

Chickenshit

von

Gabriel Barylli

Textbuch
englisch

Chickenshit

von

Gabriel Barylli

Textbuch
englisch

Alle Rechte vorbehalten
Unverkäufliches Manuskript
Das Aufführungsrecht ist allein zu erwerben vom Verlag

gallissas
theaterverlag und mediaagentur gmbh

Bitte beachten Sie folgende Hinweise: Dieses Buch darf weder verkauft, verliehen, vervielfältigt, noch in anderer Form weitergeleitet werden. Alle Rechte, insbesondere die der Übersetzung, Verfilmung und Übertragung durch Rundfunk, Fernsehen und sonstige Medien, sowie der mechanischen Vervielfältigung und der Vertonung, bleiben vorbehalten.

Dieses Buch darf zu Bühnenzwecken, Vorlesungen und sonstigen Aufführungen nur benutzt werden, wenn vorher das Aufführungsrecht einschließlich des Materials rechtmäßig von uns erworben wurde. Das Ausschreiben der Rollen ist nicht gestattet. Eine Übertretung dieser Bestimmungen verstößt gegen das Urheberrechtsgesetz.

Eintragungen dürfen ausschließlich mit Bleistift vorgenommen werden und müssen vor der Rückgabe entfernt sein.

Wird das Stück nicht zur Aufführung angenommen, so ist das Buch umgehend zurückzusenden an:

gallissas theaterverlag und mediaagentur GmbH

Potsdamer Str. 87

10785 Berlin

Deutschland

Telefon 030 / 31 01 80 60 – O

www.gallissas.com

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved. No performance may be given by professional or amateur casts, nor may public presentations, movies or radio or television transmission be made, nor may translation rights be taken.

This manuscript is not for sale and may only be used on the basis of a written contract with the publishing company. Copies as well as distributions, whether against payment or for free, are not permitted and violate the copyright.

The copying of individual roles is also not permitted.

Stage performance rights:

SILVERLINE PUBLISHING LIMITED
COMMERCIAL CENTRE, 24 KAU YUK
ROAD YUEN LONG, N.T.
HONG KONG

European contact :
Tel.0043-(0)676-7833088
gabriel@worldangels.de

If this manuscript should be conveyed by email, this is only a reading copy for the receiver and may be printed out only for personal use. The manuscript may not be multiplied.

SYNOPSIS

STEFAN and MARTIN, both survivors of failed relationships, have finally found the perfect solution: they've decided to share an apartment and the housework. Stefan, an actor, does the housework; Martin, an architect, is a “typical man”—he arrives late for appointments, forgets birthdays, etc.—but the two of them get along splendidly.

They are preparing to celebrate the birthday of a friend, PETER, who is due to arrive for dinner with his beloved wife, Lilli. To their surprise, he arrives alone: Has his wonderful marriage also failed? That Peter has been cheating on his wife for ages is not something he considers significant, but his wife doing the same is something he just can't tolerate, and yet he can't be alone either. So we now have a THREE-MAN HOUSEHOLD. Apart from the odd bit of friction, they all get along fine. It all seems ideal—until one day, Martin meets a woman who suddenly rekindles his passions . . .

CHARACTERS:

STEFAN KOWALSKY, an actor

MARTIN STERNECK, an architect

PETER STEINER, a shoe store owner

LOCATION:

An apartment

TIME:

"The present"

ACT I

Scene 1

A Spartan apartment—STEFAN is setting the table—he is nervous. Music: Overture from “The Barber of Seville.” MARTIN enters carrying a small box.

MARTIN: Hello—

(STEFAN briefly glances at him. MARTIN crosses to the radio, turns off the music.)

MARTIN: “Hello!”

STEFAN: Hello—(he continues working)

MARTIN: Uh-huh—I seem to be feeling a strange vibe in the room.

(STEFAN continues working.)

MARTIN: I see . . . (he sits down, takes off his jacket, and observes STEFAN) What’s wrong?

STEFAN: Could you please tell me what time it is—?

MARTIN: It’s . . . uh . . . eight oh three and . . .uh . . .

STEFAN: You do know I have a performance tonight, don’t you?!

MARTIN: Come on, it was just one little hour—

STEFAN: One little hour, one little hour—one little hour during which I had better things to do than washing dishes and cleaning the apartment—why wasn’t the cleaning lady here, anyway—?

MARTIN: Doesn’t she come on Tuesdays—?!

STEFAN: We just talked about it yesterday, you said you’d call her today before you leave for work, so she could get the place cleaned up for our guests tonight—or am I losing my mind?

MARTIN: (putting his hand to his mouth) You’re right. You are absolutely right—

STEFAN: That does me a lot of good—

(MARTIN gets down on his knees in front of STEFAN.)

MARTIN: I beg you to forgive me. My mind was somewhere else. I'm so sorry to have caused you so much trouble, especially since you have to perform tonight and your mind should be focusing on much loftier things than stupid housework, and all because I forgot to call the cleaning lady, who usually delivers us from this drudgery—please forgive me.

STEFAN: You're a fucking idiot!

MARTIN: Yes, I'm a fucking idiot, and I want to thank you for helping me get to know myself—"You think, therefore I am."

STEFAN: "Ha-ha-ha."

(Pause. MARTIN looks at STEFAN with an ironic smile.)

MARTIN: Well, it's all for a good cause.

STEFAN: What is?

MARTIN: You creating such a lovely evening for all of us.

STEFAN: What's that supposed to mean?

MARTIN: I was observing you very carefully the other night.

STEFAN: When?

MARTIN: Last Friday, at the Lucky Chinese, the first time the four of us went out together—the Steiners, you, and me!

STEFAN: So?

MARTIN: Lilli really is a very attractive woman!

STEFAN: Oh, my god! She's an incredible woman!

MARTIN: . . . and worth spending one little hour cleaning up.

(Pause.)

STEFAN: Shit—you think he noticed?

MARTIN: Don't know—but maybe tonight you could be a little less obvious—you old ham!

STEFAN: Ha—

MARTIN: “It is the East, and Juliet is the sun . . . It was the nightingale, and not the lark.” Come on, Romeo and Juliet?

STEFAN: What was I supposed to do? She said it was her favorite love scene.

MARTIN: I don't know—recite it, sing it, dance it, mime it, whatever you want—just not so loud—so the whole restaurant doesn't see you're hitting on your friend's wife—especially not her husband.

STEFAN: But she wanted me to—

MARTIN: Want, want—all women want—

STEFAN: Yeah, to leave their husbands.

MARTIN: Speaking of women! I leave the office today—in order to get here on time!!!—and down the hall I see this stunning woman—tight, black leather skirt—unbelievably beautiful—somewhat pale, looking a bit lost—a bit . . . helpless.

STEFAN: So you had to help?!

MARTIN: So I had to help—I went over to her—and I said: “Hi, can I help?” And she said: “Yes, I'm looking for Martin Sterneck.”

STEFAN: She didn't.

MARTIN: She did. And I said, “I'm right here.” And then she says—sort of laughing a little—uh . . .

STEFAN: Helplessly?—

MARTIN: Helplessly—exactly—she says—a colleague of hers gave her my name and thought I might be able to help because she wants to have her apartment redone.

STEFAN: This is really sad.

MARTIN: Very sad—

STEFAN: Just go on.

MARTIN: So I say: “Where do you live?”—She says: “Two blocks up the street.”—I say: “Great.”—and we go to her place—

STEFAN: You didn’t!

MARTIN: We did—

(Pause.)

STEFAN: Well?!!

MARTIN: Nothing—we talked . . . about architecture and design . . .

STEFAN: Say no more.

MARTIN: This isn’t a confession, it’s justification for the fact that I spent one little hour —

STEFAN: Okay—so you’re in her apartment—then what?

MARTIN: Nothing—I—looked at the apartment—made an appointment—she offered me tea—I said, “No thank you—my friend’s waiting for me at home.”

STEFAN: Yeah, right. So now it’s my fault.

MARTIN: She—uh—(pause)—she said, “Maybe we could have dinner sometime?”—I said, “I don’t think we can avoid it.”—and when I left, we almost kissed . . . right here. (he taps his chin)

STEFAN: Amazing!

MARTIN: And now I’m here—so, am I forgiven—?

STEFAN: You’re forgiven!

(Pause.)

MARTIN: My god, something smells great . . .

STEFAN: It should.

MARTIN: Someone's been cooking!

STEFAN: Is that so?

MARTIN: Let me guess—Peking duck.

STEFAN: Chicken curry.

MARTIN: Excellent—but there's something else—sort of sweet and heavy—

STEFAN: The pie!

MARTIN: The pie?!

STEFAN: The pie.

MARTIN: You baked a pie?

STEFAN: With candied orange peel and slivered almonds—just like we said!!

MARTIN: A feast.

STEFAN: Yes, a feast! How old did you say he's going to be?

MARTIN: Forty-five.

STEFAN: Five times nine. A good phase—Aries?!

MARTIN: Yeah—with Scorpio rising, I think.

STEFAN: I'll figure it out—she's a Gemini with Leo rising.

MARTIN: I see you already figured her out.

STEFAN: She's a good match for me. Her Venus is in perfect conjunction with my Mars.

