

GELLU NAUM

THE TAUS WATCH REPAIR SHOP

A Statistical Comedy in Two Acts

Translated by Sasha Vlad and Allan Graubard

Characters

TAUS
KLAUS
MAUS
PAPUS
MELANIE
THE ANGEL
MRS. BURMA

Beside the above, there appear:

THE DIVER COCLES and HIS GHOST, played, as needed, by Papus and The Angel

MRS. KLAUS, who is actually Klaus

A PRIEST, who is Taus

ATLAS, played by Papus

THE CENTAUR, played by Maus

TWO SALTIMBANQUES, played by Melanie and Mrs. Burma

A WAITRESS and A VEILED PASSERBY, played by Mrs. Burma

AN OLD WOMAN and A YOUNG GIRL, played by The Angel.

THE PROFANE ACT

The interior of Taus Watch Repair shop; toward the back at the same level are two smaller stages with curtains drawn. Maus sits on a chair near the footlights. A clock strikes eight o'clock. Taus enters. He adjusts a clock then notices Maus.

TAUS: Maus! Have you been here long?

MAUS: Two years.

TAUS: Two years. Is there anything I can do for you?

MAUS: No... I wanted to say goodbye. I'm leaving for New Zealand. I found a job as a diver.

(The doorbell rings.)

TAUS: Excuse me.

(Klaus enters the shop.)

KLAUS: Good morning.

TAUS: Good morning. What can I do for you?

KLAUS: I'm looking for Mr. Taus, the watchmaker.

TAUS: That's me.

KLAUS: Are you sure?

TAUS: As sure as anyone.

KLAUS: You were recommended...

TAUS: An honor...

KLAUS: Naturally. I am Mr... I forgot my name!

TAUS: It happens...

KLAUS: Yes, but I'm quite... well known.

TAUS: Good for you... should I call you "sir."

KLAUS: That's too... short...

TAUS: As you wish.

KLAUS: Wait. I have a card. *(He hands him a business card)*

TAUS: *(examining the watch)* Is it fast?

KLAUS: No.

TAUS: Is it slow?

KLAUS: No. *(sad)* It's accurate.

TAUS: I could make it go a little faster or a little slower.

KLAUS: Same thing.

TAUS: Of course... It's a simple adjustment. You can do it yourself.

KLAUS: Oh, no!

TAUS: You're right. That's completely different...

KLAUS: Completely different...

TAUS: Then I'll make it go slower. It's more relaxing. Slower is more relaxing.

KLAUS: Could you make it go faster and slower?

TAUS: That could be fun.

KLAUS: Or make it stop, for good?
TAUS: Without noticing...
KLAUS: Or make it go square?
TAUS: Watches go round.
KLAUS: Then make it go round with a square time.
TAUS: The corners can be a problem.
KLAUS: And put initials on the dial.
TAUS: Or a mark.
KLAUS: I want my initials.
TAUS: You say "initials," I say "mark" -- they're the same thing.

(Papus enters and goes to them.)

TAUS: *(to Papus)* Sir?
PAPUS: *(bowing)* Papus... *(He shows them a collection of photos)* Do you take...
nudes?
TAUS: This is a watch repair shop, sir.
KLAUS: *(defending Taus)* He was recommended!
PAPUS: So? *(furious)* Aren't watch repairmen people?
TAUS: Who knows?
PAPUS: Well, then? *(more furious)* If it's not clear, why don't you let me earn my
...nude!
KLAUS: He stutters, no? He mixes up his words.
TAUS: Not only his words...
PAPUS: *(choking)* It doesn't, Papus! Facts are facts. Do you buy?
KLAUS: *(pointing to Taus)* I'm very sorry but his name's well known.
TAUS: *(pointing to Klaus)* And he was recommended to me...
PAPUS: OK, OK... *(He exits mumbling)*
KLAUS: *(returning to their interrupted conversation)* We'll put the initials P.N.
TAUS: That is?
KLAUS: "P" from Papus, "N" from nude.
TAUS: Great!
KLAUS: No one will know...

(They both laugh as if at a good joke.)

TAUS: You're very funny.
KLAUS: I like it here. It's pleasant. It's fun.
TAUS: Won't you stay for another hour, perhaps two? *(clock strikes once)* It's just
eight. We can chat some more.
KLAUS: Delighted. But on one condition.
TAUS: And that is?
KLAUS: That we don't call each other "sir."
TAUS: As you wish... It's eight. Time to close up. *(He locks the door)* Would you care
for a drink? *(He shouts.)* Melanie!

(A male Angel appears)

KLAUS: *(pointing to the Angel)* Is it yours?

TAUS: Mine.

KLAUS: For real?

TAUS: Yes.

KLAUS: Can it fly?

TAUS: *(to the Angel)* Melanie!

(He makes a sign. The Angel hooks a cord to his waist. He flies and glides a bit then floats down and bows modestly.)

KLAUS: Bravo! Bravo!

TAUS: I have a tiger, too -- black market. Want to see it?

KLAUS: Not now. *(to the Angel)* A glass of mineral water.

(The Angel exits.)

TAUS: I'll show you the tiger.

KLAUS: Not now. *(confidentially)* My wife woke up...

TAUS: I didn't know...

KLAUS: *(to himself)* My dear, here is my good friend Taus... *(to Taus, pointing to himself)* Dear Taus, I'd like you to meet my wife.

TAUS: *(bowing before Klaus)* Madam...

MRS.KLAUS: *(who is Taus, yawns)* Delighted...

TAUS: Please, madam, have a seat.

MRS. KLAUS: Thank you. I'll sit over here. *(She points to an armchair a little to the side)* I'm so tired. *(She sits in the armchair and falls asleep. Klaus gets up and becomes himself again)*

KLAUS: *(pointing to the armchair)* She falls asleep, just like that. She sleeps like a rock, but she can't wake up so quickly.

(Someone knocks violently on the door.)

TAUS: Who is it?

PAPUS: Papus.

TAUS: What do you want?

PAPUS: Photos...

TAUS: We don't need any. And stop that knocking.

(Klaus sits in the armchair and falls asleep.)

MRS. KLAUS: *(wakes up yawning)* What's going on?

TAUS: Just a peddler, madam...

MRS. KLAUS: Oh! *(She falls asleep again. Klaus gets up. The knocking stops.)*

TAUS: Did he wake her up?

KLAUS: She fell asleep again. She falls asleep, just like that.
TAUS: You make a lovely couple.

(The angel enters, gives Klaus a glass of water and exits silently.)

TAUS: How long have you been married?

KLAUS: Forty years.

TAUS: Out of love, of course...

KLAUS: I can't recall. Anyway, I dreamed of a different kind of love.

TAUS: We all dream that dream.

KLAUS: I wrote plays, dramas, tragedies. Then the architect came and wrecked everything.

TAUS: Perhaps when you were younger...

KLAUS: Who can say. I was by the sea...

(The lights focus on the small stage to the right as the rest of the stage dims. The curtain opens. A seascape. Klaus goes to the stage, takes off his white wig and puts on a black moustache.)

KLAUS: The fashion, you know...

TAUS: Please, I'm from the Charleston generation. But let me show you the tiger.

KLAUS: Wait... *(He undresses and hangs up his clothes for a bathing suit from the turn of the twentieth century, with wide horizontal stripes and trunks covering his knees. He cups his hand to his mouth and shouts.)* Don't catch cold!

TAUS: I don't understand.

KLAUS: My wife. She talks in her sleep. *(He looks toward the horizon, his hand over his eyes. One can hear the sea. Mrs. Burma, wearing a bathing suit but wrapped in a cape, comes out of the waves then stands perfectly still.)* Something's wrong.

TAUS: She's the diver's widow.

KLAUS: No, no... She was blond... Now she's dark.

TAUS: *(to Mrs. Burma)* By yourself, baby?

MRS. BURMA: As you see.

KLAUS: Aren't you bored?

MRS. BURMA: What do you care?

KLAUS: I asked that, to be polite... *(to Taus)* Now, watch this...

TAUS: Don't worry, go ahead!

KLAUS: Care to take a walk, just the two of us?

TAUS: *(encouraging him)* That's it, go on!

KLAUS: *(gallantly)* An intimate stroll on the beach, to a pub...

MRS. BURMA: Or behind a hearse.

TAUS: I told you, she's in mourning.

(Mrs. Burma exits.)

KLAUS: *(disconcerted)* What gives?

TAUS: It happens. Let me show you the tiger. Get dressed.

KLAUS: It's better like this. I feel younger. *(He gets down, feeling his hair. The little stage grows dimmer.)* Is this my hair?

TAUS: That, I don't know.

KLAUS: The others know, though.

TAUS: Do they?

KLAUS: In any case, the moustache is fake. I'll take it off.

TAUS: Why?

KLAUS: Because it's fake.

TAUS: And the hair? How do you know that your hair isn't a wig? Are you sure it's not fake?

KLAUS: Who knows? *(He knits quickly with his fingers)*

TAUS: What are you doing?

KLAUS: My wife knits in her sleep.

TAUS: Socks?

KLAUS: Gloves.

(They both laugh. A clock strikes one.)

KLAUS: Eight o'clock.

TAUS: At my place, it's always eight.

KLAUS: An even number.

TAUS: What number is your shoe size?

KLAUS: 1846.

TAUS: No, really!

KLAUS: Yes...

TAUS: In 1846, I...

KLAUS: I prefer 1846.

TAUS: I was too young ... and too inexperienced.

KLAUS: Then let's say 1946.

TAUS: Let me think... Yes!... Look there.

(He points to the little stage to the left, where the lights focus. The curtain rises. A sidewalk cafe. Papus and Melanie sit quietly at a table. The Angel stands perfectly still behind Melanie.)

KLAUS: There's your Angel.

TAUS: For the time being, he's her other half. *(He points to Melanie)*

KLAUS: Right! And Papus? What's he doing?

TAUS: He's her father.

KLAUS: *(to Papus)* Do you have... nudes?

(Papus shakes his fist at him and points to Melanie.)

TAUS: He doesn't... *(He giggles with Klaus)*

(The waitress -- Mrs. Burma, but slightly disguised -- enters silently and takes the order. The characters at the table become more animated.)

PAPUS: A brandy for me. *(The Angel gestures: "what about me?")* And another one...
And another one for me.

