(As the play opens, Marie is wearing a flowery dress. Bruce is asleep, in his pajamas. Marie has just gotten up. It is morning.)

MARIE (to audience)

Let me tell you something. I find my husband so God damned irritating that I'm planning to leave him. And that's a fact. (to Bruce) Yes! I'm sick of you! Do you get it? You're driving me insane! I can't stand living with you for one more minute! I'm sick of it! I hate it! I hate my life with you! Do you hear me?—I hate it!

BRUCE

Oh—hello, darling. Is it time to get up?

MARIE

No! No! It is not time to get up! For God's sake, go back to sleep—please!

BRUCE

Well don't be irritable, darling—

MARIE

Irritable? Irritable? You call me irritable? God damn you, I've had about enough of your disgusting insults, you God damned cheap God damned idiotic pig, you shit! Now go back to sleep!

BRUCE

Well—all right, darling—(He returns to sleep.)

MARIE (to audience again)

Let's begin at the beginning. Yesterday morning this fucking pig woke me up from a good night's sleep to ask me—to ask me where his God damned horrible piece-of-shit two-hundred-year-old typewriter was. I threw your type-
writer out, you God damned fucking incredible pig! I threw it out because it makes too much noise! Get yourself another typewriter that doesn't make any noise, I told him, you God damned son of a bitch, you idiot, you shit. Do you get it? Get yourself another typewriter that doesn't make any noise. "But now darling, after all, I need my little typewriter"—you pathetic pig, you piece of shit, you idiot! You need your little typewriter? Poor little man needs his tiny little whatsis?—God damn you, you pig! "Well, darling, really—" Well darling, darling—You God damned worthless piece of filthy shit, you idiot, you asshole, you God damned filthy cock-sucking turd! (to audience) I'll tell you frankly I'm fed up with this God damned fucking incredible pig, I've had it with him, I've had it up to here, and I'm going to fuckin' well leave him and see how he likes it.

BRUCE (waking, half-asleep)
Darling, don't be angry. I'm a nice guy—I am—I'm not so bad. All right, I'm worthless, I'm nothing—I know that. But why can't you accept me? I'm only a person.

MARIE
Oh, really? Is that it? You mean you're only a person? Well then pardon my mistake. You're only a person? Well, pardon my mistake—I just thought you were a shit, you filthy cock-sucking turd—Now do you have to lie there in that disgusting heap? I mean if you're going to get up and start wrecking my whole fucking day, then please get out of that bed and get some of that filth out of the sink and make me some breakfast! Now! Now! Now! I said, now!

BRUCE
Oh—you want some breakfast, darling?

MARIE
I said I want some breakfast. Would you like me to repeat it? I want some breakfast, I want some breakfast. Now do you think that might be possible? Or maybe it just isn't quite possible today. Or do you think it just might be possible? Eh, "honey"? A little coffee and a roll? Or is that too much to ask? A little bit too much, "darling"? A little bit too much to ask? Well that's great! That's great! I'll just clean up the whole fucking thing myself, you fucking pig, you lazy shit!

BRUCE
Well, I could heat up the coffee—er—darling—really—

MARIE
Oh you could, could you? You mean you could actually walk over to the stove and actually turn on the heat under the coffee? Do you really mean it? Oh no—oh no, oh no, oh no, that's not possible—you just meant that you might be able to do it—I mean you might be able to do it, but actually you just can't, isn't that it, you shit? Isn't that what you meant?

BRUCE
Oh no—I can easily do it, darling—See, I'll just get it on here—and then those rolls over there—

MARIE
And would you mind putting on your little bathrobe so I don't have to look at those filthy, filthy, disgusting pajamas? Or is that really now too much to ask? I mean, I think it might be nice. I think so, really. I really do think so. I mean, don't you, "darling"? Or do you disagree? Oh well, I'm so sorry, I see you just don't agree—Well that's fine, that's fine, I don't mind looking at your pajamas, but just close them up tightly! Tightly! You sickening turd, you filthy little shit—"Yes, a horrible episode happened to day. A disgusting, nauseating animal was seen wandering around in a person's apartment. A revolting dick protruding from his open pajamas revealed the filthy beast to be a male shit of the most disgusting variety. The intruding filth was immediately chopped into bits, and his revolting mem-
ber was thrown into the stove where it was roasted. A neighbor’s baby, coming upon the member and tasting a bite of it, became fatally ill and vomited his guts out.”

BRUCE
Well, darling, I think I'll just slip on my clothes, actually—(He exits.)

MARIÉ
"I think I'll just slip on my clothes, actually"—how cute, what a cute little fellow—"I think I'll just slip on my clothes, actually"—"I think I'll just slip on my clothes, actually"—It was a miserable summer. It was hot. We didn't have jobs. We were running out of money. We didn't have anything to read that was good, it was all worthless shit. I had the flu the whole time—I was sick, I was weak, I felt dizzy—

(Bruce returns, dressed.)
You God damned fucking son of a bitch, you pig, you shit, you revolting turd—

BRUCE
Now darling, is this really—

MARIÉ
Shut up! I said shut up! Shut up!

BRUCE
Well—all right, darling—I was only—

MARIÉ
You God damned filthy son of a bitch, you incredible shit, you nauseating turd—

BRUCE
Well, here are the rolls—

MARIÉ

BRUCE
Well—ah—darling—now you take this one—oh my, they are rather tasty, now, aren't they, darling?

(Silence. They eat.)

MARIÉ
Great. Just great. So what happens now? Eh, "honey"?

BRUCE
There were—

MARIÉ
Eh, "honey"? So what happens now? Eh, "honey"? Eh, "honey"?