MARTIN: Wouldn't it be better the other way around?

STEFAN: Useless. It's absolutely useless trying to talk to you!—What's in the box?

MARTIN: Doesn't matter—

STEFAN: What is it?

MARTIN: A cake—

STEFAN: What?

MARTIN: A cake!! I forgot—that you—that you—

(STEFAN stares at him.)

MARTIN: I just forgot. Don't look at me like that.

STEFAN: You can give it to your leather-skirted angel—

MARTIN: That's right—great idea—I must have been planning it subconsciously, without even realizing it.

STEFAN: That's generally why we call it the *subconscious*—

MARTIN: Wait!—That look you just got on your face will be perfect for tomorrow's rehearsal—

STEFAN: (crosses to a mirror) “Have you prayed tonight, Desdemona?!!”

MARTIN: That's it—think of cake number two and you're Othello—

(Pause.)

STEFAN: I don't want to go to the theatre tonight.

MARTIN: Then don't.

STEFAN: Ha—then don't!

(Pause.)

MARTIN: It's still that bad?

STEFAN: It keeps getting worse.

MARTIN: Be happy you only have a small part. Don't forget the others will have been working for an hour and a half already—when you swoop in for the final act, solve everything with one monologue, and you're back home by eleven thirty.

STEFAN: Four hours—it's insane—

MARTIN: So write a letter to the editor.

STEFAN: Useless. When the audience complains, it only proves to the director that he's swimming against the tide—and every genius swims against the tide—therefore, audience complaints are proof of the director's genius.

MARTIN: You're in deep shit.

STEFAN: You can say that again.

MARTIN: You're in deep shit!!!

STEFAN: I hate this profession—I hate it—

“I tread these dusty boards of yore,
Of lifeblood drained for evermore.
Eternal quest—eternal prayer—
Vainglorious journey in despair . . .”

MARTIN: Well, you are a poet.

STEFAN: I know—and the day will come when, after a mere hour and a half, the curtain will fall on one of my own plays, and the audience will be sorry it's over, and they'll say, “It's over?”—and then they'll find a restaurant where the kitchen is still open, and then, like always, they won't give a damn what it was they just spent ninety minutes listening to—but my tombstone will read: “Here lies the inventor of the intermissionless evening of theatre, sponsored by the restaurant owners of the city.”—I'm a failure—

(Pause.)

MARTIN: Great!! So you're a failure—let's light the candles!—

STEFAN: Let's light the candles—

(They light the candles. The doorbell rings.)

MARTIN: I'll get it—

(PETER enters, his arms in the air.)

PETER: I'm a free man!!!

MARTIN: Aha!

PETER: I'm a free man!!!!

(STEFAN laughs.)

PETER: Hello—I'm a free man!!!—I'm a free man!—Ha!—Ah . . . My friends, it's good to be here with you—I tell you, man was born to be free—I am a free man; a free man I am—Ah . . . gone—gone—gone—I'm sorry, I'm a bit agitated—I'm agitated!

MARTIN: Aha—(glances to STEFAN)

PETER: I drove here like a bat out of hell, I tell you—sometimes . . . oh . . . it's good to be here.

STEFAN: Where's Lilli?

PETER: I don't give a damn. No idea—at home—at the movies—in the jungle—somewhere—on the toilet—(laughs)—I'm a free man!—

MARTIN: I see—

PETER: No, you don't see—what I mean is—is that—everything's fine—just fine—there are times in a man's life . . . I'm sorry, but I have to let this out before I explode, before I explode—

STEFAN: Sure—

PETER: I'm a free man! Ah—(he sits down and falls silent) The two of you must be wondering what happened to my charming wife—

STEFAN: No, no—

PETER: There are times in a man's life when he has to put up a sign, a clear sign everyone can recognize. Like buoys in the water where everyone knows, okay, here I have to sail to the left or I'll be disqualified and I'm out of the race—I'll be out. Mankind has a wonderful means of communication at his disposal to place just these kinds of buoys in the sea of a relationship—and that is language—human language—but what am

I telling you this for?—we have here an actor and poet who knows a little something about using words. “It was the nightingale, and not the lark.” So, you’re probably wondering where I’m going with all this—very simple—for a number of years . . . for five years, I’ve been married, and for five years I’ve been trying to make myself understood. I’ve been trying to have quiet conversations with my wife that are supposed to let her know what I’m thinking, and let me know what she’s thinking—and what’s the result?—I’ve come to the conclusion—that she doesn’t think—she just acts like she’s thinking—women can’t think—and if they do think, it’s only for our sake—they camouflage themselves in thought-like utterances to lure us into believing they’re human—but women are not human, women are most likely not even animals—they’re much more dangerous than animals. With animals you can at least tell from a distance—aha—an animal!—But women look human, and that’s the diabolical part—they’re diabolical traps for men looking for human relationships. To hell with them—I’m over it, I have nothing to do with them anymore—I’m a free man—should we have a drink?

(Pause.)

STEFAN: So she’s not coming.

PETER: No, my wife is not coming. I’m celebrating my birthday with my dear friends—don’t you have anything to drink?

MARTIN: Yeah . . . just a hint—maybe —about what—uh—

PETER: If I start giving hints we’ll be sitting her for at least another four hours—

MARTIN: Then please don’t.

PETER: All I can say is this: For the longest time—and I don’t give a damn what anyone thinks about me—I’m just going to tell it like it is—for the longest time, I’ve been living a life that has absolutely nothing to do with me—today’s my birthday—today marks the end of all that, from now on I’m a free man. I recognize and understand that, due to physical attraction, for years now I’ve been living with another person and denying my own true self, just so I wouldn’t miss out on the pleasurable aspects of living with a woman—as of today, that’s all over—as of today, I’m a free man.

MARTIN: Shall we have a drink?!

PETER: Please.

MARTIN: What would you like?

PETER: Something clear, something strong—a buoy—it smells great in here—I'm hungry—

MARTIN: He's been cooking—

PETER: Fantastic—an evening with men. Strong and clear—high-proof—a schnapps and a steak—and a chunk of bread—nothing wishy-washy—no more of that alternative crap—Lately—thanks (STEFAN pours him a glass)—lately, all I've been getting is slow food from the Far East—I can't even look at that crap anymore—nothing tastes like it should—sweet cucumbers, sour sugar—last week we had Peking duck three times and chicken curry twice—never again—never again—I'm a free man—

STEFAN: Cheers!

(Blackout. Music: Introduction to Act I of "The Barber of Seville," up to the start of the "piano, pianissimo.")

Scene 2

(After the meal. The three men are seated.)

PETER: That was—excellent—

STEFAN: You don't have to . . .

PETER: No, I'm so sorry—please, I had no way of knowing that you—but really, it was excellent—it was cooked . . . clearly—you know what I'm trying to say?

STEFAN: Sort of.

PETER: Only people who think clearly can cook clearly.

STEFAN: Mind if I write that down?—

PETER: Go ahead.

STEFAN: Sorry, guys, but I have to go.

PETER: What a shame.

STEFAN: But I'll be back soon!

PETER: Just act fast—

STEFAN: Yeah—(he starts to leave)

MARTIN: Can you pick up tomorrow's papers?

STEFAN: As if I've ever forgotten—

MARTIN: Just a friendly reminder—

STEFAN: Farewell—heaven alone knows when we'll meet again—

MARTIN: Eleven thirty, I'm guessing.

STEFAN: Bye!

MARTIN: Bye!

PETER: Bye!

(STEFAN leaves.)

MARTIN: You done here?

PETER: Yeah, thanks! Sorry I said that about the food—

MARTIN: Don't worry about it.

PETER: And this Chinese chicken really was good.

MARTIN: Ha—yeah. (laughs)

PETER: Depends on your mood, I guess—

MARTIN: All right, what's all this about!?

PETER: Ah . . . (pause) . . . yeah, what's all this about . . . what's it about . . . (pause) . . .
Sorry—I didn't want to . . . in front of him—

MARTIN: I understand—

PETER: I mean, I really like him, but I haven't known him all that long, and I need—

MARTIN: I understand—

PETER: Yeah . . . what's it about . . . where do I start—

MARTIN: How about at the beginning?—

PETER: Hm (laughs) . . . I just don't believe human beings are meant to live with only
one other person. Okay—maybe there are some people who can, but I can't—I can't—
Maybe she can, but I can't . . .

MARTIN: Hmm—

PETER: I tried to stay faithful to her as long as I could, but it doesn't work for me—this
“forever” thing—

MARTIN: Hmm—

PETER: Besides, it's different for men—

MARTIN: Hmm—

PETER: I held out for three years, which is a hell of a long time for me—I mean, you know what I was like before I met Lilli—

MARTIN: Hmm—

PETER: All right—after three years I met that cute little woman in Florence—you remember—I showed you a photo. Ricarda.

MARTIN: Yeah.

PETER: All right. It happened, and Lilli never found out, and I thought—everything's okay . . . but then there were a few other times . . . uh . . . and then she suddenly figured out what was going on—and—and then a year ago we were about to split up, you remember—

MARTIN: Yeah.

PETER: So, we talked about it over and over again, and I told her it had nothing to do with my love for her—and—that it was something completely different, and she said, “Well, if you do whatever you want, then I'll do whatever I want.”

