

## **FÜR OFELIJA (A Mythology of Drowning)**

Based on the motifs from Raymond Carver's short story *So Much Water So Close to Home*.

### **DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

She

Her Mother-in-Law

Her Husband

Others: First, Second and Third Man/Police Officer, Woman Police Officer/Lawyer/Doctor/Plumber/Guest/Shop assistant

The actress who will play her daughter

### **FOOTNOTES**

- The text consists of drama scenes, images, directions, notes, sound recordings and commentaries.

The use of them is, of course, arbitrary; the recommendations are merely a guideline that the sequence of scenes is never the actual, chronologically accurate sequence.

The same is true for the selection of music pieces; these are recommendations, not obligations.

- The footnotes, if they are used and considering the way they are implemented, are meant to be the material for the role of Her Mother-in-Law.

- There are no names in the texts. Deliberately. They can be left as empty spaces or filled as per choice.

The only important thing is that the actress who will play her daughter uses her own name in the beginning.

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## PICTURE ONE

*She enters the stage, murmuring Remember Me by Diana Ross.*

## SOUND RECORDING

*The actress who will play her daughter, presses play. We hear the recording. It has the voices of her and her daughter.*

- Mom, this is now recording.
- Is it?
- Yes. Yes, I think so.
- Okay. Which one do we start with?
- With Cassandra.
- Of course, with Cassandra. Okay. Cassandra was the daughter of the Trojan King Priam and his wife, Queen Hecuba, a sister to princes Hector and Paris. She was outstandingly beautiful, and god Apollo fell head over heels in love with her. In order to be allowed to sleep with her, he gave her a gift of clairvoyancy. So, she had the ability to see everything that would happen in the future. But Cassandra did not like Apollo at all, so she used her gift to see where he'd try to catch her and deftly avoided him. Once Apollo figured that out, he got furious and, as a punishment, he changed the gift into a curse. She would still make correct predictions, she would see the future of humankind clearly, but, as a revenge because she tried to escape him, absolutely no one would believe her. Cassandra, for example, told everyone that the Trojan horse was a trap that would destroy the entire city, but nobody listened to her. In the end, with Troy defeated, she was taken home as a mistress and a slave by Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae. There, Casandra foretells his and her own death. They are murdered by their wife, Clytemnestra.

## SCENE ONE

*Phone ringing.*

HER HUSBAND

Don't answer.

SHE

It might be the kindergarten.

HER HUSBAND

Why would it be the kindergarten?

SHE

Well, why would it be the kindergarten? What kind of question is that?

HER HUSBAND

But you have its number saved, no?

SHE

It could be a different teacher calling. *(picks up.)* Hello? Yes,  
I am she. *(a longer pause.)*

No, no I would not, thank you. *(hangs up.)*

HER HUSBAND

I've told you not to pick up. It might be the kindergarten, sure, sure. Fuck. Where did they get your number?  
What are you going to tell them?

SHE

I've no idea.

HER HUSBAND

Don't you go around talking to them. I mean it. I know you'll try to be kind, but they'll use that, do you  
hear me?

SHE

Do you really think I'd go and talk to the press?

HER HUSBAND

I haven't done anything wrong, bloody hell, nothing. We found her, literally just found her. We could have  
pretended we didn't see her and gone somewhere else, but we called the police. We did everything right.  
Fuck. What is it? Can you look at me? I haven't done anything!

SHE

Okay.

HER HUSBAND

"Okay" what? What do you mean by that?

SHE

That you should know what you're saying.

HER HUSBAND

Yes, I should! I do! Now you're getting on my case, too, as if all those who can't mind their own fucking business weren't enough.

## COMMENTARY

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My name is [REDACTED] and in the text, my role is called "the actress who will play her daughter". And except for one scene, I never appear as a character, either, always just as stage directions or commentary that uses direct speech. It is never fully explained why.

This is the play about her parents, the parents of the girl I'm playing, so for clarity, in this case: the play about my parents, about my parents' marriage and relationship.

In the Dramatis Personae, my mother is listed as She. She is clearly the protagonist; the rest of us are listed in relation to her: there's Her Husband, meaning my dad, and Her Mother-in-Law, my grandma. This play was inspired by a short story by the American author Raymond Carver called *So Much Water So Close to Home*. His short story also tells a story of a marriage. This text is a daughter's gaze, my gaze and perception of my parents' marriage.

The first scene in the chronology of their history is decidedly simple. It begins as any other grand romantic story. A man and a woman in their early twenties accidentally find themselves in the same space, on a summer Saturday night. Around 40 minutes pass between their arrivals, they sit at tables that are approximately 7 meters apart. They are significantly younger than the actress and actor on stage, but to avoid bad make-up or double casting, one has to imagine these things. They arrive with separate groups, sit at totally different tables, drink completely different drinks. They don't even meet when they order new drinks at the bar, nor when they use the toilet. But what is true for every romantic story is also true for them – they will meet at the exact moment they're supposed to meet. They will bond over a simple duet by Diana Ross and The Temptations. What exactly happened is not yet really relevant at this point. More crucial is how the evening ended.

*The man and the woman each stand at one side of the stage, laughing, looking at one another. The music is unbelievably loud. I'm Gonna Make You Love Me, by Diana Ross and the Temptations. At a certain moment, they run towards each other, jump into each other's arms and start kissing uncontrollably.*

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

One thing that needs to be remembered here: this is, of course, not a romantic story.

### INSTRUCTIONS

“Bend your legs, place your feet, a big circle and stop, one, two, bend your knees, place your feet, a big circle and stop, one, two. It’s like drawing eyeglasses, one, two. One more time: bend your legs, place your feet, a big circle, just like that, yes. Let’s go, stop, one, two, bend your knees, place your feet, one more time, a big circle and stop, one, two.”

### DRUGI PRIZOR

*The phone is ringing. The phone is ringing. The phone is ringing. At the police station, the officer on duty picks up..*

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Police, how can I help you?

Sir, slow down, let’s go from the start. What death, what’s happened? Fine, sir.

So, you’ve found the body?

I understand. Super. Can you tell me who I’m talking to?

Mr [REDACTED]. Super. Do you know the people whose names you have just listed? Excellent.

So, you’ve found the body?

Where did you find it, sir? Right,

are you still there?

Fine. Here’s what we’ll do: we’ll send our people who’re out patrolling to you, can you give me your exact location? Very well, the car is on its way, I’d like to ask you to stay where you are.

Sir, do you know who the body is?

So it’s a woman?

Are you sure she’s dead?

She’s naked?

Have you noticed any sign of injury on her body, perhaps a weapon nearby? Who told you?

Alright, sir. When exactly did you find the body? Aha, but you’re calling today?

Fine, I’d like to ask you to stay on the phone with me until the police arrive.

But still. Can you please give me your information? Date of birth, place of residence. No worries, sir, just a standard procedure.

## COMMENTARY

### THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The timeline of this play has no real, clear logic, so only one thing matters: the turning point in the play is a death, a death that leaves a mark on the entire happening. Like in life: the events are split into before and after. So before and after the event. Everything else is up for interpretation and intuition. Simply, your choices. In the end, everything will be almost completely clear, I promise.

## NOTE

'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.'

- Heraclitus

## SCENE THREE

*Three men. One of them, Her Husband, has just retreated. They came here to fish. Everything is as it should be: the sand, the shrubbery, the reeds, the mosquitoes. It's getting dark, they're far from home.*

THIRD MAN

Where did he go?

FIRST MAN

To take a leak, I think.

SECOND MAN

The best thing to do is to go take a leak when there's work to be done.

THIRD MAN

Into the river?

FIRST MAN

I don't know. I guess so, yes.

SECOND MAN

And he couldn't go to the bushes?

THIRD MAN

Shall I stretch it here?

FIRST MAN

Yeah, I think so. Tie the upper tarp to the tree, in case there's a storm.

SECOND MAN

Fuck.

THIRD MAN

What?

SECOND MAN

Nothing, I forgot my smokes.

FIRST MAN

Take mine, here.

SECOND MAN

Do you have a lighter?

FIRST MAN

What?

SECOND MAN

A lighter, do you have one?

FIRST MAN

I don't know, I might have matches somewhere.

SECOND MAN

Do you have a lighter?

THIRD MAN

I don't know, maybe somewhere at the bottom of my backpack. Wait a moment.

SECOND MAN

Can you go look for a lighter, please.

THIRD MAN

Can you light up once we're done setting up ...

FIRST MAN

I'm gonna go get some twigs.

THIRD MAN

Wait, here's charcoal.

SECOND MAN

Neither twigs nor charcoal are of absolutely any use if we don't have a lighter.

THIRD MAN

██████ has one for sure.

FIRST MAN

██████ obviously went for a swim.

SECOND MAN

Or to take a dump.

THIRD MAN

Here, can you hold this, please?

SECOND MAN

What if we all smoked one in peace and then set everything up? A beer, a smoke, we've walked a lot.

THIRD MAN

It'll get dark any minute now.

SECOND MAN

So what, we have flashlights.

*Her Husband comes back. He's not quite himself.*

THIRD MAN

Everything sorted? We were kind of worried you'd gone swimming.

SECOND MAN

Do you have a lighter?

HER HUSBAND (*feels his pocket.*)

Aha. Here.

FIRST MAN

Thank god.

HER HUSBAND

Hey, come over here.

SECOND MAN

We've just agreed to have a smoke, haven't we? Sit down.

HER HUSBAND

Come on, just come here.

FIRST MAN

Where?

HER HUSBAND

To the water. Something ... Come.

**NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER**

My mother wanted to be a writer. She had a degree in literature. As a student, she started working at a swimming pool. She didn't get a job in her field. Slowly, the swimming courses turned from a few times a month to a few times a week, then every day. She started reading less, and she stopped writing. One of the things she retained from her student days was the obsessive need to structure her life into lists. Therefore, this text assigns lists to each of the four protagonists, and within the text, these lists have meaning for them. To all four protagonists there is a list that belongs to them, and they have a meaning for them within the text.

My mother has two. The first one is called "this year's milestones" with four points on it, and the second, "???", also with four points.

## **SOUND RECORDING**

*Her voice on the recording. She, narrating to her daughter.*

- Hades, the god of the underworld, became obsessed with Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, the goddess of fertility and the earth. Fearing she would turn him down, he decided to kidnap her and take her to the underworld by force. There, he forced her to become his queen. Demeter mourns her daughter and becomes depressed, and, because in her grief she has completely neglected the earth as the goddess of fertility, people started dying of hunger. Despite all the pleas, Demeter withdrew into her grief. To prevent humanity from becoming extinct, Zeus struck a deal with Hades under which Persephone can spend half a year with her mother on the Earth's surface, but for the other half of the year, she has to stay underground as the queen of the dead. So, for six months, Demeter mourns her daughter and that's when that winter envelops the earth which becomes barren, and the second half of the year, when Persephone returns home, she brings back life, crops and prosperity. The myth claims that when Persephone was returning to the earth for the first time, Hades demanded of her to eat some pomegranate seeds. According to the

legend, they have the power to tie her to the underworld forever, she will never be able to escape and will have to return to it and him every six months.

#### SCENE FOUR

*The phone ringing. Four men standing by a car, they're nervous, they smoke. They all look at Her Husband, who has his phone touching his ear and is waiting for someone to pick up on the other side.*

HER HUSBAND

Yes, yes. Hi, there. I mean, good afternoon ... Yes ... I'd like to report, I mean, we'd like to report, we, we'd like to report a death. Um, how do I describe that? We have found ... Well, a dead person.

A corpse. Yes, we found a corpse, and this is why we're calling you.

I'm [REDACTED], with me are [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Yes. We're friends and we're on vacation together.

Yes.

In the river [REDACTED], right, lodged in some branches there, here, a two-or-so-hour hike from [REDACTED], where there's a fishing point, I mean, I don't know if there is, I think there is, we fish here every year, in short, the road from the village to the river and then straight on for another hour or so, I don't know, that's the best description I can give you.

No, there's no reception there, we're now in the village nearest to where we parked, we have reception and this is why we're calling. Yes, there's a bar, [REDACTED] we're waiting here now.

*(to other men)* She says we have to wait here for the police ... Yes, alright. What? No, how are we supposed to know that, she was just lying there.