BRUCE
Well actually, darling, I'd been planning to go out rather early today—You see, Roger and I thought we might have a quick lunch somewhere together—

MARIÉ
Oh, Roger, eh? Well how fascinating—wow! The world's most interesting person! Boy, I wish I could be around for that lunch, I'll tell you—I mean, lunch with Roger—wow! Gosh! Do you think he might tell you some of those great ideas he has about the history of urine and feaces in the nineteenth century? Roger! Oh boy, what a brain! I just love to listen to Roger when he really gets going. I mean when he really gets into his groove, do you know what I mean? I mean, it's just so enriching just to hear his ideas come crawling right out of his very own mouth just right while you're sitting there next to him at the very same table. It's really a pleasure, it's really great. And do you know what's best about Roger? It's the fact that he's so boring that he even gets bored himself, so you can watch those little bits of drool just come creeping from the corners of your mouth—and do you know that little crinkly red look that he gets around the corners of his eyes?
Well that's when you know that he's going to stop talking, because he's just run out of boring things to say, so then you have to talk for a moment while he tries to think up a few more boring things to say—Oh God—Roger—oh, he's really great. Of course I'm a little bit jealous now, you know, because, after all, I mean, to think that you'll be sitting there hearing Roger's ideas about feces and urine, and I'll be missing them—I mean—to think that you just selfishly made your plans to go out with my favorite person just all by yourself, just leaving me at home to just sit here and think about all the little things that I might be missing—But well—I forgive you—I know you men need time to yourselves, just to suck each other off in your own little ways—

**BRUCE**

But darling, I really think I'd better get ready to meet Roger. I mean, you won't mind, will you, my love, if I just shave a bit and brush my teeth now? Did you need to use the bathroom? Am I getting in your way?

**MARIE**

Why, no! Not at all! Getting in my way? You get in my way?—aha ha ha ha! What a funny idea! As if that could happen! Oh—God—you really are funny—

**BRUCE**

All right then, darling, I'll see you in a moment. (He exits.)

**MARIE (to audience)**

All right, so what happened then, after I threw out the typewriter? It was two hundred years old, it was a wreck, it was filthy—he went downstairs, into the trash, and he looked and he looked, but he could not find his filthy little machine. So he came upstairs in his torn little sweater, and he put his head on my chest, and he cried. And he cried and he cried and he cried, and I finally thought, Well, I really have to leave you. I mean, you're a fine little man, you're not a bad little man, but, I mean, I really have to leave you, and I really have to leave you, and there's really just nothing else to say. And that's when I decided that I had to leave him.

(***Bruce enters.**)

**BRUCE**

Hi, darling.

**MARIE**

Hi, Bruce.

**BRUCE**

Do you think we should throw out this coffee? Or keep it one more day?

**MARIE**

Oh, I don't know, Bruce. What would you say about it? Let's hear your opinion. Keep it for a day?—or just toss it out?

**BRUCE**

Well why don't I make a fresh pot right now—just so you'll have some.

**MARIE**

Why Bruce, how thoughtful! I didn't know you were a saint—that's really just terrific—you make a perfect saint.

**BRUCE**

Oh well—thank you—er—darling—I'll just do this quickly—(He starts to make the coffee. Silence.)

**MARIE**

Bruce—darling—I think you smell of urine, sweetheart.

(***Bruce keeps working on the coffee.**)

I say, sweetheart, I believe your trousers have urine on them, dear. Do you think you should change them?
BRUCE

Darling, I'm trying to concentrate on making this coffee. Is that all right with you, sweetheart? Please don't disturb me.

MARIE

But darling—your trousers have urine on them today, dearest. I think they should be changed—don't you?

BRUCE

I'm doing my best, darling. I'm doing my best. Simply the best that I can. Simply my best. Simply the best that I can. Now these aren't the trousers I'm planning to wear. I'm planning to change them. But I need my concentration. I need to pay attention to the thing that I'm doing. Do you follow me, darling?

MARIE

Yes, Bruce. I think I do, dear. I think I do, dearest.

(to audience) We had arranged to go to Frank's for dinner, for a party. Frank was a friend. I wanted to stay home. I had to talk to Bruce.

(Bruce immediately returns in new trousers.)

You know, Bruce, sweetheart, do you really think we need to go to Frank's tonight, darling? Why don't we just stay home for the evening? I need to talk to you, sweetheart—it's been so long since we've talked. And I really have to talk to you about various things.

BRUCE

Well darling, I know we haven't had much of a talk for a very long while, and that would be so nice, but you know, I really don't see how we can avoid going over to Frank's at this point—

MARIE

But Bruce, do we really need to go there?

BRUCE

Well darling, he's invited us, and as a matter of fact I really don't feel like going there at all, but I think we just have to. I mean, he did invite us, and we said we'd go there—and I mean, we said we would go, so I just don't really see how we can avoid going over there now, you see, at this point, really—but the thing is, darling, we can just stay briefly and then go along and have dinner somewhere pleasant and talk all we like. Now doesn't that sound nice?

MARIE

Yes, all right, Bruce. Whatever you want. Shall I meet you at Frank's, then?

BRUCE

Well yes, why don't you, darling? Why don't you just meet me there? And then we'll go out afterward to somewhere nice and have a bite to eat, and just talk all we like. Now is that all right, darling? (Silence.) I love you, sweetheart.

(They kiss.)

Goodbye, darling. The coffee's almost ready.

MARIE

Goodbye, Bruce.

BRUCE

Goodbye, darling. (He exits. Silence.)