(The waitress exits.)

MELANIE: Papa...

THE ANGEL: You cretin...

PAPUS: *(furious, to Melanie)* Shut up, you! When it comes to people, young lady, it's difficult to tell an Arabian... from a Trojan horse.

MELANIE: What are you talking about?

PAPUS: About the whole wide world.

THE ANGEL: Are you sure the Trojan horse wasn't a mare?

PAPUS: Quiet!

(The waitress silently serves the drinks and exits.)

PAPUS: *(to Melanie)* Have you ever seen a horse's soul? Or a human soul? Have you ever seen anyone's soul?

MELANIE: I'm too young...

THE ANGEL: On what occasion?

PAPUS: You insolent...

MELANIE: I swear Papa... *(She cries, the Angel laughs)*

PAPUS: You laugh? Don't you have any respect for the memory of your mother. She wore tapeworms. She had ribbons. I loved her... *(sobbing, his head falls to the table, Melanie cries with him)*

MELANIE: *(stops crying)* Papa, calm down. You know it doesn't do you any good...

THE ANGEL: Just a little more and you'll croak.

PAPUS: No, no... I loved her at night when she set... By the fence, the faucets. *(in a paroxysm)* Why?

THE ANGEL: That is the question.

PAPUS: *(furious, to Melanie)* You, shut up! *(He points to the Angel)* Let him, he's good, he's good and dead...

MELANIE: Calm down, Papa.

PAPUS: No, no... I gave you your life, I'll make you marry. *(cries softly)* With your mother... with the grave... with the salt mines...

THE ANGEL: There you go again. *(He tastes the brandy)*

PAPUS: She had bees on the back of her head... and backwaters... and everything... *(Mrs. Burma enters dressed elegantly for a night out, a rifle on her shoulder. Papus recovers and jumps to his feet.)* Ah, Mrs. Burma! Marry me! *(He moves to get closer to her)*

MRS. BURMA: *(threatens him with the rifle)* Don't or I'll shoot! You know I don't like that.

(For a moment, as Taus and Klaus talk, the people at the table fall silent.)

KLAUS: She looks like...

TAUS: Now she's someone else...

PAPUS: Mrs. Burma, you know that I... Here is my daughter.

MRS. BURMA: She's cute... so fresh...

THE ANGEL: Precocious motherhood.

PAPUS: *(to Melanie)* Be polite now. Remember, she's a widow. I'll take her.

MELANIE: The edelweiss is my favorite flower.

MRS. BURMA: That's fine... How old is she?

PAPUS: She'll turn eighteen this summer.

THE ANGEL: And twenty-four in the fall.

PAPUS: Mrs. Burma...

MRS. BURMA: Don't come any closer, or I'll shoot.

PAPUS: Melanie, put your earplugs in! *(Melanie does that)* Mrs. Burma, I love you to death.

MRS. BURMA: You know I'm in mourning.

PAPUS: Everyone's in mourning over something. I'll take you, mourning or no mourning.

MRS. BURMA: Be patient. Let me get to know you better.

PAPUS: When shall I come to your place?

MRS. BURMA: I receive on Thursdays, between four and six in the afternoon.

PAPUS: Couldn't we meet at night?

MRS. BURMA: At night?

PAPUS: Yes.

MRS. BURMA: Why at night?

THE ANGEL: It's cooler.

PAPUS: I don't know, but at night.

MRS. BURMA: Then on Thursday... no... Friday... no... Let's say on Saturday, between two and four fifteen.

PAPUS: Why not sooner?

MRS. BURMA: On Saturday? Impossible...

PAPUS: Fine. Melanie, take out your earplugs!

(Melanie can't hear him. The Angel gestures to her. She obliges.)

MELANIE: Thanks, Papa.

PAPUS: Don't mention it. Have a seat, Mrs. Burma.

THE ANGEL: Perhaps you're in a hurry...

MRS. BURMA: Thank you. *(She sits next to Melanie)*

PAPUS: Mrs. Burma, you who've been through so much, do you know where the restroom is?

(Mrs. Burma points straight ahead and to the right with the palm of her hand turned vertically. Papus leaves. The characters at the table fall still.)

KLAUS: I like Mrs. Burma...
TAUS: She's a bit faded...
KLAUS: It's a matter of taste. I like her.
TAUS: Hmm...
KLAUS: I'd like to meet her.
TAUS: I'll call her over. Mrs. Burma!
MRS. BURMA: Yes.
TAUS: I'd like you to meet a friend.
MRS. BURMA: Gladly. *(She comes down. The others on the small stage stay motionless.)*
TAUS: My friend Klaus...
KLAUS: Madam... *(He steps toward her)*
MRS. BURMA: *(threatening with the rifle)* Don't come any closer. *(sweetly)* Men frighten me...
KLAUS: That's a pity!
MRS. BURMA: It all begins like this...
TAUS: I'll leave you two alone. *(He steps to the side and finds something to do)*
KLAUS: Mrs. Burma. It's important, I swear...
MRS. BURMA: Oh?
KLAUS: A matter of the heart. I'd like your advice...
MRS. BURMA: That's different... I'm listening... *(Klaus wants to get closer)* Not one step closer!
KLAUS: I can't speak loudly. My wife, you know...
MRS. BURMA: Is she here?
KLAUS: She's asleep over there, in the armchair...
MRS. BURMA: Right! *(She lets him take one step closer)* Talk.
KLAUS: No, not here. I can't. Even when she's asleep...
MRS. BURMA: Then on Sunday, between three and five.
KLAUS: I won't be in town.
MRS. BURMA: Then, on Saturday, between four fifteen *(She examines him from all sides)* and nine.
KLAUS: Perfect. *(He tries to get closer)*
MRS. BURMA: Freeze!
KLAUS: Ooooh!
TAUS: Done? *(He comes to them)* Shall we continue? *(He points to the small stage)*
MRS. BURMA: Ah, yes... Good bye...
KLAUS: It's a deal.
MRS. BURMA: Of course... *(She climbs on the small stage and sits at the table. Lights focus on the small stage.)*
MELANIE: You're so nice, Mrs. Burma *(She cries)*
MRS. BURMA: I receive on Thursdays...
THE ANGEL: Between four and six...
MELANIE: No, no... *(She cries)*
THE ANGEL: Now...

MRS. BURMA: I've suffered in my life, but now I'm not so inspired. Anyway, what's the matter?

MELANIE: It's Dad. He's so irritable.

MRS. BURMA: I've noticed. He was furious today.

MELANIE: He had a tough time, today.

THE ANGEL: He ate like a pig.

MELANIE: (*crying*) He's always like that. I can't take it any more. Mrs. Burma!

THE ANGEL: (*points at Melanie*) She's crying.

MRS. BURMA: Calm down, my dear.

MELANIE: He wants to marry me off...

MRS. BURMA: That's how it is for us.

THE ANGEL: Did I hear that?

MELANIE: I have dreams, Mrs. Burma...

MRS. BURMA: Of course...

MELANIE: No...They're different...

MRS. BURMA (*interested*) Erotic?

MELANIE: Sentimental. (*She cries*)

KLAUS: Oh, cut it out!

MRS. BURMA: Mr. Klaus, let the girl...

KLAUS: Yes, but not like that...

THE ANGEL: He's right

MRS. BURMA: What do you know?

KLAUS: Anyway...

MRS. BURMA: Continue, little girl.

MELANIE (*without crying*): I have dreams, Mrs. Burma. I have dreams with plants and animals. I hear how the suitcases sigh. I have sentimental dreams.

MRS. BURMA: Any men?

MELANIE: Only one...

THE ANGEL: Ahem! Ahem!..

MRS. BURMA: If you tell me his name and address, maybe I could do something.

MELANIE: Maus, his name is Maus.

MRS. BURMA (*writing down*): And his last name?

MELANIE: I don't know (*She cries*)

MRS. BURMA: Where does he live?

MELANIE: How would I know, Mrs. Burma?

MRS. BURMA: But, didn't you two meet?

MELANIE: In my dreams, Mrs. Burma...

KLAUS: That's too much!

THE ANGEL: Right!...

MRS. BURMA: Mr. Klaus, please!

KLAUS: OK, OK...

MRS. BURMA (*to Melanie*): Don't mind the interruptions. So, tell me, where did you meet him?

MELANIE (*crying*): In a dream.

MRS. BURMA (*melancholy*): I see...

MELANIE (*without crying*): I know his name is Maus. He told me so. One morning, at the Tropics. He told me that his name was Maus. Since then, I am not scared of mice any more.

MRS. BURMA: I don't quite see how I could help...

MELANIE: Convince dad... (*She cries*) He torments me... The child was born dead... It was less than two weeks old...

MRS. BURMA: The child?

MELANIE: Yes...

MRS. BURMA: With Maus?

THE ANGEL: Who cares? It's been such a long time since then...

MRS. BURMA: But have you ever seen Maus, in reality?

MELANIE: No...

MRS. BURMA: Then it will be difficult...

MELANIE: But why? I love him. I buy him cigarettes. I take walks with him, with my hands on my head. I have sentimental... (*She cries*)

KLAUS: I can't stand it! Enough!

TAUS: Call them over here. We'll have some fun.

KLAUS: You think so?

TAUS: What do we have to lose?

KLAUS: Right. Mrs. Burma!

MRS. BURMA: Yes.

KLAUS: Why don't you come on over?

MRS. BURMA: Both of us?

TAUS: Yes.

MRS. BURMA: Are you sure?

TAUS: Yes.

MELANIE: Without dad?

KLAUS: Without...

MRS. BURMA: We're coming.

(Mrs. Burma, Melanie and the Angel step down to the watch repair shop. The little stage remains open but the light focuses on the big stage. Maus is still in his corner.)

TAUS: We'll be better here.

THE ANGEL (*gestures approvingly*).

KLAUS: It's more intimate.

TAUS: More appealing. Do you know Mrs. Klaus?

MRS. BURMA (*pointing to the armchair*): The lady over there?

KLAUS (*making the introductions*): My wife...

MELANIE: Is she ill?

KLAUS: She's sleeping.

THE ANGEL: Or she pretends to.

TAUS: It doesn't matter.

MELANIE: Certainly. She's harmless. She doesn't torture anyone. (*She cries*)

MRS. BURMA: When a person sleeps...