MARTIN: Sounds good.

PETER: Sounds good?! I told her that was the biggest load of crap I'd ever heard—but fine—we agreed we'd just go on like normal and give each other some space, and not ask what we've been doing or where we've been if we haven't seen each other for a while. You know, she has to travel sometimes—and sometimes I have to work late—and so on—

MARTIN: Hmm—

PETER: So, today I go into the bedroom, change my clothes—I'm looking forward to the evening—and I find a letter—

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: Well, you can guess what it said!

MARTIN: No!

PETER: (takes out a letter) “My Dearest Wildcat! It seems like an eternity . . . I can’t stop dreaming of biting your neck and scratching your back bloody like a panther attacking his mate in the jungle . . .” Et cetera, et cetera—

MARTIN: Shit—

PETER: I wanted to kill her—

MARTIN: Well, yeah!

PETER: We must’ve shouted at each other for at least three hours, and then I smashed my chairs—you know, those lovely old wicker ones—

MARTIN: Oh, no! Not the wicker ones!

PETER: Yeah—and then I left—and then, to top it all off, she shouted after me, just so the whole building could hear, that I should never come back again, and then I came here—

MARTIN: Well, well, well!

PETER: Yeah—

(Pause. PETER gets up and pours himself a drink.)

MARTIN: But . . .

PETER: What?

MARTIN: Nothing, I . . . What a mess—

PETER: Yeah!

MARTIN: No, it’s just . . . it’s so . . .

PETER: You spend five years under the same roof with a woman, and then you suddenly read she’s a wildcat getting her back scratched by some panther you’ve never met . . . Ha . . . Now I know why she didn’t want to shower with me all week, and why she’s been wearing those pajamas the whole time—and she never wears pajamas in bed—just panties, if anything—I tore them all to bits—

MARTIN: What?

PETER: I bought her something like thirty or forty panties—white ones, pink ones, black ones, and those tiny little thongs—I tore them all to bits—I must’ve been out of my mind—I made sure I ripped them to shreds before I left.

MARTIN: That was very mature of you.

PETER: You expect me to spend all that money just so some panther guy can scratch her back while she’s wearing my panties? No way!

MARTIN: Yeah, but . . .

PETER: But what?

MARTIN: I don’t get it—if you both agreed not to ask each other what you’re up to, then why did you—

PETER: I didn’t ask her anything, I found the letter, what was I supposed to do?

MARTIN: Where’d you find it?

PETER: In her skirt—it was one of those skirts with pockets—

MARTIN: Why were you looking in her pockets if—

PETER: I’m interested in what she gets up to when I’m not around—

MARTIN: Aha—

PETER: She is my wife, after all—

MARTIN: Of course!

PETER: Isn’t she—?!

(Blackout. Music: Elvis Presley, “Suspicious Minds.”)

Scene 3

(MARTIN and PETER are sitting and drinking. The phone rings.)

PETER: That's her! Don't answer.

MARTIN: It could be for me.

PETER: No!

(Pause.)

MARTIN: But what if it is for me?—

PETER: No! Don't answer!

MARTIN: Hm. All right.

PETER: Who'd call you at this time of night, anyway? Just let it ring!

(MARTIN answers the phone.)

MARTIN: Hello?

PETER: I'm not here—or—let me talk to her.

MARTIN: Hello?

PETER: Let me talk to her.

MARTIN: Stop it—

PETER: I'll talk to her.

MARTIN: Hello . . . no, no, I was talking to a friend—

PETER: Yeah, yeah—

MARTIN: No, another one . . . I'm never alone. (laughs)

PETER: "Ha-ha-ha."

MARTIN: Yes, I'm also very glad we met . . . hmm . . . yes, really . . .

PETER: (in a singsong voice) I don't believe a *word*!

MARTIN: Quiet . . . No, he's in the kitchen—

PETER: I am not in the kitchen! Lilli!

MARTIN: Will you be quiet!!!—It's not Lilli!

PETER: Oh, sorry.

MARTIN: No, we're just having a little birthday party, and . . . yeah . . . forty-five . . .
hmm . . . no, no grey hair yet . . . (laughs) . . . yeah . . . yeah . . . Listen, why don't we
meet up at your place again tomorrow? . . . yeah . . . I'll bring the blueprints and we'll
build you a brand new, cozy little castle—

PETER: And I'll be your black knight—

MARTIN: Okay . . . see you tomorrow . . . good night.

(He hangs up.)

PETER: Who was that?

MARTIN: I'm not sure yet.

PETER: Are you in love?

MARTIN: Huh?!?!

PETER: There's nothing more idiotic than love, and nothing more idiotic than women!
What's the point? From every mountaintop you eventually have to climb back down into
the valley or you'll starve, so why climb up there in the first place? Stay in the valley and
eat, that's what I say.

MARTIN: I don't . . . I don't quite . . . see it like that—

PETER: Ever been married?—

MARTIN: No.

PETER: Then you have no idea what I'm talking about.

MARTIN: What's the difference?

PETER: The difference, my friend, lies in expectations—if you only “build a castle” for your little princess, then she knows—“my prince is just here for the tournament—everyone will do their best, and then, bye-bye.”—but if the expectation is “till death do us part,” then you're one step closer to it—

MARTIN: To what?

PETER: Death. And you know where it all started?

MARTIN: Where?

PETER: Hollywood.

MARTIN: Hollywood—

PETER: Hollywood—everyone watches the same movies and everyone wants to be just like the big stars on the big screen. But even George Clooney has to go take a crap every now and then—

MARTIN: Don't you think that's a little too simplistic?

PETER: All wisdom is simple.

MARTIN: True.

PETER: My wife cheated on me—I got drunk—we're getting divorced, it's over, just like in the movies.

MARTIN: I thought it wasn't supposed to be like that—

PETER: Exactly—

MARTIN: Somehow—uh . . . yeah.

PETER: What?

MARTIN: I don't know—I . . .

PETER: Once they get hold of you, you're a goner.

MARTIN: Yeah.

PETER: I know for a fact that if my wife—my ex-wife—had ever seen me cry . . . *if* she had . . . I would've lost.

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: It's such a mean and—devious trap—

MARTIN: What is?

PETER: The new man—this gentle, tender new man—who doesn't just have muscles, but can also cry . . . I'll tell you what women need . . . what they really need . . . deep down inside . . . is someone who calls the shots for them. (he whispers) From the beginning of time, women haven't participated in the evolution of mankind nearly as much as men—deep inside they're still animals, and the female always wants to feel that her male is superior to her—for procreation—genetics and all that—you know what I mean.

MARTIN: I know what you mean.

PETER: And now, if they claim men should cry every so often, it's a cunning little trap—to test your genetics.

MARTIN: Aha.

PETER: It's obvious—every woman cries whenever and wherever she feels like it, and people do whatever they want with her. Women know, from personal experience, that if you show your feelings you're a loser—and no woman wants to be a man who's a loser—*have* a man who's a loser—so if you believe them and let it out, they know you're no match for them . . .

MARTIN: Hmm—I've never really looked at it like that.

PETER: Because you're doing it right . . . short and sweet—look, with the chicks I have for a weekend, I also let myself go—I mean, emotionally and so on, because they can't use it against me, but in a marriage—watch out—you'll never hear the end of it—

MARTIN: How about some coffee?

PETER: You think I'm drunk.

MARTIN: No, I just . . .

PETER: You're right . . . I'm drunk.

(The doorbell rings.)

PETER: That's her! That's her! I know, she's come to apologize and take me home. Don't open the door—

(The doorbell rings.)

MARTIN: I'm sorry, I have to—

PETER: Tell her I left already, tell her—

(MARTIN opens the door. STEFAN enters.)

MARTIN: Hello.

STEFAN: Forgot my key.—Hi.

PETER: Where is she?

STEFAN: They coughed.

PETER: What?

STEFAN: They coughed—Okay, so I did an hour less preparation than usual, but I was still prepared . . . I hadn't eaten anything since three o'clock, I only smelled my chicken curry . . . I awakened my mind and senses, warmed up my voice, and then once again stepped before an ignorant, unfocused, coughing mob. I've been wounded—wounded in my willingness to reveal my very soul, to elevate these people to another plane of consciousness—to alter their existence through the vibrations of my being—I made myself vulnerable, in order to appeal to their own vulnerability, and they coughed—

PETER: Was it a mixed audience?

MARTIN: What?

PETER: He should've only performed for men.

STEFAN: Tonight, I finally did it!! I stopped the show and told the audience exactly what I thought. I said: “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m so sorry we’ve bored you to tears. I’m so sorry your stupid subscription forced you to come tonight. All I’ve ever wanted is to step on stage and show you my heart—but since you don’t give a damn, I am now going to step off stage—farewell.”—then the final curtain fell—almost hit me on the head, and the performance was cancelled—

PETER: Today’s totally fucked up, isn’t it?

(Blackout. Music: Phil Collins, “Both Sides of the Story.”)

Scene 4

(They are sitting and drinking.)

MARTIN: So . . . what are you going to do now?

STEFAN: I don't know.

MARTIN: Yeah, but—

STEFAN: But what?

PETER: He's a free man.

STEFAN: You can say that again.

