ANY SPOT WITH MARKS LEFT BEHIND

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The play consists of 11 scenes: 39 pages.

CHARACTERS

FLAT OWNER (female)
WOMAN
WATCHER (female)

BYSTANDER (male)

MODERATOR
JOURNALIST 1 (male/female)
JOURNALIST 2 (male/female)
JOURNALIST 3 (male/female)
JOURNALIST 4 (female)

FRIEND (male)
GIRL-FRIEND
SIDEKICK (male)

HE	a young man speaking Belarusian
SHE	a young woman speaking Belarusian

CAMERAMAN

A BELARUSIAN	a man speaking Belarusian
A JEW	a young man speaking Hebrew
A UKRAINIAN	a woman speaking Ukrainian

DOCTOR (female)
MOTHER

ACT 1
SCENE 1

The woman is in the room: semi-dark, cozy. The Flat Owner emerges from the darkness of the doorway. Another woman, the Watcher, stands in the corner of the room. She looks out the window, almost blending in with the wall.

FLAT OWNER Would you like anything? Tea, maybe?

WOMAN Me? No, I… No, thanks. I don't want anything, I guess.

FLAT OWNER Please sit down. Maybe you'd like some coffee? It's instant coffee, though.

WOMAN No, I guess not. Thanks.

FLAT OWNER I also have wine. It's a good one – it comes with the protected geographical indication. Do you want some? Just one glass!

WOMAN Well, then… I'll have tea, if that's okay.

FLAT OWNER *(with a friendly smile)* You don't like to choose, do you? Where are you from?

Distant sound of an explosion.

FLAT OWNER The fuse has blown.

WOMAN But the lights are on.

FLAT OWNER Oh, that's the neighbors. So a glass of wine for you, yes?

WOMAN A cup of coffee, if you don't mind.

FLAT OWNER Well, it's up to you to decide. My job is to offer. Please wait here one moment.

The Flat owner leaves. The Woman looks around. The hum of the street can be heard. The Woman gets up and heads for the window. The Flat owner comes in with tea, puts the teapot and cups on the table. The Woman sits back down.

FLAT OWNER Are you cold? I'll close the window. *(Closes the window.)*

WOMAN No, it's fine. Actually, it's a bit stuffy in here.

FLAT OWNER Drink some tea to warm up.

The Flat owner pours the tea rigorously. The Watcher sighs. The Woman and the Flat owner drink tea in silence.

WOMAN You have a beautiful home.

FLAT OWNER Oh, thank you! Well, it's just a small flat in a Soviet-era apartment. But it's my home, yes. We tried our best to make it cozy. You know, when I moved in here, the flat was completely empty and everything stank. God, you should have seen the toilet! I got some detergents somehow… You know, it was hard to get them. There were no detergents, well, very few of them. So I diluted the detergents and cleaned everything, yeah. Made it look nice. It gave me an illusion of control in my life. *(Laughs)* And, oh boy, did we sing back then!

WATCHER Quiet!

WOMAN (*talking to the Watcher*) Are you waiting for someone?

WATCHER (*hisses*) Shhhh!

The sound of a door opening. Someone comes in, takes their clothes and shoes off, and then disappears into the depths of the flat.

WOMAN Aren't you going to greet them?

FLAT OWNER (*brushing off the question*) It's the neighbors. Maybe you want to lie down?

WOMAN To be honest… I know how it sounds, but… To be honest, I don't remember how I got here.

FLAT OWNER And what *do* you remember?

WOMAN *(looking back at the hallway)* Are you sure there's no one there?

FLAT OWNER Absolutely no one.

WOMAN No one just entered?

FLAT OWNER I didn't notice anything. You were talking about your memories.

WOMAN Yeah.

FLAT OWNER Please drink your tea.

WOMAN Yes, it's very good, thanks.

FLAT OWNER Okay, stay focused.

WOMAN On what?

FLAT OWNER You were telling something.

WOMAN Ah, yes (*takes a sip of tea*). I can just remember that there were a lot of people around.

FLAT OWNER (*smiles*) City celebrations, I love them so much!

WOMAN And they were walking…

FLAT OWNER How nice! Were you walking, too?

WOMAN Yes, I was.

FLAT OWNER (*smiles*) How nice!

WOMAN Then they stopped near the bus stop.

FLAT OWNER (*laughs*) Well, that makes sense.

WOMAN A girl was passing by and she handed me a flower.

FLAT OWNER (*smiles*) I bet you loved the gesture.

WOMAN No, I didn't take the flower.

FLAT OWNER What a shame, to refuse a flower. It's so rude.

WOMAN I know, but I wanted my hands to be free.

FLAT OWNER What did you have in your hands?

WOMAN Nothing, I guess.

FLAT OWNER Why did you refuse a flower, then?

WATCHER I wanted to be able to run quicker.

FLAT OWNER At the bus stop?

WOMAN No, it was okay at the bus stop, we were just standing there… And then everyone screamed.

A voice from the flat above: "Stop yelling, or I'll call the police! I'm fed up with all your noise!"

FLAT OWNER (*smiles*) The neighbors. So someone screamed?

WATCHER (*hisses*) Shhhhhh!

FLAT OWNER So what were you screaming?

WATCHER Don't scream!

A sound of someone's footsteps. The front door opens, someone comes out of the flat.

WOMAN See, someone *did* come in earlier.

FLAT OWNER (*smiles*) It's the neighbors, don't worry. Drink your tea and keep talking.

WATCHER Just don't scream please.

FLAT OWNER Yes, better drink your tea instead. Haha, just kidding!

WOMAN Well, it wasn't exactly screaming. I remember more of a feeling… It's very stuffy in here, can we open the window?

Flat owner comes to the window and opens it. The rumbling of many human voices can be heard from outside. A voice from upstairs: "Will you shut up, morons! How much longer are you gonna fuck around, idiots? I'll call the police!" Flat owner closes the window, approaches the table and pours herself a cup of tea.

FLAT OWNER Ooh, I'm freezing. (*To the Woman*) Maybe you'd like some more tea?

WOMAN No, thanks. I haven't finished this cup yet.

FLAT OWNER Why aren't you drinking?

WOMAN (*takes a sip*) Well, I just—

FLAT OWNER Maybe you'd like some other tea? I have different flavours.

WOMAN No, thanks a lot! *(takes a sip)* This one is good.

FLAT OWNER I've got other flavours, I even have red tea. I also have some… mysterious tea *(smiles and winks)*.

WOMAN No, thank you! I'm really grateful for your hospitality.

FLAT OWNER Oh! I've got Milk Oolong tea! That's its name! I've remembered at last. But I haven't got any milk.

WOMAN One doesn't add milk to this tea.

FLAT OWNER Oh, so you know about it? I've had a pack of it lying around since someone from abroad sent it to me as a gift. I've never tried it. Let me boil some more water and brew it for you.

WOMAN No need, thank you. I'm not a fan of this particular tea.

FLAT OWNER (*smiles testily*) Well, it's really hard to please you.

WOMAN I'm very sorry, I didn't mean to cause any trouble! Many thanks for the tea and for hosting me here. I just have absolutely no recollection of how I—

WATCHER Shhhhhhh!

Several people's footsteps can be heard from the staircase. The voices are muffled, people seem to be arguing about something. A thumping sound – like someone is hitting a sack of potatoes with a stick – and a soft groan can be heard.

WOMAN What is going on there?!

WATCHER Shhhhhh!

Thumping sounds and a soft groan are heard again. Them the thumping continues in silence.

WOMAN Maybe someone needs help there?

FLAT OWNER It's the neighbors. So would you like some more tea?

Woman gets up from her chair and heads to the door. Flat owner jumps up, blocking the way.

WATCHER Shhhhhh!

FLAT OWNER It's the neighbors! Mind your own business *(smiles).* Maybe you'd like some red tea? With raspberries?

WOMAN Maybe someone needs help over there?

FLAT OWNER Maybe coffee? I've got 3-in-1 instant coffee.

WOMAN The sound just reminded me of… It was like—

WATCHER Yeah.

