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Luigi Lunari

# Under a Bridge, along a River

Eight scenes

English text by Mica Bagnasco

*The English text is a word to word translation from the original Italian and is not intended for stage production.*

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What usefulness can mankind gain from all the  
hard work he's doing under the sun?...  
Plenty of knowledge, plenty of struggles.  
He, who increases the knowledge, increases the struggles.

The Ecclesiastes. 250 B.C.

Who can treasure our collective memory better than women? Their connection to mother nature finds them equal mothers, ever so loyal to life, forcing them to renew it there where the destructive power of men passes through, men's connection to mother nature is ever so feeble and forgetful despite the charm it spills on them and the game field of history. (Not the ancient history, that being related to the origins and the birth of civilizations it's a woman's phenomenon, but today's history, that by being uprooted from its origins it's a sheer outcome of power.

At this point it would be dutiful to turn over to women the reconstruction (...) of all those lands where devastation occurred. However, us westerners, who flaunt to the Arab 's world the emancipation of our women, will never allow them to do so, since we've "liberated" them only what's necessary to satisfy men's desires, or else, if those are extinct, only what's necessary not to jeopardize men's confidence. Different ways of being talibans: "With knife and fork – as Nietzsche would say – instead of biting with our teeth", granted the table metaphor, from which we partake more than our guests, might still hold any meaning.

Umberto Galimberti - From "D" supplement of "La Repubblica": June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003

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## Characters

A Bum

A Gentleman

A Woman

The action takes place under a bridge, along a river...

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## Scene One

*Under a bridge, along a river, in the outskirts of a city. A steep bank, with sporadic tufts of grass, imprinted the trace of a path ascending toward the road.*

*On one side of the stage, a mount of garbage of an illegal dump.*

*At the other side, protected by the bridge, a shack made out of cardboard and wooden panels, almost like a big cardboard box which serves, obviously, as a shelter for some desperate person. Leaning against the shack a duffel bag.*

*Sitting on the ground, facing the audience while staring at the ever moving water, there's a "Bum": forty years old, may be less, not necessarily filthy, neither slovenly nor overly bundled up. His clothes, though dirty and worn out, must have been very good once, given the fine quality of their fabric and style. He's holding a wooden stick and is picking up objects brought by the water stream, he holds them briefly one by one with his stick only to relinquish them to their destiny, almost as if not worthy of his attention.*

*All of a sudden he turns toward the shack and says:*

THE BUM

A pillow. It's all rotten.

*(Pause)*

A tin box...

*(Pause)*

A doll...

By the way: a few weeks ago, before you came here, a corpse passed by...A woman, half naked, her eyes wide open...actually...what was left of her eyes.

I let her go and I didn't say a word to anyone...God forbid! I remembered about the time that... – I was driving – I picked up a man who had been hurt in an accident, I took him to the hospital: and the hospital and the police gave me such a hard time...Do you remember? I had just gotten my driver license...Eh?...

*(No answer from the shack.)*

Not to mention the back seat...all covered with blood.

*(Pause. Suddenly a noise from above. The Bum turns his eyes to the sky... waiting.*

*From up high a cart of new refuse is being added to the dump, paper, empty cans, rags...)*

Here comes our daily bonanza...

*(The bum gets closer to the latest additions, scrounges a bit: examines an empty package of cigarettes, a lighter, a crooked fork...picks up a*

*piece of paper, studies it and reads:)*

Saint Rita from Lima...ora pro nobis...Sure, all we need is the Saints to take care of us. Go ahead and pray for those in need!

*(Tears the piece of paper into bits and throws them back on the pile.)*Nothing!

*(Suddenly, we hear a cell phone ringing.)*

A WOMAN'S VOICE *(Announces from the shack)*

Telephone!

THE BUM

It's not mine!..

*(Pause)*

I said it's not mine...

*(A woman comes out of the shack – about sixty-five years old – she also, is wearing clothes that must have been of good quality: perhaps a worn out fur coat. The woman moves next to the duffel bag, searches through it, pulls out a cell phone, turns it on, talks and listens:)*

THE WOMAN

Hello?...Yes, we're here...we're here...I don't know: he might've turned it off. He never keeps it on...Yes. All right...I don't know about today. No, I don't think we're going away...All right. I understand.

*(She turns off the cell.)*

...He tried to reach you on your cell phone but you didn't answer. Where is it? Did you turn it off?

THE BUM

I threw it away.

THE WOMAN

Why?

THE BUM

Because I don't need it. Don't you have yours? One is plenty.

THE WOMAN

Where did you throw it?

THE BUM

*(A bit annoyed)*

What do I know? Over there...or may be... in the water. I don't like the idea that people can follow me everywhere and find me when ever they want to...it feels like I'm being spied on, actually, it makes me feel like a prisoner.

THE WOMAN

If you don't want to use it, you can turn it off.

THE BUM

Then, what's the point of having it?

THE WOMAN

This way, you can turn it on when ever you feel like it?

THE BUM

I never feel like it, so I threw it away. ...Anyway, I'm going to get the newspaper.

THE WOMAN

Wait a minute! He'll be here any time.

THE BUM

Is that why he called you?

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THE WOMAN            Yes.

THE BUM              Why didn't you tell me?

THE WOMAN            I'm telling you now.

THE BUM              I'm going to get the newspaper.

THE WOMAN            What if he gets here?

THE BUM              Let him wait.  
*(He walks towards the riverbank)*

THE WOMAN            Did you wash yourself?

THE BUM              Yes.

THE WOMAN            Your neck too?

THE BUM              Yes, my neck and behind my ears too.

THE WOMAN            You still look dirty to me.

THE BUM              That's because the water is dirty. The usual industrial waste. They should be told: you know whom!

THE WOMAN            I know, I know.

THE BUM              The owner of the factory!  
*(He leaves. The woman follows him with her eyes for a brief moment, and then kneels on a cardboard box, or something that resembles a kneeler. She makes the sign of the cross and moves her lips as in prayer.  
A few moments later, we hear a car come to a stop.  
The Woman goes into the shack, she comes out briefly after holding a blanket, she hangs it somewhere as if to air it a bit.  
A Gentleman appears. He's slightly younger than the Bum. He dresses with the simple, proper elegance of a manager...a gray woolen suit, perhaps a camel coat...  
He looks from above and walks down along the small path. He suddenly stumbles which brings him to a suppressed curse...  
He gives a questioning look to the Woman, gesticulating with his hands and head as if to say: "...where is he?")*

THE WOMAN            He went to get the newspaper.

THE GENTLEMAN        When is he coming back?

THE WOMAN            I don't know: it depends.

THE GENTLEMAN        Usually how long does it take him?

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- THE WOMAN            Five to ten minutes. But there's no rule, once he was gone for two days.
- THE GENTLEMAN      Doesn't he tell you?
- THE WOMAN            He doesn't even realize it. He doesn't do it on purpose. It just happens and...so he goes.
- THE WOMAN            Would you like to sit?
- THE GENTLEMAN      Where?
- THE WOMAN            We have a chair.  
*(The woman enters the shack, to come out shortly after with some sort of a miniature armchair, which is: dirty and falling apart. The gentleman reluctantly sits on it, careful not to get his clothes dirty.)*
- THE GENTLEMAN      *(after a pause, a bit uncomfortable and impatient.)*  
He needs to sign some papers for me...
- THE WOMAN            Again?
- THE GENTLEMAN      These should be the last ones. Given he doesn't change his mind!...
- THE WOMAN            I don't think he's going to change his mind.  
*(Other indignant gesture on the Gentleman part. The woman resumes the cleaning of the blanket. Long pause. Then...)*
- THE GENTLEMAN      *(Speaks with embarrassment)* You know...Business is going well. Even too well: I hope it continues. We had to add an extra shift at the factory...our branch in Rumania also...  
*(He pauses. The Woman remains silent.)*  
Don't you care?
- THE WOMAN            I'm happy for you.
- THE GENTLEMAN      Well, not just for me. I give work to three thousand people: which makes fifteen thousand people that eat, because of me...I mean...us... Pretty good eh? I feed fifteen thousand people!
- THE WOMAN            Just as many as they feed you.
- THE GENTLEMAN      *(He smiles bitterly, shakes his head)*  
Who used to say that?
- THE WOMAN            You know who!  
*(Pause. The gentleman gives up. Shakes his head, wrings his hands then says.)*
- THE GENTLEMAN      Oh! Mom!...  
*(It could be a simple expression "Italian way", especially because the Woman doesn't give it any weigh. After another pause, sufficiently long, the Gentleman repeats himself, this time forcibly so.)*
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Mom!  
*(The Woman stops what she's doing, turns toward him.)*  
Mom, tell me why...?

THE WOMAN           Why what?

THE GENTLEMAN   *(Bringing his hands together in agony)*  
Why...this! What has happened?...

THE WOMAN           Here he comes. Be quiet!...