MARIE

I was tired. I was sick. The apartment was filthy. The dishes were filthy. The bed was filthy. I had thrown out his typewriter. And now I planned to leave him. As soon as he left, I grabbed the sheets off the bed and hurled them onto the floor. The bed was stripped—but then I couldn't put on the new ones. I stood by the window. The heat was overpowering. What to do. I decided I would get very drunk at the party at Frank's. This was something to look forward to, at least. Then I'd finally tell Bruce I was
planning to leave him. As for the rest of the day, I spent most of it getting ready to go out. I showered a couple of times; I put on my flowered dress; I put on lots of make-up. By the end of the day, I really looked great. I don’t think anyone would have had a hard time if they’d had to look at me. Eventually I grew hungry, and a large sandwich, stuffed with vegetables and meat and some rather flavorful exotic hot sauce, took a great big bite out of my raging appetite. Strangely, it was not yet time to go to Frank’s, so I decided to walk there by an indirect route. I went out onto the street and was shocked to find an attractive dog, bumping at my legs. When I reached down to pet him, his large tongue began lapping at my hand in a pleasing manner. He had a thin nose and gold and white fur and a face like a person. I was delighted. He followed me along until we reached a little gate that seemed to open onto an enormous garden. As my watch still told me I had plenty of time, and as the gate was clearly unlocked, I walked through it happily, followed by my trusty and slender and companionable dog. Inside, the flowers were huge. They grew to a great height, and their petals were gigantic and robust. There were purples and reds and countless shades of peach. The perfume of these flowers was thick and potent, and a desire to sit down among them and see how they would tower over my head became irresistible. I threw my raincoat onto the grass and proceeded to sit down—it was rather a long way to the ground, and I landed with a bump. The air was overwhelmingly humid, and I could feel the sweat beginning to form under my arms and slide down my sides. I’m going to ruin my dress, I thought, I’m extremely likely to be stinking rather soon, but that quickly turned out to be the least of my worries as a heavy-headed drowsiness seemed to cloud my brain and pull me down farther toward the ground. The noise of the insects was abnormally loud. My dog was running in great circles and sweeps at a distance—it seemed a great distance—and in fact every distance seemed a very great distance. I had no pillow—I put my hand under my head. The earth was hard, and I could feel the presence all around me of the ants and centipedes and spiders just waiting to crawl up my dress and even inside my face if I should dare to fall asleep. I closed my eyes, thinking sleep was impossible, and within one moment I was fast asleep. (Pause.) Not long passed before a strange sensation woke me up. It was my dog at my back, bumping me gently, over and over. A powerful impulse to have intercourse with the dog, a male, made my heart pound rapidly and my face flush hotly with blood, but he, the poor beast, ran away quite suddenly and continued to chase around in circles. The unsatisfied impulse left me quite nervous. I stood up; I felt cold; I drew my raincoat closely around me and walked very fast, with the dog running before me, till we reached the gate and shut it behind us. Twilight was falling. I looked in the windows of shops at dresses. I looked at women’s shoes as they passed me on the street. A great wind blew up suddenly—perhaps it would storm. The pavement thronged with huge, big-faced men in suits passing all around me. The sounds of the traffic were incredibly loud. I walked faster and faster, and finally I found myself at the building where Frank lived. I left the dog wandering in the gutter. I entered the building. Inside Frank’s apartment, there were already several people there, but Bruce wasn’t there yet. Everyone was flirting. I started to drink. The evening went on for quite a little while. I was still feeling nervous. More people kept arriving. There were Steve and Helen and Randy and Dana and Trini. A really great group. I was feeling rather restless. I was feeling rather sick. Bruce finally showed up.—“Oh—Am I late?
Oh, I'm sorry, darling—." He looked like a prince. He was handsome. He looked like a god. He talked with several other women. Then he talked with me. He himself began drinking.

**BRUCE**
Very delicious. I think I'll get plowed. I'm really enjoying this party—the people here are great—really fantastic—really delightful—

**MARIE**
Janet, in particular—eh, darling?

**BRUCE**

**MARIE**
Well, she's very attractive.

**BRUCE**
Well yes, I know, well yes, yes she is, but not to me, you see, darling! Not to me, darling!

**MARIE**
A little overheated, though, by her, sweetheart?—I mean, you seem over—

**BRUCE**
What? What? Over-what? Darling, what in the world are you saying?

**MARIE**
You seem a little—

**BRUCE**
Eh? What? You must be crackers! Absolutely crackers, darling! I'm as sound as a bell, if you get my meaning—Whoops—ergh—

**MARIE**
Spilled the drink?—er?—darling?

**BRUCE**
Hey—wow! Got to watch the angle of those fucking—those fucking—

**MARIE**
Bruce—darling—you seem a bit tight—a bit high—

**BRUCE**
Listen—are you kidding? You're in very good hands tonight, darling, believe me. Believe me, I'm in very good shape. I'm really in very good shape. And you're not in such bad shape yourself, you know, darling. I mean, fuck Janet, you're looking very attractive. Very very attractive, darling. I'm really not kidding. I mean, you really look great. Your hair, darling, and that marvelous lipstick—

**MARIE**
Well—Bruce—

**BRUCE**
No darling, really. I'm really being serious. The people at this party are very excited by you, darling. I've been watching the way that they're looking you over. I mean, these people would really like to have you, darling. They'd really like to have you. They really want you, if you get my meaning.

**MARIE**
Well—Bruce—

**BRUCE**
You see, I'm being very serious now, darling. I mean, I want you to know—you have an incredible power over all of these people—

**MARIE**
Well—Bruce—

**BRUCE**
Listen—have some of my drink here, darling, I can see that you're thirsty—No really—take it—
MARIE
Darling, I think you’re a little bit insane tonight, dear, a little drunk, a little absurd—

BRUCE
Darling, your hands are awfully cold—why is that?

MARIE
I really don’t know.

BRUCE
But why are your hands cold, darling? Are you sick? Are you?

MARIE
I don’t think so, Bruce.

BRUCE
Listen to me, darling. You don’t think it’s possible—

MARIE
What? What?

BRUCE
No—darling—

MARIE

BRUCE
Ha ha ha—No, darling, I was referring to the flu—But I mean I’m sure you’re all right, you just looked a bit peaked. But now you just sit here quietly and I’ll get you a drink—you need another drink now, darling.

MARIE
What?

(Bruce exits.)

(to audience) He ran off in the direction of the bar. I was feeling quite hot, quite flushed. There were people who were talking quite near me. I could hear them.

HERB (to Enid and Bettina)
Well you see, I’ve worked my ass off, I mean I’ve really worked my ass off for the guy, I mean for three whole years, with no credit for myself, with no respect being paid to myself, and I’ve just sat there quietly and listened to people talk about him, and praise him, and say how great he is—”Oh yes, isn’t he great, what a marvelous man, he’s so extraordinary, he’s so remarkable”—and I’ve just been sitting there day after day just taking it all in—and that’s fine, that’s wonderful, but the problem happens to be that the guy is really driving me bananas—I mean, the guy is insane, he’s just fucking insane, I mean he keeps coming into my office and just poking at my desk and sort of saying, Well, Herb, how are things? I mean, the guy is insane, it’s just really impossible, and I’ve done what I can for the guy, I mean I’ve helped him, I’ve worked very hard for the guy for three whole years, I mean I’ve worked my ass off, but he just can’t leave me alone, and it’s really just driving me bananas to the point where I really don’t know what to do.—Do you see what I’m saying?

