







# RESADO EN ESTABLECER CONTACTOS DIRECTOS CON ISRAEL

22. (Crónica telegráfica.) La Mogrebí de hoy anuncia, en forma te, la probable visita que hará Nueva York en septiembre próximo. La noticia ha sido difundida por el arroqui de noticias con Nixon. El aser se encontrará con Nixon General de las Naciones Unidas confía en que, si como se asociaciones se hallarán para fase de estancamiento para propicia para estimularlas e los dos "grandes".

atribuyen la resistencia is- nlsión Jarrin se desarrolle t, tanto a esa posibilidad ridad y de la reunión del Comenta esta mañana el he" de Casablanca, que neral, se sienten ahora un edificio de cristal de os israelíes es, en cam- En cualquier caso se e que la Casa Blanca omesas "muy concre- Golda Meir, respecto s en el Canal. Si se dades, Israel no se A. U. hubiera ins- mpas que han sus-

ensa mogrebí de a importante que en Pekín el en- rafat. Se quiere a la medida ne- defección de a Saudita. Se a palestina ha lao Tsé-tung. o del fusil." n de que en palestinos. n la evolu- el Cercano

ecoge una viv sobre de esta- rael. Se Golda estruc- o una orma- arez". entes pare- liza. pre- un- é- te

gaf, en Alta Galilea, cerca de la frontera libanesa, antes de medianoche. Al mismo tiempo la granja paramilitar de Geshera en el norte del valle del Jordán, fue atacada desde territorio jordano, según dice el portavoz. Se respondió al fuego en ambos casos.—Efe-Reuters.

## PRIMEROS RESULTADOS DE LAS ELECCIONES MARROQUIES

Rabat 22. Se celebraron ayer en todo Marruecos las elecciones para designar 150 representantes en el Parlamento. La elección efectuada, por sufragio indirecto, se refería a los candidatos de las Cámaras profesionales de las Comunas y de las agrupaciones de asalariados, integrantes de listas resultantes de escrutinios directos en el ámbito de cada uno de dichos sectores. Los 150 representantes elegidos ayer se distribuyen de la siguiente manera: 90 para las Comunas; 16, para las Cámaras de Comercio e Industria; 24, para las Cámaras de Agricultura; 10, para las Cámaras de Artesanía, y 10, para los representantes de los asalariados. En todo el país los actos electorales se efectuaron en medio de absoluta calma.

El ministro del Interior proclamó a última hora los resultados, subrayando que el porcentaje de participación del electorado había sido del 91,17 por 100.

Terminada esta primera fase de las elecciones, el día 28 de agosto se celebrará la segunda. En ésta se procederá a la elección, por sufragio directo, de los 90 representantes que, con los 150 elegidos ayer, completarán el número de 240 de que se compone la Cámara única, de acuerdo con la Constitución aprobada por el pueblo ma-

Fulbright cric- ción de los ter- la posición mo- respecto al Esta- tiempos. "Pero- tados Unidos deb- te sus lazos cultu- Israel."—Efe.

arroqui en el referen- sado.—Efe.

## FINALIZA EL NUEVO TRIENIO EN LIBIA

Tripoli 22. Un Tribunal ha terminado hoy su primera vez, contra dos sentencias a cadena perpetua este mes por haber conspirado al actual régimen de la nación, dice que el Tribunal citado ayer y deliberaciones el pasado día y que ha archivado el caso, diente de sentencia. No se ha para su pronunciamiento. El Gobierno libio ordenó del juicio a raíz de que se p- Tripoli masivas manifestaciones que los manifestantes califican de benignas.—Efe-Reuters.

## Julio Camarero, a disposición de la autoridad judicial uruguaya

Montevideo 22. El período Julio Camarero será p- la autoridad indi- declarado-

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### IV BOLSA DE LA ENSEÑANZA

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- 16. Varios
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### V. BOLSA DE LOS SERVICIOS

- 17. Idiomas
- 18. Bachillerato
- 19. Varios
- 20. Detectives
- 21. Gestorías Administrativas
- 22. Transportes
- 23. Viajes
- 24. Varios

### VI. OTRAS SECCIONES

- 25. Compras
- 26. Ventas
- 27. Filatelia
- 28. Hospedaje
  - a) Ofrezco Solicito
  - b) Ofrezco Solicito
- 29. Maquinaria
- 30. Modistas
- 31. Muebles
- 32. Óptica
- 33. Pérdidas
- 34. Perros
- 35. Préstamos
- 36. Radio

Estos anunciantes y lectores el que se interesan incluimos capitulos en que se divide la correspondientes noblemente una persona desea vender el apartado numero 9, si anunciar una pérdida, el 33.

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Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden

Paper Flowers  
A Play in Six Scenes  
by Egon Wolff

A Breakthrough Book  
University of Missouri Press  
Columbia



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# Introduction

Egon Wolff, a Chilean, is representative of one of the most interesting and exciting phenomena in recent literary history, the explosion onto the world literary scene of many excellent Latin American writers. Certainly, the new awareness of the English-speaking world toward all the arts in Latin America has served to make the explosion more apparent, but the phenomenon has a substance that cannot be explained simply as a matter of belated recognition that literature *does* exist south of the North American continent. The explosion is real, and its most satisfactory and accurate explanation lies, I believe, in the comment by Mexican essayist and poet Octavio Paz that for the first time in history Latin American writers are contemporaries of their world.

It was in the sixties that such writers as Jorge Luis Borges, Carlos Fuentes, and Julio Cortázar emerged as universal literary figures. The factors responsible for this period of renovation are complex and too involved for discussion here, but one powerful, negative factor that impeded an earlier renaissance was Latin America's long cultural dependence upon Spain and France.

Latin American theatre, more than any other genre, remained dependent upon its cultural mother, Spain, long after the political cord was severed. From Colonial times, when theatre was used for purposes of propaganda by the Church, Spain's influence over the theatre of the Spanish New World was almost exclusive, a dominance interrupted briefly in the nineteenth century by the French Romantics. As late as the thirties of this century, theatre audiences were being entertained largely by actors trained in Spain speaking with Castilian accents, playing Spanish Golden Age and French Ro-

G59094

mantic plays. It was not until the forties, with the establishment of experimental, usually university-affiliated theatres, that a truly original and autonomous theatre was born. Specifically, in Chile, it was the founding of its two experimental groups, ИТУСН (Instituto del Teatro de la Universidad de Chile) in 1941 and ТЕУС (Teatro Experimental de la Universidad Católica) in 1943 that brought its theatre to life.

The past two decades have produced several fine Chilean playwrights. Sergio Vodánovic, Jorge Diaz, and Egon Wolff are probably the best known. Wolff, a chemical engineer before he became a playwright, began writing in 1958. Since that time nine of his plays have been published and produced. Throughout these plays his continuing thematic concerns have been: (1) the sometimes destructive results of the human need for love, (2) the destruction of the old (*status quo*) by the new, and (3) his continuing exploration of social reality and of the absurdity of what happens within that reality—this third theme inextricably linked with the second.

Wolff's sensitivity to social reality is amply illustrated in *The Invaders* (1965) and *Paper Flowers*, which depict the destruction of a bourgeoisie indifferent to its surrounding social problems. Each, read in the context of the events in Chile in 1970, including the assumption of power by a democratically elected Marxist president, dramatically portrays the inevitable result of years of middle-class indifference toward *los rotos* (the broken ones), Chile's frustrated poor.

*Paper Flowers* [*Flores de papel*] has recently been published in Spain and also in Cuba, where it won the 1970 Casa de las Americas theatre award, Latin America's most prestigious prize. As the 1970 recipient, *Paper Flowers* demonstrates Egon Wolff's importance in Latin American theatre, a theatre now ready to take its place in the mainstream of world theatre.

M. S. P.

Columbia, Missouri

December, 1970

# Paper Flowers

*The hake is a fish of the Chilean seacoast. It is long and thin-bodied, its large, acute-nosed mouth set with sharp teeth. It hunts the deep waters of the Pacific to feed its voracious appetite.*

# Scene One

*The living room of a small suburban apartment, carefully arranged, revealing a feminine hand. Comfortable. Intimate. Three doors in addition to the entrance. One, to the bedroom; one to the bathroom; the third to the kitchen.*

*One window.*

*A canary in a cage.*

*Somewhere, an easel with a half-finished painting. A box of oils.*

*Also, straw figures: fish, heads of animals, roosters, etc.*

*The stage is empty. Then Eva and The Hake enter. Eva, forty, is well dressed, with conscious elegance. The Hake, thirty, dirty, his hair uncombed, thin, pale. Eva, who opens the door, enters resolutely. She walks toward the kitchen.*

*The Hake stands in the doorway. He carries two large paper bags. He is trembling visibly. He looks at the room with timid curiosity.*

**EVA** (*returning from the kitchen*). Well, come in! Come in! Leave those in there, in the kitchen!

*The Hake enters with respectful caution. Never taking his eyes from the objects in the room, he places the bags on the floor, in the middle of the room.*

Not there! (*She points to the kitchen.*) In the kitchen. Next to the stove, please!

*The Hake does as she says. He returns without the bags. Eva has gone into the bedroom. She comes out brushing her hair. She takes a bill from her wallet, which has been lying on a small table, and hands it to him.*

EVA. Here you are, and . . . thanks very much.

*The Hake refuses the bill she hands him.*

Take it! You're not going to tell me you carried my packages for nothing?

*The Hake stares at her.*

Well, then . . . thanks very much. You've been very kind.

*The Hake continues to stare at her.*

Very pleasant. There was no reason for you to do it. Thank you very much.

THE HAKE (*in an impersonal, painful voice*). I would rather you gave me a cup . . . of tea.

EVA (*a little surprised*). Tea?

THE HAKE. You do have some, don't you?

EVA. Yes, I do, but . . . I don't have time. (*She offers him the bill once more.*) You can buy yourself some tea anywhere with this. There's a drugstore on the corner.

THE HAKE. "Anywhere" wouldn't be the same.

EVA (*interested, amused*). Oh, no? Why?

THE HAKE. It wouldn't be the same.

*He stares at her, continuously.*

EVA. Well . . . but I don't have time, I already told you. Take this and go on. I have things to do.

THE HAKE. They're waiting for me down there.

EVA. Who's waiting for you?

THE HAKE. Miguel and "Birdy."

EVA. The two that were following us?

*The Hake nods.*

What do they want? Why are they waiting for you?

THE HAKE. To get me.

EVA. Well, what do you want me to do? (*Annoyed.*)  
Take this. I have things to do.

THE HAKE. They're going to kill me.

EVA. That's your affair. Don't bother me any more, I tell  
you. Go away!

THE HAKE. I didn't think you'd be so hard. You don't  
look it.

EVA. Well, then, you were mistaken.

THE HAKE. Since the first time I saw you, last year, paint-  
ing those flowers in the Botanical Garden. I've thought  
you were different.

*A pause.*

EVA. The Botanical Garden? You saw me?

THE HAKE. You were behind the parrot's cage, painting  
some clumps of laurel. . . . (*He stares at her.*) You had  
on a light straw hat with a green ribbon. And a kerchief  
with some scenes of Venice.

EVA. You're a good observer, aren't you?

THE HAKE. I observe certain things.

EVA. So your offer today, to carry the packages for  
me. . . . (*Perturbed.*) What did you say you wanted?

THE HAKE. A cup of tea.

EVA. Wouldn't you rather have a bowl of soup? I'll bet  
you haven't eaten today.

THE HAKE. Anything you want to give me.

EVA. I have some soup from last night. Shall I warm it  
for you?

THE HAKE. If you want to.



EVA. Well, sit down while I fix it.

*She goes into the kitchen. One hears the clatter of pots and pans. The Hake, meanwhile, stands fixed where he is, not moving a millimeter. Eva comes back after a while.*

Sit down. Surely you're not going to stand there all day.

THE HAKE. Not in these clothes.

EVA (*from the kitchen*). I don't think the furniture will mind.