FLAT OWNER Sit down. Feel at home, but don't forget that you're a guest *(laughs).*

WATCHER (*laughs*) It's awful, it's just awful here.

WOMAN Why don't you leave?

WATCHER (*turns around, showing that one of her arms is handcuffed to the radiator*) What makes you think I want to stay here?

FLAT OWNER Don't you think I'm holding her hostage here! She's got the key in her other hand, but she's chosen to stay here. She's standing there and watching what's going on.

WOMAN What's going on?

FLAT OWNER (*shrugs*) Injustice. So shall I bring the wine in?

WOMAN (*taking to the Watcher*) What's the point of you watching?

WATCHER And what's the point of *you* watching?

Sound of footsteps at the staircase, then a series of muffled thumps and several groans can be heard. Then everything goes quiet again.

WOMAN *(rushes to get out of the room)* What the hell is going on there?!

WATCHER Shhhhhhh!

FLAT OWNER I just told you!

WOMAN But there's…

WATCHER Exactly.

WOMAN But why?

FLAT OWNER You know.

WOMAN I don't!

FLAT OWNER And who are you to know everything?

WOMAN Who am I? I was telling you that I have no clue…

WATCHER Once upon a time there was a girl, and then she vanished. Or did she exist at all?

Distant sound of an explosion

WOMAN Is it the neighbors? The fuse?

FLAT OWNER Sure.

A sound of footsteps on the staircase. A thump, then more thumps gradually turning into the sound of applause.

FLAT OWNER I have to turn on the kettle.

WOMAN Listen, I think I'll go. Thank you for…

FLAT OWNER Where will you go? It's nighttime.

WOMAN (*to the Watcher*) Is it nighttime?

WATCHER Why are you asking?

FLAT OWNER You're not being nice. Very impolite.

WOMAN I don't understand, what's going on here.

FLAT OWNER Hasn't your Mom taught you not to poke your nose into other people's business?

WOMAN Why would…

FLAT OWNER Such bad manners! You young people think that you know and understand everything. But it's rubbish! Is your life really so bad?

WOMAN No, but…

FLAT OWNER You're safe and warm, you've got hot tea. I'll also bring cookies in a moment. What else do you want?

WOMAN I'm very sorry, I didn't want to offend you, but…

FLAT OWNER But you're behaving really badly! I've let you into my heart and into my home (though I could not have let you in). I'm being nice to you. And that's how you repay me?

WOMAN Sorry, I need to go.

WATCHER Where to?

FLAT OWNER You'll ruin everything if you leave!

WOMAN Jesus Christ, why?

FLAT OWNER You'll destroy my life!

WOMAN *(points at the wall from behind which all the sounds are coming)* What on earth is going on there?

WATCHER Shhhhhh!

The women fall quiet. Thumping sounds are heard. A voice from upstairs shouts: "Will you ever shut up? Will you let me live in peace?! I'll call the police!"

WOMAN It's all fucked up.

WATCHER You should learn some yoga breathing. Just breathe: in and out. In and out.

Watcher and Flat owner begin to breathe in sync. Thumping sounds don't stop.

WOMAN (*gets up and heads to the door*) It's all fucked up. Totally fucked up.

Woman yanks the door open and steps out into the darkness.

SCENE 2

Silence. Darkness. Woman starts moving forward very slowly, groping the air. Then her foot bumps into something and someone pulls her down with force. Woman crouches down.

BYSTANDER Shhhh!

Woman sits, clinging to the Bystander. Headlights of a passing car outline a figure of a man standing nearby.

It's dark again. Gravel-crunching footsteps can be heard: the man who's been standing nearby moves further and further away. Woman touches the Bystander by the sleeve.

WOMAN (*in a low whisper*) Is he gone?

BYSTANDER I don't know.

Headlights illuminate the wall again. No figure of a man can be seen.

WOMAN (*at the same time*) Why are you here?

BYSTANDER (*at the same time*) Who are you?

Both chuckle quietly.

BYSTANDER I don't know if it's better to leave now or in the daylight.

WOMAN But what's going on?

BYSTANDER (*smiles looking at the Woman*) Funny.

WOMAN It's kind of tense.

BYSTANDER (*smiles again*) You bet. So what do you think: now or at dawn?

WOMAN To be honest, I don't understand what's going on.

BYSTANDER It's not about understanding, it's about acting. We'll understand later. *(To the Woman)* So how long have you been here?

WOMAN I wish I knew.

BYSTANDER I get you. Sense of time has been warped completely.

WOMAN You think if we go now someone can…

BYSTANDER I don't think so, I know so.

WOMAN But what can they…

BYSTANDER Pretty much everything.

WOMAN What do you mean by "everything"?

BYSTANDER I mean, *everything.*

WOMAN Did they do it to you, too?

BYSTANDER It's very humiliating for a man to discuss this.

WOMAN Oh. Sorry, I didn't mean to.

BYSTANDER What about you?

WOMAN Me? No, nothing like that ever happened to me. I guess.

BYSTANDER You don’t remember?

WOMAN To be honest, I…

Car headlights illuminate the wall again. Both stop talking, crouch even lower. No figure of a man can be seen.

BYSTANDER Maybe you happen to have water with you?

WOMAN (*examining her pockets and everything*) No, sorry. I don’t have anything at all.

BYSTANDER Smart.

WOMAN How long have you been here?

BYSTANDER As I’ve said, our sense of time has changed completely. One thing is clear: it’s a bad idea to hide in a confined space without any escape routes.

WOMAN Do you live here?

BYSTANDER If I lived here, why would I be crouching now?

WOMAN (*smiles*). Fair enough. Where do you live?

BYSTANDER Why are you asking? (*chuckles quietly*) Just kidding. I’ve been living here and there. Well, used to. I love travelling. When I get out of here, I’m immediately buying a one-way ticket to some faraway place. Where would you like to be right now?

WOMAN I don’t know.

BYSTANDER Don’t you like to travel?

WOMAN I don’t remember.

BYSTANDER (*smiles*) I understand. All past emotions have also changed.

WOMAN No, I mean I really don’t—

BYSTANDER You know, I’m not going to buy any ticket to anywhere. I’m just fooling myself. I’ll stay here forever.

WOMAN Don’t say that, it’s so sad.

BYSTANDER But it’s true.

WOMAN And dreadful. It’s so very dreadful!

The gravel crunches, a flashlight illuminates the wall. Woman and bystander duck as low as possible to the ground. The flashlight is searching for something in the darkness. People are silent.

The light from the flashlight disappears. Footsteps on gravel move away.

WOMAN This, too. It's so dreadful.

BYSTANDER (*talks to himself*) Is it better to go now or at dawn?

WOMAN I just want to sit here for a bit. I need to sit down.

BYSTANDER (*talks to himself*) They might start coming in here.

WOMAN Just to sit here.

BYSTANDER (*talks to himself*) And they won't disappear in the light of day either.

WOMAN I just need to stay here for a bit.

BYSTANDER (*talks to himself*) On the other hand, others will see me in daylight. If something happens to me, someone will see that. In the dark, no one will see anything.

WOMAN Once upon a time there was a boy, and then he vanished. Or did he exist at all?

BYSTANDER (*to the Woman*) Sorry?

WOMAN I just want to stay a bit here, in safety.

BYSTANDER In safety? (*leans close to the Woman*) Are you fucking nuts?

WOMAN I don't know.

BYSTANDER Are you insane or what?

WOMAN (*starts laughing softly*) Maybe. I don't remember anything, so I might as well just be insane.

BYSTANDER Shhhh! You can't just— Calm down!

WOMAN (*laughs softly*) Yes, probably I'm insane.

BYSTANDER You can't have hysterics here, pull yourself together. You should act instead of being carried away by emotions. I've already told you that.

WOMAN (*laughs softly*) But when will I be allowed to be emotional?

BYSTANDER Listen, you definitely don't feel well. You might throw a fit here and they'll hear us. And then all of us will be exposed!

WOMAN What do you mean "all of us"?

BYSTANDER (*points into the darkness*) I mean all of us!

WOMAN (*peers into the darkness*) I can't see anyone.