THE GENTLEMAN   *(Abruptly.)*  
Oh, stop it! Why should I be quiet? All the better if he hears me, so he can answer himself!  
*(The Bum enters. Perhaps he has heard the last line, but he shows no signs of understanding what's going on. He's holding a newspaper.)*  
Did you hear me?

THE BUM             Walter Polis died.

THE GENTLEMAN   Whom?

THE BUM             Walter Polis. He died.

THE GENTLEMAN   Who is he?

THE BUM             *(correcting him)*  
Who "was" he?

THE GENTLEMAN   Who "was" he?

THE BUM             I don't know. But he's undoubtedly dead. I saw the obituary on the paper.  
*(Opens the newspaper and reads.)*  
"The wife, son, nephew announce the death of Walter Polis...employee of the Municipal Electrical Agency."

THE GENTLEMAN   Did you... know him?

THE BUM             No.  
*(He's rereading the obituary with vivacious curiosity. Pause.)*  
Isn't that incredible? One dies...and wife and son have nothing to say but:  
"He was and employee of the Municipal Electrical Agency"!

THE GENTLEMAN   *(Trying to be patient.)*  
Evidently...that must have been his job.

THE BUM             I don't buy it. How can it be possible that a wife, a son, had nothing to say? An adjective... about the deceased, an hint of their grief...nothing. "He's dead" that's all. How do you explain it?

THE GENTLEMAN   I don't have any need to explain it.

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THE BUM

It can't be about money, because if a family is really poor, they're not going to put an obituary on the paper. On the other hand, between son and nephew they used a comma, instead of "and" that would've been more correct, which leads one to believe that they used their words sparingly. So, how do you explain that?

Maybe he was one of those tyrants that when they pass away, everybody jumps up and down. Or may be he was someone that one day, thirty years earlier, had abandoned his wife and son, and after thirty years he died, so there's nothing left to do but burying him, so he died, amen!

THE GENTLEMAN Listen, I...

THE BUM

What about that nephew? "The wife, son, nephew..." Who is he? His son's son, his brother's son or his sister's son? And this brother or this sister, where are they? Are they all dead? Or perhaps, they never forgave him for having left and dumped on them... his own wife and son?

And that nephew, is the only one with any Christian compassion left, and perhaps he's even the only one who went to the funeral!...

Do you know that people could write novels on the life of a man like this? Yes, about someone that when he dies, after an entire life, his wife and son have nothing to say, except to: announce his death. And this mysterious nephew, who suddenly appears from behind a column or a bush...what a formidable twist! Don't you think?

No need to answer right away. It's not an easy answer, I know. I can already tell, that this story is gonna stick to my head and God knows when I'm going get rid of it...it could become an obsession, like one of those songs that one keeps senselessly repeating for hours, unable to stop.

My only hope is that in tomorrow's paper there'll be a more interesting news to focus on. One problem begets another. Just like that time that the unions organized a demonstration against our factory...(remember how worried we were?)...well...the day before, there was the attack at the Twin Towers in New York...so everybody forgot all about the demonstration! As I said : One problem begets another. Indeed.

*(Abruptly to the gentleman.)*

Did you need anything?

THE GENTLEMAN *(Trying to control himself)*  
...some signatures...here...

THE BUM Now?

THE GENTLEMAN Now! Yes, now...what's the problem?

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- THE BUM I don't feel like it right now.  
*(The Gentleman glances to the Woman)*
- THE WOMAN *(To the Bum)*  
It'll take you a moment...
- THE BUM How many are there?
- THE GENTLEMAN Five or six...
- THE BUM Five or six?
- THE GENTLEMAN Eight...there're eight.
- THE BUM *(to the Woman, shaking his head, as if to say – or perhaps saying it:)*  
See how he's always trying to cheat?
- THE WOMAN It'll take you a moment.  
*(The Bum searches for a pen without finding it, the Gentleman hands him his. The Bum wipes his hand on his pants before he takes it, then he signs.*  
*The Woman and the Gentleman look at each other in understanding. Leaning on an improvised table, the Bum signs a few papers, at the umpteenth one he says:)*
- THE BUM What is this? A Power of Attorney: for five years? Did you have to put five years?
- THE GENTLEMAN *(annoyed but controlling himself)*  
It's the law. A Power of Attorney must have an expiration date.
- THE BUM So you'll be back in five years to make me sign another one of these?  
*(The Gentleman doesn't answer. He looks at the Woman as if to say: "You see?" still refraining himself, while the Bum – though reluctantly so – is now signing)*  
...seven...eight...Done.
- THE GENTLEMAN Thank you.
- THE BUM Anything else?
- THE GENTLEMAN No. That's all.  
*(He's about to leave but hesitates for a moment)*  
What about food? Do you have enough?
- THE BUM We manage, don't worry.  
*(The Gentleman turns to the Woman)*
- THE WOMAN Don't worry, we manage.
- THE GENTLEMAN Do you...need anything else?  
*(The Bum opens his arms as if to say: no. The Gentleman hesitates a bit embarrassed he says:)*
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If you need anything...call.

*(He leaves. The Woman follows him with her eyes as she nods)*

*Right before the Gentleman exits, the conventional theatrical action comes to an abrupt stop. The characters become actors; they move outside of the dramatic action and position themselves into the places for the following scene. Once settled into their positions, the actors resume their characters roles.*

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## Scene Two

*(On the scene, the Bum and the Woman. The Bum is reading the newspaper. The Woman is looking into the sun, toward the path from where the Gentleman walked away. A doubtful smirk on her face, then:*

THE WOMAN           He wasn't done.

THE BUM               What?

THE WOMAN           When he left yesterday, he still had something to say.

THE BUM               *(While reading the newspaper)*  
Then he'll be back. Isn't this around his usual time?

THE WOMAN           But...with me or with you?

THE BUM               Pardon me...what? I didn't hear you.

THE WOMAN           Will he want to talk with me... or you?

THE BUM               *(Uninterested)*  
Perhaps...with both.

THE WOMAN           No. Not both.  
*(Pause. The Bum puts the newspaper away)*

THE BUM               Mom...  
*(Pause. The Woman seems to be waiting for the Gentleman's return)*  
Mom...He's strange, don't you think? He keeps asking us if we need anything...He reminds me of...do you know who Diogenes is?

THE WOMAN           No, I don't know who Diogenes is.

THE BUM               He was a Greek philosopher. He lived in a barrel. A Bum. Did you hear me?

THE WOMAN           I heard you.

THE BUM               One day, Alexander the Great goes to visit him. Do you know who Alexander the Great was?

THE WOMAN           I've heard of him.

THE BUM               An Emperor. In those times Emperors went to visit philosophers...just like God in the Bible, who, every now and then, came down and spoke to the people. Diogenes was there, sitting on the ground next to his

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barrel...just like the two of us! Alexander came, they talked, chatted... I don't know what about...history doesn't tell us.

Then when it was time to leave, Alexander asked him if he needed anything and if there was anything he could do for him.

Do you know what Diogenes told him?

THE WOMAN Move out of the sun, you're casting a shadow on me.

THE BUM See...you knew it? The first time I was told this story, I thought it was a joke. But then I asked myself...What could Alexander the Great have done for Diogenes? Offered him a job? Given him some money?...What could Diogenes have needed? To tell you the truth, the only thing that Alexander could've done for him, was...to get out of the sun. It sounds like a joke...however, it's the fairest and most profound thing one could've said, the wisest!...Nevertheless, it wasn't easy to grasp.

*(The sunbeams are now reaching a clearing under the bridge.)*

Ah, the sun! How Beautiful.

*(He smiles, closes his eyes, enjoys the sun beams with abandon. Then moves toward the Woman and hugs her with tenderness:)*

Mom!...I don't need you either!

THE WOMAN I know.

*(The Bum holds the Woman close and smiles happily. Then:)*

THE BUM You were right. Here comes Alexander the Great.

*(The Gentleman enters the scene, stepping down the riverbank.)*

Mom was right.

THE GENTLEMAN What?

THE BUM Have you forgotten something?

THE GENTLEMAN I haven't forgotten anything. But...we need to talk.

THE BUM To me? Or to Mom?

THE GENTLEMAN To you.

THE BUM Now? Today?

THE GENTLEMAN When then?

THE BUM When ever you want. I'm always here...

THE GENTLEMAN Now!

THE BUM So then...today. I knew it!

