

Valentin Krasnogorov

Let's have sex!

A play in two acts

Translated by Eugene Reznikov and James Walker.

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CHARACTERS

HUSBAND

WIFE

PROFESSOR

GIRL

SISTER

PART ONE

The stage can represent an empty space. The room may be furnished with nothing more than a table, some chairs and an armchair.

The HUSBAND is reading a book. The WIFE enters. The HUSBAND continues to read. The WIFE goes out, enters again. The HUSBAND continues to read.

WIFE. Let's have sex.

HUSBAND. OK. *(Continues to read.)*

WIFE. Let's have sex!

HUSBAND. *(Continues to read.)* OK!

WIFE. I said - let's have sex!

HUSBAND. What?

WIFE. Sex!!

HUSBAND. Right now?

WIFE. Why not?

HUSBAND. Just let me finish reading this page.

WIFE. What if I want it right now?

HUSBAND. What has come over you?

WIFE. Nothing. Do you have any objections?

HUSBAND. Me? No. *(Continues to read.)*

WIFE. Well?

HUSBAND. Well, what?

WIFE. You said that you have no objection.

HUSBAND. To what?

WIFE. To doing it.

HUSBAND. Doing what?

WIFE. Put down the book, or I'll throw it out the window.

HUSBAND. The book doesn't have anything to do with it.

WIFE. I know that it doesn't. But you don't want me throw *you* out the window, do

you?

HUSBAND. What do you want from me?

WIFE. I have said, let's have sex.

HUSBAND. You interrupted me in a particularly interesting place - he is sneaking up to her bed with a gun.

WIFE. Nobody sneaks up to my bed.

HUSBAND. That's good.

WIFE. I am not so sure.

HUSBAND. (*Furtively glancing at the book.*) I think he's going to kill her now.

WIFE. (*Grabs out the book away from him and throws it into the corner.*) I will kill you now.

HUSBAND. What do you want from me?

WIFE. Nothing. A woman is not supposed to want it. *You* are the one who is supposed to want it.

HUSBAND. You seem very irritable today.

WIFE. There is nothing wrong with me.

HUSBAND. Did something happen at work?

WIFE. Do people have sex only when something happens at work?

HUSBAND. No. Not necessarily.

WIFE. Thank God. Otherwise else I would think that nothing ever happens to you at work.

HUSBAND. I think that now it is not the right time, and this is not the right place.

WIFE. For you, never is the right time and nowhere is the right place for sex.

HUSBAND. Somebody could come in ...

WIFE. But we're alone now, so let's hurry!

HUSBAND. You know, it would be inappropriate here.

WIFE. So tell me when and where it would be appropriate for you? Why does it always have to be in the matrimonial bed, always at the same time, on the weekend, ten minutes after the light is turned off? Why not in the morning, why not in the afternoon? Why always lying in bed? Why not standing up or sitting down? Why not on the floor or on a table? Why not on the washing machine? Why not on a swing in the garden? Why not on a roll of barbed wire? Why not by candlelight? Why don't you take me by surprise, without warning, when I'm not expecting it, where it's inconvenient? Why does it always have to

be at home, in a warm and comfortable room, when we're yawning before going to sleep, in the same everlasting bed?

HUSBAND. Because... Because in the bed is more convenient.

WIFE. More convenient? Then why are the times on the back seat of a cramped car, or in a forest on an ant hill, or on a dark backstairs the ones we remember forever, while matrimonial caresses at home, in the soft, wide, convenient bed so suitable for sexual pleasure are forgotten in ten minutes?

HUSBAND. Because... I don't know why.

WIFE. Why don't you come up to me when I'm washing the dishes and take me from behind? Why don't you look for a chance, why don't you pursue me? Why I am always sure that you won't do anything unexpected? Why not at a symphony concert? Why not in someone else's apartment, where somebody might come in at any moment?

HUSBAND. Somebody could come in here at any moment.

WIFE. Well, let them. Let something happen at last. I don't want to be stuck inevitably doing the same thing over and over. I want unpredictability. I want to not know what awaits me tonight. Maybe a meeting with a girlfriend in a cafe, or maybe a party at somebody's home... Or a quiet walk alone through the park, or taking a rest in an armchair with a book in my hands, or an unexpected rendezvous on a dark beach under the stars... Under the bright stars in a mysterious black sky... White sand, pounding waves, the passionate embrace of unfamiliar arms, hands greedily exploring a new and unfamiliar body – my body – that longs impatiently for those arms ... But none of this will ever be, and I know precisely what will happen today, and tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. It seems as if my life has already ended, because I already know everything; I've already gone through everything. There is nothing new left to happen. I'm not living, I only continue to exist. I read the same page of the same book, and it is so boring to me, boring, boring... It's so boring to me! Let's have sex!

HUSBAND. My God, again?

WIFE. "Again"? Did we already do it?

HUSBAND. In general or today?

WIFE. What happened in general, I don't remember anymore. There never was anything, and there never will be. All that there is, is "now." Why do we live only in the past or in the future? Why not to try to live now, and so that "now"

can make us happy? Let's have...

HUSBAND.... Sex.

WIFE. Yes. For a change.

HUSBAND. I don't know what has come over you. You sound so cynical. Such a matter-of-fact and naked way of putting it: "Let's have sex."

WIFE. And what do you want me to say? "Let's make love"? Love? Doesn't that seem ridiculous to you? Aren't you embarrassed? Doesn't it sound cynical? And you don't seem to approve of the word "naked." Better to be clothed. In a long coat, for example. All buttoned up.

HUSBAND. In a decent society they don't talk about sex.

WIFE. You might think that in a decent society they don't have sex.

HUSBAND. They do, but they just don't talk about it.

WIFE. But each of us is not first and foremost an executive, a teacher, an engineer, a doctor or a member of parliament. First of all we are men and women. Why shouldn't we think about it and talk about it? Why should I be ashamed of what is natural? Of what gives me pleasure?

HUSBAND. You shouldn't be ashamed, but you shouldn't talk about it either.

WIFE. And what do they talk about in a decent society?

HUSBAND. I don't know. About money.

WIFE. You want me to talk to you about money? About what you call your salary?
Well then, let's talk about money.

HUSBAND. No, better not.

WIFE. And what is so cynical in the word "sex"? It is matter-of-fact - I agree. But sex is a fact of life. A part of our lovely, comfortable, boring, miserable everyday life. You say, "Let's have supper." So why can't I say, "Let's have sex"? Let's watch TV. Let's go shopping. Let's go to the movies. Let's have sex. Let's take out the trash. Let's do the laundry. Let's have sex. Let's call up some friends.
Let's...

HUSBAND. Enough!

WIFE.... Let's move the furniture. Let's buy a teapot. Let's have sex. Let's go to bed...
Does "Let's go to bed" sound cynical too?

HUSBAND. It depends on with whom.

WIFE. With my husband.

HUSBAND. With your husband it does not sound cynical.

WIFE. It doesn't sound anything at all.

HUSBAND. So tell me, are you having a hard time at work?

WIFE. I'm having a hard time at home. At home, not only do I not have sex, but I'm also forbidden to talk of it.

HUSBAND. Why should we talk about it?

WIFE. Precisely because we don't do it. And what else should I talk about? About the children that I don't have?

HUSBAND. What has come over you today?

WIFE. Nothing. Today I want to talk about sex, again about sex and only about sex. Even if it's just for today. Even if only to talk. I kept silent about it all my life. I talked about everything in the world. About Beethoven and the prices at the market. About skirts and French painting. About local elections and the boss's tie. So really, do Beethoven, French painting, prices, skirts, elections and the boss's tie interest you and me more than sex?

HUSBAND. Skirts interest you.

WIFE. And you too.

HUSBAND. Everything about a woman interests me.

WIFE. Yes. Everything between her knees and her waist.

HUSBAND. I'm a normal man.

WIFE. I wish I was sure of that.

HUSBAND. You are talking recklessly.

WIFE. That's good. I grew up inhibited and uptight. Sex was forbidden. Nobody spoke about it. It was obscene, done only at night. Only with the shades down and the lights off. So that nobody would see, even yourself. It was forbidden to remember it in the morning or discuss it at work. We were sexless. We had nothing between our legs. And now they do it in broad daylight. Now they show it at the movies. Now they write about it in children's books. Recently I found twenty-two tips on how to use birth-control in a magazine for schoolgirls. And I had never read about it before.

HUSBAND. So what do you want?

WIFE. To take the taboo off of sex. To free it from sin. To lift the veil of secrecy from it. To stop alluding to it. To call things by their proper names. Penis. Orgasm. Vagina.

HUSBAND. You're crazy..

WIFE. Yes, I'll repeat the word "vagina" twenty times, two hundred times, until the word starts to sound neutral, sterile, medical. Until you stop reacting to it; until people who hear it stop giggling, or being offended by the vulgarity of it, stop being indignant or getting excited. Vagina, vagina, vagina...

HUSBAND. Stop it!

WIFE. Vagina, vagina, vagina...

HUSBAND. You're crazy.

WIFE. And you're a hypocrite. A puritan. What is more attractive to you than a vagina? What do you see in your dreams? What do you pay the most attention to when you look at paintings in museums? What is the main thing for you in a woman? The eyes? The smile? Well, answer me!

