

THE DEAR LITTLE ONES

OR

What will happen if we go on
bringing up children
in the same ugly way as
we were brought up?

A play for 2 female and 2 male actors

BY

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ACT ONE

Darkness. The crying of a new-born baby is competing with the sound of a vacuum cleaner. Lights on. Set: A modern home predominated by an old, high-backed and rather worn Elisabethan chair. There is also a shelf with two books, a big cupboard, a fridge, a pink plastic Christmas tree, a big basket for the dog and other common pieces of furniture.

MUM and the vacuum cleaner are performing a very erotic ballet. She is completely neglecting the SON who is sitting in the dog's basket on a sheepskin. He is dressed in a baby's napkin and umbilical bandage. MUM gets satisfaction and comes to.

SON Mum?

MUM Shut up.

SON But Mum, you ...

MUM You've got your comforter.

SON But Mum, you're ...

MUM Now, look. You've got your bloody comforter, haven't you?

SON Yes, Mum, but I'm ...

MUM But, but, but, but, but, always those buts, I can't stand it.
Suddenly in a gentle tone: You're right, my boy. Life is nothing but buts. *She caresses the hose of the vacuum cleaner.* We have to be fond of our comforters.

SON You're my mother, aren't you?

MUM I can't deny it. *Aside:* You give birth to a child and at the same moment you are sentenced to motherhood for the rest of your life, never alone, always stumbling over forgotten skates whenever you want to do something different.

SON Oh come, I'm helpless. I'm displaying the most elementary

physical requirements of a human being.

MUM I have read about that.

SON I'm hungry. I'm cold.

MUM Don't be unreasonable, you'll be fed at five. Until then you've got your comforter.

SON I've got psychological requirements as well, Mum. I'm longing for tenderness.

MUM For what?

SON Tenderness.

MUM Ten ... Hahahaha. You might bloody well have thought of that before coming here.

SON But Mum, small kids do long for tenderness. It's a fully legitimate need.

MUM You're wrong. You're a baby and babies are completely different. 95% of a baby is intestinal canal. The rest is vocal cords. So, if you'll please shut up.

SON But ...

MUM No more buts. Don't you realize that I, during the whole long pent-up and sorely afflicted winter, have been attending the town council's evening classes learning about nursing and care for young babies and making exercises to restore my demolished floor of pelvis? I've been doing that for your sake exclusively.

SON Yes, but ...

MUM A dark, badly carpentered winter.

SON But ...

MUM Okay, the pelvis exercises were for the sake of your father, that ungrateful pig, but everything else was for your sake my beloved son. I attended all the lessons and I was never late. Are you wet?

SON No. But I have my dreams.

MUM Dreams? You? Bosh! You don't know what you're talking about. Dreams? At your age? Nonsense. My boy, I could tell you about dreams.

Shes gives herself to the vacuum cleaner. She soon has some difficulties in breathing, but recovers. She lets go of the vacuum cleaner.

SON I'm dreaming of life, Mum.

MUM *Aside:* I must say the pelvis exercises were better than the nursing.

SON I'm dreaming of life, Mum.

MUM Life?

SON Yes.

MUM Did you say life?

SON Yes. When does the life begin?

MUM Now listen. Once and for all I'm going to tell you something I want you to understand. Never say that filthy word again. If your father had heard it, oh boy. There is no such thing as life. There's nothing but slippery slopes, crushing defeats, approaching cold fronts and a moth-eaten old world. That's all. The rest is silence.

SON Silence?

MUM Silence. You'd better learn that at once. Great Britain expects it to be a basic part of your scholastic attainments. Shakespeare said it. They knew it even then. It's time to catch up. *Aside:* I'm sure I've got a slow learner.

SON I've also heard of something called happiness.

MUM Happiness?

SON Yes.

MUM Oh God, all innocence gone. Well, my boy, sometimes ... very, very seldom ... *She sighs.*

SON You admit?

MUM Why not? As time goes by you'll learn that your mother was a sensible woman. As to happiness I admit that if you are very, very lucky you may perhaps happen to find a cup with only a single chip.

SON And that's the peak?

MUM That's the peak.

SON Somebody told me that you can read about happiness.

MUM Read about it?

SON Perhaps there's a bulletin for members of happiness?

MUM No. ... Well, you may have have a few happy minutes reading the death notices, but nowadays reading can't be recommended as a way to happy feelings. The great poets are dead. Like the rest of those who were great. ... By the way, who told you about happiness?

SON Pamela did.

MUM I see.

SON She said ...

MUM Pamela is a tart. I've told you not to play with that beastly girl. You're Mum's own kid, you're too small for Pamela. Too small for playing with girls and what worse is. And don't tell Dad about Pamela. Imagine the words he would spit out. Perhaps he wouldn't keep to words. You'd better learn it now along with the other lot. A son shall follow his father. Rome wasn't built in one day. The wise egg doesn't teach the hen.

SON Nor the cock.

MUM That's right. Clever boy.

SON However, it might be discussed wether ...

MUM No. Will you please lie down. It's out of the question. You've got a long and dreary life waiting for you, so just be patient and

relax.

SON But Mum, you said ...

MUM Shut up.

SON Well, you did say ...

MUM Go to hell. I didn't say anything. *Aside:* This is unjust. He's a holy terror. *To Son:* If I were Emily Brontë you wouldn't talk to me like that.

SON Emily is dead, Mum.

MUM So much the worse for you. I haven't deserved a treatment like this. I don't eat dirt. Don't forget, after all, I'm your mother.

SON As to motherhood, Mum, I'm still longing for tenderness.

MUM Don't you try to sink me by such a spiteful gunfire. You demand too much, my son.

SON I'm also giving. The tenderness might be mutual, Mum.

MUM Babies can't be mutual. I have never heard of mutual babies. Babies are egomaniacs sucking even the last drops of blood and energy and wide waking state out of their dog-tired mothers. They don't stop their demanding raids until they've brought their mothers to the deathbed. One more thing. Longing for tenderness is only one of the many, many needs which you'll carry with you through your whole life, unfulfilled, never met, never complied. You'd better learn that as fast as possible.

SON Along with the other lot?

MUM Yes.

SON I see.

MUM Longing for tenderness! Ha!

SON Can I have a bottle, then?

MUM What do you think I've been longing for? What do you think I got? Twenty years on bread and water and holy motherhood, and

a demolished floor of the pelvis at that.

SON A bottle, Mum. A feeding bottle.

MUM This is where the suppression of women begins. You're never allowed to think two thoughts in succession.

She opens the fridge. It's full of beer bottles. She takes out a feeding bottle from the overcrowded fridge and throws it to her son.

MUM *Aside:* He hasn't inherited his needs from strangers.

Son is sucking. Again Mum is having intercourse with the vacuum cleaner. Son stops sucking.

SON Here you are, Mum.

MUM Quiet, please, I'm coming.

SON I'm finished.

MUM Ah, that's good, that's good.

SON There's a big boy?

MUM Oh yes ... yeeeeeees ... there's a big clever boy ... ohhhhhh

SON I'd like to see my navel, then.

MUM What? ... *She comes to.* ... What did you say?

SON I'd like to see my navel.

MUM Mgrhhyirf!!!

SON Time has come, hasn't it?

MUM Stop it, stop it, for God's sake. And your father's too. Never never will you make that disastrous, ill-fated request again. If your father were around ...

SON Well, I just ...

MUM I don't want to hear it. Neither does your divine father or any of

the other heavenly hosts. How can you think of such an attitude?

SON I think it's quite simple.

MUM Definitely not.

SON Natural curiosity, in fact.

MUM Down! Down! Will you please lie down! *He hands her the feeding bottle and lies down in the basket. Aside:* How did I get such a histrionic child?

SON I suppose you did it the common way.

MUM That'll do. Don't you shave me that close. You're not a politician.

SON A politician? Well, considering this family I might very well become one.

MUM Don't threaten me. This is a reliable family with no pollution so far. You may as well stop carrying your filthy ideas to extremes. There are several better ways to go off the rails.

SON But ...

MUM No further talks about that. This is a regular family with a white piano and your father is a subscriber to the National Psychological Magazine.

SON I see.

MUM We should like it to be appreciated.

SON Of course.

MUM I said that we should like it to be appreciated.

SON Yes.

MUM Well???

SON I appreciate.

MUM Your appreciating doesn't look convincing.

SON It doesn't?

MUM I'm afraid not.

SON Sorry. I do appreciate. Really. I do.

MUM Okay. That was the last word spoken on that subject.

She puts the empty bottle on top of the cupboard, picks up a duster and goes on an aggressive sight-seeing tour in the furniture jungle. She stops at the basket.

MUM Stop that!

SON Eh?

MUM Immediately.

SON Who? I?

MUM Drat you if you don't stop.

SON Stop what?

MUM Looking suppressed.

SON Suppressed?

MUM Suppressed, yes. Don't you understand? Suppressed, repressed, oppressed, crushed, put down, make your choice, but stop looking like it. Immediately. You are a happy baby.

SON But Mum ...

MUM I can't stand it. My nerves buckle. My handlebars get out of control.

SON Sorry, Mum. What am I supposed to do instead?

MUM Have you heard?... You haven't understood anything at all, have you? Well, your father and I are, with the best of our trusted and well-beloved abilities, trying to give you a stright back, self-confidence, courage and a full-blooded zest for life so that you'll be able to to walk dryshood through the battlefront and survive the fittest and become the one and only who moves on the face of the waters and leads the firm safely between fish, flesh and

good red herring towards the golden Wall Street salvation. But what are you doing? You're just looking suppressed. For no reason at all.

SON Oh Mum, I'm terrible sorry.