*(The Gentleman tries so hard not to explode.)*

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- THE GENTLEMAN Shall we go home, or my office?
- THE BUM Why?
- THE GENTLEMAN So we can talk peacefully.
- THE BUM Here there's all the peace you want. There's even the sun...
- THE GENTLEMAN Here?  
(*He takes a look around.*)
- THE WOMAN If you want me to leave...I'll leave.
- THE GENTLEMAN (*Uneasily*)  
Of course not.
- THE WOMAN (*Lying with irony*)  
I have things to do around the house...  
(*She moves toward the shack. Pause. The Bum is enjoying the sun. The Gentleman looks at him then.*)
- THE GENTLEMAN ...It's about things you already know. Next week is the fiftieth anniversary of the factory...It's also the first anniversary of Dad's death. So I...actually...everybody... thought of celebrating the two events at the same time by throwing a big party...
- THE BUM Everybody whom?
- THE GENTLEMAN Excuse me? Everybody...everybody! The Administration Committee, the Press Committee...the various offices, Public Relations...
- THE BUM I got it.  
(*Almost prompting*)  
"By throwing a big party..."
- THE GENTLEMAN Excuse me?
- THE BUM You were saying: "By throwing a big party..."
- THE GENTLEMAN (*Refraining himself*)  
That's right...the usual things...For sure there'll be the Undersecretary of the Commerce, perhaps even the Secretary of State! I'm doing my best to get the Minister of the Foreign Affairs to show up also. After all...we qualify. Given the circumstances I've decided to inaugurate a nursery: so the workers can leave their children there, the women that is. By the way, it has been done in the U.S. and in England with excellent results; an increase in productivity of six per cent. Cost...irrelevant. Anyway, an inauguration calls for Ministers, whom as you know, when it comes to cut a ribbon will all be there! Not to mention TV stations, the Bishop who will say mass outside in front of the cafeteria, after which he'll bless the nursery and of course Dad's bust which we put in the lobby. It doesn't look much like him...what could I do? The sculptor was recommended by the Chamber of Com-
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merce, I couldn't turn him down.  
(Pause)

THE BUM I can see you're very excited!

THE GENTLEMAN Well...put yourself in my shoes: it's quite an achievement!  
(Pause)

Ah, I almost forgot! There'll be something for all the workers too; medals for the elderly, and party favorers for every one. We'll have a dancing floor with live music in two different locations, one in front of the cafeteria and the other behind the warehouse. A rock band for the young and folk music for the elderly...

(Pause)

There'll also be a delegation from our branch in Rumania. A free trip for the deserving!

(Trying to be funny)

If nothing else because they didn't run to the unions or the local committee...

(Resumes his way.)

Those people never left their home, just imagine what it must be for them to travel to Italy! On their way back they'll stop to spend a whole afternoon in Venice.

Isn't that nice?

THE BUM Nice.

THE GENTLEMAN The City Hall's square will be named after Dad...

THE BUM Nice.

THE GENTLEMAN Therefore...there will be some journalists...television...  
(Determined and resolute)

What shall I say about you?

THE BUM Me?

THE GENTLEMAN Yes, you and Mom!

THE BUM Leave Mom alone!

THE GENTLEMAN For Heaven's sake, Gianni: don't play dummy! Do you really think I can afford to have a brother who lives like a bum, with his Mother...

THE BUM I told you, leave Mom alone!

THE GENTLEMAN ...under a bridge, ten kilometers from our own factory and Villa? Everybody knows it in town, the journalists will show up and it'll be all over the newspapers...don't you think about our reputation?

THE BUM Is that all you can think of?

THE GENTLEMAN What?

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- THE BUM "Our reputation" it's that all you're concerned with? So, to you it's only a matter of image!  
*(Pause. The Gentleman makes an effort not to lose his patience, trying to refrain himself. Then:)*
- THE GENTLEMAN No, Gianni: It isn't "just" a matter of image. You know that! It's exactly what I wanted to talk to you about...though today it doesn't look like is going to be the right day.
- THE BUM It' isn't...
- THE GENTLEMAN It doesn't matter. Never mind, one day we'll talk about everything...whenever you're ready. I've always been willing; you're the one who's been difficult! We'll talk some day! Just like we used to...remember? When we were younger?  
Today, however, this is very important and yes, it is a matter of "image".  
I can't afford in a moment like this; when our factory is going through smooth sailing and expanding, not only in Rumania, but also in Ukraine, Byelorussia and Asia; we are even contemplating the opening of a branch in Ceylon...we're making great contacts in Hong Kong...All this, will be in the open. No forced labor, no child labor working ten hours a day...  
*(The euphoria of his success got him all worked up. Finally he gets a hold of himself.)*  
...well... I can't afford that ...all of a sudden...one of the owners chucks everything and moves into a dumpster, where he lives out of garbage, surrounded by shit, under a bridge along a river...
- THE BUM Polluted.
- THE GENTLEMAN ...and drags his Mother along with him...
- THE BUM I told you to leave Mom out of this!
- THE GENTLEMAN There she is! I knew it! She heard everything!  
*(The Woman comes out of the shack. She looks at them for a brief moment.)*
- THE WOMAN Supper!  
*(The two men stop talking, they move around as expected, after a short moment the conventional theatrical action comes to a stop again.*
- Just like at the end of the previous scene, the characters become actors again, step outside of the conventional theatrical action and settle into their positions to begin the next scene. The Gentleman exits; the Woman exits as well, only to re-enter almost immediately, while the Bum takes his position on the river bank.)*
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## Scene Three

*(It's evening. The Bum is sitting on the riverbank. We hear a cell phone ring: the Bum hears it but doesn't budge. A few more rings, then silence.)*

*The Bum releases a gesture of satisfaction. A little later a noise catches his attention. He gets up, walks closer to the path from which the Woman is coming from, he quickly tries to help her.)*

THE BUM                    Mom!...I was getting worried.

THE WOMAN                Mass started off late...so I decided to stay a little longer and pray on my own. What about you?

THE BUM                    I've been here...thinking. I've straightened things up around the house...read the newspaper. Nothing more about that guy Walter Polis who died yesterday...no other obituary. Obviously nobody else had anything to say. I've got some hot tea: would you like some?

THE WOMAN                Yes, thank you.

THE BUM                    *(Pours the tea)*  
Remember the obituary we wrote for Dad?  
"Untiring worker, exemplary husband and father, guardian of the industrious tradition of our city"...We picked our brains to make sure nothing was left out...it ended up being half a column long: it included everything!  
Perhaps...even Walter Polis's obituary already included everything!  
Will you tell me what you prayed for?

THE WOMAN                I don't even know. I just did.

THE BUM                    Did you pray for me?

THE WOMAN                No. Not today.

THE BUM                    For my brother?

THE WOMAN                Yes, maybe.

THE BUM                    Do you think he needs it more than I?

THE WOMAN                I don't know, I don't think anything.

THE BUM                    Mom, why don't you go back to him? Why don't you go back home?  
*(The Woman doesn't answer.)*  
Mom, I don't need anything. Not even you! I'm sorry to see you suffer...

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THE WOMAN           Suffer?!...

THE BUM               ...I don't take any pleasure to see you here...in this...to see you live like a bag lady... working so hard...soon it'll be cold...then hot...

THE WOMAN           My life has been harder.

THE BUM               I know that Mom, I remember.

THE WOMAN           How can you remember? You weren't even born.

THE BUM               Yet, I remember! Perhaps you and Dad passed it on to me...  
*(He curls up close to her)*

THE WOMAN           *(Little by little, like a fairy tale.)*  
Nothing excited me any more, neither day nor night. We slept in between the machinery, among the piles of merchandise, for fear of thieves and also so we could be ready to work as soon as we woke up...Or else, we went to sleep right away when too tired to keep on working! We slept like that even when we had the first two workers, for fear they might steal. Our kitchen was in a corner next to the workers room. A little burner. We looked for a home, a real home, only when the new machinery was delivered and there was no more room in the warehouse...

THE BUM               I remember the house. I remember the walls...

THE WOMAN           That's right, walls. Nothing else but walls.

THE BUM               What then?...

THE WOMAN           *(Still like a fairy tale.)*  
Then, business picked up. The warehouse became a factory, the two workers turned into ten, then twenty...

THE BUM               ...then one hundred...

THE WOMAN           ...then one hundred, then two hundred...so on and so forth until we no longer new them personally! Your father didn't like that...me neither, though I was never very sentimental...women...are more pragmatic! By then there were so many workers that we had to hire accountants, office clerks...

THE BUM               *(Like a child.)*  
Tell me about the one whom retired and you hired his son...

THE WOMAN           Of course! Our first worker retired and asked us to hire his son to replace him, so your father did.

THE BUM               ...mean while you had to hire accountants, office clerks.

THE WOMAN           Yes. First a secretary, her name was Antonia, she had to answer the phones: I used to do that, but then I became so busy with everything

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else...so we hired Antonia. I remember her because she died so young. However, by the time she passed away, she was no longer the only office clerk. So even the clerks became ten, then twenty, then one hundred...

THE BUM ...then the managers...

THE WOMAN ...the managers, the general managers...

THE BUM The offices, Mom, the offices!

THE WOMAN Of course! Offices instead of people: human resource's office, purchases office, sales office...

THE BUM ...press office, public relations...

THE WOMAN No, no: that came after you and Carlo arrived! We had nothing to do with those things!... That was too much...I don't know, that was something else, like a different world.