HUSBAND. You're crazy.

WIFE. I know. This life is enough to drive anyone crazy. Have I ever truly lived? What have I seen? What have I done? Home and work, home and work, home and work... And what happens at home? What happens at work? Where is my life? What have I done with it? So there is only one thing left to do – try to lose myself in sex and forget all my petty problems. They not worth worrying about anyway, but still they overwhelm and oppress me. To stop hating myself, even for just ten minutes. Not to think, even for just one second. Not to remember. Not to care. Just feel. The joy of being alive. The pleasure. The delight of taking and being taken. Man and woman are always in a state of war, and sex is the one moment of truce, the one field of mutual understanding and attraction. The one moment when you don't feel lonely. An act of unity, a time of reconciliation with life, an illusion of love, a glimpse of happiness, an opportunity for self-affirmation.

Pause.

HUSBAND. Well, if you really want to have sex with me...

WIFE. With you? What makes you think that?

HUSBAND. You said, "Let's have sex."

WIFE. But I didn't say, "with you." Just "Let's have sex."

HUSBAND. Not necessarily with me?

WIFE. No, not necessarily.

HUSBAND. With whom then?

WIFE. Do you have anyone else that you can have sex with but me?

HUSBAND. Not right at this moment.

WIFE. What about other times?

HUSBAND. Theoretically - with anybody.

WIFE. Leave the theory aside, let's get to the practice.

HUSBAND. I am tired of your nagging.

WIFE. My poor, unfortunate husband. He's tired to death of sex. Apparently, forever.

HUSBAND. You know, I've had enough of you. Maybe you really think I am your husband, but I don't consider you my wife. And I am not going to have sex with a strange woman.

WIFE. Why do you think I want to have sex?

HUSBAND. Well, what do you want?

WIFE. Nothing. That's the problem. I don't want anything. I'm depressed. Every day the same thing. I am so depressed...

HUSBAND. So why torment me? Why ask for sex if you don't want it? Just to spite me?

WIFE. Have I no right to talk? I'm your wife!

HUSBAND. Leave me alone! You are not my wife! I hate the very word "wife"! My wife has ruined my life! My wife has driven me crazy! Stop it! Leave me alone! (*Leaves.*)

WIFE. (*Alone.*) A little more of this, and I really will go crazy. I have to save myself. I need a change. As soon as possible... Otherwise it will be too late. As soon as possible... What to do? What to do?

PROFESSOR. (*Entering.*) What to do? I'll tell you. Let's have sex.

WIFE. That's a surprising proposition.

PROFESSOR. Good! Sex shouldn't be planned. It's only good when it's spontaneous. It should be sudden like a whirlwind, unexpected like an earthquake. It should catch us by surprise, when we're not hoping for it, where it doesn't seem possible. Do you agree?

WIFE. Yes.

PROFESSOR. Then let's start now.

WIFE. Not so fast.

PROFESSOR. But you said you agreed.

WIFE. I agree in principle. Not to your proposition, but to what you said about the whirlwind and earthquake.

PROFESSOR. If you agree in principle, then let's get started. We can work out the details as we go along. Or when we're done.

WIFE. I don't have time.

PROFESSOR. Neither do I. So let's not waste it. Let's get started right away.

WIFE. I am not used to doing it "right away." I need time.

PROFESSOR. Nonsense. Imagine you've been swept up by a whirlwind.

WIFE. Besides, we don't really have time. By the way, what time is it?

PROFESSOR. You're kidding! Who has sex with a watch in his hand?

WIFE. What makes you think that I want to have sex?

PROFESSOR. Everybody wants to have sex.

WIFE. But not me.

PROFESSOR. So what do you want to do? Learn to speak German?

WIFE. I don't want to do anything. And definitely not have sex.

PROFESSOR. You don't want to have sex at all or just right now?

WIFE. Not at all.

PROFESSOR. That's why you've called me?

WIFE. Me? I didn't called you. Who are you, anyway?

PROFESSOR. I am a world-famous professor of psychiatry, psychology and sociology. A sexologist and sex pathologist. Treatment, consulting, lecturing. I get rid of complexes, inspire self-confidence, free people of their inhibitions. I cure frigidity and impotence. I satisfy the unsatisfied. It's very hard work. Lots of calls. I get very tired.

WIFE. Are you a doctor?

PROFESSOR. Not exactly. I am a sex consultant. I teach, give advice, help to solve problems, cure any illness, everything.

WIFE. Why everything, if you're just an expert on sex?

PROFESSOR. Because lack of sex is the cause of all illnesses. Now do you understand why you feel bad?

WIFE. What makes you think that I feel bad?

PROFESSOR. You told me you don't want to have sex. That's a type of derangement.

WIFE. Do you think I'm crazy?

PROFESSOR. No, I didn't say that. Madness is normal because we all live in a mad world. The abnormal one is the person who's normal. But I'll cure you.

WIFE. How?

PROFESSOR. I have a universal remedy: sex three times a day. Instead of meals.

WIFE. I agree.

PROFESSOR. Excellent. But the patient has to be very healthy to take this cure. Are you healthy?

WIFE. Yes.

PROFESSOR. Then there's no need for me to treat you. So let's just have sex. Do you know what it is?

WIFE. I once knew, but I've forgotten.

PROFESSOR. Do you have a husband?

WIFE. A husband and sex are two different things. And besides, I'm not sure if I have him.

PROFESSOR. What?! You don't even know if you have a husband?

WIFE. I have him, but I don't know whether he is my husband.

PROFESSOR. My dear, now I see. You need to start life all over again. And I'll help you. Nobody in the entire world knows what sex is, but me. I have devoted myself to it completely. I have given it the best years of my life. I studied it in libraries and archives, at lectures and in museums, at conferences and seminars.

WIFE. And nowhere else?

PROFESSOR. If you mean nitty-gritty experience, perhaps that may be good for an amateur, but not for a top-notch professional. You can't even imagine what a rich world will be opened up for you when I start sharing my knowledge! Primitive sex. Ancient sex. Greek and Roman sex. Medieval sex. Renaissance sex. Baroque and Classical sex. Romantic sex. Modern sex. Oriental sex. French sex. Sex of all countries, times, and peoples. And we'll start learning all this right now.

WIFE. Right now? I clearly told you, I am not in the mood for sex right now.

PROFESSOR. We'll have sex in the academic sense. A course of four hundred and eighty hours, for a start. We will study the theoretical principles. The history. The social aspects. Practical applications. Tantra and the Kama Sutra. Pictures. Films. Physiology and psychology. Hygiene and techniques. Exercises for the

hands and legs. Voice training: shouting, sighing, groaning. Resisting, relaxing, surrendering. Pretending.

WIFE. I already know how to pretend.

PROFESSOR. I will teach you how to pretend so well that you'll believe it yourself.

WIFE. And when I learn all this, then what?

PROFESSOR. Then everything will still be the same. But you will never learn everything. Sex is a boundless science. A science that brings us happiness. All your life is not enough to explore it completely, even if you start from childhood and don't stop until you die. This subject should be taught in school. Why do we have to learn algebra, which is of no use to anybody, and not sex, which everybody needs all the time? Tell me, have you ever needed to know Newton's binomial theorem?

WIFE. Never.

PROFESSOR. And yet sex is with us always and everywhere. It accompanies us all our life. It warms us in the winter and cools us in the hot summer. It soothes us but does not let us rest. It's a magic elixir which gives us a sense of youth and happiness. That's why we love it so much.

WIFE. Right now I detest it.

PROFESSOR. Don't deceive yourself. It's not sex that you feel an aversion to, but your partner. Change partners. Three times a day. Start today. I will teach you. Right now. You are a beautiful woman, and it is your duty to be happy. My services are expensive, but I am willing to teach you for free.

WIFE. I always thought that in circumstances like this the teacher pays, not the girl. And I didn't call you.

PROFESSOR. Called me, didn't call me, what's the difference? Remember, we don't have much time. Let's get started. One, two, three, go!

Pause.

WIFE. How do we start?

PROFESSOR. You see, you don't even know how to start. One, two, three, go!

Pause.

One, two, three!

WIFE. Stop that. It would be better if you teach me...

PROFESSOR. Teach you what?

WIFE. How to live differently. Not like I live now. Better. More sensibly.

PROFESSOR. To live differently? It's very simple. To live in another way you must live with another partner. This idea might seem like a commonplace joke to you, but it's true. You can't change yourself now – so left to your own devices you will always live the same way you have before. But life with another man will force you to live differently.

WIFE. Better or worse?

PROFESSOR. Worse for sure. But differently. That's what you want, isn't it?

WIFE. I don't even know what I want. I only know what I don't want. To live here. To live like this. A miserable, boring life. Alone. People are alienated and crazy. Their favorite pastime is tormenting each other. I want to run away. Doesn't it seem to you that everybody has gone mad?

PROFESSOR. No, it doesn't just seem that way, that's the way it really is. So there is nowhere to run away to.

WIFE. The years will pass like peas in a pod, but each one uglier than the one before. The end will come, and I'll ask myself, what did I live for? Did I ever live at all?

PROFESSOR. My dear, life does not and cannot have any meaning, except for the continuation of life. In other words, the meaning of life is sex. Sex is the affirmation, continuation and celebration of life. You and I are ants, and nature does not care about each separate ant. Its goal is to preserve the anthill.