MUM I can't sleep for thinking about all what we are doing for your sake. All the sacrifices. Time and tears. We've always stirred you up and given you hard-boiled encouragement. We've stimulated your curiosity, washed your underwear and dreamed your wonderful dreams about your outstanding prospects. But what happened? All our efforts ran directly through and ended up in the napkin.

SON That's not true, Mum.

MUM It isn't?

SON I still contain my curiosity.

MUM You do?

SON It didn't run through.

MUM Prove it.

SON I want to see my navel.

MUM GRHGHYFPTEAAAAHHHH!!

She looks around for something she can use for killing him. The doorbell rings. She pulls herself together.

How lucky you are.

She ploughs out. Pamela enters. She is dressed in a summer dress and has a skipping rope in her hand.

SON Hello, Pamela.

PAM Hello, mate. When are we going to play?

SON Soon.

PAM Soon???

SON Yes.

PAM I want to play now.

SON I can't.

PAM Why not?

SON Mum, you know. She says soon. In a little while. Some other day. By and by.

PAM That's what your Mum says?

SON She definitely says not now.

PAM I see. So when?

SON In the beautiful fullness of time.

PAM What?

SON That's how she formulates it.

PAM What's her problem?

SON I'm too small, she says.

PAM Too small?

SON For you. I'm afraid I'm Mum's kid. That's what she says.

PAM Well then ... *(She starts walking out)*.

SON But I'll grow. I'll grow very fast. Look. I'm growing now. Just wait. Soon I'll be big enough.

PAM Soon?

SON I'm big enough now. What are we gong to play? House?

PAM What else. We're going to make a lot of kids. And you, you're my bus driver.

SON *(dreamingly)* I'm your bus driver?

PAM Yes.

SON That's a rather tall order.

PAM Nothing less will do. You're going to drive through the city, following ingenious impenetrable systems and in the evening you'll return, horny as an elephant, to your penetrable wife and when the kids are asleep your wife will turn horny too.

SON You will?

PAM Juice and gravy. ... What's the matter?

SON Bus drivers work in shifts.

PAM Horny in the morning, then? When the kids are off to school? There's nothing like varying the changes.

SON I'm afraid I'll never come home. I'll be caught by the traffic jam and captured forever.

PAM You'll get through.

SON No, I won't. I'll be sentenced to go on all the dull way to High Barnet and back again in the boundless old wheel track along the cemeteries and the only encouragement will be my late grandfather's mossy headstone.

PAM I'll be there too. I'm your consolation prize.

SON You can't get onboard.

PAM Why not? Don't you want me to come along?

SON Certainly.

PAM But Mum is your bus conductor?

SON Mmm.

PAM And she doesn't intend to give me a single ticket to Blissful Heaven?

SON I'm afraid she won't.

PAM Well ... (*She turns round and heads for the door*).

SON Don't disappear! I'm jumping off the bus. I don't want an everlasting eternal life stretched out between High Barnet and Wapping with Mum on the top floor and no stopping at Blissful Heaven. I don't want to become a bus driver, no matter how many promises they disgorge.

PAM You won't?

SON My life shall not be crushed between snarling time-tables and heavy loads of tickets leading nowhere. I'll live on my imagination.

PAM You want to become a poet?

SON No, not 'once upon a time', I want something better. I'll compose a whole new life for you and me. I'll reach to the sky and pick a bright brilliant star for you. I'll pick two, three, four, five, a whole Milky Way of stars and I'll sow them round your hair like a luminous halo. I'll sprinkle them at your kissable tiny feet all the way from the armchair past the old cupboard and the stinking telly to the tickling sheets in the bed-room and then we'll float in the air.

PAM Oh God!

SON We'll continue out into the space.

PAM Marvellous.

SON And touch down at the moon before our non-stop flight to the sun and the millions of degrees of good old-fashioned longing and desire.

PAM And after that?

SON There will be no after. The burning desire is our permanent everlasting condition.

PAM But the kids?

SON The kids?

PAM Don't forget. We'll have kids.

SON You want to?

PAM Lots of kids.

SON Okay, we'll visit one of the fixed stars and cool down for a moment while delivering a baby. Having done that we'll return to the burning degrees.

PAM And once a year we'll deliver a new baby for each of the lonely fixed stars. A whole Milky Way of singing babies.

(She gives him one end of the skipping rope. They start swinging).

PAM One, two, three, four, five, six ... how many stars are there in a Milky Way?

SON I don't know. But I'm looking forward to the efforts.

(They stop swinging. She talks to the handle as if it were a microphone).

PAM Hello? ... *(He listens to his handle).* ... I love you. Roger and over.

(Mum enters. They don't discover her)

SON *(speaks to his handle)* I love you too. Roger and over.

PAM Thank you. More, please. Roger and over.

SON Something is going to happen very soon. Do you know what?

PAM No.

SON I'll be a full-grown hefty man.

PAM Oh God ... and what next?

SON I'll come up to scratch.

PAM You will?

SON Roger and over.

PAM Can I have the details?

(He kisses his handle with violent passion. She quivers).

SON Did you like it? Roger and over?

PAM I'm palpitating.

SON Ohhhh.

PAM I'll give you something in return.

(She kisses her handle, he kisses his. The kissing goes on and develops into a wet, sucking affair).

MUM Stop that filthy smut. Stop it.

(They don't stop. Mum pulls the rope away from Pam. Son goes on sucking, happily smiling, eyes closed).

How dare you kiss my tiny boy's handle? Bloody tart.

(Mum pulls the rope away from Son. He comes to and opens his eyes).

Don't you realize she's a pervert sex maniac? She's raving mad.
(To Pam) Get out you rotting beast. Get out and don't you ever dare to slosh around in the wake of my little dinghy. Get out. Shoooh. *(Exit Pam)*. ... That was not what we had expected, my boy. After all what Dad and I have done for you. I've never seen the like. In our time we never even dreamed of ... well, dreamed of doing what I've just been forced to watch. You have let us down, my boy. In cold blood. I'm very disappointed. Do you understand?

SON I think I do. I've trampled the flowerbed.

MUM No. It's worse. You've trampled a sensitive mother's heart. - You've been drinking, haven't you?

SON No, Mum.

MUM I'm sure we can expect everything from you. *(She points to the floor in front of her feet)*. Down! Come on, down!

(Like a beaten dog he creeps out of the basket and lies down in front of her).

SON I'm sorry. I apologize.

MUM Go on.

SON I apologize.

MUM That won't do. ... No. You can't say apologize two times. It's against the rules. Come on.

SON I can't remember what to say.

MUM You ought to be ashamed of yourself. *(Son starts weeping. She smiles).* Well, well, my mother's heart whispers to me that even it was beastly trod upon just a few seconds ago I should be indulgent towards you and help you, so ms, ms, ms. *(Sound of a kiss).*

SON Oh, Mum, thank you. *(He kisses her foot).*

MUM That's better.

SON Will everything go on as it did before?

MUM I can't promise anything, but under certain obedient and submissive circumstances you might very well cling to a slice of hope. Are you grateful?

SON Yes, Mum.

MUM Also it depends on what you've learned from this.

SON ???

MUM Don't tell me that you learned nothing.

SON Oh no, Mum, I've learned a lot.

MUM What did you learn?

SON I ... eh ... You know better, Mum, you always do. Tell me, please.

MUM You learned at least three important rules. One must crawl before one can walk. ... When you've learned how to walk don't thread on Oedipus' toes. ... And very important: Always keep your handle in the basket. Only politicians break that rule.

SON There's a fourth rule. Never stop loving Mum.

MUM Right. And Dad.

SON And Dad, sorry.

MUM Remember, if you don't learn what you're able to, what you have to, what you're expected to, what you're obliged to and what you must ... what will happen?

SON He'll be coming.

MUM Who'll be coming?

SON Must I say it?

MUM You have to. Well, who'll be coming?

SON The big bogeyman.

MUM Right.

(A big bang from the wings).

SON What's that? ... The bogeyman?

(Mum smiles. A diabolic smile. Dad enters and heads determinedly towards the highbacked chair).

MUM You've become a father.

DAD Oh no! Not again.

MUM He's a boy.

DAD Another one?

MUM Don't blame me.

DAD Who else?

MUM Would a girl be better?

DAD Don't be cheeky. (*Aside*) 'Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage'.

MUM Pardon?

DAD I quoted Shakespeare, my dear. You would have known if ... never mind. ... How is he? Will he become a manager?

MUM Don't worry. Up till now all of our sons have become managers, haven't they?

DAD We've only got two.

MUM They are managers now both of them, aren't they?

DAD And the third?

MUM Once upon a time there was a wise man. He had three sons. The first became a manager, the second became a manager and the third ...

DAD Oh no! God forbid! A fairy-tale in the family. How could that happen? Compared to number one and number two ...

MUM Don't be unreasonable. He has just arrived.

DAD I'm not unreasonable.

MUM Yes, you are.

DAD No, I'm not. I'm neither unreasonable, exaggerated, excessive nor difficult.

MUM Yes you are. And peppery too.

DAD Bloody bitch. I'm not peppery, certainly not. Say that once more and I'll kill you. Aeee? It's not in my nature to be peppery. You bloody well know that's not true.

MUM Okay, okay.

DAD (*Aside*) A still small voice spake unto me, thou art so full of misery, were it not better not to be?

MUM Has somebody trampled on you?

DAD I quoted Lord Tennyson, my boy. Keep to the classics. Your mother never graduated. Silly old cow.

MUM Somebody trampled on you.

DAD Of course they did. This day is no exception.

MUM Who? Your boss?

DAD No.

MUM The traffic warden?

DAD No.

MUM I know. They've increased your tax assessment, haven't they?
(*Dad nods. Death is at hand*). That was your last straw. The cup is full, isn't it?

DAD Jesus mounted the cross for less than that.

MUM Hallelujah.

SON Dad?