Your father kept saying "I'm going to the warehouse"...but...there was no more warehouse; there was the "factory", he didn't even want to look at it. At times, when he couldn't help it, he'd go to take a look at the assembly line...but it hurt him so. It hurt him to see those workers in their smocks, with their dirty hands and not knowing any of their names...weather they had children or what kind of problems they had... So as soon as he could trust me, he turned everything over to me and he took off to: London, America, Japan, with his drawings, samples and papers. Then he'd come back stopping first in Moscow, Bucharest...

THE BUM ...he was gone five days, from Monday to Friday.

THE WOMAN ...Saturday and Sunday though, he was always at home... where he spent all of his time organizing his papers. Like he used to do on the kitchen table, when we lived in two rooms.

THE BUM You know, I remember those times. Even because we never saw either of you from Monday to Friday.

THE WOMAN I had to take his place at the "warehouse". He was all over the world from Monday to Friday...Saturday and Sunday he worked at home...he went out only to go to Mass...

THE BUM That's right. He wanted us to go too. One day I told him: Dad, aren't you a Communist? He answered: "Even God is a Communist."

THE WOMAN You're right. He used to say it all the time: "God is a Communist!"

THE BUM Until one day..."Damned factory!"

THE WOMAN "Damned factory!" and "Damned money!"  
(Pause)

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- THE BUM Do you think he would be happy if he hadn't died?
- THE WOMAN Happy about what?
- THE BUM About everything: us, the factory, the money he made... Why aren't you answering?
- THE WOMAN What?
- THE BUM I asked you, if he'd be happy if he hadn't died?
- THE WOMAN Yes, of course...I think so.
- THE BUM *(He smiles knowing she's not telling the truth.)*  
That's not true, Mom: you're lying to me!
- THE WOMAN It is so: he was very proud of what he had built, like your brother. That's where your brother got it from. He didn't like everything...he did have some regrets...anyway...I...don't know how to express myself. I have feelings...but...I don't know how to express them...
- THE BUM Did he regret having changed?
- THE WOMAN I remember once...many years ago, perhaps it was the only time he went out on a Saturday night. He went to the bar to play cards, like he used to. At the bar...most of the people were his workers...He played, but – so he told me – he couldn't have fun like he used to!...”Damned money!” he used to say.
- THE BUM What about you?
- THE WOMAN I'd say: “What do you mean damned money?! Thank God for it!”
- THE BUM What about him?
- THE WOMAN He said nothing. But...he never went back to the bar.
- THE BUM Are those the things I got from him?
- THE WOMAN May be. He used to say: “It seems like they're afraid to play with me! They're all quiet and serious. Nobody calls me names, not even when I screw up!” He didn't have fun anymore.  
*(Pause)*
- THE BUM Mom, if you were to give away a euro, or a thousand euros, to whom would you give it? To Diogenes or Alexander the Great?
- THE WOMAN Wasn't Diogenes the one who lived in a barrel? Well...I think...I'd give it to him...
- THE BUM You see? You're wrong. You didn't understand a thing I told you! A euro or a million didn't make any difference to Diogenes, he didn't need anything Mom!
-

Alexander the Great on the other hand, could arm a soldier, feed a horse, buy a sail for his ship...he could put it to fruition! Is as simple as that, Mom: American soldiers need more help than the peasants of Vietnam, or the shepherds of Afghanistan...what could they possibly need? Think about it...everything... everything is nothing and nothing is everything... it's all the same. They've never had anything... so they don't need anything. They don't even know what they need from this world. It's the American soldiers that find themselves in the jungle or the desert without showers, hot water, air conditioning or ice-maker...They are the ones who suffer, they are the ones missing things! Don't you think so, Mom?

THE WOMAN

I'm not following you Gianni. You don't make any sense.

THE BUM

What I mean Mom, is that you should stay with Carlo, not me?

THE WOMAN

I'm staying with you.

THE BUM

You're making a mistake Mom: a big one!

THE WOMAN

I'm staying with you.

THE BUM

Why?

THE WOMAN

I don't know and I don't want to know it: all I know is that I must stay with you.  
(Pause)

THE BUM

Mom, listen to me: I'm drowning. There's nothing you can do. You need to let me go. It's not a tragedy...That's the way it is!

The world keeps on turning, every now and then someone is left behind, gets cut out, tired, fed up, nothing matters anymore and he starts to drown. I'm like a broken toy! Like a rotten apple! What do you do with a rotten apple? You tell me, what do you with it? Do you keep it, so the others will rot too?

*(He shakes his head in pain.)*

Let me drown Mom! Don't make me feel guilty of pulling you down with me! I assure you...I'm all right Mom! I'm serene, I don't need anything.

I'm at peace. Do you know what it means to be at peace? Not that many people can say that! Go back home Mom, go back to Carlo. Please stay with him!

THE WOMAN

*(Hugs him)*

I'm staying with you, my child.

*(Pause. The Bum seems resigned and gives into the Woman's hug.)*

*(Up above on the path the Gentleman appears. He hesitates for a moment then walks down the slope. When he gets to the end of the path the Bum and the Woman pull apart abruptly. They do so in a decisive manner, almost as if the actors themselves stopped acting a specific*

*scene while changing attitudes and positions.  
The Woman enters into the shack, or else walks up the path and disappears.)*

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## Scene Four

*The new situation is a confrontation between the brothers. They take position like two actors getting ready for the next scene.*

*Long pause. Little by little they enter into their characters. The Gentleman seems embarrassed, the Bum more at ease, or at least he pretends to be. He pulls out tobacco and paper and rolls up a cigarette then he gestures to his brother that he needs a lighter. The Gentleman gets closer, and offers him his.*

THE GENTLEMAN    Go away, Gianni! Go away! I won't allow your hatred to ruin myself, the factory and Mom...

THE BUM            Mine is not hatred, Carlo.

THE GENTLEMAN    What is it then? Answer me: stubbornness? Insanity?  
(Pause)

I'm only asking you to disappear from town for a few days: just like you disappeared from the factory and home. A few days only, so we can say: "He's gone!...He went skiing...he's in a clinic for some tests..."

(Changing tone)

Gianni, we're here alone, just the two of us!...Let's talk. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? "Talk". Just like when we were kids and told each other everything. I'm your brother. You talked with Dad. You used to talk with me. What happened?

THE BUM            It's hard to explain. It's a long story!

THE GENTLEMAN    We have time. All night, Gianni. We have all night and more. We have a life time. Go on.

Come on...give it a shot. Talk...pretend you're talking to yourself.

THE BUM            I don't know what happened.

THE GENTLEMAN    That's not true! One can't make a move like yours not knowing why! If something makes sense to you, you must be able to express it. What did the Romans say? "Rem tene, verba sequuntur"

THE BUM            (Automatically)  
Sequuntur.

THE GENTLEMEN    What ever. Bring the body and the mind will follow. If you're confused... say what ever you can. I'll help you. I'm your brother, Gianni.

- THE BUM I don't feel like talking, Carlo. Think what ever you want. "He's gone mad? It's fine with me.
- THE GENTLEMAN That's not good enough for me, Gianni. Besides... You haven't gone mad.
- THE BUM So why should I tell you...? I don't even know if you'll understand.
- THE GENTLEMAN (*About to loose it*)  
Ah no, please don't start again with " I don't even know if you'll understand"! Who do you think you are? What is it? Humanity can't live up to your moral crises? Are we all so ignorant and stupid that we're not worthy of listening to you? Fine, so be it, then if we're not allowed to understand, allow us at least to defend ourselves. All I need is a phone call Gianni, and in less than a half hour there'll be ambulance with a doctor and two nurses that will take you to a clinic...doctors over there are used to not understanding.  
(*Silence*)
- THE BUM I didn't mean to insult you, Carlo.
- THE GENTLEMAN (*Imposing upon himself a sense of calmness.*)  
All right, all right.
- THE BUM I don't understand what you should defend yourself from.  
(*The Gentleman sighs, exasperated*)  
Oh, I see. People could think I'm right. No, don't worry. People are like you, Carlo: everybody will be on your side!
- THE GENTLEMAN Everybody what? What side are you talking about?
- THE BUM They'll all be prisoners of your machine, Carlo! They'll all be lost in your labyrinth! I'm not saying it's your fault, God forbid! You are a victim too, it's obvious: you are a prisoner too, you too have been contaminated...
- THE GENTLEMAN (*with sarcasm*)  
That's right! What about you?
- THE BUM What about me? I don't want to give the impression to be a "contrarian", nor to judge myself better than others...just because one day I was able to open my eyes and I realized that this world...
- THE GENTLEMAN ...that this world what? Come on: what about it? Is it all wrong? Is it going down the tubes?
- THE BUM Stop it, leave me alone! What do you care? What do you do if someone gets up from the table and throws the cards on the floor because he doesn't feel like playing anymore? Do you run after him? Do you force him to play? Do you make him recover?...I don't want to play anymore, Carlo. I left. I've changed my mind.
-

