

You and Me
Roger Simeon

Act 1

A partially lit room.

Seven pm.

The evening light filters through the broken curtain.

A green, old, wasted leather sofa facing the audience, a square table with two non-matching chairs and lots of shoe boxes are the only furniture.

The boxes are colourful, with different shapes and textures. All of them are empty but perfectly, geometrically and chromatically —following the inverted rainbow colour palette— placed one on top of the other against the now invisible walls.

[An old WOMAN snoozes uncomfortably on the sofa. She wears old pyjamas of the wrong size and she covers herself, every now and then, with a torn tartan blanket]

The door opens.

[An old MAN enters the room struggling to carry lots of shoe boxes. He places them delicately and accurately on the table and sits himself on a chair, his back to the WOMAN who, as soon as the door opened, has covered her head with the blanket.

The MAN's clothes are also mismatched.

He changes the heavy specs for heavier ones and begins to analyse the boxes he was carrying. He weighs them up in the air, checks the material, catalogues the contents, examines the colour and the size of the shoes they once contained and distributes them, precisely, on the table]

[This action takes place in silence]

WOMAN **[Suddenly, with a tired voice and totally subdued but without moving or taking the head out of the blanket]** I hope you haven't brought any more of those damn boxes of yours...

[Long silence]

WOMAN **[With her head still under the blanket and talking in a low murmur in a mechanical way]** ... boxes here boxes there boxes on top of the refrigerator boxes under the bed boxes in front of the door boxes in the toilet boxes on the way...

[Silence. He does not answer, he continues examining the first box instead. The same precise and detailed analysis will be carried out with all the boxes throughout the play]

WOMAN **[Taking the blanket slightly off her, as far as her nose]** But you said that you are not going to bring any more, didn't you?

MAN **[Indifferent, without stopping his analysis]**
Nope.

WOMAN **[Covers her head again with the blanket and lightly moves around the sofa searching for a more comfortable position]** I really hope so because today I am extremely tired: Tuesdays knock me out.

MAN **[Grabbing a pen and writing down the box details in a big notebook]** Today is Friday...

WOMAN Even worse then.

MAN **[With the same indifferent voice]** Yesterday it was Tuesday... **[slowly, just as if he was opening a treasure box, he opens the lid of the box and sniffs inside it loudly]** ... and tomorrow it will be Monday again...

WOMAN The days go by so quickly... **[Removing the blanket completely from her head and**

looking straight ahead fearfully] but the minutes!

MAN **[With his whole face inside the shoe box and sniffing even louder]** What is wrong with the minutes? Are they attacking us? **[Waving his arms trying to get rid of them but without removing his face from inside the box]** Where are they? Where are they?

WOMAN **[Sitting upright on the sofa, speaking up and pointing everywhere]** Here! And here! And here! And here! And here! And here here here here here here here here here here! And... **[looking at the boxes against the wall]** And there! Yes... you keep the minutes inside your bloody boxes! Don't bring any more! I already have too many minutes to kill... you won't bring any more boxes, will you?

MAN **[Taking his head out of the box with a long sigh as though in ecstasy]** No... never ever... I have enough now...

WOMAN **[Still looking at the boxes rancorously]**
Enough for what?

MAN To pass the time.

WOMAN **[Lying down again on the sofa]** But... but... time... doesn't pass. It's the days that run away... but never the time... **[with a tired and sleepy voice]** this is our burden... this is our punishment for wanting to live so many years...

MAN **[Nervous and looking at the door as if he had heard a non-existent noise]** They're knocking at the door.

WOMAN **[With no reaction]** They must want something.

MAN **[Panicking, looking worriedly at the boxes]** But I... now... I am too busy... I just cannot...

WOMAN They'll come back later if they want anything... **[covering her face again with the blanket]** when there is someone at home.

MAN But they keep on knocking... Can't you hear it?

WOMAN **[Showing only an ear from under the blanket]** No, I can't hear a thing... **[covering the ear again]** but I am sure there is someone at the door... they always come at the least convenient time... **[speaking up from under the blanket]** Don't you see that

this is not a good time for us? Don't you know that we are not at home right now and that, even if we were here, we are too busy to see you?

MAN But... but... what if... why don't... why don't you open it?

WOMAN Because right now I'm sleeping and I don't like to sleepwalk... I used to do it when I was a child and I woke up in a different place every day... one day I even woke up in your bed... how I wish they had tied me to *my* bed!

MAN **[Forgetting about the door and returning to the examination of the box that he still holds in his hands]** Our destinies were written long before we were born. There is no point in trying to rebel against them: everything is planned and it will all happen as it has to happen.

WOMAN And what will happen?

MAN I don't know that myself. It is written. But I cannot read...

WOMAN And why don't you learn to read?

MAN Because I'm not in the mood for it right now... I am too busy, can't you see? And what about you... can you read?

WOMAN No. But I have never need it... to read the silly things that people write nowadays...

MAN **[Writing down a new detail in the notebook]** Because to write is extremely easy... you just need to place letters next to letters, and words next to other words, and sentences next to other sentences.

WOMAN That sounds incredibly tiring!

MAN I don't recommend it.

WOMAN **[Partly showing her head from under the blanket but with her eyes closed]** And what do you write?

MAN Anything. Everything. But my specialty are numbers.

WOMAN But can people write numbers as well?

MAN Of course they can!

WOMAN And can people read numbers?

MAN Don't be silly! People count numbers.