PETER: You're a free man!

MARTIN: Just hold on, will you!

STEFAN: Every man reaches a point in life when he has to be able to look at himself in the mirror.

PETER: Exactly.

STEFAN: And today is that kind of day—

MARTIN: Come on, guys, be reasonable—Stefan!—

STEFAN: To hell with reasonable.

MARTIN: You might have to pay a fine.

STEFAN: Yes, Daddy.

PETER: Give him a break—I completely understand why he did it.

STEFAN: What should I have done? You want me to spend three more years crying on your shoulder? And never do a damn thing about it?

PETER: No, you did the right thing.

STEFAN: You know why people despise actors?—because they lie . . . well, I don't want to lie anymore . . . some people become actors for money and fame—but I became an actor out of love. And that's also why I'm leaving.

PETER: You can work for me.

STEFAN: Thanks. I always wanted to be a shoe salesman. Cheers! Do you ever build houses without roofs?

MARTIN: No.

STEFAN: Do you sell shoes without soles?

PETER: I'd be ashamed of myself!

STEFAN: Then why should I stand on stage with a bunch of liars and lie right along with them?

PETER: I know exactly what you mean.

STEFAN: I have a friend—

PETER: Two.

STEFAN: And I have my conscience—what more does a man need?—

PETER: No women, that's for sure. (laughs) I'll always be here for you.

STEFAN: Ha!

PETER: No, really. Always.

STEFAN: Then it's already worth it. We'll laugh about it tomorrow.

MARTIN: (jumping to his feet) Come here.

STEFAN: Where?

MARTIN: Come on.

(PETER gets up.)

MARTIN: You stay here.

PETER: I want to come, too.

MARTIN: You stay here and wait for a little surprise.

PETER: What kind of surprise?

MARTIN: I can't tell you or it wouldn't be a surprise, would it?

PETER: Okay.

MARTIN: Wait here!

PETER: Right, wait here . . .

(They leave. PETER remains seated, staring into space. He takes a sip of his drink, looks at his watch, takes his cell phone out of his pocket, stares at it for a moment, puts it back in his pocket, takes another sip, waits. He looks over his shoulder, takes out his cell phone again, and dials. The lights go out—he quickly puts his cell phone back in his pocket. MARTIN and STEFAN enter with two cakes covered in candles, singing.)

MARTIN & STEFAN: "Happy birthday to you . . ."

(PETER laughs.)

MARTIN: Happy birthday!

(General celebration.)

STEFAN: Happy birthday!

PETER: Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

MARTIN: "Dear Peter, I'd like to wish you all the very best for your birthday. I wish you all the strength and courage you need to continue along your chosen path. And may you have many, many more happy birthdays like this one. Your friend, Martin."

(PETER and MARTIN hug.)

MARTIN: And since we're still far too sober—he pulls out a bottle of champagne) Voila!

PETER: Thanks, thanks so much.

STEFAN: Dear Peter, I wish you the courage to become the person you are.

PETER: Thank you.

STEFAN: And since we're still far too sober—(he pulls out a bottle of champagne)

PETER: Thank you, thank you so much. I'm really touched. (he is close to tears) This is one of the nicest . . . no, this is the nicest birthday I've ever had. Thanks . . . thanks so much . . . aha . . . two cakes . . . must have some mystical meaning—

MARTIN: One of them, uh . . .

STEFAN: This one's from Martin and I made this one. Sugar-free.

PETER: Sugar-free?

STEFAN: Well—it's made with pear molasses—sugar destroys trace elements.

PETER: Aha—I'll still eat both. Thanks.

MARTIN: We divided up the candles, because—

STEFAN: Because there are two of us.

PETER: Pretty . . . pretty how they're burning.

MARTIN: Pretty . . .

PETER: (laughs) . . . All right, now is when you give me a teddy bear.

(STEFAN laughs.)

PETER: Nice . . . really nice . . . thank you so much!

STEFAN: Now he has to make a wish.

MARTIN: Now you have to make a wish . . .

PETER: Right . . . okay . . .

(PETER thinks for a while, then blows out all the candles.)

(Blackout. Music: Bruce Springsteen, "Jersey Girl.")

Scene 5

(They are sitting, drinking, and eating. Candles are burning everywhere. A romantic idyll. PETER starts singing “Que sera, sera.”)

PETER: (sings) When I was just a little boy
I asked my mother, what will I be?
Will I be handsome, will I be rich?
Here's what she said to me.

PETER, MARTIN, STEFAN: Que Sera, Sera,
Whatever will be, will be,
The future's not ours, to see,
Que Sera, Sera.
What will be, will be.

STEFAN: When I was young, I fell in love,
I asked my sweetheart, what lies ahead?
Will we have rainbows, day after day?
Here's what my sweetheart said.

PETER, MARTIN, STEFAN: Que Sera, Sera,
Whatever will be, will be,
The future's not ours, to see,
Que Sera, Sera.
What will be, will be.

PETER: Oh my god, do you hear that thunder and lightning? . . . and now . . . the rain . . .

(Pause.)

MARTIN: Wow, I'm stuffed.

PETER: Come on, just one more bite—(gives him some cake)

(STEFAN laughs.)

PETER: How'd you make this cake?

STEFAN, MARTIN, & PETER: (screaming) Sugar-free!!!

(They laugh.)

PETER: It's excellent!

MARTIN: I'm stuffed.

(Pause. Silence.)

STEFAN: You know . . . there are moments in life—not many—but there are some moments, when you can feel eternity.

PETER: Hmm.

MARTIN: Yeah.

STEFAN: For me, today was one of those moments.

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: I understand.

STEFAN: I stood there, and in front of me was this big, dark something, the people, the audience—I reached into it as if it were clay—and shaped it into exactly what I wanted.

MARTIN: Hmm.

STEFAN: That is creativity.

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: That's creativity—when you gather your courage, confront something that's shapeless, and compel it to change—when you penetrate into that warm, dark something that has no name, that is just one big breath—in and out . . . in and out . . . in and out . . .

PETER: In and out—in and out.

STEFAN: In and out . . . that's how you feel when you create something out of nothing, when you—uh . . . know what I mean?

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: That's love—to be able to surrender to darkness, even when you don't know how deep it is . . .

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: It's not often in life that such an opportunity presents itself . . . recognizing this gift, realizing it's time to change the direction you started out in—is what it means to become human—it—you understand?

PETER: Hmm.

MARTIN: Weren't you scared?

STEFAN: Acquiring consciousness is never painless. Or as Arnie says, "No pain, no gain."

PETER: And he conquered his fear.

STEFAN: Beyond the sound barrier is silence.

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: Really.

PETER: Considering the fact that we only live once, we're scared shitless far too often—

STEFAN: Absolutely!

PETER: Death—it's death that makes us feel alive.

STEFAN: Have you been secretly reading my plays?

(The phone rings.)

MARTIN: I'll get it—

PETER: Go ahead.

MARTIN: Hello? . . . Ah . . . Lilli . . . sorry . . . I—

PETER: I don't want to talk to her—

MARTIN: Would you like to speak with him? . . . no . . . yes . . . yes . . . no . . . no, why? . . . aha . . . yeah, sure—

PETER: (whispers) Women—

MARTIN: Okay . . . bye—(he hangs up)

PETER: She wanted to apologize—

MARTIN: So: She says don't call her. There's no point, she's not picking up. You shouldn't come home, you should go to a hotel—she doesn't want to see you—

PETER: She doesn't want to see me?!

MARTIN: Yeah.

PETER: She doesn't want to see me?!!! Well, I don't want to see her—so that's the situation.

MARTIN: Yeah. That's the situation.

PETER: Go to a hotel—

MARTIN: Yeah.

PETER: I'm not going to a hotel—

MARTIN: But you can't go home—

PETER: It's my birthday.

MARTIN: You can stay here tonight.

PETER: No—I—

MARTIN: Don't be silly—you're staying here.

PETER: I'll get on your nerves—

MARTIN: We'll build you a nice, cozy little castle right here and you'll sleep like a baby—and tomorrow morning Stefan will make bacon and eggs and get the paper and it'll be better than a five-star hotel.

PETER: Sounds tempting—

MARTIN: You can stay all week, if you want.

PETER: She won't be expecting that.

MARTIN: You're a free man—

PETER: I am.

MARTIN: Now, let's get to bed, I'm ready to drop—

PETER: This is . . . I just want to say how nice it is . . . that you . . . I'm so—

MARTIN: Shush! Off to the bathroom with you!

PETER: Shush—(exiting) Off to the bathroom with me!

MARTIN: You'll back me up here, won't you?

STEFAN: I'm not so sure.

MARTIN: What?

STEFAN: You shouldn't have said he could stay all week—

MARTIN: Why not?

STEFAN: We agreed that strangers can stay a maximum of two nights.

MARTIN: Come on, he's not a stranger.

STEFAN: We could've at least talked about it.

MARTIN: Don't worry. Tomorrow they'll kiss and make up and he'll move back home.

STEFAN: Think so?

MARTIN: Know so.

STEFAN: And what if he doesn't—

MARTIN: What if, what if—if he doesn't, we'll see what happens, for now he has to stay here—Lilli . . .

STEFAN: What happened, anyway?