- THE GENTLEMAM I see...so you would be The One Whom Opened His Eyes. The chosen one, the one whom came out of the darkness where everybody else instead is...
- THE BUM Don't do that Carlo. I don't claim any presumption, in fact, I don't even claim to be right. Perhaps you are the ones who are right. Perhaps what you're all doing is the right thing...nevertheless, it's not my fault either if all of a sudden...
- THE GENTLEMAN If all of a sudden what...?
- THE BUM You know what the negative of a picture is like: all that is white in it becomes black and all that is black becomes white...everything in it is exactly the opposite of its reality. That's exactly what happened to me...all of a sudden...  
*(He flips his hand one hundred and eighty degree turn as if to say: from here to here! Then, little by little lost in his thoughts...)*  
As if I had been reborn...as if I had been resuscitated...as if my eyes had opened...I understood it all, all was clear and precise...
- God in Heaven, I said to myself: is this the world we live in? Is this what we're living for? Is this as good as it gets? Work, love, wars, pain, suffering...What for? Money? Power? Head lights on newspapers? Paparazzi...A scintilla, a crumb...of what? Us, mankind, the "king of the universe"...
- THE GENTLEMAN So, all of a sudden you thought to yourself: there's a "when" and there's a "how!"...
- THE BUM I was on line at a gas station. Gas prices were raising at midnight, so I wanted to fill up. I would've saved four five euro. Isn't it gross? Yet, I sat there on line for a half an hour of my life, my time with tens of other cars...
- THE GENTLEMAN So that's where you had your epiphany...don't get me wrong: I'm not objecting to it! For many others it took even less: for Newton it was an apple, for Archimedes a ring...
- THE BUM It wasn't just about sitting on line for gas. It just so happened that that day...  
was the day...that Dad passed away...
- THE GENTLEMAN Nice! The day that Dad passed away...but it started at the gas station.
- THE BUM You and Mom called me so I was running home.
- THE GENTLEMAN Well, "running home"...I wouldn't exactly put it that way.
- THE BUM Perhaps I didn't want to get there so fast. Most likely that's why I got myself on line: to buy time, so I could think. All of a sudden...
- THE GENTLEMAN All of a sudden?
-

- THE BUM All of a sudden I heard Dad speak. He called my name. His voice – real, among the noises - I turned around and there he was, I swear to God, I saw him! Just for a moment, but I saw him, just like I’m seeing you now. He was shaking his head and I heard him say: “ Damned money!” Like he used to. Except that this time he was dead, do you understand? It wasn’t a joke! It was something real absolutely real! “Damned money!” A message, an order...that’s when my eyes opened...
- THE GENTLEMAN *(After a pause, shaking his head)*  
I don’t understand: I’m trying to keep an open mind, I’m forcing myself to...but even with all my good intentions, unless you explain yourself better I can’t follow you.
- How can one sit on line, to save a few bucks, and be illuminated instead about how damned money is...?
- THE BUM Dad used to say it all the time.
- THE GENTLEMAN *(Pragmatic)*  
Sure, mean while he made billions!
- THE BUM You don’t understand.
- THE GENTLEMAN *(Quickly)*  
I said it first, I admitted it right away.
- THE BUM Fine.  
*(A pause. The Gentleman huffs and puffs, shakes his head with a smirk. Then, almost as if he had found an ideal solution:)*
- THE GENTLEMAN Gianni, listen to me! Gianni, do you know what you need to do? Why don’t you write a book? Come home, you don’t have to worry about the factory, which you don’t anyway, you mind your own business and write everything you have inside, everything that happened to you, your thoughts, your feelings...perhaps it’ll turn into a best seller...
- What do you say?
- THE BUM No.
- THE GENTLEMAN Maybe you’ll make a ton of money.  
*(Anticipating his brother’s reaction, whom by the way, doesn’t even dream of one)*  
Yes, you’re right: that wasn’t the right thing to say. Money...troubles!  
Never mind! Still...you could at least try to explain it to yourself...
- THE BUM I don’t owe myself any explanations.
- THE GENTLEMAN What about others? Do you think it’s... (forget about who you are now, think about how you were a year ago!) Do you think it’s natural
-

that one can dump his normal life and come to live here...in this dumpster...? Dragging his Mother along.

THE BUM Leave Mom alone.

THE GENTLEMAN I'm not the one who won't leave her alone!

THE BUM You know very well that I've got nothing to do with her being here!

THE GENTLEMAN Give me a break, you've got nothing to do with her!

THE BUM I do nothing but tell her to leave!

THE GENTLEMAN Horseshit!

THE BUM She won't listen to me!

THE GENTLEMAN I can only imagine "how" you're telling her to leave. You're a hypocrite Gianni.

THE BUM On the contrary, if you convince her to go back home, you'd do me a favor!

THE GENTLEMAN You're a selfish hypocrite and a liar!

THE BUM I don't need anything...

THE GENTLEMAN Only Mommy!

THE BUM Not anyone.

THE GENTLEMAN "Not anyone"! Come on! Sometimes you really disgust me! That's right, you are disgusting! It's convenient isn't it, to sit there cooped up in your little shrine, perfectly...content, satisfied, like an hermit, like an Indian guru, pretending not to see that everybody else is going mad because of you while you ignore their suffering...I don't believe you Gianni! I don't believe your problems, your demons...none of it! You're a worm! Look at yourself! I'm insulting you... and what do you do? You sit there blissfully, looking at the sky. Nothing fazes you. What are you thinking about?

Is it your superhuman wisdom? Is it the mission that you were chosen for, as the only person among all mankind whom has opened his eyes and understood? Therefore...everything is due to you, like it would to a God, so much so that you shouldn't even have to ask for anything! You say you don't need anything nor anyone! Meanwhile, you watch your mother torturing herself, you watch me come here every day begging you to come back to your senses, imploring you to establish a dialogue ...and you continue to watch immune to anything, like an idol to whom people bring human sacrifices! You are a monster! Do you understand? A Monster!

So what do you have to say, eh? Would you answer me? For Heaven's sake, would you say something and stop pretending, eh?

*(He grabs him and starts shaking him)*

What if I threw you in the water? What if I smashed your head? I bet you'd be happy, right? Of course: you'd be a martyr then, eh? For Christ's sake, answer me!

THE BUM

*(Maintaining his composure and removing his brother's hands from his neck)*

Mom is here...

*(The Gentleman lets him go and pulls himself together almost as if he were coming out of a role, same procedure of the previous scene. The Woman enters, sits and looks at them.)*

THE WOMAN

*(To the Gentleman)*

Were you leaving?

THE GENTLEMAN

Yes.

THE WOMAN

So soon?

THE GENTLEMAN

*(After a pause, impatient)*

Yes, so soon!

*(Just before the Gentleman leaves, once again the usual break of the theatrical convention, the three interpreters visibly abandon their characters' gestures. The actor who plays the Gentleman can also make a gesture of complicity in reference to the scene that just ended. The actors that play the Bum and the Woman are taking positions to begin the next scene.)*

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## Scene Five

*(The new situation is between mother and son.)*

- THE BUM                    The days are getting longer. The air feels so good tonight, don't you think?
- THE WOMAN                Yes it does.
- THE BUM                    Don't you have anything to do? For example...I don't know...something to mend?
- THE WOMAN                Not really...why?
- THE BUM                    Because unless you're doing something...it's almost as if you were spying on me, or interrogating me...which freezes me and I can't talk...I have many things to ask you.  
*(The Woman gets up, without a word enters the shack, shortly after she comes out with some sewing material in her hands. Mean while:)*  
Do you want to know something Mom? Carlo is convinced I want you to stay here. Do you think I do?
- THE WOMAN                I don't know.
- THE BUM                    Didn't you ever ask yourself that?
- THE WOMAN                No.
- THE BUM                    Yet, you're assuming so.
- THE WOMAN                Why? What do you mean?
- THE BUM                    I mean that if you are here...you must have thought I needed you, or that I would've liked having you here.
- THE WOMAN                I didn't think of anything. I did what I felt like doing.
- THE BUM                    Actually, what you felt you "had" to do.
- THE WOMAN                I don't understand.
- THE BUM                    *(Laughs shaking his head)*  
You know you are remarkable, Mom? When you find it difficult to answer or don't want to...you say you don't understand.
- THE WOMAN                Even your brother doesn't always understand you.
- THE BUM                    In his case that's true Mom. But you, you do understand Mom, you understand and you know everything!
-

- THE WOMAN All I know is that this is my place.
- THE BUM But why Mom, why?
- THE WOMAN I told you I don't know anything else. It's like asking a cat why she protects her kiddies...
- THE BUM Or asking a tiger why she eats them!  
What are you protecting me from, eh? You're making a big mistake Mom! Carlo is the one who needs protection!
- (The Woman doesn't answer. Pause. The Bum shakes his head giving up.)*  
I'd like to ask you something...Something that came up last time I spoke with Carlo. Please don't answer me "I don't know". Try to make an effort...if you really want to help.  
*(Pause)*  
What did Dad mean when he'd say:... "Damned money"? Did he really mean it?
- THE WOMAN Have you asked Carlo?
- THE BUM Carlo? Yes, and he answered that Dad would say: "damned money" meanwhile, he made billions."
- THE WOMAN That's true!
- THE BUM Mom, stop pretending you don't understand! I know he was making billions. Why did he say "damned money"? And "damned factory"? Eh? Was he just saying that? What is hypocrisy? Was it one of those things he told others so he could show that even rich people – poor them – have their problems?
- THE WOMAN Your father was sorry...of course he was also happy for the way things went: however, he was sorry for all the things he had to leave behind!
- THE BUM Things such as; no longer knowing his workers by name...
- THE WOMAN How could he have? There were more than three thousand...
- THE BUM And the fact that... at the bar he was no longer one of them...
- THE WOMAN That was his regret. He showed me his hands: "look" he'd say "I've got calluses too! And you do also. You see? Nothing much has changed!"
- THE BUM Would he have wanted to start all over again?
- THE WOMAN No, of course not...He had worked so hard to be what he was...Perhaps... he had different expectations. He never thought it would turn out this way...to expand and become rich, yes...but without having to lose others along the road...without having to be
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treated like a stranger, almost like an enemy..."I can no longer say I'm a communist, without having people laughing at me thinking I'm an hypocrite." He'd say.