*The Hake takes a newspaper from an inside pocket of his coat, doubles it carefully, scrupulously, and places it on one of the armchairs. He sits upon it. Eva watches his actions and smiles. She props open the kitchen door with a chair so she will be able to talk through the open door.*

Do you go often to the Botanical Garden?

THE HAKE. Sometimes.

EVA. To look at the flowers?

THE HAKE. No, to give peanuts to the monkeys.

EVA. Do you like the monkeys?

*The Hake shrugs his shoulders.*

I think they're dirty . . . gross! I can't bear them. To watch them . . . there . . . picking their fleas in front of everybody. I can't stand them!

THE HAKE. They do what they can.

EVA. Do you have time for that?

THE HAKE. For what?

EVA. To go to the Garden?

THE HAKE. I arrange it.

EVA. I wish I had more!

*At that moment The Hake is struck by uncontrollable spasms. They rack his entire body. They contort his face. He must hold on to the table to maintain his upright position. He turns his back to the door of the kitchen and clamps his arms between his legs. It concerns him that Eva not see him in this state. Nevertheless, Eva notices. Finally, he masters the spasms.*

How do you do at the supermarket? Do you find many clients?

THE HAKE. There's always someone who finds his packages too heavy.

*Eva comes out of the kitchen carrying soup and table service for them both. She places it all on the small table. As she does this, The Hake rises.*

EVA. It isn't very warm, but I suppose you'd like it better that way. Sit down!

THE HAKE. I'm fine.

EVA. Sit down and help yourself.

*The Hake takes the bowl and begins to take spoonfuls standing up.*

But sit down, for Heaven's sake!

*She returns to the kitchen and comes out again carrying a hard-boiled egg, a tomato, and a glass of milk. She places them on the table.*

I'm not going to begin if you go on standing there like that.

THE HAKE. It's . . . considerate enough of you to invite me to have this. I wouldn't take advantage and sit down with you—where I don't belong.

EVA (*openly*). And if I tell you it doesn't matter to me?

THE HAKE. I thought you were saying it to make it seem . . . easy. (*He sits down.*) It isn't good to go too far. (*Indicating the soup.*) Is it because of your figure?

EVA (*laughing*). Yes. Because of my figure! If it weren't for this, I'd be big as a balloon! I have a terrible tendency to gain weight. I eat a piece of bread and I gain a pound.

THE HAKE. That's a shame.

EVA. Yes. And a nuisance.

THE HAKE. It's just the opposite with Mario.

EVA. Who's Mario?

THE HAKE. A friend. Every time he eats a piece of bread he loses half a pound. He's skin and bones. It comes from stubbornness. The doctors tell him he should eat more, but he's stubborn.

*He looks in her eyes with an expressionless, concentrated look.*

You shouldn't do that.

EVA. Do what?

THE HAKE. Eat so little. It might harm you. You might die.

EVA. Does it matter? Does it matter to anyone?

THE HAKE. It matters to me.

*They eat a moment, in silence, each one concentrating on his soup. The Hake spoons his, but never takes his eyes off Eva. After a while, Eva rises nervously.*

EVA (*half laughing*). So that's how you kill your time? Going to the Botanical Garden to see how a lonely old woman kills her time painting the laurel in bloom?

*She goes into the kitchen. She returns with salt and a napkin.*

Because that's how I seem to you, isn't it? A lonely old woman? Killing time?

*The Hake looks at her; he does not respond.*

Let's see. Tell me! What do you think I am?

THE HAKE. A woman.

EVA. No, no! What I mean is: married or single?

THE HAKE. Married.

EVA (*with coquettish curiosity*). Why?

THE HAKE. From the way you cross your legs.

*Eva laughs.*

EVA. Oh, how amusing! And why? How do old maids cross their legs?

THE HAKE. (*expressionless*). They don't cross them.

*Eva laughs nervously.*

EVA. How amusing you are! (*Always half laughing.*) Tell me. Do you always stare at people?

*The Hake immediately lowers his glance to his soup.*

Well, you guessed (*touched; excited*). I'm married. Doesn't that worry you? What if my husband should enter suddenly and find me here with you?

THE HAKE (*low*). What could he think?

EVA (*still coquettish*). Why not?

THE HAKE. You shouldn't joke about being poor.

*A moment of embarrassment. The Hake is struck by another attack, which he can scarcely suppress.*

EVA (*doesn't know what to do*). Eat something, man. You haven't eaten a thing.

*The Hake gestures that it doesn't matter.*

A drink? Is that it? (Pause.) Do you need a drink to calm that trembling?

*The Hake makes a vague gesture. Eva goes toward the kitchen and returns with a glass of wine, which The Hake grabs from her hands and drinks avidly. This finally calms him.*

Almost, mmmm?

THE HAKE. Almost what?

EVA. Well . . . almost. I didn't mean to offend you. I wasn't amusing myself at your expense; it's just that it seems so . . . well, so strange, that you remember me. Among others. . . . There are other people who paint in the Garden. For instance, the old man in the blue corduroy hat. Have you seen him? The one who comes in the afternoons with his little cane stool. Sometimes with a dog, sometimes without. (Laughs.) One day he got angry with me because of the way I use green tones. He practically yelled at me that it wasn't academic. I never knew what he meant by that. He walked around and around me, shaking his cane. I thought he was going to knock over my easel!

*During this monologue, The Hake is almost doubled over.*

Are you in pain?

THE HAKE. No.

EVA. Well, then, what's the matter?

THE HAKE. After my "dance," my stomach always knots up.

EVA. I have some tranquilizers. Do you want one?

THE HAKE. No, thank you.

EVA. Then, do you need a drink?

*The Hake looks at her.*

I mean, the trembling comes because of that, doesn't it?

*There is no response. An embarrassing moment. Eva looks toward the kitchen.*

Well, you'd better hurry because I have to leave soon. I open the store at two.

*The Hake renews his slow spooning of soup. Eva returns with two peeled peaches. She places one in front of The Hake. She eats hers.*

These peaches don't have the flavor they used to. I don't know what they do to them now. I remember when I was a child. We used to go with Mamma and Papa to a farm near the river where for practically nothing they let us go to the orchard and eat our fill of peaches and strawberries. What we could throw down! Those peaches really had flavor! Today they export the best ones and leave the leftovers for us. I remember that while Papa and Mamma sat down to eat at some tables that had been set under the trees, Alfredo and I—Alfredo is my brother—would go play in a barn that was close by. Climbing over the baler. . . . My brother Alfredo! He had a real obsession for doing the heroic thing. I remember he would hoist a handkerchief tied like a flag and we'd play "Take the Brigantine"! (Laughs.) He was the glorious captain, and I was the accursed corsair! Oh, what times! Silly, happy kids!

THE HAKE. If you throw me out, Miguel and "Birdy" will kill me.

EVA. And what do you want me to do? Leave you here?

THE HAKE. They're waiting for me around the corner, behind the pharmacy.

*Eva goes to the window and looks out, barely raising the curtain.*

EVA. There they are. They're looking up here.

*She turns toward him.*

Well. . . . What shall we do? I can't leave you here! (Hardening herself.) I have to go to the store . . . soon. I've already told you.

*The Hake suddenly explodes, a spurting, agitated, machine-gun rattle of words. The tone is monotonous, mournful, almost a litany. As he finishes, he has a new onslaught of trembling.*

THE HAKE. "Birdy" has a meathook under his coat! He has a meathook and he's been waiting all morning for me to kill me! Because last night I won a few bucks from him shooting craps and he says I cheated on him! And it isn't true, because I won fair and square. Playing fair and square. He came to Julia's house this morning to look for me, but I saw him hide behind the oven and got past him and ran toward the river. All morning I hid in the bushes down by the tannery, until I went to the supermarket, and if you hadn't helped me, he'd have killed me! If you don't help me and hide me, he'll kill me! If you don't help me hide, I'll die, and I don't want to die! I don't want to die! I don't want to die!

EVA. There, it's all right. It's all right! Calm yourself. No one's going to do anything to you.

*She doesn't know what to do.*

I could notify the police. Do you want me to? So they'll arrest those men?

*The Hake shakes his head.*

Ah, yes. That's true. The code of honor, umm? You don't denounce each other.

*The Hake is bent over. He shivers. Eva considers the situation a while.*

I'll have to lock you up in here.

*The Hake looks at her.*

Because you understand, don't you? I don't know you. And besides, the lock and chain are on the outside. I'll have to lock you inside until I come back.

THE HAKE. I understand.

EVA. I'll lock the other rooms, too. You'll have to wait for me here.

THE HAKE. More than logical.

EVA. You have some magazines. Today's paper . . .

THE HAKE. Thank you. . . .

*He smiles for the first time—a broad, open smile—that says nothing.*

It's as if everything had been . . . well, prepared. . . . Ready. . . . The newspapers, I mean, and the magazines. I couldn't ask for anything more, to tell the truth. Anything else would be, well . . . ungrateful, I'd say.

EVA. Yes.

*Eva removes the bowls. She goes into the bathroom and then walks around combing her hair. The Hake eats a little of the peach. Then he gets up and walks toward the canary's cage.*

THE HAKE. A pretty little bird. What's its name?

EVA. Goldie.

THE HAKE. Goldie, eh? (*He plays with it.*) Ps, ps, ps, ps! (*He gives it a piece of peach.*) You like that, eh? Ps, ps, ps, ps! You like to eat ripe fruit under the trees, eh, little glutton? (*Gives it another piece.*) Here, take it! That's it!

*Eva closes the door to the bathroom.  
The Hake is alone.*

You have quite a gullet, eh, you little queer? (*His voice takes on a tone of harshness.*) Did you know that I'm the cursed captain and you're the glorious corsair? Didn't you know that, you fuck-up? (*He shakes the cage.*) Didn't you know that? That I'm the cursed captain and you're the glorious corsair, you freaking bird? (*With a wounded voice.*) I don't know you! (*He shakes the cage again.*) I'll have to lock you up, because I don't know you, son-of-a-bitch bird. I'll have to chain you . . . !

*Eva comes from the bathroom. She is ready to leave.*



Ps, ps, ps, ps! Little canary . . . !

*Eva turns on the radio.*

EVA. I'll leave you this. Change it if you want.

THE HAKE. Thank you.

*Eva walks toward the door.*

Ma'am . . .

EVA (turns). Yes?

THE HAKE. I knew. The thousand times I've seen you, I knew that you were what your eyes say you are. . . .

EVA. I'll be back at six. (Points to the kitchen.) If you want to help yourself to anything. . . .

*She exits.*

*One hears the noise of the lock and the rattle of the chain.*

*The Hake shakes the cage.*

THE HAKE. Eat your little peaches! Eat, you shit! Eat, you fruity corsair!

*He is shaking the cage as the curtain falls.*

## Scene Two

*The same evening, a little after six o'clock. The Hake is making a paper basket from doubled strips of newspaper. A paper bird hangs from the light fixture, a kind of gull, tied by a thread. The Hake is kneeling on the floor, surrounded by piles of scattered, disordered newspapers. The radio is playing a dance tune. Offstage, the sound of an automobile's brakes and the closing of its door. The Hake goes to the window to look, peering out from behind the curtain. Then he returns to his work.*

*After the sound of the key in the lock and the rattle of the chain, Eva enters. She is carrying a paper bag from which the neck of a bottle protrudes.*

EVA (nervous; appearing to be casual). You see? Three minutes after six. Not a minute before or a minute after!

*She closes the door. She bumps into the bird.*

And this? What is it? Did you make it?

THE HAKE. Nobody else has been here.

EVA. It's precious! You're quite an artist, you know? A gull?

THE HAKE. Do you think it is?

EVA. Yes, of course! A gull! Precious!

THE HAKE. Then it is.

EVA (about the basket). And that? A basket?

*The Hake nods.*

That's precious, too. Where did you learn the art?

THE HAKE. It's for you. . . .

EVA. What? The basket?

THE HAKE. Everything.

EVA. Oh, thank you!

THE HAKE. Providing it doesn't bother you. . . .