WOMAN **[Straightening up a bit on the sofa and looking discreetly towards the door]** Are they gone?

MAN **[Delicately touching the surface of the box with a finger to relish the texture]** Yes... who?

WOMAN Whoever was knocking at the door.

MAN I don't know. But I am guessing so.

WOMAN And who was it?

MAN Who?

WOMAN Whoever was knocking at the door.

MAN Noone... someone who got lost.

WOMAN And how do you know that he was lost?

MAN Who?

WOMAN Whoever was knocking at the door.

MAN Because we were not waiting for anybody.

WOMAN Maybe I was.

MAN Then he'll be back.

WOMAN Who?

MAN Whoever was knocking at the door.

WOMAN But was it not you?

MAN No, I haven't been out today.

WOMAN **[Lifting the blanket up to her neck and closing her eyes]** I don't remember...

MAN **[Raising his arms to look at the bottom of the box]** We had lunch together.

WOMAN And what did I eat?

MAN A little bit of everything. As usual. I believe you had meat and fish, but maybe it was ostrich egg with boar paté...

WOMAN Tasty! And did I drink any wine at all?

MAN A couple or five glasses. Just to wash the meal down. But now we'll have to buy more wine... you never told me that the wine runs out.

WOMAN **[With her eyes still closed]** It depends.

MAN It depends on what?

WOMAN On a lot of different things. **[Straightens herself up on the sofa. Opens her eyes and looks at her hands that are gesturing as though they were firmly holding a bottle of wine]** It depends whether there is a hole in the bottle... here **[she points at the empty space where the imaginary bottle is]**, right at the bottom of the bottle, so tiny that no-one can see it...

MAN **[With the box raised but changing the examination angle]** If you cannot see it, it means that it is not there.

WOMAN **[Keeping the imaginary bottle on her hands]** Are you saying that only that which we can see exists?

MAN Yes.

WOMAN But I don't see the bed and this morning it was certainly there...

MAN But not anymore.

WOMAN And how do you know?

MAN Can you see it?

WOMAN No...

MAN **[Conclusive]** Because it does not exist.

WOMAN **[Confused but still holding the imaginary bottle]** But... but... if I go into the room right now... will... will the bed be there?

MAN If you see it, it will be there.

WOMAN And if I don't see it?

MAN Then it won't...

WOMAN Wow... now I am really tempted to go in there and...

MAN Then go.

WOMAN But, what if it's not there? What if they have taken it? **[Covering her head with the blanket but without throwing the bottle that shows its shape under the blanket]** Oh my! How scary! Now I don't want to go in there! Never. You go and tell them that they must return our bed right now because I want to go to sleep!

MAN **[Checking the last corner of the risen box]** I can't do that.

WOMAN Why?

MAN Because I don't know where they are... we will have to wait until they come back for more and then we will ask for a business card.

WOMAN **[Lowering the blanket and still holding the bottle]** But... what about you? I... I can't see you... do you exist?

MAN Do you hear me?

WOMAN Yes.

MAN Then it may be that I exist.

WOMAN That's interesting... **[looking at her arms and the hands holding the imaginary bottle]** then... this bottle does not exist either... **[moves the arms throwing the bottle violently against the door: noise of broken glass]**

MAN **[Calm now, looking at the door still holding the box up in the air]** All theories are valid until they are not.

WOMAN Therefore, do things that we don't see exist?

MAN So far they do.

WOMAN Then the wine can really disappear through a tiny hole **[takes another imaginary bottle]** right here, at the bottom of the bottle...

MAN That's why we have no wine left!

WOMAN But the wine can also run out due to the inclination of the bottle at the moment of pouring it... see? **[gestures as if pouring wine]** If the angle is higher than 45 degrees, then we pour the liquid...

MAN **[Screaming]** Don't waste it! It's such a good wine!

WOMAN Don't worry, I've poured it into the glass **[pretends to grab an imaginary glass from the table and takes a long swig]** Excellent. But do you know what?

MAN That today we will have tea at midnight with all your explanations...

WOMAN No...

MAN That so much wine is giving you a headache...

WOMAN No...

MAN Then, how do you expect me to know it if you don't tell me...

WOMAN If the angle is larger than 270 degrees, then the liquid is preserved...

MAN **[Keeping his eyes on the box]** And if it is a 425 degrees angle?

WOMAN Then the wine gets sick.

MAN **[Pleased with the answer]** Sure... but who told you that?

WOMAN **[Visibly enjoying the imaginary wine from the imaginary glass]** Nobody... this is one of those things that you know from birth... like the fact that we all are going to die...

MAN Well... all all... I don't think so.

WOMAN **[Slightly turning her head without looking at him directly]** And why not?

MAN Because there is not enough room in the local cemetery.

WOMAN But they are building a new one...

MAN **[Dropping the box to calculate the time it takes to fall]** It won't be big enough... there's so many people in the world nowadays... you wouldn't believe it: there's people everywhere! And everybody wants to die... I don't know where they think they are going to fit them!

WOMAN Well, I'm sure they'll find a place for them...

MAN Sure! Right in the middle of the square! Nah! I've made up my mind. I don't want to be a problem to anyone... and I am aware that it is a huge sacrifice that no one else is

prepared to do... but I've decided that I will never die.

WOMAN What?