ENID
Yeah—sure—

HENRY (to Antoine)
Excuse me. Excuse me. Let me get this part straight in my head before we go any farther. All right? I mean, you seem to be saying that children don’t need to learn to read. I mean, isn’t that really your point?—because the point that you’re making is that reading is really just completely out of date—I mean, it’s just not necessary today—we just don’t require it—Isn’t that what you’re saying?

ANTOINE
No.

HENRY
Oh, I’m sorry. I thought that’s what you just finished saying—

BRUCE (returning)
Well, here you go, darling. Here’s that drink. And here’s one for me. Good Christ, I like these. But are you all right,
darling? Are you feeling a bit better? I mean, you look just great. You look great, darling. Just great. Great. So why don't you tell me—be frank with me, darling. I mean really, let's really be serious. Let's be absolutely true to what we feel. I mean, really, darling, do you care for me at all? I mean, let's talk frankly. Do you actually like me? What do you feel? Why not really tell me. Do you love me, darling? Do you actually love me?

MARIE
Well Bruce, really—I find you very attractive, if that's what you mean. You're a very beautiful man, Bruce. You're a very beautiful man. You have a very, very beautiful body, actually.

BRUCE
Well darling, darling—do you really find me handsome?

MARIE
You're a very handsome man, Bruce. You're a very, very attractive man.

BRUCE
That's very exciting. I like that, darling. I really do like it. Only—aha ha—you should fuck me more often then, darling, if you find me so handsome.

MARIE
Oh Bruce—really—

BRUCE
No, really—I mean it—you should fuck me more often—I mean, because you can be sort of a cunt at certain times, darling, when you refuse to fuck me—I mean, I'm just saying that you really should fuck me more often—

MARIE
I hear you, Bruce—

BRUCE
Well of course I'm being an asshole—I know that, darling. I mean sometimes that's just my way, I mean I seem to be an asshole. I mean, some people aren't, but I just happen to be one somehow—an asshole, I mean—I mean, you know me, darling—

MARIE
Bruce, really—

BRUCE
But I need another drink. I mean, I really do like these drinks here tonight—they're just extremely decently prepared! Shall I get you one, sweetheart? I'll bet you'd like one as well, now wouldn't you? I'll bet you would. (He exits.)

MARIE
He left me quickly. He didn't return with the drink. I sat on the sofa—the most comfortable in the room. For a long while no one came near me. I sat by myself and did nothing. I stared at the fabric that covered the sofa. Then I noticed a book that was sitting right by me on a table. I started looking at the pictures. There were scenes of waterfalls and rivers and nudes of both sexes and children, lying on the grass in the sunlight. Then people came nearer; they were sitting right next to me, talking.

ANTOINE (to Henry)
No, I really didn't say that children don't need to learn to read, you see. I wasn't talking about that. I just said that there will soon be machines on the market that will be capable of reading books aloud.

HENRY
Yes—so people won't need to read them to themselves—exactly—that's just great. Yes, it seems to me we're talking about a world without any books at all, aren't we? I mean, books will just be out—I mean really—just—no more books!—no more books of any kind—Because they really won't be needed, will they? So why should anyone learn to
read? Why should they? I mean, isn’t that what the whole situation comes to, really?

ANTOINE
Well, why say there won’t be any books? There may very well be books. But machines could read them out loud, or else some books might appear on certain forms of tape that a machine could more easily read.

HENRY
Yes, I see.

HERB (to Enid and Bettina)
And then, I know this is funny, but actually the most difficult part of the whole thing for me is that I just can’t help liking the guy in a way, I mean he’s not a bad guy, he’s really all right, I’m actually quite fond of him as a person, you see, but it’s just so hard to deal with a guy like that on a day-to-day basis, because you’re always thinking, Well, I don’t want to hurt him, his feelings might be hurt, and it can actually become almost manipulative, really, because you don’t want to hurt the guy’s feelings, but on the other hand you really want to do certain things that would probably really hurt him, and you really should do them, but you just don’t want to.

ENID
Yeah—yeah—

BETTINA
But you know—I mean—I understand what you’re saying, but I mean isn’t it possible for people just to sometimes not feel what they actually do feel?

HERB
What?

BETTINA
I mean, they may actually feel a certain thing, but they don’t really know that they do, because in their own con-

scious minds they’re so incredibly involved in what they think that they feel that they really don’t feel the thing at all—do you know what I mean? I mean, sometimes a person can have some feeling that they think is a feeling of liking some person, but it may actually be some other kind of feeling, but they think that they ought to be feeling some kind of affection for that person, and so they think that they feel it, when actually what they feel is something completely different—I mean they might feel resentment or even anger toward that person, but they think that they ought to feel affection, so they think that they do, but actually they don’t.

ENID
You mean—

BETTINA
I mean like for example a very common example is when a person is supposed to feel pleased by something—I mean like when someone gives you a present, and you’re supposed to feel pleased, but actually you don’t, because the thing is something that actually you hate or you actually already have the thing. Well then, you’re not supposed to say, Well I really hate this, you’re supposed to say, Oh boy, that’s great, I really like it. I mean, that’s not really an example of when you think you feel something but you really don’t feel it, but it shows how sometimes you can actually be feeling two completely different feelings at once, because on the one hand you don’t like the thing that you got, but on the other hand you don’t want to hurt the person’s feelings, particularly if they’re someone you like and they tried to get you something you’d enjoy, but actually it’s something that you hate or you already have. I mean, there’s sometimes a difference, because sometimes a person is actually giving you something that uncon-
sciously they know that you'll hate, but sometimes they just really think that you'll like it but for some particular reason it just happens to turn out that you actually don't.

HERB
I really don't know what you mean, Bettina.

BRUCE (returning)
Well here's that drink now, my love.

MARIE
Thank you, Bruce. I really feel sick.