THE ANGEL: Or pretends...
TAUS: What can I say!
KLAUS: What do you mean?
TAUS: Nothing.
KLAUS: Right...
MELANIE: Sleep doesn't hinder sentiments.
MRS. BURMA: On the contrary. It develops them.
THE ANGEL: It makes them stink.
MRS. BURMA: It develops them. At least, I hope it does...
TAUS: Maybe, but it still gives them an unpleasant odor...
KLAUS: One may never know.
MELANIE: My sentiments are always perfumed when I dream.
KLAUS: How do you know?
MELANIE: From experience.
KLAUS: How do you know they are perfumed?
MELANIE: In any case, I know they are sentiments. *(She cries)*
KLAUS *(to Taus)*: There she goes again.
TAUS: It's her style. You'll have to get used to it.
MRS. BURMA: Still I believe it develops them. The dreams, that is...
TAUS: It could be.
MRS. BURMA *(pointing to the armchair)*: Why not ask her? Now, while she's asleep.
KLAUS *(firmly)*: She doesn't talk in her sleep. She talks only to me.
THE ANGEL: Who can say? Let's try.

(They all go to the armchair save Klaus.)

KLAUS: Let her alone. Let her sleep.
MELANIE: Just a little...
TAUS: It would be interesting.
KLAUS: You're wrong.
MRS. BURMA: *(offended)*: What do you mean?
KLAUS *(losing his temper)*: I mean...No one has sentiments. You are all like trained animals. Bow-wow!
TAUS: There is also the presentiment of a sentiment.
THE ANGEL: Trained. Back to your cage. Bow-wow!
TAUS: It's a point of view...
MELANIE *(to Klaus)*: You mean to say I have no sentiments? *(to the others)* Please, forgive me! *(She cries)*
TAUS: As you wish...

(The light focuses again on the little stage. Papius pounds the table with his fist, ignoring what's going on below.)

PAPUS: Is there anybody here? Hey! Waiter!
MRS. BURMA: I'm coming! *(to Klaus, with conviction)* I have the sentiment of duty!
(She climbs up to the Café, gesturing like a waitress.)

PAPUS: Is there anybody here? Where's the girl?

MRS. BURMA: She's taking a walk. With the widow.

PAPUS: What widow? She's a widow! I have a girl with her. *(as if telling a secret, pointing to where he came from)* Over there it's for ladies...

MRS. BURMA: For men, too.

PAPUS: Where?

MRS. BURMA *(points with her hand like the first time)*.

PAPUS: Over there, it's for ladies. They cursed me out.

MRS. BURMA: The other door. With the picture of a man's shoe.

PAPUS *(losing his temper again)*: If I find ladies there, I'll curse them. And beat them. With the shoe. Over their mouths and shoes. Over their ears. And over the widow. *(He leaves, determined)*

MRS. BURMA: OK, OK... *(She exits through the other side)*

TAUS: He got the wrong door.

KLAUS: Poor man...

THE ANGEL: Because he ate like a pig! Where is the restroom?

(Taus shows him with the same gestures as the widow Burma. But he points to the sky. The Angel exits.)

MELANIE *(to Klaus)*: You, if you want to know, you have sentiments.

KLAUS: No, I don't. Nobody does.

MELANIE: Not even your wife?

KLAUS: Not even her.

MELANIE: Really? And Mrs. Burma? And the sentiment of duty? And her sentimental drama? *(She cries)*

TAUS: What drama?

MELANIE: It's in the papers...

TAUS: I don't read the papers that much...

MELANIE: That's why you don't have sentiments.

KLAUS *(giving in)*: That could be true...

TAUS: Would you tell us the story?

MELANIE *(crying)*: Tell you? It's in all the papers. *(She takes a newspaper out of her purse and stops crying.)*

(On the curtains of the little stage to the right—the one with the seascape—a text in Khutsuri characters appears. The little stage remains dark.)

TAUS *(looking at the text)*: I don't understand.

KLAUS: It's an unknown alphabet.

MELANIE: Those are Khutsuri letters. *(She cries)* Nobody understands them!...

KLAUS: Do you understand them?

MELANIE: I do.

TAUS: Then read it to us.

MELANIE *(happy)*: That's right!... *(apologetic)* When he is not with me *(she gestures as if she had wings, referring to the angel)* I think slower...

TAUS: Nevertheless, sometimes you think...

KLAUS: Correctly enough...

MELANIE: Really? Then I will read. "The sentimental drama of the widow Burma." See? The sen-ti-men-tal drama. "The revenge of a woman, whose husband cheated on her." See? (*She cries*)

TAUS: It's true!

KLAUS: One can see with the naked eye...

(A brief fanfare precedes each illuminated text, tableau vivant, or pantomime. During Melanie's reading the fanfare decreases, then grows deafening and stops abruptly every time the little curtain falls in between tableaux. The tableaux vivants are fairly motionless with certain slight movements if necessary.)

MELANIE (*reads the new text*): "Moved by her best sentiments Mrs. Burma suspects her husband. She lies in wait."

(The curtain rises showing the seascape. Two movements: Mrs. Burma looking toward the sea and Mrs. Burma hiding behind a rock and lying in wait.)

MELANIE (*reads the new text*): "Well-meaning locals try to change the course of the respectable, if barbarian, sentiments of Mrs. Burma. But their efforts (*She cries*) are bound to fail..."

(Pantomime between Mrs. Burma, slightly disguised as an old woman, and the Angel.)

TAUS: She seems determined.

KLAUS: I wonder how far she'll go.

MELANIE: How far? Until death. Sentiments are strong, Mr. Klaus!

KLAUS: I don't think so.

TAUS: Me neither.

MELANIE (*reads the new text*): "On a deserted part of the shore, Mrs. Burma's husband, the diver Cocles, has illicit encounters with a dark, unmarried, young lady."

(Cocles, who is actually Papus but unrecognizable because of his antique helmet and diving suit, comes out of the water. He looks to his right and to his left then sits down, sighing. The Angel appears without wings and disguised as a young Roman lady. He covers the helmet visors with his hands. Amorous scene. They exchange wedding rings. Then the text changes.)

MELANIE: "But Mrs. Burma will catch her husband red-handed."

(Crawling on her hands and knees, Mrs. Burma approaches the two lovers. She rises suddenly. Panic. The Angel runs away. Cocles takes off his helmet. It is Papus, still unrecognizable because of his thick hair and beard. He laughs

sardonically. Mrs. Burma fires. He continues laughing until the third bullet when he collapses. She leaves the stage crestfallen. The fanfare becomes a sad waltz. The curtain falls.)

MELANIE (*triumphantly, to Klaus*): See?

KLAUS: Yes.

MELANIE: Now do you believe?

KLAUS: No.

TAUS (*enthusiastically*): Bravo!

MELANIE (*crying*): If you don't believe, you have no sentiments.

TAUS: But he has presentiments.

MELANIE: Preconceived.

TAUS: Premeditated.

MELANIE: I don't believe in presentiments.

KLAUS: That means you don't have them.

TAUS (*curious*): How do you know?

KLAUS: I have a presentiment. My presentiments are sure, while her sentiments... what can I say!

MELANIE (*crying*): He offends me, again...

TAUS (*conciliatory*): What if we talked about something else?

MELANIE: Something more pleasant.

KLAUS: Or stop talking altogether.

TAUS: People talk when they don't want to understand each other.

KLAUS: When they understand each other, they are silent.

MELANIE: A *tacit* agreement. What did I say?

KLAUS: Nothing intelligent.

TAUS: We are not intelligent at all.

MELANIE (*happy*): How nice!

(The Angel enters with glasses on a tray. They all clink their glasses in agreement.)

TAUS: There is an extra glass.

THE ANGEL: I could drink it.

TAUS (*tolerantly*): Anyway Mrs. Burma left...

KLAUS: It's for my wife. (*He takes the glass and goes to the armchair*) Would you like a drink, my dear?

MRS. KLAUS (*yawns*): Who is she?

KLAUS (*drinks and makes the introductions*): Miss Melanie... She has sentiments.

MELANIE (*comes closer to the armchair*): Nice to meet you, madam... Have you slept well? (*She cries*) Why doesn't she answer?

KLAUS: She fell asleep again.

TAUS: Why don't we let her sleep.

MELANIE: She is as ill-mannered as her husband. (*She moves away from the armchair then notices Maus*) You?

MAUS (*stands up and introduces himself*): Maus...

MELANIE: Maus!

TAUS: Maus! Have you been here long?

MAUS: Two years.

TAUS (*makes the introductions*): My friend Maus, Miss Melanie, Mr. and Mrs. Klaus... Mrs. Klaus is sleeping...

MAUS: Charmed.

MELANIE: It's like we've known each other forever...

MAUS: I'm sure we've met before...

MELANIE: Do you remember?

(Taus, Klaus and the Angel form a wide circle around the two who swing to the right and to the left as if talking under a spell.)

MAUS: We loved each other on bloodied snows...

MELANIE: Sometimes the wind was blowing... (*The wind whistles; they keep swinging*)

MAUS: I was a rubber band, a crippled colonel, a beaver in lime water...

MELANIE: And I slept on a comb like a salamander...

MAUS: Every night, a bull sat on my mouth and whispered your name...

MELANIE: In the sand, your words looked for me like blue bees...

MAUS: We'll run away together...

TAUS (*pointing to the Angel*): What about him, her other half?

MELANIE: You take him. I don't need him any more.

KLAUS: A souvenir.

MELANIE: Why do you interfere?

KLAUS: True!

TAUS: Then (*points to the Angel*) he is mine.

KLAUS: You can feed him to the tiger.

(The Angel exits, crying.)

MELANIE (*starting to swing again, together with Maus*): Let's run away somewhere, the ice fields...

MAUS: To a closed space, transparent and odorless...

KLAUS: Here they go again.

TAUS: They are in full rut.

KLAUS: But they lack nuance. (*He yawns*)

TAUS: Tired?

MRS. KLAUS: I just woke up. Where is my husband?

TAUS: Probably in the loo. We could take advantage of the situation.

MRS. KLAUS: What do you mean?

TAUS (*points to the two who swing mutely, in ecstasy*).

MRS. KLAUS (*sizes him up*): You are a bit old... And I am tired... (*She yawns*)

TAUS: Do you work a lot?