MAN That I'll live forever. Don't get me wrong... it's not that I enjoy being here, but I'm kind of used to it and I move around easily... and now, to think about all the hassle of dying and having to wear my Sunday's clothes and being measured for the coffin and having to go to church to endure my service and all those never-ending tales of the tears and the people bothering me opening the lid to kiss me and fill my cheeks with saliva and makeup and the... nah! Such a pain! So many unnecessary complications... I accept my condition of martyr and I remain here and that's that.

WOMAN **[Staring at the audience with deep concern in her expression]** Oh! I didn't know that you could choose... I haven't thought what I want to do...

MAN **[Delicately closing the box's lid]** You're already too late. There are such long queues at the registrar's office! Now it's in vogue to die because they see it on TV and everybody

wants to do it... I don't think you'll be able to choose and maybe you'll be forced to keep on living until there's room amongst the dead ones.

WOMAN Is it really in vogue nowadays?

MAN Of course! People prefer it to weddings these days! Don't you see that the whole thing of marriage is outdated and nobody buys it anymore? Weddings last a fortnight and all the hassle for nothing. The guests complain about having to go four times to the same friend's wedding and the couples are hopelessly looking for excuses to attract the guests' interests... besides, in the best case scenario, the attention is always shared with the other one... nah! To die is 10 times juicier: everybody looking at you, clapping, crying (because people cry a lot at funerals, much more than at weddings where grandma is the only one who still cries)... oh my... you really have grown old and out of date!

WOMAN I see that... what a shame! Imagine that somebody mentioned it at the home and I was lost for words... but tell me, tell me... right now, everybody wants to die?

MAN Yes. People go mad looking for the most flamboyant tombstones with the cheesiest inscriptions that you can imagine: **[faking the voice]** “Tonight, a new star will shine up in the sky, it will be you, Mary-Ann, who was cremated in... in... in the Isle of Skye”

WOMAN **[Thrilled]** How beautiful! I want one of these!

MAN And that’s not all. They buy luxury dresses to be buried in... they say that the clothes maketh the corpse...

WOMAN Oh my! I must go shopping... tomorrow if not sooner... maybe a red dress because red has always suited my eyes...

MAN Yes, you’re devilish eyes...

WOMAN Or maybe a bright-green one, so I could be seen from far away...

MAN Not far enough...

WOMAN **[Decided and banging the floor with her feet]** I want to die as well!

MAN Great, another one! Let’s all go with the flow... everybody wishing to belong...

WOMAN **[Closing her eyes and laying on the sofa to dream about her thoughts]** I should die on a Wednesday, though, because they get

the fresh fish on Tuesday and you know how much I love fish...

MAN **[With the same angry tone]** ... everybody to be mindless sheep...

WOMAN I would relish on shellfish and the following morning, not too early in case I looked hurried, but not too late either so no one could call me lazy, I would die. Here. On this sofa. Happily. Quietly. Dressed for the occasion. With a smile on my lips, even...

MAN Well, tomorrow it happens to be Wednesday... so if you want, you could start dying or we'll have to wait for another week.

WOMAN **[Oblivious]** I will give all I have to my sister...

MAN But you have nothing because you've never worked!

WOMAN And I will write a beautiful poem to be read by our son at church...

MAN But you've never been to church because you always got lost!

WOMAN And I will buy stiletto shoes, but comfortable ones so they won't hurt me if I have to walk a lot...

MAN **[Giving up, waving his arms in rage and returning to his box]** Then do it! I'd rather be alone than in such bad company!

WOMAN **[Covering her head again]** You've always been a selfish man...

MAN **[Throwing the box onto the sofa]** Selfish me? I, who have slaved all my life to bring you money so you could keep on sleeping? I, that have given up all my dreams to give you a roof! I, that have given everything and have received nothing in return! And now you are calling me a selfish man... to me?

WOMAN **[Mocking him from underneath the blanket]** Me me me, I I I...

MAN Selfish are all these people that want to die only to be looked at, only to get your obituaries all over the papers, to get the neighbours talking well about you for the first time... you are indeed selfish! But me... poor me! I, that am a selfless person, that have never had a second to think about me and my interests. **[Grabs another box and repeats the detailed analysis]** Selfish, Me?

[The dialogue evolves in a crescendo]

WOMAN Yes you are.

MAN Then good.

WOMAN Then great.

MAN Then excellent.

WOMAN Then fantastic.

MAN Then amazing!

WOMAN Then terrific!

MAN Then bloody...

WOMAN Oi! Mind your language!

MAN **[Honestly worried]** What's the matter? Have I stepped on it?

WOMAN Well, no, but almost...

MAN Oh, I'm so sorry... I didn't see it... it is so tiny the poor thing...

WOMAN And it is always sick...

MAN Talking about squalor... I saw your son...

WOMAN **[Removing the blanket and looking everywhere]** When?

MAN Don't know... one or two years ago...

WOMAN And what did he say?

MAN Oh, we didn't speak. He came to say hi and I remembered I was in a hurry.

WOMAN Well, if you see him again, tell him that he left his underwear here and I don't know if he wants me to wash it or not.

MAN **[Slowly, as if opening a treasure box, he opens the lid of the second box before answering]** And why wouldn't you wash it?

WOMAN Because you men like to stink.

MAN **[Smelling noisily the insides of the box]**
Only when we want to attract the ladies.

WOMAN **[Closing her eyes but remaining seated]** I think I feel more attracted towards a good perfume...

MAN Because you're weird...

WOMAN That must be, otherwise I don't know what I am doing with you.

MAN Living your life. And truth be told, a much better one than others... look at your sister...