EVA. No. Why should it bother me?

THE HAKE. The newspapers, I mean. Because I have spread out all the papers this way. Everything messed up.

*He begins hastily to pick up the papers.  
He folds them carefully.*

EVA. No, it doesn't matter. . . .

*She goes toward the kitchen.*

But, where did you learn this?

THE HAKE. Around. I worked for a guy who worked with wicker. But he was a moron. He only knew how to make chairs. I know how to make flowers, too.

EVA. Flowers?

THE HAKE. Camellias.

EVA (from the kitchen). But . . . for Heaven's sake! The dishes! Who washed them?

*The Hake does not respond. Eva enters  
from the kitchen.*

You didn't have to do that.

*The Hake shrugs his shoulders.*

I'll bet you scrubbed the floor, too? It wasn't this shiny when I left.

THE HAKE. There was some wax here, and I thought a little polish wouldn't hurt it any.

EVA (*smiling*). I don't dare go into the bedroom. What might I find there?

THE HAKE. Nothing. How could I go in there without your permission?

*Eva goes into the kitchen again and returns with a salami and some cheese and a few packages of cigarettes.*

EVA. Speaking of surprises, don't think I forgot you. I thought, since the nights are cold and "a full stomach is one's best friend" . . . a few snacks. A little paté. And cheese. Gruyère. Very rich. It was especially recommended by the owner of the store, who's a friend of mine.

*The Hake scarcely looks at what Eva is showing him. He has finished gathering up the newspapers in a carefully folded stack and is going to carry them to the kitchen. He runs into Eva, and this produces a brief business of getting into each other's way.*

Where are you going?

THE HAKE (*referring to the papers*). I took them from the kitchen.

EVA. Leave them. It doesn't matter.

THE HAKE. Everything's going to be messy.

EVA (*a little impatient; nervous*). It doesn't matter, I tell you. (*Smiles.*) Put them down there. (*Always with a small, nervous smile that looks strange, almost as if she were laughing to herself.*) When I went into the store, I was so wild to get there, thinking about buying this, that I completely forgot to invent an . . . excuse, because the question was bound to come up, and it did. "Who are you buying all this for, dear? Don't tell me it's all for you?" At first, I didn't know what to say. I stammered out a couple of silly things, and then, when I was about out of breath, it occurred to me to say that it was for a picnic! (*Laughs.*) A picnic with some friends. Imagine! Me, on a picnic!

*The Hake, kneeling on the floor again, folds and smooths the stack of newspapers with exaggerated care.*

Because if I told her the truth. . . . Who do you think would have believed me?

THE HAKE. Nobody.

EVA. Yes. That's what I thought, too.

THE HAKE. In these cases you always offer a bowl of warm soup. (*Indicating the snacks.*) That would never occur to anyone. It's not necessary.

EVA (*laughs nervously*). Do you like it?

THE HAKE. What?

EVA. The salami? The cheese?

THE HAKE. You always ask two questions at once. I never know which to answer first.

EVA (*confused*). The salami?

THE HAKE. It turns my stomach.

EVA. You don't like it?

THE HAKE. It isn't that. It must be because my stomach isn't used to it. When you're only given rice soup and things like that, you develop a weak stomach. Once the sisters at the charity kitchen gave me roast meat with mushrooms and I vomited for two days.

EVA. I should have thought of that. I shouldn't have bought it.

THE HAKE (*looks at her for the first time, with the look so typical of him—it says nothing*). Eat it with your friends on the picnic.

EVA. What friends? I don't have any friends.

THE HAKE. Tough luck for you.

*Resumes his task.*

EVA (*lively*). Well, I think I should start preparing dinner.

*She goes toward the kitchen.*

That's my life. Eat, and then eat some more. A meal in the morning. A meal at noon. A meal at night! Sometimes I get to the point I think that's all life is: one big continuous meal, with an occasional pause for boredom, and then we begin eating again. And happiness too, naturally! Like a thin powdery dusting of sugar over the whole affair!

*While speaking, she has gone from the kitchen to the bedroom, putting on and taking off a wool jacket, putting on and taking off some slippers, opening and closing closets, always with The Hake watching her imperturbably.*

What foolish things one does. . . . Opening and closing closets . . . and putting clothes on and off. . . . If you add up the days, the hours, you lose doing useless things . . .

*She goes to the kitchen, where she can be heard working with the pans. She drops a glass. The noise of breaking glass.*

Oh! How stupid I am! What's the matter with me today!

*She comes out of the kitchen winding a handkerchief around her finger and walks toward the bedroom.*

I cut myself! The day never passes that I don't have to go to my medicine chest!

*The Hake rises.*

THE HAKE. May I help you?

EVA (*from the bedroom*). No, let it be. I'm used to it. I told you. My fingers are covered with scars! The quarts of blood I've spilled! Not that I do it on purpose!

*She comes out of the bedroom.*

But a person wouldn't do a thing like that on purpose, do you think?

*She hands him a pair of scissors and gauze.*

Cut it here, will you, please?

*The Hake cuts the gauze skillfully.*

THE HAKE. Iodine, do you have any?

EVA. Yes.

*She goes to the bedroom and returns with a little bottle of iodine that The Hake also uses with agility and skill. He paints the wound with iodine, places the gauze on it, and secures it with adhesive. Eva observes his movements. The Hake ostensibly avoids all physical contact with her. He avoids her with prudent and delicate caution. Eva, on the other hand, doesn't show the same reticence; rather, curious sympathy, in contrast to his timidity. When The Hake finishes, he starts to tremble again. He sits down. He clasps his arms between his knees in his characteristic gesture. Eva goes to the kitchen and returns with a glass of wine. The Hake drinks avidly. The trembling subsides. He coughs.*

Is that better?

*The Hake nods.*

It seems you have learned a little of everything around, haven't you? The only thing you don't seem to have learned is to talk. . . . Are you always so frugal with your words?

THE HAKE. Where I live there isn't much interest in listening.

EVA (with irony). I don't think where I live there is, either.

THE HAKE. Put on the jacket.

EVA. What did you say?

THE HAKE. The jacket and the slippers. . . .

EVA. Oh, that! No, I'm all right this way. . . .

THE HAKE. You were going to put them on.

EVA. Yes, but I'm fine. . . .

THE HAKE. Well, you were going to put them on. . . .

EVA. Yes, but . . . not now . . . and don't look at me like that! (*Laughs nervously.*) Don't look at me so much. Good Lord, what a starrer you are! What a starrer of a man! Do you always stare like that, tell me.

*The Hake lowers his glance.*

You're capable of making one completely . . .

*She goes toward the kitchen.*

Let's see, but I want to hear your story! Come on, tell me. Where did you learn to use your hands so well? In putting on gauze and adhesive, I mean?

*From the kitchen.*

You give the impression of being very familiar with them.

THE HAKE. I learned from an orderly, a sergeant.

EVA. Were you in the Army?

THE HAKE. In the hospital.

EVA. Ill?

THE HAKE. Something like that.

EVA. Like what? What was the matter?

THE HAKE. I can't talk like this. . . .

*Eva comes out of the kitchen.*

I can't talk like this . . . with you in the kitchen and me, here, shouting. I can't talk if I don't see the other person's face. You'll forgive me, won't you? But I think you don't allow yourself sufficient . . . repose.



EVA (*her curiosity piqued*). Why do you say that?

THE HAKE. Because you're always going back and forth . . . up and down . . . moving things . . . changing things around . . . with no apparent reason. Since I came in here, you haven't once stopped moving around. Have you looked, for example, at the basket I'm making?

EVA. I looked at it, yes . . .

THE HAKE. No, but really . . . looked at it?

EVA. Yes, I looked at it, I already told you.

THE HAKE. Thought about it?

EVA. Well . . .

THE HAKE. Do you like it?

EVA. Yes. I like it. I told you already.

THE HAKE. Why?

EVA (*anguished*). It's only a . . . basket.

THE HAKE. It's more than that.

*Moment of embarrassment.*

EVA. Yes. You're right. Forgive me. I told you, I'm a machine. I think it's because of the kind of life I have to lead.

THE HAKE. I could show you how I make the flowers, for example. Paper flowers.

EVA (*more than necessarily interested*). Yes. Let's see, show me!

*She kneels down next to him.*

THE HAKE (*taking a sheet of newspaper*). You take a sheet of newspaper, like this, and you double it from the corner, like this, you see? (*He does it.*) And it isn't an ordinary sheet of paper, as you will see. You take a piece of paper that has a lot of printing, or a large photograph, or a lot of photographs without any printing, you see? Like this. So that the flower has some meaning. Some continuity. Some beauty.

*While he works and speaks, something  
is changing in him. Something that pos-  
sesses and absorbs him.*

For some people the paper of newspapers is just that. A strip of worthless paper that's only good to wrap meat, to plug holes, or to line suitcases. But it isn't that. Those who think so, it's clear, are marked, and you can recognize them by other superficial features. The paper from newspapers has a world of things to say. It takes whatever form you want to give it. It folds submissively. It allows itself to be handled without resistance. It occupies very little space in your pocket. And it is a faithful companion on winter nights. It keeps you company . . . tranquilly . . . silently . . . always ready, there it is, for any use whatever.

*The flower is ready.*

There it is! A camellia, you see?

*He places it at Eva's brow.*

To adorn the beautiful.

EVA. Who are you?

THE HAKE. I also make carnations and chrysanthemums, but that's a little more difficult, because you need scissors, and scissors aren't something they let you have, ordinarily. Even less on winter nights, down by the river.

*His excitement continues to increase.*

I also make fish and butterflies of paper! But that's much more difficult, because once you have them made, no one wants them. Because everyone wants fish in beautifully lighted fishbowls, and butterflies mounted on pins in little mahogany boxes. But made from dirty newspapers that are only good for lining suitcases, no! No one wants dirty paper butterflies, dirty from wrapping meat, mounted in lighted mahogany boxes! Nor does anyone want to dirty her brow with flowers of dirty paper!

*As he finishes he is panting.*

At least, that's what the bourgeois say . . . who are the

arbiters of style . . . in everything . . . including the way you work . . . the paper . . . the newspapers.

*He coughs. Brief pause.*

EVA. Who are you?

THE HAKE. They call me "The Hake."

EVA. I mean . . . your name?

THE HAKE. I don't know. A name, one loses it around here in the streets, down a crack . . .

EVA. But you must have some name. I can't call you "The Hake."

THE HAKE (*with an expressionless face*). Why not?

EVA (*confused*). Well . . . because . . .

THE HAKE (*with the same lack of expression*). Because it's the name the gang uses.

EVA. It isn't a Christian name.

THE HAKE. And you're not part of the gang.

EVA (*with certain defiance*). No, no I'm not, if you want to put it like that. Among my friends we call each other by Christian names.

THE HAKE. I thought you told me you didn't have any friends.

EVA. It's a way of speaking.

THE HAKE. It must be, then, that between us—who aren't friends—we call each other by names that aren't Christian. (*Smiles, pacifying her.*) My mother calls me Robert.

EVA. That's better. I'll call you Robert, then.

THE HAKE. And Bobby.

EVA. Bobby?

THE HAKE. And pig. Pig before we ate. I had two mothers. She called me pig before we ate, Bobby, after.

EVA. Did she die?

THE HAKE. Something like that.

*Eva rises, and with exaggerated vivacity goes to a piece of furniture and takes out some scissors and hands them to him.*

EVA. Well! Here we're not on the shore of the river; we have scissors! Show me how you make the chrysanthemums!

THE HAKE (*rises*). I think it's time for me to go.

EVA (*hadn't thought about this*). Oh, yes! Of course! But, those men? Don't you think you're still in danger?

*Eva rises and goes to the window.*

There they are! They're still waiting for you!

THE HAKE. What do you think? That they're playing?

EVA. Well, what do they want? You haven't done anything except win a couple of dollars from them shooting dice! Isn't winning allowed among you?

THE HAKE. It's allowed. But you pay for it.

EVA. I don't understand! How can they be so vengeful?