KLAUS: Lately, poor thing, she's doing it all. She's carries the world on her shoulders.

TAUS: Physical labor.

KLAUS: The first woman night guard.

MAUS (*recovering from his ecstasy, agitated, to Taus*): My friend, lend me a suitcase. I have to run away. With her.

MELANIE: Let's hide from the world, from dad...

KLAUS: A straw chest would be good.

TAUS: I have a suitcase. But it doesn't have a key.

MELANIE: Whatever. I keep no secrets from him. (*She points to Maus*)

TAUS: What if you two hid in the armoire.

MAUS: No, no... When is the first train?

TAUS: In what direction?

MELANIE: To the ice fields.

MAUS: Anywhere.

KLAUS: The principle of indetermination. The first train is at ten fifteen.

TAUS (*checks his watch*): You have time. It's only eight.

MELANIE: Give us the chest...

KLAUS: The suitcase...

MELANIE: True... (*She cries*)

(Taus brings a suitcase.)

MAUS (*upset*): There's no key.

TAUS: I was wrong. (*He gives them another suitcase*)

MAUS: Hurry, my love... Put the documents in the suitcase...

MELANIE: The handkerchiefs...

TAUS: Hurry...

KLAUS: The ice fields...

MAUS: The neckties...

MELANIE: The chair...

(Seized by the fever of departure, they empty their pockets and put in the suitcase all they can lay their hands on, including the chair, which doesn't fit.)

MELANIE (*cries*): It's too big...

MAUS: Don't waste your tears.

KLAUS: Be more thrifty.

TAUS: You know what? I'm not running away any more.

KLAUS: Me neither.

TAUS: You stay, too.

KLAUS: In the tiger's room.

MELANIE: And dad? He is going to kill us.

MAUS: What's the time?

TAUS: Eight. You have time to change your minds.

MELANIE: I'm sick! (*She moves to and fro; she falls down*)

KLAUS: She's dead.

TAUS: Just wounded.

MAUS: I loved her. Maybe she fainted.

TAUS: From emotion.

KLAUS: In any case, she's lost blood.

MAUS: We'll still be together. And I will walk; I'll walk as long as I live.

TAUS: It's exhausting.

KLAUS: If she's dead, she'll rot in your arms...

TAUS: It depends...

KLAUS: It's certain...

TAUS: What about in the cold, in the north, the cold northern realms?

KLAUS: Hmm...

TAUS *(to Maus)*: Stay here. I have a cold room in the basement.

MAUS *(broken-hearted)*: No, no... Her last wish... The ice fields...

KLAUS: Try to make her stand.

(Maus raises Melanie to her feet. She stands like that with her eyes closed.)

TAUS: That's a good girl! She behaves even when she's dead.

KLAUS: Make her walk.

(Maus makes Melanie walk.)

TAUS: She walks. You're in the clear.

MAUS: I'll take her to the ice fields...

KLAUS: You can bury her in the snow when you get bored.

MAUS: Goodbye!

TAUS: Safe journey!

KLAUS: Write to us from Amsterdam...

(Maus exits with Melanie.)

TAUS: They're gone.

KLAUS: Finally! What time is it?

TAUS: Eight. Don't you want to see the tiger?

KLAUS: Perhaps he's asleep.

TAUS: He's not asleep. He's doing his homework. *(He points to the door, stepping aside)* Please.

KLAUS: After you...

TAUS: Oh, no, no... *(They both get going as if they were together, although Taus, speaking to an imaginary Klaus, goes toward the door, while Klaus goes toward his wife's armchair, where he falls asleep.)* The tiger has his own schedule. On Wednesdays I make him wear a muzzle. On Thursdays, it's the bathroom... *(He makes room for the imaginary Klaus at the door, then exits.)*

(The light focuses on the little stage to the left, where Papus reappears. He bangs furiously on the table.)

PAPUS: Hey! Is anybody here? *(Mrs. Burma enters as Mrs. Burma and not as a waitress)* Mrs. Burma, I cursed them, all six of them.

MRS. BURMA: Blond?
PAPUS: Of course. Mrs. Burma, marry me.
MRS. BURMA: I'm in mourning.
PAPUS: What mourning? I love you to death. Where is the boot?
MRS. BURMA: Melanie?
PAPUS: Yes. She was on the table.
MRS. BURMA: Mr. Papus, Melanie ran away. With a young man.
PAPUS: Where to?
MRS. BURMA: The wide world...
PAPUS: So why did it take her so long? She couldn't find the door?
MRS. BURMA: She found the door. But she's not coming back. She's in love.
PAPUS: In love? I'll beat her over the mouth. With the shoe from the restroom door.
Marry me.
MRS. BURMA: Melanie ran away with young Maus.
PAPUS: What Maus? Never heard of it.
MRS. BURMA: That's his name. That's it! She's not coming back.
PAPUS: But the police? I'm going to the police. With Maus tied up and beaten over the mouth. You're a witness.
MRS. BURMA: I am.
PAPUS: So? I'll tie them up. I'll kill them. I'll destroy them. And afterwards I'll take you.
MRS. BURMA: Dear Papus, they're in love...
PAPUS: Never heard of that. *(He pounds the table with his fist)* I'll destroy them!
MRS. BURMA: Be reasonable...
PAPUS: I am but I'll destroy them. *(He points the direction with his hand, imitating Mrs. Burma's initial gesture)* Straight to the police... *(He exits, dignified)*
MRS. BURMA: Mr. Papus... *(She goes after him)*

(The lights on the little stage go to black. On the big stage Mrs. Klaus, alone in the armchair, sleeps peacefully. The Angel enters, comes close to her and looks at her silently.)

MRS. KLAUS *(yawns)*: Is there anybody here? *(She notices the Angel)* Are you a boy or a girl?
THE ANGEL: If necessary, I can be a man, too.
MRS. KLAUS *(yawns again)*: Interesting... And you don't know where everybody went?
THE ANGEL: To see the tiger.
MRS. KLAUS: *(She looks at him with interest)* What do you do?
THE ANGEL: I was an angel, madam...
MRS. KLAUS: A guardian?
THE ANGEL: If you wish...
MRS. KLAUS: What a coincidence! *(She yawns)* Day or night?
THE ANGEL: Permanently. *(He yawns, too)* Now I'm going to be an overseer.
MRS. KLAUS: Overseer is not bad either. If you work honestly...
THE ANGEL: That's it...

MRS. KLAUS: Any work... *(She yawns)*

THE ANGEL: True.

MRS. KLAUS: And are you married?

THE ANGEL: No.

MRS. KLAUS *(yawns)*: Physical deficiencies?

THE ANGEL: No. *(He shows his wings)* The profession...

MRS. KLAUS: Yes, but an overseer...

THE ANGEL: It's different. But it's still bad.

MRS. KLAUS: Anyway... *(She yawns)*

THE ANGEL: I was an orphan, from this high... I liked to study but I didn't learn much; I'm stupid ... If I could find someone, a mother...

MRS. KLAUS: I'm tired. *(She yawns)* Sleepy...

THE ANGEL: It's no big deal being an angel...

MRS. KLAUS *(asleep)*: That's possible...

THE ANGEL: But it's still... *(He notices that Mrs. Klaus fell asleep)* Better than nothing... *(He shrugs and exits on tiptoe)*

Curtain

THE SACRED ACT

Same sets in black. A vaguely iridescent light suggests a cathedral's stained glass. Melanie and Maus crouch near the footlights in a tightly focused spotlight. When the curtain comes up, one can hear a Gregorian Mass, which grows fainter but persists barely audible. Melanie and Maus speak in whispers.

Note: In this act, the change of scenery – from cathedral to watch repair shop – is done only by means of lighting.

MAUS: Melanie!..

MELANIE: Yes...

MAUS: Are you cold?

MELANIE: Yes. Is it still raining?

MAUS: Yes.

(One can hear the rain and wind over the Mass in the background.)

MELANIE: The door is open...

MAUS: That's how I found it.

MELANIE: Why is he so late?

MAUS: He wasn't home. But I left him a note saying: "Father, come quickly. I'll be waiting at the church."

MELANIE: A telegram. *(She cries)*

MAUS: I left it with the maid.

MELANIE: What if she reads it?

MAUS: What if?

MELANIE: She can call the police...

MAUS: I didn't sign the note.

MELANIE: The telegram. *(She cries)*

MAUS: The telegram...

MELANIE: What if she loses it?

MAUS: Out of the question.

MELANIE: Why?

MAUS: Because it's out of the question.

MELANIE: Right... *(pause)* Show me the wedding rings.

MAUS: Here. *(He hands them to her)*

MELANIE: What do you want? A boy or a girl?

MAUS: Let's not rush into anything...

MELANIE: Rush? We have two more months.

MAUS: What? It's been only a few days...

MELANIE: We have two more months...

MAUS: Are you sure?

MELANIE: You know I love you. What do you want it to be?

MAUS: It's all the same to me.

MELANIE: What if they are two, twins?

MAUS: That could be a problem... With the breastfeeding...
MELANIE: Nature is wise. That's why mothers have two breasts.
MAUS: Why not three?
MELANIE: I've never heard of mothers with three breasts.
MAUS: I read about a case like that in New Zealand. There were eight twins. But on the ice fields, it is out of the question...
MELANIE: Of course. That can happen only on the high plateaus. Women have seven or eight breasts there. And even if they don't, there are other women who come to you and say: Dear, you have, let's say, one breast... You know, that happens pretty often on the high plateaus. The Amazons were like that, to fight better...
MAUS: On the high plateaus, yes, I read about it...
MELANIE: And then the Amazons would say: Dear, you have only one. Keep one. We have one each. Seven of us will breastfeed the remaining seven... And that's it!
MAUS: Life is beautiful on the high plateaus!..
MELANIE: On ice fields, too... But it is cold here... And the police are looking for us...
(She cries.)
MAUS: Hush!

(The priest -- as Taus in a beard, black cape and white collar -- appears in the semidarkness.)