WOMAN **[With her eyes still closed but effortlessly hiding behind a cushion]** Where?

MAN Don't know... maybe at her place...

WOMAN **[Relieved]** Ah! **[Removes the cushion from her face]**

[Brief silence. The MAN continues analysing the box. The WOMAN lays again on the sofa]

WOMAN Maybe it was her who knocked earlier.

MAN I didn't hear anything.

WOMAN No. Me neither. But I'm sure it was her. She told me she wanted to visit.

MAN And did she tell you what did she want?

WOMAN To visit.

MAN **[With his head again inside the box]** Then wait for her.

WOMAN Yes, I think I won't go out and I'll wait for her. Such a pity, though, now that I was all dressed up... maybe I got dressed because I wanted to go out...

MAN Who knows... you do the weirdest things, but you didn't tell me you wanted to go out.

WOMAN Well, do you think I tell you everything?

MAN And what don't you tell me?

WOMAN If I tell you I would have told you already and then they won't be things I don't tell you, but things I have already told you.

MAN Sure. Then don't tell me, but sing it to me, because I want to know.

WOMAN **[With a clear and distinctive voice]** I'm a bit out of voice today... I shouted all day long yesterday.

MAN **[Writing more information on his notebook]** And what were you shouting for?

WOMAN Because you didn't hear me.

MAN Maybe we were too far apart.

WOMAN But I can hear you now.

MAN **[With a tiny, tiny voice]** That's because we are shouting.

WOMAN **[Covering her ears and in a similar voice]** And why do we shout?

MAN I don't know. Why are you shouting?

WOMAN **[Out loud]** Because I hate you!

MAN **[Oblivious, staring at the box]** Sure... but, then, what are you doing with me?

WOMAN Force of habit.

MAN Sure... and do you think that this bad habit of yours will last much longer? Cause I wouldn't mind some more room in here...

WOMAN Room for what! For more of your damned boxes?

MAN **[Looking at the box in his hands with lust]** Oh! I wish they were mine... I only keep them.

WOMAN For whom?

MAN For whoever needs them.

WOMAN But, who would ever need so many shoe boxes?

MAN A shoemaker, for instance.

WOMAN **[Moving on the sofa and dropping the blanket]** There are no shoemakers anymore...

MAN **[Delicately touching the surface of the box with his finger to appreciate its texture]** Aren't there? So who makes the shoes, then?

WOMAN Do I have to tell you everything? The shoes are made by the machines.

MAN The machines?

WOMAN **[Looking for her blanket]** Where did you put my blanket?

MAN I've given it away.

WOMAN And what about me?

MAN I don't think they'd want you... they're after old things, but worth something, not damaged goods...

WOMAN So much the better, I won't have to move. **[Finding the blanket]** Oh, look, there it was, hidden...

MAN What a playful thing!

WOMAN More than you and me.

MAN But what were you saying about some wonderful machines that...

WOMAN Which machines?

MAN Don't know... you were the one talking about some machines wearing shoes that...

WOMAN Oh, yeah. Right. The machines.

[Silence. The WOMAN covers herself with the blanket slowly]

MAN Oi!

WOMAN What do you want now?

MAN **[Raising his arms to look underneath the box]** You were talking to me!

WOMAN Are you sure?

MAN Yes... you were about to tell me about the machines with shoes.

WOMAN **[Removing the blanket]** Ok, Ok... so it's like this, you take some...

MAN **[Taking the notebook]** Wait, wait, that I want to write it down! Right... I'm ready... tell me... but slowly...

WOMAN **[Talking extremely fast]** You take some rubber, between 10 and 15 pounds, you add a little shoe polish and a tiny bit of, well no, more than that, a good pinch of shoe laces

even though there are some people who prefer to take three pinches but you know that there are all kinds of people and that they tend to go too far always, they think that the more the better but they end up doing only crap, so I only take a good pinch and that's more than enough and then the machine takes everything, analyses it, canalizes it, solidifies it, vomits it and produces a beautiful pair of shoes in any colour and for all tastes.

MAN **[Finishes writing just when she finishes talking. Reading the last sentences written]** It chloroforms it, putrefies it, constipates it, and produces a painful pair of shoes in every odour and for all disgusts?

WOMAN That's it.

MAN **[Pretending to put all the ingredients inside the box]** Rubber... shoe polish... pinched shoe laces... but... who puts everything inside the machine?

WOMAN Don't be silly! **[Lying down again and covering herself with the blanket]** Another machine, of course.

MAN **[Visibly worried]** But, are there so many machines in the world?

WOMAN More than people.

MAN **[More worried now. Yelling]** Shut up! Don't tell them! What if they find out that they outnumber us and revolt against us?

WOMAN Then we would stop them.

MAN But how if they are stronger and cleverer than us?

WOMAN **[As if stating something obvious]** We would build some machines to disconnect the rebellious ones.

MAN **[On the verge of a panic attack]** But that means more machines! Why do we need so many machines!?

WOMAN So we don't have to work.

MAN **[Suddenly losing his fear]** Then we don't have enough machines, yet! And to think that I've been working all my life when the machines could've done it for me!

WOMAN **[Covering her face with the blanket]** It's because we were born at the wrong time... that's why we have fought so much: because we were upset to be part of the worst generation in history.

MAN **[Returning to the box and speaking calmly]** And who chose it?

WOMAN Our parents.

MAN And did they want us to suffer so much?

WOMAN Maybe they didn't know...