BYSTANDER You must be in shock from what you've been through, not everyone can take it. (*turns around and speaks into the darkness*) Fuck, if she runs, they might see where she's appeared from and come here. Maybe it would be better if we all ran together? Or shall we let her stay here? (*silence*) That's right. (*talks to the Woman*) Listen to me. You'll get out now and run away immediately, very quickly. Without looking back. As far away from this place as possible, so no one can see where you came from. You got it?

WOMAN (*presses into the floor*) I don't want to. I don't want to go there.

BYSTANDER Can you guarantee that you won't throw a fit in a minute? I can't. You'd better go.

WOMAN I don't want to.

BYSTANDER Go! They don't beat women.

WOMAN But you were just asking if they had—

BYSTANDER Well, they beat women not so often. Listen, I don't know! But it's easier for women. Just pull yourself together and run! Run as fast as you can and soon you'll be home. You'll forget about all of this, as if it were a bad dream.

WOMAN (*starts laughing softly*) Home. I'm telling you that I don't remember— It's fucking ridiculous.

BYSTANDER (*lifts the Woman by her arm and gives her a nudge*) Run!

The Woman darts out into the street and runs very fast through the dark courtyard. There are screams coming from behind: the sound, mixing with many voices, grows and gets closer. A bright light is turned on sharply. The Woman stops.

SCENE 3

The scene is brightly illuminated. Several people take the woman under her arms and lead her to a long table in the center of a bright room. There are many chairs placed in front of the table. This is a press conference room, and all the chairs are occupied by people. The woman is brought to the middle of the table and helped to sit down. Someone puts a sandwich in her hand and places a plastic coffee cup in front of her. People in the hall start clapping.

MODERATOR Thank you, thank you! (*gestures with his hand asking the audience to stop clapping*) Hello everyone! (*addresses people in the audience*) We are very glad that you are here today, we are grateful for your interest in this topic. (*turns to the Woman*) And of course, we are incredibly happy that *you* are here today (*people smile amicably*). Don't worry. Everything's fine, you're safe. And if you're ready, we can get started. (*People in the audience raise their hands eagerly and the Moderator points to one of them*).

JOURNALIST 1 Hello, I'm this and that journalist. I'll tell you on behalf of everyone here: we are very happy that you are with us today, that you were able to get out and that you are safe now (*approving applause and smiles in the audience*). My first question: could you please tell us about your first minutes on the outside? Thank you.

WOMAN (*confused*) To be honest, I haven't somehow…

MODERATOR Yes, thank you very much for your question. Today we will not probably move too fast (*smiles at the Woman, strokes her sandwich-free hand*), but our goal is to give as much information as possible and bring it to the world. It can be very difficult for the psyche to re-focus at once and begin to adequately perceive reality. One can forget negative experiences and everything related to trauma. Sometimes, the first happy moments in safety can be forgotten for that very reason. They might seem, as we say, a bit "foggy" (*soft laughter in the audience*). Next question, please! (*points with his hand*)

JOURNALIST 2 Hello, I'm this and that journalist. I understand how fragile your state is, but could you please give us any details, literally anything you remember, of your detention? What conditions were you in? Who were you with? Can you give us the names of those people? Thank you.

WOMAN (*clears her throat*) To be honest, I don't understand what's going on.

MODERATOR (*corrects the Woman*) What *was* going on. It's all in the past, you're safe now. (*amicable smiles in the audience*)

WOMAN Well, I remember a room. It was quite small, and it was stuffy in there. There were three women…

JOURNALIST 2 Names? Do you remember their names? Thank you.

WOMAN No, they didn't introduce themselves.

MODERATOR How rude. (*approving chuckles in the audience*) Please continue.

WOMAN Yeah, so there were three women.

JOURNALIST 2 What did they do to you? Thank you.

WOMAN No, no one did— I mean— One of the women kept offering me tea.

JOURNALIST 2 Could you please tell us about that particular case when…

MODERATOR Dear all, let's not interrupt our guest. (*To the Woman, stroking her arm*) Please continue, darling. Everything is fine, you're safe now.

WOMAN So one woman was offering me tea and the other one…

MODERATOR Dear, I realize you are very confused, but this is very important. Try to remember exactly what happened. I know you'd like to forget it. (*strokes Woman's arm*) But just for once, we kindly ask you to tell us about everything in as much detail as possible.

WOMAN I'm trying. The thing is… I don't remember much. I remember only a room and three women…

MODERATOR (*mumbles*) Here we go again. (*to the audience, smiling*) Just a second. (*takes the microphone aside)* I assume that you had some kind of memory replacement, but according to our data, your detention didn't involve— But if it did, we need to— Listen, let's move on from the discussion about tea. (*smiles*) Just try to speak about the most difficult things openly and it will immediately become easier (*strokes the Woman's hand*). Please, we're asking you kindly (*smiles*).

WOMAN I don't know what to tell you.

MODERATOR (*returns the microphone to its place*) Say it into the microphone please.

WOMAN I don't know what to tell you.

MODERATOR Let's help our guest with the questions. (*Points to the audience*) Please.

JOURNALIST 3 Hello, I'm a journalist from another periodical. Are there any marks left on your body? Could you show them please? Thank you.

WOMAN Sorry, show you what?

JOURNALIST 3 Any spot with marks left behind. Thank you.

WOMAN I don't know. I don't have any marks. I haven't looked yet.

JOURNALIST 3 No marks? And you don't remember any names? Thank you.

WOMAN (*To the Moderator*) Sorry, do you have a napkin so I could put the… (*points at the sandwich; Moderator shakes his head to say no*).

JOURNALIST 3 Could you at least say something about the atmosphere in there? Thank you.

WOMAN The atmosphere? The atmosphere was… It was very stuffy and then very dark.

MODERATOR Ah, that's something already. Keep talking.

WOMAN There also was anticipation. And sounds. And a flashlight.

JOURNALIST 2 What kind of sounds? Thank you.

WOMAN As if someone was kicking a sack of potatoes. And also an applause. I just heard…

JOURNALIST 1 What about the flashlight? Thank you.

WOMAN The flashlight, yes. It was searching for us.

JOURNALIST 2 That's why you decided to escape? Thank you.

WOMAN Actually, it wasn't my decision, they…

JOURNALIST 3 What did they do to you? Thank you.

WOMAN No, no, no one did anything to me. I was just feeling unwell, so they asked me to go. They said… They said it would be better if I went.

JOURNALIST 1 Didn't you fight against coercion? After all, any violence should be unacceptable to you as a woman. Thank you.

WOMAN Sorry?

JOURNALIST 2 Didn't you fight against coercion? After all, any violence should be unacceptable to you as a woman. Thank you.

WOMAN I don't think it's relevant.

MODERATOR You obviously can't yet assess the situation fully and objectively. (*To the audience*) Sometimes the assessment of the situation is distorted to allow the brain to cope with trauma. If we take the Stockholm syndrome as one of the most *battered* examples (*the audience laughs*)... Yes, yes, forgive me for such a dark comparison, let's call it the most common example of the situation where the victim begins to sympathize with the abuser, denying any coercion.

WOMAN I guess I was just lucky. I haven't experienced any of the things you're talking about right now.

JOURNALIST 3 And what are we talking about? Thank you.

WOMAN *(to the Moderator)* Where are the others?

MODERATOR The others?

WOMAN Where are the other people?

MODERATOR It's incredible. At a moment like this, you care about others. You are a true woman and this is an example of pure grace (*he claps, followed by several supporting claps from the audience*).

JOURNALIST 3 You mentioned earlier that you were lucky. Did you mean you were lucky because you'd been born a woman?

WOMAN Are you obsessed with my womanhood?

MODERATOR (*strokes Woman's arm*) Let's all calm down and try not to be rude or let our emotions overpower our minds (*smiles*). We are not undermining your suffering by any means, what you have been through is terrible.

JOURNALIST 2 What have you been through?

JOURNALIST 3 What exactly have you been through?

Everyone is silent.

WOMAN I... It was really stuffy.

Everyone is silent.