DAD (*Doesn't answer*).

MUM Your third son wants to speak to you.

DAD Is that you?

SON I'd like to ...

DAD Not now, my boy. Another day perhaps.

SON But Dad ...

DAD No, no, no. ... My God ... these never-stopping demands. You must learn to choose. You can't have it entered and get discount for cash at the same time. You are old enough to understand that. And who else do you intend to lean on when your parents have passed away?

SON But Dad. I'd just like to ...

DAD Did you say but?

SON Yes, but ...

DAD But, but, but ... Ladies and gentlemen may I have your attention, please ...

MUM I have already told him.

DAD You have? It's my part! Silly goat.

MUM You may play it once more. He's a slow learner.

DAD My son, as to your excessive abuse of buts ... the reason why you keep saying but all the time is that you just want to be able to tell your kids that when you were young you always took part in protesting against everything. It's pure vanity, my boy. There's no real development whatsoever in those buts.

SON But Dad ...

DAD Yes, I'm your Dad, no doubt about that if we're going to rust your mother. ... That's normally a bad idea, but in this case ... we don't want people to talk, do we? So I'm your Dad, but what's the sense of throwing it in my teeth every minute? I must this and that and the other, it's too much. I'm just one person.

MUM A man.

DAD A man? What do you mean by that?

MUM A man. Certainly. Take it easy. No ulterior motives hidden in the sleeve.

DAD Sure?

MUM You may relax.

DAD Well. After all I think I'll not hang myself today then. ... The Earl of Chesterfield, my boy. Nice chap. Many good quotations. Tell me about your lucky life at school. (*Son's face starts twitching*). ... Come on.

SON I've got the essay back.

DAD And? ... And? ... (*The twitching gets worse*). Stop those tics. Stop it.

SON Stop what?

DAD Those tics.

SON Tics?

DAD (*His face starts twitching too*). Your face twitches. It's neurotic. Morbid. Pathological. It's Freudian and that's what we don't want to have in this family. I might kill you. You remember Oedipus? (*Mum starts twitching*). Well, you got the essay back?

SON Yes, Dad.

DAD (*His twitching stops. So does Mum's*). Go on. I'm very interested, you know. I spent a whole evening, my boy writing about those long forgotten archeological matters. (*Son's twitching gets worse*). A sweating father's assistance will always be taken for granted. I know that bloody well. Twenty pages of Osborne's angry young men from our butting past and no gratitude at all, but I don't blame you, I blame your dear mother who fucking well knows that it's she who has failed to come up to my expectations of a real son fully aware of the fact that a kind and modest attitude will always help to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

MUM Shakespeare. Cultural heritage.

DAD It was an easy one. That's why she knew it. But gratitude, my son, that is what we in the old days had for breakfast, lunch and supper.

MUM Times have changed, Manny.

DAD I might have read the paper.

MUM Sure. Or ... oh God ... you might have watched telly. (*To Son*) You're lucky it wasn't time for the match of the week.

DAD I didn't expect any gratefulness, my son, but you might at least have sent me a sickly smile. I'm not used to getting much atten-

tion. I'm born in a house with neither gas, electricity nor water laid in. I grew up emptying the privy each Friday, so I think that in the event kids always owe their parents some service of the debt. Didn't you appreciate my assistance?

SON Yes, Dad.

DAD Good. Let's get back to the point. How about the marks?

SON I didn't get a first.

DAD You're not going to break down and tell me that you got a bad mark?

MUM (*Giggles*). He got the lowest.

DAD I knew. I knew. (*To Son*) You've always stabbed me in the back with your lethal daggers. You've got them all the way up your sleeves.

MUM Oh come.

DAD And you! You've always taken his side.

MUM Nonsense.

DAD I saw it!

MUM What?

DAD Your smile. ... Yes, you smiled even if you fucking well know that I've always behaved as if I were the full father of that boy. I don't deserve this treatment.

MUM I'm afraid you'd better realize that nowadays education isn't what it was in the stone-age when you graduated.

DAD I know. There's nothing to touch what I learned and I'm dog-tired of your cabals and fairy-tales. ... Yes, I saw it, you smiled. ... Oh God, women and children may be happy, but we ... the suffering members of the human race ...

(Mum takes out a bottle of beer from the fridge and hands it to Dad. There's a teat on the bottleneck).

MUM Here you are. Let's restore the family idyl.

DAD (*Starts sucking*). Think of all sss ... what I'm doing ... ssss ... for your sake.

MUM That's right. You've done a lot.

DAD Have done?

MUM You still do. No doubt about it. Nobody's doing as much as you're. You're sacrificing yourself for the good of your family.

DAD That's true. ... Sssss I'm drinking myself to death.

MUM Your Dad is a very selfless person. I hope you'll appreciate it.

SON Sure I will. Look, Dad.

MUM He's appreciating. Aren't you happy?

DAD I was fated to play a bigger part in life. But all these everlasting ceaseless childbirths and all the obligations ... Ssssss ... My home is my quagmire, my castle my quicksand.

SON Another quotation?

MUM No. Dad's own wisdom. (*To Dad*) Go on. Sing a song.

DAD A song? In times like these? The Palmy days of depression?

MUM You've got a talent, haven't you? Don't let it sink into oblivion. Please, Manny.

DAD One more sacrifice for the sake of the family. (*He tries out various poses and sings*).
 When life invited me to dance
 My tie was not awry.
 My eyes could see and look and glance.
 Now they can only cry.

A man may have the wildest dreams
 they'll never come alive.
 Just listen to your soul, it screams.
 Oh man, why do you strive?

My life will soon have passed away
with stains and cracks untold.
Why did I come? It's hard to say.
Be glad, I'll soon be cold.

MUM *(Sings)*
I see, you're going to conk out.
Oh yes we had our dreams.
But it's too late to face about
the end is near ... *(She looks at Dad)* it seems.

(Thus encouraged Dad gets up from his Elisabethan seat. He puts down the bottle and makes for Mum. He dances towards her, probably tango).

DAD In the heyday of youth ... do you remember?

MUM Oh come.

(During his next line Dad takes hold of Mum and dances with her. However she doesn't take much part in the dancing. To say it as it is: she isn't much cooperative).

DAD In Hyde Park when the dark fell and the small noisy boys went home with their footballs under their arms and the froghoppers sang and the mole itched blissfully behind the fly ...

MUM No way.

DAD And you and I crept under the bushes ... all Christmas candles lit, our hearts in tempo di mazurka, molto espressivo, con grazia ...

MUM Lecherous?

DAD *(Utters noises that indicate that he is).*

MUM For once.

DAD *(More grunting noises, he seems happy)*

MUM *(Disengages).* It's too much fag. *(Dad starts fading).* You always promise more than you can perform. ... *(Dad draws himself up, but swallows the truth and collapses again in the chair. He consoles himself by sucking the bottle).* ... Cheer up, Manny,

we've still got all our sad memories.

SON Dad?

DAD (*Teat in mouth*). Es my goy.

SON Dad, I'd like to ...

MUM No!

DAD Ssss ... What would you like to?

MUM Nothing at all.

DAD (*To Son*) I've stopped drinking for your sake.

SON Yes, Dad. I'd like to have a look at my

MUM NO! NO! NO! ... (*There's a ring at the front door*). ... You must control yourself. I did warn you, didn't I? ... Quiet! ... (*She runs out*).

DAD Do you know what a son is?

SON Well, I think so.

DAD No, you don't. A son is a thing begot within a pair of minutes, thereabouts, a lump bred up in darkness. Another encouraging quotation, my boy.

SON Shakespeare?

DAD No. Thomas Kyd who unfortunately died in 1595. Wise man he was.

SON Can a son be wise, Dad?

DAD I've never seen one myself, but according to the holy Bible it should be possible. A wise son makes a glad father. Book of proverbs, my son. ... On the other hand ... I've never seen a glad father either.

MUM (*Returns with the newspaper. To Dad*) Did he say anything?

DAD No.

MUM Praise heaven. *(She hands the paper to Dad).*

SON Dad?

MUM You shouldn't talk to your father. Remember the rules. Never eat fish with a knife, don't believe in horoscopes. Don't break the seventh Commandment, at least not at your age, don't steal, don't lie and don't commit the worst of all crimes: Don't disturb your father while he's reading the newspaper!

DAD My boy, my dear little boy, what were you going to say?

(Son looks at Mum, then at Dad, then at Mum again, confused).

MUM Don't ask that silly question once again.

DAD *(To Son)* You may perhaps have noticed that I have interrupted my reading solely for the sake of maintaining my fatherly duties?

MUM *(To Son)* Mind what you're saying. Daddy may deliver his lecture. - *(To Dad)* You might deliver it now, Manny, it's high time.

DAD *(neglecting Mum, to Son)* I'm waiting.

MUM *(To Son)* You'd better keep your big bawdy mouth completely shut.

DAD I'll give you a piece of good old-time fatherly advice, my boy. Never let the New Statesman wait in vain.

(Son makes an attempt to speak, but can't. He's too confused and Mum scares him).

MUM Say something sensible.

SON *(put out)* Eh ... eh ... When will Pamela come back? ... *(Ominous silence. He regrets).* ... Oh my God.

DAD In my time one took one's time awaiting the fullness of time.

MUM We did. Verily we did.

DAD Pardon?

MUM We waited very long indeed, didn't we?

DAD (*Aside, rythmical*) When a man has married a wife he finds out wether / Her knees and elbows are only glued together. ... Blake, my boy, William Blake.

SON Wise man?

DAD Very wise.

MUM You've got a good father, my son. Descending from two books-helves.

DAD Unlike your mother. Silly goat. (*He resumes reading. There's a short pause*).

SON I'd like to see my navel, Dad.

DAD Beg your pardon?