THE HAKE. From watching how dogs fight over a piece of meat.

EVA. So, as soon as you leave the building they'll assault you?

THE HAKE. Their pulse won't miss a beat.

EVA. I can't allow them to do that.

THE HAKE. Shall I show you how I make paper chrysanthemums?

EVA. You stay here until those men go away.

*The Hake begins to cut up pieces of paper. He is contained at first, but then goes about it with increasing fury.*

THE HAKE. You take a piece of paper and you cut it from the corners, you see?

*He does it.*

You make some long cuts along the printed lines, you see? Until you make shreds of paper, the thinnest possible . . . with the finest points . . . until the whole sheet of paper, which originally was a newspaper, . . . looks like a big piece of shredded paper! As if a dog had made it his prey! Or a falcon! Or any rabid animal! Like when in the bus someone runs his razor along the seats and leaves his mark of stupor and rage there! Or when in the hospital the orderly pours iodine on a back shredded by the whip.

EVA. Bobby . . .

*The Hake looks at her.*

Do you mind if I call you Bobby?

*The Hake continues to stare at her with eyes that express nothing.*

Does it seem like a good idea . . . for you to sleep here? Tonight? In this big chair? I'll lend you some blankets. It doesn't matter to me.

THE HAKE. But you brought me salami and cheese so I'd leave.

EVA. Not now, Bobby. You can't go like this.

THE HAKE. If I stay I'll have to . . . take a bath, naturally?

EVA. Have I said that?

*The Hake laughs and looks for laughter in Eva's face.*

THE HAKE (*laughing*). No, no! Say it! "It would be better if you took a bath, Bobby!"

EVA. I already told you: it's just the same to me.

THE HAKE (*always laughing*). No, no! It isn't the same! Go on, say it! Confess! I want to hear how you say it! "It would be better if you took a bath, Bobby, because like that, with those clothes and that filth . . .," mmh? Come on!

EVA. All right, if you insist. "It would be better if you took a bath, Bobby."

THE HAKE (suddenly serious). But . . . I can't use your bathroom. How could such a thing ever occur to me?

EVA. Go ahead and use it! Did I say not to?

THE HAKE. No, naturally not. That's true, you didn't tell me! What ideas I have! How could you say such a thing to me?

*Suddenly.*

Shall I show you how I make paper chrysanthemums?

EVA. You already showed me.

THE HAKE (never taking his eyes off her). But you didn't look.

EVA (protests). Yes, I . . .

THE HAKE. No, you never looked.

EVA. Well, show me.

*The Hake takes another sheet of paper and begins to cut it the same way he did the first.*

THE HAKE. You take a sheet of paper and you cut it with the scissors from the corners, you see? You make some long cuts along the printed lines until you make shreds of paper, the thinnest possible . . . with the finest points . . . until the whole sheet of paper, which originally was a newspaper, . . . looks like a big piece of shredded paper! Or like a dog had made it his prey! Or a falcon! Or any rabid animal!

*His voice has become tense. The words are squeezed from his mouth.*

Or like in the bus when somebody runs a razor . . .

*Curtain*

## Scene Three

*The following day, early morning. The Hake is already up. It is obvious he has bathed and combed his hair. His clothing is folded on a chair. Next to it, his shoes. He has put on one of Eva's bathrobes, which is obviously short and tight on him. He is moving around the room, cleaning with a broom and a dustcloth. He opens the curtains. He runs the dustcloth over the furniture. From the kitchen, the noise of a teakettle. He hums a tune while he cleans. The sun floods in. The straw figures are no longer in view. In their place on the walls, and hanging from threads stretched from wall to wall, some paper flowers and a few butterflies. After a while.*

EVA (*from the bedroom*). Good morning!

THE HAKE. Good morning!

EVA. How did you sleep?

THE HAKE. Couldn't be better!

EVA. Up so early?

THE HAKE. It's a beautiful morning!

EVA. What are you doing?

THE HAKE. A little cleaning!

EVA. But why?

*She opens the bedroom door, which obviously has been locked. She enters, in a bathrobe, combing her hair.*

You didn't have to . . .

*She notices the appearance of The Hake.  
She cannot repress an expression of stupefied amusement.*

THE HAKE (*gesturing to the bathrobe*). It was in the bathroom. It doesn't bother you, I suppose?

EVA. No, no. Why should it bother me?

THE HAKE. The soapsuds were so fragrant it must have gone to my head. I didn't know what I was doing. This morning I woke with this on.

EVA. That's fine.

THE HAKE. And then I said to myself: "Hake, you have to do something useful!" I looked around and I saw the blossoms of the mimosa and the beautiful swallows swooping after each other around the General's statue, and I said to myself: "Hake, you have to do something useful!" (*Laughs his characteristic laugh; a laugh that covers his whole face, but says nothing.*) On a day like this, even the river rats would like to come out dressed in lace! How do you like your eggs?

EVA. Eggs?

THE HAKE. Yes, eggs.

EVA. But, Bobby, I don't . . .

THE HAKE. Fried or boiled?

EVA (*resigned*). Boiled.

THE HAKE. I guessed! They're already boiling. That doesn't bother you, I suppose?

EVA. What?

THE HAKE. That I took the eggs like that, without permission?

EVA. Why should it bother me?

THE HAKE. You told me the same thing yesterday.

EVA. What?



THE HAKE. "Why should it bother me?" Curious how one always repeats himself, isn't it?

*While he speaks, he has been straightening his improvised bed. He collects the blankets. He folds them carefully. Eva goes into the bathroom.*

I used to have a friend, down south in a sawmill where I was working for a while, who had a little refrain too. "I'm innocent," he used to say all the time. When he got up, at breakfast, on the job . . . persistently. It was an obsession that made a martyr of him. "I'm innocent! I'm innocent!" He drove us out of our minds! One day a few of us grabbed him and hung him up by his feet, so he wouldn't go on talking. No use! Even hanging upside down that way he kept on: "I'm innocent! . . . I'm innocent!" No one ever knew what he was innocent of! Simply, the poor man thought he was innocent of something, and that gave him strength to go on living! Curious things, refrains, aren't they? Sometimes they seem meaningless!

*Eva comes out of the bathroom, tying a ribbon in her combed hair.*

EVA. You woke up loquacious this morning, didn't you? You weren't, last night. I love to see you this way.

*The Hake shrugs his shoulders, lifts the corner of the rug, sweeps.*

THE HAKE. I already told you. The mimosa in bloom.

*Eva looks at him.*

EVA. Your face, too. You look different today.

THE HAKE (*smiles happily*). The bath . . .

*Eva sees that the straw figures are not there.*

EVA. And my figures?

THE HAKE. Mmh?

EVA. My straw figures? The burro's head? The rooster?

THE HAKE. I put them in the kitchen cabinet.

EVA (surprised). And why?

THE HAKE (indicating the flowers). I thought that these would look better.

EVA (doesn't know what to say). Oh, yes . . .

THE HAKE. It doesn't bother you, I suppose?

THE TWO IN CHORUS. No, why should it bother me?

*The Hake laughs, then Eva.*

EVA. Well, anyway, one of these days I was going to take them down. You just saved me the effort.

THE HAKE. Why? Didn't you like them?

EVA. Horrible.

THE HAKE. Why? I didn't think they were so bad.

EVA. Why did you take them down, then?

THE HAKE. Because I thought these would look better. That's all. Don't you agree?

EVA. Oh, yes.

THE HAKE. You shouldn't belittle your own work. Because . . . you made them yourself, didn't you?

EVA. In a weak moment.

THE HAKE. That's bad, that you expect so much of yourself.

*He leaps toward the kitchen.*

Those eggs must be well cooked by now!

*From the kitchen.*

By the way . . . the little bird . . . I gave him some seeds. Was that all right?

EVA (goes to the cage; plays with the canary). Yes, that's fine!

THE HAKE. I was going to give him some bread balls, but I remembered that he's a pet! That's a habit from feeding pigeons!

EVA. Bobby!

THE HAKE. Yes?

EVA. I heard voices last night.

THE HAKE. Voices?

EVA. Arguments! It seemed to me they were coming from the corridor! Did you hear anything?

THE HAKE. Arguments? No!

EVA. Like people arguing heatedly!

THE HAKE. I slept like a log! I couldn't hear a thing!

EVA. Strange! Then I heard something like a door being slammed! It must have been the neighbors. Some Italians who work in a cabaret. Sometimes they bring friends home with them in the middle of the night. They forget this is a building where people are . . .

THE HAKE. Quiet and unassuming.

EVA. What did you say?

THE HAKE. Quiet, unassuming people.

EVA. Well, yes . . . something like that! You always take the words out of my mouth!

THE HAKE. People who don't know how to act! I always say they should go live down by the river to learn how not to do it!

*He comes out of the kitchen with a tray on which are two eggs in egg cups, two cups, a teapot, a creamer, a napkin, a butter dish, and biscuits, all very tastefully arranged in the clean, neat manner of an upper-class hotel. He has doubled the towel over his arm to serve as his napkin. He puts everything down with great skill and elegance.*

EVA. Don't tell me you worked in a hotel, too?

THE HAKE (very efficient; with a bow). Comment dites-vous, madame?

*Eva laughs.*

*The Hake is now serious.*

*Préférez-vous le beurre salé ou sans sel, madame?*

*Eva laughs good-naturedly.*

EVA. Who are you, Bobby? Where did you learn to do that? You are diverse! Really diverse!

THE HAKE (*always serious*). One does what one can.

*Both begin to eat their eggs.*

EVA. Did you work in a hotel? Really?

THE HAKE. Mmh.

EVA. As a . . . waiter?

THE HAKE (*with his mouth full of egg*). As a thief.

*Eva laughs.*

It's true. It was a snobbish hotel; because of that I had to go in the back door so the public wouldn't see me, you understand?

*Eva understands.*

I had a contract as a washer. A dishwasher. It really wasn't a real contract. Just a slap on the back by the fat guy who ran the kitchen. A guy who liked to make himself important. (*He imitates.*) "All right, stupid, go stand over there by one of those sinks. Let's see if you can wash a plate!" He told me he'd give me a penny for every washed plate. He was tricky. He didn't tell me he'd deduct for all the ones I broke. In the evening when I went to pick up my money, I owed him two dollars.

EVA. You owed him?

THE HAKE. I owed him.

EVA. And the French?

THE HAKE. What about it?

EVA. Where did you learn it? There?

THE HAKE. I had to stay six days to pay my debt. Actually

I never did pay it, because every day that passed, my debt was bigger. You understand, don't you?

EVA. Yes.

THE HAKE. After a week I realized that wasn't the way to get ahead. That's when I decided to steal a calculating machine, and I lifted . . .

EVA. That seems fair to me.

THE HAKE. Do you think so? They didn't.

EVA. But . . . the French? Where did you learn it? In another hotel?

THE HAKE. Painting some incubators for a guy in Saint Andrews.

EVA. Was he French?

THE HAKE. No, Yugoslavian. Do you know I can make silhouettes with my hands?

EVA. Silhouettes?

THE HAKE. Yes. (*He spoons the bottom of his cup.*)  
Dogs . . . foxes . . .

EVA. Let's see.

*The Hake goes to close the curtains. He turns on the lamp that's on the table. He spreads the leaves of a magazine so it will stand on edge.*

THE HAKE. Look! What do you see?

*He throws the silhouette of a figure on the magazine.*

EVA. A dog!

THE HAKE. And now?

EVA. A rabbit!

THE HAKE. And this?

EVA. A deer? Let's see, let me do it!

*She tries.*

No. It doesn't come out. How do you do it?

THE HAKE. The forefinger up. The thumb like this.

EVA (*holds out her hands to him*). You do it for me!

*The Hake hesitates in taking her hands.*

Come on!

THE HAKE (*taking her fingers with care*). Like this. No. This finger's stuck out.

EVA. A deer! (*Enthusiastic.*) Come on . . . another!