Yes, a woman.

Lying naked, motionless, head in the water.

Hard for it to be anything else. Yes.

No, nothing. Oh, she has some kind of bruises on her arm. Well, I didn't see that, they told me.

[REDACTED] told me. *(looks at the other man, who starts to get angry)* Well, what, when she asked?

Yes, the day before yesterday. No, yesterday. Yes, yesterday we saw her when we went fishing for the first time. So, we arrived the day before yesterday, set up camp and went to sleep, and in the morning, when we went fishing, we saw her.

Well, a storm was coming and it's a tricky trail, so we didn't dare. Aha, yes, my battery is about to die, I haven't charged my phone in three days.

Yes, yes. Why do you need this? I mean, we'll wait here. We haven't done anything wrong, we're calling you straight away.

**NOTE**

“So much water so close to home, why did he have to go miles away to fish?”

R. Carver

**IMAGE TWO**

*We hear God Only Knows by the Beach Boys play very loudly. She and her husband at a party, dancing, laughing, occasionally kissing. They're feeling good, they're happy.*

**COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My grandma is my Dad's mother. We share three scenes in this text. They all belong to the future, that is, after some time had passed after the event. Grandma is the only one who doesn't have a list while the play is going on. She only starts one after the event and continues to write it until her death.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I'll wear this.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

These are pyjamas.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I know.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You can't have pyjamas.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why not?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Pyjamas are for sleeping, you know that. We have to put on something else to go out.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: This.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

No.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Because these are also pajamas, and you can't walk around in pajamas all day.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why not?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Because they're made for sleeping. You can't wear them outside. And you'll be cold. What about this tee?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

This one? You like this one.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Fine, anything else. Literally anything else, just take off these pajamas.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: This.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Stop making fun of me, please.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why not?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

This is a swimsuit.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Is it pajamas?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

No.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Well then. You said anything else. This.*

**NOTE**

“Police blotter, ■. ■.

#### Female Body Found in the XXXXX River

The police were notified on Monday afternoon that XXXXXXX had found a female body on the riverbank near XXXXX. The incident was allegedly reported by fishermen who were there on their annual trip. The crime scene examination was conducted by the investigative team of the Criminal Police Sector of the XXXXX Police Directorate, in collaboration with the officers from the CCC Police Station. The investigative judge and the district state prosecutor were also present at the scene. The investigative judge ordered a judicial autopsy, stated the Police Department. The press release confirmed that XXXX’s death was a consequence of a criminal act, and added that collecting information, reviewing security cameras, checking telecommunication devices, the crime scene investigation and other activities are currently ongoing. The public will be informed of the progress in due course.

#### COMMENTARY

##### THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My other grandmother, my Mom’s mother, died two years ago. In the course of three weeks, my mother, who had not written a single thing in a decade, finishes a novella about her relationship with her mother, writing every evening, and enters it for a competition on the radio. Her story is among the five selected from the 800 entries, and its excerpt is read in the evening programme sometime in winter. The radio also sends the selected excerpts to all the state-owned book publishers and one of them contacts my mother that same day. They offer her a contract and publish her novella as a book. It wins the award for the best debut at the book fair and the nomination for the best literary work of the year. At the same time, she signs a contract for two more literary works in the next two years. Dad is the biggest champion of her work.

#### SCENE FIVE

*After breakfast. Husband and wife at the table together.*

##### HER HUSBAND

She was dead, what do you want from me now?

##### SHE

That’s exactly it, she was dead. You should have helped her.

##### HER HUSBAND

What are you talking about, how was I supposed to help a corpse?

SHE

By calling people who'd take care of her!

HER HUSBAND

Are you out of your mind? She was dead. D E A D. How is one going to take care of her?

SHE

And what would you do? If somebody found your body, lodged between branches, in ice-cold water? Wouldn't you want to be handled with respect? That your family learns as soon as possible, that they identify you, that they dry you off and figure out why you died? That they bury you?

HER HUSBAND

My family? You mean you?

SHE

Yes, me, yes. Wouldn't you want me to know as soon as possible what had happened to you?

HER HUSBAND

What were we supposed to do? A two-hour walk to the car, it was getting dark, there was no signal. We'd all agreed to wait a little.

SHE

You waited for two days! You were right there, fishing.

HER HUSBAND

We decided together, do you understand!?! We wait for the entire year for these couple of days. We came back three days early, didn't we?

SHE

Do you even hear yourself? Congratulations, really. I hope you're proud of yourselves. Of course, a tiny corpse won't ruin your male vacation. Right? You work yourselves to death, don't you!

HER HUSBAND

Honestly, there's no point. You haven't even tried to understand me. You're just glaring at me –

SHE

Glaring?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, glaring and bitching. Instead of protecting your family. Particularly with all that's going on!

SHE

And what is going on?

HER HUSBAND

All this between us, this entire last year, instead of sticking up for me, instead of being a team, no, you go right against me, as if I did something wrong.

SHE

What if it were me?

HER HUSBAND

What?

SHE

If it were me, lying in that water, naked, and some guys were fishing next to my body.

HER HUSBAND

Will you please stop?

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER**

My father was a relatively successful designer who, at some point, handled all the major accounts of the company where he worked. But above all, he was charming and people loved him and loved working with him.

Realistically, the entire company was carried on his accounts. When they didn't want to give him a raise, he set up his own firm and took the clients with him. He was doing well. Good money, some creative work. And I think he genuinely enjoyed his job. He was important.

My father's list in this text is decidedly concrete:

Tent

Sleeping bag

Tarock cards

Cooking utensils

Food

Flashlight 2x

Tins of peas, corn, tomato paste, couscous, pasta, potatoes

Energy bars

Baked beans/Minestrone (tin) water

Bottle

Whiskey, beer (from the gas station)

Fishing rod + hooks/mono line, extra + set-up kit

Folding chair

Fishing pants, poncho

Radio transistor (?)

Cooler Rope

Plastic bags Toilet paper/tissues

## **INSTRUCTION**

“Stretch your arms, then leave them, let’s go, stretch your arms, leave, like that. Bend your knees, heels to butt. Arms still. Place your feet, we’re flexing. Heels to butt, pull. Listen, turn your feet like ducks or penguins. Set them. Turn, yes. Wait in this pose for two seconds, now legs together, one, two. Like that, super, keep your arms stretched, where are your feet. Bend, bend, to the butt and set.”

## **SCENE SIX**

*A man climbs into bed next to a woman. He embraces her. It’s late at night. She wakes up and gets scared.*

HER HUSBAND

It’s me, it’s okay.

SHE

Why are you home already? Didn’t you say you were staying until Wednesday?

HER HUSBAND

We had enough. The weather was bad. You smell nice.

SHE

You don't.

HER HUSBAND

How have the two of you been?

SHE

Okay. What time is it?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, around four.

SHE

Why are you home already?

HER HUSBAND

I've told you.

SHE

But you have never before returned early because of bad weather.

HER HUSBAND

I'll explain tomorrow, it's a little complicated.

SHE

Is everybody okay?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, yes, don't worry.

SHE

Okay. I'm going to the living room.

HER HUSBAND

No, stay here. Just today.

SHE

I don't know if that's a good idea.

HER HUSBAND

Please.

SHE

Okay. Good night.

HER HUSBAND

Good night.

#### **NOTE**

Actress Natalie Wood, best known for the film *A Rebel Without a Cause*, in which she played James Dean's great love, often spoke publicly about her fear of water. She would refuse films that required swimming or diving. In her biography, her family members speak about her premonitions that water would be what would kill her. Natalie Wood dies on 19 November 1956 when, in unexplained circumstances, she falls from a boat where she was with her husband and a friend, and drowns.

#### **COMMENTARY**

My gran used to always say that what you fear most is actually your destiny. And she also used to say that if you weren't ready for change, the possibility of a change wouldn't even appear.

One time after the event, still a child, I'm sitting on the floor of my room.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Are you hungry?

*The actress who will play her daughter shakes her head.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Are you coming to the living room?

*The actress who will play her daughter shakes her head.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Everybody's gone. We can watch a movie or something.

*The actress who will play her daughter shakes her head.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

This dress is really pretty.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes, Mom bought it for me.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

It suits you.

*The actress who will play her daughter nods.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Here, I brought you a little cake anyways.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Come on.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Please, just a little bit. It's really good.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I won't.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You haven't eaten anything.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I'm not hungry.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Should I leave it here for you?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

For later, maybe.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Come on –

*The actress who will play her daughter interrupts her: I won't eat this stupid cake, it has fruits.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

What?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't eat fruit cakes. I find this mushy cooked fruits in sweets disgusting.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I'm sorry, I didn't know.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I know you didn't know. Can you go now, please?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Yes. I'm sorry. Will you have something else?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

**NOTE**

"Your shelled bed I remember. Father, this thick air is murderous.

I would breather water."

- S. Plath

**NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

**COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My father was the greatest supporter of my Mom's writing. Since always. But at the same time, the chronology of events makes it clear that from the point when Mom actually writes something, publishes something and gets recognition, things start to change. The first event on my mother's "key" list is marked "award" and she enters it when they return from the awards ceremony for the most promising design companies.

SHE

I'm sorry.

HER HUSBAND

Excuse me?

SHE

I'm sorry.

HER HUSBAND

For?

SHE

This situation. It sucks. For you.

HER HUSBAND

You don't have to be sorry for me.

SHE

You know what I mean.

HER HUSBAND

Mhm. But there's no need to put yourself above me like this.

SHE

No, I'm not. I'm really not.

HER HUSBAND

Fine.

SHE

I'm sorry if it came out ... Although ... I'm sorry, I don't actually know what the problem is, why are you now angry with me?

HER HUSBAND

I'm not angry.

SHE

No, just passive-aggressive?

HER HUSBAND

I don't need this as well right now.

SHE

Can we just talk? I really didn't mean anything –

HER HUSBAND

I think you enjoyed it.

SHE

Excuse me?

HER HUSBAND

You enjoyed being the centre of attention.

SHE

I'm sorry but what are you talking about? We were at the awards ceremony where you were the nominee?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, but who cares about that, you're the star now, you actually have an award.

SHE

The award from the city book fair, my love. It's not the Nobel. But also ... I don't even know why I have to explain anything. What are we actually talking about here?

HER HUSBAND

Realistically, even if I weren't there today.

SHE

I honestly don't know what is the matter with you, really. Is this an ego thing? I'm truly sorry that today wasn't a success for you, but that has nothing to do with me.

HER HUSBAND

Of course it does. Look, I'm totally proud of you –

SHE

Are you now?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, of course, but do you really think that everybody doesn't suddenly simply see me as the man from your book –

SHE

What? You appear in one chapter, and without a name, as an unknown child? Who connects that?

HER HUSBAND

Everybody! You've written just enough for the people to start talking about it.

SHE

Honey, people don't care. Nobody's talking about you.

HER HUSBAND

Ouch, thanks a lot.

SHE

What? I don't understand.

HER HUSBAND

Nobody's talking about me. Cool. But they're talking about you?

SHE

I'm sorry, but we wouldn't be having this debate if you won the award tonight.

HER HUSBAND

Fuck you.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

That night he didn't sleep at home. The next day, they talked. And apologised. But this discussion stayed somewhere.

**NOTE**

"There's a level of feeling of failure, the lack of success that kills. Desperation is like a flood.

It can pretend to be Julianne Moore in *The Hours*.

Kristen Dunst in *Melancholia*. Let it motherfucking rain!

He'll never have the budget to stage something like that, or shoot it."

-D. Pešut

## **SOUND RECORDING**

*Her voice on the recording. She, narrating to her daughter.*

- Orpheus was one of the best musicians of the ancient world, deeply in love with his wife Eurydice. One day, Euridyce was bitten by a snake, and Orpheus couldn't get over her death, so he set off on the impossible journey to the underworld to bring her back. Although according to some myths, Euridyce begged him not to do it, he never gave up and, with his music, finally convinced Hades and Persephone, the king and queen of the underworld, to let her go. They promise Eurydice's return to the world of the living, on the condition that he, until they reach the Earth's surface, doesn't turn back and simply trusts that she's walking behind him. Although Eurydice begs him to believe, Orpheus is overcome by doubt and becomes uncertain, so he, just before they return home, turns. Eurydice, who was standing there, disappears and returns to the underworld. She remains there forever, and Orpheus never stops lamenting her death.