SON I'd like to see my navel.

DAD So you want to see your navel?

MUM Your lecture, Manny, your lecture.

DAD If you strike a child, take care that you strike it in anger, even at the risk of maiming it for life. A blow in cold blood neither can nor should be forgiven.

MUM (*Giggling*) Are you angry?

DAD (*To Son*) Bernard Shaw, 1856 to 1950. ... (*To Mum*) I'm wrathful. Furious. Wild. I'll strike in anger. (*He goes to the big cupboard and takes out a cane*). Look, my boy. When I was a boy I was brought up by this dear and precious heirloom. And before me your grandfather, your stout and upright grandfather who walked across the pack ice from Dogger Bank to his small, but beloved house in Newcastle in the inexorable winter of 1902.

MUM And before him your great-grand...

DAD Quiet! - I'll do the talking. Thank you. ... All things considered it was a good, durable upbringing. As you may have noticed it was, at least in my case, very successful. One must admit that

the result has never been surpassed. That's why we still keep it in the cupboard. It's a monument to a childhood rich in feelings. *(He makes use of the cane as a rifle, a sword, a whip etc).*

MUM Go on, Manny. The lecture, go on. *(To Son)* You asked for it.

DAD When the ceremony was over and the holy monument was replaced you sat in the darkness, tears boiling over, bubbling across your cheeks, and there you were, blushing with shame, moaning as the cold toilet seat imprinted a motherly kiss on your burning bottom. *(Pink spot-light upon Dad who has sat down with the cane between his thighs)*. Sitting there you were overwhelmed by an endless need of affection. *(His hand goes up and down the cane. The telly drivels. Mum moans)*. Oh dear, oh dear. *(The pink spot-light fades away. Dad collapses, but comes to)*. Afterwards I realized that my world had become richer, my head brighter and my heart full of the pinkest beatitude. And I'm grateful to this heirloom because it helped me to become a man of high standards. If the upbringing of our time shall succeed in being modern it must build on a solid base of confidence in all authorities and absolute obedience.

MUM Excellent. - *(To Son)* You're lucky, he's using kindness.

SON He is?

MUM Very tolerant attitude.

DAD Of course I'd like to see some reciprocal affection from your side, my boy. Do you understand? *(Son understands nothing, we can't blame him, can we? ... To Mum)* Will you please replace the monument in the cupboard? ... *(To Son)* And you, soldier boy, go away and get a medal.

SON But what about the navel, Dad?

DAD UWR3345SKZZZPPPPPP!!! ... *(He takes back the cane intending to kill the Son)*.

MUM I warned you, didn't I? Dad's an altruist.

SON A what?

MUM Don't take advantage of it.

DAD So Oliver Twist asks for more?

MUM Charles Dickens, eh?

DAD Don't waste the time, silly ass, everybody knows that. *(To Son)*
Now, listen. There's no sense at all in that never ceasing looking
at your own navel business. It's unproductive and utterly ghastly.
I won't have a lethal disease like that in the family. So now I'll
make use of this. Just to make you understand.

MUM You aren't serious, are you?

DAD Of course I am.

MUM A blow in cold blood neither can ...

DAD Shut up.

MUM It's Bernard Shaw, Manny, and ...

DAD I don't care. For all that he was a fucking old socialist.

MUM He's too young.

DAD Nonsense, he died at 95.

MUM HE's too young. Don't do it.

DAD How come you're suddenly a mother? Some incest going on?

MUM He's just too young. You've been young yourself, haven't you?

DAD That's right, I've been young too, younger than most people, but
I've never wanted to see my navel, have I?

MUM You were very fond of looking at mine.

DAD The cup is full.

MUM Oh Manny, your love is infinite.

DAD That doesn't prevent a firm hand.

MUM Forgive him, there's still hope. After all, he's wearing a napkin.

DAD *(looks at the napkin, then at the cane, realizes that the cane will*

not hurt Son enough, decides that he'll show his magnanimity) It isn't wise, but okay, I'll forgive him. Let the troubles continue as Moses said to Potiphar. I'll be a father. (He gives the cane to Mum. She replaces it in the cupboard, locks the door and gives the key to Dad. Dad, Mum and Son join hands and start walking round the Christmas tree singing 'Here we go round the mulberry bush'. Church bells are ringing. The telly's showing sparklers).

DAD Look what we've done for you, my boy. It's yours.

MUM Look, we've bought presents.

DAD We've overdrawn the account.

DAD and MUM We hope you'll never forget it.

SON Dad?

DAD Yes?

SON The navel, Dad, I'd like to ...

DAD WRAUGHPTTFFFTTPPP!!!! *(He looks around for the cane).*

MUM No, Manny, no!

DAD GRKQUITRETH!!!

MUM Stop!

DAD He denied the Christmas tree!

MUM He isn't baptized.

DAD We've toiled and moiled.

MUM He must have a name.

DAD The cup is running over.

MUM Shouldn't we call him Manny?

DAD No. Definitely not.

MUM It's such a beautiful name, isn't it?

DAD I am Manny. Our first is Manny. Our second is Manny.

MUM We might go on. Manny the fourth?

DAD NO!

MUM Why not?

DAD The Mannies of our family never wanted to watch their navels. Manny one and Manny two ...

SON Dad? Am I the third son? What about a princess ...

DAD Shut up, toad! ... Your brothers hhave become managers. Fiive telephones, and oak-venerated entertainment account.

MUM (*points to a gilt-framed painting of the first son*) His wife is a countess, (*points to a similar painting of the second son*) and his rococo-legs have been in Beautiful Homes. Eight colours, glazed paper.

DAD First of all because they never asked that filthy navel question, my fairy-tale boy.

MUM We might call him Ugly Duckling?

DAD No. To my knowledge the Ugly Duckling never had two elder brothers who became managers. Besides, we shouldn't sully the world literature.

MUM No, that's your sore point. But why not? Let's get the big bells going. The bible. What about Abraham?

DAD No. ... Because he didn't have the courage to sacrifice his son.

MUM Abraham Lincoln?

DAD He was shot.

MUM Is that important?

DAD He was shot in a theatre. Bad manners. Ghastly.

MUM We might call him after a king?

DAD There's no need to sully the royal family.

MUM A Swedish king?

DAD I don't know any Swedish kings.

MUM I know twelve.

DAD Twelve?

MUM All of them were called Karl. Karl the First, Karl the Second, Karl t ..

DAD Is that what you're suggesting? Karl the Twelfth?

MUM Not the Twelfth. He was shot too.

DAD What a shame.

MUM With a button.

DAD Shot with a button?

MUM A silver button. That's true.

DAD What a fool. It had never happened with a zip.

(Dad laughs. Mum looks at him and thinks she'd better laugh too. Suddenly Dad stops laughing. He's become aware of Son. Mum also stops laughing and looks at Son. During their dialogue about names Son has unwound the umbilical bandage).

DAD I'm afraid I can't ... rrrphe ... the cup is empty ... turned over ... rrrphgggggggh ...

MUM Is it the heart?

DAD Shut up, silly goat. ... *(To Son)* Do you really think that I deserve this?

MUM Manny?

DAD Don't take his side. Oh what an incestuos mess. *(To Son)* You laid hands on me. I hope you'll never ever forget it. Never ever ...

MUM Manny, Jesus bore grudge against nobody.

DAD Jesus?

MUM You'd better think it over, haven't you?

DAD Well, I don't bear grudge either. My boy, the cupboard ... which walked over the endless pack ice in 02 ... you should never do that, my boy, it could be dangerous ... I leave to you this cupboard containing all what my kin has collected since the insane idea of living in families damaged the human brain. *(He starts dying, but realizes that he has forgotten to say good-bye)*. Oh sorry. *(He gives hand to Mum)*. And Millament said, I believe I gave you some pain.

MUM Yes, Mirabel answered, does that please you?

DAD Oh yes, Millament answered, infinitely, I loved to give pain. *(To Son)* William Congreve. ... Farewell.

(He dies. They catch him as he falls from the high-backed chair. They bind him to the chair with the bandage. Dad's eyes are still open. They end up with a pretty bow knot).

SON I don't like it.

MUM Like what?

SON He's looking at me.

MUM Of course he is. That's the way it is with late fathers. Cheer up. He'll go on staring at you wherever you hide for the rest of your life.

SON He will?

MUM *(closes one of Dad's eyes with her thumb)*. There's one for you too. ... According to the traditional practise in the family.

SON No. ... I won't.

MUM Won't?

SON I'm too young.

MUM You didn't love him.

SON Oh yes, I did.

MUM And you don't love me.

SON Yes, I do.

MUM No, you don't, but I'm not bitter. This has always been the destiny of lonely widows. Forsaken and let down by those nearest and dearest to them, shrouded in tears, clasped in the arms of an overwhelming sorrow.

SON But Mum ...

MUM Broken up. Deserted. Like Jesus upon his cross. Fated to Gothic Agony and a future in the blackest marble.

SON Stop, Mum, stop. I'll do it. (*He closes the other eye*).

MUM Kiss him.

SON Mum?!?!

MUM He died for your sake. Kiss him.

SON But Mum!

MUM Come on! Before he gets cold.

SON I can't, Mum, I can't.

MUM Just on the forehead. (*He doesn't move*). Is that my son? A callous and unfeeling bloody beast?

SON No, Mum. (*He kisses*).

MUM There's a good boy. (*Son shivers*). What's the matter?

SON I have a feeling.

MUM You have a feeling?

SON He's still looking at me.

MUM (*Laughs*). You shouldn't have killed him. I warned you. Late fathers always go on looking at their sons manqué.

SON Help me, Mum.

MUM Honestly, I don't think it's any of my business.

SON Mum, please. I've got nobody else.