WIFE. I despise the human anthill.

PROFESSOR. An anthill? That's an undeserved compliment for our society. Ants work together in harmony, while we are a society of competitors, where everybody is wolf to each other.

WIFE. I don't know how to solve my problems anymore.

PROFESSOR. Don't complicate things. All problems come from sex. Happy sex - happy life, bad sex - unhappy life. That's all. Is your sex life good?

WIFE. No.

PROFESSOR. And the rest of your life?

WIFE. No.

PROFESSOR. Q.E.D.

WIFE. That's why I want to run away. Away from this life.

PROFESSOR. To tell the truth, so do I. Who will you run away with?

WIFE. Alone. ... But it would be better with somebody.

PROFESSOR. Together is certainly better.

WIFE. Why don't we run away together?

PROFESSOR. I am asking myself the same question.

WIFE. And what is your answer?

PROFESSOR. Let's do it. That's what I offered to do when I first got here.

WIFE. You offered to have sex when you first got here.

PROFESSOR. Sex is just an escape from life.

WIFE. I thought it was life itself.

PROFESSOR. Let's not argue. We don't have much time.

WIFE. So you'll take me with you?

PROFESSOR. I'll abduct you, steal you, take you away, carry you away in my arms.

WIFE. Where to?

PROFESSOR. Nowhere.

WIFE. That's the problem.

PROFESSOR. But we have to run away all the same.

WIFE. Where to?

PROFESSOR. That's not important. The main thing is not to stop. Not to think. Not to look back. Give me your hand.

WIFE. Right now?

PROFESSOR. Otherwise someone will come and it will be too late.

WIFE. Then wait here, I'll just get some things to take with me.

WIFE leaves. Pause. GIRL enters.

GIRL. Let's have sex.

PROFESSOR. So it was *you* who called me?

GIRL. Me? Called you? What for?

PROFESSOR. To have sex, I believe.

GIRL. No, it wasn't me. But I'm ready.

PROFESSOR. So who called me?

GIRL. If someone wanted to have sex, just presume it was me that called. A very urgent call. Let's start immediately.

PROFESSOR. That's just what I wanted to suggest. Who are you, by the way?

GIRL. I work with the husband.

PROFESSOR. It's a pleasure to meet you.

GIRL. Whether it's a pleasure or not, we'll soon find out, I hope. (*Starts to unbutton her dress.*)

PROFESSOR. And why don't you have sex with the husband?

GIRL. With whose husband?

PROFESSOR. With yours, for a change.

GIRL. I don't have a husband.

PROFESSOR. But you work with him!

GIRL. I work with him, but he is not my husband.

PROFESSOR. That changes things completely. If he isn't your husband, it is simply your duty to have unlimited sex with him. Especially since you work together. It's very convenient and saves time.

GIRL. Unfortunately, he's terribly busy.

PROFESSOR. Busy? At work!?! With what? Impossible! What can keep a person busy at work?

GIRL. Sex, of course.

PROFESSOR. That's different.

GIRL. I make out his daily schedule for him and keep a record of his work: the beginning of sex, the end of it, with whom, when, on whose recommendation, who's next. It's a lot of work.

PROFESSOR. If he's so busy, you should have sex with someone else.

GIRL. That's just what I proposed to you.

PROFESSOR. My pleasure.

GIRL. I want to make sure of that.

PROFESSOR. You are in luck: you've found the right person.

GIRL. Prove it.

PROFESSOR. My reputation does not require any proof. My name speaks for itself.

GIRL. And who are you?

PROFESSOR. I am a world-famous professor of psychiatry, psychology and sociology. A sex consultant. I get rid of complexes, inspire self-confidence, free people of their inhibitions. I cure frigidity and impotence. I satisfy the unsatisfied. I teach, give advice, help to solve problems. I cure all illnesses.

GIRL. I would like to become such a consultant, too.

PROFESSOR. Then I'll teach you. Do you know who said the famous words: "I have taken all knowledge...."

GIRL. "...to be my province."

PROFESSOR. Exactly right. It is me who said it.

GIRL. I didn't know that.

PROFESSOR. There are still many things you don't know.

GIRL. So let's study. I'm very curious. Let's start right now.

PROFESSOR. Good. We shall begin by checking your sexuality.

The GIRL starts to undress.

No, don't undress! It's not necessary.

GIRL. (*Disappointedly*). Not necessary? Then how will you check me?

PROFESSOR. I have a special system of tests. Sit down facing me and concentrate.

They sit down opposite each other.

Are you ready?

GIRL. Yes.

PROFESSOR. (*Takes out a pen.*) Tell me, what does this pen remind you of?

GIRL. Sex.

PROFESSOR. Very interesting. Well, what does this armchair remind you of?

GIRL. Sex.

PROFESSOR. What? Sex again? But why?!

GIRL. Everything reminds me of sex.

PROFESSOR. But tell me what an armchair has to do with sex?

GIRL. Oh, it has a lot to do with sex. If you only knew, professor, how many of my fantasies involve an armchair! Unfortunately, they're only fantasies and not memories.

PROFESSOR. I am giving you the highest score! A hundred points. You have a rich imagination.

GIRL. I have a normal imagination. The trembling sails full of desire to be opened and give themselves up to the wind; the ray of sunshine piercing the moist depth of the sea; the clouds merging with each other; the train confidently entering the tunnel; the smokestack of a power plant; the trunk of a poplar; a candle – all of these represent the same thing to me. A carrot is a man; a turnip, a woman. A

banana is a man, too – what a man! And potatoes, beet, apples, porridge – all of these are women.

PROFESSOR. You have amazing abilities. I need to learn from you, not you from me.

GIRL. The sister says that I am crazy.

PROFESSOR. Forget the sister. Trust me. You are normal. She isn't.

GIRL. I live in a world of symbols: a spoon and a plate...

PROFESSOR. (*joining in*)... a cylinder and a piston...

GIRL.... a ring and a finger...

PROFESSOR.... an arm and a sleeve...

GIRL.... a seed and the soil...

PROFESSOR.... a blade and a sheath...

GIRL.... a key and a lock...

PROFESSOR.... all these are symbols of the eternal union of man and woman. Each is meaningless and impossible without the other.

GIRL. Don't stop talking! It's getting me so excited!

PROFESSOR. Tell me, what do you know about sex? No, let me put it another way. What don't you know yet about sex?

GIRL. I have to admit, I don't know what sex is at all. I've never had it. That's why it's so interesting to me.

PROFESSOR. We shall start having it, and we shall have it for a very long time, all day long, from morning till evening, and from evening till morning, and you will learn everything. We'll start right now.

GIRL. Now? I'm afraid we can't do it now.

PROFESSOR. Why?

GIRL. We can't do it here.

PROFESSOR. I know. But why not try?

GIRL. (*Looking around and lowering her voice.*) Can you keep a secret?

PROFESSOR. Yes. But you'd better not tell it to me anyway.

GIRL. No, I'll tell you. I want to escape.

PROFESSOR. You, too? Where will you go?

GIRL. Where everything is different. And why do you say, "you, too"? Do you want to escape, too?

PROFESSOR. Who doesn't?

GIRL. Then we will run away together, while we have the chance.

PROFESSOR. Dear, how can I run away? I don't run anymore, I shuffle. I don't breathe, I gasp for breath. A few steps more and my run on this earth will be finished.

GIRL. Oh, don't talk about these awful things! Follow my example and think only of sex. Think about it all the time, so you won't think about anything else. Do you understand me? I forbid you to think about anything else. We'll run away from here, and you'll live another thousand years. Are you ready to go?

PROFESSOR. (*Stretching out his hand.*) With you – to the ends of the earth.

GIRL. Let's leave at once, right now, without losing a moment, not stopping, not looking back, otherwise it will be too late. (*She pulls the Professor toward the exit, but he stops suddenly.*)

PROFESSOR. Wait! I just remembered; I can't.

GIRL. Why? Are you afraid?

PROFESSOR. I am. But that's not the point.

GIRL. What then?

PROFESSOR. I just promised a lady that I would run away with her.

GIRL. So...?

PROFESSOR. I ought to at least explain to her...

GIRL. Why do you think you have to explain anything? Are you the first man to leave a woman?

PROFESSOR. No, but...

GIRL. Did you have an affair with her?

PROFESSOR. Not exactly, but...

GIRL. Whether you did or didn't, it doesn't matter. Sex is no reason to talk things over or prolong a relationship.

PROFESSOR. But since we've gotten to know each other...

GIRL. (*Interrupting*). So what? Sex is no cause for acquaintance. But if you're so scrupulous, leave her a note. Get out your remarkable pen. Write: (*Dictates*). "My dear, don't worry. I have run away with another woman. I won't be back anytime soon."

PROFESSOR. (*Gets out his pen and starts writing, then stops.*) I should tell her myself. Or maybe the three of us could run away together?

GIRL. Will she agree?

PROFESSOR. Why not?

GIRL. A threesome is not so interesting.

PROFESSOR. On the contrary, it can be even more interesting.

GIRL. Well then, go and talk to her. I'll wait here. But don't leave me alone for long! I hate being alone. It makes me feel sick.

PROFESSOR. I've been sick of being alone for a long time now.