## **SCENE SEVEN**

*Men sitting on the ground around tents that have been half set up. It's getting dark. They're passing an open bottle of whiskey. Silence.*

FIRST MAN

Are we at least going to start a fire? It's getting cold.

*Silence.*

HER HUSBAND

Do you have reception here?

THIRD MAN

No. Shall we go to the village? And call from there.

SECOND MAN

It's almost dark.

FIRST MAN

And cold.

*Silence.*

THIRD MAN

We can't just leave her like that and sit here next to her.

SECOND MAN

Can you pass me the whiskey?

*Silence.*

THIRD MAN

Should we take her out of the water?

SECOND MAN

Are you insane?

THIRD MAN

Well, how should I know.

FIRST MAN

Let's just leave her as she is.

*Silence.*

HER HUSBAND

We should report her.

*Silence.*

THIRD MAN

Is it certain that she's dead?

SECOND MAN

You really are insane.

THIRD MAN

And you're so fucking smart!

SECOND MAN

She's naked, head in the water, lodged in the branches. What would she be doing there if she weren't dead? Idiot.

THIRD MAN

Fuck off.

HER HUSBAND

Come on, let it go.

THIRD MAN

I really think this is no joke. There's a dead body over there. We need to do something. It must be an offence not to report it straight away.

SECOND MAN

Look, any minute now, it's gonna be night time. It's getting cold. We're exhausted. The trail is not clearly marked. And we've had a bit to drink already.

FIRST MAN

I'm afraid to go back now.

HER HUSBAND

I also think it could be dangerous.

*Silence.*

THIRD MAN

Give me that. (*Leans over to grab the whiskey.*) So what now, are we going to set up camp and sleep next to the corpse?

*Silence.*

HER HUSBAND

We'll go tomorrow morning. The moment we wake up. We tell them we arrived in the dusk already and didn't see her.

SECOND MAN

Fuck, all year I look forward to this. These five fucking days. All year. Fuck all of it, really.

*Silence.*

FIRST MAN

Not like she's going anywhere.

THIRD MAN

Do shut up.

SECOND MAN

All I'm saying is that nothing more can really happen to her. That's all. Whether we report now and the police arrive, or in three days, nobody can help her. That's all.

THIRD MAN

Stop.

*Silence.*

SECOND MAN

I agree with you. We really can't help her.

HER HUSBAND

Let's just stop. Fine, we'll go back tomorrow morning. Let's set up the sleeping thing now, before we finish the whiskey.

*Silence.*

FIRST MAN

Do you think it was an accident?

SECOND MAN

What, that she went swimming? The water has five degrees.

THIRD MAN

Maybe she tripped and hit her head on a rock, lost consciousness and simply drowned.

SECOND MAN

And what, stripped naked just before?

HER HUSBAND

What if she did it herself?

SECOND MAN

I think, if you want to kill yourself, you go somewhere where it's at least a little bit more certain.

FIRST MAN

That's true, there are no currents here and the water is a meter and a half deep, max.

THIRD MAN

I would just like to emphasize once more that we've decided not to go and report a dead body, for which we are almost certain is a consequence of a murder.

SECOND MAN

Hey, what's the difference between a murder and a manslaughter?

THIRD MAN

What is the matter with you?

FIRST MAN

Has anyone thought that her killers might still be around? Could we be in danger?

SECOND MAN

Yeah, for sure, a person who killed a young girl, stripped her naked and chucked her into a river can't wait to attack four adult dudes.

*Silence.*

HER HUSBAND

I can't believe it.

SECOND MAN

Don't say a thing.

THIRD MAN

Pass me that whiskey, please.

### **IMAGE THREE**

*She and her husband, we hear very loud Baby It's You, by Smith. They discuss quite agitatedly; it's hard to say that they're fighting, because we cannot discern the voices, but in any case, there's tension between them, and they're upset.*

### **NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

### **COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

After Mom started writing more and working more, they started arguing more. And because they didn't want me to hear them argue, they always played music loudly when they started shouting.

Which was unbelievably ironic for two reasons: first, because it made me even more certain about when they're fighting, because the music was absolutely too loud, and second, because they always played music

they loved, the 1970s pop love songs. Completely at odds with the logic of the situation, of course, them using this type of music so they can scream at each other.

The scenes in which mom and I appear have neither temporal nor spatial frame. They can belong anywhere. As per your personal preference.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Mom, wake up.*

SHE

What is it?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Can I lie next to you?*

SHE

Of course, come. What is it?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Nothing.*

SHE

Were you dreaming?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes. You.*

SHE

Was it horrible?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't know.*

SHE

Are you sad?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes. I didn't find you.*

SHE

I'm here. It's all good.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: You're cold.*

SHE

I love you.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I know, yes. Don't go.*

SHE

I'm not going anywhere.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Okay. Come back.*

SHE

I'm not going anywhere.

#### **NOTE**

Set design description: a construction, slightly pushed back from the portal. Spaces, built of planks, two metres high, their width depends on the width of the stage. Spaces in the ratio 2:1:2, in the following order from right to left: first, a nursery, built down to details. A child's bed with a modest canopy, laminated floor, yellow rug. An IKEA table, a wall with children's illustrations.

A large wardrobe, half with drawers, half with books. Toys in a basket on the floor. Comfortable, cosy. Warm light. A window.

Then a corridor, cold and impersonal, reminds one of a hospital/prison/police station corridor.

This third space is a segment of a landscape by the river. A river bank, sand, reeds, bugs, fauna and flora, as realistically as possible.

All three constructed as living installations, inhabited, used. The construction is surrounded by spotlights and mikes. The reference is a film set.

The construction is leaking water. It is slowly seeping down the stage and filling it with water. The actors establish no relationship to this fact. At the front, between the portal and the construction, is a desk with chairs, dictating machines, evidence. Just as a suggestion to help with the structure and interpretation of the material.

An important staging rule: No scene plays out in the space that is its actual natural space.

Everything written here is absolutely non-binding for the production's creative team.

Bottom line: Any similarity with the set of the production XXXXX ( ... XXXXX) is coincidental.

## INSTRUCTION

“Stretch your arm out and we’re gliiiiiding. Hands together just under your chin. And switch, careful, arms, legs, arms, legs. Stretch the neck, head above the water. Slowly, first arms, then legs. We’re gliiiiiding, now, arms, legs, arms, legs. Slowly, careful with the head, lift it. We’re gliiiiiding.”

## SCENE EIGHT

*Her husband at the lawyer's office.*

HER HUSBAND

I don’t know whose idea It was ...

LAWYER

It is very important that we’re precise about that –

HER HUSBAND

But why? I really don’t understand. We haven’t done anything to her. We just didn’t want her to float away.

LAWYER

Why?

HER HUSBAND

Listen now, whose side are you on?

LAWYER

Yours, of course, but these are all questions that keep posing themselves.

HER HUSBAND

You’re the same as the police. Nobody’s even trying to understand.

LAWYER

I am trying. But these are key questions: Why didn’t you call the police immediately? Why did you tie her? What were you doing next to her body for two more days?

HER HUSBAND

When you say it like that we come across as complete psychopaths, but in the given moment, it was the most logical thing.

LAWYER

Well, exactly, let's go over this logic, so I can understand it, too.

HER HUSBAND

We didn't call the police, because we were exhausted. It would take at least two hours to walk back to the car. It was getting dark, we've already had a few, we were knackered.

LAWYER

Fine. So you're knackered and you see a body in the water. Now what?

HER HUSBAND

Well, she was obviously dead. She had her head in the water. She was naked. I don't know, it was all so weird. So, we went back, decided we wouldn't go anywhere, not that same night, it got dark, so we pitched our tents and started drinking.

LAWYER

And then you went and tied her?

HER HUSBAND

Yeah. I mean, a little later, yes ... yeah.

LAWYER

Whose idea was it?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, I've already told you, I don't remember.

LAWYER

Yours?

HER HUSBAND

No. Not mine. No.

LAWYER

Whose, then?

HER HUSBAND

I have no idea. We drank a lot, I have very little memory of it all.

LAWYER

Alright. Why?

HER HUSBAND

Huh?

LAWYER

Why would you tie her?

HER HUSBAND

Oh. We got scared.

LAWYER

Scared of what?

HER HUSBAND

Well, that she'd float away.

LAWYER

And so you went and tied her?

HER HUSBAND

Yes.

LAWYER

I don't understand.

HER HUSBAND

Yes, it's not logical, I know. But at that moment, we felt we'd have massive problems if she did float away. How would we call the police then, what would we say? We'd be even more suspicious ... At least that's how we saw it. And perhaps we left a trace or so ... I don't know. What if they found her a lot later, and they'd be looking for someone who knows something about it, and we'd come forward just to say that we

didn't do anything. I don't know. Try to understand, though, we were four guys next to a dead woman. That in itself is totally suspicious, you know what times we live in.

#### **NOTE**

A dance number:

*A back side of the body, naked. The light from a torch that dances on the skin*

Shoulder

Ear

Fingers

Front vertebrae

Knee joint

Buttocks

Scapula

Elbow

Hand

Neck vertebrae

Thighs

Foot

Lower back

Calves

Hair

Repeat, twice

Applause.

#### **COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

All the events from my mother's list happen before the central event in the text. Actually, they all lead to this event. The second list is called "???" It has four events from last month, that had a great impact on my mother. First, the faucet.

PLUMBER

What exactly is the problem? It's not leaking?

SHE

No, no. Just dripping. All nights long, inside.

PLUMBER

Dripping where?

SHE

No, nowhere. Inside, it rumbles in the pipes. Do you know what I mean? There's this constant sound – plink, plink, plink. From the pipe.

PLUMBER

Aha.

SHE

Yeah. So, plink, plink, plink. I can't sleep. It's like torture. Same rhythm all the time.

PLUMBER

Yeah, nothing to be done here. These are old pipes. Once hot water gets into them at night, when you heat them, the pipes expand and are too big for the holes between floors through which they travel and then this dripping can be heard. You can sleep with earplugs.

SHE

I have a child, I don't dare to, in case she calls me at night. And to widen these holes, is that possible?

PLUMBER

That's these old buildings, ma'am, there's nothing to be done. In winter, you just put up with it. Or you can sleep in a sweater instead of naked, haha.

SHE

Yeah. Okay, right. How much do I owe you?

PLUMBER

Nothing. I'm glad to serve such pretty ladies for free.

SHE

Mhm, thanks.

PLUMBER

That's is? Do you want me to check something else now that I'm already here? Do you need a check-up, some fine tuning, haha?

SHE

No, thanks.

PLUMBER

No harm in joking, eh? I'd just wash my hands if you don't mind?

SHE

Of course, bathroom is first door on the left.

PLUMBER (*from the bathroom*)

Has it been like this for long?

SHE

What?

PLUMBER

This faucet, there's no pressure.

SHE

Yeah, about a month. It just needs to be cleaned, I know, but I can't get down to it.

PLUMBER

Where's your husband? If you were mine, I'd get down to it immediately.

SHE

Mhm.

PLUMBER

Here, let me fix this for you, it'll be done in a sec.

SHE

No, you really don't have to.

PLUMBER

Ma'am, there really is no point in you calling someone separately. When I'm already here. And you can tell your husband that you fixed it yourself. Here, two screws need to be replaced.

SHE

Thank you, but I am rushing to get to work, I need to leave in five minutes or I'll be late.

PLUMBER

Five minutes and I'm done.

SHE

Fine.

PLUMBER

What do you do?

SHE

I teach swimming, to children.

PLUMBER

Oh. All day in a swimsuit? Lucky children.

SHE

Yeah ... let me go get ready, and then we should leave, please.

PLUMBER

Of course.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

As Mom is changing in the bedroom she sees his reflection in the mirror. She covers herself and when she looks again, he's no longer there. She doesn't know if she'd made the whole thing up.

PLUMBER

Look here, like new!

SHE

Thanks. How much do I owe you?

PLUMBER

We've already had this conversation, when it comes to beauties like this, I only take alternative forms of payment, haha.

SHE

Yes, fine. Thank you. I have to tidy up a few things before I go, so thank you.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The plumber stays in the parking lot, in his parked car, for ten minutes, and until he drives off, Mom doesn't dare to leave the house. Of course, she's late for work.