MUM Okay. (*She takes off her apron and covers Dad's head*). ... I want you to remember what you just said. You've got nobody else. It's alright, my boy. You and I will always stay together. (*She picks up the telephone directory*). I'll help you, and you'll always help me. What am I going to look for?

SON A ... alabaster cenotaphs. B ...

MUM Bible punchers. ... C?

SON Ceremonies. ... D?

MUM Death-grant. Very important. Well, my boy, we'll live a modest life, but in its own way a paradise, won't we? You and I? ... (*The telephone rings. She answers it*). ... Yes, he is in. ... What he's doing? He's consoling his mourning mother. ... You'll pay a visit? I'd rather not, but I can't prevent it, can I? ... Hello? Hello? (*She puts down the receiver*). Bloody bitch.

SON Who called?

MUM The snake.

SON The snake?

MUM She'll pay a visit. ... She's coming to condole, she says, but I bet she has planned to give you the apple. Don't take it. ... Also I suppose she'll have a look at your inheritance. Don't let her touch the cupboard.

SON Why not?

MUM And don't you touch it!

SON But Mum, it's mine. Dad said ...

MUM Not yet. ... You'll learn that soon enough. A deal is a deal and even if you're easy to get on with you should remember that your father's premature death ... by the way he was always premature ... well, his glorious death shouldn't lead the family into any unprincipled mudhole. *(She heads for the door, but stops at the doorstep)*. Mum expects every son to do his duty. Remember you're now the head of the house. *(She exits)*.

PAM *(Enters)*. Hey. How are you?

SON I've inherited. ... A cupboard.

PAM Who's dead?

(Son points with his thumb over his shoulder at Dad avoiding looking at him).

PAM *(To Dad)* Hello.

SON Pam, you're my queen.

PAM Kiss me.

SON No. ... Not yet.

PAM I'm cut out to be kissed.

SON Later, perhaps.

PAM Perhaps there'll never be a later.

SON Bear with me. Life is not for beginners.

PAM You'll never become advanced by waiting.

SON I can see that.

PAM Come on, then, kiss me.

SON *(Wants to, but hesitates)*. Mum is out there.

PAM Don't tell me you're afraid of your Mum.

SON Of course I'm not, but Dad has just passed away, you know. She's a mourning widow.

PAM How long will that last?

SON It's hard to say.

PAM Mum is the only one who knows?

SON (*Utterly depressed*) One shouldn't start one's life as a child.

PAM No problem. I'll take you from boyhood to manhood in a few minutes. Sounds good, doesn't it?

SON I'm afraid you can't take me just here.

PAM Mum again?

SON No. (*He points to Dad*).

PAM He's dead. He can't see us.

SON He'll always be looking at me.

PAM Nonsense.

SON His eyes are on you too. It's ugly.

PAM (*She feels her breasts and mount of Venus*). Superstition. Don't be ridiculous. Look. (*She lifts the apron and waves her hand in front of Dad's closed eyes*). He's ready for the certificate. Look. (*She opens one of Dad's eyes*). Dead as a doornail.

SON Close it! Close it!

PAM Oh rot! If you don't want his eyes on the back of your head for the rest of your bloody life you'd better look. (*Son looks*). Stone-dead. Say it: stone-dead. (*Son says nothing*). STONE-DEAD!

SON (*Whispering*) Stone-dead.

PAM Okay, kiss me. (*His eyes wander*). Life must go on. (*His hands wander*). My lips will chap. (*Everything wander*). You're still

mourning?

SON It won't be long.

PAM The world is full of men who are probably more men.

SON I'm waiting for my heritage.

PAM That miserable cabinet?

SON It's not miserable, my gran...

PAM What's in it?

SON I don't know.

PAM You d... - Oh man, open it. (*Son shakes his head*) It's yours. Haven't you got the key?

SON No, but I can tell you what you would find if you opened it. All what my father's kin has collected since the beginning of time.

PAM All that in this cupboard? Where's the key? (*She goes up to Dad and examines his pockets*).

SON I don't like what you're doing.

PAM (*She finds a key and opens the cupboard. She takes out the cane and points. It is empty*). There you are, my apple. The imposing result of all your ancestor's efforts. Are you grateful?

SON It's empty????

PAM (*Throws the cane*) Kiss me.

SON You're right. Time has come. The stalk must let go of the apple. I have to leave the family tree. A long drop from the sprig, kill or cure, I hope you'll catch me.

PAM I'm ready, my lips are longing, my tongue is tender, I'll suck the apple juice.

SON My apple eater.

PAM Oh, my apple, bristling stalk and quivering core.

SON My apple eater.

PAM You have said that. Go on. (*Son is confused and doesn't know what to say*). Still down-hearted? Okay, I'll give you one more chance. You're not my apple, you're my bear. (*She covers him with the sheep skin*). My big beautiful bear. What do you say?

SON Thank you.

PAM No, not thak you. What do bears say? (*Son growls*). That's right. More. (*Son growls louder*). More. (*Son growls louder*). Fine, fine, you're bestial, you're swinish, you're everything from my forbidden dreams. (*Son growls*). I'm yours. Take me now.

SON I will.

PAM You're dangerous, you're hungry, you're rutting, ooooh. (*Son growls very loudly*). You're big and wild, and I am Goldilocks, come on, strip me, tear me, skin me. (*He grabs her*). Goldilocks can't run away, the bear is too strong, praise heaven, too wild, too bristling stalk. (*He comes down on her*). A clever tongue ready to plough the patch of Venus, ooooh there's a good tongue, ahhh, glorious music, bears love raw meat.

MUM (*Enters*) That's not true. Bears are not particularly fond of raw meat.

PAM Bloody bitch! Tear her.

MUM Listen, my boy, it's not the season for fancy dresses. Put it back.

SON But Mum, I love her.

MUM I won't listen to your smutty remarks. Your Daddy never said anything like that. Come on. Quick.

PAM Don't do it.

MUM Don't poke your fat nose into our business.

PAM If you give it up now you'll ...

MUM (*To Pam*) Get out, get out, shooo ... (*To Son*) And you, put it down. Now!

PAM He won't do it. He's my bear.

MUM No, he's my baby, and he shall never go bear-hunting again. I'll see to that. (*She pulls at the bow knot on Dad's chest. He comes down on Pam*). Come on, doggy, into the basket. (*Son tries to move Dad away from Pam*).

SON Oh Mu, if she's dead, I'll ...

MUM Shut up. You haven't got the greatness for that. Besides, you've got me. You don't need second hand versions of real love. Also, you've got your grand heritage. (*She looks at the cupboard. The door is still open. She panics*). Have you... ? No, say you haven't. It isn't true.

SON (*Has moved Dad away from Pam*) Pamela? Pamela? I'm ready now. (*Mum is now very nervous*). I'm grown up. I won't keep you waiting any more. We'll walk together, hand in hand, singing in the rain, dancing in the sun and making love in all sorts of weather.

MUM Well, well, the truth has dawned upon me. I can see, you're no longer a child. You may go to the pub. And you may ... well, this raw meat, it's okay, little man, I've accepted it. (*Aside*) I had to, I was steam-rollered by a just destiny. I deserved it. (*She takes out a beer-bottle from the fridge and hands it to him. He ignores it*). My little big man? (*Aside*) I hope I've got some good marks left on the account.

SON (*Kisses Pam. She comes to*) Oh, praise heaven.

PAM What happened?

SON My father let fly at you.

MUM Sorry. He couldn't resist short skirts. (*She offers the bottle to Pam*). A most cordial welcome to the family. I've always suffered from the lack of a daughter.

PAM (*Ignores the bottle*) He went straight to the point, didn't he?

MUM Yes. Very surprising indeed. As far as I remember our sex life was always very, what's the word, sedentary I think.

SON (*To Pam*) Cranberry.

MUM Pardon?

SON *(To Pam)* My sweet little cranberry. Bears love cranberries.

PAM And honey.

SON That's right. Look at my tongue. It's a honey-sucker tongue. Do you remember? The violins? The trumpets?

PAM The trumpets?

SON The drums, the harps, the glorious music that was just about to come? *(They embrace. Gipsy violins from the background. Pink light. They dance, but it looks somewhat coitus-like. Mum looks away, sighs, resigns herself to her fate and replaces the beer bottle in the fridge. Pam and Son return to the world).*

MUM If Dad had still been alive I think he would have quoted his dear Earl of Chesterfield.

PAM Saying what?

MUM I rose politely in the club and said, I feel a little bored. Will someone take me to a pub?

PAM A pub? *(To Son)* I'd rather that you and I went off and played some more glorious music.

MUM We might celebrate? Just a few bottles of beer?

PAM and SON Okay.

MUM Dad will be with us.

SON No, Mum. the neighbours might come in.

MUM Well, well, it'll be less festive, but okay. Let's take away the rubble and clear the slum. *(Son puts the sheep skin into the basket. Pam and Mum throws Dad into the pit or out of the window, the vacuum cleaner hose is put up like a festoon, beer bottles are fetched from the fridge. Mum poses for a speech).* My dear boy, do never forget what you got in this house, happy memories from a happy childhood, a wonderful heritage ... *(The cupboard door opens with a creak. Mum goes up to the cupboard and closes it. She returns and poses).* A wonderful herita-

ge of human values on which you may build, together with you beautiful wife, a future which ... *(The cupboard door opens again with a creak. Mum goes up to it, closes it, returns and poses)*. Which you may look back upon with gratitude and say, Mum I can't deny that you've given me a childhood so full of ... *(The cupboard door opens again with a creak. She closes it and poses again. But instead of continuing the speech she watches the door and waits. So do Pam and Son. Nothing happens. She looks triumphantly at Son and continues)*. As mentioned in my previous statements you're the happy owner of a happy childhood and you can't blame me for saying that a happy childhood isn't the best sole leather for a muddy walk in a frenetic future. *(They look at the door. Nothing happens. They lift their bottles)*.
ALL Cheers. *(The cupboard door opens with a creak. Dad is in the cupboard swaying to and fro. He falls out onto the floor)*.

