant, if Lord doesn't accept.

1.WOMAN: He'll have to. He's an ambitious little bastard. Career and all that. Three kids. Mortgage, two cars, the lot. He can't afford not to accept it.

2.WOMAN: Norm's met him, has he?

1.WOMAN: Oh, yes. Says he quite liked him. He even said he wouldn't mind taking him to the footie one day. That is the ultimate compliment, coming from Norm. They must be supporting the same team.

2.WOMAN: They're all the same to me.

1.WOMAN: I know.

2.WOMAN: I've been thinking...

1.WOMAN: What?

2.WOMAN: That Norm challenges him, knowing full well that the water's clean. Do you think he still would, if it was dangerous?

1.WOMAN: I think he would. That's the fascinating thing about him. Norm has a very clear idea about responsibilities. He'd say, "My responsibility is to challenge him, it's none of my business whether he accepts it or not. That is his responsibility. As long as I don't lie." He would not lie. If the water was polluted and Lloyd died, for argument's sake, Norm would still pack his kids into his battered old station wagon and go for a picnic, or fishing, if there is no footie on. He would. As if nothing had happened. He would not get upset, or feel responsible for it. He'd get up at five the next morning as usual and do his regular three mile swim.

2.WOMAN: I guess it's healthier that way.

1.WOMAN: I met him when he was still at the paper. Norm was involved in this strike, you see, and I was going there to interview someone. I thought at the time that I had picked him from the crowd. I was really proud of my choice. He didn't mince words, and it was an excellent interview. Norm told me later that he had planned it all. He'd found out that I was going, what time I was going to be there, coming from which direction...

2.WOMAN: Seriously?

1.WOMAN: Seriously. He very innocently let me pick him up.

2.WOMAN: I always thought this was a very female thing.

1.WOMAN: There *is* something feminine about Norm.

2.WOMAN: (INCREDULOUS) Norm?

1.WOMAN: No. I don't mean that way.

2.WOMAN: (LAUGHING) Norm...

1.WOMAN: (JOINS IN THE LAUGH) No, the way he thinks, or perceives rather...

2.WOMAN: What about in bed?

1.WOMAN: You were always curious, weren't you?

2.WOMAN: Well?

1.WOMAN: It didn't last very long, you know that. But it was lovely while it did. No hassles, no ego trips. Nice and gentle. In the end i could even tell him straight that I hated his beer-gut, and having to spend all that time with his kids, and wanted to call it quits. I couldn't find too much to talk to him. I don't like union politics, I don't like football, fishing, kids... Not necessarily in that order.

2.WOMAN: You never told me about Norm before.

1.WOMAN: There isn't much to tell. Really.

2.WOMAN: It sounds like you had a good thing going there. For a while. You know, I've never been unfaithful to Russ?

1.WOMAN: You mean you never went to bed with any other man. You did want to, though, with Norm, didn't you?

2.WOMAN: No. Well... Since I wouldn't, I never thought I wanted to. I wouldn't have, if I couldn't. Sounds a bit topsy-turvy, doesn't it?

1.WOMAN: It sure does.

2.WOMAN: What I mean is...

1.WOMAN: Fairly obvious.

2.WOMAN: I couldn't...

1.WOMAN: Even want to.

2.WOMAN: What's the use?...

1.WOMAN: If you can't...

2.WOMAN: Wouldn't let myself.

1.WOMAN: Even dreams.

2.WOMAN: No dreams for me. I won't allow it. What's the use? Although I do, sometimes... Fantasise In bed, with Russ... Funny telling all these to my husband's mistress.

1.WOMAN: Sal!

2.WOMAN: I don't mind. **(PAUSE)** A huge chalice... That's what I imagine myself to be. A huge, earthenware chalice. When he enters me, it keeps pouring... Can't be stopped. The chalice sucks in the whole body. It's like a one-way valve. It opens and shuts in time with every movement he makes. With each movement, more is poured into the chalice, but nothing comes out. The chalice is huge, it's heavy. I sit there, on a kind of altar... It's not like a sacrifice, though... he doesn't die, or bleed, or anything... Just becomes fluid... His whole body... A thick, viscous fluid... Just keeps flowing in with every movement. Keeps flowing in. His hair is the last thing I see. My eyes are around the rim, whizzing. All around the rim, seeing him from every possible angle, yet I can't make out his nose, or eyes... His head, his hair pops in and out a few times. I can sometimes catch a glimpse of the eyes. They're dull, frightful... Then... One last glimpse of his hair, sticky with sweat, all wet and sticky... I contain him. I keep staring into my own eyes... They look smug and sated. No more whizzing. I grow roots into the altar. I contain him, I contain him!