## **NOTE**

Drowning is death by suffocation caused by the airway blockage or pulmonary malfunction due to immersion in liquid. The consequence of this blockage is hypoxia that soon leads to brain damage and cardiac arrest.

We know several phases of drowning. The first phase is the so-called "dry drowning" that occurs most often in non-swimmers, but also in swimmers who overestimate their knowledge and physical stamina. In this phase, the vocal cords constrict to seal the airway so the victim cannot breathe, but instead swallows water. The victim tries to remain on the surface and calls for help. This phase is at most two minutes long. In the second phase the muscles that sealed the airway in phase 1 relax, and water enters the victim's trachea and lungs. It lasts up to 1 minute. In Phase 3, the victim, because of exhaustion, loses consciousness and drowns.

If we're pushed under the water surface by force, the body at first attempts to hold breath to stop the water from entering the airway. However, when breath is forcefully held and at the same time the physical perception of the lack of oxygen, the body's survival instinct responds with panic. Because a person can no longer hold breath and the need for air becomes too strong, they inhale reflexively, which causes the water to enter the airway. This reflex is a part of the natural defense

reaction of the body that activates when the person suffocates. The water aspiration causes suffocation as the water replaces air and prevents the lungs from absorbing oxygen.

The signs that indicate drowning during autopsy include presence of water in lungs, blue shadows on the skin, particularly around the mouth, ears and fingers that indicate the lack of oxygen, an elevated level of chlorine or salt in the blood that could indicate that the person died in fresh or salty water and the presence of foamy liquid that can appear in the mouth and nose as a consequence of suffocation and aspiration of water into the airways.

### **COMMENTARY**

These things, apparently, happen relatively imperceptibly. Relationships falling apart. Slowly, my parents started to talk less and less. They argued more and more. I think we both believed it was a phase. Mom started working on another text and she always wrote at night, usually on the couch. Every now and then, she fell asleep there. About six months before the event, she brought a blanket and a pillow to the couch in the evening.

HER HUSBAND

What are you doing?

SHE

I'll sleep here.

HER HUSBAND

Why?

SHE

I'll just sleep here, I want to write –

HER HUSBAND

You can write here and then come to bed.

SHE

No, here's good.

HER HUSBAND

Because?

SHE

Because I need to be alone for a bit. Because I need to think for a bit.

HER HUSBAND

I won't even ... I won't even comment anymore. Do what you want. I don't care. Just don't come apologising to me later.

**NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

**SCENE NINE**

*Daughter and father at the kitchen counter, leaning over a pot that contains fish. Mother enters.*

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Mom, look!*

SHE

Put that away.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: But Mom, look, they're so big.*

HER HUSBAND

And slimy, here, caress them.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Ewww, no!*

HER HUSBAND

Come on. Boo!

*The actress who will play the daughter says: No, come on!*

SHE

Put them away.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Mom, can we have them for dinner?*

SHE

No, we're not eating this. Put them away, I said.

HER HUSBAND

Calm down, will you, they're just fish.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Mom, why not?*

HER HUSBAND

We can prepare them, okay? Perhaps on a grill.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Or sushi?*

HER HUSBAND

Since when do you eat sushi?

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Since never!*

HER HUSBAND

Agreed!

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Mom, have you heard?*

SHE

For the last time, put the fish away.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: Mom, come on, why are you so annoying, come have a look, yesterday, these were swimming. She comes over to the pot with the fish, grabs it and chucks it in the bin.*

SHE

Go get dressed, we'll be late for kindergarten.

*The actress who will play the daughter says: But, Mom –*

SHE

Quiet. Get dressed. I'm counting to three, and then I'll take your bike away for the day.

HER HUSBAND

You really aren't all there.

SHE

Why didn't you tell me straight away?

HER HUSBAND

What?

SHE

Why didn't you tell me the moment you came home?

HER HUSBAND

Because you were asleep and I was exhausted.

SHE

Not exhausted enough to not want to shag.

HER HUSBAND

I didn't want to shag, I wanted to hug you.

SHE

I don't understand, isn't that the first thing you tell me?

HER HUSBAND

Would that make any difference?

SHE

Huge difference.

HER HUSBAND

I didn't want to upset you. Particularly considering the phase we're in.

SHE

That's exactly why you should have told me the second you walked through the door. Not that I wake up to the police in my living room.

HER HUSBAND

I've already told you they're overreacting. And mostly that you're overreacting. We haven't done anything.

SHE

One more time: You left her there. You tied her. You slept by her side. You caught fucking fish. And now you're bringing these fish home to me and forcing them on our daughter for dinner. You're the one who really isn't all there.

HER HUSBAND

Forcing them on who? What are you saying? Enough. I'm serious. You're trying to guilt trip me for something that has absolutely nothing to do with me. You have no idea what you're talking about. Listen, take the afternoon off. I'll call my mother to go get her from the kindergarten and to the playground, you get some rest. (*goes to hug her*) You're just in shock, no wonder, it's truly horrible.

#### **NOTE**

Mom often told me she believed that any small decision can completely change the course of your life. The butterfly effect, she really believed in it. That everything has its own specific consequence. She liked to say that Diana Ross was the key to my existence. Even more, she claims she was convinced to the very last moment that she would sing her *Remember Me* at the karaoke. That's her favorite song. But just before she wrote down the title to the piece of paper, her intuition told her to put down her duet with The

Temptations instead. Diana herself whispered that to her ear. Because if she hadn't, she was convinced, that Dad and she would have never found each other.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Can you stop whistling?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Of course. Now what, are you just going to stand here? Go a step lower, come on.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I want armbands.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

But you know how to without them.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Sweetie, of course you do. You were swimming last year without anything, you even went underwater.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Put your head under, come!

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Or jump. You can jump today, go, a cannonball, I'll watch you!

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't want you to watch me.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Or a somersault! Can you show me a somersault?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I want to go out.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

We've been filling this pool all day, come on, it's hot, enjoy!

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I hate this stupid water, you keep pushing it on me! You jump in if you like it so much, just leave me alone. Mom and you, constantly this stupid water.*

*Leave me alone!*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Honey–

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Stop watching me!*

### **ČETRŤA SLIKA**

*She and her husband onstage, we hear Stevie Wonder's For Once in My Life, really loud. They're screaming at each other, although we cannot discern the words, it is clear that it is a very intense fight.*

### **NOTE**

“At the end of the 1880, they pull a body of a drowned girl from the Seine at the Quai du Louvre, who, based on the quality of the skin that was left, was only sixteen years old at the time of her death. Her body shows no signs of violence, so the Paris morgue concludes that the girl committed suicide. The pathologist is so taken by the beauty of the unknown girl's face – the drowned girl is smiling, her expression is peaceful, content, happy, even – that he prints a death mask. The copies of the death mask of the unidentified young woman, nicknamed L'inconnue de la Seine, the Unknown from the Seine, become a very popular piece of décor of the bohemian salons of Paris and morbidly oriented artistic abodes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Unknown from the Seine becomes an erotic ideal of her era, inspires many French and other literary works, and with her looks influences the image of an entire generation of German girls.”

E. Mahkovic

### **SCENE TEN**

*Men around the fire playing cards, smoking, drinking whiskey.*

HER HUSBAND

Fuck, this water is ice-cold, just rinsing your hands makes you hurt all over.

FIRST MAN

Yeah, don't even talk about it.

SECOND MAN

Tell it to the honey in the water.

THIRD MAN

How can you call her a honey, you have a daughter.

SECOND MAN

What?

THIRD MAN

Will you finally follow?

HER HUSBAND

Please, you two, can you please not start again.

THIRD MAN

We're really stupid, we're still here.

HER HUSBAND

Your turn, concentrate.

FIRST MAN

I believe that this cold water functions as a refrigerator, that's why the body is so intact.

HER HUSBAND

But at the same time, it washes off all the evidence, doesn't it? Fingerprints and what not.

THIRD MAN

But that's what I've been telling you, the longer we're here, the cleaner the body will be, and the fewer the traces.

FIRST MAN

You have no idea how long she'd been lying here before we arrived.

SECOND MAN

Hey, perhaps her bottom half is completely eaten by the fish.

THIRD MAN

Have you really been saving this till the end? Have you not been counting the tarocks?

HER HUSBAND

Go, count.

THIRD MAN

Eaten by the fish, god love you, honestly.

SECOND MAN

She looks quite young.

THIRD MAN

Does it matter?

SECOND MAN

I don't know, does it?

FIRST MAN

How closely did you look at her?

SECOND MAN

Ten difference.

THIRD MAN

We're still here, this is so against the law.

FIRST MAN

Why would it be against the law?

THIRD MAN

Just imagine somebody came now? How would you explain that we've been camping next to a corpse for the second night?

SECOND MAN

By telling him that this is the only fucking vacation we take all year and because there's no reception here and because it's been looking like storm all the time and we didn't dare to go back.

THIRD MAN

It's literally been clear skies ever since we got here.

SECOND MAN

Exactly. The unpredictable spring storms. They're the most dangerous. Pass.

FIRST MAN

Pass.

HER HUSBAND

Three.

THIRD MAN

Two.

HER HUSBAND

You've got it.

THIRD MAN

Spades.

SECOND MAN

She has bruises on her arm. Have you seen that?

FIRST MAN

Seriously, how closely have you checked her out?

SECOND MAN

Just before, when I was doing the dishes, I looked.

THIRD MAN

You were doing the dishes next to her?

FIRST MAN

Fucking morbid, mate.

SECOND MAN

But fishing next to her isn't morbid?

THIRD MAN

It really is sick what we're doing.

FIRST MAN

Drink some more, you'll find it less sick.

HER HUSBAND

We can say it was shock.

SECOND MAN

What?

HER HUSBAND

If the police ask why we didn't head straight back. Shock. To see a body, dead, in the water. A corpse. And nobody really knew how to react.

FIRST MAN

We should probably have some sort of a plan.

THIRD MAN

No plan, we tell it as it happened.

HER HUSBAND

Yes. Exactly. A shock.

THIRD MAN

Are you in shock?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, I think I am. This is the first dead body I've seen in my life.

SECOND MAN

Same here.

THIRD MAN

Not here. I found my father.

FIRST MAN

I saw one by the motorway, on a stretcher. Bloody, a complete mess. Before they zipped up the bag.

SECOND MAN

You were driving on a motorway and had the time to see a body, completely fucked up, before they put it in a bag?

FIRST MAN

Yeah, there was bumper-to-bumper traffic.

THIRD MAN

I'll kill you with this Pagat, I swear.

SECOND MAN

I didn't even see it.

THIRD MAN

What did you say?

SECOND MAN

It's dark. I wasn't saving it, I just didn't see it.

THIRD MAN

I'll kill you.

FIRST MAN

Do we have more bottles?

HER HUSBAND

Two more.

SECOND MAN

One and one more for the road.

FIRST MAN

Ha ha ha.

THIRD MAN

We'll take down the camp tomorrow morning, and we'll call from the village, right?

SECOND MAN

Yeah, we catch a few more, have coffee and leave.

HER HUSBAND

Five difference.

**NOTE**

"They didn't look at the girl again before they left."

R. Carver

## INSTRUCTIONS

“Careful with the knees, stretch, stretch the knees. We’re kicking, faster, faster. Elbows, where are they? Bend. Let’s go, kick, kick, kick. Lean your head on the arm when you inhale, don’t hit, gently. Let’s go, two strokes, inhale. Look to the side, look back at the arm, not up. Not at the ceiling, neck to the side! Keep kicking, power, go, go, go. Blow bubbles into the water, inhale to the side. One, two, inhale. Lean, lean you head, exactly like that, yes. Let’s do some more, look out for your knees and elbows.

## COMMENTARY

### THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My mother often said that she had more luck than talent. At the very same time when she got those few positive reviews, the Writers’ Association was changing its board. They wanted a completely new face, someone young, with a different approach. She ran for the Association’s president and won. Overnight, she became extremely busy, swimsuits were replaced by shirts, and she started to bring work home. She managed a creative team of nine people. But the biggest difference was actually that she started to enjoy her work and the responsibility it brought, immensely. When she and my father found themselves in the same room, they, for the most part, either argued or ignored each other. My father still claimed that he was immensely proud of her. At the same time, he kept reminding her all the time, that she’s not alone in the world.