MARTIN: She cheated on him.

STEFAN: No!

MARTIN: Hey, keep it down.

STEFAN: When?

MARTIN: It's been going on for a while.

STEFAN: And?

MARTIN: And what?—

STEFAN: Are they splitting up?

MARTIN: At least for tonight.

STEFAN: Nothing but crap—wherever you look.

MARTIN: Do you know of a single intact relationship?—Even one?—

STEFAN: Yeah—ours.

(MARTIN laughs.)

STEFAN: I cook, I clean, I make the beds, and you do nothing.

MARTIN: Now, that's perfect harmony.

STEFAN: She cheated on him?

MARTIN: Hmm.

STEFAN: Who was it?

MARTIN: Sorry, it wasn't you.

STEFAN: If I'd known the other night, I'd have been even more obvious.

MARTIN: Believe me, you were obvious enough.

PETER: (entering in his pajamas) Ah, this is great. (he gets into bed) I'm already asleep.

MARTIN: Good night.

STEFAN: Good night.

MARTIN: (whispering) So what's happening tomorrow?

STEFAN: (whispering) I have to leave at nine.

MARTIN: (whispering) I can stay till ten. We can have breakfast together.

PETER: (loudly) Great.

STEFAN: (loudly) Okay—good night.

MARTIN: (loudly) Good night.

PETER: (whispering) Good night.

(STEFAN and MARTIN leave. PETER lies awake for a while, then reaches for his cell phone and dials.)

PETER: I don't care if this really pisses you off, but I'm doing great—so that's the situation—sweet nightmares—

(Music: Phil Collins, "We Wait and We Wonder.")

Scene 6

(The following morning. MARTIN is putting coffee cups and a coffee jug on the table)

PETER: (wakes up) What?!

MARTIN: Good morning, free man!

PETER: Hm.

MARTIN: Sleep well?

PETER: Like a log. Hm, what time is it?

MARTIN: Ten after nine.

PETER: Hm . . . vacation . . . sorry, I'll be right . . . um . . .

MARTIN: No rush.

(MARTIN pours himself some coffee and unfolds a newspaper.)

PETER: All right—that's better—where's Stefan?

MARTIN: At the theatre.

PETER: Coffee—(pours himself some coffee) Hm—that's great—strong and black—any news?

MARTIN: Hm—the magnetic pole reversal is imminent . . .

PETER: Finally . . . (pause) My god, what a day that was yesterday.

MARTIN: Hm—

PETER: So, I guess I'll—hm—guess I'll head into town—

MARTIN: Yeah?

PETER: I'll . . . I'll give her a call and suggest we—we go out for lunch . . . and then I'll throw a few of those buoys in the water.

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: I'll tell her: If it's just this once, it's okay . . . if she doesn't see him again, as far as I'm concerned, she can stay . . .

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: Then she'll give me hell for a while—then I'll buy her a Louis Vuitton bag—and then all will be well.

MARTIN: Hmm.

PETER: Coffee.

(PETER pours himself some more coffee. The phone rings.)

MARTIN: Kowalsky, Sterneck, and—(whispers) Lilli.

PETER: Hmm. Let me talk to her.

MARTIN: He'd really like to talk to you . . . yeah . . . here he is.

PETER: Hi, I'm just having some coffee . . . what?! . . . why . . . what . . . I was just going to suggest we meet in town and . . . no, listen, I . . . yeah . . . yeah . . . no, it wasn't like that . . . no . . . no . . . and when I say no . . . come on, it was just a scratch . . . I . . . so that's your final word? . . . aha . . .

(He hangs up.)

MARTIN: Trouble in paradise?

PETER: She wants a divorce.

MARTIN: No!

PETER: She's serious.

MARTIN: Why?

PETER: She said the thing with the chair was just too much—

MARTIN: But they were your chairs.

PETER: She got—well—I hit one of them against the wall and she happened to be—she had to go to the hospital last night—somehow her collarbone got . . .

MARTIN: Then go see her!

PETER: Her father's in the apartment. She says he'll kill me if he sees me—

MARTIN: Hm.

PETER: If I think of—

MARTIN: Yes?

PETER: Of everything I've done for that woman—I decorated the apartment for her—she owns half my store—oh, fuck—

MARTIN: What?

PETER: If all this—I might have to pay her something—

MARTIN: I don't think so.

PETER: You have no idea. She'll get the best lawyer in town—and I'll be left with chickenshit. No, no, no, no, no—this is some birthday—fucking hell—I tell you—is there any more coffee?—

(Blackout. Music.)

Scene 7

(MARTIN and PETER have dressed.)

MARTIN: Well, I have to get going, sorry.

PETER: Don't worry about it—I—I wouldn't mind sticking around—she might call again—you never know—

MARTIN: Yeah—no problem, just remember to pull the door shut if you go out—

PETER: Will do—

MARTIN: Okay?

PETER: Okay.

MARTIN: Bye.

PETER: Bye.

(MARTIN leaves. PETER loiters about, lights a cigarette, drinks something, finds a CD and puts it on—we hear Bruno Lauzi's "Genova per noi" . . . PETER is shocked—he sits down . . . listens . . . that was "their song" . . . he reminisces . . . becomes sad . . . takes out his cell phone, dials.)

PETER: Hi, I'm—will you pick up, damn it—I'm—I'm—I'm still at Martin's—but call me on my cell . . . please—I—I want to talk to you. (he hangs up, redials, and holds the phone up to the speaker) Listen . . . this is just for you!

(STEFAN enters.)

STEFAN: Hi.

PETER: Hi. How was rehearsal?

(PETER turns off the music and puts his cell phone away.)

STEFAN: Hmm.

(STEFAN pours himself some coffee and sits down.)

PETER: Problems?

STEFAN: You could say that.

PETER: Well?

STEFAN: He who avoids all storms should not wonder that he starves in the calm.

PETER: Bravo! Who wrote that?

STEFAN: I did.

PETER: Well?

STEFAN: I went to the theatre—and was summoned to the Artistic Director's office, where he told me how much I'd be fined, and demanded an apology before the entire cast.

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: I'm leaving that theatre.

PETER: Really?

STEFAN: I know I'm walking a tightrope without a safety net—but I'm not afraid anymore!

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: There are only two things I'm worried about.

PETER: Yes?

STEFAN: First, that this feeling will go away; second, that this feeling won't go away.

PETER: Hmm.

STEFAN: The crazy thing is, I know this is exactly the feeling I need in order to penetrate into the essence of my profession, namely: to not be afraid—and I realize I was only able to achieve this by kicking myself out of the company that, until yesterday, I had lived for. Why is it we can only reach down into our substance, our core—why is it we can only reach our potential as human beings and artists, when we break the rules humanity has created?—it's driving me crazy—I've spent my entire life tearing round a

racetrack in first gear, and then yesterday I discover I can shift to another gear—and—
What should I do, what should I do? . . . I had a horrible feeling just now—for about a
second.

PETER: What kind of feeling?

STEFAN: That I wanted to get drunk, to help me slow down again—

PETER: Yeah.

STEFAN: But I won't—

PETER: No.

STEFAN: I'd rather burn up than shift back down—Peter, I see you—

PETER: Yes—

STEFAN: I see you as the person you are—as the man you are—

PETER: Yes.

STEFAN: I'd like to ask you how you're doing, and I'd like you to tell me the truth, and
then I'll tell you my truth, anything else would be pure insanity. We don't have time for
detours in this life, you understand what I'm saying?

PETER: Yes.

STEFAN: How are you, Peter?

PETER: (laughs) I'm fine.

STEFAN: Don't lie to me. I'm here with my unique life that will never again appear in
this universe. This moment, this space, you and me, everything that exists right here will
never come together again in all of eternity—this is your one-time chance—in our one-
time lives—Peter—me—how are you?

(Pause.)

PETER: . . . terrible—

STEFAN: Yes. That's the truth in this moment—I've often felt terrible myself . . . I
always said I'm fine, instead of telling the truth—like every human being, I long for love,

nothing else, and whoever can't stand being around me when I'm not fine—I don't want to be around them if I have to lie that I'm fine just to keep them close—you understand?

PETER: Yes.

STEFAN: You're having problems with your wife.

PETER: You can say that again.

STEFAN: There's only one question you need to ask yourself: do I love her, or do I not love her?

(PETER laughs.)

STEFAN: Every minute of your life has been an opportunity to find happiness. And what have you done with it?—

PETER: I haven't lived as badly as you think.

STEFAN: But we make mistakes, right?

PETER: Same as you.

STEFAN: Yes, but I've changed—now, now, and now.

PETER: You were never married—

STEFAN: Because I knew I couldn't promise I'd still be the same person tomorrow she fell in love with yesterday.

PETER: But that's not why people get married.

STEFAN: Then why do they?

PETER: Because they want to be together, and—

STEFAN: And—?

PETER: Because you can go out somewhere together where you wouldn't go on your own.

STEFAN: And did you always do that consciously each and every time?

PETER: What?

STEFAN: “Go out somewhere together,” or did you just stumble into it?

(PETER laughs.)

STEFAN: You see?

PETER: It’s easy for you to talk.

STEFAN: Specifically me.

PETER: Specifically you. You’re an artist. You never set foot in the cold reality of everyday life.