THE BUM                   What about you?

THE WOMAN               What about me?

THE BUM                   What did you tell him?

THE WOMAN               I told him:" Don't pay attention to that, mind your own business!

THE BUM                   Didn't you ever think of stopping him?

THE WOMAN               Stop him? How?

THE BUM                   Yes, stop him! Before it was too late. Before he could no longer remember his workers by name, before the basement turned into a factory, before you...made a lot of money. What did you need a huge factory for? Did you really need one in Sicily and then another one in Tunisia...?

THE WOMAN               What do you mean "did you really need"? No one really needs to do anything in this world...however...one must keep going, that's all!

THE BUM                   Keep going "where" Mom?

THE WOMAN               What do you mean "where"?

THE BUM                   Now your showing your true colors! What about yourself? Didn't you ever think of stopping?

THE WOMAN               I've never played cards. I never went to the bar. I've always worked: if your father stopped, I'd work even harder, so he could see me and begin again!  
*(Pause)*

THE BUM                   Turn around!

THE WOMAN               What?

THE BUM                   Turn around, look the other way!...I don't want you to see my face while I'm talking.

THE WOMAN               Isn't it enough I'm working?

THE BUM                   No, it isn't.  
*(The Woman does so by turning around her chair. She is now giving her back to her son and the audience.)*  
We must keep going ahead, we must go on, we must move forward! If we stop we're dead!

But where are we going? What is it that we're trying to achieve, if

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each time we reach a goal, another one will attract us like a magnet, so it can imprison us with its spell?

I remember about a legend I heard when I was little. A poor fisherman, whom had freed a genie from a bottle...was granted a wish and he asked for a modest home in exchange of the miserable shack he was living in with his wife, but soon he regretted his small request and asked for a palace instead. Then shortly there after he went back to the genie asking for a kingdom where he could be king. He was soon unhappy with that and asked to become emperor and then pope...the genie kept granting him his wishes...until one day the fisherman asked to become God himself. Once again the genie granted the wish. Kingdoms and palaces disappeared, and the fisherman found himself one more time sitting by the bank of a river; poor and hungry just like the first day...

Are you listening to me? ... Are you?

THE WOMAN

Yes.

THE BUM

What do you say?

THE WOMAN

Nothing.

THE BUM

Is it what Dad wanted?

THE WOMAN

I don't know.

THE BUM

*(He smiles while shaking his head)*

Of course you do! But you don't know how to say it, or you don't want to say it: because you know I'm right: You should go to Carlo and help him, who's still aiming to become omnipotent!

That's what Dad wanted to say. And he told me so. I took from him. The difference is that I was able to stop. I understood that this "keep going" would've precipitated into a vortex from which it is impossible exit and impossible to stop. Unless one really wants to, of course. Think of Babel's tower, where the men don't want to stop, climbing higher and higher into the sky...until – it's obvious – they go completely mad so they can no longer understand each other.

Are you listening?

THE WOMAN

Yes, yes. Keep going!

THE BUM

Eh, keep going, she says! You're not even listening. I don't blame you: God knows how many times I've already told you these things. Anyway, I'm done. There's nothing else to say. Maybe...one or two more things. Or a hundred. Because you know, Mom?

I "start" to think... and then I keep going. I start from nothing...and then I can't stop. This also is a vortex: a different kind of vortex but

just as lethal!

Any silly thing can set me off, like: "Did I take my pill this morning?"...Or else..."Does God really exist?"...on and on...one thought leads to another...until...a get a headache.

Mom...was it really smart of us, to leave the Garden of Eden?

Eh?...Imagine all those chimpanzees that all of a sudden saw us stand up and leave: what did they make of us?...No: even better: what would they think of us if we went back? Perhaps...we'd be disfigured by a virus, perhaps retarded because of the ozone hole, or perhaps all wobbly...like jello...with no bones...What do you say Mom? Where are you?

*(The Woman comes out of the shack carrying a blanket that she lays on her son's shoulders.)*

THE WOMAN

Put this on. It's getting chilly.

THE BUM

Thank you, Mom. You know what's important! I take off with my grand speeches...and you notice that it's getting chilly. I love you.

*(The Woman resumes sitting like before.)*

That's how women are. They're attached to things.

You see...in the - fisherman's story - I left out a detail. He wasn't the ambitious one. It was his wife. It was the woman who told him: "You have been so stupid to ask for so little! Go back! Ask him to be king, to become an emperor, pope..." It's always been like that. Eve with her apple, lady Macbeth...

THE WOMAN

This has nothing to do with anything.

THE BUM

It's you women who start everything! But then it's the men who keep going...on and on and on...until it's too late!

What did you say?

THE WOMAN

It's not a matter of men or women!

THE BUM

You're right. I wonder why I brought up this thing about women. It has nothing to do with anything...or perhaps it does, I don't know!

Eh?

*(He looks at her and waits for a reaction, she doesn't.)*

Perhaps that's how it went for Dad. Eh? He had you pushing him...Say something, Mom.

THE WOMAN

I helped him. When he got discouraged I'd say:..."Have faith!" When he was tired I'd say: "Be strong!" I'd tell him..."Think about Carlo and Gianni!"

THE BUM

What about him?

THE WOMAN

Then he regained everything: strength, faith...

THE BUM

Didn't it occur to him that thinking about us, could've meant something else? He was gone...you were gone. And you? Didn't you think of that? From Monday through Friday, Eh? Didn't you think of that?

I know! It's hard to think of...it's painful even when one doesn't have to make a decision. Take me, for example, and my speeches: it's as if I was running around like a chicken without a head through the labyrinth of my mind. Every speech has a specific direction, however, there are so many distractions, I try to pursue one direction which inevitably leads to another and then another...and as soon as I know it, I lose my train for thought.

Where was I? Where was I... before I got distracted?

THE WOMAN

*(Almost quoting him)*

Why did he keep going?

THE BUM

That's right! Why do we keep going? Going where? What for? So we can live better? I don't think so! Men get busier, more preoccupied, more nervous: mothers don't spend time with their children, one day they'll even stop having them! And all this for money, to fill the house with things, so we can take advantage of progress: traveling, television, automobiles, clothes!...If you snooze you lose: we must keep going, accumulate, have fabulous careers, keep on moving where each step forward will open up new opportunities...it's a vortex that engulfs us becoming stronger and faster dragging us to the bottom...

THE WOMAN

Don't get all excited. You know it's not good for you.

*(Pause. The Bum slowly recovers then he starts up again, now calmer.)*

THE BUM

Do you know, in medieval times, what was the most beautiful gift that a knight could bring to his damsel? A gift to which no woman could resist, it would've been a panty dropper even for a nun!

A pair of scissors! And I'll tell you why. It was a product of advanced technology...more precious than jewels!

On the other hand...today, everybody can afford a pair of scissors! Remember Grandpa? Once a year he'd take the carriage and go to town to see the outdoor opera! Today who can't afford, with just a push of a button, to see whatever they want? Operas, movies, soccer games...and who doesn't have closets full of clothes, yet throws them away because they are no longer fashionable a few months later? Who doesn't go skiing? Who doesn't take a trip? Books cost nothing! And children go to school!

Not all of them, true: however, you watch...the race just started!

There're still differences between classes, nevertheless...thanks to progress there's everything for everybody! Forget about scissors! And we keep on and on making things we don't have the time to use or wear them out, yet, we throw them away!

*(With enthusiasm)*

We have everything, Mom! We have everything and more! What need do we have to envy those whom have more than we do, when the poorest in this land of plenty has more food he can eat? What more need do we have of revolutions, uprisings, social battles? Think about the communists, Mom! What would they have said, two hundred years ago, if they had known how comfortably our labor workers live today? “What do you mean only eight hours a day? And they’re even trying to propose less? And they make enough to buy an automobile? They vote, they make decisions; they dress well and they send their children to college? Well then...” They would’ve said”...then...we did it! We won! This... is paradise on hearth, this...is communism!