MAN Don't be a fool! Of course they knew! You know these kind of things. They prepared the path towards the first war. Don't tell me they didn't know... I accept that the other two were more our doing, but the first one!

WOMAN What are you talking about?

MAN The decay of society.

WOMAN Then talk about something else 'cause this topic bores me.

MAN So what do you want to talk about?

WOMAN **[Uncovering herself and looking towards the audience]** Nothing.

MAN **[Looking towards the sofa not sure what to do]** But... then... what should we do? Should we switch on the TV?

WOMAN No. **[Sits still with her eyes fully open]** We sit and we listen.

MAN But... what if we hear something that we don't want to hear?

WOMAN Then we'll cry.

[Silence. A long one. The WOMAN sits still on the sofa directly staring straight at the audience. The MAN stops his conscious analysis of the box and also remains still with his eyes wide open]

MAN **[Shouting]** I hear nothing!

WOMAN Shhhhhhtttt.

[Another silence. Maybe not so long as the previous one. Both of them remain quiet]

WOMAN **[Slightly moving her head]** No. I hear nothing either. Just silence.

MAN **[Quiet, still]** And what voice does silence have?

WOMAN **[Peacefully lying on the sofa]** It is a rough, throaty, heavy voice.

MAN **[Still]** And what does it tell you?

WOMAN Nothing.

MAN **[Still]** Then... why do you listen to it?

WOMAN So I don't have to listen to you.

MAN **[Still. Silent for a second]** And... this silence thing... would I be able to hear it?

WOMAN I doubt it. It demands effort and strong concentration.

MAN **[Finally moving and returning to the study of the box]** Then I'm not interested... today I'm very tired.

WOMAN What have you been doing?

MAN Everything. I sat on the park bench all day.

WOMAN **[With no irony]** Oh my!

MAN Yes, I know... it is extremely tiring, but it had to be done: two old codgers died and the bench would've been left empty...

WOMAN How ungrateful! After everything that bench has done for them... and how quickly they abandon it.

MAN Well.... It's all about this craze of dying...

WOMAN Oh, shut up 'cause I'm consumed by...

MAN **[Licking the lid of the box]** And do people not eat in this house?

WOMAN Yes, they do. But not today.

MAN Why not?

WOMAN Because there is no food.

MAN So much the better: I won't have to cook.

WOMAN You've never cooked anything!

MAN Liar! I was a professional cook when I was young and I've always cooked you the best dishes around: haggis-filled hog marinated in sweet wine and fresh strawberries... liquid

Yorkshire pudding in a thick gravy sauce with pan-fried haddock and orange juice...

WOMAN **[Sitting and shaking her head in hesitation]** But... why didn't you tell me you were a cook?

MAN 'Cause you never asked.

WOMAN Then... all the dishes we've had over the years... did I not cook them?

MAN No.

WOMAN And we don't have a cook, either?

MAN And how would've we paid him if we have no money?

WOMAN With love and friendliness... just like all your presents!

MAN **[Hugging the box]** I don't believe in consumerism.

WOMAN You don't have to believe in it: it's not a matter of faith! It is a fact and you have to take it as it is.

MAN Fine, but I don't take it.

WOMAN And what will you do about it?

MAN Nothing.

WOMAN Nothing?

MAN Nothing. Passive resistance, they call it.

WOMAN **[Lying again on the sofa]** Laziness, I would call it.

MAN Laziness is subjective: if someone works hard he'll think everyone else is lazy if they don't work as hard as he does... on the other hand... if no one worked hard...

WOMAN **[Engaged in the train of thoughts]** ... all of us would be good workers! We should only work for the amount of retribution we receive... no more effort... we must take the streets and proclaim it to the world... bring sheets so we can make banners! Bring our uniforms for the demonstrations!

MAN You and me should've changed the world... **[sad]** it's a shame it is so late...

WOMAN What time is it?

MAN I don't know. I don't have a watch **[looking around a bit]** but outside it is pitch black already.

WOMAN And in here?

MAN **[Looking around]** There's still light.

WOMAN **[Covering herself with the blanket]** Then turn it off!

MAN Just a second while I finish...

WOMAN You are not still playing with your goddamned boxes, aren't you?

MAN No... I'm knitting.

WOMAN **[Getting up excited]** Great! Make me a scarf, but a very thick one 'cause they say it's going to be a frosty winter.

MAN **[Looking around]** Who says? Do you hear voices again?

WOMAN No. Real people say that.

MAN And do you believe them?

WOMAN Sometimes.

MAN **[Raising his arms to check the bottom of the box]** I never believe them.

WOMAN Not even when they are right?

MAN Never.

WOMAN Oh... well, I sometimes believe them...

MAN Because you are too innocent.

WOMAN Maybe.

MAN Too gullible...

WOMAN Could be.

MAN Too malleable.

WOMAN You're right.

MAN **[In a single breath]** Too silly fool naïve dumb ignorant childish and hesitant!

WOMAN Well, yes.

MAN See? You've been tricked again!

WOMAN **[Lying again]** Ouch! I don't like these games!
Don't you see that I am tired?

MAN Then why don't you go to bed?

WOMAN Because I'm already in it.

MAN And why don't you sleep?

WOMAN Because you are not letting me.