Point two on her “*key*” list: cheating. Morning, a few months before the event.

### HER HUSBAND

Is there someone else?

### SHE

Come on.

### HER HUSBAND

Answer, please.

### SHE

No. No, there is not. Although I would want there to be one, so much, at this moment.

### HER HUSBAND

Excuse me?

SHE

It would be easier, no? Because then I wouldn't have to think about what isn't working here and how to fix it, but only about how I deserve something better to wait for me on the other side.

HER HUSBAND

Something better?

SHE

You know what I mean. Something different.

HER HUSBAND

You said better.

SHE

But I meant different.

HER HUSBAND

Right. And?

SHE

And what?

HER HUSBAND

What's your conclusion? Do you deserve something *different*?

SHE

I don't know. Honestly, I don't know.

HER HUSBAND

Just don't do anything stupid.

SHE

Stupid how?

HER HUSBAND

You know.

SHE

No, I don't know. Please, tell me.

HER HUSBAND

You've changed.

SHE

Isn't that kind of the point? The point of time passing? That you change.

HER HUSBAND

Aren't you satisfied with what we have?

SHE

That's not what this is about.

HER HUSBAND

Then what is it about? Or, can I guess?

SHE

Well, go ahead.

HER HUSBAND

You actually think that you're better than me.

SHE

No, I really don't.

HER HUSBAND

No? Ever since you've felt you've made it?

SHE

With writing?

HER HUSBAND

Yes.

SHE

But, isn't that a good thing? That I succeeded in something? I don't get it. Aren't you my biggest fan and happy for me the most?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, but I didn't know it would change you this much.

SHE

It hasn't. It's just your attitude towards me that has changed.

HER HUSBAND

Oh, really. Then why do you have a feeling that you can do whatever you want?

SHE

What? I can do whatever I want.

HER HUSBAND

You know what I mean by that.

SHE

No, no I don't. Explain. Are there things that you won't let me do?

HER HUSBAND

Actually, yes.

SHE

Really?

HER HUSBAND

Yes.

SHE

For example?

HER HUSBAND

Fuck other people.

SHE

And that's really the only thing that worries you? Wouldn't that be the smallest possible problem? If it was just about me hooking up with someone else?

HER HUSBAND

So you are hooking up with someone else?

SHE

You're not normal.

HER HUSBAND

No, you're not normal. Listen to me: you're not going to destroy this family. Do you hear me?

SHE

Don't talk to me like that.

HER HUSBAND

Oh, but I will. You're not going to make decisions about my family.

SHE

Our family.

HER HUSBAND

Exactly. Our family. It won't be anyone else's, no matter how well he fucks you.

THE ACTRESS WHO PLAYS HER DAUGHTER

That night, he took her computer. He went through all her emails, her messages, her contacts, photos, everything. And he printed out everything he found a little, but really even a little objectionable and put it on her desk. They never talked about it.

**NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

**SOUND RECORDING**

*Her voice on the recording. She, narrating to her daughter..*

- After Eros, the god of love, meddled in his love life, Apollo fell head over heels in love with a nymph named Daphne. Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus, loved freedom and the wilderness of the forests and thus promised she would remain unmarried forever. But Apollo, heedlessly in love and overflowing with passion, started to stalk her relentlessly, declaring his love and pleading and blackmailing her to reciprocate. Daphne, who was ready to fight for her future but was increasingly afraid of Apollo's obsession, had to flee. When he came so close to her that he almost caught her and possessed her, she, desperate, asked her father for help, and he, to save her, transformed her into a laurel tree. Her arms became branches, her skin bark, her hair leaves. The moment Apollo caught her, he was holding a tree.

**COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

After her mother passed, my mother went for a breast check-up every six months. The second point on her "???" list is her consultation with the doctor who substituted for her regular doctor. Naked from the waist up, she's sitting on the examining table.

DOCTOR (*begins the examination*)

Have you noticed any changes lately?

SHE

No, nothing special.

DOCTOR

How many children do you have?

SHE

One. A five-year-old.

DOCTOR

Did you breastfeed?

SHE

Yes, ten months.

DOCTOR

It's a pity that women have so few children nowadays. Mostly just careers. Well, it's not too late yet. Maybe you decide to have another one, right?

SHE

Yes, maybe, yes.

DOCTOR

A son or a daughter?

SHE

A daughter.

DOCTOR

If she looks like you, lucky boys. Lean your arm against me.

SHE

It's okay, I'll hold it up in the air.

DOCTOR

No fear, we're friends, I've seen you almost naked, haha. Are my hands cold?

SHE

No, it's okay.

DOCTOR

Good thing that breasts are not like penises, right, and don't shrink when it's cold. Haha, I apologise, I just say it like I see it, directly, I hope you don't mind.

SHE

No, no.

DOCTOR

I can't feel anything unusual. I'll feel around some more, just in case. More is more in this case, they say, right? (*Feels her breasts for a long time, passes them several times. It's becoming more and more awkward.*) Nothing, it all looks fine. (*He puts his hand on her hip and leaves it there.*) You can stop worrying. It all looks great. You have beautiful and healthy breasts. Get an appointment with the nurse in six months. (*He pats her a little and moves away.*) I look forward to meeting you again. And good luck.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The doctor leaves the room. My mother remains seated on the examination table. Her body is still naked from the waist up, she breathes deeply. She doesn't move for a long time.

**SCENE ELEVEN**

*He enters the front door, she's by the kitchen counter.*

HER HUSBAND

You're home already?

SHE

Yes, yes. You didn't go to work?

HER HUSBAND

No. I took a day off. In case they call me again. You?

SHE

It's weird. It's all weird. Other mothers at the kindergarten practically didn't look me in the eyes. They were just murmuring something. Same at work. As if I didn't exist.

HER HUSBAND

Well, that's what I'm trying to tell you! People will always form their own opinion, half of them think that we did it. That's why we have to stick together. Do you understand me? That's why we need to be a team, and you have to believe me that I did the best I could. Alright?

SHE

Mhm.

HER HUSBAND

You know what would help us right now? (*approaches her and kisses her neck.*)

SHE

Sorry, but no. There's so much going on. I'm just not in the mood.

HER HUSBAND

You haven't been in the mood for a really long time.

SHE

Oh, please. Not this, too.

HER HUSBAND

Sure, fine.

SHE

Come on, let's go out. For a drive, out of town.

HER HUSBAND

Fine. Deal.

SHE

Come on, let's take my car. I feel like driving.

HER HUSBAND

Yeah, good idea. Shall we take whiskey, too? Indulge a little. It'll be alright.

**NOTE**

On 28 March, Virginia Woolf filled her coat pockets with rocks and marched into the river Ouse near her home in Sussex. She left a letter at home for her husband Leonard Woolf, which said: "I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been." Her body was found several weeks later.

**COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

You have to understand something, my parents' love story is not a fateful love story. That night, when they met at the karaoke bar, both slightly tipsy, by pure coincidence they selected the same song. What is actually interesting is that it was a relatively unknown song and, above all, it was a duet. But when they sang it, at around three in the morning, their "happily ever after" didn't begin. Far from it. That night they shared a drunken hook-up, as befits *twentysomethings*, and then didn't see each other for a long time. Over the next couple of years, they ran into each other at different events, but nothing. They were acquaintances, relatively fond of each other. And then, at some opening, six years after they first met at the karaoke, they started talking and went to the next event together. And then more and more events, and soon they became a couple. A very classical beginning of a relationship. But they were a match. And they always referred to that evening as if their meeting was fate. As if the scene in which they pick the same song, were the best scene from a Hollywood romance:

HER HUSBAND

That's bizarre, isn't it?

SHE

Somewhat, yeah.

HER HUSBAND

Would you prefer to sing it alone?

SHE

Well ... no. I mean, it is supposed to be for two. I just didn't expect anyone to even know it, let alone pick it.

HER HUSBAND

Yeah, same. Do you listen to this music?

SHE

Mhm, kind of. Diana Ross is kind of my people. You?

HER HUSBAND

Yeah, this period is to my liking.

SHE

Do you want to sing it alone, by the way?

HER HUSBAND

No, no. It just seems like a crazy coincidence.

SHE

Yeah. Well ... I guess it was meant to be.

HER HUSBAND

Oh, you're that girl?

SHE

What girl?

HER HUSBAND

The one who believes everything happens for a reason.

SHE

Oof, no, far from it. It's just that every action has a consequence. Honestly, I'm kind of a shit singer.

HER HUSBAND

Same.

SHE

See? It is fated. Fated that we offer these people in the middle of the night a truly crap duet.

HER HUSBAND

Very much in favour of it.

SHE

Cool.

HER HUSBAND

Will you be singing the female vocal?

SHE

Am... Yes, that would kind of be logical, no? I mean, I can sing both.

HER HUSBAND

Whatever you prefer.

SHE

Yes, yes, I'll take Diana. Queen.

HER HUSBAND

Princess! Fuck, what, whatever, I'm sorry.

SHE

Pretty bad, yes. Are you nervous?

HER HUSBAND

Yes. But not about the song. About you.

SHE

Why?

HER HUSBAND

I like you. And you have a sense of humour and a good taste in music.

SHE

Okay, calm down. Ready? *(To the technician.)* Okay, we're ready!

*(The karaoke scene, with the exact amount of the romance overdose that we imagine. It ends with crazy, fatal infatuation.)*

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY THE DAUGHTER

What defines a story as romantic? Its beginning or its ending?

## **SCENE TWELVE**

*Her husband at the police station.*

HER HUSBAND

From the top of my head, I don't know. Five years, I guess ... Yes, let's say five years. Since we've had children, I believe.

POLICIST

Always the same dates?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, the weekend and a couple of days before the May break. It's already warm, tons of fish, but no tourists yet.

POLICIST

Always the same group?

HER HUSBAND

Yes. But I've told you a hundred times ... The four of us, always, unless something comes up. If someone gets sick, or something with the children, work, I don't know, if something comes up. Why does that matter?

POLICIST

A human being has died, sir. Everything matters at this moment.

HER HUSBAND

Okay, fine.

POLICIST

And otherwise, you're friends?

HER HUSBAND

Who?

POLICIST

The four of you?

HER HUSBAND

If we're friends? My god, I can't believe what we're talking about.

POLICIST

Please, answer.

HER HUSBAND

Yes, we are. We are. We're friends. Very good friends. We met at the uni. We drank and partied through a lot and now we get together for family parties and this one week a year. Life, that's how it is.

POLICIST

Are you faithful?

HER HUSBAND

Excuse me?

POLICIST

Would you say you're faithful as friends?

HER HUSBAND

To whom?

POLICIST

Each other.

HER HUSBAND

I don't understand the question.

POLICIST

If something happened that would put any one of you in trouble or danger, would you stick with each other?

HER HUSBAND

I'm not going to answer that. None of us hurt her, do you understand me? We don't know who this woman is. We found her. What the fuck is actually going on here? Shouldn't you be looking for the person who did this to her?

POLICIST

And as husbands?

HER HUSBAND

What?

POLICIST

As husbands, are you faithful?

HER HUSBAND

Fuck off.

**NOTE**

French poet Paul Celan and Austrian novelist Ingeborg Bachmann had one of the most complex and intense love relationships that the literary world knows. Bachman describes their relationship in all its cruelty, beauty and pain in detail in her novel *Malina*. On 20 April 1970, at the age of forty-nine, Celan dies by suicide – he jumped into the Seine and drowned. Upon his death, Bachman writes: "It's not you that I've lost / but the world."

## INSTRUCTIONS

“Look up, look at the lights. Nothing will happen; the water is supporting you. Like that, hips high, lift your butt. Arms stretched out, knees stretched out. Knees lower, they shouldn’t stick out. Kick stronger, more, make some foam. Breathe, nose is outside all the time. And knees in, I don’t want to see them, under the water, like this, yes. Up, up, don’t drop your chin to the chest, stretch your neck, otherwise water will get into your nose. Like that, arms stretched, powerful, like that, yes.”

## SCENE THIRTEEN

*She and her husband, sitting by the pond.*

SHE

Couldn’t you come fish here?

HER HUSBAND

Come on. You know they don’t bite here. At least not edible fish.