STEFAN: Do you still love her?

(Pause.)

PETER: I don’t think so.

STEFAN: When did it stop?

PETER: Hard to say. We were very happy together. I just wanted to get away every now and then, I wanted to be unobserved, and . . . I didn’t even want to be with other women all that badly, I just . . . sometimes I think—I just did it to prove to myself that I’m a free man . . . Ha . . . if I—if I hadn’t . . . there were times when we were just marching along next to each other, waiting to see which of us would stray to the side—but as soon as I was on my own for a bit, I didn’t just stray, I jumped—always overshooting the mark.

STEFAN: And why do people do that?

PETER: . . . Fear?!—

STEFAN: Exactly.

PETER: Any change creates fear, because you think the other person’s taking the first step—and the next step is them leaving you—but with time . . . it all dies down. I wish there was some kind of trick to keep people longing for each other . . .

STEFAN: There is.

PETER: And what is that?

STEFAN: Living separately.

PETER: Living separately?

STEFAN: Living separately.

PETER: That's the trick?

STEFAN: That's the precondition—Who were you always thinking about when you were in love, but not yet living together?

PETER: Lilli.

STEFAN: Who did you always want to spend the night with?

PETER: Lilli.

STEFAN: Who did you always look forward to seeing after just one day apart?

PETER: I'm not saying it again.

STEFAN: So why do people give up such an ideal situation?

PETER: To pay less rent—

STEFAN: I'll tell you what I think: Nothing has to be the way we learned it's supposed to be. There's a better way of doing anything—just look at the Africans.

PETER: The Africans?

STEFAN: In Africa: there are men's houses and women's houses—between them a bridge quivering with tension—a bridge only crossed on festive occasions—

PETER: Yeah.

STEFAN: Why don't we live like that?

PETER: Because we're not Africans.

STEFAN: Unfortunately.

PETER: And you can do that?

STEFAN: I hope so.

PETER: And?

STEFAN: I'm searching.

PETER: For an African woman?

STEFAN: Yes!

PETER: Shit . . . if I left her alone for a minute, you can bet a million other guys would be after her.

STEFAN: If she loves you—

PETER: Women only love men who conquer them—

STEFAN: And to stop anyone from getting to her, you protect her.

PETER: That's the way they want it—

STEFAN: Forever—

PETER: Yeah.

STEFAN: Forever—

PETER: There'll always be another woman.

STEFAN: And with her the whole thing starts over again for ever and ever—I'm not playing that game anymore.

PETER: Congratulations.

STEFAN: Let me tell you—this place is like paradise. We hardly ever argue, we know what we want, if a woman appears on the horizon, we tell each other about it, but unlike everyone else, neither Martin nor I will ever fall into that kind of trap again. I've clawed my way out of all these customary habits, and that's how I live my life—and if everyone did the same, there'd be a lot less insanity in the world, you can quote me on that—and if

I can't find a woman who's mature enough to understand, then I'll just live without a woman, you know what I mean?

PETER: Yes.

STEFAN: I want to be a truly free man.

PETER: Yes.

(Pause.)

STEFAN: It's calming down a bit.

PETER: I know what you mean.

STEFAN: That feeling—that I'm afraid I'll be afraid of my own courage.

PETER: Yeah.

STEFAN: But there's no going back—you see—the performance already started . . . The first time I was in a theatre—I was ten years old—my grandmother had a subscription, a seat in the seventh row, her usual spot, and two days before Christmas she gave me her ticket, she probably had something to prepare at home I wasn't supposed to see—and—because of that—ha—I was so proud and so—well—it was snowing really heavily that evening, and the city was incredibly quiet, and everyone was moving very slowly, and all the cars were driving slowly, trying not to swerve. I still remember sitting down in the seventh row—far left—when it started getting dark, and the red seats, and the golden boxes—everything—was—so warm and crackling . . . like the candles at home, and then my fingers finally thawed out, and I was so . . . almost tired—I can't remember what the play was anymore—I only remember—there was a love scene at the end—the woman was sitting on a bench, and her lover put his head down on her lap—I had never seen anything like that before, that a man would do such a thing . . . I just felt that up there—on the stage—you could do that, you could put your head on a woman's lap, and she puts her hands over your eyes, and you're not alone anymore—the audience sat in total silence, and then the play ended, and it stayed silent for a while, and then everyone shouted "Bravo!", I also shouted "Bravo!" and ran up to the front of the stage, and the curtain went up, and they took their bows, and I think the woman smiled at me, and he hugged her again, and everyone was shouting "Bravo!", and . . . and there was such a peculiar smell, something like dust and perfume and wood—it drifted down from the stage like a—it was just wonderful—and that's when I knew: that's what I want, too—I somehow sensed that in real life—with a woman . . . I was ten years old . . . but I felt I wanted to love, that I had room for that inside, that I was gentle and tender—a gentle prince, who can love—and I somehow sensed that would only be possible on stage.

(laughs) . . . And that's why I became an actor . . . and . . . I still want that . . . more and more . . . but . . . I . . . not like before . . . not so . . . so . . . you only live once, you know . . . what are we waiting for—

PETER: Well.

STEFAN: You know what I'd like?

PETER: Hm.

STEFAN: I'd like to live in a world that has no need for my profession.

PETER: What?

STEFAN: I don't want to have to go somewhere to see some stranger show me what it would be like if people actually talked to each other, you know? I want to talk to you—here—now—you understand?—

PETER: Hmm—

STEFAN: Talk to me—please—talk to me.

PETER: Yeah, I just need some time to myself right now, I—I just—I have to—

STEFAN: I won't hurt you, you know. Do you want to get to know me?—maybe you just want to get to know me—Peter—please talk to me.

(A long pause. PETER looks at STEFAN. Smiles. Nods . . . hesitates . . . finally, after numerous attempts, asks . . . very cautiously . . .)

PETER: Are you gay?

(Pause.)

STEFAN: (exhales . . . smiles . . . understands . . . smiles gently) No.

PETER: Sorry!

(Pause.)

STEFAN: If you really want to, you can get to know me now—tomorrow I might be afraid again—or maybe not—maybe talking to each other now will give us the courage to continue down this path—

PETER: I can't right now—not yet—I—need some time to myself . . . you know . . . I—

STEFAN: Anyone can do it.

PETER: What?

STEFAN: Let what you say, be: me—you—yes—no—

(They look at each other.)

(Blackout. Music: Bruce Springsteen, “The River.”)

Scene 8

(STEFAN is sitting, writing. MARTIN enters.)

MARTIN: Bon soir.

STEFAN: Bon soir.

MARTIN: (sits) Where's Peter?—

STEFAN: Gone.

MARTIN: Aha . . . hmm . . . aha . . . gone—

STEFAN: Gone.

MARTIN: All right, gone—what is this vibe I'm feeling in the room?

STEFAN: I drove him away—

MARTIN: Why?

STEFAN: I “went too far.”

MARTIN: What's going on?—

STEFAN: Full moon.

MARTIN: What?

STEFAN: There's a full moon today—yesterday and today are critical. I'm just doing his chart.

MARTIN: Whose?

STEFAN: Peter's. No wonder he's in such a state, he has Pluto on the ascendant and Uranus in the seventh house.

MARTIN: Right . . .

STEFAN: Sudden separation—transformation, but also the possibility of a new beginning—looks pretty much like my situation.

MARTIN: Speaking of “new beginnings” . . .

STEFAN: Hmm?!

MARTIN: I’m in love.

STEFAN: Really?

MARTIN: Hmm.

STEFAN: Congratulations.

MARTIN: Thank you.

STEFAN: Really?

MARTIN: I think so.

STEFAN: And what about her?

MARTIN: Hmm.

STEFAN: Great.

MARTIN: I was at her place.

STEFAN: And? Did you build her castle?

MARTIN: —Yeah . . .

(STEFAN laughs. Pause.)

MARTIN: By the way, her name’s Maria. I didn’t . . . hm . . . I didn’t even dare—

STEFAN: What?

MARTIN: I didn’t even dare sit down next to her . . . then at some point she said, this is the first cup of tea we’re drinking together—

STEFAN: Hmm.

MARTIN: I said: I hope we're both experienced enough that we don't just throw ourselves at each other.

STEFAN: That's good.

MARTIN: Then she said, she doesn't want any more passion—I immediately thought of when I moved out of Susi's and came here—that's what I was shouting all evening—remember?—"I don't want any more passion!!!"

STEFAN: (singing, from "Gigi") "Ah, yes, I remember it well."

MARTIN: And then we were just sitting there, and I started thinking about how long it's been since I held a woman like that, and . . . then all these things from the past suddenly came rushing into my head, how painful it was when it ended with Susi, and how often I've had that dream about holding a woman in my arms again, but having absolutely no idea what to do with her . . . love . . . I—I swear, I was sitting there like that, and I didn't know what . . . what to do—I had forgotten everything—(laughs)—

(STEFAN laughs.)

MARTIN: Then she said, she'd like very much to go to bed with me . . . and (laughs)—I was very happy about that, and so, I said to her—actually, I'd quite like that, too, that I—that that's what I wanted from the very first moment I saw her . . . but . . . I somehow sensed that if we did it now . . . I would've been doing it just to get it out of the way, you know?