JOURNALIST 3 (*to Journalist 2*) This is hopeless.

JOURNALIST 2 (*to Journalist 3*) Maybe it's a psychological defence mechanism and she has really forgotten everything.

JOURNALIST 1 (*to Journalist 2*) Or she's ashamed to tell us.

MODERATOR Well, thank you all for your interest, our press conference has come to an end.

Everyone starts to disperse. The Woman gets up and moves towards the exit. Soon she finds herself in a crowd of exiting journalists, and the crowd carries the Woman outside. She is still holding the sandwich in her hand.

JOURNALIST 4 (*to the Woman*) Hello, I'm another journalist, here's my card with my email, Telegram, Whatsapp, Signal, whatever. Please email me, the world needs to know your story! (*Disappears into the crowd*)

SCENE 4

The Woman is in the street, a Friend appears in front of her, takes her by the elbow and gently pulls her aside: they move towards a café. A Girl-friend and a Sidekick appear next to her.

FRIEND This is total bullshit. How're you?

GIRL-FRIEND (*from the other side*) Give me this stupid sandwich (*she takes the sandwich from the Woman's hand and throws it away*). How're you?

WOMAN I don't know, to be honest.

SIDEKICK (*gesturing towards the café*) I've saved us seats, just in case.

They walk into the café together and plop down on the couch – like in a scene from a sitcom.

GIRL-FRIEND Can I get you something? What would you like? The usual?

WOMAN I don't know, to be honest.

SIDEKICK I'll go get something (*walks to the counter*).

FRIEND Okay, we should probably change the subject. (*To the Woman*) Or do you want to talk about it?

WOMAN I don't know, to be ho— Do they have beer here?

Everyone (except the Woman) laughs. Their laughter is complemented by the sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK (*comes back with a tray with four big mugs on it*) Matcha latté for everybody.

GIRL-FRIEND It's actually MATTIA, not matcha.

SIDEKICK Don't you even start.

FRIEND Thanks a lot, we are very grateful to you! She didn't want to devalue your help.

SIDEKICK (*to the Woman*) Drink your latté and relax. It's over now.

FRIEND Yeah, we all can relax now (*holds out his mug, everyone clinks their mugs*).

GIRL-FRIEND I still have these associations with the place. I wonder when it will be over and I'll be able to feel secure again.

FRIEND I look out the window and remember at once—

SIDEKICK Well, don't look out the window.

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK (*to the Woman*) I just wonder why they've chosen *you*.

FRIEND Are you jealous?

GIRL-FRIEND Jealousy is a sin!

WOMAN Amen.

Sitcom laugh track.

FRIEND It's an awkward silence. What do you think of the weather today?

GIRL-FRIEND +21, feels like -37.

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK You're being ironic, but it's not about jealousy at all. It's more about gender perspective.

GIRL-FRIEND What's wrong with the fact that she's a woman?

FRIEND He didn't actually say anything like that.

SIDEKICK Yeah, I'm just contemplating. (*To the Woman*) But you do realize that you're lucky?

FRIEND Hey, come on!

GIRL-FRIEND Yeah, you're laying it on a bit thick!

SIDEKICK Well, what can I do if I have a thick one?

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK Okay, okay, sorry. I didn't mean it. Didn't mean it at all.

FRIEND (*to the Woman)* Why aren't you drinking?

WOMAN (*a bit embarrassed*) I wanted to ask you, what the hell is mattia latté ?

Everyone (except the Woman) laughs. Their laughter is complemented by the sitcom laugh track.

FRIEND Macho latté .

GIRL-FRIEND I admire our ability to laugh at times like these.

WOMAN And in all unclear situations.

Sitcom laugh track.

WOMAN Do you guys often have such fun?

GIRL-FRIEND "You guys", huh!

FRIEND Usually you're our main cut-up.

GIRL-FRIEND It helps me a lot to laugh. It's about security.

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK It's another important point, by the way. It's easier for women to express their feelings.

GIRL-FRIEND So what?

SIDEKICK Men keep everything to themselves, they have to stay collected. They bury all their emotions and don't process them in any way.

WOMAN Wow, men's emotions are so much like bottles thrown away in the woods.

Everyone (except the Woman) laughs. Their laughter is complemented by the sitcom laugh track.

FRIEND Well, things are getting back to normal. Cheers! (*holds out his mug, everyone clinks their mugs*)

GIRL-FRIEND (*to the Sidekick*) Okay, now. How do you visualize your feeling of insecurity?

SIDEKICK As a doorway.

Sitcom laugh track.

GIRL-FRIEND I visualize it as my cat. I imagine that they're coming and starting their— Well, starting their procedures, and they're taking my cat and doing something to her in front of me just to hurt me. Like they're killing her to hurt me.

SIDEKICK But they will enter through the doorway, won't they?

Sitcom laugh track.

FRIEND (*to the Woman*) Are you okay? Maybe we should change the subject?

WOMAN Actually, it's all very interesting.

SIDEKICK Listen, maybe we should stop worrying about her so much. It's hard for all of us.

GIRL-FRIEND It seems someone decided to dig out his bottles — oops! — I mean, emotions.

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK Did you know that statistically men's biggest fear is the fear of others laughing at them?

WOMAN Women's biggest fear is violence.

SIDEKICK And men's biggest fear is the fear of others laughing at them!

Sitcom laugh track.

GIRL-FRIEND I don't like this vibe. It's not about a sense of security.

WOMAN *(to the Sidekick)* I don't quite get it, but it seems that you're mad at me. Or what are you trying to say?

SIDEKICK So when you went there…

WOMAN Where?

FRIEND (*to the Sidekick*) Now you're being toxic.

SIDEKICK (*to the Woman*) Come on, you know what I mean. You were wearing comfortable clothes, right? So that you could move around, run and…

GIRL-FRIEND (*ironically*) …Resist.

Sitcom laugh track.

SIDEKICK I mean, it's no surprise they took it that way. You knew what you were doing. You knew the situation and how it all looked from the outside.

FRIEND (*to the Sidekick*) You're super toxic.

WOMAN (*to the Sidekick*) I'm a bit sick of repeating that I don't remember a thing, okay?

SIDEKICK It's very convenient, isn't it?

WOMAN You mean I'm lying?

GIRL-FRIEND Well, to be honest, we're a bit disappointed.

FRIEND Yeah, you didn't even try to remember.

SIDEKICK Zero effort. You're just sitting there and staring. Though the human memory is a fascinating thing, of course.

FRIEND You don't have to be rude, but in general you're right.

GIRL-FRIEND And the latté thing hurts.

SIDEKICK I'm wondering, how much space does the conscious component of memory occupy within a human brain?

GIRL-FRIEND Not much. I remember how—

FRIEND (*interrupting*) And what exactly is "the conscious"?

WOMAN It's very stuffy in here.

Everyone (except the Woman) laughs. Their laughter is complemented by the sitcom laugh track.

GIRL-FRIEND The most important thing is to be in the moment.

FRIEND I thought, the most important thing is to be positive.

SIDEKICK In general, our memory is very unreliable. Very unreliable.

GIRL-FRIEND Who to trust then, if not yourself?

FRIEND (*nodding at the Woman*) Do you think she believes herself now?

SIDEKICK What about us? You think we believe her now? There is nothing, except her words about what happened.

WOMAN What happened?

Sitcom laugh track.

WOMAN What happened?

Sitcom laugh track.

WOMAN What happened?

Sitcom laugh track.

WOMAN Fucking hell. It's totally fucked up.

The Woman gets up and walks out of the café into the street. She fumbles for Journalist's 4 business card in her pocket. Then she makes a call.

ACT 2
SCENE 5

Note from the project authors:
In contrast to most scenes in the play that are written in Russian, this one is in the Belarusian language. In order to preserve the author's intention and authenticity, we give the original text in Belarusian and the translation into English. Perhaps you will find the way how to convey this.

Вёска, хлеў. Пасярод хлеву ляжыць парсюк, у сэрцы невялікая рана ад нажа. Яна ходзіць вакол парсюка, абкладае таго саломай. Заходзіць Ён, у руках вялікі таз. Ён ставіць таз побач з парсюком, бярэ салому, дапамагае Ёй абкладаць.