SHE

The kindergarten teacher said she doesn’t want to play with others. That she plays alone all the time.

HER HUSBAND

A phase.

SHE

Not everything with a child is a phase.

HER HUSBAND

But you know she’s sociable. She has so much going on. She still isn’t fully used to the new group.

SHE

It’s been six months.

HER HUSBAND

She likes her quiet. You like your quiet sometimes, don’t you?

SHE

Did you touch her?

HER HUSBAND

What?

SHE

The woman in the water? Did you touch her?

HER HUSBAND

Will you stop? Haven't we agreed to drop this?

SHE

Yes, sorry.

HER HUSBAND

Do you want a sip?

SHE

I can't, I'm driving.

HER HUSBAND

We could go to the seaside? For a long weekend? We take an extra day off and we take her from the kindergarten? It's not warm enough to swim, but it might still be nice?

SHE

How about going far from any body of water altogether?

HER HUSBAND (*laughs*)

Yes, I guess you're right. Listen, I know this hasn't been easy for you, either. But it will calm down in a couple of days.

It'll pass. They'll find the man who is responsible and everything will be as it was before.

SHE

At first, everyone claims they didn't do it.

HER HUSBAND

What?

SHE

When you watch documentaries about these guys, the murderers, they all say they aren't guilty at first. Many report the murder so as not to look suspicious.

HER HUSBAND

This is pointless. I'm trying, I'm really trying. But you have clearly made up your mind and I've no chance. Come on, let's go home.

SHE

I'll stay here for a bit.

HER HUSBAND

No, let's go.

SHE

You take the car and I'll get the bus home.

HER HUSBAND

Stop fucking about, what is the matter with you?

SHE

Nothing, just –

HER HUSBAND

Have you ever thought of [REDACTED]? You have a child, do you hear me? A family! You're not alone, with your fucking stories and delusions. You've spun god knows what in that imagination of yours. You've completely lost touch with reality. You only think of yourself, damn, you don't care if you break up your family, if you break your daughter –

*(She slaps him, hard. Is startled by herself. He looks at her. As if he wanted to pounce and return the blow, but then he calms down.)*

HER HUSBAND *(very calmly)*

Let's go.

SHE

No.

HER HUSBAND (*suddenly starts crying*)

I'm sorry. Sorry for everything. I don't know how we ended up here, what's happened to us. I swear I had nothing to do with all this. All I want is for us to find each other again. That we can somehow start anew. Just tell me, what can I do? What can I do, anything!

SHE (*look at him for a long time, in silence*)

It's always a family member anyway.

HER HUSBAND

What?

SHE

Well ... In almost all cases, it's a partner or a lover or a father or a son or a brother or a husband. Why would you do anything to an unknown woman? I know. But ... Too much has piled up. I can hardly breathe.

HER HUSBAND

What are you trying to say?

SHE

I don't know. Let's go.

## **COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

My lists are unfinished. And they look like this:

Point one: In what ways do I take after my father:

Smile, eyes, hand gesticulation, taste in films, no eating while walking, sleeping while watching TV, I eat preserves with a spoon, the way I prop up my head when I drive, drinking coffee after dinner, ashamed to dance, eager to please, ambitiousness, fear of bats, the way I fold the edges of a book, the ability to –

Point two, in what ways do I take after my mother:

Chin and ears, the timbre of the voice, I keep losing my phone, my brow gets sweaty, smile, a taste in books, the way I scratch behind my ears when I'm nervous, love for Japanese food, love for the sea, for swimming,

musical ear, a feel for words, patience, insomnia, public appearance anxiety, commitment to –

*The actress who will play her daughter stares at the dish rack and says: It has to be in order.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

What order?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Like Mom used to put it.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I don't understand.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: So that it makes sense and that everything dries well. First, the cutlery. Forks together, spoons and knives. Then the glasses. Upside down. Then the plates. And the pots over them. Do you get it?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I get it.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No, you don't get it, if you got it, you wouldn't be putting them your way.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Does it really matter that much?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes, it does matter. It does. I'll do it myself.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I'll help you, come on.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No, I've told you I'd do it myself.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You can't reach it.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I said, go away. (She tries to push her away and knocks over a glass that falls on the floor and breaks.) See what you've done now!*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

It's nothing, it's just a glass. We'll clean it up.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I want to go home.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Yes, I understand.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I want to go home. I don't want to be here anymore. May I?*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You may.

#### **IMAGE FIVE**

*She and her husband, we hear You Keep Me Hanging On by Vanilla Fudge play really loudly. Although we cannot discern the words, it is clear that they're upset, but their argument includes more and more pauses. As if they were a bit fed up with the same fight over and over.*

#### **SCENE FOURTEEN**

*Her husband at the police station.*

HER HUSBAND

I don't understand what you want from me. I've told you everything, and not just you, the twenty police officers before and after you. We haven't done anything wrong. We called you straight away. These interrogations have been going on for a week now, don't you have some actual suspect you could debate that with?

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Not straight away.

HER HUSBAND

What?

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

You didn't call us straight away.

HER HUSBAND

As soon as we got the reception back.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

After three days.

HER HUSBAND

No, after two nights. Because a storm was forming and because we were in shock. We didn't know what to do.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Who saw her first?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, I don't remember.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Was it you?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, it's possible.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Possible? Surely that's something you'd remember, isn't it?

HER HUSBAND

Look, we were all so upset, it was all so abnormal. I've told you the same thing so many times that I've mixed it all up, it all seems like a single long day. So yes, it's possible. It's possible that I saw her first when I went to piss in the river, yes.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Tell me again, who was with you? And what were you doing there?

HER HUSBAND

I've told you a hundred times.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Then it won't be a problem for you to repeat it once more.

HER HUSBAND

I've had it with you. I haven't done anything wrong.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

You say that a lot.

HER HUSBAND

Because it's true.

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

Or because you're trying to convince yourself it's true?

HER HUSBAND

This is pointless. Can you call my lawyer, please?

WOMAN POLICE OFFICER

What do you need a lawyer for?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, you tell me.

**NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

#### **NOTE**

*Ophelia, running on the beach*

“They bore him barefac'd on the bier

(Hey non nony, nony, hey nony)

And in his grave rain'd many a tear. Fare you well, my dove! [...]

You must sing 'A-down a-down, and you call him a-down-a.' O, how the wheel becomes it! [...]

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, that's for

thoughts. [...] There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me. We may

call it herb of grace o' Sundays. O, you must wear your rue with a difference! There's a daisy. I would give

you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father

died. They say he made a good end.”

W. Shakespeare, Hamlet. Act IV, Scene 5

#### **SCENE FIFTEEN**

*Her mother-in-law touches her. She lifts her head from the pool, barely manages to catch her breath.*

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Are you okay?

SHE

Yes, yes.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You really scared me. I understand it's not a deep pool, but you can't just stay under for such a long time. I

thought you'd drowned in my front yard.

SHE

Everything's fine, I was just ... thinking.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You were thinking in the water?

SHE

Yes ... Yes. I'm sorry if I scared you.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Is everything okay?

SHE

Yes. I said it was.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

No, that's not what I mean ... Are you okay? Are you two okay?

SHE

What?

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

At home, is everything okay?

SHE

Yes. It's nothing. Don't worry. Where's [REDACTED]?

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Inside. She's watching cartoons.

SHE

Great. I'll just change and we'll be off.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You can stay for dinner.

SHE

No, no. We're going home. Thanks for your help.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Of course, anytime.

### **SOUND RECORDING**

*Her voice on the recording. She, narrating to her daughter.*

- Menelaos, the king of Sparta, was married to Helen, who was considered to be the most beautiful woman in the world. But it was her love that the goddess Aphrodite had promised to the Trojan prince Paris if he bestowed her with the title of the most beautiful among goddesses. When Paris arrives in Sparta, he falls deeply in love with Helen and convinces her to flee with him to Troy. This event triggered one of the greatest wars in Greek history, as Menelaos, together with his brother Agammemnon, the king of Mycenae, attacked Troy. The Trojan war lasted ten years, and killed thousands and thousands of soldiers. Troy finally defeated, Menelaos repossesses Helen and takes her home. Some interpretations state that the only reason he didn't have her killed was to force her to prove to him every day that she loved him and not Paris and that she had made a mistake that could not be made right.

### **COMMENTARY**

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

And then there's point three on the "key" list. When she writes it down, Mom has the feeling that she finally understands what is going on. And what is the only thing she has left.

Point three: *Sleeping*. A couple of days before the event.

SHE

Why are you sleeping there?

HER HUSBAND

Why are you sleeping on the couch?

SHE

That's not the same conversation.

HER HUSBAND

Isn't it, though?

SHE

No, it really isn't. My sleeping on the couch is related to me and our relationship. Our marriage. You sleeping on the floor in our daughter's bedroom, I'm not entirely sure what that relates to.

HER HUSBAND

We're guarding her.

SHE

From what? From who?

HER HUSBAND

From you.

SHE

From me?

HER HUSBAND

Yes, in a way.

SHE

In what way? Please, explain what is the thing about me that you should protect my daughter from?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know what's going on with you. This sleeping in the living room, in the afternoon you go to the playground and you don't tell where you are. You go to my mother's and you they there until dark. Even she called me that she's worried about you being completely in your own world. You don't even talk to me, you don't take my calls. As if I'm not there. I actually want to protect her from you doing something stupid.

SHE

Something like what?

HER HUSBAND

Something like going somewhere without telling me.

SHE

You mean running away?

HER HUSBAND

For example.

SHE

Aha. You're afraid that at night, while you're asleep, I would take our daughter and run away with her?

HER HUSBAND

Yes.

SHE

Where would we go?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, you're the one who's been unpredictable lately.

SHE

Fine. There's no point.

HER HUSBAND

No, there really isn't.

SHE

Do we have a reason to run away?

HER HUSBAND

I don't know, I have no idea.

SHE

No, I'm the one asking you now. Am I supposed to be afraid of something?

HER HUSBAND

Of course not. I'm just saying: please watch what you're doing.

## **NOTE**

If possible, we begin mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing while still in water, as soon as we feel the ground. As soon as the drowning victim is on dry land, they should be undressed to the waist. In any case, we undo their collar and loosen the belt. If we notice obstructions in the victim's upper respiratory tract, we quickly remove mud, sand or algae from their nose, mouth and throat. We lay the drowning victim on their back to release the airways and immediately begin mouth-to-mouth rescue breaths for adults, or mouth-to-nose-and-mouth resuscitation for children. If the heart doesn't start beating and the victim does not begin to breathe independently, the resuscitation must continue with rescue breaths and chest compressions. We begin by administering five rescue breaths followed by a combination of chest compressions and rescue breaths in the ratio of 30:2. After one minute of resuscitation, we call 112 and continue chest compressions and artificial respiration. We continue resuscitation until the victim shows signs of life or the EMS team arrives. A victim who has regained consciousness should be dressed or wrapped in dry clothes or a blanket, because they have lost a lot of body heat. We keep a close eye on them until the medical professionals take over. (Adapted from [policija.si](http://policija.si))

## **SCENE SIXTEEN**

*She, in a clothes shop.*

SHE

Hi, excuse me, do you have this one in black?

SALES ASSISTANT

I can go check. What size?

SHE

Forty, thereabouts.

SALES ASSISTANT

Let me check, one second.

SHE

Thank you.

SALES ASSISTANT

Sorry, we don't, there's either beige or grey.

SHE

Okay, thanks.

SALES ASSISTANT

Is there anything else I can help you with?

SHE

Do you have time?

SALES ASSISTANT

Yes, of course, it's a very slow day today.

SHE

In that case, I'd need something similar to this one, but in black?

SALES ASSISTANT (*scans the hangers*)

Hm... Let's have a look, something like that perhaps?

SHE

No, it's too revealing. Perhaps a bit more ... discreet?

SALES ASSISTANT

What's the occasion, if you don't mind me asking?

SHE

Yes, of course. It's for a funeral.

SALES ASSISTANT

Oh, I'm sorry. My condolences.

SHE

It's okay. I didn't really know her. I don't even know if I'll attend the funeral. I'll just sign the condolence book. She was young. And I feel sorry.

SALES ASSISTANT

Of course. *(lifts a dress.)* How about something like this?