PROFESSOR leaves. HUSBAND enters.

HUSBAND. Let's have sex.

GIRL. OK.

HUSBAND. I'm serious.

GIRL. I could tell right away that you're not joking. *(Starts to unbutton her dress.)*
Well?

HUSBAND. Right now?

GIRL. Certainly not tomorrow.

HUSBAND. Right here?

GIRL. Where else?

HUSBAND. Who will start first?

GIRL. Don't we have to do it together?

HUSBAND. Yes, but somebody has to take the initiative.

GIRL. You have already done it. You offered; I agreed. Now it's your turn again.

HUSBAND. What should I do?

GIRL. Do what you offered to do, I think.

HUSBAND. That would be great. But I don't know how to start.

GIRL. That's the most difficult part.

HUSBAND. What do you suggest?

GIRL. To tell the truth, I don't have any experience.

HUSBAND. You've never had an affair with a man?

GIRL. Never! But men sometimes had an affair with me.

HUSBAND. And how did they start?

GIRL. All sorts of ways.

HUSBAND. I think we're supposed to talk for a while first.

GIRL. What for?

HUSBAND. I don't know. That's how it's done.

GIRL. What should we talk about?

HUSBAND. I don't know. Books, movies, painting...

GIRL. And how long do we have to talk?

HUSBAND. I don't know. It depends.

GIRL. Why not to talk afterwards?

HUSBAND. We can talk afterwards, too, but somehow you don't want to anymore.

Usually the talk comes first.

GIRL. Well, if that's the way it's supposed to be, then talk. But make it quick.

Pause.

HUSBAND. Under other circumstances I would offer to take you out to a cafe.

GIRL. Thanks. I already had a cup of coffee today. I thought you were proposing something else.

HUSBAND. That offer remains valid.

GIRL. So, what's the matter?

HUSBAND. You see, sex should not begin from the end; it should begin from the beginning. There should be a resistance, there should be a struggle, and there should be a victory. That's what brings satisfaction.

GIRL. We have resistance. On your part.

HUSBAND. I'm not resisting.

GIRL. Oh really? Are you being aggressive, then? Well, I surrender. It's impossible to resist you. So, we've had resistance; we've had victory; now it's time for satisfaction.

HUSBAND. But first let's talk.

GIRL. Haven't we talked already?

HUSBAND. We haven't even started to talk.

GIRL. Is that so? Well then, let's talk.

Pause.

HUSBAND. What will we talk about?

GIRL. Tell me about your Don Juan list of conquests. I suppose it's incredibly long.

HUSBAND. Yes, I have a lot to tell ...

GIRL. Well, how many women have you had? Tell the truth. Twenty? Thirty? A hundred?

HUSBAND. Maybe more... (*After a pause.*) To tell the truth though, not quite that many.

GIRL. Well then, how many? Ten?

HUSBAND. Not quite.

GIRL. Less than ten? And you call that a list? Still, I want to know, how many? Nine? Eight?

HUSBAND. (*Reflecting*). Including my wife?

GIRL. On the Don Juan list? Absolutely not. You can only include women on the list; is your wife really a woman to you?

HUSBAND. Then... I have to admit... I... I don't have a Don Juan list. I mean, I do have a list, but there are no women on it.

GIRL. So get started it!

HUSBAND. Right here?

GIRL. Yes, right here, right now.

HUSBAND. You know, right here, just like that, it doesn't seem right.

GIRL. What do you mean, "just like that"?! We've already been talking for five or ten minutes now!

HUSBAND. That's not much. Imagine that you're about to start traveling across a country that is completely new to you. Is your purpose just to reach the final point? No. You will be looking forward to the whole journey, from beginning to end, over all the hills and valleys, cliffs and canyons, roads and trails. Or, if you open a new book, will you start reading from the last page? Without a beginning there is no plot, without a plot there is no climax. And do you think that the goal of a climber is just to be on top without making the climb? Without having to make an effort, without the climb, there is no summit point, no climax.

GIRL. I'll have a climax. But, of course, it depends on you to some extent. So let's have sex, finally!

HUSBAND. But we are already having it!

GIRL. Really? I am an inexperienced girl, and easy to fool, but it seems to me that we're doing something else.

HUSBAND. Sex is not what you think, it's not just the last fifteen minutes. It's not the curtain falling at the end of the last act; it's a drama that has to be played out from beginning to end. Words, gestures, looks, serenades, flowers, gifts, advances, retreats, proposals, evasions – they all are a part of the great game called sex. It's a ceremony, a series of rituals as old as the rutting of deer or the

mating dance of cranes. It is a way of life, the foundation of culture. Fine clothes are not just worn to be taken off at the right moment. The most refined rules of etiquette, novels and poems, the sighs of violins and songs of flutes, pictures and sculptures of the beautiful Venus – all of these are created to convey the yearning of body and soul.

GIRL. Listen...

HUSBAND. No, you listen to me! What an intricate interrelation of the sexes mankind has devised! Certain parts of the body are concealed. Different clothes for different sexes. Different standards of behavior for men and women. The “strong heroic man” and the “weak fragile woman.” Don’t you see that none of this is accidental? It all fits together, doesn’t it?

GIRL. Are you all right?

HUSBAND. What do you mean?

GIRL. You’re acting as though you’re from the century before last. You talk too much.

HUSBAND. You oversimplify life.

GIRL. And you make it too complicated. Sex is a very useful, very simple and very necessary thing. Unfortunately, people go about this simple, pleasant and useful act in complicated, roundabout ways and spend a lot of effort, time and money on it. Why not simply approach someone, give them a big smile, stretch your hand and say, “Let’s have sex!” Like saying, “Good morning” or “Good night.” And how can it be a good night without sex?

HUSBAND. You’re right.

GIRL. “Let’s have sex!” should be used as a greeting. What better way to express an openness and willingness to make contact?

HUSBAND. You’re right. And what would be the response to this greeting?

GIRL. Something casual. Like, “Thanks, my pleasure.” Or, “Always at your service.” Or just, “Sure.”

HUSBAND. And how would we say goodbye?

GIRL. There’s no need to change anything. The words “See you later” already have a certain sexual connotation. You can hear in them a promise of something sweet, intimate, and long awaited At least I can. (*Speaks quietly to herself.*)
“See you later”

HUSBAND. See you later. (*Goes toward the exit.*)

GIRL. Where are you going?

HUSBAND. You said, "See you later."

GIRL. (*Stopping him.*) I was talking to myself. I swear, you *are* crazy.

HUSBAND. I'm completely normal. Maybe a bit old-fashioned, that's all.

GIRL. That *is* crazy. But we've talked enough. Now it's high time to do something!
We live in a time of action. If you're not always running to keep up, you'll fall behind.

HUSBAND. (*Anxiously.*) Who can outdo me?

GIRL. Anybody! You talk, talk, talk, and meanwhile someone will come and snatch me from under your very nose.

HUSBAND. (*Scared.*) Will you leave with him?

GIRL. If someone takes me, I'll leave. I'm a young, inexperienced girl, I don't know how to resist.

HUSBAND. Please – don't leave!

GIRL. Well, alright. You said that we have to have some kind of foreplay. Let's play then. Pretend this is not the first time we've met, but the second.

HUSBAND. And then what?

GIRL. When we meet the second time, we don't necessarily have to talk. The formalities are over, and we can get right to the main act.

HUSBAND. No, I can't do it. Sex is an art, an act of creation ...

GIRL. So let's procreate!

HUSBAND. But at least tell me something about yourself first. What's your name, what are your interests...

GIRL. I don't have any interests. I'm a young, inexperienced girl – pure, enthusiastic, and romantic – who is interested only in sex.

HUSBAND. And nothing else?

GIRL. What "else" is there? (*Thinks.*) Maybe, also math.

HUSBAND. Mathematics?

GIRL. I once calculated that at any given moment at least ten million people in the world are having sex. Think of that! While we're talking now and wasting time, at this very moment five million couples pairs all over the world are doing what you and me are not doing. If you laid them all out in a straight line six feet apart – the width of a king-size bed – they would form a chain over five thousand miles long! Can you imagine that? A cosmic process! A factory! It takes my breath away!

HUSBAND. Mine too.

GIRL. So let's join them!

HUSBAND. Right here?

GIRL. Right here, right now. Hurry! We don't have much time, you know!

The HUSBAND hesitantly approaches the Girl, but suddenly shudders and listens in fear.

HUSBAND. Hush!

GIRL. (*Frightened*). What?

HUSBAND. Somebody's coming!

Both listen.

GIRL. I just knew that this would happen!

HUSBAND. Hush!

Both listen. Silence.

GIRL. There is no one coming. Hurry, let's do it! Otherwise it will be too late.

HUSBAND. Maybe later? Not now and not here?

GIRL. Are you afraid?

HUSBAND. Aren't you?

GIRL. To tell the truth, I am. But you have to take the chance sometime. You have to prove sometime that you have the right to do what you want.

HUSBAND. Maybe tomorrow?

GIRL. And tomorrow you won't be afraid?