BRUCE
Well you just rest right here, darling. You can even fall asleep. No one's going to disturb you. (He exits.)

MARIE
I lay back against the sofa. I closed my eyes and listened to everyone talking. Then I fell asleep. I dreamed of pleasurable excursions, a trip to the beach. Bruce and I seemed to find a world in which every person was somehow extremely complex and interesting, but at the same time terribly relaxed. These people in the dream each had their own way of living, their own tastes. We were always going over for dinner at their houses. One person served a kind of soft fried noodles, with pea-pods and peas.

JEAN (to Tim)
You can see these things from different points of view, you see, Tim. You can see them a little bit differently from the way you see them. Some people don't have a lot of money, you know.

TIM
Well Jean, I know that.

JEAN
Some people can't afford to buy a piano. Did you ever think of that? Some people can't afford to buy a guitar. They can't have musical soirées. They can't sing madrigals in the evening and put on performances—did you ever think of that? Maybe they're just a little bit too tired, from working. Maybe they're just a little bit too hungry, if it's not too embarrassing to say that—"Oh, now she's really exaggerating—too hungry—how absurd." Well it may not be so absurd, as a matter of fact. It may not be so incredibly absurd!

FRED (to Ilse)
And obviously I'm not saying that I know the whole story. I'm not saying that I know more than you do. I've been there, of course, but I've never really lived there. I don't really know about the way things work there. I've read certain articles—

ILSA
You've written—?

FRED
I say I've read certain articles—I've read certain articles, I've talked to some of the people who know more than I do—And the fact happens to be that I just happened to be there at a very odd moment, and I happened to be there when some of the things that I've read about just happened to be occurring—

JEAN (to Tim)
Listen, there are babies out there who are dying because they were brought up on milk that was intentionally mislabeled—I mean, milk that was mixed with water—

TIM
But Jean—

JEAN
There are old men and old women—I mean, these people could have been our parents—and they can't afford to buy underwear—I mean, these are people with pride, it makes them actually ashamed, but they need all the money that they have just to survive and pay the rent—
TIM

I know—

JEAN

I mean, maybe they'd like to sing madrigals. Maybe they'd like to sing madrigals. But they don't have anything to wear!

MARIE

Then I dreamt we had a house with chickens and snakes on the grass outside, and broken eggshells, and I dreamt we went to a restaurant, with beautiful tablecloths and napkins, and Bruce was holding my hand at the table, and then it was a long summer night, and we were making love over and over again.

FRED (to Ilsa)

I mean, I saw that man being pressed between two panes of glass—and it was horrible, horrible—I mean, you just can't imagine—the way his tongue was hanging to one side—he looked just like a slaughtered beast—

ILSA

But why are you telling me this?

FRED

I said that these are the articles—These people are—Don't you see?—that's what I was trying to explain to your brother—

ILSA

Well don't bring him into this—

FRED

Don't what?

ILSA

Don't bring—

FRED

But he's already in it. He's already in it. He is involved in this. He is involved. He's in the field we're discussing. Don't tell me not to bring him into it. He is in it.

ILSA

I really don't feel like talking about this. I really don't want to.

HENRY (to Antoine)

So is that why you think that children should listen to popular music in school? Because when you have these machines—?

ANTOINE

Well, you're really distorting my—

HENRY

Well, what am I distorting? I mean, isn't that just what you said? That children should listen to popular music in school? Didn't you say that? Or maybe I didn't quite follow you, somehow.

ANTOINE

Well you're drawing a connection between two such completely different things. I mean, the fact that these machines have been invented really doesn't have much to do with my opinions about popular music.

HENRY

Well, are you trying to get away from what you said? I mean, first you said that they didn't need to learn how to read, and then you talked about listening to popular music. That's what I understood. I mean, didn't you talk about listening to popular music? That children would be listening to popular music in school?

ANTOINE

Well, I mentioned certain forms of music, yes. But—er—really—why are you so upset by the thought of popular music? I mean, why do you think it bothers you so much?

HENRY

It doesn't bother me a bit.

ANTOINE

Well, don't you think there's anything to be learned from listening to it, then?
HENRY
I'm not saying there isn't.

ANTOINE
Well then what are you saying?

HENRY
I'm just saying—Well—ha! aha ha!—I just happen to have these very odd opinions, I'm afraid—you see, I just happen to believe in certain values—Well—To me, you see, when you see that children are living in a certain way—I mean, let's not be absurd—I mean, really—let's face it—how can I describe it?—when you see that children are eating when they like, sleeping when they like—

ANTOINE
Well, you misunderstand me if you think I'm encouraging some form of—er—chaos—

HENRY
Well, I see, I see—so that goes too far even for you, does it? Eating when they like? Sleeping when they like? That's very interesting. I'm very interested in your reaction to that—