SHE

Yes, maybe, is these two pieces?

SALES ASSISTANT

Yes, but worn together.

SHE

I'll try it. *(they both look forward.)* She was killed, you know. Someone killed her. That makes it ... different. It's weird. I'd never known anyone who died like that before. Well, I didn't know her, either. Have you ever known anyone who was murdered?

SALES ASSISTANT

No. I mean, killed, yes, but not on purpose.

SHE

Yes ... Well, it's not sure here, either. They don't know who did it. Not yet. But I doubt it was an accident. Well, even if it was, if nobody confessed to this day, that's telling in itself.

SALES ASSISTANT *(lifts a black suit)*

Something like that?

SHE

No, that's too tight. Or they do have him already, but it's not yet known. They don't want to tell. Anything's possible.

SALES ASSISTANT

Yes... *(holding a simple black dress in her hands)* Would you try this one as well?

SHE

Yes, this one is beautiful. Can I ask you something?

SALES ASSISTANT

Of course.

*(On this spot, Carver uses dialogue that is impossible to write in any other way. Or a better way. So here, I am copying them almost verbatim.)*

SHE

“Did you ever wish you were somebody else, or just nobody, nothing, nothing at all?”

SALES ASSISTANT

I can't say I've ever felt that, no.

SHE

Why is that?

SALES ASSISTANT

If I was somebody else I'd be afraid I might not like who I was.”

SHE

Good answer.

SALES ASSISTANT

You think?

SHE

Mhm.

SALES ASSISTANT

Try this one, too, I think it'll suit you nicely.

SHE

Thank you. I apologize. For having ... For having attacked you like this with my ... Ideas.

SALES ASSISTANT

It's alright, don't worry.

SHE

I'll go try it on. I beg your pardon, one more thing ... What if you liked yourself more?

SALES ASSISTANT

Excuse me?

SHE

If you were somebody else ... What if you liked yourself more than you do now?

SALES ASSISTANT

I don't know. I guess it's a risk.

SHE

Yes. Yes, of course.

SALES ASSISTANT

No problem. If you need anything, call me.

## NOTE

Three contemporary interpretations / reimaginings of the story about the Water Man:

1. A thriller or a crime story: a man kills women by drowning them in the Ljubljana River. In the end, it is revealed that he is a man, a "righteous one" who feels called to decide which woman seems sexually promiscuous to him. If he can seduce her, she is too available, so he kills her. The case is resolved once it becomes apparent that all the murders have a link to the Water Man (which becomes his alias in the media): he finds his victims, for example, in the Water Man Bar, the Urška Café, the Prešeren Tavern etc.
2. A similar genre: A woman moves abroad, falls madly in love and gets married. Then she returns to Slovenia with her husband, who realises that she had a lot of sexual history before him, that she enjoyed sex. He becomes obsessively jealous and, in the end, strangles her by the Ljubljana, on the spot where she had a lot of fun with men as a young woman.

(The Water Man, in short, is in both cases someone who punishes women's pleasure, freedom, sexuality.)

3. A weird mix between a fairy tale and a love story, like *Shape of Water*, the opposite of *The Little Mermaid*:

a man who lives in the Ljubljana River, a half-water creature, falls in love with a woman who plays by the water every day with her child. He sells his sight to a huda so that he can assume human shape. He is washed ashore as a blind man, and he slowly searches for this woman. He becomes a guide to the Ljubljana, he finally finds her and they fall in love, but she decides against leaving her husband and child. The man finds love with a tour guide who is by his side from the start, but he is out of his element on land, so he returns to the Ljubljana by suicide.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER**

The third situation that finds itself on the “???” list is set in a bar, a watering hole, on a parking lot overlooking the church where people are gathering. She, sitting at the table, alone. Dressed in a black two-piece suit, staring into the void.

GUEST

May I join you?

SHE

No need, thanks.

GUEST

Everything alright?

SHE

All good, yes.

GUEST

Sure?

SHE

Yes, just a little headache.

GUEST

You know what they say the best cure for a headache is.

*(She smiles, pulls out her phone. He sits down at her table.)*

What are you drinking?

SHE

Whiskey.

GUEST

A bit early, isn't it? No wonder your head hurts.

SHE

I'm sorry, I'm really not ... If I may, please.

GUEST

Yes, of course, you looked lonely, so I ... You know.

SHE

Mhm. Thanks.

GUEST

Are you from around here?

*(she shakes her head.)*

What's so interesting on this phone?

SHE

You know what, I should be calling someone.

GUEST

Of course, go ahead.

SHE

Can you please –

GUEST

It's not like I want anything from you.

SHE

Fine. (*downs her drink and gets up to pay.*)

GUEST (*grabs her hand.*)

Hey, no need to get all worked up, calm down, all I wanted was to talk –

SHE

Please, do not touch me.

GUEST

Oof, sensitive, are we? Come on, I'll buy you another whiskey, drink it in peace.

SHE *whispers*

Fuck off.

GUEST

What?

SHE

Fuck off. Fuck off. FUCK OFF! Get the fuck away from me. Leave me alone, please.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Mom stands perfectly still. Any time before, she would have probably run out, quickly, just so she could hide, but not this time. She stands still, stares at the man in front of her until he becomes uncomfortable and leaves first.

**NOTE**

"I want to smother," I say. "I'm smothering, can't you see?"

R. Carver

**IMAGE SIX**

*She and her husband, sitting, silently, looking in opposite directions because they have nothing to say to each other anymore. We hear Try A Little Tenderness by Otis Redding playing very loudly.*

**Scene seventeen**

*She, sitting at the table, a bouquet in hands. Her mother-in-law opposite her.*

SHE

Thank you.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You know, anytime. Are you leaving?

SHE

We're leaving. Was it okay?

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Everything okay.

SHE

Super.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Do you want some coffee?

SHE

No. Or yes. Yes, please. Thanks.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW *(looks at the flowers, smiling)*

Are these for me?

SHE *(laughs.)*

No. Sorry.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Pity. Are these daisies?

SHE

Yes, and violets.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW *(after a long silence.)*

Very well, then, I will ask you: who are they for?

SHE

For a ... For a funeral.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Oh, I'm sorry.

SHE

No, it's ... just ...

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Whose funeral? Anyone I know?

SHE

No. Of that woman. The one XXXX found in water.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

You went to her funeral?

SHE

Yes. I mean, I wanted to go sign her book.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Why?

SHE

I don't know. It felt like I owed her as much. I don't know. But it doesn't matter ... I ended up not going anyways.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Not going?

SHE

No. I brought [REDACTED] to yours, got dressed in black, picked up the bouquet, drove for two hours, had a whiskey in front of the church, stood at the door, watching people going in and ... I couldn't. Suddenly, it seemed unfair that I was there. There were children, parents. All broken ... All grieving and I was doing what, exactly? Putting myself out there? So I went back to the car.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I understand. Do you need anything?

SHE

Why?

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

Just asking.

SHE

No. (*stays silent for a while.*) But do you know what the truth is? That I didn't dare enter. I didn't dare, because I was afraid I'd see myself in that coffin. I swear. I had this feeling that I'd get inside and everybody would be there, everyone I know, all of you, tight, and I'd be there, dead. That's how I feel. I don't understand anything anymore. Something ... Something broke. That's it, yes, something snapped and I no longer know how to proceed. I can't put it back together and go on. And nobody cares. Everybody pretends that it's nothing, that time will pass and everything will be like it always was, but no. Some things happen and then everything is, in fact, different.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

I know.

SHE

I don't know why I'm telling you this. I'm sorry.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

It's okay.

## **SOUND RECORDING**

*Her voice on the recording. She, narrating to her daughter..*

- Theseus, the prince of Athens, was one of the Athenians who were sent to Crete every seven years, where Minos was the King, to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. Minotaur was a monster, half-man, half-bull, who lived in a labyrinth from which nobody who entered it returned alive. But when Ariadna, Minos's daughter, laid eyes on Theseus, she fell in love with him and promised she would make sure he survived the test. In return, he promised to take her home to Athens as his bride.

Ariadne gave him the sword with which he'd kill the Minotaur, but more crucially, she gave him a ball of thread with which he would find the way out of the labyrinth. And Theseus did kill the Minotaur, saved himself from the labyrinth and took Ariadne with him. But on the voyage home, something unexpected happens, he learns about her unbelievable power, courage and intelligence that scare him. Worried that she might take his power or in any way threaten his power in his homeland, he leaves her on the island of Naxos and never looks back.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER**

There's a single photo left from that first night, when they met at the karaoke bar. An extremely overexposed Polaroid, with my mother in a red dress, laughing, and somewhere in the background, a tiny black dot that is supposedly my Dad's head. The photo, taken before they sang together. Fate.

Ever since I can remember, that photo used to hang in the living room, in a brown frame. When things started to get complicated, I took it. Nobody said anything. They didn't notice. I used to hide it under my pillow. Then one night, I lay awkwardly on it, broke the glass and cut myself on the shards. Mom was not angry, she just changed the sheets and threw the photo away, together with the shards and the frame. Father still didn't notice it was no longer hanging on the wall.

SHE

Why are you crying all the time?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I'm a child. I have a right to cry.*

SHE

Have you read this somewhere?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: What?*

SHE

That you have the right to cry?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why don't you ever cry?*

SHE

I do cry.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes, but not in front of me.*

SHE

No, not in front of you.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Why not in front of me?*

SHE

So that you don't worry.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Do you worry if I cry?*

SHE

Yes.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: But wouldn't you be more worried if I never cried?*

SHE

Probably, yes.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: See?*

SHE

You're a little too smart for a five-year-old, aren't you? What's going on? Are you okay?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Yes. Are you okay?*

SHE

You don't have to ask me that. You don't have to worry about me.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Okay.*

SHE

Do you want to go somewhere?

*The actress who will play her daughter says: No.*

SHE

Come on.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Where to?*

SHE

Ice-skating.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: Mom, it's summer.*

SHE

It doesn't matter.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't have skates.*

SHE

You don't need them.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: You do.*

SHE

No.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I don't have my beanie.*

SHE

You don't need one.

*The actress who will play her daughter says: I'll be cold.*

SHE

It's summer.

*The actress who will play her daughter starts to laugh. They laugh together. The daughter leans on her mother. They embrace.*

SHE

It passes. Whatever it is, it passes, I promise.

#### **SCENE EIGHTEEN**

*We hear the song I'm Gonna Make You Love Me, Diana Ross & The Temptations.*

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The scene that follows is the scene that marks point four on both of my mother's lists. Fourth, colon, two words: the end. That simple. The words are twice underlined. It happens a little bit before the event around which the entire drama revolves. Perhaps only a few moments before. Perhaps parallel.

That night, my Dad takes me to his mother, then he cleans the apartment, prepares dinner, puts on a suit and welcomes Mom by candlelight. When she comes, he plays the well-known music on the radio and asks her to dance.

*She and her husband dance. Embraced.*

SHE

I'm sorry.

HER HUSBAND

I know. Me too.

SHE

No, I think you don't understand. It's true ... Yes. I'm sorry.

HER HUSBAND

For what?

SHE

I feel like I don't even remember my life.

HER HUSBAND

What do you mean?

SHE

I mean, there comes a moment when you realize that it's too late. That you've waited, years of your life, you waited for something to happen. But you know what? In the meantime, it all happened. Everything. And nothing changed. Nothing is decisive anymore. Everything is permissible, we allow each other everything. Look at what we permitted to each other. What violence this thing that we're playing actually is? And through all of this, I've become some woman who is a consequence of decisions I don't remember making. Decisions that I am horrified to have made. And a cluster of compromises to which I did not consent. And I no longer want to be her.

HER HUSBAND

What do you want to say?

SHE

That I want to leave. That I want a divorce. That's what I want to say.

HER HUSBAND

No.

SHE

Okay. I can even understand why. But that's not your decision. It's mine. I don't know how to tell you, but everything that comes ... the future. There, I don't see you in it anymore. I'm there, XXXX is there with me and you're not.

HER HUSBAND

No, I've told you I won't let you. I've been telling you all the time.

SHE

Come on, please, let's talk rationally.

HER HUSBAND

Rationally? You've just told me you were leaving, that you'd take my child from me, and you want me to behave rationally?