A stable in a village. A pig lies in the middle of the stable, a small knife wound pounding in its heart. She walks around the pig, covering it with straw. He comes in, holding a large basin. He puts the basin next to the pig, takes the straw and helps Her cover it.

ЯНА А сёння якую?
SHE **Which one is it today?**

ЁН Жылі-былі дзед і баба.
HE **Once upon a time there was an Old Man and his Missus.**

ЯНА Такія мы ўжо старыя, па 20 гадоў усяго!
SHE **Hey, we're not that old, we're just 20!**

ЁН (*смяецца*) Дык гэта не пра нас!
HE **(*laughs*) But it's not about us.**

ЯНА Ага, ну.
SHE **Yeah, okay.**

ЁН Ну дык жылі-былі. І пайшоў неяк дзед па дзіка ў лес.
HE **Well, where are we? So one day the Old Man went to the woods to fetch a wild boar.**

ЯНА А што, ў іх дзіка не было?

SHE **Didn't they have their own boar?**

ЁН Ну свайго-то і не было.

HE **No, they didn't.**

ЯНА Такія ўжо гаспадары.

SHE **What kind of lazy people are they?!**

ЁН Ну, то пайшоў дзед па дзіка ў лес ды знік.

HE **So the Old Man went to the woods to fetch a wild boar and disappeared.**

ЯНА (*іранічна*) Анягож!

SHE **(*sarcastically*) Oh, really!**

ЁН Дзень няма, два няма. Сядзіць баба, чакае, слязьмі абліваецца.

HE **So he was gone for a day, for two days... His Missus stayed at home, waiting, tears pouring down her cheeks.**

ЯНА (*смяецца*) От ужо абліваецца! Думае, дзе той дурны падзеўся, можа ў суседа так настойкай настаяўся, што і стаяць не можа.

SHE **(*laughs*) Yeah, sure! Tears pouring, huh? She was probably thinking, "Where the hell did the old fool go? He must be drinking his head off at the neighbor's!"**

ЁН Ну дык вось сядзіць баба, сумуе...

HE **So the Missus stayed at home, sad and lonely…**

ЯНА Не, ня так. Устала баба, сабрала сабе мяшэчак і пайшла дзеда шукаць, дзе той небарака лясы точыць. Ідзе, ідзе і суседка ёй насустрач. Пытае ў суседкі: «А дзе-та мой падзеўся, можа бачыла?» А суседка кажа: «Дык бачыла як днямі ў лес ішоў. Чаго ідзеш, пытаюся. Кажа, пайду самага вялікага дзіка знайду і будзе ў нас дзік свой! Так ужо і свой, кажу. Лес-та чый, пытаю? То і дзік-та чый значыць? А ён адмахнуўся і пайшоў». Паківала баба і пайшла далей. Заходзіць у лес, там аканом.

SHE **No, not like that. The Missus got up, put some food in her sack and went to look for her old foolish man. As she was walking along, she met a neighbor. She asked the neighbor: "Where did my Old Man go?" And the neighbor said: "Well, I saw him going into the woods the other day. So I asked him, 'Why are you going there?' And he said, 'I'll fetch the biggest boar and we'll have a boar of our own!' And I was like, 'What do you mean, your own? You remember whose forest it is? So whose boar is it, then?' But he waved me off and wandered into the woods." The Missus nodded and continued walking. She went into the woods, and there was the Butler.**

ЁН Нос нізкі, бот слізкі, бо лізаў панскія палуміскі (*смяюцца*). І пачынае той аканом пытацца адразу, куды тая баба ідзе, а чаму, а ўжо ж так позна...

HE **His nose was wet, his boots were wiped clean, because he was running around licking the Master's boots. (*both laugh*). So the Butler started asking, where the Missus was going, why she was out so late and so on.**

ЯНА «Дый на шпацыр вось выйшла, аканому. Ногі размяць».

SHE **“I’m just going for a walk, to stretch my legs.”**

ЁН «Ага, на шпацыр, ага», -- аканом кажа. -- «А я думаю, што ў маліннік ты панскі ідзеш па ласункі».

HE **“Sure, for a walk! You know what I think? I think you’re going to feast in the Master’s raspberry garden under the veil of night!” the Butler said.**

ЯНА «Ды што ж я дурная такім шляхам у маліннік ісці, калі вось праз там яно хутчэй будзе!»

SHE **“Why, you think I’m a fool to go this way? There’s a much quicker way to get to the raspberry garden. Over there!”**

ЁН «Ды якое хутчэй, што ж я, аканом, ня ведаю дзе маліннік? А ну давай-ка з табой хто хутчэй да малінніка таго». І вочы ў таго аканома ўжо загарэліся, думае, як тую бабу зараз прыцісне да дрэва ў лесе ды павесяліцца.

HE **“What do you mean ‘quicker’? I’m the Butler and I know better where the raspberry garden is. Come on, let’s see who will get there quicker!” The Butler’s eyes lit up, as he was imagining how he’d pin the Missus to the tree and have fun with her.**

ЯНА Але ж баба ведае, што калі гэткім шляхам да малінніка ісці -- у воўчую яму трапіш, бо сама тую яму днямі з дзедам і рабіла. «Канешне, аканоме, давай ты гэтым шляхам, я тым – ля малінніку й сустрэнемся!» І пасміхаецца.

SHE **But the Missus knew that if one went to the raspberry garden that way, they’d fall into a trap hole, because she’d just dug it the other day together with her Old Man. “Of course, Mr Butler, let’s do it: you go this way and I’ll go that way, and then we’ll meet at the raspberry garden!” the Missus smiled.**

ЁН Пайшоў аканом у лес, усмешка да вушэй, думае пра свае справы гнусныя і пад ногі не глядзіць. Раз – і ў яму праваліўся!

HE **So the Butler went deeper into the forest, grinning ear to ear, thinking his nasty thoughts and not watching his step. Thud! He fell into the hole!**

ЯНА Ды нагу зламаў!

SHE **And broke his leg.**

ЁН Ды руку таксама! Ды...

HE **And his hand, too! And...**

ЯНА Ну ўсё, усё, досыць.

SHE **That’s it, that’s it. Enough.**

Ён падпальвае салому і чакае, пакуль уся не згарыць. Як дагарэла, Ён і Яна бяруць нажы і пачынаюць бруд і сажу сашкрабаць са шкуры: пад імі шкура белая, чыстая.

He sets the straw on fire and waits until it all burns down. Him and Her take two knives and begin to scrape off the dirt and soot from the pig’s skin: the skin is white and clean underneath.

ЯНА А баба ж далей ідзе, дзеда шукаць. Ужо глыбока ў лес зайшла, так што і неба амаль не відаць. А дзеда ўсё няма. Дайшла да палянкі, прысела, мяшэчак свой развязала, кішкі кавалак дастала і сядзіць жуе.

SHE **In the meantime, the Missus kept going, searching for her husband. She already went deep into the woods, so she could hardly see the sky through the treetops. Still, no sign of her Old Man. So the Missus found a clearing, sat down, untied her sack, took out a piece of home-made sausage and started chewing on it.**

ЁН Тут чуе: нехта праз хмызы прадзіраецца. Можа, дзед?

НЕ **And then she heard someone trudging through the bushes. Maybe it was her Old Man?**

ЯНА А не, то пан на паляванні ад усіх паехаў наперад, каб першым звера забітага пабачыць – дый згубіўся!

SHE **Nope, it was the Master. During the hunt, he left behind his servants to be the first one to find the body of a beast — and got lost!**

ЁН Бо нашто таму пану мазгамі думаць, калі можна ў такія вопраткі вялікія апрануцца, ды на каня сесці самага вялікага, ды на ўсіх зверху пазіраць.