1.WOMAN: Sal!

2.WOMAN: I never really enjoyed sleeping with him. It was all right, but... He is basically a very cold man.

1.WOMAN: Rational.

2.WOMAN: Demanding. **(PAUSE)** Is it really over between you two?

1.WOMAN: You always thought this was the problem, didn't you?

2.WOMAN: Is it?

1.WOMAN: I shall not be interrogated.

2.WOMAN: Tell me!

1.WOMAN: Sal!

2.WOMAN: I demand to know!

1.WOMAN: No!

2.WOMAN: Yes or no?

1.WOMAN: Yes!

2.WOMAN: Is it over?

1.WOMAN: Yes... Yes... Yes... **(SHE CAN HARDLY HOLD BACK HER TEARS)**

2.WOMAN: Poor Wendy.

1.WOMAN: Don't bloody patronise me.

2.WOMAN: I'm trying to understand.

1.WOMAN: You wouldn't. I can hardly understand myself. Why do we all bloody try to understand all the bloody time? What is there to understand?

2.WOMAN: Russ has to. Always. He just has to understand. Even if it destroys him.

1.WOMAN: Analysing

2.WOMAN: Taking everything apart. Like a child. Pulling toys apart. He pulled me apart, too. Years ago. I never recovered from that. He would have destroyed you, too.

1.WOMAN: I wasn't...

2.WOMAN: Through himself. Forget it. You've saved your skin. Put back your little springs, your little clips, the tiny cogs, you're as good as new. Good, working condition.

1.WOMAN: He pulled himself apart, too. As viciously.

2.WOMAN: He'll survive. **(GOES AND RENEWS THE DRINKS, BOTH TAKE A SIP, SHE PUTS ON A RECORD.)** We listened to music for a while. It was fairly late

when they came back. They were like little kids. They must have drunk the pub dry.

(1. AND 2. MAN ENTER, SINGING, DRUNK AND WET. IT'S POURING OUTSIDE.)

1.MAN: Bloody Lloyd!

1.WOMAN: Was he there, too?

2.MAN: Bloody oath, he was.

1.MAN: And guess what?

1.WOMAN: He accepted the challenge.

2.WOMAN: He must feel quite a martyr.

1.WOMAN: Bloody dupe!

1.MAN: (SINGING TO THE TUNE OF `OLD MACDONALD'S FARM') And a dupe dupe here, and a dupe dupe there, here a dupe, there a dupe, everywhere a dupe dupe...

2.WOMAN: He's been drinking.

1.MAN: Ooo, he's been drinking, has he now? Who may that be, I wonder? Whom might you be addressing, Mother Hubbard? With a chook chook here, and a chook chook there...

2.WOMAN: Oh, really!

(1.MAN STARTS FLAPPING LIKE A CHICKEN.)

1.MAN: Here a chook, there a chook, everywhere a chook chook...

(1.WOMAN JOINS IN AND THEY START SINGING TOGETHER.)

1.MAN/1.WOMAN: Old MacDonald had a farm, eee-ii eee-ii ooo...

1.WOMAN: Eee-ii eee-ii ooo...

2.WOMAN: Stop it! Stop it! Have you all gone mad? Don't you see what this means?

1.MAN: See, Mother Hubbard...

2.WOMAN: He will get into the water and nothing will happen. We'll be the laughing stock...

(2.MAN STARTS A KOOKABURRA LAUGH. 1.MAN JOINS IN.)

1.WOMAN: Norm!

2.WOMAN: I will be a non-event.

1.WOMAN: Did he... **(WAITS FOR THE TWO MEN TO QUIETEN DOWN.)** Did he know about the independent test, d'you think, Norm?

2.MAN: Couldn't have.

1.WOMAN: How come he accepted, then?

2.WOMAN: Because he is an ambitious little bastard. Career and all that. Three kids. Mortgage, two cars, the lot. He can't afford not to accept it.

1.WOMAN: I guess so.

2.WOMAN: What'll we do?

1.MAN: (STARTS SINGING.) Singing in the rain... **(OPENS THE WINDOW. RAIN COMES IN. IT IS POURING AND VERY WINDY. HE STARTS DANCING.)**
Sing-ing in the rain...

2.WOMAN: Shut up!

1.MAN: (TO THE SAME TUNE) Whist-ling in the dark... Whist-ling in the dark...

1.WOMAN: Russ, please. **(TO 2.MAN)** We can make him change his mind.

2.MAN: No. Fair's fair. I challenged, he accepted.

2.WOMAN: Total fiasco.