MUM Festival was over, anyhow.

PAM You can't leave that kind of mess about, can you?

MUM I'm afraid not. I can hardly vacuum the carpet. *(She points to the basket)*. It's not wanted any more. *(They put him into the dog's basket and places the sheep skin over him)*.

PAM I think it's time now to get my honey-patch sucked, isn't it?

SON Glorious music.

(Exeunt Son and Pam. Mum drinks, finds the cane. She puts it between her legs, draws it up and down two or three times. She looks at Dad. A sound of disgust comes from the depth of her soul. She strikes the sheep skin with the cane and throws it away).

MUM Sentenced to be a grandmother for the rest of my poor life. Bloody bitch. Slut. *(She drinks)*. Why am I always the one who steps upon the dog shit?

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

(Pam's and Son's living-room. The high-backed chair and the cupboard have moved with them. The rest of the furniture is young style. The set is, however, very much like the set in Act One. The dog's basket is double size. The sheep skin is on the bassket waving up and down accompanied by the sound of church bells, the barking of dogs and gipsy violins. The happy situation goes on for seven seconds as is normal for a business like this. The alarm-clock rings and stops. Pam and Son look out from under the skin).

PAM What was that?

SON Real life, I suppose.

PAM Real life?

SON That's what my Dad called it. *(The alarm-clock gives a confirming ring)*. Where are your briefs?

PAM I don't miss them. Do you?

SON I can't see them.

PAM Don't say you've forgotten what we did to them.

SON I'm afraid I have. Man, six weeks gone since I teared them off you. Six weeks on raw meat and cranberry-floss.

PAM We put them in an envelope and posted them, don't you remember?

SON Oh yes, we did.. So, now they're on their way to the moon.

PAM Yes. No need for briefs. Our love should go on forever. *(She prepares for a kiss. Suddenly he looks tired. She flutters her bosom)*. What about licking the pudding? *(He burps)*.

SON I'm afraid they'll fall down.

PAM Who'll fall down?

SON The briefs. It's inevitable.

PAM Why?

SON Nobody has ever succeeded in nsending briefs to the moon.

PAM Nobody has ever loved as much as you and I.

SON They'll fall down anyway. I know. At the cemetary.

PAM Oh come.

SON On top of my grandfather's headstone. That's how my lot is constructed.

PAM Don't be silly. They are on their way to the moon. Why not?

SON I can think of many reasons. Incomplete address. No stamps.

PAM Nonsense. It was franked with more than a thousand glowing kisses.

SON The Post Office doesn't care. They're in the same team as the alarm-clock. I'm sure they'll let it fall.

PAM At the cemetary?

SON Where else?

PAM You can't think of any other place?

SON Oh yes, High Barnet for instance.

PAM (*She strikes him. He falls from the basket to the floor*). You renounced High Barnet, didn't you?

SON Yes.

PAM You wanted something more heaven-defying, didn't you?

SON Yes.

PAM And now you're thinking exactly like a bus driver. Alle tyres glued to the road. Left hand on the parking brake. Right hand on the reverse gear. The nose in the time-table and all your golden dreams hidden in the spare wheel.

SON You're not fair.

PAM Yes, I am.

SON Shouldn't we stop arguing?

PAM I'm not arguing. I'm trying to explain that you've stopped dreaming. You've fallen back into the old stinking shit from your Daddy's worn-out catechism. You're just longing for the final station and the veil of eternal oblivion.

SON You're wrong. I hate the buses. I hate High Barnet. I hate, no, I don't hate, on that point I'm ready to carry matters to the extreme, I renounce, once again: I renounce the timetable and all it's works.

PAM What about the cemetary?

SON I renounce the cemetary as well.

PAM Good. (*She steps out of the basket*).

SON But ...

PAM But?

SON Thinking it over ...

PAM I knew! You can't carry through anything at all. Jelly-man.

SON Darling ...

PAM With a jelly-mind.

SON You can't renounce a cemetary. It doesn't make sense.

PAM Why not?

SON Charles Dickens is buried in a cemetary.

PAM And Coleridge. And Congreve. And the Earl of Chesterfield. And all the other favourite pets from your late fathers rotten oogie-boogie-books. And that's why ...

SON Oh no, Freud is buried there too and he certainly wasn't one of

my father's favourites.

PAM But ...

SON Not to mention Karl Marx.

PAM Anyway, I can't stand your cemetery fixations. Do you hear me?

SON Oh yes, you're shouting.

PAM You're getting on my nerves. The truth is, no matter what you're saying, that you don't dare face our golden dreams. You promised to walk me far out in space along the sweet-smelling Milky Way to the mountain tops of glorious love. You promised to pick, with your own tender fingers, barrels of glittering stardust and sprinkle it on my heart. You promised that we should end up out there where the wild happiness is in flower for those obstinate lovers who are not content with the fast-food-happiness in the two-room-prison. But what do you do? Before we've left Victoria Station you stop. Mudhole!

SON Well ...

PAM You don't believe that our love can keep my briefs floating in the space. Ten grammes of briefs and your ant-love sunk under the burden of the petty-bourgeois law of gravitation. You're a failure of mausoleumistic dimensions.

SON *(Aside)* Life isn't easy. I shouldn't have entered it.

PAM Pardon?

SON *(Aside)* I suppose the answer is a clip on the ear. She's asking for it, isn't she?

PAM What the hell are you talking about?

SON Nothing. Just a short conversation with Woody. *(She strikes him. He falls to the floor. He is on all four).* Grrrrrrrrrrrrrr.

PAM What's the matter?

SON I'm your bear.

PAM Bear? Ha! You're shown up, Dachshund. *(He barks and kisses*

her leg. She kicks him. He falls. Lying on his back he moves his arms and legs like a dog making up to her). Stop that performance. It's miserable. (He stops moving. Arms and legs go down). Are you dead? (He doesn't answer). Are you dead?

SON No.

PAM Blast! *(He oozes away to the fridge. He draws a short line on the door of the fridge)*. What's that? Trying to be an artist, eh? Painting the picture of your career? A monument to commemorate your failure as a man?

SON It's a counting stroke.

PAM A what?

SON A counting stroke. It's like a raised forefinger.

PAM Are you perfectly well?

SON Thank you, I survived.

PAM Why do you put it on the fridge?

SON To commemorate our first quarrel.

PAM Do you intend to put one stroke whenever we quarrel? ... You'll have to buy a bigger fridge then.

SON I think you're cruel.

PAM Why don't we buy a ghetto-blaster? We might record our quarrelling and play it over and over again, getting better and better at it.

SON You are cruel.

PAM Perhaps you'd begin to understand what this is all about.

SON I do understand.

PAM No, you don't. You can't see that the distance between you and me is growing at a tremendous speed. Millions of light years already.

SON It's not a matter of distance between you and me. It's a matter of

distance between golden dreams and a difficult reality.

PAM That's exactly what I'm saying. I was your dream and you are my very difficult reality.

SON I see. And this distance, can it never ...

PAM No. Dream is dream and reality is reality and never the twain shall meet.

SON Dad's cemetery.

PAM Shut up.

SON Couldn't we make an attempt?

PAM I'm afraid I'll have to leave you. I can't see any other way out of the mud hole.

SON We might do it the same way as when we went into it?

PAM ???

SON There was a thing called love.

PAM (*Aside*) Male chauvinists. They always think they can fuck their way out of the problems.

SON We did that in the beginning, didn't we? (*Suddenly her eyes get very big and bright. She puts her hands on her stomach*). We might do it again?

PAM No. Definitely not.

SON Couldn't you please think it over?

PAM No. ... No! ... I can think of only one thing. Make way. (*She starts cackling and gathering various material for a nest in the basket*). Help me! (*Son doesn't understand*). I'm pregnant. (*She steps into the basket and sits down. She cackles and mimes that she needs some more material for the nest. Son looks around, but he can find nothing but the cane. He gives it to her. She throws it away*). Not for my baby! (*He brings the high-backed*). Idiot! You'll need that yourself. You're going to be a father. (*The cackling comes to a peak. She gives birth to a son. This new character should be played by the actor who played Dad in act*

one. His name is Tim.). Hello.

TIM *(Looks around, very sceptical)* Good gracious! ... Where's the exit?

SON *(Giggles)* It's no good. You've joined the society.

PAM Don't you talk. He is the issue of our love.

SON Of what?

PAM Our love. Do you want to borrow the dictionary?

SON So quick bright things come to confusion. Shakespeare, my boy.

PAM *(To Tim)* Bad habit this quoting, but you'll have to be accustomed to it. It's an inheritance from the Dogger Bank.

SON I'm your father. How do you do. *(They shake hands)*. As a matter of form I'd like to say, now as I'm making your acquaintance, that probably I'll be fond of you, according to the custom founded by your great-grandfather who in 1902 went from the stone age directly into our own age without being severely impressed by the changes. It will, of course, be a pleasant duty too keep alive this great illusion of being loved. On the other hand it is my intention to renovate certain parts of the old customs of bringing-up in our family. I am very progressive and tolerant, so to say, not to mention that I'm also known for being broad-minded. *(He sets out for the high-backed chair and mounts it as if he were a king)*. You may have a look at your navel.

TIM Good grief!

PAM Isn't that rather ill-considered?

SON No. He must.

PAM *(To Tim)* Categorical imperative.