BRUCE (to audience)
Well, I had another drink at the bar, and then I bumped into a girl named Susie, and we talked for a while, and then she moved along, and then I just sat by myself just thinking about my day. I'd had quite a day! First, lunch with Roger. That was enjoyable as always. And then I had some shopping to do, and I went on a big expedition to the farthest end of the city—you can get some incredible bargains out there—and when I'd finished my shopping, I decided to walk more or less in the direction of Frank's through some unknown sections of town. And I just walked through all sorts of sections. I even found a place where there were fishermen mending their boats, and little fish were flopping all about, and sails were flapping, and you could actually smell water and seaweed. And then there was another place not far along from that one—it was a marvelous park, with stiff pointed trees just clumped all together and very dark green, and I wandered around in it for an hour or so. And then finally I got thirsty, and I looked for this wonderful café that I'd been to years before where they made this drink made of freshly squeezed orange juice and soda. And after quite a lot of looking, I finally found it, and I went inside and sat down at the counter. I was sipping my drink when a tanned young woman came in wearing shorts and a light-colored, lightweight shirt, without a brassiere. If you looked at her closely, her nipples could actually be seen through the shirt. She sat down right next to me and ordered some food, and then she started reading this big sheet of newspaper that she'd carried in with her. Her hands weren't clean, and the paper looked ripped, as if she'd torn it from some old pile of trash. And then the material in the paper—I could easily read it—was of a kind that really could have been of no interest at all to this girl, but she seemed to be reading it with total absorption as if nothing else mattered. Then the waitress brought along a glass of water and placed it beside her. Still reading the paper, the girl put her hand out and tried to reach for the glass, but she missed. Then she looked up and ever so gently took the glass with both hands and lifted it to her lips and drank from it slowly and carefully, as if it were valuable wine. "Good," I thought to myself, "a nut. A manic. My type of girl." I could easily pick her up. I could easily get her, I thought. I was leaning way over, straining so hard to see the nipples through her shirt—forget it, I thought, those nipples can wait; if I'm actually going to fuck her, I can look at any part of her I like. I mean, if I'm going to be fucking this girl, she isn't going to be wearing her clothes! Just then, the waitress
brought her food. I stared at her plate. Suddenly she speared an enormous piece of meat on her fork and was about to stick it in her mouth. “Wait!” I said. “That meat is hot!” She looked at me, amazed. She took a small bite of the meat. We sat there next to each other, neither of us speaking. Then she turned away from me and addressed herself totally to her meal. My face felt hot. She was eating incredibly slowly, making very strange movements with her lips. I looked at her legs. They were heavy. If I fucked this girl, she might go mad while being fucked—after all, she was insane! I decided to masturbate instead. I walked to a hotel, checked in, and went upstairs to a room. I immediately looked out the window to see if there were windows across the way. There were. In one of them, a woman seemed to be cleaning her apartment. I sat down in a chair near the window. I forgot about masturbating, and I watched the woman, hoping that something would happen. She was pretty good-looking, she was tall and thin. After fifteen minutes, impulsively, she pulled off her shirt, and her breasts were totally revealed. I couldn’t believe what had happened. My head felt light. I was trembling. She stood in the window for a moment, as if wondering what to do. Then she left the room. I sat frozen in my chair. My eyes held on to the window like a carpenter’s vise holding on to a big piece of wood, but nothing seemed to happen. After an interval that seemed like about an hour or an hour and a half, I finally shifted my position in my chair, and a little after that, the woman came back. She was wearing a bathrobe. She sat down on a sofa. I watched her while she sat there and read. A long time passed, and then she stood up, and she pulled down the shade. There was a tiny crack between the shade and the sill. I could see a bit of her bathrobe; her hands were untying the cord. Then she moved away, and came back in some kind of a dress. Then the lights in her apartment went out, and the window was black. Sweat was pouring down my face. It was late—I was sitting in darkness. A telephone rang somewhere down the hall. I jumped. I stood up. I ran out of the room. I looked at my watch—I was already due there at Frank’s. I left the hotel and went out into the evening. I started to run, but I didn’t want to run too fast—I was afraid of sweating. I walked with big strides, rapidly, controlling the sweat. The air was greasy. I made it to Frank’s just a little bit late.

**HERB** (to Roxanne)

You see, please don’t misunderstand me, I’m not trying to say that the guy isn’t nice. I don’t mean that at all. The truth is that I actually like him. He happens to be just a very nice guy. The only problem is, he just drives me bananas—do you know what I mean?

**ROXANNE**

Oh God—yeah—I know—I know—

**MARIE** (to audience)

I slept so soundly. My body seemed to sink into the sofa so heavily, so far, like an object falling in water. When I woke up again, I felt really sick. Bruce was sitting right next to me, talking.

**BRUCE** (to Marie)

Well, darling, I’m glad you’re waking up. You had me worried for a while. I was just having a conversation with some people over there, and you know, there are some interesting things about the treatment of certain illnesses that Jack was explaining to me. Do you know—?—there was a time when vomiting was induced in patients whom today we would classify as mentally ill. Then the vomit itself would be kept in containers, because usually the sim-
ple reappearance of one of these containers would be sufficient in itself to lead the patient into another fit of vomiting.

(Pause.)

MARIE

Bruce—did you slap me while I was sleeping?

BRUCE

Why—of course not, darling! What do you mean? Are you crazy?

MARIE

I don’t feel normal.

BRUCE

God—darling—you don’t think you might be mentally ill now, do you? I mean, darling, you don’t think you might be crazy, do you? I mean, do you think you might actually be crazy now? God, darling, I really hope not—

MARIE

Bruce—help me—

BRUCE

I’ve had this terrible feeling lately that something was about to happen to you, darling—

MARIE

Just talk to me, Bruce. Help me. Hold me.

BRUCE

God, let me see. Do I have anything to tell you? Well, Roger and I had a marvelous lunch—prawns with peas—it was absolutely great!

MARIE

Darling—I’m sick—

BRUCE

Er—and then—oh, yes! Gloria and I were just having the most fascinating conversation. You know, we were talking about the whole question of people having servants!—have you ever thought about that? I mean, it’s just such a fas-

inating subject—and I was sort of saying that it really seems to me sort of a shame that the whole tradition of people having servants has just gone out of style, because really the whole point of having servants was actually that servants were people who could be counted on to care about your welfare, and even sort of respect you, whether you deserved it or not, and I really like that, I just think it’s such a nice thing. And I mean I was even saying that personally I wouldn’t particularly have minded being a servant myself—I mean, it wasn’t such a bad occupation! I mean, it must have been rather nice to work in a home rather than an office or a factory, and the food must have been pretty good as well—I mean, you could eat whatever the family ate, or else you could go into the kitchen and fix whatever you liked for yourself—Oh, but darling, I’ve bored you! Oh darling, I’m sorry! Oh really, how dreadful—

MARIE

Bruce—

BRUCE

Oh God, I’m so awful. I’m just so awful, darling. What a boring person—

MARIE

Bruce—

BRUCE

No really, I’m sorry. I’m just doing you no good at all. Anyway, I’m going to go over by the bar again now, darling. I’ll get you another drink, and meanwhile you can just keep resting. I’ve got to have a word with Grace over there.

MARIE

With who, Bruce?

BRUCE

You remember her, darling—that friend of Chuck?—that brunette?—the one who went fishing in her panties—?
What?