[While the MAN speaks, the lights fade out slowly and so does his voice until reaching the almost complete darkness and the incomprehensible sound of his voice]

MAN Well then, sleep, don't worry, sleep because I won't bother you again. I really don't like to be a pest... Me, that I've always been such a discreet and respectful person who knows exactly when it's time to be quiet... and if you tell me that you want to sleep, then I shut up and I let you sleep... quietly... you'll see... I won't bother you anymore... I will remain here, close to you... but it will be as though I'm not here at all because I will be silent... here, quiet, silent...

[The lights turn on as soon as she speaks]

WOMAN **[Shouting]** I'm not sleepy anymore! Who would've thought it... I was convinced that I was sleepy but now I see I wasn't...

MAN Maybe you were constipated...

WOMAN Could be... but listen, what are you doing now that you are not coming to bed?

MAN **[Accurately measuring the angle of the box]** Nothing... nothing...

WOMAN Are you sure you are not playing with your boxes?

MAN No... no... I'm praying... "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be..."

WOMAN **[Sitting still and clumsily trying to join hands to pray]** Don't be silly! We are atheists!

MAN Not today.

WOMAN No? Why not? What day is today?

MAN **[Writing the box's measure in a notebook]**
Today is the day of Saint George's Mystical and Revealing Illumination.

WOMAN The one with the dragon?

MAN No. The other one.

WOMAN Aahhh... which other one?

MAN Saint George, the one illuminated mystically and revealingly, of course.

WOMAN Of course. **[She lies back again on the sofa]** And what did this man do? Come on, tell me because you know how I love science fiction tales at bed-time...

MAN Oh my, what a silly question! You are so ignorant of the saints! I can't believe you went to the school of the pious and all-loving sisters of mother Theresa...

WOMAN I didn't.

MAN Didn't you?

WOMAN No.

MAN Sure?

WOMAN Yes.

MAN So then, where did you go?

WOMAN Nowhere. Women were not allowed to go to school then.

MAN Why not?

WOMAN Don't know. Maybe they were afraid we would get lost... the school was far away then...

MAN And now?

WOMAN Oh no! Now there are schools everywhere!

MAN And women, can they go to school now?

WOMAN Of course! Look at my sister...

MAN Where?

WOMAN No: she isn't here. I was misled, too... with so many boxes, I thought she was one of them.

MAN And why don't you go to school now?

WOMAN Because I'm too old. They only want young and juicy girls.

MAN **[Surprised]** And what are you?

WOMAN An old fart.

MAN Are you sure? When did you get old?

WOMAN Not so long ago.

MAN You should've told me! How embarrassing: me, such a good-looking lad with a toothless, flatulent and illiterate old fart!

WOMAN And what about you? Did you go to school, yourself?

MAN No. Of course not!

WOMAN Because you are also a woman?

MAN **[Hesitating]** No... I mean... I don't think so... I guess not... but you can never be completely sure.

WOMAN No. You can't be completely sure, ever. But... if you are not a woman, why didn't you go to school?

MAN **[Using the box as a rifle to emphasize his words]** Because they put a rifle on my shoulder and told me I had to go and kill all the bad ones.

WOMAN And who were the bad ones?

MAN All the ones that weren't good ones.

WOMAN Oh my! You were busy, then!

MAN Extremely. **[Aiming with the box]** Day and night shooting. Bullets here and bullets there! Look, one that seems dubious... boom! and down he goes... one that is too tall to be British... boom! and good bye... one that holds an American flag...

WOMAN But which side were you on?

MAN None. I went on my own account.

WOMAN I see... and did you kill a lot of bad ones?

MAN **[Presumptuous]** Woman! You know me... when I have something in my mind... and there were so many of them that it was so complicated to miss that...

WOMAN You killed none!

MAN Not a single one. I left my specs at home...

WOMAN But you've never used glasses in your life!

MAN **[Removing the glasses and getting close to a box trying to read its label]** "Size 25"

No... "891" or is it "73"... hey, listen, are you sure that I've never worn specs?

WOMAN Positive. I've never liked men that wear them, with those boiled frog eyes that they end up having... ouch no! How disgusting!

MAN **[Placing his glasses on the table]** Well, if you say so... it must be true. But I don't know whose specs these are?

WOMAN **[Extending her arm]** If they are chocolatey they are mine.

MAN No... I wouldn't say they are chocolatey.

WOMAN And how do you know that? Have you tasted them?

MAN No.

WOMAN Then taste them! Do I have to tell you everything?

MAN **[Extends his arm towards the sofa from the chair]** Here, taste them yourself, I'm not hungry now.

WOMAN **[Violently reacting, as though she were covered in a thick and sticky spider-web]**
Oooohhhh! Get your stinky specs off me!

MAN They are off.

WOMAN **[Still shaking the alleged dirtiness from her body]** Now I'll have to shower, and I wasn't due for one this week!

MAN Who says that?

WOMAN The gardener.

MAN But we don't have a garden...

WOMAN Then the milk-man.

MAN But we don't drink milk because it constipates us.

WOMAN And who says that?

MAN The doctor.

WOMAN **[Mischievously]** And would he shower me?

MAN Only out of duty...

WOMAN I don't mind waiting until his shift is over...

MAN ...and he will wear gloves.

WOMAN Because he is a true gentleman and he is afraid to emaciate my fragile skin.

MAN If you say so, Guinevere.

WOMAN I do, Quasimodo.

MAN Talking about your sister... don't you think that you should phone her **[in a lower tone]** and leave me alone?

WOMAN Why should I phone her if we are not on speaking terms?

MAN Because.

WOMAN And what will I tell her?

MAN Nothing.

WOMAN And how will she know that it's me on the
phone?