SON Still throwing knives? ... Don't worry, my boy, I have my reasons. Looking back at my long and dreary journey through the dreary desert ... I'm talking about my life ... looking back at the endless clouds of dust and defeats, the nightly sobbing on the wet sheets of my childhood, interrupted only a few times by small oases of imaginary happiness which always showed up to be

distant fatamorganas ... when I recall the mountains of unsurmountable reproaches, the deep abysses of mocking smiles and mortal looks ... oh, my boy, don't fear, I'll not bring you up in the same ugly way. My boy, you shall see your navel.

TIM Cool down, Dad.

SON May I continue?

PAM I don't think he appreciates your lecture.

SON This is not a lecture. It is my spiritual will.

TIM Daddy ...

SON Quiet! Noa listened to God, didn't he? Will you please listen to me?

TIM No, I won't take part in your floppy navel excursions. I want to be Rocky Stallone, King Kong, United Steel, Master of the Stock Exchange, IBM fucking Jane and all the rest of that gang. Do you understand?

SON You didn't mention your navel?

TIM Good gracious.

SON Why don't you want to see it?

TIM Daddy, I've just explained. (*To Pam*) Lime in the memory?

PAM Calcified like the rest.

TIM Do you think he'll be able to lend me a tie?

PAM He never had a tie.

TIM What?

PAM He thinks he's subversive.

TIM Good grief! What sort of a place is this?

PAM A third generation's soil tub.

SON I beg your pardon?

PAM *(To Son)* I'm telling the truth.

SON Lousy bitch. My dear son ...

TIM Keep your breath.

SON Whyrghpht!!

TIM I'm not a subscriber to your nonsense, Daddy. You got Mum in the family way, but don't think you've got the right to be my engine driver. Who are you? An old, derailed banner-bearer from 68 who no longer has any idea at all of where the rails have gone. Confusion that's your philosophy. What have you told me about the realities of life? Dealing in shares? Stockbroker's pleasures? How to bring down a dame? How to escape from the throttling claws of the tax system? Nothing. You've told me nothing. And you think you can serve as an exemplary model? Good grief! There's only one solution for you ... off to the bone-meal factory.

PAM Bingo! *(To Son)* that was the wall paper coming off in big flakes, eh? *(To Tim)* I'm sure you and I shall have a nice time together.

(The telly plays music, the screen glows. Pam and Tim dance. The dance is much like Mum's excesses with the vacuum cleaner in act one. Son goes to the fridge, takes out a beer bottle and drinks. Suddenly he lifts his head and listens. He goes to the dog's basket and rummage about in it with his foot).

SON Mummy? *(Pam ignores him)*. I think we've got another. *(Pam ignores him)*. It's a girl. ... As far as I can tell.

PAM Keep your hands off her, thank you. No dirty habits in our family. I remember your father.

SON *(Aside)* He was right, one or two clips on the ear.

PAM Pardon?

SON *(Aside)* She's been saving for it since the wedding.

PAM What did you say?

SON I'm afraid it's too late.

(The daughter pops up without help. She is played by the actor who played Mum in act one).

PAT Hello? My name is Patricia. *(Nobody takes notice of her, the dancing goes on)*. I've just escaped the birth control. ... The parish register says that I belong to this address. ... You may call me Pat. ... Daddy? ... Daddy?

SON Is she allowed to talk to me?

PAM Talking is okay.

SON May she say Daddy?

PAM As long as it doesn't become rampant.

PAT Dad?

SON *(To Pat)* Do you happen to know where I can buy an urn? *(The telly is turned off, the music and the dance stop)*.

PAM Shame on you! Don't get my innocent kid mixed up in your filthy plans. *(To Pat)* Your Dad is sucking at a small, repulsory, distasteful dream, he watches for an opportunity to do himself in.

SON And so what? There's nothing surprising at that as long as your Mum demands me to be happy. Happy! Ha!

PAM What else? You're married to me.

SON Acid syringe.

PAM He has got his back against the wall. That's why they come popping out of his big, filthy mouth, all those slimy, smutty toads. Kick the bucket? How can you do that against me? Soil tub!

SON *(Aside)* Shit, man.

PAM You can't piss off and leave me alone with two dog-hungry kids and the tiniest widow's pension ever seen.

SON There's the life insurance too.

PAM (*Indicates with two fingers that it is very small*) Crab louse.

SON You always ask for king size.

PAM And you've never provided it. Neither here nor there. (*She points to indicate the wallet and the penis*).

SON Bitch!

PAT (*Screams*) Stop it!!!

PAM (*Unaffected*) What's the matter?

PAT Stop throwing words.

PAM Why?

PAT It hurts.

PAM Hurts?

PAT Yes, it hurts.

PAM Sure it does, that's why we say them. ... What a cute little kitten, just fancy, she doesn't understand.

SON She will.

PAT I'm longing for tenderness.

PAM For what?

PAT Tenderness.

PAM You shouldn't. You'll regret it. Sooner or later.

SON (*Wondering*) Tenderness? I'm sure I've heard that word somewhere.

PAM I don't doubt it. Your pornographic dream-box (*pointing to his head*) is full of slimy words. You need some clearing away.

PAT Why don't you listen? ... I'm longing for a little tenderness. ... Is

that unreasonable?

SON *(Still wondering)* Tenderness?

PAT You might at least provide some cosiness. We are a happy family, aren't we?

PAM *(To Son)* Say yes.

SON What?

PAM Tell her, we are a happy family.

SON Are we?

PAM Come on, lie.

SON *(Wonders again)* Tenderness.

TIM Shut up. Don't use those crazy words. I can't find them in my computer. *(To Pat)* Where did you learn that bloody language?

PAT Tenderness?

TIM I know. It's the kindergarten teachers, pervert subversives all of them.

PAT At my age the need for tenderness is a quite natural feeling.

TIM Feeling! There we are. She's the victim of those jelly-minded kindergarten perverts. That's the bloody way they sap the share market. Bloody refined, isn't it? Tenderness instead of setting the wheels turning. Cosiness instead of knocking out the bottom of our bloody competitors.

PAT *(To Pam)* How come he's so fond of the top C?

PAM Don't blame me. If you've got something to complain about, turn to your father. He is the head. *(Son is completely absorbed in thinking of the forgotten word tenderness)*. You're the head!!!

SON Eh?

PAM Don't disclaim your responsibility. We've got a problem. She believes in feelings.

SON That's not a problem.

PAT (*About Tim*) He doesn't. That's the problem.

SON (*To Tim*) You might read a book on that subject.

TIM A book?

SON Don't tell us you can't read. We've paid your public school, haven't we? (*To Pam*) The money popped out of the wallet like a geyser.

TIM Shit, man. Read a book? Tell it to the marines. I know those bloody undermining books written by disguised left-wing psychologists. I wouldn't touch them with my bazooka. Tenderness!! She will end up as a bloody I-am-seeking-security-junkie glued to a picture of Santa Claus together with the rest of the Holy Family.

(During Tim's lines Son has stopped listening. A happy smile is now growing rapidly on his face. There is a pause. They look at him).

PAM I think he is coming down from the mountain of transfiguration.

SON I remember.

PAM What do you remember?

SON The word tenderness.

TIM (*The forefinger pointing to the temple*) Bssssssssssss.

SON We used to say it ... once ... but I can't recall -

PAM We've never spoken a word like that in this shop.

SON Don't you remember?

TIM You've found it in the dust bin.

SON No, I'm more inclined to think that it is part of our cultural heritage.

TIM Is there any difference?

SON *(The word heritage makes him look at the cupboard. He points to it).* Look, kiddies, look, now I remember. *(He opens the door and pulls out the miserable remains of the old Christmas tree).* Look, Pamela! *(He points to the only thing left on the naked boughs: her briefs. Sun shines on Son's face).* They've come back from space. Do you remember?

PAM Shut up. The kids are still awake.

SON That's all to the good. They ought to learn about our old 68 confession: make love, not war.

PAM Don't talk about it.

SON Why not?

PAM Not in front of the kids.

SON Okay, okay, I'll skip the kickling highlights and go to the end of the story. *(To Pat and Tim)* Your mother and I sent this message of love to the good old glittering Milky Way with a noble suite of thousand glowing kisses. We hoped ...

PAM *(Has inspected the briefs)* They are not mine.

SON *(Smells them)* Yes, they are. Oh, those dreamy smells, waving in the wet, glistening folds with wonderful promises hidden behind the black lace veils, still full of stardust. They are yours, admit it. *(Pam sighs, without malice, remembering).* A polyester caress spaceborn through the universe on a moonbeam of loving abandon.

PAM *(Softly)* Come to, old boy, come to.

SON You remember! Our cobwebby dream sent out in the inconceivable spiteful permafrost, and now they've come back. Safe! And listen: love is still twittering smoothly between the legs.

PAM The dreamy days have gone, old chum. You have to face the grinning reality.

SON No. Reality is 20% mean cotton and 80% cold nylon. Why can't we keep our dreams alive? I want the impossible.

(For a short moment Pam gets weak and strokes his

hair).

PAT *(To Tim)* It's beautiful, isn't it? *(Tim makes a wry face)*.

PAM You demand too much. *(She stops stroking his hair)*.

SON I'm not demanding. I'm asking nicely.

TIM He makes me sick.

SON Just a little bit of justice. That's all I'm asking for. Second hand, if necessary. That's good enough for me. Life has no right to cheat me. I've never done life any harm, have I?

PAM You were born, weren't you?

SON In the beginning everything was hot silk and sheer tickling lace-delight. No tight-fitting tapes or bands, all raw meat and candy-floss. Don't you remember?

TIM If he doesn't stop I'll vomit.

PAT No, it's beautiful.

SON Yes, you do. It makes you blush. You're so cute. Do you realize what's happening just now?

PAT Whatever it is, it's wonderful.

TIM Good grief.

SON We're getting back the happiness from those bygone days. I can see it. I can feel it.

PAM No. Bygone is bygone.