1.MAN: (TO THE TUNE OF FIGARO) Fiasco, fiasco, fiasco...

2.MAN: I'd better be off.

1.MAN: I'll give you a lift.

2.WOMAN: No, you won't. I'll call a cab. **(GOES OUT.)**

1.MAN: Wendy, my dear little mistress... Now that we've lost another worthy cause, what do you propose? What shall we fight for now, eh? Why don't we drop all this shit until we get old? What do you say, my love? Leave it all till later. All the good causes are to be taken up by elderly respectable gentlemen who can't get it up anymore, and the elderly gentlewomen who don't want the men to get it up anymore. Decree. Why don't we just go on with or business... of... of living? Eh, my little, little mistress? Give us a kiss... **(1.WOMAN SLAPS HIM, 2.MAN TAKES 1.WOMAN AWAY.)** Right... My good mate. Take her away. I get the slap, she must be comforted. I get kicked in the balls, her toes must be nursed. Twinkle toes... Twinkle... What's wrong with me? I mean, when I'm not drunk... Can't I be pitied, for pity's sake? Pity... Pity's sake... Joke!

2.WOMAN: (COMES IN) It'll probably be ages. In this rain. What happened?

1.MAN: Nothing, Mother Hubbard. You want to join the game? It's let's kick the bastard time. Oh no, you would do your kicking in private, wouldn't you? In the privacy of our little love nest. Chirp... Chirp, chirp, chirp...

2.WOMAN: What have I done to you? Sit down, will you? Norm, Wendy, make him sit down. I want to talk to him.

1.MAN: Where's my little perch? **(PERCHES ON A CHAIR.)**

2.WOMAN: For God's sake!

1.MAN: Chirp, chirp... Chirp, chirp...

2.MAN: Come on mate, let's go for a walk.

1.WOMAN: You'd get pneumonia, in this weather...

2.WOMAN: Listen to me!

1.MAN: Do I get a say? May I tell what I want?

2.WOMAN: It is always what *you* want, isn't it? **(PAUSE)** Why do you hate me? I want to know. I have a right to know. What have I done to you?

1.MAN: Chirp...

1.WOMAN: Please...

2.MAN: Coming?

2.WOMAN: What is it? You've got to tell me. Before I go completely mad.

(2.MAN GETS GOING.)

2.WOMAN: The cab, Norm.

2.MAN: See ya. **(EXITS.)**

1.MAN: There's my best mate for you. The heat was a bit too much. Just teensy weensy too much. So what does he do? He runs away. Do I care? No, I don't care. I have my water, my little seeds, and I can shit on the cage floor. I can. I can. I even may. No one may stop me.

1.WOMAN: Finished?

2.WOMAN: Sit down.

1.MAN: (STILL PERCHED, SINGING) Come to meeee... Come dance with meeee... All the way... To Copacabana... **(FLAPS HIS WINGS.)**

2.WOMAN: You want to dance, do you? **(TAKES HIM DOWN RATHER VIOLENTLY AND STARTS A FRANTIC DANCE. SOME REALLY LIVELY SOUTH AMERICAN RHYTHM. 1.WOMAN KEEPS THE RHYTHM, CLAPPING. HE IS MOVED AROUND LIKE A RAG DOLL. 1.WOMAN JOINS IN THE DANCE. WHEN SHE GRABS HIM, 2.WOMAN KEEPS RHYTHM, CLAPPING AND TAP-DANCING. HE IS A YO-YO BETWEEN THE TWO WOMEN. THE DANCE GOES ON FOR SOME TIME WITH INCREASING FRENZY. SIGHING AND SCREAMING. 1.MAN IS FINALLY ON THE FLOOR, PANTING. 1.WOMAN COLLAPSES WITH A CRAMP. 2.WOMAN DESCENDS ON HIM AND GIVES HIM A HUGE, PASSIONATE, WET KISS.)**

HE STRUGGLES FOR AIR. AFTER THE PROLONGED KISS, HE IS LIMP AND MOTIONLESS. 2.WOMAN IS STILL ON 1.MAN ON THE FLOOR. MOCKINGLY.) Chirp, chirp!

(AS LIGHTS CHANGE, THEY ALL DISAPPEAR, 2.MAN APPEARS.)