HUSBAND. I'll never stop being afraid. I'm afraid all the time. I'm afraid to make a mistake. To say sometime wrong. Take the wrong bus. Shake the wrong hand. Take the wrong side. Bet on the wrong horse. Everybody is climbing, climbing, climbing, and I'm afraid I can't keep up. I don't have the elbows, claws and teeth to make my way through the jungle. I'm afraid of tomorrow. I'm afraid of next Friday. I wait in fear of next month. I'm afraid I'll lose my job. I'm afraid I'll get sick. I'm afraid of women. I'm afraid of old age. I'm afraid to die. And even more afraid to live.

GIRL. Calm down.

HUSBAND. And this damn money. Money, money, money! It's all anyone thinks, talks and cares about. Wives don't want love from their husbands, just money. That alone is enough to drive you crazy.

GIRL. Aren't you afraid to always be afraid?

HUSBAND. Of course I am. Don't you see what's going on all around? Every day is the same, without purpose and without hope. Nothing changes, and if it does change, then it's only for the worse. We are caught in a net and flop around like fish; we open our mouths to scream, but nothing comes out; nobody hears. We keep running just to stay in place – round and round in the same wheel, in the same cage, today just like yesterday, tomorrow just like today, the day after tomorrow just like always. We struggle to make our way up, up, up. Up the down escalator. All the time we have no time. We want to have time to do everything we want to do, to make all the money we want to have. We reach out, clutch hold and scramble up. We're almost there, so close, just one more step, just a little more effort – grab it, take it! But there is nothing to grab because you can't hold on to happiness. That's how we spend our lives; you can never get those years back. And what is it all for, what for? You want to run away from this life, run as fast as you can. But you just don't have the strength to do it. You start to get out of breath; you stop, look back and think. You get scared, and then you start running again. So let's run away. There's no time left!

GIRL. You think too much. You shouldn't think. There is no tomorrow. There is only today. Don't think, OK?

HUSBAND. You think that we shouldn't think?

GIRL. I think we should run away, that's all.

HUSBAND. Where to?

GIRL. The important thing is not where to, but where from. Away from the place that we hate, away from here. Here where nothing is possible, where everything is forbidden, everything has to be by the rules and according to schedule. We'll escape to a better world, where everyone is free, where nothing is forbidden, where there's not a ceiling overhead, but a big high blue sky with big white clouds floating by. Where people laugh; where they're happy, and sing and dance; they're cheerful and never sick, and nobody tells them how to live or what they have to do.

HUSBAND. Is there really such a world?

GIRL. Yes, it exists! It's a world where no one is afraid, where everybody goes to bed whenever they want to, with whomever they want to; where there is plenty of sun and plenty of sex. Where no one is boss and everyone is happy.

HUSBAND. And where will we live without money?

GIRL. Wherever we want! We'll live on a bench. In the bushes. On a soft green meadow. In a boat. Yes, in a boat! We'll lie in it, embracing, and it will rock gently and carry us away, always to somewhere new. A brass band will meet us on every pier, and the music will ring out, and they'll shower us with flowers, and we'll drift and drift and have sex, and we'll go so far that nobody will ever find us.

HUSBAND.... Nobody will ever find us OK, let's do it!

GIRL. When?

HUSBAND. Right now.

GIRL. Perfect. Wait here for me. I'll go get a glass of water, take a tranquilizer, and then we'll be ready to go.

HUSBAND. Just come right back, otherwise I'll start thinking again.

GIRL. And what then?

HUSBAND. I'll start having second thoughts and change my mind.

GIRL. I forbid you to think. You understand? Follow my example.

HUSBAND. I'll try.

GIRL. Sit here, don't move, don't do anything and don't think. I'll be right back, and we'll begin a new life!

The GIRL goes out. The HUSBAND waits for her impatiently. There can be an intermission here. The HUSBAND can stay on the stage, waiting for the GIRL.

PART TWO

The action between the first and second acts can proceed without an intermission.

GIRL. Perfect. Wait here for me. I'll go get a glass of water, take a tranquilizer, and then we'll be ready to go.

HUSBAND. Just come right back, otherwise I'll start thinking again.

GIRL. And what then?

HUSBAND. I'll start having second thoughts and change my mind.

GIRL. I forbid you to think. You understand? Follow my example.

HUSBAND. I'll try.

GIRL. Sit here, don't move, don't do anything and don't think. I'll be right back, and we'll begin a new life!

The GIRL exits. The HUSBAND waits for her impatiently. The PROFESSOR enters.

PROFESSOR. Let's have sex.

HUSBAND. Thanks, my pleasure.

Pause.

PROFESSOR. Well?

HUSBAND. What?

PROFESSOR. I'm waiting to see what will follow your "thanks".

HUSBAND. I thought it was a greeting.

PROFESSOR. No, it was a business offer. So?

HUSBAND. I'm willing.

PROFESSOR. Then we'll get started.

HUSBAND. *(Looking around)*. I don't see any women here.

PROFESSOR. We can manage perfectly well without them.

HUSBAND. Without women?!

PROFESSOR. Certainly. There's you, there's me, so there is a couple. What else do we need?

HUSBAND. I beg your pardon, but who are you?

PROFESSOR. I am a world-famous professor of psychiatry, psychology and sociology. A sexologist and sex pathologist. Treatment, consulting, lecturing. I get rid of complexes, inspire self-confidence, free people of their inhibitions. I cure frigidity and impotence. I satisfy the unsatisfied. It's very hard work. Lots of calls. I get very tired.

HUSBAND. I'm not sure I understand exactly what you are offering concretely.

PROFESSOR. To have sex. What could be more concretely?

HUSBAND. Professor, with all due respect to you, to your wisdom, knowledge and age, to your gray hair and infinite understanding, you are no substitute for a woman to me.

PROFESSOR. Tell me, are you an intelligent person?

HUSBAND. I hope so.

PROFESSOR. Very well. Tell me, what is the most important thing in a partner for you – the body or the soul?

HUSBAND. The soul, certainly.

PROFESSOR. Then what difference does it make what body this soul has, male or female?

HUSBAND. For me – a very big difference.

PROFESSOR. Imagine a kindred soul so fine, sublime, gifted, intellectual, sympathetic ...

HUSBAND. I have been searching for such a soul for a very long time. But this soul should inhabit a nice body, not too skinny and not too plump. And it is also important to me that this soul would have a normal woman's breasts, slender legs and blue eyes.

PROFESSOR. In other words, you're against homosexual love?

HUSBAND. Absolutely. But I can understand lesbians. Who wouldn't be attracted to a blushing, soft, gentle, fresh, supple, appetizing, young female body. But any attraction to a man is unnatural.

PROFESSOR. But, you see, some women find men to be rather attractive.

HUSBAND. A perversion. Women will always have their follies.

PROFESSOR. Well, I'll find you a woman. By the way, I have just been talking to two ladies.

HUSBAND. So have I.

PROFESSOR. I have every reason to believe that they will not object.

HUSBAND. They're willing.

PROFESSOR. Which do you prefer - a plump blonde or a slim brunette?

HUSBAND. That's a hard choice. What did you say, "a slim blonde or a plump brunette"?

PROFESSOR. No, the other way around – a plump blonde or a slim brunette.

HUSBAND. I would prefer a compromise.

PROFESSOR. Namely?

HUSBAND. A slender redhead.

PROFESSOR. And I thought you would choose both.

HUSBAND. That's a good idea. Where are the women?

PROFESSOR. I don't know. Let's get back to the subject. What I am offering is not a coarse carnal act, but an educational process. In other words, I give lessons. Treatment, consulting, lecturing.

HUSBAND. What is there to lecture about?

PROFESSOR. How can you even ask that? Sex is a kind of transaction. And, as in any transaction, you must be considerate, discreet, skillful, and most important, persuasive. Are you persuasive in sex?

HUSBAND. I don't know what to say ...

PROFESSOR. Don't hesitate to admit your weakness. Such shyness is a prejudice. Unfortunately, our society has not yet freed itself of its primitive values. Why isn't shameful to be a fool, an alcoholic, or a cheat, but it is to be impotent? If you don't have a leg or an eye, if you are short-sighted, skinny or fat, if you are stupid and rude, it is not shameful. If you can't support your family, it's pardonable. But woe to you if you're incapable of this one thing. You must hide it from everyone... (*Sighs.*) But, if you think about it, who cares, really, except your girlfriend?

HUSBAND. As for me, I'm OK, I think. But I want to be successful. Earn a lot of money. I work hard, I'm very busy. I think a lot. There's no time left for sex. And, to tell the truth, no strength either.

PROFESSOR. That's just your mistake. You're busy, but not with the right things. Only sex makes us all equal, only sex frees us from feeling inferior to the arrogant highbrow elite. If you're sure of yourself as a man, you will be sure in everything else.

HUSBAND. You think so?

PROFESSOR. I don't think so, I know so. Success requires an enormous effort. You have to study for a long time, struggle, strive, push others aside, grit your teeth, pay your dues and kiss ass. The only self-affirmation you get is from sex. It makes you feel strong, important, necessary, and even superior, without studying anything, without knowing anything, without any intelligence or talent. So you can enjoy life. That is the advantage of sex over anything else you can do. If you are successful in sex, you can't be a loser. And, vice versa, if you're a failure at sex, nothing goes right. (*Bitterly*). Believe me, I know.

HUSBAND. There's some truth to what you're saying.