TAUS: Anyone here?
MAUS: Father...
TAUS: You left the note?
MELANIE: The telegram. *(She cries)*
TAUS: What can I do for you?
MAUS: I have wedding rings...
TAUS: A wedding?
MAUS: A secret one. I am Maus.
MELANIE: And I am Melanie.
TAUS: Melanie, and your last name is?
MELANIE: Melanie Papus. *(She cries)*
TAUS: Poor little thing.
MELANIE: Why do you say that?
TAUS: Three times poor! You might be an orphan by now!
MELANIE: Alas!
TAUS: Papus, your father committed suicide. Out of desperation...
MELANIE: He died?
TAUS: He's struggling between life and death. It's in the papers...
MAUS: I don't read newspapers.
MELANIE: I used to read them. They are instructive. And educational. But now, given what's happened... *(She cries)* I haven't read a newspaper in five days...
TAUS: Now, now, my child...
MAUS: Be strong, Melanie. Don't cry. We love each other. We are happy...
MELANIE *(not at all convinced)*: It's true.
TAUS: Given the circumstances, you understand... Keep the wedding rings...

MELANIE: But in two months...

MAUS: In two months we may be on the ice fields, or the high plateaus...

TAUS: Unknown are the paths of the Lord.

MELANIE: It's true...

MAUS: Father, we are poor runaways. Without shelter. And it's raining. Can we stay here overnight?

TAUS: Sure.

MELANIE: And the door, can he close it? I'm cold. *(She cries)*

TAUS: As you wish. But don't latch it, so the gendarme can come in.

MAUS: The gendarme?

TAUS: When he makes his rounds, sometimes he stops here. Especially when it rains.

MAUS: When does he make his rounds?

TAUS: Never before ten o'clock.

MAUS *(looks at his watch)*: It's eight.

TAUS: I'll go now. Good-bye.

MELANIE: Good-bye.

MAUS: Good bye.

(Taus exits. The couple crouches in the old place.)

MELANIE: It's so cold!... Could you close the door...

MAUS: Sure. *(He wants to get up)*

(The Mass grows louder. On the little stage to the right – seascape – the light comes up on the window Burma, rifle in hand, standing motionless like a statue in a niche. The rest of the stage is dark except where the two runaways are. The choir music fades.)

MAUS: What do you know! An altar.

MELANIE: An ice field!

MAUS: There are no ice fields in churches.

MELANIE: Then it is a high plateau.

MAUS: No, it's an altar. A marine altar. An altar of the Virgin. *Stella Maris*.

MELANIE: By the sea, it is warm...

MAUS: What if we hid over there?

(They get up. He takes a step toward the back scene.)

MRS. BURMA: Stop! Who goes there?

MAUS: Sweet Mother of God, we...

MRS. BURMA: Stop, or I shoot!

MAUS: We...

(He takes another step. Mrs. Burma shoots. The choir is Fortissimo. Maus and Melanie scream. The light fades slowly on the little stage along with the music.)

MELANIE: Are you hit?

MAUS (*from the dark*): I don't know. (*He comes into the light, near Melanie*) She missed me.

MELANIE: That was a mystical vision.

MAUS: A warning from the sky.

MELANIE: Dad's curse... (*She cries*)

MAUS: Don't cry, Melanie. (*He checks his watch*) It's eight. Maybe the gendarme will come, because of the shot.

MELANIE: Maybe he didn't hear it.

MAUS: They hear everything.

MELANIE: Let's run...

MAUS: Let's run!

MELANIE: But it's raining!..

MAUS: Be strong, Melanie. We love each other. We are happy.

MELANIE (*regretfully*): That's true...

(They both leave the cathedral, on tiptoe. The Angel enters through the door that they used and turns on the lights. Now one can see the same set from the first act. The Mass has ceased. Mrs. Klaus sleeps in her armchair. The Angel kisses her forehead then moves away.)

MRS. KLAUS: Stop it, Ernst!..

THE ANGEL: It was me, madam.

MRS. KLAUS: It seemed like... It seemed that I was in a church...

THE ANGEL: Dreams, madam...

MRS. KLAUS: True. They are not back yet?

THE ANGEL: No.

MRS. KLAUS: Do you think the tiger ate them?

THE ANGEL: It's possible. (*He exits*)

(Mrs. Klaus gets up from the armchair. Taus enters the room and politely gives an imaginary Klaus space to stand in. He's still in the priest's disguise but doesn't realize that, and continues his discussion with Klaus. Mrs. Klaus goes to him.)

TAUS: Ah, no... Nevertheless, purple is a pleasant color. That's what I think...

MRS. KLAUS (*yawns*): Interesting.

TAUS: Did you rest well, madam?

KLAUS (*looks to the armchair*): She fell asleep again.

TAUS: She's so peaceful.

KLAUS: Yes.

TAUS: Life's merry with her, yes?

KLAUS: Like a merry widow... Like the widow Burma... Widow Burma is beautiful...

TAUS: It's a matter of taste...

KLAUS: I've thought of her from the moment I saw her.

TAUS: That happens.

KLAUS: It's a kind of... sentiment... What do you think she's doing now?

TAUS: Taking a bath perhaps...

(The light dims on the big stage and comes up on the little stage to the left – the sidewalk café. Instead of a table, Mrs. Burma’s bed is on the sidewalk. The bed is made up for sleeping. Widow Burma, dressed for the night, is in bed with the Angel. They both sit upright from the waist up and look straight in front of them. The Angel holds Mrs. Burma’s rifle. The bed is parallel to the background and its end is toward the left, so that the little stage to the right – the seascape – now dark, is in the direction of the two characters feet.)

KLAUS: Lo and behold! Your Angel!

TAUS: He’s just a poor soul!

KLAUS: He’s a dog. Why do you call him “soul?”

TAUS: Have you read the Zohar?

KLAUS: Yes, no, what does it matter?

TAUS *(explanatory)*: The Zohar says that before descending into this world, each soul had a secret, an animate secret. After they came down, they split in two, bringing life to two different bodies: a man and a woman. And the men and women who unite are...

KLAUS: Yes but this dog *(He points to the Angel)* is the soulless half of a soulless half. The crippled half of a crippled half. He lives the doubling of a half that became the half of a half, and so on. Awww! *(He struggles as if he’s been hit by someone)*

TAUS: What’s with you?

KLAUS: It’s my wife... She’s beating me in her sleep.

TAUS: That’s a biographical detail.

KLAUS: Yes, but it hurts!.. *(He calms down and resumes in a learned tone)* In this world, one has to find a way to unify the half that he or she possesses: the unity of the half, or the other half of the unity. I have spoken!

TAUS: Plato has a different opinion...

(The light comes up on the cathedral. Melanie and Maus enter and move to their places as previously. They believe that they are in the church. The mass resumes.)

MELANIE: I am completely frozen... *(She cries)*

MAUS: It’s better here. At least it isn’t wet. *(He points to the small stage lit up)* The Immaculate Conception. What a beautiful icon!

MELANIE: It’s the widow Burma. And the angel? What is he doing in her bed?

MAUS: He is lecturing to her.

MELANIE: I think he is doing something else. I know him pretty well...

TAUS *(to Klaus)*: Plato has a different opinion...

MAUS: Are you here, Father?

TAUS: Yes. *(He moves toward them)* You’ve come back?

MAUS: Wretched weather.

MELANIE: My soul is frozen.

TAUS: Stay here. Until the rain stops.

MAUS: We’re not putting you out? Is the gendarme coming?

TAUS: I am doing my job. It’s only eight. Why don’t you rest a bit.

MELANIE: Thank you... *(She cries)*

(Melanie and Maus crouch as previously and fall asleep. Taus returns to Klaus.)

KLAUS: You were saying that Plato...

TAUS: Rubbish...

KALUS: Nevertheless...

TAUS: Plato made Aristophanes.

KLAUS: Aristophanes? So what does Aristophanes have to say for himself?

TAUS: In the beginning of all beginnings, our nature was different than it is now. At first, there were three kinds of humans: male, female, and a third androgynous kind with the name and shape of the other two but distinct from them.

KLAUS: Right!

TAUS: On top of that, each human was round or spherical. Their spherical character was due to the fact that the male originated from the Sun, the female from the Earth, and the mixed from the Moon. They were spherical because they resembled their parents...

KLAUS: They must have looked great!...

TAUS: And they walked round and round like saltimbanques in a circus...

KLAUS: If you say so...

TAUS: And they had four arms, four legs, two faces on one head, four ears...

KLAUS: And so on... What are you getting at?

TAUS: And these round people began to storm the sky. So Zeus in his anger split them in two, turning one face to the split part...

KLAUS: Let's talk about something else.

TAUS: Wait... When the bodies were separated, each one, missing its other half, rushed toward it. And they embraced. But because of hunger and inaction, they died. And when one half died and the other half survived, the latter searched for another half and so on...

KLAUS: I understand. You want to justify that dog.

TAUS: I was speaking, you know, in general...

KLAUS: What if we dropped it?

TAUS: Let's be silent, dammit!...

KLAUS: Let's let them speak...

(He points to the couple in bed. The Mass plays continuously in the background. Mrs. Burma and the Angel get excited.)

MRS. BURMA: You're all like that, just for... Give me the rifle.

THE ANGEL *(slightly absent-minded, looks straight in front of him, speaks without any inflection)*: It's unloaded.

MRS. BURMA: You don't even look at me...

THE ANGEL: That's your impression. You have a flea on your elbow.

MRS. BURMA *(catches the flea)*: It's true! How did you know?

THE ANGEL: Because I'm looking at you.

MRS. BURMA *(reconciled)*: What are you thinking of?

THE ANGEL: My future.

MRS. BURMA: And not mine?

THE ANGEL: Sure.

MRS. BURMA: So what do you think?

THE ANGEL: I'm going to be an overseer. I'll study bridges and roads at school.

MRS. BURMA: What about me?

THE ANGEL: Give me a cigarette.

MRS. BURMA (*pulls out a pack from under her pillow, gives him a cigarette and lights it for him*): What about me?

THE ANGEL: Light it yourself.

MRS. BURMA: I am a widow...

THE ANGEL: It doesn't matter.

MRS. BURMA: Yes, but being a widow and overseer at the same time doesn't work...

THE ANGEL: You are what you are...

MRS. BURMA: Let's drop it...

THE ANGEL: That is, a widow...

MRS. BURMA: Ah, yes... Are you going to the beach with me on Sunday? Just the two of us...

THE ANGEL: No.