*The Hake moves close to her. He holds her hands. This produces a brief, embarrassed paralysis of movement during which they look in each other's eyes. Then The Hake, confused, goes to the window and opens the curtains again. He turns off the lamp.*

Bobby, there's no reason to be timid with me. (*Laughs.*) I'm not going to eat you, don't you know. (*Agitated.*) After all, having spent the night here together, gives us a right to . . . a certain familiarity, don't you think?

THE HAKE. Don't play with me, please.

EVA. But, Bobby, it's ridiculous. Just because you brushed my hand . . . it doesn't matter to me.

THE HAKE. One ought to keep his distance.

EVA. What distance?

THE HAKE (*indicating the bathrobe*). It's because you see me in this, and washed, that you forget.

EVA. What have I forgotten?

*The Hake points to his clothes.*

Don't be ridiculous. Have I shown in any way that it matters to me?

THE HAKE. It can't be.

EVA. If you insist.

THE HAKE. I'll have to go right now.

EVA. I'm not saying you should go.

*The Hake rises and moves away from her.  
He turns his back.*

THE HAKE (suspiciously). Why?

EVA. Why, what?

THE HAKE. Why do you want me to stay?

EVA. I haven't said you should stay. I've only said you don't have to go.

THE HAKE (complaining). Why is it my fault, I say?

EVA. But Bobby . . .

THE HAKE. Why is it my fault I was born as I was? I didn't ask my mother to be born where I was!

*Eva rises.*

EVA. But, Bobby, for Heaven's sake!

THE HAKE. I'm a simple man, but I have my pride!

EVA. Of course you have! Who says you don't?

*She approaches him. To his back.*

Bobby! I'm not the woman I seem to be. I'm just a woman filled with a need for kindness! Perhaps it doesn't seem so, because I look so forceful, so . . . fulfilled. (Smiles.) But you see, I paint alone, laurel in bloom, Saturday afternoons in the Botanical Garden. Doesn't that seem . . . odd?

THE HAKE. I'll need new pants. If I stay here any longer, I'll need new pants. I can't put those back on.

*Eva looks at him without speaking.*

Because if I put those on, I can't stay here, isn't that right?

EVA. I hadn't thought about that.

THE HAKE (never looking at her). But now you think about it, isn't it true?

EVA. Well, perhaps . . .

THE HAKE (*his tone changes; he returns to his earlier manner of speaking, anxious, intense*). Because what if, suddenly, someone came in here? Yes, suddenly, some friend of yours came in here, what explanation could we give them? If they see me here, with this on (*indicating the bathrobe*), or those (*indicating his pants*), sitting on one of your chairs like a king in his castle? Don't you see? They might think I'm a beggar from down by the river that you picked up out of pity to prevent the poor devil's turning up his paws before God meant him to, offering him something . . . some warm soup or salami. . . . It wouldn't be very correct, do you think? Sad, instead, don't you think? A sad, hopeless situation that neither you, nor I, could stand for very long, don't you agree? Because that would mean that you know as well as I . . . how could we avoid it? That you as well as I knew the sad reality. It would establish a situation of moral misery between us that would be very difficult . . . to disguise. Don't you think so?

EVA. And do you think a new pair of pants will change all that?

THE HAKE. We could play at it a little, deceive ourselves. Don't you think so?

EVA. You'll have to overcome that . . . that obsession, Bobby. I've noticed how it makes you suffer.

*The Hake whirls around. A broad smile illuminates his face.*

THE HAKE. Blue pants with a white stripe. A white stripe an inch wide, no more, no less. That's the kind I've always dreamed of.

EVA. We'll look for something you like.

THE HAKE (*like a happy child*). Will you do it? Really? Will you go yourself from store to store, looking for what I ask?

EVA. Why not?

*The Hake takes her hands and pulls her up. He whirls her around.*

THE HAKE. You're an angel! You're an angel! An angel!



EVA. Oh, for Heaven's sake, Bobby!

*They stop.  
Eva is breathless.*

What I meant is I find it meaningless! Really meaningless, Bobby! I don't notice things like that!

THE HAKE (*laughing in amusement; teasing slyly*). Yes, yes, you notice!

EVA. No, really, no.

THE HAKE (*reprimands her with a finger*). Yes, you notice! You notice!

EVA. Why do you say that to me? Why are you laughing?

*The Hake laughs as if he were telling a funny and rather embarrassing story.*

THE HAKE. Yesterday evening, when you arrived here, a friend brought you in her car and you didn't want to let her come up!

EVA (*denying effusively*). No . . .

THE HAKE. Yes, yes! I saw the gestures she was making. As if she wanted to come up with you, but you told her, with signs, too, that you were fine . . . that you didn't need anything, or something like that! It was amusing, extremely amusing, to see how you were trying to think of something . . . how you cast about, almost desperately, for some explanation!

*Choked with laughter.*

Waving your arms like this! Gasping for air!

EVA. No, no. That wasn't the reason . . .

THE HAKE. Yes, yes! But don't get mad! I understand! I understand! If you only knew how well I understand!

*Suddenly becoming serious.*

What did you tell your friend?

EVA. Well, I told her that . . .

THE HAKE. When I have new pants, we'll be free from embarrassment, you see? We can say I'm your cousin.

A distant cousin who dropped in from the country, how does that seem? A cousin, or an uncle? Which seems better? More plausible?

*A pause.*

EVA. You're going to have to get that obsession out of your head, Bobby.

*The Hake drops his arms, discouraged.*

THE HAKE. Yes. Perhaps that comes from wandering around by the river so much, looking for things under the stones. From so much crawling around, looking for things, scratching for food. Finally, the world gets you right around the ankles. It's a little tiny world, the one you see, and in this tiny little world, we're the tiniest of all! Not even as high as a toad. You get a kind of subservient personality. Sub-something, anyway. (*He smiles again with an empty smile, radiant, meaningless.*) A "sub" personality . . . sub-normal . . . sub-ordinant . . . sub-jugated . . . sub-versive!

*He stands before her, smiling happily.*

A white stripe an inch wide. No more, no less. Will you buy them for me as I asked?

EVA (*worried*). I'll do what I can.

*The Hake kisses her hands.*

THE HAKE. You're an angel!

*Eva pours herself some coffee.*

EVA. If this means anything to you, Bobby, I should tell you that I've become very fond of you. In my opinion, you have a tremendous potential for becoming a . . . fulfilled man.

*As she says "fulfilled," The Hake starts to tremble again. Eva wants to help him, but he waves her away. He calms down again.*

I don't know what it is that torments you.

*The Hake picks up the papers and begins to make flowers again.*

Drink your coffee.

*Eva walks to the kitchen.*

This needs sugar.

*Suddenly a scream from the kitchen.*

What's this!

*She enters. She is carrying the straw rooster and burro. One is hanging grotesquely from each hand; their necks are broken.*

Why did you throw these into the trash can? And their necks . . . why did you break them?

THE HAKE. They didn't fit in the trash can.

EVA. But throw them away? You told me yourself you'd put them in the cabinet.

THE HAKE. They didn't fit there either. (*Innocently protesting.*) But you told me yourself they were horrible!

EVA. Yes, but . . .

THE HAKE. I'll make you one of paper! I swear that when you come back this evening I'll have a rooster and a burro made of paper for you! Mmh? What do you say? With strong, red feet, and a great golden comb! A strong powerful rooster! Mmh? Is that all right?

EVA (*doesn't know what to say*). Well, I . . .

THE HAKE (*with his broad smile; playful, vacant*). It won't bother you if I do it, will it?

THE TWO IN CHORUS. No, why should it bother me!

*The Hake laughs loudly. Eva enters in chorus. Both laugh with all their hearts; The Hake's, finally, with exaggeration, out of tune, drowning out Eva's laughter.*

*Curtain*

## Scene Four

Evening of the same day. The arrangement of all the pieces of furniture has all been changed. The canary cage, its door open, is empty. The shade of the floor lamp has been taken off. It serves now as a vase for three enormous paper flowers with wire stems. In addition, there are flowers hanging from the walls and from the lamp.

The Hake, his legs wrapped in a blanket of Scotch wool, a bottle of cognac at his side, is lounging in the big chair, watching television. One can see he has just washed his hair, because he has a towel wrapped around his head. He is apparently happy. The television entertains him enormously. The sound of shots from the screen, which cannot be seen. The shouting of Indians. Little by little The Hake becomes involved in the action. He imitates the movements he sees. He hides behind the chair. He shoots toward the set. He jumps on top of the chair. He shoots again. A bullet gets him. He "dies" ostentatiously in the middle of the living room floor.

He's lying there, sprawled on the floor, when the door opens and Eva enters. She is carrying several packages.

EVA. Bobby!

The Hake doesn't move.

Bobby! What's the matter?

*She drops the packages on the floor. She kneels next to him.*

What's the matter with you? (*She touches him.*) My God! (*She touches his face.*) Bobby. . . . (*She shakes him.*) Wake up! Bobby, for God's sake!

*She looks around desperately. She goes into the kitchen. She runs back with a glass of water. She gives him a drink while she holds his head. The Hake opens one eye.*

THE HAKE. Did you bring the pants?

EVA. Oh, God, Bobby! What did you do? You frightened me so!

THE HAKE. Blue? With white stripes?

*Eva hands him a package, which The Hake opens eagerly, ripping the paper.*

They're gray!

EVA. Yes. I couldn't find the ones you wanted.

THE HAKE (*injured*). But I asked you for blue ones!

EVA. I'm telling you. I couldn't find what you wanted.

THE HAKE (*screams*). Blue, with a white stripe! An inch wide! And you bring me gray! What do you want me to do with these?

EVA. I looked in all the stores, but . . .

THE HAKE. You didn't look enough.

EVA. Yes, I looked, Bobby. I looked, but . . .

THE HAKE. You didn't look. Yesterday I saw three pairs in different stores.

*He holds the pants up.*

What am I going to look like in these? What will Mario say to me when he sees me dressed like this? That I'm

one of those playboys from España Square, that's what he's going to say I look like. One of those playboys from the apartments in España Square, who aren't good for anything except to warm their women's beds! Playboys in skirts! Playboys with soft bellies! That's what he'll say I look like!

*He throws them away.*

I don't want them!

*Eva picks them up dejectedly. She wraps them up again.*

EVA. I didn't think it would matter so much.

THE HAKE. No, of course not. For a guy who goes around in rags, anything is good enough.

EVA. I wasn't thinking that when I did it.

*A long embarrassing pause. The Hake turns off the television.*

THE HAKE. Do you like the way I arranged the furniture?

EVA (*distraught*). Oh, yes . . . fine.

THE HAKE. Is it better this way?

EVA. Better, yes.

THE HAKE. And the flowers? Do you like them?

EVA. Pretty, yes.

THE HAKE. The canary got out.

*Eva turns toward the cage.*

EVA. Goldie! Oh, God! How did it happen?

THE HAKE (*in the middle of the room: the very picture of innocence*). I opened the door to give him some seeds, and zap! he got away!

EVA. And where is he?

THE HAKE. I don't know.

*Eva goes to the window and looks outside.*

It was when I opened the door to give him some seeds that he got away. He flew around the room a while; he went into the bedroom, into the kitchen, and then flew over my head again. I tried to catch him with a towel. I got a towel from the bathroom and tried to catch him. For a minute I thought I'd caught him. It was when he lighted on the frame of that picture. I stopped in front of him, waiting for the minute to throw the towel over him, but that's when I realized that he didn't want me to get him.

*Eva turns toward him.*

It was all up to me. I couldn't miss. It was a question of throwing the towel, and zap! he would have been mine. But that's when I realized he didn't want me to catch him. Something in his attitude, you understand?

EVA. So you let him get away?

THE HAKE. I don't know. It was just that for a minute, I couldn't do anything. I think that's when he started to fly again; he flew around the whole apartment and, finally, went out that window . . . toward the mimosa blossoms. It must be my fault. I think that bird never liked me. From the first day, he always looked at me out of the corner of his eye, a little suspicious. It must be that he realized, before I did, that there wasn't room enough for both of us here.