2.MAN: I wanted to let it go. Drop the whole thing. It was fair. We'd challenged him and he accepted. That was that. But Wendy and Sal didn't want to. They pressed Lloyd. The rain hadn't stopped since Saturday morning. So, it wasn't quite the family picnic we had planned. It was only us and the TV people who were there. Oh, and Lloyd's family. Huddled together under umbrellas. Lloyd didn't look like the big-shot bureaucrat at all, in his shorts. He was dressed for the occasion. Funny the shorts had the team's colours. Russ was still chirping in a hung-over way. Hooting, more like it. The two women were further up, under the old fig-tree. Once the TV people were ready, Lloyd took the plunge. He was holding on to this rope, as he went in. We wanted him to go at least shoulder-deep. He kept walking. Wasn't easy, with the current. All the débris from the flood kept hitting him. If he'd stayed in any longer, he'd have ended up like a bloody statue of logs and rags and twigs and old shoes. Kept piling on him. Then something got stuck on his face, a plastic bag or something. He couldn't see where he was going. He tried to get rid of it, and let go of the rope. That was it. He went down. All you could see was this bloody plastic shopping bag in his hand. He kept struggling, trying to get back on his feet. He didn't have a hope in hell. I couldn't get out of it myself. The current was so strong. This was all happening in front of everyone, including Lloyd's family. Two little girls and a baby boy. Beautiful kids. Next thing, I see Russ in the water, with the rope in his hand. I shouted at him, come back, I said, it's bloody dangerous, come back. He kept going towards Lloyd, then threw him the rope. He grabbed it. Lloyd. We started pulling him ashore. We somehow lost sight of Russ for a minute. He must have lost his grip. I asked everyone later, no one saw what actually happened in that minute. The last I saw of him was about twenty yards from the rope. It was a funny sort of sound. A sort of... squawking sound like a seagull makes. And a wave of the hand. Just a wave, that was all. They recovered the body later that night, about a mile downstream. Bloody stupid it was. The whole thing.

A VOICE: (OFF STAGE) Mr. Lloyd! Mr. Lloyd!

2.MAN: I'd better be off now. **(EXITS.)**

(AS LIGHTS CHANGE 1.WOMAN APPEARS, SITTING IN A CHAIR, WITH A BLANKET OVER HER LEGS. SHE IS EIGHTY-TWO.)

1.WOMAN: Nurse! The sun is coming the wrong way again. It was like this last year, too. The blinds! Pull down the blinds! I can't see. You do this on purpose. Because I can see, I have perception. I know what goes on behind those closed doors. Mother never tells me, but I know. That young man should watch his step. Just because he is tall and handsome... Thank you, Doctor. **(QUICK MAKE-UP)** Come closer. **(PAUSE)** Oh, thank you, thank you. My son brought it to me for my birthday. Would you like to smell it? French, I think. I am sure it is expensive. He thinks his mother deserves it. A mother does, doesn't she? You've seen my son. **(PAUSE)** Twelve... Perhaps thirteen. He is, isn't he? Listen young man, I know the gossip. I know you and nurse what's-her-name... Don't think I'm a prude. Sexual revolution, we invented it, see. At least we tried. But what you're doing with this young man all over the place... He is supposed to spend his time with us, not you. How can he, when... when he's screwing you all the time? We valued privacy. No, don't get me wrong. I'm no old maid. If I didn't have any children, that's because I did not wish to. No other reason. Well, that's not quite true. I imagine I did, at one stage. I must have been about thirty-five then. I told him, what's-his-name... But he didn't, not then. He gave me all this garbage about the world, the bomb and all the rest of it. He did. I think I believed him then, I must have. Then later, he said yes, because that other woman, what's-her-name... She was my friend. Yes, she couldn't, that other woman. And he did, see. It was a young doctor then, with a beard, who'd said no, I couldn't. "I'm afraid it's a bit too late now", he says. The other doctors too, they all did. They all had beards. They were the same doctor... Perhaps... You haven't aged... All these years... They all said the same thing. D'you know what I think? I think doctors have a secret communication system. When one finds out something about you, all of them know it. All those doctors with beards. Instantly. If they didn't have beards before they knew, they grow them, instantly. **(PAUSE)** I never liked beards, you know. I don't mean doctors, I mean men. No, that's not what I mean.