PROFESSOR. The naked truth. I'm willing to teach you for twenty years and then you'll see that... (*Suddenly presses his hand to his chest, groans and falls into an armchair.*)

HUSBAND. What's wrong?

PROFESSOR. My heart...

HUSBAND. Do you have your pills?

PROFESSOR. (*Breathes heavily.*) Usually, a sister comes and gives me a shot.

HUSBAND. Should I call the sister?

PROFESSOR. (*Hastily*). No, don't do that! I'll feel better soon... Or maybe not. (*Pause*). My life is over - and what is there for me to remember? If I could start my life all over I wouldn't want to. In kindergarten I dreamed of going to school as soon as possible. At school I dreamed of finishing it as soon as possible. At the university I dreamed of being on my own as soon as possible. At work I dreamed of retirement since my first day on the job. When I got married, I dreamed of divorce. Whenever I had sex with a woman, I dreamed of another woman and different sex. All my life I dreamed of another life. What now? Start all over and live the same life, dreaming of something else?

HUSBAND. So you too dream of another life and different sex?

PROFESSOR. Not of different sex anymore. Once I had it every day. Then every other day. Then once a week. Then once a month. I can't understand it: as the years

go by, I have more and more skill and experience, but for some reason less desire. There is more and more theory and less and less practice. Why is that? And, you know, my work is very hard. Lots of calls. I get very tired.

HUSBAND. So do I.

PROFESSOR. I'm too old for this kind of work. When I was younger the hand of my clock stood at ten or eleven, and now it barely reaches eight. To tell the truth, it stopped at six a long time ago I try to remember now and I can't – when was it?

HUSBAND. When was what?

PROFESSOR. When was the last time I had sex?

HUSBAND. Did you ever have it?

PROFESSOR. Oh yes, lots of it. At lectures and in libraries. At seminars and conferences. But even that was a long, long time ago.

HUSBAND. Don't give up.

PROFESSOR. Yes, my friend, everything in the world has changed for me now. There are juicy steaks, but no teeth. Beautiful women, but no money. There is a rich past, but no future. There is everything, but there is nothing. Soon I too will not be. *(He clutches his chest again and groans.)*

HUSBAND. Maybe I should call the sister?

PROFESSOR. *(Scared)*. No! *(Pause)*. People used to believe that a guardian angel watches over us all our life. But at the appointed hour he abandons us, and the angel of death takes his place. What do you think does he look like?

HUSBAND. I don't know... An old woman dressed in black, holding a scythe... Or a grinning skeleton. What do you think?

PROFESSOR. Sometimes I feel death so very close, but I can't see it. Maybe, it comes in the guise of an ordinary soldier with a tommy-gun, or a surgeon with a scalpel, or a sister with a syringe...

HUSBAND. *(Echoes him.)* Yes, a sister with a syringe...

PROFESSOR. The worst thing is that it's always near. It may knock on the door at any minute. Wave the scythe. Press the trigger. Stick in the needle. *(Quietly.)* Look, is that her?

HUSBAND. *(Frightened)*. Who? The sister with the syringe?

PROFESSOR. *(Whispering)*. I'm afraid she has already come.

HUSBAND. Where?

PROFESSOR. I don't know. I always have the feeling she's somewhere close by, behind my back, watching me.

HUSBAND. (*Whispering*). Me too.

PROFESSOR. Go see.

HUSBAND. (*Looks around the room and checks the exits.*) There's nobody here.

PROFESSOR. Thank God. (*Sighs*). We must hurry up and live before she puts her hand on our shoulder. And what are we doing? How are we using the hours we have left? Do you ever wonder: where do all the days go away? Meanwhile And meanwhile she may come at any moment, this witch with her syringe.

HUSBAND. Yes, there's nowhere to hide from her. I keep thinking about her myself.

PROFESSOR. (*His hand on his chest, listens to himself.*) I think I'm getting better... (*Gets up from the armchair, cautiously takes a few steps and quickly cheers up.*) We'll still get by for a while! Forgive me for this moment of weakness, this attack of fleeting pessimism! There are so many pleasures in the world! A good steak, a glass of red wine, the sun, women, flowers! Life is fine, my friend! Especially if there's sex in it! By the way, I forgot to ask, who are you and what are you doing here?

HUSBAND. Me?... I... uh

PROFESSOR. It's not at all important, though. What's important is that both of us are young and healthy. We must hurry up and live! Let's sing, let's dance! Turn on the music!

A fiery tango starts to play.

Wonderful! Superb! Perfect! Listen to me: I have a splendid idea...

GIRL. (*Entering*). Let's have sex.

PROFESSOR. That is just what I was going to say. Would you like to dance, and we can discuss the details.

The PROFESSOR and the GIRL dance.

GIRL. Which details interest you?

PROFESSOR. What, where, when.

GIRL. Sex, here, now.

PROFESSOR. With whom?

GIRL. With you.

The HUSBAND breaks in and starts dancing with the GIRL.

HUSBAND. What were you talking about?

GIRL. The professor was interested in the details of my offer.

HUSBAND. I'm interested in them too.

GIRL. I'm ready to reveal them. *(She makes a provocative move.)*

HUSBAND. Very impressive details.

GIRL. And the entire offer?

Now the PROFESSOR breaks in and dances with the GIRL. During the subsequent dialogue she passes from one partner to another.

PROFESSOR. Which of us is your offer addressed to?

GIRL. Both of you.

PROFESSOR. Together or one after the other?

GIRL. Do you really think I'm that depraved?

PROFESSOR. So, one after the other?

GIRL. So, together.

HUSBAND. You're kidding!

GIRL. Not at all. To have sex with two people one after the other is deceit and infidelity. To do it together is honest, interesting and fun.

HUSBAND. I'll have to think about that.

GIRL. Again? You're thinking again? *(Passing to the Professor.)* And what about you?

PROFESSOR. As I understand, you propose a group dance.

GIRL. You think it's better to do it alone?

HUSBAND. Together, you and me, just the two of us.

GIRL. Two, three, four together – what's the difference? Just not to be alone, never be alone...

HUSBAND. But think about this: while one lady is being entertained by two men at once here, maybe another woman somewhere is left all alone.

GIRL. So call her here!

HUSBAND. *(Perplexed.)* Whom?

GIRL. The woman, so we can all be lonely together.

HUSBAND. I was speaking hypothetically; I didn't mean anyone in particular.

GIRL. Never mind. Go and find her. *Cherchez la femme!*

The HUSBAND and the PROFESSOR exit. The WIFE enters.

WIFE. Let's have sex.

GIRL. OK.

Pause.

WIFE. But who is there to do it with?

GIRL. Don't you know?

WIFE. No.

GIRL. So why did you say, "Let's have sex"?

WIFE. I thought you might know.

GIRL. If I knew, I wouldn't be sitting here alone.

WIFE. Did you offer yourself to anybody?

GIRL. To everybody.

WIFE. And?

GIRL. No result.

WIFE. Maybe they were afraid you would ask for money?

GIRL. No, I explained I was ready to do it for free.

WIFE. And?

GIRL. Same result.

WIFE. Did you offer *them* money?

GIRL. No. Only myself.

WIFE. That was your mistake.

GIRL. I know.

WIFE. You should have offered to pay.

GIRL. I know. But I don't have any money. That's the problem.

WIFE. When you have money, you don't have to look for men. They will look for you.

GIRL. Nobody looks for me.

WIFE. That's too bad. We need to have a family, house, money, social status. And for all this we need a man.

GIRL. Where can we find a man like that?

WIFE. Such a man simply doesn't exist. That's why it's better to have several of them.

GIRL. I know. But I don't have money. I have only myself.

WIFE. What do you do at work?

GIRL. I do my work, what else.

WIFE. I mean what work? Sex?

GIRL. No. Work is when you do something that you don't want to do, but you get paid for.

WIFE. Sometimes men pay for sex.

GIRL. They don't pay me.

WIFE. Me either.

Pause.

WIFE. Are you married?

GIRL. No.

WIFE. That's too bad. A woman should be married. I would like to be married, but without a husband.

GIRL. For me it's not important to be married, but I want a husband.

Pause.

I wonder why women are so unlucky nowadays? It seems like the more progress we make, the less happy we are.

WIFE. I think we just can't compete with computers. We're not as smart and contain less information.

GIRL. And we are less exciting than a picture on the screen.

WIFE. Maybe women were not created just for sex?

GIRL. (*Indignant*). What do you mean "not for sex"? For what then? Why do we have our earrings, bracelets, chains, necklaces, brooches, and rings? Why the perfume, creams, powder, mascara, and lipstick? What are the combs, tweezers, scissors, and hairpins for? Only to attract, to entice, to be liked! To be liked for what? For just one thing! We were created for sex, we live for it. That is why we should dedicate ourselves completely to this purpose, one hundred percent, not missing a single day, hour or minute!

WIFE. But there are exceptions...

GIRL. No exceptions. Even the driest, strictest, coldest, prudish old maid is a walking sexpot.

WIFE. You're right. (*After a pause*). Maybe I'm just not attractive?

GIRL. (*Puts on glasses and looks at the Wife.*) No, you are still quite something.

WIFE. Do you like what you see?

GIRL. Yes.

WIFE. Maybe, we can get by without men? Since they are nowhere to be found....