BRUCE

Ha—actually—ha ha—I spent the night with her once about eleven years ago. I'll tell you, she was really amazing. I'll never forget—ha—pardon me, darling, but her vagina was just incredibly tight, you know? It was just like being gripped by a hand. I mean, I remember, by the time we were finished, my penis was absolutely bright red—I mean, it looked just like a raw piece of meat, or fish—and I just felt absolutely drained—I mean, my testicles were really just as dry as bones—they ached for a week—Oh God, it was great—it was really something—

MARIE

Darling—I'm sick—

BRUCE

Darling, why is it that whenever we have a conversation you always feel sick? You ask me to talk to you, and then when I do you feel sick. Have you ever really noticed that, darling? It's really a pattern with you. It's sort of upsetting. And it actually gives me a pain in the ass, if you really want to know.

MARIE

All right, Bruce.

BRUCE

And I mean, really, darling, the expressions you get on your face sometimes—I mean, these people are going to think you're an absolute nut—

MARIE

I said all right, Bruce. All right. All right.

(Bruce exits)

I went to Frank's bedroom to get my raincoat. A woman named Selena was living with Frank; his bedroom was crammed with all of her things. There were bottles and creams and combs and lotions. The tables held vases that held white flowers. The only light was from a little toy lamp that was sitting by the phone. I sat by the lamp in a little toy chair, catching my breath after searching through the closet, through her clothes and his clothes, till I found my coat. A powerful smell of urine seeped through the window. It passed over my lips. It mingled with the smell of perfume in the room. My hand was playing with a huge fur coat on the bed. Then the telephone rang. I got up to answer it. I thought it could be a murderer who was coming to kill me. I thought it could be thick poison gas pouring into my mouth over the phone. But no—it was just a friend of Frank named Willy. I heard his tiny voice through the receiver. I went to find Frank. I went to find Bruce. I was feeling very sick. We left the party, and we walked to a restaurant. I picked it; I like it. I used to go there all the time when I was single. I used to go there by myself. I used to eat there by myself. It was down at the end of a street near a pier. It was a pretty long walk, but I felt like walking. It was almost raining. Unbelievably attractive men kept passing us and smiling. We ate dinner in silence. The restaurant was cold.

(Long silence. Three or four pots of espresso coffee, and extra cups, are on the table in front of Marie. Bruce is eating. Marie sips coffee. The Waiter approaches them, bringing another pot of coffee.)

WAITER

Well—er—here's your coffee. Shall I clear away these other cups and pots?—eh eh—

MARIE

Yes, why don't you? Thank you.

(Very long silence. The Waiter clears away the cups and pots and exits. Bruce eats. Marie sips coffee.)
BRUCE

Darling, do you think we should just have our dinner for the moment? I mean, perhaps we should go into all this when we've finished our meal.

MARIE

I don't enjoy your company. I don't enjoy being with you. You're pitiful, you're pathetic, and you're actually one of the least interesting people I've ever met in my life.

BRUCE

Yes—well—my darling, what do you think?—are we going to have our meal here or not? I mean, this was the restaurant that you wanted to go to, and personally I would rather have had something cheap, and this is not my favorite kind of food, but if we're going to be here, it seems somewhat absurd if all we're going to do is just have an unpleasant conversation.

MARIE

I mean, I had thought we would have a nice evening together. I know you're unhappy. But we could discuss your unhappiness and still have a very nice evening together.

MARIE

I hate you, Bruce. That's why I have to leave you. I'm very, very sorry.

(Very long silence. They move slightly in their chairs.

BRUCE

Yes, you know the amazing thing, darling?—I really think homosexuals do have special skills for dealing with certain awkward situations. (Silence.) I mean, really, you know, take Jack for example. He's a fabulous fellow. A marvelous person. I mean, he's just terribly agreeable, he's nice in other words, I mean, he knows how to make people relax,
feel good— *(Pause)*—Now Edwina was extremely upset, for example. He calmed her right down. I mean, somehow, he has some ability that most of us just lack: he knows how to make people relax! *(Pause)* Well, darling, you know I won't disturb you. I won't keep talking. I know you'd rather have me be quiet. I know how you feel. I was trying to talk, but I can see that it's better to be quiet. It's all right, darling. I'm just going to sit here, and we'll just be quiet, and we can finish our meal.

*(Silence. Bert and Ed enter and sit at the next table. Bruce and Marie try to eat as Bert and Ed talk. They can hear Bert and Ed's conversation.)*

**BERT (to Ed)**

It was an extraordinary thing—because I'd been feeling worse and worse for several days. I mean, I'd feel just fine, and then I'd eat, and I'd have this sensation that somehow the food was just rotting in my stomach. I mean, something wasn't happening correctly in there. And then I'd suddenly get these sharp, shooting pains, like a sort of a flash, like lightning, through the entire length of my asshole somehow—you know? And then by Friday afternoon there was this whole new sensation—my stomach started giving these little leaps—these lurches—like this—bip! bip!—and I would feel like going to the bathroom really badly, but then in about two seconds the sensation would go away, and I'd feel all right again. Well finally, it got to be evening, and all of a sudden I felt another one of these lurches, but instead of going away, it just sort of took a hold on my gut—it just sort of stayed there, and so I sort of really rushed into the bathroom and sat down on the toilet. Well, I was faint, dizzy, I felt like throwing up, and I sort of began to see spots in front of my eyes—my vision got cloudy—

**ED**

Oh my God—

**BERT**

There was a kind of burning sensation in my whole rectal area, so it was painful to shit, but the horrible thing was that I couldn't help just shitting and shitting! I couldn't control it!

*(Bruce has approached them)*

**BRUCE**

Excuse me. I'm sorry. Er—excuse me—you see—er—

**BERT**

we're eating our meal—

**BRUCE**

You what?

**BERT**

I say, we're eating our meal, and your—conversation—we couldn't help hearing—

**BRUCE**

What? What?

**BERT**

We can't—er—we're eating—argh—

**BERT (to Ed)**

Is this guy trying to tell me I'm talking too loudly?

**BRUCE**

Well Sir—er—

**ED (to Bruce)**

Pardon me. Can I make a suggestion? Would you mind? I'd like you to return to your table. That way we won't have any kind of trouble.