We would have to explain to them that this isn’t exactly correct: to them though, working sixteen hours day, their children doomed to be living the same way, diseases to face... it would’ve sounded too good to be true. We’ll have more than we could hope for! We have our rights; we don’t need anymore Christian charity! We won! “Carl Marx stuck it up Jesus Christ’s ass!”

Isn’t it true, Mom? Dad would’ve liked this kind of speech, right Mom?

What about you? How do you like it?

*(He moved closer to her, turned her around so he can see her face.*

*Not surprised:)*

Are you crying?

*(Fondly)*

I don’t blame you: there’s nothing to laugh about! Poor woman! Poor women!

*(Resumes his position, giving his back to his mother)*

You know, in this machine of ours that drives us higher and higher, that makes us richer with things to own and do...there’s a virus that is distorting everything, it corrupts and rots everything. Nevertheless, we must keep going, keep going ahead further and further.

For heaven’s sake, what for? We already have more than we ever dreamed of. Why do we need more? We’re fooling ourselves into thinking we’re moving forwards, when we’re actually going backwards; so we can relentlessly work – ten, twelve hours a day, Saturday, Sundays, men and women, depriving ourselves of the time we need to enjoy the things we have or we could do, so that mothers can’t see their children and fathers see them only at bedtime.

We must compete, always compete...instead of understanding what the donkeys understood long ago: we must cooperate and pull the cart from the same direction. We’re all enemies instead...each of us must win over the other, even at the cost of killing ourselves! (What kind of victory is that?) We regressed into the jungle, Mom!

Who’s gonna win in there? Who’s gonna be the strongest that will survive? What kind of human beings are in the making? Beings

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brought up without security, tenderness, or loving gestures, precociously set up into their lives with the specific goal of: doing, building, making money, keep moving ahead! What kind of monsters are going to be those who will prevail?

One day I got scared, Mom. It was the day I saw Dad! A deep fear that smoldered every bit of life inside, every desire of life, this life... So I decided to call it quits! That's it, no more! This is my life now. The soil, the river, that terrible godsend that each day comes down from the sky to keep the memory alive...

So, I scrounge left and right to read what's going on up there... They're destroying the world, Mom, as long as they can keep moving ahead. This is the only world we have! If I could only keep my train of thought, before I get a headache, I can see the grand finale: a molecule gone crazy, the eye shuts off, words fall from the mouth like slobber, the ears are turning sounds into a torturous buzzing... human larva are rambling among the ruins as they stutter and shake... perhaps while copulating, perhaps not, who knows!...

Don't worry Mom, this is not a tragedy! There'll be plenty of other creatures who will live their lives in a balanced and wise way: plants and herbs will cover the ruins, bees will continue to build their bee hives, chimpanzees will keep picking fleas from their babies, dolphins will dance among the waves, and all fish will notice that the oceans have become more livable...

As for mankind... bah, he left the Garden of Eden, he challenged God, he won, he wasn't able to handle his victory... and ended up in ruins. Will he try Again? We have more time at our disposal than we have life, don't we Mom? Perhaps some day somebody else will try again! Or may be not.

What do you say Mom?

*(He turns towards his mother, whom had left for some time now, by having gone back into the shack.)*

*(The Bum shakes his head, yet, not overly disappointed.)*

As usual, I've talked in vain!...

*(Break.*

*Once again, the theatrical fiction dissipates. The Bum leaves his role, the Gentleman enters - to be precise - the actor who plays the role of the Gentleman.)*

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## Scene Six

*The Bum leaves, the woman enters. She gets close to the riverbank, kneels down to wash something in the water.*

*The Gentleman is walking down the path. He's holding a crunched up newspaper.)*

THE GENTLEMAN Where is he?

THE WOMAN *(Startled)*  
He'll be back soon.

THE GENTLEMAN *(He moves close to her, grabs her arm as to prevent her from doing the washing)*  
Do I have to see you doing this? You're doing it on purpose, aren't you?

THE WOMAN I just need to rinse...

THE GENTLEMAN Don't you see the water is filthy? Your son talks about it all the time; it's polluted by the factory! How can you rinse anything in it?...  
*(Without a word the Woman stops and gets up with effort)*

There she goes! Not a word! Will you say something? But of course she never does! You're a rubber wall Mom! The two of you plotted everything to drive me mad, to destroy everything, to turn everything into rubber!

*(He shakes the newspaper in front of her eyes)*

Have you seen the newspaper?

*(At the top of the path the Bum appears. The Gentleman leaves his mother alone and turns aggressively to his brother.)*

What about you: have you seen the newspaper?

THE BUM They ran out of it!

THE GENTLEMAN *(Sarcastically)*  
It figures! They ran out of it since 7:00 am! It flew off the shelves!

THE BUM Could you leave me a copy? Or else, xerox it for me?  
*(The Gentleman stares at him speechless, then he turns to the woman)*

THE GENTLEMAN Did you hear what he said?  
*(The Woman has already left and entered the shack.)*  
It figures, if she smells trouble, she leaves!  
*(He's calling:)*  
Mom!

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- THE BUM                    Leave her alone!
- THE GENTLEMAN        You leave her alone!  
*(The Bum walks down the path. The Gentleman gets close to him waving the newspaper)*  
You've got what you wanted: are you happy now? What did you do: a press release? An exclusive press conference? Eh? How much did they give you? Why not talk to the TV while you were at it?
- (The Bum takes the newspaper and purses it, he does so in all calm without paying attention to his brother's rage.)*  
Mom, come on out! I've got to talk to both of you!
- (The Woman leans on the doorway of the shack.)*  
This morning, less than an hour ago, I gave the lawyer instructions to file for an interdiction notice!
- THE BUM                    For me?
- THE GENTLEMAN        What do you think?
- THE BUM                    That wasn't necessary: don't I always sign everything you ask me to?
- THE GENTLEMAN        What about this stuff then? Eh?  
*(He rips the newspaper from his hands)*  
If nothing else I'll be able to say: "He's crazy: what can I do?"
- THE BUM                    You can say that now. I'm not going to retract it.  
*(The Gentleman didn't pay attention to him: he's browsing for something in the newspaper, which he finds)*
- THE GENTLEMAN        You know, in this machine of ours that drives us higher and higher, that makes us richer with things to own and to do...there's a virus that is distorting everything, it corrupts and rots everything. Nevertheless, we must keep going, keep moving ahead further and further...For heaven's sake what for? So we can relentlessly work ten, twelve hours a day, Saturdays and Sundays...
- Do you have any idea how much it costs us to stop the assembly line on Friday evening? Turn all the oven machines off and then start everything all over again on Monday morning?...Do you? Eh?  
*(Resumes reading)*  
"So that mothers can't see their children and fathers see them only at bedtime..."
- THE BUM                    It's true.
- THE GENTLEMAN        Oh really? What about...quote. "Carl Marx stuck it up Jesus Christ's ass"? Is that also true? By the way, did you see the title? "A magnate who eats humble pie: repentance or delirium?"  
*(Long pause)*
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THE WOMAN            Can I leave?  
                               *(No answer. The woman leaves. Other pause.)*

THE GENTLEMAN    I don't get it!  
                               I don't understand where I get all this patience from? Which isn't at all part of my temperament! Could it be because you're my brother? No that's not it! Could it be because I always hope we can one day understand each other?

Often I make an effort to look for reasons! Is it because you went to college and I didn't? After all: by the time you arrived we had money!

You went to high school and university, you studied philosophy...I on the other hand started working at thirteen: we had no money then. Nobody's fault, I know. However...that's the way it was. Of course, I could always say: Thank God I wasn't able to study if these are the results"! I just hope it isn't envy. Because the more I think about it, the more I realize how much I despise you! I don't buy it, Gianni! I don't buy your problems!

You're just a coward; you're a man who runs away! You keep pretending to be the only person among mankind who opened his eyes and understood!...

THE BUM                *(Interrupting him with a small gesture)*  
                               We've already said that.

THE GENTLEMAN    That's right we've already said it. I know!  
                               I'm not finished. There's something else that doesn't concern only the two of us, it concerns the things we say and that we stand for. The two of us...do you understand?

Are we sure that those who don't do anything don't make mistakes? Namely, you! In any case: what is your purpose?

I might make mistakes, of course, ...each morning however, when I open the factory's gates thousands of men and women come in to roll up their sleeves and produce anything that makes our lives easier and more beautiful. Where would we be without all this? Where would we be if we still had to pick fleas and lice off our children's heads, instead of having learned how to prevent them? We'd still be living in caves, naked or else wrapped in animal skins, so we could die at twenty of TB or poisons, after having had just enough time to bear ten children: eight of whom destined to die right away and the other two – if lucky – barely reached their twenties. Is it this what we were born for? Or rather, was it to follow our inner voices? So we could learn, build and keep going ahead? Risks need to be taken! Dangers can be avoided! Mistakes can be corrected!