*His smile—that says nothing—returns.*

Little creatures have tremendous insight in these matters. It's lucky that he left first, because if not, suddenly, it could have been me . . .

*Eva disappears into the bedroom.*

Did you know I'd given him a nickname? "Corsair." A strange name for a canary, I know, but it's just that that name reminds me of something! Maybe that it's necessary to be very brave to be able to bear a cage! "Corsair." Poor little thing.

*He waits a while.*

Do you want me to go?

*Eva enters, putting on a robe over her dress. She can't help smiling at the appearance of The Hake standing in the middle of the room, his arms by his sides, wrapped up in the blanket, his head wrapped in the towel, his legs bare—guilty, abject, contrite.*

EVA. And why should I want you to go?

THE HAKE. Because of the bird. Ever since I've come I haven't done anything but cause confusion.

EVA. You're just a spoiled child, Bobby.

THE HAKE. To be so unpleasant to you when I refused the beautiful pants you brought me.

*Eva takes his hand.*

EVA. Come on, you big baby. I've been thinking we need to talk about something. Clear something up.

THE HAKE. After all your affection . . .

*Eva sits him beside her in the chair. She places a finger on his lips.*

EVA. What were you doing in the Botanical Garden, the day I was painting the laurel, spoiled child?

THE HAKE. Well . . . wandering around.

EVA. Come on, tell me the truth.

*The Hake maintains his distance from her.*

THE HAKE. You talk to me as if you've known me for a long time.

EVA. You can treat me the same way if you want. I won't break because of it, you know.

THE HAKE. There you go again, laughing at me.

EVA (*impatient*). Oh, Bobby, come on! Why don't you drop it? We're not going to spend a lifetime this way, you so sensitive, and I not knowing how to take you. I



know you're not what you seem or what you pretend to be. Some error, some slip "along life's road" (*She makes a gesture as if entertained at her own cliché.*) brought you where you find yourself now, but I know you aren't what you seem . . . or you don't seem to be what you are. . . . None of that matters to me; you see I don't even ask you. Can you accuse me of that? Of having asked you?

*The Hake shakes his head.*

No, isn't that true? Then why don't you be yourself? Hmm? Shall we talk as equal to equal?

THE HAKE. As equal to what?

EVA. Well, as equal to equal, as I said.

THE HAKE. And if I weren't what I seem to be, or I didn't seem to be what I am, we wouldn't be speaking like this, isn't that right? As equal to equal . . .

EVA. Well, maybe not.

THE HAKE. Why?

EVA. Because your sensitivity would be in the way, preventing it. (*She moves a little closer to him.*) Come on, silly, tell me . . . what were you doing in the Garden?

THE HAKE. Looking at the parrots.

EVA. No, really? What were you doing?

THE HAKE. Mario had sent me to pick up cigarette butts in front of the Orfeon kiosk, so we could grind up the tobacco and sell it at the Marquesa's brothel.

*Pause.*

EVA. So you don't want to confess, eh?

THE HAKE. Also Chancha, the deaf old woman who sells newspapers in front of the Congress, had asked me to pull some feathers out of the parrot's tail to make a decoration for her hat.

EVA. Yesterday, just after you arrived, you told me that you remembered me a year ago painting the blooming laurels in the Garden in my straw hat with a green rib-

bon. Unless you're terribly observant and have a very special memory, no one would believe that you'd remember those details so long, if it weren't for a very special reason.

THE HAKE. Special reason?

EVA. Special inclination.

THE HAKE. Special inclination?

*He is standing far away from her, his back turned.*

EVA. Oh, Bobby, don't be so . . . timid!

*The Hake rises.*

THE HAKE. It's just that it can't be!

EVA (*from her place*). Why?

THE HAKE. Where would all this lead?

EVA. Who cares? It's strange that you, with the life you lead, should worry about tomorrow. As if you had spent all your life looking ahead. I'll bet you've never worried about anything in your life. Why worry now? Am I worried, for example?

THE HAKE. It's different with you.

EVA. Why with me?

THE HAKE. Because you know what I don't know.

EVA. And what do I know?

THE HAKE. That I'm not what I seem or I don't seem to be what I am. On the other hand, I only know I am what I seem and not that I am not what I don't seem. In other words, you have your fantasy and I have only reality, which is much poorer, much sadder, much more disillusioning. . . . (*In a clipped voice.*) That's the advantage you have over me, although you tell me not to worry . . . what happens is that one worries so much about worrying that in the end he doesn't worry any more about worrying.

EVA. Bobby, Bobby, turn around!

*The Hake turns. He doesn't look at her, however.*

If you were only the poor vagabond you seem to be, we wouldn't even be able to have this conversation, don't you see? It would all have been over between us a long time ago. Yesterday perhaps. After I gave you your warm soup, I would have sent you away, because it's certain you would have ended up . . . boring me. There's nothing more boring than the conversation of the poor when they're complaining. Don't you agree?

*The Hake thinks so. He nods his head, looking at the floor. Eva approaches him and takes his arm.*

From the first moment I saw you, I knew who you were. I understand that your shyness must be a consequence of the bad treatment you've had from life. Things that have happened to you have made you pull into your shell. I want you to believe that I'm completely sincere when I tell you that doesn't matter to me. I place no false barriers between us, do you understand?

*The Hake understands.*

Do you believe I'm your friend, Bobby?

*The Hake believes.*

Then . . . ?

*Eva waits.*

THE HAKE. Then we'll have to change the furniture here.

EVA (surprised). The furniture? Why?

THE HAKE. I don't like it.

EVA. You don't like it?

THE HAKE. That's what I said.

EVA. Well . . . (Doesn't know what to say.) What do we . . . ?

THE HAKE. It has no class.

EVA. Class?

THE HAKE. Style. It has no style. (*With irritation.*) Trash you find by the thousands in any second-class junk store! Just looking at it makes me want to scream! It has no imagination, no fantasy, no dream of any kind!

*Eva is stunned. The Hake whirls toward her.*

Let's see! How much time did you spend choosing it?

EVA. Well, I . . .

THE HAKE. Not five minutes, I'll bet! You went in the store like someone going in to buy some aspirin and you pointed to the first piece of junk that met your eyes, I'll bet! Anything that would serve to throw your body on and fall asleep! Well, you're mistaken! You need to be a poet to choose furniture and give it the tone it deserves! All the nerve cells that decide taste must be aroused when the moment comes to decide! You're like that crazy old Fabian from the other side of the bay who'll set his ass down on anything he finds . . . an old paraffin tin . . . a rickety old suitcase . . . his shoes . . . on the chest of the old syphilitic Sandilla who bums around with him stealing railroad ties, anything at all. . . . As if one could resolve the problem that way! Choosing furniture is a liturgical act!

*His excitement increases as he acts out what he has been describing. His concentration absorbs him completely. He concludes as if debating with another being that is within himself, as if arguing with someone whom he should convince.*

You have to raise the chair skirt and see if the framework is made of poplar or of mahogany, because there is always some wretch who wants to trade you a cat for a hare and pass off poplar for mahogany, and that wouldn't be good, because your visitors might notice! Then, it's also important that all the nails be in place! All the nails, or rather all the glue, because it could be that it isn't satin fringe but only tufts of ordinary cloth some son-of-a-bitch wants to palm off! And it's also important,

very important, of *primary* importance, to concern yourself with the form, the color, the design, whether it's brocade or velvet, whether the style today is an oblong silhouette or square design, whether the pegs are concave or convex, whether the sons-of-bitches have put in nails—nails, and not screws! Because when visitors sit down they shouldn't simply fall into a chair, but instead, when they bend their knees they should encounter . . . that's it, they should encounter the anatomy of a chair adjusted to their rumps. All of that should be taken into account! All of that should be considered with the greatest care! Because all of it is of maximum importance! Of primary importance! Of the most primary importance. (*He concludes, exhausted.*) You must put life into it, life . . . if necessary . . . that's what that stupid Fabian can't understand! (*Pause.*) We have to change this furniture. We owe it to our visitors.

EVA. Well, we'll change it. You choose. Is that all right with you?

THE HAKE. When?

EVA. Tomorrow?

THE HAKE. I won't be here tomorrow.

EVA. Don't you understand, silly, that starting from today you'll be here tomorrow and all the days you want to?

THE HAKE. We'll have to go out.

EVA. For what?

THE HAKE. To choose the furniture.

EVA. Well, what about it? We'll go out, then.

THE HAKE. In what clothes?

EVA. I'll buy you a suit.

THE HAKE. Gray.

EVA. I thought you wanted blue with white stripes.

THE HAKE. That's for the pants. The suit I want gray. Gray with little white flecks, hardly visible. Better invisible than visible . . . better . . .

EVA. Whatever you say. Is that all right with you?

*The Hake looks at her out of the corner of his eye. Distrustful. Icy.*

THE HAKE. No, not unless you tell me what it will be like?

EVA. How *what* will be like?

THE HAKE. Walking through the streets.

EVA. I don't understand.

THE HAKE. Will I walk in front of you or behind you?

EVA. There you go again. Beside me, if you want to.

THE HAKE. How far away? A foot? Two? Have you thought about it? And what will we tell the store owner?

*Eva looks at him. She does not answer.*

Because there are suspicious types, tremendously suspicious. They see rags and they imagine a world of things. Just a simple glance at some rags awakens a whole mythological fantasy.

*He turns toward Eva.*

Do you understand what I mean? We have to be extremely careful. (*His face completely blank.*) Do you think it would be a good idea if we say I play . . . tennis?

EVA. Tennis? Why that?

THE HAKE. Doesn't your husband play tennis?

EVA. Yes. How did you know?

THE HAKE (*points toward the bedroom*). The pants and the racket there in the closet.

EVA. Curious, hmm?

THE HAKE. Do you think I could pass?

EVA. You could pass for anything at all!

*The Hake's blank smile.*

THE HAKE. Even for a gigolo, hmm?

EVA. Tonight you'll sleep here in the chair, but I won't lock my bedroom door. I no longer distrust you, you see?

*The Hake takes her hands.*

If you feel lonely, don't hesitate to call me. I sleep very lightly.

*Very close to him.*

Unless you're not attracted by ladies over forty who paint out of desperation, or for nostalgia's sake keep the clothes of a man who left his nest centuries ago. A woman alone who doesn't even know how to buy the right kind of furniture.

THE HAKE (*rigid again*). Will I have to . . . take a bath again?

*Eva leans her head on his chest.*

EVA. Oh, Bobby! Give up! Relax. (*After a while.*) Resting my head on your chest is like resting it on a rock. What has life done to you to make you like this?

THE HAKE. *Comment dites-vous, madame?*

EVA (*looks at him; kisses his cheek*). Oh, my love!

*The Hake looks straight ahead. He is a rock. A sphinx.*

THE HAKE. Yes. It is of the greatest importance, of absolutely primary importance, to choose appropriate words to say what one wishes to say. It involves a complete process of selection carefully prearranged by the spirit. A process that has nothing to do with one's own will. The fundamental thing is to believe in the beauty of one's own expression, since without the contribution of one's delivery, words, thrown out by pure whim, acquire a false dimension in which not even one's self, and certainly not others, can find anything that evokes even a lie. The important thing, then, is to say what one wants to say without saying it, so that others contribute the entire weight of their own . . . deception. Only this way may one be happy.

EVA. Oh, God!

*The Hake begins to make little figures with his hands that he projects upon the front wall.*

THE HAKE. A rabbit, see? An owl. A child. A frightened child. (He looks at her.) Do you have a hatchet?

EVA. Yes.

THE HAKE. And a saw? And a hammer?

EVA. Yes.

THE HAKE. Give them to me. Tonight I'll make the kind of furniture I like.

EVA. They're in the kitchen.

*Eva goes into the kitchen. A scream.*

What's this! What happened to Goldie!

*She comes in with the dead canary hanging from her hand.*

Who did this to him?