MAN Is there anybody else that doesn't talk to her
perchance?

WOMAN Of course! Don't you see that the world is
such a big place and she is so annoying?

MAN Well then, phone her, tell her that it is you and
that you don't want to talk to her... ah! And
while you are on it, tell her to stop bothering
us knocking at the door every five minutes
because we are extremely busy.

WOMAN And that we'll meet tomorrow for a coffee.

MAN In silence.

WOMAN In silence... hand me the phone, then.

MAN We don't have a phone.

WOMAN So how will I phone her?

MAN Whom?

WOMAN My sister.

MAN Why do you want to phone her if you two
don't speak to each other?

WOMAN Don't we? And why not?

MAN Who knows, some women stuff. Why don't
you go there and ask her?

WOMAN Not now. It's too late. I'm pretty sure she's already asleep.

MAN **[Checking the time on his non-existing watch]** But it's not even tea time yet...

WOMAN Even worse then: she always goes to sleep before tea and wakes up after breakfast... she says that by doing so she cheats the hunger and loses weight.

MAN Your sister is so weird...

WOMAN She is. She fell in the sink when she was young and bumped her head...

MAN And what was she doing in the sink?

WOMAN Falling in it. She was lucky, though, because there were no washing machines back then, otherwise she could've got a shock.

MAN But how did you wash your clothes with no washing machine?

WOMAN We didn't wash them: we wanted them to last longer.

MAN And why do we wash them now?

WOMAN So we can buy more clothes.

MAN Oh my, what a boring game!

WOMAN **[Lifting herself up and moving her arms excitedly]** Which game? I want to play as well!

MAN **[Placing the boxes around the table as if they were pieces of a game]** This game of buying things **[he grabs a box]** that break the following day and you throw the dice **[throws the box]** and you fall into the big shopping mall square and you lose three turns locked and wandering about like a simpleton doing some window-shopping in shops you don't like until you can buy your freedom from another player who sells it to you at double the price so they can pay back the mortgage they have with the bank and with the few remaining coins they buy and sell again, speculate and re-value, cheat and deceive, invest and transactionalise...

WOMAN That's not even a word!

MAN Because the game is nonsense.

WOMAN **[Lying back on the sofa]** Then I don't want to play it.

MAN **[Rearranging the boxes and continuing his analysis]** No. Me neither. Besides, the bank always wins.

WOMAN And why aren't you the bank?

MAN Because they don't let me... I mean... because I don't want to.

WOMAN But we all have to do things that we don't like to do in this life.

MAN And why do we do them if we don't like them?

WOMAN Because we are stupid.

MAN And what would happen if we didn't do them?

WOMAN We would be happier.

MAN But, isn't happiness a good thing?

WOMAN I thought so, but it can't be, otherwise we would be chasing it constantly.

MAN Yes. But, I'm sure I heard somewhere that happiness is the point of life.

WOMAN Nah, TV commercials and nothing else.

MAN And what is the point of life?

WOMAN The horizontal one: six feet under.

MAN **[Pleased with the answer]** I see. **[Measuring the side of a box with a tape measure]** Listen: what's 10x2?

WOMAN **[Sitting again on the sofa]** Why? Are you sure you're not still playing with your goddamn boxes?

MAN Of course not! I just want to know how big is the table because today I was offered a jigsaw and I don't know if it would fit...

WOMAN But, if you make a jigsaw on the table, were are we going to eat then?

MAN We don't eat at all, don't you remember?

WOMAN **[Proud]** Yes, indeed, it was my idea! But...
why don't we eat?

MAN Because we are neither hungry nor do we
have time to eat.

WOMAN Right: busy as hell all day... when would we
find a second to sit at the table?

MAN I hardly ever get close to the table.

WOMAN And don't we miss eating?

MAN No. Besides, judging by the quality of today's
food... we are better off if we don't eat
anything... actually, precisely today it was
three weeks, two months and 41 days since
we buried the neighbour...

WOMAN **[Counting with her fingers]** Oh my, time
flies by... and which neighbour was it?

MAN The one who died.

WOMAN And did we bury her?

MAN From head to toes.

WOMAN And where?

MAN In the garden... as usual.

WOMAN And did we mark the spot clearly? 'Cause I
don't want to find her when I plant the
daffodils...

MAN But where will you plant them if we don't have a garden?

WOMAN But we had one only five minutes ago...

MAN Look... these things shift around... maybe later we'll have a garden again.

WOMAN **[Hesitating]** But then... where did the dead neighbour go?

MAN Oh, that's a mystery! Some people say that we go up, some that we go down, some that we remain in the middle, and some that we simply rot.

WOMAN How disgusting! I'll never understand people's eschatological obsession: all day long talking about urine, excretions, secretions, vomits, intestinal flows, dung and putrefaction... just like kids **[pretending to be a naughty girl saying a word she knows she is not allowed to say]** ... wee-wee **[placing her hands in front of her mouth to cover her naughty smile]** ... poo-poo...

MAN **[Covering his ears with both hands]** Shut it! Or I'll have to rinse your mouth out with soap!

WOMAN **[With the same playful attitude]** ...wee-wee... poo-poo...

MAN Oi! Quiet!

WOMAN wee-weepoo-poowee-weepoo-poowee-
weepoo-poo wee-weepoo-poo...

MAN It's not funny.

WOMAN **[Back to being an adult and acting as if she wasn't to blame]** Not at all. But people are just that childish. They love talking about it, and laughing about it.