GIRL. No, I can't have it that way. But I can understand gay men, though. Who wouldn't be attracted to a strong, muscular, young male body. But a female body ... No way. (*Removes glasses.*)

WIFE. You wear glasses?

GIRL. I only put them on when I'm having sex. So I can see everything.

WIFE. What is there to see?

GIRL. Sex should involve all of the sense organs. Eyes. Ears. Nose. Hands. Legs. Skin. So I carry glasses in my bag all the time, to be ready. To tell you the truth, I haven't yet had a chance to put them on. It's my dream – to put on the glasses, close my eyes and enjoy.

WIFE. You are crazy.

GIRL. No, I'm just enthusiastic and romantic. I keep searching. Not a day without a line.. Not an hour without an adventure. And I'm still bored. I'm tired of searching. I want to have something constant and steady. Steady sex. Every day. Every hour. Sex early in the morning. Sex late in the morning. Sex at work. Sex on lunch break. Sex in the bus on the way home. Sex in the evening in front of the TV. Sex in bed before going to sleep. Sex in the shower. Sex in my sleep. Sex before. Sex after.

WIFE. After what?

GIRL. After everything. Before everything. Instead of everything. Always. Everywhere. With everybody. (*Sighs*). If I didn't know that I'm already crazy, I'd think I'm losing my mind.

WIFE. So you love to love?

GIRL. Oh yes! If I could, I would love all the men in the world!

WIFE. Why do you love sex so much?

GIRL. How can you not love it? Sex is the opposite of loneliness. Sex means two people together. At least two. That's already a salvation. It's the culmination and embodiment of intimacy. Besides, I love sex because it helps to satisfy our main need – to talk. To my heart's content, openly, frankly. That's why it is called "intimate relations." A unique opportunity to tell everything about yourself. And to listen too, but the most important thing is to tell someone else. How it's going between you and him. How it's going between you and others.

How it's going between him and others. How it's going between others and others.

WIFE. He and I don't talk while we're doing it.

GIRL. And afterwards?

WIFE. Afterwards? What is there to talk about afterwards?

PROFESSOR (*Entering.*) Girls, there is no need to talk afterwards, before, or instead.

Stop talking, stop wasting time, let's have sex.

GIRL. Thanks, my pleasure.

PROFESSOR. Then sit down, get out your notebooks, and we shall start.

GIRL. I am willing to do it sitting down, but what are the notebooks for?

PROFESSOR. For taking notes.

GIRL. Taking notes? I'll remember everything without any notes.

WIFE. As for me, I have no desire for group lessons. And besides, I'm jealous.

PROFESSOR. My dear, you're out of fashion. Jealousy has been out of date for a long time now. Even a brainless hen isn't jealous. How can an educated woman of the twenty-first century talk about being jealous?

GIRL. The hen is not jealous because it's her nature to bring up her chicks without a husband, and therefore she doesn't need him. People raise their children together, and that is why jealousy is genetically inherent in a woman. Necessary or not, reasonable or not, we are jealous.

PROFESSOR. With all due respect, I must say that you display surprising erudition and intelligence for such a young, inexperienced girl.

WIFE. And besides, you just promised to run away with me.

GIRL. And with me, too.

PROFESSOR. It's very strange. As soon as I offer to have sex, everybody wants to run away. But I'm ready. Let's go!

GIRL. Let's go who?

PROFESSOR. Both of you. Let's run!

All three run after each other around the room. The HUSBAND enters and joins the run. After a few rounds, he stops.

HUSBAND. (*Panting.*) Enough running. It would be better to have sex.

THE GIRL, WIFE AND PROFESSOR. (*Stopping and catching their breath.*) Thanks, my pleasure.

PROFESSOR. By the way, we have already met today.

HUSBAND. Better to greet each other twice, than not at all. Where are you running to?

PROFESSOR. We aren't running, we're talking

HUSBAND. About what?

GIRL. About sex, of course.

HUSBAND. Why do we only talk about sex all the time? I'm sick of it. Let's talk about something else.

GIRL. What?

HUSBAND. I don't know. Just not about that.

WIFE. I agree. I'm tired of it too. Not a word about sex!

PROFESSOR. It's settled then.

Pause.

WIFE. What will we talk about?

HUSBAND. About something intelligent. Like normal people.

GIRL. (*With enthusiasm.*) Sure!

Pause.

WIFE. Let's talk! Let's have a clever and cheerful conversation. OK?

GIRL. That's what I've dreamed about for a long time.

PROFESSOR. So have I.

Pause.

HUSBAND. It's pleasant to talk about something intelligent, isn't it?

PROFESSOR. (*With enthusiasm.*) It certainly is!

GIRL. Sure!

Pause.

WIFE. Well, why are you all so quiet?

GIRL. What about you?

WIFE. I just don't know how to start. (*To the Professor.*) You begin, you're the professor, aren't you?

PROFESSOR. M-m... Well, to tell you the truth, being a professor I have gotten used to talking only on professional subjects.

GIRL. And what is your profession?

PROFESSOR. You know - sex. I can talk about sex forever.

WIFE. No, sex is a forbidden subject.

GIRL. (*Sighing*). Yes, it's prohibited

WIFE. Naturally. So we agreed.

Pause.

HUSBAND. Well, I can start.

Everyone prepares to listen.

Mm-mm... One day a husband unexpectedly comes home early and finds his wife with a lo...

WIFE. (*Interrupting*). Stop! We have agreed to speak only of intelligent things. And no sex.

HUSBAND. About intelligent things? Well then... (*After thinking a bit*). One day an intelligent husband comes home early and finds his intelligent wife in bed with a very intelligent lover...

Pause.

WIFE. And what then?

HUSBAND. Nothing. He found out a lot of new things that day.

Pause.

PROFESSOR. Who else wants to talk about something intelligent?

Pause.

Is it possible that no one has anything to say about literature, theater, music?

GIRL. To tell the truth, the literature doesn't interest me.

WIFE. And I don't like music.

HUSBAND. I know nothing about theatre.

PROFESSOR. So I must conclude that in modern society where everyone is equal in their lack of culture, the only subject that always interests absolutely everybody, that everyone loves and understands is sex.

WIFE. Well, if we can't talk about intelligent things, let everyone talk about what's interesting for them.

Pause.

GIRL. I wonder what else can be interesting, other than sex?

Pause.

For example, I'm interested to know if sex can ever be uninteresting.

WIFE. It happens.

PROFESSOR. To be honest, nothing interests me anymore. Not even sex.

GIRL. I am not interested in sex either. But sex is interested in me. Very much so.

WIFE. We have slipped into sex again. Can't we talk about anything else?

GIRL. (*Glumly.*) About something intelligent?

PROFESSOR. Only about intelligent things.

Pause.

WIFE. Let's talk about love. May we speak about love?

PROFESSOR. About love? Certainly.

GIRL. Why can we speak of love, and not sex? Aren't they both the same thing?

PROFESSOR. Absolutely not.

GIRL. In my opinion, "love" is simply an ancient word for sex.

HUSBAND. The word "sex" was probably censored back then, and the word "love" was used instead.

GIRL. No. Love, it seems to me, is some other thing. I don't remember exactly what. We studied about it at school... It's something that took place in the distant past.

WIFE. So what's the difference between them?

PROFESSOR. Well, what's important in love is the partner, while in sex it's the process.

GIRL. What if the partner is good and the process is bad?

PROFESSOR. Besides, it's thought that women prefer love, while men prefer sex.

GIRL. That's not true. I am a young, inexperienced girl, and I don't know what men prefer. But I do know what women want.

HUSBAND. Professor, what's better – sex or love?

PROFESSOR. Sex, without a doubt. Sex is good for your health, while love is harmful.

WIFE. Why?

PROFESSOR. Love involves too many negative emotions. Excitement, jealousy, demands, depression, excuses and whatnot, while sex provides only pure

pleasure. Love leaves us with distressing memories, taut nerves and bitter disappointment, while sex only creates pleasant exhaustion and a strong appetite.

HUSBAND. And besides, love takes up a lot of time. All these conversations, bouquets, walks, talks, invitations, presents... Who can afford it nowadays? Who can find even a free half hour? Having sex only takes a few minutes.

GIRL. Yes, sex is somehow more modern.

HUSBAND. Look, what an intelligent conversation we are having!

GIRL. And not at all about sex!

WIFE. (*Nervously*). The problem is that we're only talking again. And wasting time.

HUSBAND. What else can we do?

WIFE. I don't know. I only know that we have to do something. Are any of you pleased with your life?

Pause.

I'm asking all of you, are you pleased with your life?

PROFESSOR. No.

GIRL. No.

HUSBAND. No.

WIFE. So why are we sitting here, chattering and pretending to be happy?

GIRL. Who pretends? I don't.

HUSBAND. But what can we do?

WIFE. What I proposed a long time ago – run away.

GIRL. We can't escape from ourselves.

WIFE. So what can we do?

GIRL. We have to act, we have to finally change something. It doesn't matter what. Wreck it, break it, set it on fire. I don't know about you, but I'd love to do something like that.

WIFE. We all would.

PROFESSOR. We must unite. We must rise up! All of us together.

GIRL. Yes, unite!

HUSBAND. It's not so easy. We are all so different...

PROFESSOR. We'll come together! Develop a common platform...