НЕ **Yeah, why would the Maser use his brain when he could just put on some gorgeous clothes, sit on his best horse and look down on everybody?**

ЯНА І вось прадзіраецца той пан праз хмызы ды на палянку выходзіць ды бачыць бабу, якая кішку ясі. А пан той галодны, вай вай, амаль дзве гадзіны ня еў ужо. І давай крычаць бабе:

SHE **So the Master trudged into the clearing and saw the Missus who was eating her home-made sausage. And the Master was damn hungry, the poor bastard had't eaten for two whole hours, can you imagine? So he yelled at the Missus,**

ЁН (*адначасова; па-польску*) «Цо ты еш таки? Дай ми!» (*смяюцца*)

НЕ **(*talking at the same time; in Polish*) "What are you eating? Give it to me!" *(laughs)***

ЯНА (*адначасова; па-руску*) «Что ты ешь эдакое? Дай мне!» (*смяюцца*)

SHE **(*talking at the same time; in Russian*) "What are you eating? Give it to me!" *(laughs)***

ЁН А тая баба і кажа яму...

НЕ **So the Missus said,**

ЯНА Гэта ж паночку, я свой жывот разадрала ды кішкі свае ем. Але ж тое кішкі прыгоннае бабы, нашто табе такія, калі ты сваімі панскімі пачаставацца можаш?

SHE **"Your Excellence, I just ripped my belly open and I'm eating my guts. But these are the guts of a peasant serf, you don't want these. You can treat yourself to your own, noble guts."**

Ён выцірае саломай нож, падыходзіць да парсюка і нож устаўляе ў дзірку што ў грудной клетцы.

He wipes the knife with a bunch of straw, walks over to the pig and inserts the knife into the hole in the rib cage.

ЁН У пана вочы загарэліся, такі ласунак яму зараз будзе! Разадраў свой жывот дый памёр.

HE **The Master's eyes lit up, he was going to get such a treat! He ripped his belly open and died.**

Ён ускрывае грудную клетку, у таз адтуль цячэ кроў.
He opens up the pig's chest, blood flows into the basin.

ЯНА А баба кішку тую дажавала дый да хаты пайшла. Бо не дурак жа той дзед сам з леса не выбрацца.

SHE **The Missus finished her sausage and went home. After all, her Old Man wasn't that stupid to not get home on his own.**

ЁН А дзед ужо у хаце даўно, дзічка закалоў, саломай абклаў ды бабу чакае – кішкі смачныя рабіць!

HE **And the Old Man was at home already! He stuck a boar, covered it with straw and was waiting for his Missus to make pork sausages together.**

Ён і Яна смяюцца і смачна цалуюцца ў вусны.
Him and Her laugh and kiss passionately.

ЯНА Ты ж толькі як будзеш каму расказваць на жывёлаў памяняй.

SHE **If you're gonna tell this story to anybody, just change the characters into some animals.**

ЁН Добра, будзе пра лісу, ваўка і зайца.

HE **Okay, it'll be about a fox, a rabbit and a wolf then.**

Ён бярэ ў рукі таз, яны выходзяць з хлева.
He takes the basin and they leave the barn.

SCENE 6

A Room. The Woman sits in an armchair, a Journalist (female) sits next to her with a recorder in her hand. Bright lighting is set up, the Cameraman looks into the camera on the tripod: filming is in progress.

WOMAN To be honest, I don't remember anything about them. I mean, I don't know anything. I don't even know their names.

Everyone is silent for a while.

WOMAN I know about a home-made pork sausage.

JOURNALIST A sausage?

WOMAN Yeah, you know, a sausage made from pork intestine.

JOURNALIST Oh. I thought it's a Ukrainian special.

CAMERAMAN I thought it's Polish.

WOMAN Well... I'm pretty sure it's Belarusian. One needs guts, buckwheat, pork scratchings and fresh blood to make it. I once saw people in a village making it. So yes, it's a Belarusian dish. I'm sure about it.

Everyone is silent for a while.

CAMERAMAN I thought you'd talk about a dish made from potatoes.

WOMAN Oh, go fuck yourself!

JOURNALIST (*hides a smile*) I'm sorry. Do you remember anything else?

WOMAN No, nothing else. But I'm telling you, I don't think I ever knew anything there. That's why I don't remember. *(Everyone is quiet.)* Look, it's really weird. I just realized that I'm kind of jealous of— Well, I'm jealous of African Americans. Because they know the history of their slavery, you see?

SCENE 7

Note from the project authors:
Each character in this scene also speaks their native tongue. A Belarusian speaks Belarusian, a Jew speaks Hebrew, and a Ukrainian speaks Ukrainian. In order to preserve the author's intention and authenticity, here as well we give the original text in three languages accordingly and the translation into English.

The back of a truck. A Belarusian, a Jew and a Ukrainian sit inside. They sit quietly, the car only bounces on bumps sometimes. The Ukrainian woman looks out of the window from time to time.

A BELARUSIAN Якая карысць ад таго, што вы глядзіце?
What's the point of you watching?

A UKRAINIAN А яка користь від того, що ви?
What's the point of *you* watching?

They sit in silence for a while.

A JEW ...נכנסים יהודי, בלארוסי ואוקראיני למסעדה
So a Jew, a Belarusian and a Ukrainian enter a restaurant.

A UKRAINIAN Ну ось знову.
Here we go again.

A BELARUSIAN (*пасміхаецца*) Вусная народная творчасць на тое і вусная, каб яе ўслых… ну, перадаваць.
(*smiles*) Well, oral tradition is oral for the sake of being spoken aloud. We should pass it on.

They sit in silence for a while.

A UKRAINIAN Як ви вважаєте, ми зараз де?

Where do you think we are now?

A JEW מנקודת מבט אקזיסטנציאלית?

From an existential point of view?

A BELARUSIAN (*Украінцы*) А што вы там бачыце?

(*to the Ukrainian woman*) What do you see there?

A UKRAINIAN Та поля одні, сіре все, так...

Well, it's just fields, everything is grey and...

A JEW לא,לא,לא, ככה לא צריך לנו. גם מבלי זה קשה! מה אתם בכלל רוצים להרוג אותנו? ספרו לנו משהו מעורר השראה.

No, no, no, no, we don't want that. It's hard enough as it is, are you trying to kill us? Tell us something inspiring.

A UKRAINIAN Яка ви, виявляється, романтична людина.

Oh, so you turn out to be a romantic man.

A JEW ומה אתם חשבתם?

And who did you think I am?

A UKRAINIAN А я думала, що ви є**ей.

I thought you're a Jew.

A JEW אני משורר

I'm a poet!

A BELARUSIAN Гэта я паэт.

***I'm* a poet!**

A UKRAINIAN Жодного чоловіка, одні поети.

Not a single man around, just poets.

A BELARUSIAN Проста ўсіх мужыкоў ужо адвезлі (*ківае галавой, намякаючы на масавыя растрэлы*), перад паэтамі.

It's just that all the men have been taken away (*nods his head, alluding to mass shootings*), before the poets.

Everyone laughs.

A JEW נכנסות יהודיה, בלארוסי ואוקראינית ...

So a Jew, a Belarusian and a Ukrainian enter a restaurant.

A UKRAINIAN Мені більше до вподоби ваш романтичний настрій.

I prefer your romantic mood.

A JEW והינה עומד אני במסדרון בית סוהר...

So I'm standing in the prison hall and…

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN *(Я**эю)* А прачытайце-ка нам што са свайго?

***(to the Jew)* Maybe you could recite some of your poems?**

A JEW ואני ממש עכשיו אכתוב לכם משהו

Okay, I'm going to come up with something new right now.

They sit in silence, the Jew ponders for a while.

A JEW כשבשדות של המאות שלי,
אשכב אני בצל עייף,
שלפי הרצון שלו
אהיה מזון לפרות.

Alas, goodbye my lonely shadow
That lies alone in a weary meadow!
My remnants rot in no man's land,
But cows will feast on them, firsthand.

A UKRAINIAN А ось це правильно.

Now that's right.

A BELARUSIAN Адзначу, што мне вельмі даспадобы тое, з якой іранічнай лёгкасцю вы спалучаеце гэткі філасоўскі дух з духам зямным.

I'd like to say that I really love the ironic ease with which you combine the philosophical and the mundane in your poem.