STEFAN: Yes.

MARTIN: I was so nervous, I got hoarse . . . at my age—so I said to her . . . (laughs) . . . she needs to give me a little time—(laughs)—

(STEFAN and MARTIN laugh. Pause.)

MARTIN: I love her so much . . . really.

STEFAN: Hm.

MARTIN: Why did it happen so fast? God, I don't want to make any mistakes.

STEFAN: Only do what you really want to do.

MARTIN: But what is it I really want to do? I—I just want to be happy with her—

STEFAN: Sure.

MARTIN: And no one can stop that.

STEFAN: No one but you.

MARTIN: Exactly. I'll be careful, but not hesitant; act, but not rush; love, but not own.

STEFAN: Eat when you're hungry.

BOTH: Sleep when you're tired.

MARTIN: Now, for example, I'm going to give her a call and wish her good night—

STEFAN: A manly decision.

MARTIN: Indeed. Why is it all so difficult?

STEFAN: Because no one ever taught us.

(They look at each other . . .)

MARTIN: All right—I'm going to call now . . . (he dials)

STEFAN: You want me to leave?

MARTIN: No, no . . . stay, stay—Hi, it's me . . . (laughs) . . . yeah . . . good night . . . wait, wait, when were you born exactly? . . . uh . . . witchcraft . . .

(STEFAN writes.)

MARTIN: April third, 1974—3:15 p.m.—Ohio—aha! Good, you haven't heard the last of this—(laughs) sleep well—I love you, too. (he hangs up)

STEFAN: Uh-oh—Aries, oh my, oh my—hm—ah—Virgo rising! Oh!

MARTIN: Stop it.

STEFAN: My, oh my, oh my.

MARTIN: Stop it, this is the woman that God, in his infinite goodness, has chosen for me

—

STEFAN: Oh, yeah?

MARTIN: I'm going to be her savior and protector.

STEFAN: Maybe that's not what she wants.

MARTIN: I love her, so it *is* what she wants.

(Blackout. Music: Overture from "The Barber of Seville" again.)

Scene 9

(STEFAN is working on Maria's horoscope. MARTIN is impatiently looking over his shoulder.)

MARTIN: Well?!

STEFAN: Patience is a virtue.

MARTIN: At this speed it's a sin—

STEFAN: Interesting.

MARTIN: You're driving me crazy.

(The doorbell rings.)

STEFAN: Getting a little hot under the collar—?

MARTIN: Boiling.

(PETER enters.)

MARTIN: Well, hello, look who's here—

PETER: Me. Hi.

STEFAN: Hi.

PETER: May I sit down?

STEFAN: May he sit down?

MARTIN: What does his chart say?

STEFAN: Just sit down.

PETER: I've been walking around town all day.

MARTIN: Would you like a drink?

PETER: No.

STEFAN: A piece of your pie!

PETER: No.

MARTIN: Do you want anything at all?

PETER: Yes—(pause) I want to start a new life.

MARTIN: May I sit down? (he sits down)

PETER: (after a pause) I left earlier—

STEFAN: Yeah—

PETER: It had nothing to do with you—sorry.

STEFAN: That's okay.

PETER: I'd like—I'd like to ask you guys a favor.

STEFAN: Yes?

PETER: I'd like . . . uh . . . I'd . . . I'd like to move in with the two of you for a while, if that's okay—

MARTIN: Aha.

PETER: It's not just because I can't go home—or that I'd have to go to a hotel or something . . . but I—I think—it just—it just felt so good being here with the two of you last night—and—I couldn't help thinking about when you moved in with him . . . I thought, great, now he's turning gay on me—

MARTIN: Aha—

PETER: That was . . . no, I . . . you know what I mean—maybe I'd have a chance—here with the two of you . . . shit . . . I don't feel too good—I . . . I . . . (he cries, then immediately stops) Stupid—no—I just wanted to ask if it might be okay—I—I can still go to a hotel . . . I don't mind at all—really. Well?!

STEFAN: Yeah—fine by me.

MARTIN: Of course—no problem.

PETER: Thank you.

(PETER cries briefly, then stops himself again.)

MARTIN: (going to him, giving him a hug) Hey.

PETER: It's okay—it's okay—I'm just a little tired—

(PETER hugs MARTIN briefly, quickly letting go.)

MARTIN: I know.

PETER: (laughs) Thanks so much—

STEFAN: At least our rent will go down.

MARTIN: Huh?

STEFAN: We've been splitting it two ways, now it'll be three. Obviously.

MARTIN: We can discuss that tomorrow.

PETER: No, no, that's—that's fine—so—let's get started—

(Blackout. Music: Phil Collins, Introduction to "Every Day.")

Scene 10

(Three months later. STEFAN is sitting, reading his play. PETER enters.)

STEFAN: So, how'd it go?—

(PETER sits down, lights a cigarette, gets himself something to drink, goes and gets something else. STEFAN looks at him.)

PETER: It wasn't pretty—

(STEFAN continues looking at him.)

PETER: Not very pretty . . . she gets the apartment and half the proceeds from the store.

STEFAN: Hmm.

PETER: But I . . . I don't give a damn about that.

STEFAN: Yeah.

PETER: I honestly don't give a damn. I was sitting there looking at her, and it hurt me to see her, and . . . not because I—I knew I didn't . . . well . . . the best thing we can do is go our separate ways.

STEFAN: Yeah.

PETER: But . . . I just . . . I just couldn't stop thinking about all the things . . . that we . . . how we started and all the mistakes we made . . . I . . . at the end we shook hands and the sleeve of her blouse slipped up a bit and I could see the little scar she has on her wrist . . . she got it sailing—once we went sailing and she fell in the water and cut herself—in Greece—it wasn't that bad—but . . . that evening—I changed her bandage and we played doctor and nurse . . . I carried her to the terrace, put her down on a deckchair and fed her—melon and red wine—and then we . . . then I told her stories . . . and there was this dog on the island . . . who always went with us to the beach . . . he knew right away something was wrong and he laid himself down next to her and was watching her all evening—and then—then the sun went down and the stars got brighter and the sky got darker, and then this damned shooting star flew across the sky, and she said: "I'll make a wish and whisper it in your ear." And then she whispered something in the dog's ear, but I heard it anyway—she said, "I wish that me and Peter never break up—never, never, never." And the stupid dog wagged his tail. Shit . . . then I took her to bed, and it was . . . it was the most wonderful night I've ever had . . . I don't really know—why everything

went wrong . . . it can't be it's just because I . . . with—or that she . . . I loved kissing her—when we were married, we kissed in the marriage bureau for a full three minutes as man and wife—as man and wife—and today she shook my hand and said “bye,” and I also said “bye,” and—that was . . . that was . . . that was still my Lilli, my—my wife . . . my wife . . .

(PETER collapses . . . cries . . . STEFAN gently lays a hand on his shoulder . . .)

(Blackout. Music: Phil Collins, “We Fly So Close.”)

Scene 11

(The stage is empty. MARTIN enters and turns off the music.)

MARTIN: Hello . . .

(STEFAN is reading.)

STEFAN: Hello!

MARTIN: Well?

STEFAN: He's taking a bath.

MARTIN: How did it turn out?

STEFAN: Fifty-fifty.

MARTIN: They could've saved themselves the trouble—

STEFAN: Yeah.

MARTIN: And how are you coming along?

STEFAN: I'm finished.

MARTIN: No.

STEFAN: Really.

MARTIN: And you say it just like that—are you going to read it for us?

STEFAN: Maybe.

MARTIN: What's it called?

STEFAN: Mm—well? I thought, maybe . . . “Chickenshit”? Or something like that?

MARTIN: All right, I'll stop asking.

STEFAN: I—don't know . . . “Play Without a Title” . . . what do I know? . . .

MARTIN: Okay.

(PETER enters.)

MARTIN: Well?

PETER: Well?

MARTIN: Hm?

PETER: Hm?

(PETER gets a glass and pours himself a drink.)

MARTIN: Stefan's finished.

PETER: Hmm.

(PETER sits down and drinks.)

STEFAN: So . . . you want to see a movie?—

PETER: Not really.

MARTIN: Um—

STEFAN: Oh, well—whatever.

MARTIN: (coughs) There's something I need to tell you—

STEFAN: We're all ears.

MARTIN: I'm getting married—

(Pause.)

STEFAN: What?!

MARTIN: Yeah.

(Pause.)

STEFAN: Why?

MARTIN: Because I love her.

(PETER laughs.)

MARTIN: I love her. What do you think?

STEFAN: Does it matter?

MARTIN: And while we're on the subject, I thought I'd let you know I'm moving in with her today—or tomorrow.

PETER: Into the castle.

(STEFAN is breathing heavily.)

MARTIN: I'm sorry, I—yeah—

PETER: Into the castle.

MARTIN: What do you think?

STEFAN: You know damn well what I think.

MARTIN: But I'd like to—

STEFAN: You've decided—and quick decisions are always best, so what's the problem?

MARTIN: Please don't do this—I—it's not easy for me, either.

STEFAN: Then why are you doing it?

PETER: Because he's crazy.

STEFAN: And why so soon?

MARTIN: Because I love her.