MRS. BURMA: I gave you the rifle. I'll give it to you on Sunday, too. You could be a little nicer... Are you going?

THE ANGEL: No.

MRS. BURMA: Why?

THE ANGEL: Because.

(When Mrs. Burma utters the word "beach" the lights come up on the small stage to the left – the seascape. The ghost of the Diver Cocles appears on the beach. This time the Diver is Papus, who is unrecognizable because of the helmet.)

MRS. BURMA: I thought that angels were completely different... After all, I have my dignity as a woman...

THE DIVER (*like an echo, tragically*): Woman!..

MRS. BURMA (*to the Diver*): Cocles! He's my nephew, I swear! He came from the country!..

THE DIVER: In your bed?

MRS. BURMA: He is resting...

THE DIVER: With you?

MRS. BURMA: He is an overseer... he studies bridges and roads...

THE ANGEL (*to Mrs. Burma*): Give me a bullet.

THE DIVER: I loved you... Even dead, I loved you... I kept your memory intact...

MRS. BURMA (*who looks under her pillow, gives the Angel the bullet*): It's a dum-dum. (*to the Diver*) I, too, Cocles, kept a fond memory of you.

(The angel shoots.)

THE DIVER: You, woman!... You killed my soul!... (*He collapses to the ground*)

MRS. BURMA (*cries in her handkerchief that she took out from under the pillow*): I loved him... Fondly...

THE ANGEL: It's over.

(The little stage to the right – the seascape – goes dark. The shot woke up Melanie and Maus. The Angel cleans the weapon with a gun rod that he took from beneath Mrs. Burma's pillow. Mrs. Burma cries mutely in her handkerchief.)

MELANIE: Thunder...

MAUS: The storm outside...

MELANIE: We can't leave any more... I'm cold... And I'm scared...

MAUS: Take my jacket. *(He gives her his jacket)* Father, are you still here?

TAUS: I am.

MAUS: Do you have a blanket? It's very cold...

TAUS: I don't have one, my son.

MAUS: She's shivering, the poor thing...

KLAUS: Let her do some calisthenics.

MELANIE: No! No calisthenics! *(She cries)* No calisthenics!...

MAUS: She got scared. She's soaking wet.

TAUS: And the child?

MAUS: It's not born yet... *(thunder and rain)* My God, what a storm! Lest the policeman comes!...

TAUS: He's not coming. It's only eight.

MAUS: Fine. My, how she shivers, the poor thing!

KLAUS: Let her do some calisthenics.

MELANIE: No, no! No calisthenics!

(The lights come up again on the little stage to the right – the seascape. There is an iron bed without linens on the beach in the same direction and symmetrical with Mrs. Burma's bed. The bed's end is to the right in such a way that Papus, who is in the bed in a hospital gown, has Mrs. Burma's bed from the other stage in front of him. Mrs. Burma and the Angel face Papus but they ignore each other.)

MAUS: One more altar. It's Job.

MELANIE: It's dad! Let's run!...

MAUS: In this rain? Out of the question!

(The Mass sounds forcefully accompanied by rain and thunder. The dialogues that follow, numbered 1, 2, 3, as well as Papus' monologue, occur simultaneously and separately, in the sense that in each pair one person takes into account only the counterpart's speech, and Papus only his monologue.)

1.

KLAUS: Let her do calisthenics.

TAUS: She could walk round. On four arms and on four legs, like our parents the Sun, Earth and Moon.

KLAUS: But she is a half of a half...

TAUS: The whole is always one half.
KLAUS: Her half is in the widow's bed.
TAUS: It's not that simple. Plato claims...
KLAUS: Who cares about Plato! I believe in mechanics.
TAUS: You're wrong.
KLAUS: Fine. I'm wrong.

2.

MELANIE: Let's run. It's dad, I'm telling you.
MAUS: In this rain? Out of the question! It's an altar.
MELANIE: I'm frozen to the bone. Do you love me?
MAUS: What bones? It's an altar.
MELANIE: The bones of love. My bones of love are frozen.
MAUS: I always loved you.
MELANIE: Me, too... But in this cold...
MAUS: In blankets, not in churches. I mean to say...
MELANIE: It thundered eight times...
MAUS: Even numbers were always lucky for me.
MELANIE: You are my luck. Although you are not my husband.
MAUS: You are very witty tonight.
MELANIE: It's because of the cold.

3.

MRS. BURMA: I loved him fondly...
THE ANGEL: Enough!
MRS. BURMA: But you don't understand. You think that since I'm not an angel I can't... I have my dignity, too.
THE ANGEL: Fine.
MRS. BURMA: You are a child. What would you become without me?
THE ANGEL: An overseer.
MRS. BURMA: No, what would you become in general... How would you manage in life...
THE ANGEL: You have a flea on your elbow.
MRS. BURMA: How you see them. Extraordinary!

PAPUS: Doctor... Nurse... I'm finished... I committed suicide... I shot myself in the left leg... Cut it... No... Cut the other one... There... It's better now... Cut an arm, too... My left arm... There... I feel much better... I'm finished... I'll take it... Nurse, give me a leg... I'm thirsty... Cut, doctor... there... I feel much better each time you cut my nurse... Nurse... Give me a finished...

(The dialogues and Papus' monologue continue, repeated as long as necessary, and finish as Taus and Klaus intervene in each one separately.)

TAUS (*shouts over the uproar*): Enough! Stop it! (*suddenly, it's quiet*) You can't hear yourself think!

KLAUS: The whole lot is a pain in the... We've lost the knack.

(The dialogues and Pappus' monologue resume in low voice accompanied by the Mass in the background.)

TAUS (*goes to Melanie and Maus, who stop whispering and respond in normal voices*): That's it! It's not raining any more. Here, off with my beard! (*furiously*) What are you waiting for? Scram!

MAUS: Well, see, Father, the poor thing...

MELANIE: It's dad! We have to run...

TAUS: Then, what are you waiting for?

MAUS: Right... Good-bye, Father...

MELANIE: Don't tell dad...

TAUS: You're still here?

(The two run on tiptoe. Taus remains in place and covers his forehead with his hands as if recuperating. Meanwhile, Klaus engages in a dialogue with Mrs. Burma. From the moment Klaus talks to Mrs. Burma and the Angel, they stop their dialogue. Now they both speak in normal voices.)

KLAUS: You're a mature woman, Mrs. Burma. It's not nice...

MRS. BURMA: But I'm nice...

KLAUS: I never said you weren't. But, don't you think, with that dog... (*He points to the Angel*)

THE ANGEL (*to Mrs. Burma*): Give me a bullet.

MRS. BURMA (*to the Angel*): Don't be a child! (*to Klaus*.) I am a widow and I am not responsible before anyone!

KLAUS: He's a dog. And it's below your dignity.

THE ANGEL (*gets down from the bed*): Give me a bullet!

MRS. BURMA (*to Klaus*): You are wrong, sir. He is an overseer. (*She kisses the Angel on the forehead*) He is a student at the School of Bridges and Roads. And he is my nephew.

KLAUS: You have many relatives.

MRS. BURMA: What do you mean?

KLAUS: I can't explain to you in his presence...

MRS. BURMA (*to the Angel*): You can go... I'll give you a call, at bridges and roads. (*the Angel gives her the rifle and leaves, humbled*) What did you mean to say?

KLAUS: Let's drop it. I was jealous.

MRS. BURMA (*coquettish*): Of me?

KLAUS: Of you.

(Mrs. Burma makes room for him in the bed beside her. Klaus wants to climb onto the little stage. Taus recovers from his state of apathy.)

TAUS *(to Klaus)*: It's not possible!

MRS. BURMA: Oh, come on, Mr. Taus! I wouldn't have expected that, especially from you...

TAUS: Mrs. Burma, the talk was about Thursday, between four and nine...

KLAUS: We anticipate a little...

TAUS *(points to the armchair)*: And the wife?

KLAUS *(scared)*: Did she hear me?

TAUS: She's sleeping.

KLAUS *(whispers)*: Mrs. Burma, then on Thursday...

MRS. BURMA: Mr. Taus, I want you to know that I'm angry with you. I didn't expect that!

(She pulls the curtain furiously. The lights on the little stage go off.)

TAUS *(to Papius, who resumed his monologue in a loud voice)*: You stop it, too!

PAPUS: True. *(He comes down from the bed)* I got well. Good doctors, good medicine...

KLAUS: The sun, the sea... That helps...

PAPUS: Right. I'm going to destroy them. .. Would you like some... ? *(He takes out photos from the gown's pocket)*

TAUS: No.

PAPUS: Maybe you'll change your minds. Now I'll destroy them.

(He exits. Lights go off on this stage, too. The Mass stops completely.)

KLAUS: Alone, at last...

TAUS: As always...

KLAUS: It's pleasant at your place.

TAUS: I do what I can.

MRS. KLAUS *(yawns)*: And it's so quiet!

TAUS: Did you rest well, madam?

MRS. KLAUS: Perfectly! When it's quiet, I rest perfectly.

TAUS: Here it's always quiet. I live far from the world.

MRS. KLAUS: Interesting... *(She yawns)*

KLAUS: She fell asleep. She didn't hear a thing.

TAUS: I think she didn't.

KLAUS: Otherwise, she would have made a scene!...

TAUS: Oh yes!..

(The ghost of the Diver, this time played by the Angel, enters slowly through the door. The bushy hair and beard—covered at first by the helmet—make it impossible to identify the two different characters. The Diver comes close to them and speaks unintelligibly because of the helmet.)

TAUS: What? *(The Diver repeats his mumbling)* I don't understand a word.

KLAUS: Let's take his helmet off. (*He tries to do that with the Diver's help*) Do you have a screwdriver?

TAUS (*gives him a screwdriver*): It works! (*the helmet is off*) Who are you?

KLAUS: And what are you doing here?

THE DIVER: I was the diver Cocles Burma...

KLAUS: The divers look alike...

TAUS: He's the husband of widow Burma.

THE DIVER: It was written up in all the newspapers.

KLAUS: Then, you are dead.

THE DIVER: Does that bother you?

KLAUS: On the contrary...

THE DIVER: Who of you two is Taus, the watchmaker?

TAUS: That's me.

THE DIVER: I was sent to you.

TAUS: If it's about a repair, come tomorrow. We're closed now. It's eight.