**BRUCE**

Oh—I see—yes. Oh yes, well if that's the way you feel, well then yes—I see—uh-huh—all right. Fine. Fine. Well all right—yes—oh yes—uh-huh— *(He returns to his place. Pause.)*
MARIE
You eat shit, Bruce. You're a worthless turd.

BRUCE
Yes—well—okay, okay—

MARIE
I'm sorry I met you. I'm sorry I knew you. Of all the men I ever knew, you turn out to be the worst. And the incredible thing is that I never loved you.

BRUCE
Well—I thought you did.

MARIE
But you see, you were wrong. It's very, very sad. Our dinner is spoiled, and my life was spoiled, because I met you. I wish I hadn't. I wish I hadn't.

BRUCE
Yeah—it's a shame—

MARIE
You horrible shit—

BRUCE
Yeah—that's right—

MARIE
You horrible shit.

BRUCE
Would you like to go now, darling? I don't imagine you'll be wanting dessert—er—

MARIE
No?

BRUCE
Well, I didn't—

MARIE
Well fuck you, Bruce. Maybe I'd like some.

BRUCE
Oh well, great. That's great. Let's have some—yes! Ah—Sir?

WAITER (entering)

Yes?

BRUCE
We'll have that thing with the pears right now, actually.

WAITER
Oh—all right.

BRUCE
Yes, that would be great.

(Waiter exits.)

MARIE
"Yes, that would be great."

BRUCE
Darling, must you always mock me?

MARIE
Well, Bruce, I'm afraid I can't help it. You're just so mockable. You're my mockable boy. (Long silence.) But Bruce, really—do you actually not care at all that I'm leaving you?

BRUCE
Oh—are you leaving me, darling?

MARIE
Yes, Bruce, I'm planning to leave you.

BRUCE
Well, darling—you know you shouldn't leave me, I mean, you know you shouldn't leave me—

MARIE
Well Bruce, I'm planning to leave you.

BRUCE
Oh. Well. Well darling, it's a little funny just to tell me this, isn't it? I mean, what brings this up just at the moment, you see—I mean, what have I done? We've just gone to a certain restaurant for dinner, and I'd understood it to be one that you liked. And as far as I can tell, it's lived up to expectation at least one hundred per cent, I would say.
MARIE
Oh Bruce—you're funny. You really are. (Pause.) So you
don't actually care that I'm leaving you, then?

BRUCE
Well, you're really not leaving me, darling. I mean, you
feel you would like to, but you really aren't actually leaving,
if you see what I mean.

MARIE
You don't think I'm leaving?

BRUCE
Well—are you?

MARIE
Yes—I am, Bruce. I really am.

BRUCE
Well darling, I mean, you know you can't leave me. I
mean, don't you know that I love you, darling? I mean,
really, after all—er—

MARIE
"Love" me? You "love" me? Bruce—you don't even know
the meaning of the word. You don't know the meaning of
the word, Bruce.

BRUCE
Oh—really? I always thought I did. How very, very
strange—

MARIE
Bruce—don't you know that you're not a living person?
(Silence.)

BRUCE
I'm sorry, darling. I thought I was one.

(Silence. The Waiter brings the dessert and exits.)

But what am I, then? I run around like a living person. I
say things, I talk to people, I even have certain feelings,
believe it or not.

MARIE
Bruce, I can't talk. I don't feel well.

BRUCE
I try to be decent—

MARIE
Shut up, Bruce.

BRUCE
I mean, I try very hard to be—

MARIE
Please, Bruce. Please be quiet. Please be quiet.

BRUCE
I'm sorry, darling.

(Silence.)

MARIE
You see, you're not human, you're not a person, you have
no connection to me, or to any other person, and you never
will have one, and you never can have one, and that's why
to me you are nothing but a filthy piece of shit that is
attached to me physically, but now I am cutting you off of
me, you see. I am cutting you off of me, I am cutting you
away from me.

BRUCE
Marie—

MARIE
No—you see, Bruce, you see, Bruce, you're not alive. You're
not a person. I am telling you the truth now, Bruce, and
I'm telling you that you are dead. You're dead. You're a
horrible dead piece of meat.

BRUCE
Marie—

MARIE
No—shut up! Shut up! I am calling you dead. I am pro-
nouncing you dead. As far as I'm concerned, you are now
dead. You are now nothing. Your face is nothing. Your face is not a face. Your expressions are not expressions. So it means nothing to me to leave you, because you are now nothing. I don't know anything about you, Bruce, because you are meat. You are only meat. God help me—I know what it means to be sitting with nothing. You may say things, but I don't have to listen, because you are death. You are filth. You are only filth.

(Silence.)

BRUCE

Darling?

MARIE

What?

BRUCE

Darling—do you know what I did today? I bought a new typewriter for myself. And you know—it really wasn't expensive. I mean, I got it on sale, and it was incredibly cheap. I tried it out in the store, and it worked like a charm. I mean—I really loved it! And they were even willing to deliver it for free. They're bringing it tomorrow.

(Pause.)

MARIE

Will you miss your old one, Bruce?

BRUCE

Well you know, I really don't think so.

(Silence.)

MARIE (to audience)

We sat at the table. We finished our dessert. And then I took him home. By the time we left the restaurant, he was drunk once again. He was tired, he was sleepy. We got into a taxi. As we rode, he hugged me tightly. He hugged me as we went around the corners. He hugged me when the taxi went faster. We got home, and the apartment was cool, there was a breeze. I took the clean sheets out of the closet.

I made some hot milk. We sat in our chairs and we drank it. Then I put him to bed. I stayed up for a while. I drank some more milk. I read a magazine, a paper. Then I went to bed myself. It was warm under the sheet. I watched the shadows moving on the ceiling. I listened to the cars rushing by outside the window. Then it started to rain. Then it rained and rained. It began very gently, very lightly; then the sound of the rain grew stronger and heavier, and I sank down farther into the darkness of my pillow, and my face went down into the pillow, and my mouth opened wide, and I drooled into the pillow, and I sank down farther into it, and farther, and farther, and I slept.