STEFAN: And that won't last too long, will it?—so you'd better get married quick to nail it down.

MARTIN: You don't understand, I—

STEFAN: Then it really doesn't matter. (he gets up)

MARTIN: Please stay.

STEFAN: What for? Everything's been said—you're moving out—you're getting married—and he's getting his own room.

MARTIN: Stefan, please don't—I want to talk with you—

STEFAN: We've been talking about this for three years, so why right now?

MARTIN: Because now everything's different.

STEFAN: Because now you've lost your mind.

MARTIN: No! People change.

STEFAN: Congratulations.

MARTIN: Will you stop being such an asshole and talk to me like a human being?

STEFAN: What do you want me to say?—What else can I say? Three years ago you walked in here crying your eyes out, "I did everything wrong—I did everything wrong—I'm never doing that again—I don't want any more passion."

MARTIN: Yeah, but . . .

STEFAN: But what? It's different with her—right—

MARTIN: Right.

STEFAN: So why not give yourself a little time?—why not give yourself a little time, and why not use it to live here as long as you want, but still be with her whenever you want?—why do you have to fall back on old habits, like a butterfly crawling back into its cocoon?

MARTIN: Because I want to live with her—

STEFAN: And that's the only way—

MARTIN: That's the way we want it.

STEFAN: Then, good luck . . . You were sitting right there telling me how nice it was that you're being so cautious with each other—and now look. Three months and it already smells like forever.

MARTIN: As far as I'm concerned, you can spend your whole life calculating who's a good match for who, and who should or shouldn't be together, and all you'll get from being so careful is old and ugly, and women will just get more, and more, and more—

STEFAN: More what?

MARTIN: More what—you have to take risks in life—you have to have the courage to make mistakes—otherwise—

STEFAN: It's always the same—isn't it?!

MARTIN: What?

STEFAN: You have to have the courage to make the same mistakes over and over again—no, thank you.

MARTIN: Just do whatever the hell you want—

STEFAN: That's what I'm doing—that's exactly what I'm doing—you don't have to worry about that—so, you wanted to hear what I think—all right, here's what I think—and don't go running off with your tail between your legs when I tell you, because it's the same thing you're thinking—only you don't want to admit it.

MARTIN: You've always been good at twisting people's words around.

STEFAN: I have no idea what's gotten into you. Apparently, living here has really been hell, or you wouldn't suddenly be spouting all this drivel like some deranged idiot.

MARTIN: Why does it bother you so much that I want to spend my life with the woman I love?

STEFAN: That's not what bothers me! That's not what bothers me, you stupid ass—I just don't believe that the molds people squeeze themselves into in order to live with another person in this world—are necessarily the best. And we spent hours talking about this, and we agreed with each other, and we resolved we'd find a better way if one of us were ever to fall in love again—and I was happy, I was happy, that you found your love, and that you succeeded in not jumping on each other like rabbits right from the start, but approached one another with care . . . and now it hurts me to see it was all in vain.

MARTIN: We were careful enough.

STEFAN: For three months—three months!

MARTIN: Three months—some people get married when they're seventeen after waiting a whole two weeks.

STEFAN: Now you're really grasping at straws—we always agreed that was idiotic. I—there's no point—I wish you luck.

(Pause.)

PETER: You know, I can understand what he's saying.

MARTIN: Thank you very much.

PETER: I also once—I understand you.

(Pause.)

MARTIN: I didn't know I'd be called before the Inquisition—

(Pause.)

PETER: It seems, um . . . it seems you had the need to talk to us about it—

MARTIN: Yes—but I don't need a papal decree from the council of roommates graciously permitting me to do what I want to do—if this topic upsets him so much, that's his problem, not mine.

PETER: I think it would be wrong to—

STEFAN: Don't start playing the peacemaker.

PETER: I'm not playing the peacemaker—but I am paying rent here, and that gives me the right to say what I think.

(STEFAN laughs.)

PETER: I'd like a—I . . . ah—this is tough—today I made a clean break from a relationship I started in the same way you're starting yours today—

MARTIN: For some reason, I can't stand the word "relationship" anymore—I love this woman—"love," okay?!

PETER: Okay—love—there's . . . as we know, we're all damaged goods as far as love is concerned, and we're all looking for a different way of dealing with this phenomenon than we're accustomed to. Because we're all accustomed to failing in the usual way.

STEFAN: Since when are you a televangelist?

PETER: Idiot. So, about—

STEFAN: Failing.

PETER: . . . if you look at the world—from Eskimos who offer their own wives to their guests, to West African matriarchies, there are thousands of different ways of living and loving together—it's obvious the customary arrangement we have here is not the best, and if everyone didn't have a similar experience, then "Love Actually" wouldn't have been the top film of 2003. Right?

MARTIN & STEFAN: 2004!

PETER: Now, if I'm correct in assuming I've understood the intent Stefan was attempting to—

STEFAN: Plain English, please.

PETER: I'm trying—really, I'm trying—why not use this opportunity to live differently, but still sort of in the usual way, what I want to say is: a woman's house and a man's house, living separately, so you develop a longing for each other, but still celebrate together.

MARTIN: Because I don't feel good when she's not around.

STEFAN: And if one day that feeling disappears?

MARTIN: It won't.

STEFAN: And if it does?

MARTIN: Then I'll just move out again.

(STEFAN laughs.)

PETER: Why not spare the woman you “love” the disappointment of wanting to get away from her—and instead give her the satisfaction of always coming back to her?

MARTIN: Because that wouldn’t make her happy.

STEFAN: So it *is* all about her!

(Pause . . . MARTIN suspects where STEFAN is going with this.)

MARTIN: What?

STEFAN: So she’s the one who said: “Move into my castle”—just to get you under her control—

(Pause.)

MARTIN: I think I feel like going now—

STEFAN: Go ahead.

MARTIN: Maybe women perceive things differently than men, and maybe I enjoy making her happy by being with her.

STEFAN: And denying your own nature.

MARTIN: I’m not so sure what my own nature is anymore—

PETER: A man is meant to go out into the world—to hunt and pursue!

MARTIN: Maybe not—what if I find it incredibly pleasurable just to be at home and work, and then in the evening she comes home and tells me about her day—what about that?

PETER: What about it?

MARTIN: How about if we just agree that there are no rules, except the ones we create for ourselves?

STEFAN: Yes!

MARTIN: How about that?

STEFAN: Yes, Martin!

MARTIN: How about if we admit that because of fear, we don't even dare to have these normal feelings anymore. Don't you have any desire to lay your head down on a woman's lap, and she places her hand over your eyes and you don't have to do anything but be there and feel she loves you?—That she really loves you, and not just in a play on stage. (to PETER) Don't you have any desire to be with a person who can offer you a shoulder to cry on, like a good friend—and this person is your wife—Well, I do have this desire, and I'll gladly run the risk of making mistakes—which starts by taking this first step—rather than wither away trying to “do everything right.”

STEFAN: At this rate, you'll crash and burn.

MARTIN: Yes, then I'll crash and burn, damn it—I'd rather feel pain than feel nothing at all.

STEFAN: So your time here didn't mean a thing.

MARTIN: That's not what I said—

STEFAN: Just a halfway house so you wouldn't be all alone—and then as soon as you've caught your breath—it's right back into chaos—

MARTIN: I don't want to be afraid like you.

STEFAN: I'm not afraid.

MARTIN: You are, you're terribly afraid, but what can I do if at some point you closed down and then deluded yourself into thinking you opened up.

(Pause.)

STEFAN: Martin, where are you?

MARTIN: I'm right here, and I'm feeling great.

STEFAN: As soon as a woman appears, the sun revolves around the earth, right?

MARTIN: Maybe so.

STEFAN: And that will never change.

MARTIN: No.

(Pause.)

STEFAN: . . . I can't believe this, it's just not . . . we've had such good times together, right here—we—we—I . . . Martin—please don't go—hm—(laughs)—well—

MARTIN: I'm sorry—I didn't want to say it like this.

STEFAN: But if that's what you think—

MARTIN: I don't really know if that's what I think—

STEFAN: (laughs)—Sorry . . .

MARTIN: Yeah—I can't explain it, this woman is—

STEFAN: "I pity the man who can explain women, for he has stopped being fascinated by them."

PETER: Who wrote that? Does she even know you were happy here?—

MARTIN: Yeah. Maria said you should both come visit as soon as possible—then you could see the apartment—

PETER: Oh, mother and father are being invited to tea.

STEFAN: Yeah—then I guess there's no point talking about it anymore.

MARTIN: I wanted to say that—

STEFAN: You can always stay here if you want—or need to—

PETER: By appointment only—

MARTIN: It doesn't really change anything—

STEFAN: That's what they all say—doesn't matter—
 "Joyfully, we shall traverse realm on realm,
 Clinging to none as to a home . . .
 Courage, my heart, take leave and fare thee well!"

MARTIN: You're a fucking idiot—

STEFAN: So are you—(they look at each other) give her a kiss for me—

MARTIN: I will—

PETER: For me, too—

STEFAN: Hm—I really like you—

MARTIN: I really like you, too—

(Pause.)

PETER: „To be prepared is everything ...“ ...even for the best ...!

(Blackout.)

THE END