A JEW תודה רבה לכם בני הלוויה שלי. הייתי מציע לכם בעד זה לשתות לפחות מים, אבל כפי שכולם יודעים...

Thank you, my dear companions! I would at least offer you some water to raise a toast for that, but as you know…

A UKRAINIAN Побережемо.

Not now.

A BELARUSIAN А ці вядомы нам, у рэшце рэшт, наш канчатковы прыпынак?

Anyway, do we know our final stop?

A JEW לפי המשמעות האקזיסטנציאלית?

You mean existentially?

A UKRAINIAN Судячи з того, як довго ми їдемо, і краєвидами, то...

Judging by how long we've been travelling and by the scenery, we…

A JEW "ארץ רחבה שלי, מולדת..."

"Oh wide is my Motherland!"

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN (*Украінцы*) А вы замужам?

(*to the Ukrainian woman*) Are you married?

A UKRAINIAN А ви з якою метою цікавитеся?

Why are you asking?

A BELARUSIAN Вядома ж, замужам. Стаўлю на тое, што й за беларусам!

Sure, you are. I bet your husband is Belarusian.

A JEW מה תספרי? (לאוקראינית)

(*to the Ukrainian woman*) So what do you say?

A UKRAINIAN Скажу, що чорт його знає, як тепер правильно відповідати.

I say that I have no flipping idea what's the right answer to this question nowadays.

Everyone laughs.

They sit in silence for a while.

A UKRAINIAN (*Є**ею*) А ви все питаєте про екзистенційний сенс. А я цього не розумію.

(*to the Jew*) You keep talking about existential matters. I don't get it.

A JEW

אתם במינים, אקזיסטנציאלי - זה כל מה שקשור לא כל כך לנקודות ההתחלה והסוף של דרך החיים שלנו אלא לדרך שביניהם. הרי כל נקודות ההתחלה והסוף ידועות לנו ולכן אינן מעניינות במיוחד.

You see, existentialism is something that doesn't really dwell on the starting and ending points of our life path. Rather it explores the journey between them. After all, we're well aware of our starting and ending points, so they aren't of big interest to us.

A BELARUSIAN А цікавыя нам свядомыя і несвядомыя рашэнні чалавека датычна яго лёсу, рашэнні, якія прымаюцца ўжо без страха смерці альбо ціску грамадзкай ганьбы, а выключна чалавекам пра самога сябе. Страшная і моцная свабода…

What we *are* interested in are the conscious and unconscious decisions of a person concerning their destiny; decisions that are made without fear of death, shame or pressure from society, but solely for the sake of the person making those decisions. A frightening and powerful freedom.

A UKRAINIAN (*задумливо*) Одне питання. Звідки ви таке знаєте?

(*pensively*) Just one question. How do you know all this stuff?

A BELARUSIAN (*адначасова*) Мужская гимназия.

(*talking at the same time as the Jew*) Boarding school for boys.

A JEW (כולם ביחד) גימניסיית גברים.

(*talking at the same time as the Belarusian*) Boarding school for boys.

A UKRAINIAN (*сміється*) Усіх чоловіків забрали, тепер уже навіть поетів. Вперед, жінки!

(*laughs*) All the men have been taken away, even the poets now. Go, women, go!

A JEW מסתבר שאת כם משוררת!

See, you're a poet, too!

A BELARUSIAN Альбо замужам за паэтам! Стаўлю, што вы едзеце за каханым у далёкі…

Or else, you're married to a poet. I bet you're following your beloved one…

A UKRAINIAN Якщо я по коханого їду, то господарство ж тоді на кому?

Well, if I'm following my beloved one, who's in charge of our household?

Everyone laughs.

A JEW קחי אותי בדרך מסתובבת,
מכונית שחורה גדולה.
וכאשר נינה שלי תשאל אותי,
תגיד" שאחזור הביתה בעל שיבה או מת.

I'm sitting and shaking in a black shiny car,
They're driving me somewhere untrodden and far.
And if there's a chance, please tell Nina, my wife,
That I am unlikely to come back alive.

They sit in silence for a while.

A UKRAINIAN Заходять є**ей, білорус та українка до ресторану…

So a Jew, a Belarusian and a Ukrainian enter a restaurant.

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN Як скончыцца гэта ўсё, паеду ў…

When it's all over, I'm going to travel to…

A UKRAINIAN Як скінчиться? Та ну що ви...

Over? Are you serious?

A BELARUSIAN Як скончыцца (!) гэта ўсё, паеду ў Парыж! Адразу ж! Буду шпацыраваць, удыхаючы веснавое паветра, хадзіць у музэі, у тэатры, размаўляць з людзьмі…

Yes, when it is *over (!)*, I'm going to travel to Paris, straight away! I'll walk around, breathe in the spring air, visit museums and theatres, talk to people…

A UKRAINIAN (*одновременно*) А я додому (*усмехаются*).

(*talking at the same time as the Jew*) Me, I'm going home. (*smiles*).

A JEW (כולם ביחד) ואני הביתה (צוחקים)

(*talking at the same time as the Ukrainian*) Me, I'm going home. (*smiles*).

A BELARUSIAN Што з нашым домам адбылося… І хто ў тым вінаваты.

What happened to our home and who's to blame for that?

A JEW פולנים.

The Poles.

A BELARUSIAN Чаму палякі?

Why the Poles?

A JEW בכל זאת הפולנים יאשמו בהכל.

. **They're going to blame it on the Poles anyway.**

A BELARUSIAN А сярод нас тут ніводнага. І дзе ўсе тыя палякі?

Yet, there is no Pole among us. So where are all those Poles?

A UKRAINIAN Хто його знає (*розводить руками, натякаючи на масові розстріли*)

Who knows. (*shrugs her shoulders, alluding to mass shootings)

A BELARUSIAN (*Я**эю)* А вы, дарэчы, польскі я**эй, беларускі ці ўкраінскі?

(*to the Jew)* Are you a Polish, a Belarusian or a Ukrainian Jew? Or maybe, you're a Russian Jew?

A JEW ואתה יהודי בלארוסי, פולני או אוקראיני? או אולי רוסי?

And what about you? Are you a Jewish, Polish or Ukrainian Belarusian? Or maybe, you're a Russian Belarusian?

A BELARUSIAN Чорт яго ведае, як цяпер правільна адказваць.

I have no flipping idea, what's the right answer to this question nowadays.

A JEW אההה... כמה טוב שרכשנו את מושג האומה...

Oh, God bless the concept of a nation introduced by humankind!

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN Але ж палякаў шкада. Шкада, што ўва ўсім заўжды вінавацяць палякаў.

But I feel really sorry for the Poles. They are always blamed for everything.

A JEW נוווו, מה לומר, בהכל ותמיד...

Well, I wouldn't say that they're *always* blamed for *everything*…

A BELARUSIAN Вам да іх далёка…

But you can't even compare to them.

A JEW ואתה?

Really? Can *you*?

A UKRAINIAN Дорогі таварышы! Перші національ-екзистенційні ігри оголошуються відкритими!

Dear comrades! The first national existential games are declared open!

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN Але ж не самае належнае выкарыстанне панятка «экзістэнцыяльны»…

However, that's not really the correct use of the term "existential".

A UKRAINIAN Так мені до сракі.

I don't give a fuck.

Everyone laughs. They sit in silence for a while.

A JEW נסנסים יהודי, בלארוסי ואוקראינית למסעדה ושם אומרים להם:…

A Jew, Belarusian and Ukrainian enter a restaurant and hear…

A UKRAINIAN (*перебивая*) Розстріляти!

(*interrupts the Jew*) "Shoot them down!"

Everyone laughs.

A BELARUSIAN *(сур'ёзна)* Толькі б лагер.

***(seriously)* I wish they took us to the concentration camp.**

A UKRAINIAN *(серйозно)* Оце б пощастило.

***(seriously)* Yes, we would be lucky.**

A JEW (ברצינות) מזל שזה לא בור

***(seriously)* Anything is better than a mass grave.**

A UKRAINIAN Ну не треба про це тут говорити.

Well, let's not talk about it now.