SON That's not what I think.

PAM No, but it is my decision. And it's past recall. We're the crushed victims of the cruel history of man and woman's married life.

SON That's not right. Some people manage to remain afloat together, no matter how high the sea.

PAM They're bluffing. Anyhow, we went on the rocks many years ago.

SON You haven't considered the fruits, have you?

PAM The fruits?

SON The fruits of our love?

PAT He's talking about us. He's so poetic.

TIM Puke

SON They are longing for tenderness.

TIM More puke.

SON Kids are the glue that keeps husband and wife together in their mature years.

PAM I don't believe in glue.

SON We've got the sparkling memories.

PAM I'd like to be without them.

SON No, wait. (*He runs to the cupboard, opens the door and rummages in it*).

TIM He's completely gagagagaga.

PAT He hasn't forgotten what I asked for.

TIM Tenderness?

PAT Yes. I'm sure I'll get it.

TIM So you're still longing for tenderness?

PAT Yes. He's my Dad. He won't let me down.

TIM How can you be sure?

PAT I can feel it.

TIM He can't even remember your name.

PAT Yes, he can.

TIM You love Dad, okay, but do you know that there's one more in this family who might teach you something about being tender?

PAT Mum?

TIM And tenderness? No! But you've got a big brother as reliable as your bank clerck. You need not wait for old, worn-out Dad. I volunteer to invest my best and most expensive tenderness in you. I guarantee, you won't get soft currency. *(He picks up the sheep skin and steps into the basket)*. I'll show you where tenderness is situated so that next time you'll be able to find it yourself. *(He draws the sheep skin over them. Son comes out from the cupboard with the skipping rope from act one. Odd things begin to take place under the sheep skin, unnoticed by Pam and Son)*.

SON Look! Do you remember?

PAM What's that for? Are you going to tie us up?

SON No.

PAM It isn't time for silly jokes.

SON It's not a joke. It's one of my first and best memories. The first time you held my handle. *(He hands out the handle)*.

PAM You want to brush up the past?

SON Why not?

PAM You've got a nerve. I don't want to shake your handle.

SON You're not too old, Pamela. You shouldn't succumb to dreary old myths about elderly women's sex-life. The bells can go on ringing all life through. If you want to.

PAM I don't. Not your bells.

SON Oh come.

PAM No.

SON Alright, alright, if they stop ringing we might place our intertwined souls in the rocking chair and grow old together, hand in hand, cheek to cheek, waiting for the graceful death to come.

PAM *(Sighs)* Okay, let me have it. *(She takes the handle, talks to it as if it were a microphone)*. Pamela speaking.

SON *(Listening to his handle)* I'm all ears.

PAM Take care they don't fall off, my dear, the full and laming truth is on it's way. Point one: I'm not the victim of any myth whatsoever and I don't dislike shaking handles, except in this present, ugly case. Point two: Once and for all ... I'm fully determined to leave you. Roger and over.

SON Eh?

PAM Roger and over.

SON I didn't understand.

PAM Yes, you did.

SON Not a single word.

PAM That's your problem.

SON But I thought ... *(He looks at the handle, paralyzed, without noticing that Pam ties her end of the rope to the fridge. She takes out a suitcase and begins packing)*. You can't leave me. What will become of me? Say it isn't true. Hello? Hello? Pamela? Say something. *(He stops talking to the handle and looking at it. He looks at an invisible wish-dream hidden in the heaven behind the audience. He starts drawing in the rope and thereby moving closer and closer to the fridge without looking at it, but with increasing fear and desperation. Meanwhile Pam disappears into the cupboard)*. Why does it hit me, this new cold Ice Age? Why isn't there a small lace of warmth left for me? A small lace of warmth. A small lace of warmth. *(He repeats the last sentence until he suddenly touches the frige)*. I knew. I knew. Who shall now take care of me?

PAT *(Comes out from the sheep skin. Ruffled hair, clothes in disorder, terrified eyes)* Dad?

SON *(Ignoring Pat)* You can't do that to me, Pamela.

PAT Dad?

SON I've always gone astray in the kitchen, Pam, you know that.

PAT Dad?

SON The frying pan scares me.

PAT Dad?

SON The washing machine hates me.

PAT Dad?

SON It's too much. ... It's Saturday afternoon, soccer on the screen?

PAT Dad?

SON Cricket on ITV.

PAT Dad, I need you.

SON *(Still ignoring Pat)* You can't let me down like this.

TIM *(Comes out from the sheep skin. He grabs Pat's arm)* Come on, Sissy, there's more left in the tuckshop. *(He draws her back under the sheep skin. Son doesn't notice).*

SON *(Looks around and discovers Pam's case. He goes up to it and looks into it and immediately changes his strategy).* Pamela!! What's this? *(He takes out a book from the case).* Quotations from the Earl of Chesterfield!! ... You've stolen my Earl!! ... You'd better be prepared. I might kill you. *(He looks around.. Pam is nowhere to be seen).* Pamela!!! *(She looks out from the cupboard).*

PAM Beg your pardon?

SON Don't deny! You've hidden the Earl of Chesterfield under your dirty underwear. One more of your tricky, infamous knees in the crutch.

PAM Have you ever read it? *(Without waiting for an answer she turns to the cupboard. The upper part of her body disappears into it. He frowns, looks at the rope and is struck by an idea. He might strangle her. He mimes a strangling sequence, considering various solutions to the problem. He decides to do it, but at the*

same moment she comes out from the cupboard with the umbilical bandage in her hand). Talking about your fixations ... If you want to be tied to your childhood this might perhaps be useful. *(She hands him the bandage)*. Okay, I've finished packing. The only thing left is to divide the children.

SON The children?

PAM As far as I remember we had two. That's one for each of us. Son or daughter?

SON We can't do that.

PAM You'd better take him.

SON Why?

PAM Family traditions. He may succeed in carrying on the old, proud line from the Dogger Bank. The line that, when you took over, so rapidly declined and ended up in the shit bucket.

SON Thank you.

PAM You're welcome. *(They look around)*. Where are they? *(They discover the waving sheep skin. They draw away the skin and disclose Pat and Tim engaged in practising incest to the sudden sound of rock music)*.

SON *(To Pam)* What are they doing?

PAM Something they shouldn't. *(The rock music fades away)*.

TIM Hello! ... Life is what you make it.

SON We hadn't expected a cruel thing like that.

TIM Cruel?

SON Uncivilized, shameful.

TIM Shameful? What does that mean?

SON Shameful?

TIM Never heard the word. *(To Pat)* Have you?

PAT Never. As a matter of fact I've heard very few words.

SON That's not right.

TIM Yes it is. You and Mum run out of that door every morning and you don't return until late in the evening. You can't expect us to have a big moral vocabulary.

SON We had the weekends together.

TIM Man!! From Saturday morning till Sunday late you've done nothing but shout at us, silly asses, silly asses, silly asses.

SON (*To Pam*) Why don't you help me?

PAM You're the head of the family.

SON But ...

PAM No buts, my dear. You're the one who delivers the lectures. ... Come on!

SON (*Poses like Dad did in act one*) Dear kids, there are certain basic rules in the elementary grammar of the English family. In the golden heydays of our great-grandfather ...

TIM Daddy? Just a moment, I'll teach you the grammar of our time. (*He picks up his executive case from the basket and takes out a machine gun. He fires at the cupboard. It falls to the floor in many pieces*). That was the principal clause. Now comes the dependant clause. (*He goes up to the pieces and pisses on them*).

SON He pisses on my cultural heritage.

TIM (*To Pat*) Listen. Our tolerant, broad-minded Dad is stating a funny fact. (*To Son*) Some day you'll have a telephone call. A journalist writing a book about a famous stockbroker, rolling in money, is seeking information about his origin. He has a lot of questions for you, but you have only one answer. The famous stockbroker? No, he didn't live here. We've never heard of him. Understood?

SON Is that the only answer?

TIM Yes. Categorical imperative.

SON *(To Pam)* We taught him some grammar, didn't we?

TIM Idiot! ... *(To Pat)* Have a nice time. If something itches, just give me a call. *(He exits, case in hand).*

PAT Dad?

SON *(Doesn't listen)* He didn't live here???

PAT Dad?

SON *(Talking to himself)* Did I live here?

PAT Dad?

SON Did I *live*?

PAT Dad?

SON Did I really *live*? *(Pat shakes her head and exits. Son doesn't notice).* Well. We still have a daughter. *(He looks around. She's gone. He runs to the door).* Hello? Hello? Hello? What's her name? Hello, you? ... She's gone.

PAM You can't blame her.

SON You haven't thrown your last knife yet, have you?

PAM Hard to say.

SON She was my beloved daughter, whatever her name. Helloooooo? *(He runs out).*

(Attacked by a last sentimental feeling Pam opens her case and takes out the book. She winds the umbilical bandage round it and looks around to find a place to put it. She places it in the fridge, but she isn't careful enough. The end of the bandage hangs out).

PAM Goodbye battleground. *(She goes out).*

(Son comes back alone and depressed. He trips over the skipping rope. He picks it up. Considers. He puts it round his neck and looks to the ceiling. There's no hook. He gives up hanging himself. He places the high-

backed chair in the basket and picks up the sheep skin. He becomes aware of the end of the bandage. With the end in one hand and the skin in the other he mounts the chair. He puts the sheep skin round his legs. He pulls at the bandage. The door of the fridge opens. A beer bottle is tied to the bandage. There's a teat on the bottle. He sucks like a baby. He pulls. Another bottle is tied to the bandage. He pulls. Another bottle is tied to the bandage. Etc. There are teats on all bottles. The light fades away. Curtain).

THE END

Dear reader. If you have comments I would be happy if you would please send them to kaj.himmelstrup@mail.tele.dk