(PAUSE) Funny, I used to know someone who always spoke like this. Like me. I am. No, what I mean is, I never had a man who was a doctor. What was his name, that bearded fellow, what's-his-name? Couldn't have lasted very long. I hate beards. **(PAUSE)** In my men, I mean. It's ticklish. Can't stop laughing. Of course, men look so solemn with beards, like in those old paintings of God. Paintings of old God. Bearded. They're all right in paintings, not in my bed, my dear, not in bed. Here comes God! Descending on you! God and all bearded. Old. **(GOES HYSTERICAL. KNEES PRESSED TOGETHER.)** Big and bearded. My God!... **(TICKLISH AND DEFENSIVE)** Of course I love you. Yes, yes... No, my God. No! Noooo! **(GIGGLES. SWAYS TO THE RIGHT AS THE IMAGINARY MAN APPROACHES FROM THE LEFT, TO THE LEFT AS HE APPROACHES FROM THE RIGHT. SHE'S VERY AGILE FOR HER AGE. THIS GOES ON FOR A WHILE. LITTLE GIGGLES AND SCREAMS. FINALLY SHE'S PINNED DOWN. VERY TENSE AND STIFF)** My God! **(LOOKS AT THE MAN. SOFTLY)** But I love you. It doesn't matter. It's your beard, you see. No, don't worry, it doesn't matter. I can't help it if I'm ticklish. I bet you are, too. Nurse! Nurse! I know it. I know all about it. It's that wiggle, you see. The wiggle! Naughty naughty! Nurse... He is coming, isn't he? **(PAUSE)** My son... He is coming to visit me? You don't think he is, do you? My son. twelve. I was about the same age. A bit older, perhaps. In the country. You didn't know I'm a country girl, did you? **(YOUNG COQUETTISH COUNTRY GIRL)** My rosy cheeks, I owe to the country air. No Daddy, no further than the creek. I know it's dangerous when it floods. Come on, I'll show you. I know the property. No, Daddy, I don't know. The sun, nurse! The blinds! Then it was all over, poor Sammy. It was before I started high school. I'm certain of that. We didn't have dingoes or anything around the property. But I saw him, I saw Sammy. One day, he didn't lick my face. I always lay in the sun to bring out the rosiness in my cheeks, see, and Sammy always licked my face to wake me up. My face was burning. I was so hot. I called for Sammy. Daddy came. It wasn't the same, though. Daddy never licked my face. Ha ha ha! I wanted Sammy. We searched. I was crying. I was getting even hotter, running to catch up with Daddy. He stopped me. I didn't see Sammy. Daddy was standing in front of him. But I knew it was Sammy. I saw the blood. I could sense that it was still hot. He wouldn't let me

see Sammy. I wanted to, so much... Sammy!... I prayed for him. Father O'Connor wouldn't even tell me that Sammy was in heaven. Sins... Sinners... So I said to Father O'Connor, if he's not there, I'm not going to heaven. No, I'm not. I won't even try. Keep your church. I'm not going to lie to you because of all the gossip. Isn't this proof? It is French. Daddy made sure we had education, see? He was my elder, but I could always compete with him. I know French perfume when I smell one. Yesterday, I imagine. You had a beard the last time. Funny, he looked so much like you. Except the beard, of course. Are you sure?... He will come today, too. He said he would. You didn't hear? No, of course you didn't. You had a beard then. Why can't you hear when you have a beard? No, perhaps it's not that. Perhaps you forget what you've heard when you shave off your beard. When did you... Nurse! The sun!... There were things I never told father O'Connor, of course. He would tell others, he would tell God. Not that I wasn't honest. I never lied. But there is a limit. I bet you don't tell this tall, handsome young man... Hee hee hee, you thought I would, didn't you? Pull down the blinds then. I need a good rest. That's what Daddy said. My brother... he's not allowed near me. I could just walk. He would have been about five, then. He swore to God, cross my heart, he was just testing, if I would take water and sink. I did, nearly, if it weren't for Sammy. Tell my son to bring Sammy. Phone him, call him, fetch him! Now! I want Sammy! He was so strong! Blood oozing! You'd better see a doctor, nurse, you look pale. Where's your whiskers, Doctor? My neck! Don't! Don't pull! Don't pull! I don't want to go! Nooo! Sammy! Fuck off, nurse! Sammy! Sammy... Sammy... **(SHE DIES)**

(THE SOUND OF A FOOTBALL MATCH. 2.MAN IS TACKLED, THEN FREES HIMSELF AND SCORES A TRY. THE SPECTATORS ON ONE SIDE ROAR. ANOTHER ONE, IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. SPECTATORS ON THE OTHER SIDE CHEER. THIS GOES ON FOR A WHILE, IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. THE GAME FINISHES. HE GOES AND TURNS THE TV SET OFF. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FOOTBALL MATCH FADES AWAY. HE WHEELS OFF THE TV SET. HE COMES BACK ON STAGE, BEARDED, WEARING A DOCTOR'S UNIFORM, WHEELS 1.WOMAN AWAY. HE COMES BACK ON STAGE AS A STAGE-HAND, TURNS THE MUZAK ON, SWITCHES ON THE HOUSE-LIGHTS, CLOSSES THE CURTAINS -IF THERE ARE CURTAINS- AND WALKS OFF.)

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