MAN Laughing as well? It doesn't make me laugh seeing you on the toilet.

WOMAN And when have you seen me on the toilet?

MAN Every day... and some days even twice!

WOMAN If you didn't sneak in when I'm in there... you wouldn't see me.

MAN If you locked the door...

WOMAN Of course! It's always my fault.

MAN As long as we are clear about it, everything will be fine... but listen, do you or don't you know what's 2x10?

WOMAN **[Replying quickly and confidently]** 37.64.
No, wait. 42.8. Yes, that's it: 12.476.

MAN Oh. Then it won't fit. The jigsaw was around 18 inches...

WOMAN Don't be silly! That's twice the size of our flat!

MAN **[Looking around the flat]** Yes, it is quite a small flat that we live in...

WOMAN Because there's too many people and too little planet.

MAN But two days ago I saw an empty plot...

WOMAN Shut up! There aren't any more of those: I bet you dreamt it.

MAN But I don't dream.

WOMAN And why not?

MAN Because they took all my dreams away.

WOMAN Bastards! And have you reported to the police?

MAN Yes, but they told me it was my fault for being such a dreamer.

WOMAN If the law says so, it must be true.

MAN Probably...

WOMAN But listen... what do you want a jigsaw for?

MAN To kill the time.

WOMAN And why don't you kill it talking with me, instead?

MAN Because you and me have nothing else to talk about.

WOMAN You're right: we've already said everything to each other.

MAN And some things even twice.

WOMAN That's because you've grown old and you repeat yourself.

MAN **[Staring at his hands]** I don't understand it because yesterday I was still young... maybe it happened while I was sleeping... but if it was only yesterday that I was running around chasing your skirt...

WOMAN **[Arrogant]** You may certainly mistake me for someone else, mister: I have never worn a skirt.

MAN **[Looking up into the sky remembering the scene]** And your long and curly hair: how it swirled about in the wind!

WOMAN **[In the same arrogant attitude]** I have never had hair: I was born bald, just like my mother.

MAN And the sensual scent of your body inebriating me...

WOMAN It's all clear to me now: you were drunk!

MAN ... like the soft seashore breeze of a Summer evening...

WOMAN And so drunk that you even saw the sea!

MAN ... delicately penetrating the nostrils of my intoxicated nose...

WOMAN Whose nose? Yours? Come on! You've never been nosy in your life! You and your bloody nose!

MAN And then you gently dropped a white silky handkerchief, discreetly perfumed and I stopped in my tracks thirsty for love...

WOMAN **[Moving around nervously: she is beginning to connect the loose ends]** Wait a second...

MAN **[Oblivious]** ... and I picked it up thrilled by the symbolism of your gesture...

WOMAN What are you saying?

MAN ... and I kept it in formaldehyde as a token of your love...

WOMAN Hey! So you were the hunchbacked annoying brat that chased me everyday when I finished my shift to steal my hankies? Son of a bitch! Do you know how many times I was punished for losing those hankies that I inherited from an old auntie that spent her days crying and the nights sewing? 'Cause even if they hurt your nose because they were poorly done 'cause she had no clue of sewing, maybe someday they would've ended up being worth

something! 'Cause we were not rich at home and they had not invented the tissues yet!

MAN How old are you?

WOMAN So you are coming with me right now and you tell my mother that it was you who stole all the hankies from me!

MAN But your mother died years ago...

WOMAN Don't look for excuses! Hurry up!

MAN But now it's too late and I am tired...

WOMAN **[Lying on the sofa]** You're always tired.

MAN 'Cause living is a very tiring activity.

WOMAN If you say so...

MAN You have to wake up every day. Get dressed. Get outside to get some fresh air. Eat. Digest. Piss every five minutes because the bladder is faulty. Be polite to the people you meet. Smile, regardless of having nothing to smile about. Pretend you are so happy to still be alive, despite having nothing to do. And doing everything, constantly breathing!

WOMAN Always?

MAN Always.

WOMAN And what happens if you don't?

MAN They say you die.

WOMAN Not a bad idea: dead people are never tired...
why don't you give it a go?

MAN Because I'm a man of principles.

WOMAN **[Sitting again]** It's about time that you lose them! Don't you see that you're old-fashioned? Nowadays what is in is not to have any principles. Neither principles, nor scruples, nor goodness, nor ethical values...

MAN But I feel sorry for them... where will they go if I abandon them? We've been together for so many years that I love them like the son that I never had...

WOMAN But you had a son.

MAN Did I? Who with?

WOMAN With me.

MAN **[Leaving the box in the table and checking his notes on the notebook]** Oh, but this was an unwanted one. Actually, it was more a punishment from destiny.

WOMAN I couldn't agree more: I didn't want that child of yours.

MAN Really? I would never have guessed 'cause you didn't let him out for nine months!

WOMAN It wasn't me! It was him. Like father, like son: he was too lazy to leave my womb.

MAN He could've stayed in there!

WOMAN He would've had a better life: poor boy, he had the worst father ever. With all the admirers I had...

MAN **[Ending the sentence]** ...with all the men you cheated on me with... and the only wretched one that got you pregnant was I!

WOMAN Wretched you and wretched me! Everything would have been better without that kid.

MAN We would have been happier...

WOMAN We wouldn't have wasted our life with each other...

MAN We would've been muuuuch happier!

[Silence. A long one. Slowly, the two of them look at each other directly for the first time.]

WOMAN/MAN What bad luck!

Curtain.