THE HAKE (*disconsolate; very rapidly, like a child caught doing something wrong*). I told you! I wanted to catch him, but he wouldn't let me. From the beginning he took a dislike to me! From the first glance, he looked at me out of the corner of his eye! I followed him all over the room! I begged him, I implored him to let me catch him, but he insisted on flying! He didn't want to hear my pleas. . . . (*Pause.*) When finally he couldn't fly any more, he was too worn out to understand the meaning of my pleas. He expired without giving me the opportunity to explain to him. (*Another pause.*) I could have loved that little bird. (*Sobs.*) I could have really loved him if he had only let me.

*He looks at Eva.*

Poor Goldie. Poor son-of-a-bitch.

*Curtain*



## Scene Five

*The following morning. The radio is playing "The Waltz of the Dragon-Flies." The Hake, in tennis clothes, is kneeling in the middle of the living room, nailing together a rustic chair, or rather what seems to be a chair, from the remains of a torn-up chair. Of the original chair all that remains is a scattered pile of cotton and feathers, springs and ripped cloth. The wood frame, too, has been violently torn apart as if a bird of prey had seized upon it.*

*The pictures are no longer there. In their places hang pages from newspapers.*

*There are more paper flowers scattered around. The flowers are larger now, more carelessly made. Simulacrums of flowers, as if made from whole pages of wadded newspaper, attached in the center to wire stems. The Hake hums happily to the music as he works.*

*After a while Eva appears, in her bathrobe, in the doorway. For a moment she watches The Hake working, then . . .*

EVA. I heard you working all night long. It sounded as if a big rat had been trapped in my apartment.

*She looks at the room.*

You can't say you haven't been busy.

THE HAKE. Do you like it?

EVA. Good work.

THE HAKE. The fever got me. When I get the fever it's like seeing double. I see one thing to do, and then another to be done. When I attack one, there's already another asking me to persist, and so on. . . . Mario has never given me credit for being a carpenter.

EVA. He ought to come see now.

THE HAKE. He says I'm good for taking things apart . . . breaking them, but as for carpentry, real carpentry . . . doing it really right, you understand?

EVA. Yes.

THE HAKE. He says I'm no good. "You're a vandal," he tells me. He's continually telling me that. Perhaps because he's always seen me do just this: rebuilding scattered pieces, putting scraps together. Don't you think?

*Eva has gone to sit down in the only remaining chair.*

EVA. It must be because of that.

THE HAKE. That's the bad thing about Mario. He only has the imagination about a posteriori things. He doesn't have any imagination about a priori things. I think he ought to see me doing this now, don't you think?

EVA. That's what I told you.

THE HAKE. That would shut his big yap. Don't you think?

*He doesn't wait for an answer. He holds on high, in triumph, the chair he has just finished.*

Louis XV! What do you think? Or Louis XVI perhaps?

EVA. Restoration.

*He finds the idea amusing. He laughs.*

THE HAKE. Restoration, yes! That's funny, you know? Restoration. I hadn't thought about that. (*Still laughing.*) That's what I like about you, you know? You have a sense of humor. From the first moment I stuck my dirty paws into your kingdom. I come in here and I break all your furniture . . . I let your canary loose . . .

I turn your closets inside out . . . I fill your room with horrible paper flowers and you're still . . . complacent! Always smiling!

EVA. So? What else is there for me to do?

THE HAKE. Yes. The force of circumstances?

EVA. Of destiny.

THE HAKE (*abruptly serious*). Destiny is cirrhosis of the liver or a lung punctured by a stupid life squandered in drunkenness. Don't confuse it with anything else. I'm here strictly because of some warm soup. Don't forget it.

*He shows her again the chair on which he has been working.*

Do you like it now?

*Eva goes to the radio and turns it off.*

EVA. Bobby . . . I left the door open last night. You didn't come in. (*The Hake concentrates on his work.*) I waited for you. (*Pause; uncertain smile.*) Since you didn't come in, you couldn't know that I even put on a special nightgown last night. The nightgown I wore my first night of . . . love. (*She laughs.*) Afterwards, my husband made me wear it on our anniversaries. A long gown, celestial blue, with two rosettes here on the yoke. A gown that still has the odor of the pines at Saint Stephens. My husband thought so anyway. That it retained the odor of our first night under the pines at Saint Stephens . . . with the waves of the sea breaking nearby . . . almost at our feet . . . and the moon . . . the eternal moon. (*Smiles.*) An intrusive, friendly moon, witnessing our . . . passion.

*She waits.*

Would you believe it, Bobby? That I would be capable of that? Of a night of passion beneath the pines, with only the moon as witness, and the blue nightgown as a pillow?

*She presses her hand to her forehead.*

It doesn't seem possible to you, does it? That's what makes you so unjust, that you think that it isn't pos-

sible . . . or that it isn't possible any more. Because you do think that it isn't possible, don't you?

*The Hake works.*

Isn't that right? You think that it's no longer possible?

*A vague evasive gesture; and an uncertain smile; brief dizziness.*

That a woman like me, alone, oh God! . . . could strip herself of her prudery and open her arms to love, with only the aroma of the pines as witness . . . and the intrusive moon . . .

*She looks at him.*

Answer me. You don't even hear what I'm saying! Answer me! Do you think it's possible?

*The Hake has finished his chair. He holds it in the air. He shakes it in triumph.*

THE HAKE. I finished it! I finished it! Now I'd like to invite Mario to come see it! That would shut the old pessimist's trap! Firm structure, well assembled! Strong back, as ordered! Firmness in the line! Solid! Resistant! Do you like it?

EVA. Yes. I like it.

THE HAKE. A lie! You say it for some secret motive locked up in that head of yours. You say it out of compassion! I know the symptoms of the voice. I know each inflection of the voice when somebody speaks out of compassion. It's the voice of one who lowers his hand to give something, which is distinct from the voice of someone who raises his hand to receive something. Let's hear you say, "I like your chair."

EVA. I like your chair.

*The Hake gives a cry of triumph.*

THE HAKE. There, that's it! You see? That inflection in the voice! That uncertain tremble! That painful quiver! YOU HAVE COMPASSION FOR ME!

*The Hake shakes the chair. He looks at it with disgust.*

This chair is horrible. Bad taste. Badly put together. Badly structured. Badly conceived. The risers don't fit. The back's coming apart.

*He begins to tear it apart.*

The pieces don't fit. You can see the hand that made it had no class.

*With every word a piece of the chair is torn off.*

No refinement, stubby, primitive, ordinary, shiftless, dumb, of a concept . . . made . . . by a man . . . of the . . . PEOPLE!

*He shatters on the floor the few pieces that remain.*

It was a chair that deserved to sit near a campfire of filthy trash by the shore of a river, not in a beautiful apartment on España Square.

*He rests, finally.*

The end of a dream. (*Looks at Eva.*) You should have told me, though.

EVA (*with the greatest naturalness possible*). Why should I tell you something I don't feel?

THE HAKE. Because this establishes an abyss between you and me, you understand? An abyss as wide as the distance around the world.

*Declamatory, impersonal, once again sententious. Light.*

Pity is the broken, hanging bridge that joins wrath to a full belly!

*He smiles a vacant smile that covers his whole face.*

Did you like that?

EVA. Oh, God, Bobby! How shall I take you?

*The Hake looks at her, desolated.*

I swear I don't know. As soon as you arrived I opened the door of my house to you; I received you in it with all my affection. I tried to give you everything I have, but you persist in . . . ignoring me.

*The Hake stands in the middle of the room. As Eva speaks, everything in him takes on a desolate air, like a guilty child receiving a reprimand for something he's done, that he cannot now repair.*

I speak to you with affection and you respond with irony. I want to be sincere with you and you reject me, saying that I'm lying. I do everything possible to erase between us any sign that recalls your . . . poverty, but you insist on recalling it.

*The Hake begins to tremble. He is a child without shelter who is cold, who is afraid. The smallest expression, diminished and sad, of the child of the ruins, hungry, abandoned, frozen.*

I'm not the rich, cruel, and frivolous woman you think you see in me. I am a poor lonely woman, very lonely . . . hungry for friendship and affection. I offer you my love, Bobby.

*She walks toward him and takes his face. His whole body shivers. A trembling that racks him, which he cannot control.*

Oh, my love, be calm, be calm! I am here with you. Your woman is here with you and she's going to help you! Your woman is here with you and she's going to give you all the warmth you've been denied.

*The Hake looks before him into the emptiness.*

Bobby! Bobby! Look at me! I'm here! I love you! Do you hear me? I love you, Bobby, look at me! Bobby . . .

*She shakes him.*

Look at me! For the love of God, look at me!

*She shakes him violently.*

I'm speaking to you! Listen to me!

*Still shaking him.*

Listen to me, you damned fool! Look at me!

*Nothing. She falls at his feet. Slowly The Hake ceases trembling. A long pause. The "Waltz of the Dragon-Flies" sounds in the emptiness.*

THE HAKE (after the pause). You still haven't told me how I look in the tennis outfit.

*He says it without looking at her, his cold eyes staring into the emptiness straight ahead of him. Eva screams.*

EVA. Oh! You don't want me to help you! Your arrogance, your pride, is so great you don't want me to help you!

*She rises, wrathful.*

So nobody can get near your precious body, huh? Well, I'm going to tell you what you look like in that outfit!

*She moves away from him. She picks up the paper flowers and other paper objects and throws them at him as she screams.*

Do you know what you look like? A puppet! A ridiculous, deformed puppet! You don't even have any chest! You don't have any shoulders! You don't have the carriage to wear an outfit like that! How dare you put it on!

*She awaits his reaction, which doesn't come.*

Do you know what you have to have to walk around in something like that? You have to have smooth muscles! Long, smooth, springy muscles! Sure and decisive movements! Not muscles like yours, twisted and starved, that are only fit for scarecrows!

*She waits another moment. She moves closer to him. In his face.*

You don't have shoulders! You have a hump!

*She drops sobbing at his feet, her voice barely discernible.*

You don't have muscles . . . you have . . . lumps!

THE HAKE (*distant; very lightly; as if reciting*). And then out of the thicket flew a little bird. He flew for an instant above the green foliage . . .

EVA. Oh . . .

THE HAKE. Over the scenery bathed in light! Fly, little Corsair, I told him . . .

*Eva covers her ears.*

Fly, little bird!

*The Hake looks at her with smiling compassion. He sits down beside her. He is sententious.*

Love is a truce between periods of exhaustion. Love is broken teeth in a hungry mouth. What do you say? Did you like it!

EVA (*looks at him through tearful eyes*). Go away.

*The Hake looks at her, perplexed.*

THE HAKE (*genuinely desolate*). Are you throwing me out?

EVA. Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

THE HAKE. And what am I going to do?

EVA. It doesn't matter to me! Get out!

THE HAKE. I told Mario . . . I told him: these rich people give up in a hurry. At the first opposition they throw the whole thing over. (*Laughs.*) They forget themselves in a good symphony or by giving up something for Lent.

*He looks at her.*



Do you know what I saw a monkey in a circus do once? That monkey was trying to reach his mate, but he couldn't because they had put them in two separate cages and there were bars between them. It must have been about one o'clock in the afternoon when I saw him try to reach her for the first time. That night he hadn't succeeded, but he was still trying. His chest was all bloody and his teeth were broken from the iron bars, but still he kept trying. It was the following day that he succeeded in getting close to her, when they carried the female monkey to his burial. Sad, isn't it?

*He wants to talk. He sits down on the floor at Eva's feet, crossing his legs in the position of a Hindu.*

That is, naturally, always considering that love still exists. Saint Simon, the fool of Constitution Bridge, says that it doesn't. Actually, he doesn't even say that any more. One can only deduce it, given his . . . peculiar attitude. Do you know what he does, or what he doesn't do? He sits there night and day, on the railing of the bridge, watching the water go by. If anyone speaks to him: nothing. If anyone pokes him: nothing. If anyone shouts at him: (*He shouts.*) Ahhhhhh! Nothing! It's just that nothing interests him any more. He's arrived at a state of complete renunciation of life, where not even struggle is possible any longer. They say that one day a dove made a nest in his hat and he wasn't even aware of it. It's a legend, naturally, but it illustrates the situation, don't you think? Don't you think it illustrates it?