GIRL. What platform? Leave that for later. The only way to come together quickly is sex. People can sit in the same office for a hundred years, meet each other at parties, drink together and go to picnics every weekend, but that won't make them as close as a single night spent together!

HUSBAND. (*Excited*). So let's come together!

PROFESSOR. Right! Sex is the only language that everyone understands and enjoys, from Eskimos to Mongols. That's why it brings peace, mutual understanding and goodwill. Long live sex!

GIRL. (*Pulls the tablecloth off the table, attaches it to a mop and swings it like a banner.*) Hurrah!

GIRL. Freedom - now!

HUSBAND. (*Jumps up on the table.*) Long live the revolution!

WIFE. We have nothing to lose, but our chains!

GIRL. Genitals of the world, unite!

The SISTER enters, carrying a box of medicines.

SISTER. Let's have... (*Stops*). What's wrong with you? What's happened?

Pause. The HUSBAND climbs down from the table, the GIRL lowers the flag. Everyone is tense.

WIFE. Nothing happened.

SISTER. Why are you all you looking at me like that?

GIRL. We're looking the way we normally look.

SISTER. "Normally?"

WIFE. Who are you and what are you doing here?

SISTER. You know perfectly well who am I. So stop talking. We'd better have ... (*To the Girl, who has made an impatient movement.*) What? Do you object?

GIRL. Me? Not at all.

SISTER. Good. So let's have our evening treatment.

PROFESSOR. We don't want it.

SISTER. My dear, if we can't live the way we want, we all have to live the best we can.

GIRL. We don't, we can't, and we won't.

SISTER. You have to.

WIFE. Nobody has to do anything.

SISTER. Come on now, let's be good little boys and girls.

HUSBAND. We're already good enough.

SISTER. You want me to use force?

WIFE. Forget about force. It's on our side!

GIRL. I have an idea! We'll give *her* a shot. It will calm her down.

WIFE. Do you know how?

GIRL. What's there to know? You think I never shot up?

SISTER. What is this – Mutiny on the Bounty?

GIRL. We told you – no treatment today.

WIFE. Or tomorrow.

HUSBAND. Not ever.

PROFESSOR. We are free people.

SISTER. There is no freedom. Duty, self-control and discipline are required everywhere.

WIFE. Stop this lecturing. We don't know you and don't want to.

SISTER. But I know you very well.

GIRL. What do you know about us?

SISTER. You have seen that people are malicious. Selfish. Aggressive. Stupid. You were deceived, hated, used and abandoned. And you decided to run from life. Didn't you?

GIRL. Go away, we don't like you.

SISTER. That's because I am your mirror. A mirror you don't want to look into. But I'll still make you look into it.

WIFE. (*Ironically*). I wonder what I'll see there.

SISTER. You'll see yourself. Look closely. You imagine yourself being somebody's wife, even though you're not married and never were. An old maid with complexes. You read a lot of novels about unhappy marriages and you fuss about how you're tired of family life and of your nonexistent husband. But do you know how hard it really is to see your tired, apathetic husband every night, with that perpetually dissatisfied look on his face? In your case history it says that you're a virgin. That alone is enough to drive you crazy. If it's true, you really do need sex therapy. So stop complaining and find yourself a husband. If you can.

WIFE. (*Gloomily*). It's easy for you to say.

SISTER. A woman should be inviting, alluring. But you wear a tired scowl on your face; it makes you look like you just drank some vinegar. And you expect to attract men looking like that?

WIFE. And how do you think I should do it?

SISTER. Fewer complaints and more cosmetics. More lipstick and smiles. A shorter skirt, and a lower neckline. If you want to run from men, run, but don't run so fast that they can't catch you. Push them away, but do it so that they hold you even tighter. Resist, but only to make the conquest more pleasing for them. Refuse, but in a way that makes it clear you will give in. Be cold, only so that he will warm you up and not you freeze him. .

GIRL. Every schoolgirl knows that lesson. Even I do.

SISTER. (*To the Girl*). And you, "a young, romantic, inexperienced girl" ... Have you forgotten that you have already been married three times? Three times! A normal woman can't even endure one marriage. Did you drive your husbands crazy, or vice versa – I don't know. And you keep wondering, "Why do they always leave me? What is there about me that others don't like? Are all these men to blame for abandoning me, or is it my own fault?" And so you invent a new biography for yourself, trying to deceive others and, most of all, yourself. But does it work?

PROFESSOR. Maybe you're the one inventing a new biography, not her?

SISTER. By the way, professor... Tell me, how are you going to run away in your condition? Your children got rid of you, there is nobody to look after you, and you are going crazy with your loneliness and their ingratitude.... Who is waiting for you and where? Sit here quietly, eat your mashed vegetables, and lecture on the theory of sex. You won't find anyone to listen to you anywhere else. Besides, if I am not mistaken, you are not professor at all, but a former high school English teacher. But no one can make a living teaching literature nowadays, it has gone out of fashion. Sex is far more popular, so you've declared yourself a sexologist. (*To the Husband*). And you, young man, I advise you to marry.

HUSBAND. Me?

SISTER. Your former wife – no, not this woman here, another one – threw you out of the house so you wouldn't bother her and her lover. Since then you've been afraid of all women. You're afraid that they will take away your freedom. That

they will want you to marry them. That they will be unfaithful and leave you. That they will take up all your time and spend all your money. That they will make you quarrel with your mother and come between you and your friends. That you will be bored and unhappy with them.... Stop being afraid of life! Be strong. Though in this life it's harder to be strong than to be weak...

HUSBAND. But I thought...

SISTER. Stop thinking. Thinking is dangerous. Learn to live without thinking. Don't think what will happen in ten years. Or in one year. Or tomorrow. Learn to live today. Don't think, don't think, don't think. Every one of us should say this to himself ten times a day. "Tomorrow" is a bad word. Tomorrow we may be ruined. Lose our job. Get sick. Die. If you think of all of this, it can drive you crazy.

WIFE. You have an interesting tale to tell about each of us, but what about you? If you're a mirror, would you like to look into it yourself?

SISTER. No.

WIFE. Then we'll help you do it. (*Brings a mirror to the Sister's face.*) Who do you see?

The SISTER does not answer.

Don't want to say? So I'll tell *you*. First of all, you're not a sister.

THE SISTER. That's lie. Who am I, then?

WIFE. I don't know. Someone who likes to make up stories about other people, a tired, sick woman who, for some reason, thinks she is a sister. And why would we even care who you are?

PROFESSOR. (*To the Sister*). I suppose you think we're in an asylum? That's absurd. I could just as easily say that it's a hotel.

GIRL. Or a resort.

WIFE. Or that we're at home.

HUSBAND. Or at work at the office.

PROFESSOR. So stop lecturing us and trying to cure us.

WIFE. Take care of your own problems. We're going to run away from here.

SISTER. Where to?

HUSBAND. To a better place.

SISTER. You have no place to go. There's nowhere better, everywhere is only worse.

Here, everywhere, and always.

GIRL. We'll run away anyway.

SISTER. You will never get away from here. You are not so crazy that you want to return to the world of normal people. That world is a big madhouse full of emptiness and violence.

PROFESSOR. How can something be "full of emptiness"?

SISTER. It is. And stop deceiving yourselves. You're sick and you know it.

HUSBAND. So what should we do?

SISTER. (*Wearily*). Go to sleep. It's late.

Nobody moves.

Well, why don't you go?

HUSBAND. I don't want to stay alone in my room.

PROFESSOR. Neither do I.

SISTER. Go on. I'm very tired. I'm on duty tonight. It's going to be a long, long night.... And I'll be alone. Worse than alone.

Nobody leaves.

WIFE. Can't you ever have even a few kind words for us?

The Sister keeps silent.

GIRL. Have pity on us. We're so lonely and miserable.

SISTER. Go on. Leave me alone.

Everybody reluctantly leaves. The SISTER remains alone.

You're lonely and miserable? I should have pity on you? Which one of you knows what real loneliness is like? Absolute, solitary loneliness? What do you know of true longing for real sex? Which of you understands true longing for real life? Do you understand what it means to be a sister in a place like this? To work with lunatics who you can't even talk to normally? To listen to their accusations and complaints and realize that it won't be long before I go crazy myself? Every morning I enter this mad, mad, mad world, and in the evening I go back to a world that seems even more insane. But I still have to work; I have to live. And what for? To give you your pills and shots and to feel your hatred? Do you know that I already take the same pills and I give myself the same shots? Because insanity is contagious, no matter what the doctors say.

Have pity on you? Yes, I understand you. You talk about sex, but it's actually your thirst for love and warmth. You're tired... You're tired of real life and try to find refuge in an imaginary world. If you only knew how well I understand! I'm tired too. I need some peace and quiet. Peace... Not to think. Not to plan. Not to hope in vain. Not to think...

Long pause, silence. The SISTER approaches one of the doors and knocks.

(Through a door.) Let's have sex.

No answer. The SISTER knocks more loudly and repeats.

Do you hear me? Let's have sex!

No answer. The SISTER approaches another door.

Do you hear me? Hey! Let's have sex!

No answer. The SISTER knocks at the next door. Then at the next one. No answer. Then the SISTER addresses to the audience (probably there is an invisible door between her and them).

Let's have sex!

The end