SHE

I'm not taking anything from you.

HER HUSBAND

Really?

SHE

Look, this might be the ideal opportunity, timewise, I mean. You're going away with the boys for a couple of days, we can both think it over, get organized, and when you get back, tell XXXXX. And then we continue from there.

HER HUSBAND

I don't know how can I be any clearer, but no. You're not going to do this. We're not getting a divorce.

SHE

But why do you want to persist in this? We've not been able to have a conversation without getting into a fight in over a year, we're not sleeping together, we're avoiding each other, or ignoring. We really stopped liking each other. Can we stop this before we end up hating each other? I don't understand why we'd want to continue ...

HER HUSBAND

Because. Because that's what I've decided and we're taking this one till the end.

SHE

Okay, have it your way. My lawyer will call you. I'm sorry. I really am.

HER HUSBAND

Yes, I can see that. *(She moves away from him, goes to put on her shoes.)* I swear I'll make sure you never get to see your daughter again if you leave now.

## **NOTE**

*The phone is ringing. The phone stops ringing.*

*The phone is ringing endlessly, nobody picks up.*

## **SOUND RECORDING**

*She and her daughter on the recording.*

- Mom, please, just one more.
- No, please, enough.
- Only the one about Io and Zeus? Or Odysseus and Penelope? Please?
- No, this is unhealthy. You're five. Why can't we record, I don't know, Hansel and Gretel.
- Mommy, please.
- Or we could sing something. That would be nice. A song together. Not just these horrible stories. One is worse than the other.
- I don't want to sing.
- Okay, an interview. Hello, what is your name? Who are you?
- Mom, no, this is so uncomfortable.
- Okay, then what? Shall we play lists?
- Okay.
- Fine. Five things you're most excited about this year?
- The final night party at the kindergarten, holidays, birthday, beginning of school, a dog.
- A dog? Yes, that you will buy me a dog.
- Really? That we will buy you a dog?
- Yes, you'll see.
- Okay, I can't wait.
- You'll see. Your list!

- Go on!
- Five things that you can't wait to see?
- When?
- Forever!
- Oof. You, growing up. Your Dad when he's not cranky. Books to read. Books to write. And ... and potted plants.
- Potted plants?
- Yes, that's what I want to start doing. Growing house plants.
- Except my dog will eat them, do you know that?
- Do you know that you need to water plants once a week? But you need to take the dog out three times a day.
- You keep telling me I don't spend enough time in the open air.
- Do you have a retort for everything?
- Yes.
- Okay. Can we stop recording now?
- I think it's more likely that your plants will die than my dog.
- Stop, or I'll ... Turn that off.

**NOTE**

"So much water so close to home, why did he have to go miles away to fish?"

R. Carver

**SCENE NINETEEN**

*Mother and daughter sit at the kitchen table, looking at each other.*

SHE

Who is it going?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Good. Now it's good, yes.

SHE

And the girls?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Good, yes. Both healthy.

SHE

I've missed you.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I've missed you, too.

SHE

Can I see a photo?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Of the girls?

SHE

Yes.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Mhm.

SHE

They look like me.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

They don't.

SHE

When I was younger.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

They don't, they're a spitting image of their father.

SHE

I guess.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Isn't it funny that this is always our first response?

SHE

What?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

That whenever you see a child, in a photo or in person, everybody first comments on similarities. Or differences. As if it mattered. I mean, as if it told you anything about the child. My colleague's hands are identical to mine. The barista has the same eyes. So what? I mean ... Is that something we should want or fear? I don't get it.

SHE

Yeah.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I have a feeling that it never ends. So many people still tell me that I'm a copy of you.

SHE

Right, but that's also so that ... People try to get closer to you in this way, I think. That's all.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I guess. We're roughly the same age now, aren't we?

SHE

Roughly.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Do you ever think about what it would be like if things played out differently?

SHE

If I were somebody else?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Let's say so.

SHE

No. I might not like that someone (*they both smile*) I once read somewhere that when children are born, they look very much like their father for the first few months. That nature allegedly makes sure that the father bonds more easily with the baby when they see themselves in them. And, of course, that the evolution protected the mother from the outbursts of a father doubting that the child was his. That by design, everything about the baby reminds of the father, so that there's no doubt about paternity.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Apparently, this isn't true.

SHE

No?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

No. Apparently, the bonding with the child functions on completely different principles, the scent, the physical response, the voices. This is why sight develops later than hearing and the sense of smell, because it is secondary for the bonding process.

SHE

Interesting.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Yeah, I guess.

SHE

Can I ask you something?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Of course.

SHE

When did you figure out that I was the one?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Which one?

SHE

The one from Carver's story. That it's actually his wife, that it was she who was lying in that water and not some random woman?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER (*smiles*)

In the part where it says that they go to the river and you're looking at the book and find yourself there. In it. I know it by heart: "I look at the creek. I float toward the pond, eyes open, face down, staring at the rocks and moss on the creek bottom until I'm carried into the lake where I'm pushed by the breeze.

Nothing—

SHE (*takes over*)

"Nothing will be any different. We will go on and on and on and on. We will go on even now, as if nothing had happened."

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Yes. It's always like this.

SHE

What?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

As if nothing happened. Again and again. They're killing you with impunity, one or so every minute, and nothing changes. (*silence, it lasts for a while*) Had you ever thought before that he could do something like that?

SHE

No.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Do you think about why?

SHE

I used to.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

And?

SHE

Does it change anything if you know why?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Do you think he was gonna do it to me, too?

SHE

No. I think that, in his own way, he wanted to protect you. So he sent you to his mother, that's why he told her that he'd pick you up and that she should not, under any circumstances, take you back to the house.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Do you think he did it because of me?

SHE

What do you mean?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

To stop you from taking me?

SHE

I don't think that had anything to do with anyone but him.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Okay. I'm sorry.

SHE

For?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

For what happened to you.

SHE

I don't think that's your apology to make.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I know. But I think that it's true. That nothing else is decisive anymore. That nothing else can be done, we just no longer care. We somehow try to survive, find our own holes within all this violence we're living and flee as unhurt as possible.

SHE

Do you think it hasn't always been like that?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

No idea. I guess.

SHE

Now what?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

In fact, what I miss the most is your voice. This bonding. I think that for us, it went through the voice. Closing my eyes and hearing you, that's what I've missed the most. I could picture you, even your scent lingered, and touch, but the voice disappeared. That's why I obsessively listened to the cassette tapes.

SHE

What cassette tapes?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The myths of antiquity, do you remember?

SHE

Ah, of course, you were crazy about them.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Yes. I think they were the ones that taught me most about relationships.

SHE

That's kind of morbid.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Well, so is my life, isn't it?

SHE

At least you've kept your sense of humour.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

That I have done.

SHE

Is this the first text you've written?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Second. Or third. Besides those in college. Nothing worth mentioning.

SHE

Yet! Nothing worth mentioning yet!

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

We'll see.

SHE

Anything fun?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Not really.

SHE

Pity. Nobody writes comedy anymore.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

That is true. A disaster.

SHE

Well, it is.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I don't think that's the ultimate problem in the world right now, to be honest.

SHE

What is?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

The ultimate problem in the world?

SHE

Yeah.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

How much time do you have?

SHE

An eternity.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

When I dream about you, you always look like you did in the photo that was hung in the living room. Not like you were when you died. So, not like you look now, but a lot younger. Younger than I am now. I don't know why.

SHE

Me neither.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I thought about what happened a lot. And I have a theory. I think. It's not terribly developed, but it's something. Are you interested?

SHE

Always.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Do you know what all these guys have in common, in these classical myths? That they lead the game. As long as they have the feeling that they're the ones making decisions, it's all good. Up to that point, it's all wonderful. But once this feeling is shaken, when the feeling of control escapes them, they become somebody completely different. Because by you becoming something, they feel that they lost something. And in the end, that's all there is: the need to control. Jealousy doesn't anger them, nor envy, nor ... no, they get angry when they lose control. And the, well, then all the bets are off. I think they truly understand everything as a power relationship. Regardless of all the equality, no, to them, one is still stronger. One always controls. And there is no option, in no world, that it wouldn't be them. Then it's better that the world is not here. Yes. *(pause)* I think I should slowly go.

SHE

Yeah? You don't want another drink?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

No, I'm tired. It'll soon come to an end.

SHE

I understand. I'm always happy to see you.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

I know. Take care.

SHE

Hey ... do you remember who your favourite woman from classical mythology was?

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

When I was little?

SHE

Mhm.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

No. I'm sure it was a problematic one, Electra or something.

SHE

No. No, far from it. It was Cassandra. Speak the truth, even when no one believes you.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

So that in the end she was made a sex slave to a man who – in order to win the war of his ego – had his daughter killed, then killed innumerable people and finally brought her home to parade her in front of his wife, who in turn, slaughtered them both. A great moral.

SHE

Or not. According to some modern interpretations, Clytaemnestra let Cassandra go, once she revealed the future of womankind to her.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

No way? Like, she believed her?

SHE

Maybe.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

And? What is this truth?

SHE

You tell me.

THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Bye, Mom.

SHE

Bye.

## COMMENTARY

### THE ACTRESS WHO WILL PLAY HER DAUGHTER

Usually, in life, it is really about one moment. A second. The butterfly effect, one flutter of its wings. One decision creates a completely different future outcome.

My mother decided in the last moment that she'd sing *I'm Gonna Make You Love Me*. I don't know if she'd ever thought of where she'd end up if she put Diana Ross and her *Remember Me* on that piece of paper.

I spent most of my younger years thinking about what would happen if that woman in the story weren't my mother. If all these news articles in the papers didn't talk about my parents. If it were simply some story about some woman somewhere else, to whom something happened that had no influence on me. But that wasn't the case. When my father uttered the last sentence, he really meant it, and when my mother turned to leave, she did what he had promised to do. He didn't let her go. He grabbed her by the hair and slammed her head against the kitchen counter.

He repeated that twice more. She bled out right there, in the middle of the kitchen. Then, he called his friends, cancelled the fishing trip for the next couple of days, claiming he had learnt that the area was completely flooded due to strong downpours that year. He cleaned the kitchen, carried my mother to the car and drove there, to the exact location where they set up their camp every year. He parked where he always used to park and then carried her corpse to the pre-selected spot. He put up his tent and sat by the water for two days. He washed my mother in the water and tied her. Nobody has any idea why he took her there and what he was doing there. His phone was unreachable, because there's no reception there. When she was unable to reach him by phone for a full day, my grandmother went to the house, and when she found nobody there, she called the police. Then she started calling my mother. He left Mom's phone in the car and I think it was ringing non-stop until the battery went flat. This is actually the only clear picture I still have from that time: Grandma, on the phone, calling and calling, and nobody picks up.

And then, at some point, after two nights, Dad decided that that was it. He went to the car, called the police himself and turned himself in. He confessed everything, told it exactly as it happened.

There's no story that I didn't try to spin to convince myself that this was a story of someone else. This Carver's story comes the closest. But truth always catches up with me.

My grandmother, my father's mother, died a couple of months before I had my first daughter. And when she was in hospital, very close to the end, she asked me if I could bring her a single thing from the house, a big dark green box from her bedroom. When she opened it, it contained a list. A list of six hundred and eighty-two men. From this country alone. Men, who killed their wives. Everything she found on the internet, in newspapers, in archives, everything, collected, catalogued, organised. That was her list.

She said she was doing it to figure out why he did that. She wanted to find a concrete explanation on the case of my father, her own son. What are these collective anomalies, experiences, traits, anything that

would connect them, that would explain what he did. But the more cases she discovered, she said, the clearer it became that he wasn't an exception. Far from it. That he was simply one of, a statistic, almost something normal, a man who killed his wife.

And then she added: "I know you think a lot about it, but no. No worries. You're not even remotely like him."

The actress who will play her daughter will fall silent for a moment. As if she might want to say something else, but she will change her mind. This is the final monologue in the text. The author of the text thinks it would be great if it weren't also the final scene of the production.

She suggests She, her mother, sings the number she wanted to do that night at karaoke before she changed her mind at the last second.

Maybe.

It's up to the creators of the production to decide.

#### FINAL IMAGE

Mom sings *Remember Me* by Diana Ross at the top of her lungs. Her daughter and her mother-in-law can join her.