EVA. Didn't you hear what I asked you?

THE HAKE. What?

EVA. That you leave?

THE HAKE. Do you believe that? That we've arrived at the point of spiritual starvation where not even struggle is possible?

*Eva rises to her feet. She screams and flees toward the bedroom. She locks herself in. The Hake watches her flee, half-*

way between stupefaction and amusement.

Do you believe that, Corsair? That we've arrived at a point of lack of love where love is no longer possible?

*He approaches the cage. He talks to it, as he hits it, amuses himself. The cage almost hits the ceiling. The blows grow more violent as he speaks as in an interview; making the clichés ridiculous.*

“Do you believe that, Mr. Happy?” . . . “That the human soul, deprived of all consolation, finds itself in a lamentable stage of spiritual prostration, where not even mutual confidence is possible?” “Do you believe it, Miss Smile?”

*A violent blow.*

Do you believe it, you fruity bird? Umm? What do you say? Do you believe it, you son-of-a-bitching bird? Don't you think that flying around the room that way without even saying goodbye was really a fruity thing to do, you pig of a bird? Umm? What do you say? What do you say, you shit? (Screams.) Speak, you queer! SPEAK!

*The cage shatters against the wall.*

*Curtain*

## Scene Six

*The night of the same day.*

*Nothing of the original décor remains in the room.*

*Everything is turned upside down.*

*There are no longer any curtains. In their place hang men's pants.*

*From corner to corner are draped garlands made from men's shirts tied together by the sleeves, interwoven with others made of women's underwear.*

*Furniture has been constructed from pieces of the original furniture tied together with strips of wool jackets, torn blankets, and spreads.*

*The lamps that were hanging are now on the floor. Those that were on the floor are hanging.*

*The walls are covered with childish figures and drawings, made with burnt cork; "the cat," "the bad man," "the hand," etc. There are also sayings: "I am good" . . . "Christ is King" . . . "God is at my right hand" . . . "Long live me!"*

*In essence, nothing is in its rightful place. A cyclone has passed through the room.*

*The only things that retain any appearance of premeditated arrangement are the paper flowers. Many new large paper flowers hang in profuse garlands from the walls and are distributed here and there on the floor.*

*Eva, standing in the midst of the dis-*

*order, is allowing herself to serve as model for a bridal gown, which The Hake is fitting to her body with careful solicitude.*

THE HAKE (*pinning; making pleats*). Do you see? You see that with a little hope, a little good will, this was worth digging into the old trunk for? It's a little tight, it's true, . . . a little wrinkled, but we must concede that you never . . . suspected that sometime you would have "a second chance," umm?

*He moves away, looking at his work.*

Or was it for a first time that never was? Umm?

*He adjusts a pleat.*

There you are! That's it! A little tight through the hips, perhaps. The fault of too much starch, or the years . . . or carelessness, but it passes the test, doesn't it?

*He adjusts another pleat. He is the tailor who speaks to his client, intimately, suggestively.*

We oughtn't to have put it so far down in the trunk. I understand: because of a passing streetcar, a hand waving suggestively as it moves out of sight, or a word that was left unsaid, or all, all, all the imagination now passed under the bridge, we condemned it to the depths of the trunk, but what about the bells? The little bells? And the laughter at the entrance of the church? And the furtive kiss on the cheek? "Goodbye, Mary, I hope you'll be very happy!" "Good luck!" Doesn't that count, too? We shouldn't be so harsh with time. Objects, too, have a right to take revenge. We shouldn't expect that everything will take its just place, if we don't help it a little, don't you agree?

*He moves away, he approaches again. Something about the total appearance displeases him. He rips one side of the dress.*

Perhaps it's a question of ripping the cloth a little, in order to see the flesh.

*He tears off a piece of the cretonne from the chair by his feet, and with it patches a piece of the torn dress. He smiles.*

Sweet little brides! I've observed them! Crouched under the crepe myrtle in the park opposite the church; I've seen them, I've watched them. Not that I had any twisted feeling, like envy or anything like that! No! Why should I, when I had enough paper and scissors at hand?

*He tears another piece of the dress and patches it with another strip of cretonne cloth.*

They come walking through the high grass, their feet scarcely touching the ground, as if they were floating above the spikes of rye grass . . . they come shimmering over the damp meadows . . . cadenced steps . . . radiant . . . in smooth white undulations, moving sinuously among the trunks of the oaks . . . straight toward the steps radiant in the sun . . . straight toward the gloved hand!

*He speaks into her ear.*

And there, at the same moment, before the lascivious glances of all the horrible dwarfs hidden behind the brick walls, hidden under the shadowy atrium, I have seen them . . . I have seen them!

*He chokes. Trembles.*

I have seen them! Open . . . ! The petals of their bodies! And offer . . . imagine! Offer! (*He shouts.*) Offer! (*He calms himself.*) . . . Their virgin corollas to the consummation of love.

*A choked cry.*

Oh, God!

*He controls himself. He regains his festive tone. He rips a sleeve. He replaces it with another sleeve made from a scrap of paper.*

There are some naturally who have a different version of the affair, Fabian, for example. One day I was with him under the crepe myrtle. He had lifted some tinned smoked oysters, and we were preparing to enjoy them . . .

*He slashes the hem of the skirt with the scissors.*

I should warn you that Fabian has an especially noisy way of moving his mouth when he eats, a manner like this, holding his food in his mouth . . . as if he were afraid it would get to his intestines too fast, or that he might finish too soon, or that it might end too soon the pleasure of his de-gus-ta-tion! The fact is that I don't know if it was his way of chewing, I mean, or my particular state of tension that day, or the stone under my elbow—because a stone had got under my elbow, a damned stone under my elbow! The fact is I don't know if it was that way of his of chewing, like I said, or the stone, or my particular state of tension . . . the fact is that Fabian irritates me! He drives me to madness, I must confess! I don't know if it were that, I say, or the other . . . the insolence of his type, you understand me? His brutal, his bestial insensitivity, or his way of chewing, or the stone, or my particular state of tension. The fact is that, looking toward the church, I suddenly say, "Look!" And he answers me, "Those bitches! Those bitches." Imagine. I looked at his puss and I saw the oil of the smoked oysters dribbling from the corners of his mouth . . . and his bloodshot eyes, you understand me? And his noisy, disagreeable, embarrassing, repugnant way of chewing! The fact is that *something* produced in me, you understand me, a particular state of uncontrollable tension . . . and I grabbed the other tin of oysters that was open, but not eaten, you understand me . . . ? And I pushed it . . . I ground it . . . I shoved it into his filthy puss!

*The preceding in screams; he calms himself. Now angelical.*

In that moment the church bells rang, and I felt that I had done something that had to be done, you understand? That I had fulfilled my duty! Because guys like

Fabian don't know, can't imagine, can't conceive . . .  
the scope . . . the complete miracle signified by the-  
sur-ren-der-of-one's-vir-gi-ni-ty!

*Accentuating the words with false pro-  
nunciation, he completely vitiates the  
meaning.*

THE . . . MOST . . . SPLEN-DID . . . OFFERING  
OF LOVE!

*He is amused by his own idea.*

Love is a broken bridge with a broken tooth with a  
broken crank that whirls beyond its four confines  
breaking heads! Love is a dog with three feet! A tramp  
with only one hand and two bananas.

*He has torn most of the skirt and is re-  
placing it with pieces of the curtain and  
pieces of his own shirt he has torn into  
strips. He looks at her.*

What's the matter with you? Are you shivering?

*Eva shivers, with the same trembling as  
The Hake.*

Are you cold? Are you hot? What is it?

*Pause. He waits.*

Do you want to go for a stroll on the beach with the  
happy bridegroom? Gathering shells? Hand in hand,  
gathering sand dollars? Discussing the number, and the  
sex, and the number, and the names, and the number,  
and the sex, of the children that the splendid future will  
give you? Discussing the arrangement of the furniture  
. . . of the cretonne . . . of the colors . . . of the "No  
it's better here," "No it's better there," of the sizes . . .  
of the cretonne . . . of the furniture . . . (*His voice is  
growing louder, faster.*) of the positions of the cretonnes!  
Of the sizes! Of the numbers, of the children, of the  
furniture . . . of the sizes . . . of the children? Spea-king-  
of-love! Love with an L, an O, an E, an X, a U, a  
tongue, everything, with strength, without strength!

The possibilities . . . of being! Of achieving! Of fleeing!  
Of love! Of solitude! Of death! With a tongue! Arriving!  
Arriving! Arriving!

*He screams.*

ARRIVING! ARRIVING! AR . . RI . . VING!

*He pants.*

Is that it? Is that the secret the refrigerator hides?

*Of the original bride's dress, only the veil remains. The rest is a ragbag.*

That's funny. Now we're two little brothers.

*He rips off the rest of his shirt. He covers his head with a paper rosette in the manner of a crown from which hang long strips of paper that reach to his waist. He takes a board from a piece of furniture in the manner of a lance and brandishes it.*

I am Ukelele, the Simba Warrior!

*He circles around Eva, making grotesque contortions and amusing grimaces.*

Uku! Azahanba! Humba! Tekeke! Takamba! Tumba!

*He looks at her as a curious orang-utan might regard his prey, with simian curiosity. He puts his face right up to hers.*

*Comment allez-vous, madame? Did you say something?*

EVA (with an effort). I . . .

THE HAKE. Yes?

EVA. I . . .

THE HAKE. Yes?

EVA. I only . . .

THE HAKE. You only, yes . . . ? You already said that.  
You only . . .



EVA. I only . . .

THE HAKE. Yes?

*Eva tries to speak, but can't. Once or twice she makes an effort that frustrates her, then gives up. A pause.*

You only wanted to love me and for me to love you. Is that it?

*Eva nods weakly.*

Yes. But it's too late for that. Ukelele has his guts in his hands and now he doesn't know what to do with them.

*He places one of the big paper flowers in the bodice of Eva's dress. It is so large it completely covers her face. He takes her arm in his.*

Shall we go?

*Someone is knocking at the door.*

Yes! (He yells.) We're coming.

*He looks at Eva with solicitude, like a very considerate sweetheart.*

Are you ready?

*His expression changes suddenly to the one we are accustomed to seeing. Sententious. Vacant.*

As you see, it is of the greatest importance to have understood the game. To believe in each other. To confide mutually. To renounce your own identity, to the benefit of the identity of the other, until your own identity and the identity of the other, and your own identity . . . own . . . identity . . . of the other . . . identity . . . own . . . don't you think so?

*Eva weakly agrees.*

*Mendelssohn's wedding march. Their march begins. "Ukelele," very stiff, pathetic almost in his dignity, nude, covered*

*only in rags; on his head is a crown of shredded paper. Eva by his side, her arm in his, absent, lost, beneath the immensity of her paper flower. The only real thing about her is the beautiful veil.*

Before we arrive there, I think I should inform you about the geography of the river, of the dangers it offers. There are, out there, some dangerous depths, where on nights of the full moon—when the river flows swollen with broken furniture—many people, falling, have broken their necks.

*They exit. In the room now, total disorder reigns. Everything is broken, undone. There remains in it only the new beauty. The dark, enormous, ragged paper flowers.*

Curtain





DUE	RETURNED
	DEC 2 1973
APR 4 1974	DEC 1 1973
JAN 06 '84 MU	SEP 08 '83 MU
SEP 0 6 1991	SEP 1 0 1991
JAN 1 6 1992	
MAY 2 7 1992	
OCT 6 1992	
FEB 1 4 1993	DEC 0 3 1992
JAN 2 8 1995 MU	
MAY 9 2 1995 MU	APR 1 7 1995 MU
AUG 2 3 1995	
SEP 2 9 1995	SEP 0 8 1995
JAN 2 7 2006	JAN 1 8 2007
AUG 1 0 2007 MU	AUG 1 4 2007 MU
MU DEC 1 8 2012	

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