THE DIVER: No. It's about something completely different. I was sent by the counselor Kubich.

TAUS: You don't say! The counselor Kubich, the nudist?

THE DIVER: Yes.

TAUS: He hasn't stopped by for five years since he died. Why didn't he come in person?

THE DIVER: He doesn't have consistency...

KLAUS: How come?

THE DIVER: It's hard to explain. After death, you wander about for seven days as much as you please. That's my case... You'll have the chance soon enough...

TAUS: Not too soon, I hope...

THE DIVER: As you wish. But after seven days, good-bye wandering. They don't let you any more...

TAUS: Who?

THE DIVER: You'll see...

KLAUS: We are not in a hurry...

THE DIVER: For seven years you don't have consistency. You're like a stream. That's why the counselor Kubich could not come in person. He will come in two years.

TAUS: I will be delighted.

THE DIVER: Counselor Kubich called me and said: Cocles, —because, over there, we are not formal...

KLAUS: That's normal.

THE DIVER: Why do you keep interrupting me? Cocles, he said, here is a note. (*He takes out a note from the helmet*) Take it to Taus, from me.

TAUS: How is Mr. Kubich doing?

THE DIVER: Good. He plays the piccolo with the others while phonographs gallop. But he doesn't have consistency yet.

TAUS: And he walks about in the nude?

THE DIVER: Over there, only the divers keep their costumes. Like they do in the water. And we listen to the little bells that dangle from women's nipples. Everything is speckled with blue, and women have little round bells. And when they walk, the bells tinkle...

TAUS: I think that Mr. Kubich listens to them all day long... I know him...

THE DIVER: Mr. Kubich doesn't have time. He stays to the side and talks about thermal radiation with a lemonade vendor.

KLAUS: Like my wife...

THE DIVER: What wife?

KLAUS (*points to the armchair*): There. She's dead...

THE DIVER: Apparent death.

TAUS: And what did Mr. Kubich write to me?

THE DIVER: Patience! He called me and said: Cocles, something doesn't work in the world. Go tell Taus.

TAUS: A lot of things don't work in the world...

KLAUS: Be more specific...

THE DIVER: More specific? OK. It's love.

KLAUS: Love works...

THE DIVER: Really? Then what is this?

(The little stage to the right—the seascape—lights up, where Melanie and Maus shiver wretchedly because of the cold.)

TAUS: The dramas of love...

KLAUS: Jealousy and medicine...

(The little stage darkens.)

THE DIVER: Over there (*He points to the sky*) we see things differently. Mr. Kubich told me: Cocles, explain that to the watchmaker. He understands mechanisms. Read this to him from me. (*He reads the note*) "In the case where two coherent rays appear from a ray through reflection and refraction, we find that their total entropy is greater than that of the initial ray; we can recompose a single ray from two coherent rays through proper reflection and refraction. The entropy of the two coherent rays must, therefore, be equal to that of the initial ray." (*to Taus*) Do you understand?

TAUS: Sure, why not.

(The Diver gestures with his arm. The little stage to the left—the sidewalk café—lights up. Mrs. Burma's bed has disappeared; in its stead are the table and chairs. Melanie and Maus are begging in squalor. Mrs. Burma passes by and refuses to give them anything. The two look at each other sadly. The light on the little stage goes off.)

THE DIVER (*reads further*): "The contradiction is resolved if we renounce the activity of entropy; one of the two rays is determined in all the details of its oscillation by the other: it is not statistically independent of the other." That's what Mr. Kubich wrote.

KLAUS: It's too much...

THE DIVER: I'm going to go now.

TAUS: Give my regards to Mr. Kubich.

KLAUS: Are you going to see your widow?

THE DIVER: Maybe. Why do you ask?

KLAUS: Just like that...

THE DIVER: I know what you think.

(The Diver exits. Circus music. Three saltimbanques, their faces covered by very pale masks; Papius, costumed as Atlas, and Melanie and Mrs. Burma, both with long hair in a different color than usual. They are dressed in costumes and unrecognizable.

The two women carry a heavy globe lit from within. When they reach stage center, they put the globe into Atlas' arms and position themselves to his right and left in pictorial poses. The globe is attached to an invisible thread that will lift it at the right moment.

Atlas struggles but can't hold the weight of the globe by himself. He stumbles, nearly falls. The two women support Atlas' arms, which would collapse without them. Atlas then lifts the globe up to his chest. Enters the Centaur, who is Maus but unrecognizable under his square mask. He approaches the group, stretching his arms out to the two women. Each one in turn wants to come to him but they can't leave Atlas. In despair, they sense that if they did so Atlas, and they, would collapse.

The Centaur thrusts a dagger into his chest and slowly exits wounded. Hesitating at first the two women follow him, one by one. Atlas, alone and powerless, crushed under the globe's weight, squats slowly, all his movements now in slow motion. Drum roll. In a supreme effort, Atlas lifts the globe above his head and throws it in the air. The globe rises slowly and erratically. Atlas follows the globe, his arms reaching for it. As he lifts off the ground, rising slightly, the Mass crescendos

Melanie and Maus re-enter the stage in their usual costumes. They don't see what's happening and crouch frozen on the ground in their customary place. When the globe has disappeared in the air, Klaus and Taus applaud anemically. Atlas returns to the ground, salutes and exits.)

MRS. KLAUS (*yawns*): It wasn't so amusing...

TAUS: That may be, madam, but, statistically, it was true.

MRS. KLAUS: The statistical point of view makes me sleepy. (*She yawns*)

TAUS: It's just a point of view...

KLAUS: Let her sleep. I will explain it to her tomorrow morning...

TAUS: Were you bored?

KLAUS: Not at all! The girls were pretty. One of them reminded me of Mrs. Burma...

Where could she be now?

TAUS: Forget her... We've got to talk to the lovers. Otherwise, counselor Kubich might get angry.

KLAUS: You could lose him as a client...

TAUS: I do what I can...

(He shows him the armchair. Klaus sits comfortably, stretches his legs and falls asleep. Taus lights a cigarette and goes to the two lovers.)

TAUS: Melanie...

MELANIE: *(half asleep)* Leave me alone... I'm tired...

TAUS: Melanie...

MELANIE: I can't take it any more!.. Why don't you let me sleep?

TAUS: I want to talk to you.

MELANIE: I can't take it any more!.. I sleep in churches, in vacant lots... I haven't washed in five days...

TAUS: What about love?

MELANIE: I can't take it any more!.. I want home!... *(She cries.)*

(Melanie falls asleep again. Taus goes to the middle of the stage and starts shouting.)

TAUS: Papus! Hey, Papus!...

(The little stage to the right – the seascape – lights up. Papus lies in the hospital bed leaning on an elbow facing the audience reading a magazine. He talks without lifting his eyes from the page.)

PAPUS: Did anybody call me?

TAUS: Yes, me.

PAPUS: Do you want any... ? *(He takes out a collection of photos from his gown's pocket)*

TAUS: No.

PAPUS: Then, what?

TAUS: Let's talk about your daughter.

PAPUS: I don't have one. I'm convalescent.

TAUS: About Melanie.

PAPUS: I don't have that.

TAUS: She's your daughter.

PAPUS: I'm a nurse. I love an orphan.

TAUS: It's not about Mrs. Burma, but Melanie. She wants to come home.

PAPUS: I will destroy her. With the shoe and the gendarmes.

TAUS: You are so willing to call the police. She can't take it any more. She wants home.

PAPUS: I have a situation. Nurse... Nurse!...

(The small stage to the right – the sidewalk café – lights up. The bed is there again, aligned with Papus' bed. Taus is on the big stage between them. Mrs. Burma lies down in the same position as Papus but with her feet toward him in such a way that they face each other on two different stages, both in bed. Next to her, toward the background, the Angel, half-raised in bed, holds the rifle in his hand, oblivious and motionless.)

MRS. BURMA (*to Papus*): Did you call me?
PAPUS: I forgot my saddle in the rain. Give me some syrup.
MRS. BURMA (*tenderly*): You are not allowed...
PAPUS: Then give me zinc ointment. I'm thirsty.
MRS. BURMA: You are not allowed.
TAUS: Mrs. Burma, you persuade him.
MRS. BURMA: I can't. (*She points to the Angel*) I'm unarmed.
TAUS: But you're a woman!..

(*Brief, solemn and forceful outburst of the Mass. A few fireworks.*)

MRS. BURMA (*astonished*): It's true!...
TAUS: You convince him... She sleeps in vacant lots, she shivers, she wants home...
MRS. BURMA: Fine. (*to Papus.*) You, idiot!
PAPUS (*still reading the magazine*): Did you call me?
MRS. BURMA: Are you thirsty?
PAPUS: Yes.
MRS. BURMA: Fine. Then I'll give you your daughter.
PAPUS: I'm not allowed.
MRS. BURMA: Yes, you are. You are convalescent.
PAPUS: I have witnesses.
MRS. BURMA: Everybody has witnesses. Witnesses don't count.
PAPUS: Yes, but mine are non-flammable. Will you marry me?
MRS. BURMA: No.
PAPUS: Why?
MRS. BURMA: Because you don't wash.
PAPUS: I'm not allowed.
MRS. BURMA: Yes, you are.
PAPUS: No, I'm not.
MRS. BURMA: Come on, dear Papus! You wash, Mrs. Burma marries you and Melanie will give you little grandchildren. Why don't you want that?
PAPUS: I won't wash!
MRS. BURMA: At least your neck...
PAPUS: No!
MRS. BURMA: Then your ears...
PAPUS: No!
MRS. BURMA: At least your teeth...
TAUS: Out of love...
PAPUS: So be it!.. (*to Mrs. Burma*) Consider yourself engaged.
MRS. BURMA: I'll make a note of it.
TAUS: Congratulations.
MRS. BURMA: Thanks.
TAUS: And Melanie?..
MRS. BURMA: Don't you worry. Now, that she has a mother...

(Papus, bored, gets down from his bed and pulls the curtain over his stage.)

TAUS: Mrs. Burma, you are a kind-hearted woman!

MRS. BURMA: But I have my own suffering... *(She points to the Angel)* I am suspicious...

TAUS: But it's not sure...

MRS. BURMA: That's the point, it's not sure... How is your friend doing?

TAUS: Klaus? I think he's asleep by his wife's side.