A BELARUSIAN А якая розніца? Усё адно гэтага не было. Нічога гэтага ніколі не было.

Why not? It never happened, anyway. None of this ever happened.

SCENE 8

The Woman, Journalist (female), and Cameraman in a room.

WOMAN That would be my great-grandparents? I only know that one great-grandmother's name was Halia, and I think I had a great-grandfather named Yakau, and another named Vasil.

JOURNALIST So you're a pure Belarusian by origin, aren't you?

WOMAN What makes you think that? The fact that I don't know my history?

JOURNALIST You don't know it at all? What about the graves? Maybe you remember something about those?

WOMAN I remember there were Polish inscriptions all over the tombstones.

JOURNALIST It means that you're Polish, right?

WOMAN It means absolutely nothing.

SCENE 9

Outpatient clinic. A mother waits for a doctor's appointment. There are no other people in the waiting hall. A hospital attendant diligently scrubs the floor, going back and forth, back and forth. During the third or fifth, infinitely long cycle of floor mopping, the door to the doctor's office opens.

DOCTOR Next, please!

The Mother walks into the office. The Doctor doesn't look at the woman and keeps filling out paperwork during the entire conversation.

DOCTOR *(not looking at the Mother, filling out paperwork)* Have a seat, please. How are you doing?

MOTHER Ah, everything seems fine. Getting by. How are you?

DOCTOR So far, so good. Working, as usual. A lot of work, as always. How is your family?

MOTHER Everything seems okay. My husband is working, so he's got our back. He now receives his salary twice a month, in installments: one is a sort of advance payment, and the rest comes later. Well, it must be the same for you?

DOCTOR Yeah, the same here. Actually, we should receive the first installment any day now. It's fine, nothing to complain about.

MOTHER Yes, I agree, nothing to complain about. My daughter started kindergarten this year. We like it. It's practically right next to our house, very convenient. I stayed late at work several times, so came to pick her up late, but the kindergarten teachers weren't angry with me or anything. They didn't say one mean word to me, they put themselves in my place. We are really lucky with this kindergarten.

DOCTOR And my eldest son has started school already!

MOTHER No way!

DOCTOR Yeah, can you imagine? It's his first year at school!

MOTHER So how old is he, then?

DOCTOR He is six years and nine months old. We decided that he could start a bit earlier than the others.

MOTHER What a big boy!

DOCTOR The kids grow so fast!

MOTHER Tell me about it! My daughter has started kindergarten already!

DOCTOR How do you like it?

MOTHER We're very happy, the teachers are nice, the food is good. And it's right next to our home!

DOCTOR We have to walk a little bit, so now my husband takes our son to school in the mornings, when he doesn't have a morning shift. And when he does, I

have the second shift, so I take our son to school, then. It all works fine for us.

MOTHER Lucky you! It really works out.

DOCTOR We're surprised at how well it turned out, too. So. How are *you* doing?

MOTHER It's fine, you know, nothing to complain about. Haven't even caught a cold this year!

DOCTOR That's great! Do you exercise? Do you take vitamins?

MOTHER Well, you know how it is. Running around in the morning while getting the kid ready for kindergarten, picking up toys and stuff, that's a pretty good fitness routine *(laughs).*

DOCTOR (*laughs*) True, true!

MOTHER And vitamin-wise, well… We eat organic vitamins, those that grow in our garden (*laughs*). Now, when it's April, we do have some vitamin insufficiency, though.

DOCTOR Ah, but the weather is beautiful today!

MOTHER Yes, with all the sunshine! It's warm just like in summer. It's so nice to have a walk in this weather. You should really have a walk today!

DOCTOR I shall definitely walk home and get some air today. I'm going completely crazy within these four walls.

MOTHER (*a little anxious*) You know, I came here to, erm— My sister lives in Ukraine, near Kyiv…

DOCTOR It must be even warmer there.

MOTHER So she called me today and said that yesterday, I mean, today…

DOCTOR The weather is just perfect today!

MOTHER She told me about iodine…

DOCTOR Iodine?

MOTHER Maybe you've got some iodide tablets?

DOCTOR Tablets?

MOTHER Or maybe iodine solution. I didn't really get why we should…

DOCTOR Well, I'm not aware about their situation in Kyiv.

MOTHER She doesn't live in Kyiv itself, it's more like suburbs…

DOCTOR Anyway, we have all those organic vegetables straight from our gardens, those are the best vitamins ever! Sorry, I still have so much to do, I would rather…

MOTHER (*calming down*) Sure, I told her the same. Sorry to disturb you and thanks a lot for your time!

DOCTOR All the best to you, too!

MOTHER (*puts a chocolate bar on the table, stands up, gradually backs away towards the exit*) Once again, sorry for the inconvenience!

DOCTOR Oh, never mind! It's just that I have so much work, or else I would…

MOTHER Of course, of course! I understand.

DOCTOR The weather is just perfect today!

MOTHER I can see the rain drizzling out there, but that's okay. I really like to walk in the warm rain.

DOCTOR Oh, those first summer rains!

MOTHER Haha, yeah. Beautiful. Thank you, once again!

DOCTOR Well, thank *you*! Stay well!

MOTHER You too, you too. All the best to you!

SCENE 10

The Woman, Journalist and Cameraman at a room.

WOMAN My grandmother had skin cancer.

JOURNALIST I'm sorry to hear that.

WOMAN But it was minor cancer.

JOURNALIST Minor cancer?

WOMAN I mean, it was nothing horrible, she just had a small scar on her forehead.

JOURNALIST A small scar?

WOMAN I think she went on a work trip somewhere.

JOURNALIST Where? Don't you remember?

WOMAN Well, she didn't tell us in detail about that.

JOURNALIST Do you remember anything else?

WOMAN I don't think so.

JOURNALIS I see.

The Journalist turns off the recorder and approaches the Operator. They discuss the notes and review video fragments on the camera. The Woman sits there for a while.

WOMAN Sorry, when do you think all this will be over?

Journalist and Cameraman don't hear her question. The Woman sits there for a while longer and then goes out into the next room.

ACT 3
SCENE 11

WOMAN
CHORUS Neighborhood voices and sounds (may be complemented)

The Woman is alone in the room. She sits / stands / approaches the window / whatever: public solitude.

CHORUS

"Where is it?"

"Stop shouting!"

"I'm calling the police!"

The sound of someone banging on the radiator.

"La la la!"

"Why the hell doesn't it work?"

“Fucking cat!”

“Do you hear me?”

The sounds of music: “Adieu, goodbye, auf Wiederseh'n!”

“Why are you always so loud?”

“Honey, please pick up your toys!”

“Hahahahaha!”

“Come on, push it!”

The sound of a mobile phone vibrating.

“Can you hear me?”

“Do you know where this thing is?”

“Please, don’t!”

“Twinkle, twinkle, little star!”

A dog barking.

TV sound: “Welcome to the most popular night show!”

“I’ll go have a smoke.”

“Can you hear me?”

The sounds of music: “Watch me dance, dance the night away!”

The sound of a toilet flushing.

“Mom, I’ve lost my ten-dollar flip-flops!”

The sound of someone banging on the radiator.

“BWAHAHAHA!”

“Wash the dishes, huh?!”

“Why?!”

“Over there!”

“I’ll call the police!”

“Give me my pants back!”

“Please, stop crying, for fuck’s sake!”

“Can you hear me?”

“MWAHAHAHA!”

Skype opening sound.

“Calm the fuck down!”

“So what did you say?”

“Where’s the stuff?”

“Fuck, the wrong way!”

The sounds of music: “Baby I’m just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake, I shake it off, I shake it off!”

“What if we try this one?”

“Can you hear me?”

A baby crying.

“What on earth are you doing?”

The sounds of music: “My mama don’t like you and she likes everyone.”

“I’m calling the police!”

The sound of a toilet flushing.

“Just forget it!”

“Can you hear me?”

“He’s calmed down.”

“Turn down the radio, huh?”

The sound of someone banging on the radiator.

“Can someone hear me?”

“BWAHAHAHA!”

Silence.
Silence.
Silence.