MRS. BURMA *(pensive)*: But it's not sure...

(Mrs. Burma remains motionless. Taus goes to Melanie.)

TAUS: Melanie...

MELANIE: Leave me alone!... *(She cries in her sleep)*

TAUS: That's it! He will take you back!

MELANIE *(waking up)*: Who?

TAUS: Your father.

MELANIE: Home?

TAUS: Yes. He is marrying the widow Burma...

MELANIE: She is a kind-hearted woman. She always understood me...

TAUS: Papus brushed his teeth. He's a new man.

MELANIE: How wonderful!.. And the ears, too? *(She cries)*

TAUS: Not the ears, yet. But, maybe, in time...

MELANIE: Hope is everything. I have very high expectations.

TAUS: That's very good, because they make it easy...

MELANIE *(curious)*: What do they make easy?

TAUS: The separation.

MELANIE: What separation?

TAUS *(points to Maus)*: From him...

MELANIE: Right...

TAUS: Now I'll leave you alone.

MELANIE: Why?

TAUS: For you to wake him up and tell him. To explain to him.

MELANIE: Why? He has very high expectations and I am cold. I am going home.

TAUS: Aren't you going to say good-bye?

MELANIE: I rarely ever say good-by.

TAUS: Then I'll walk you to the corner, to the Boulevard of the Barracks.

MELANIE: I can manage on my own from there... *(She cries)*

(They both leave. Klaus stands up, as if waiting for that moment, and goes to the stage with Mrs. Burma and the Angel.)

KLAUS *(gallantly)*: Good evening, lovely lady...

MRS. BURMA: Ah, Mr. Klaus! Gallant, as always! How are you, how are things?

KLAUS: So-so...

MRS. BURMA: What brings you here?

KLAUS: I can't talk to you with the dog...

MRS. BURMA: He doesn't hear us.. He's thinking.

KLAUS: It doesn't matter! Kick him out...

MRS. BURMA: Just a second... *(to the Angel)* You, go to the movies...

(The Angel stands up, stretches out his hand, Mrs. Burma gives him money from under the pillow. The Angel exits, still absent-minded.)

MRS. BURMA *(to Klaus)*: That's it!... What did you want to tell me?

KLAUS: Matters of the heart... *(He climbs onto her stage)*

MRS. BURMA: Oh, Mr. Klaus!..

(Klaus pulls the curtain over the small stage. Taus enters.)

MAUS *(wakes up with a start, scared)* Don't shoot! I surrender!

TAUS: I'm not shooting.

MAUS *(coming to himself)*: It was you?

TAUS: It was me. Have you been here long?

MAUS: Two years. I came to say good-bye.

TAUS: You are leaving?

MAUS: Yes. For New Zealand. I found a job as a diver. I have high expectations.

TAUS: Then, I wish you a safe journey.

MAUS: Good-bye... *(He exits)*

TAUS: Klaus!... Where the heck are you? *(to the armchair)* Madam, do you know where Klaus might be?... She sleeps all the time... Klaaaus!..

KLAUS *(pushes aside the curtain of the small stage and appears, fixing his clothes)*: I'm here!

TAUS: Where have you been?

KLAUS: I went to the restroom.

TAUS: Human needs...

KLAUS: Sure... And you?

TAUS: I went to the Boulevard of the Barracks.

KLAUS: You started hanging around the barracks! *(He laughs like at a good joke)* I miss the tiger. I wonder what he is doing.

TAUS *(checks his watch)*: It's eight now. It's time for his piano lesson. Do you want to hear him play?

KLAUS: I can hardly wait...

TAUS: Please! *(He steps aside and walks towards the door, accompanying the imaginary Klaus. The real Klaus goes to the armchair, where he falls asleep. Taus speaks while walking.)* He has a new teacher. He ate the old one, last week... *(He exits, stepping aside to make room for the imaginary Klaus.)*

MRS. BURMA *(from behind the curtain)*: Klaus! I'm coming too, in a second...

(The Angel enters, goes to Mrs. Klaus and kisses her on the forehead.)

MRS. KLAUS: Ernst!... *(She wakes up and yawns)* What does it mean when you dream that an Angel kisses you?

THE ANGEL: I don't know.

MRS. KLAUS: Interesting! *(She yawns)* Have you been here long?

THE ANGEL: Since only just now.

MRS. KLAUS: Do you know where my husband might be?

THE ANGEL: I killed him.

MRS. KLAUS: When? *(She yawns)*

THE ANGEL: Just now.

MRS. KLAUS: What about Mr. Taus?

THE ANGEL: I killed him, too. I killed everyone.

MRS. KLAUS *(yawning terribly)*: Why did you kill them?

THE ANGEL: So I can be an overseer.

MRS. KLAUS: That's not a reason. *(She yawns)* Why do you want to be an overseer?

THE ANGEL: Because I love you. *(He falls on his knees before her)*

MRS. KLAUS *(yawns)*: Oh, no!... I am a housewife...

THE ANGEL *(passionately)*: Precisely!

MRS. KLAUS: And since when do you love me?

THE ANGEL: Since only just now... *(He hugs her knees)*

(Mrs. Burma appears from behind the curtain of the little stage, carrying the rifle.)

MRS. BURMA: Didn't you go to the movies?

THE ANGEL *(turns his head toward her)*: Stay where you are!

MRS. KLAUS: Come down, dear... *(She yawns)* You are doing me a favor...

THE ANGEL: If you come, I'll beat you!

MRS. BURMA: You'll beat me, who loved you? Me, who adored you? I'm committing suicide with this weapon!

MRS. KLAUS: Is it loaded? *(She yawns)*

MRS. BURMA: Yes!

THE ANGEL: What are you waiting for?

MRS. BURMA: You, dog!... He was right!... *(She points to Mrs. Klaus)*

THE ANGEL *(looking closely at Mrs. Klaus)*: What do you mean "he?" Don't you see it's a woman?

MRS. BURMA: I see! So, you're cheating on me! With a woman! Oh, God! Love blinded me!... I thought it was Klaus!... *(desperate)* Then, die, dog! *(She shoots. The Angel collapses, fatally wounded. Short pause. Then, to Mrs. Klaus)* Please, forgive me, madam...

MRS. KLAUS: I understand you perfectly. *(She yawns)*

(Mrs. Burma goes behind the curtain of the small stage, which is lit, even though the curtain is drawn. Klaus stands up from the armchair and crosses to stage center where he meets with Taus, who entered, stepping aside politely and continuing his discussion with the imaginary Klaus.)

TAUS: He was making a fuss over nothing. What does a hand count for a piano teacher?

KLAUS: If we shouldn't have come, he would have eaten both of his hands.

TAUS: These new teachers, they are like this. Two weeks ago, the old teacher left home without both of his legs, and he didn't say a word.

MRS. KLAUS (*yawns*): I think it's time to go home. What's the time?

TAUS: It's early, madam. It's eight...

MRS. KLAUS: At nine I have to be at my job...

TAUS: As you wish...

KLAUS: Fine, my dear. Let's go. Good bye, Taus. It was very pleasant at your place.

TAUS: I hope you come again...

KLAUS: Tomorrow, at eight o'clock, I'll be here...

TAUS: I'll be waiting for you. You are coming together, aren't you?

MRS. KLAUS: Of course. (*She yawns.*) Good bye...

(Taus accompanies his guests politely. They completely ignore the dead body of the Angel. After Klaus' departure, a few clocks strike eight o'clock. Taus listens to them, then goes to the little stage to the left—the sidewalk café—where one can see the lights on behind the curtain.)

TAUS: Mrs. Burma!..

MRS. BURMA (*sticking out only her head*): Ah! Mr. Taus!... Long time no see... Had I known...

TAUS: Did I bother you?

MRS. BURMA: You, bother me? (*confidentially*) I was with someone...

TAUS: I see...

MRS. BURMA: No, no... It's not what you think!... It's a young man. I give him advice for his trip. He is leaving for New Zealand. He wants to be a diver. And I, as a diver's widow...

TAUS: I see... I stopped by only to ask you to turn off the light.

MRS. BURMA: I'll turn it off immediately. One can give advice in the dark too, right? (*She laughs, knowingly.*) Mr. Taus, when can you come for a little longer?

TAUS: I'll find some time... How is Papus doing?

MRS. BURMA: He washes his ears. (*She laughs*) For the wedding...

(Mrs. Burma goes behind the curtain. The light on the little stage goes off. The clocks strike again eight o'clock. The ghost of the Diver enters.)

THE DIVER: Are you alone?

TAUS: As always...

THE DIVER: He sent me to you again...

TAUS: Mr. Kubich is very active...

THE DIVER: Mr. Kubich has nothing to do with it. He doesn't even have consistency...

TAUS: You said that he...

THE DIVER: That's because there were other people present...

TAUS: I see...

THE DIVER: Of course...

TAUS: Then who?
THE DIVER: The other one...
TAUS: What other one?
THE DIVER: The one who has consistency...
TAUS: Pappus?
THE DIVER: Pappus plays a rather insignificant role. He has been dead for only sixty-five years...
TAUS: Then?
THE DIVER: If you haven't found out, I can't tell you. It's too big a secret.
TAUS: And what does he want?
THE DIVER: He told me to tell you that (*He takes out a note from his helmet and reads*): "the core of the problem was not the intensity of the formula but the dependence linked univocally to it, between the energy, frequency and entropy of radiation." That's all...
TAUS: Sounds like a quotation.
THE DIVER: He steals from books. (*convinced*) He has the right!
TAUS: He does.
THE DIVER: Then, I'll go. Good-bye.
TAUS: Good-bye? Maybe you'll come again...
THE DIVER: Tomorrow is the seventh day. The wandering is over!
TAUS: Good-bye, then!...

(The ghost of the Diver walks towards the door. Taus accompanies him and notices the dead Angel.)

TAUS: Can you give me a hand?
THE DIVER: Gladly. (*He turns and looks at the Angel*) What's that?
TAUS: An angel. He's dead, too...
THE DIVER: These people drop like flies. What do you want to do with him?
TAUS: Let's feed him to the tiger. Will you help?
THE DIVER: Of course!.. Let's go...

(They grab the body of the Angel from both ends and exit slowly, accompanied by the sounds of the Mass.)

CURTAIN

(1966)