You don't believe in humankind, Gianni! You don't believe in reason!

Victory can't be achieved by running away! You can't help people by

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running away to a desert island! First of all: we must produce things! We must research and study through trial and error! Houses! Bread! Things! Machines! Until work will be transformed! Until our hands and arms will multiply at infinitum! Until everybody in the whole world will have everything of everything! We must produce, Gianni: we must produce!

*(Pause)*

THE BUM

*(In all calm, with detachment)*

What if our “producing” will explode in our hands?

THE GENTLEMAN

*(Patiently)*

When: tomorrow? In three months? In a hundred years, three thousand years? So what...what do you care?

THE BUM

That’s right! Because there’ll be nobody left to talk about it.

*(Pause. The Gentleman wipes up his sweat.)*

*(The Woman comes out of the shack)*

THE WOMAN

Are you done?

THE GENTLEMAN

Yes we are. Or perhaps just started.

*(To his brother)*

What would Dad have to say, to you of all people, so proud of having a direct connection with him? He, who “produced” all his life; without having studied: like me! And then there came you, destroying everything!

THE BUM

There you are...at your age – CEO of an industry, – still asking yourself, like a child: “What would Dad have to say?”

Remember when I was little how many times you’d ask me that?

“What would Dad have to say?” just because I did or didn’t do something.

THE WOMAN

*(With sudden energy)*

Stop talking about your father!

THE GENTLEMAN

Oh, a reaction at last! Finally something different from the usual: I don’t know, I didn’t hear, I didn’t understand!... Good for you Mom! By all means, speak!

THE WOMAN

I simply said to stop talking about your father. He has nothing to do with your discussions: those were different times. “Times” when producing was the right thing to do, there was no danger nor need to abandon everything. People needed things and we gave them to them. However, now...

THE GENTLEMAN

What about...it?

THE WOMAN

Now it’s different.

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- THE GENTLEMAN How is it different, for God's sake?
- THE BUM She's right: now we come up with new needs so we can produce more things. That's where the spiral starts: come up with new needs, make more things, more money, so we can have even more things and always less time... You're right Mom: Dad stopped before it was too late!
- THE GENTLEMAN Dad didn't stop! He died!
- THE BUM He understood.
- THE GENTLEMAN What did he understand? And if he did, what would he have done? You tell me? Would he have done what you did? Dump everything, leave and deny himself!  
*(The Bum doesn't answer)*  
You tell him, Mom!
- THE WOMAN Enough you two! You have no right to talk for your father.  
*(Pause.)*  
I'll say something to both of you; since you've come to a crossroads, each of you on the opposite side, as if you were the only ones to have the right to exist, the only ones with the truth in their pockets, so you take the liberty to judge everybody else including your parents...though, you don't know everything...!
- Not both of you – pay attention now – are your father's children!  
*(Astounding pause)*
- THE GENTLEMAN What?!
- THE BUM Mom!
- THE WOMAN Do not ask questions! Do not judge!
- THE GENTLEMEN Whom else then...?
- THE WOMAN *(Interrupting them with a slow gesture)*  
I've said what I've said, what ever will be will be.
- THE GENTLEMAN *(After a pause, laughing sarcastically)*  
I don't believe a word you've said! It's a trick: a dirty trap! You did it on purpose!
- THE BUM Mom, did you do it on purpose? Is it true?  
Why?
- THE GENTLEMAN *(As before)*  
We'll know it soon enough.
- (Pause. Again, the break of the theatrical convention. The two men leave. The woman is now alone and moves center stage.)*
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## Scene Seven

*(The woman is center stage. As she reenters into her character, she screams. A long scream, maddening, devastating, interrupted only by monosyllables of denial. Then she falls on her knees, the face in her hands.)*

*Silence. She lifts her head up and listens spasmodically. She screams once again, then again silence.)*

- THE WOMAN      Oh My God, no, no!  
*(She closes her eyes tight, almost as if waiting for something, puts her hands together like in prayer. She makes the sign of the cross and whispers:)*  
Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum , et benedictus frictus ventris tui Jesus ...  
*(From the outside we hear a gun shot: then a second one: then a third. The Woman wakes up as if the shots had hit her. Then a deep breadth of relief, finally freedom from the nightmare.)*  
*(The sound of surreal steps is coming from the path, the Gentleman arrives. He's holding a pistol. He's agitated and breathing heavily, however, he's not upset.*
- THE WOMAN      *(kneeling – turns her back to him – she can't see what's happening – closes her eyes to shut herself out even more.)*  
Who is it?...
- THE GENTLEMAN    It's me.
- THE WOMAN      *(She slowly nods her head)*  
I knew it.  
*(Pause. The lines that follow are small fractions of the silence; the atmosphere is abstract and surreal.)*
- THE GENTLEMAN    I shot him. ... He's dead. ...I'm sorry.
- THE WOMAN      Is that all you can say?
- THE GENTLEMAN    He was trying to kill me.
- THE WOMAN      ...He didn't have any guns.
- THE GENTLEMAN    When you asked, "Who is it?"...Would you've preferred...?
- THE WOMAN      I don't know what I would've preferred; I don't know what's better...if this is the way it was meant to be.
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- THE GENTLEMAN This is how it went. Something bigger than me and him, bigger than everybody.  
*(The Woman exits quickly, from the same place the Gentleman came in.*  
*For a few brief moments the Gentlemen remains alone on stage with his thoughts. Suddenly he throws the pistol on the floor.)*
- THE WOMAN I closed his eyes. Now he's at peace. Perhaps he's happy. I hope they'll come soon.
- THE GENTLEMAN I'm sorry, Mom. But it's your fault.  
*(The Woman shakes her head, trying to remove herself from everything.)*  
You're the one who turned us against one another. He ended up paying for it! I'm sorry.
- THE WOMAN He no longer needs me. After all, he used to say that you were the one who needed help. What do we do now?
- THE GENTLEMAN I've never lost my mind, Mom. Not even for a moment and I'm not going to lose it now.  
I will turn myself in. There's nothing else to do. It would be ridiculous to think otherwise.
- THE WOMAN What about the factory?
- THE GENTLEMAN That's right! I've forgotten all about it. You'll take care of it Mom: like it used to be! You're the strongest: you lost two sons and your first thought went to the factory!
- THE WOMAN I'm too old and tired, with too many sins on my back.
- THE GENTLEMAN What sins can you possibly have Mom?
- THE WOMAN Didn't you say that I've turned you against one another?
- THE GENTLEMAN That's not what I meant, you know that!
- THE WOMAN Oh dear, dear God, Virgin Mary, Jesus!...How much longer will the children have to endure their fathers' mistakes?  
When will the children rebel, to finally kill their fathers?...
- THE GENTLEMAN ...and their mothers!
- THE WOMAN *(Pulls herself together and speaks with determination.)*  
Listen! Listen to me and obey, obey your mother, because now I understand...!  
We'll tell them I did it.
- THE GENTLEMAN What?!
- THE WOMAN I said: we'll tell them I did it.
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- THE GENTLEMAN You're crazy, Mom. Besides, it's impossible. I'm the one who pulled the trigger. Even if I denied it, there's the paraffin test.  
*(Without answering the Woman picks up the pistol and shoots three shots.)*
- THE WOMAN How about that?
- THE GENTLEMAN They're going to ask us a ton of questions, Mom? We'll contradict one another. The truth will come out!
- THE WOMAN Get yourself a good lawyer: spare no expense.
- THE GENTLEMAN Mom!...
- THE WOMAN *(Forcefully)*  
Enough! No more whining! You know I'm doing the right thing! It's better like this for everything and everybody!  
  
Enough! I'm sick and tired of following your father, you and your brother to end up where I've never wanted to end it up!
- THE GENTLEMAN Mom, I don't understand you. What are you saying? What are you talking about?
- THE WOMAN ...I'm tired of being quiet, like all women! Enough! Do as I tell you! Find me a good lawyer and let's try to limit our losses! Call the Police. Call them now. Actually: go to them, right away! Go!  
*(Her voice quivers)*  
  
I want...I want to be alone...  
  
*(The Gentleman looks at her in astonishment, fearfully, almost horrified. Hesitates and shakes his head.)*
- THE GENTLEMAN Dear God! What are you made of Mom?! Cain killed Abel, and Eve, his mother...
- THE WOMAN *(Again with much determination)* – Go away! Don't say another word! Go away!  
*(The Gentleman steps backwards, first slowly then runs away quickly, as he stumbles on the path.)*  
  
*Right before he exits, once again the theatrical convention comes to a stop.*  
  
*The man pulls himself together as he leaves, the Woman releases the tension of her character.)*
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## Scene Eight

*(The Woman is alone in the middle of the stage. After a very long pause...)*

THE WOMAN

How many years have gone by since that day? ... Many!

At first...everything went well...In any case...it went the way it was supposed to go! Good lawyers...and nobody – police – judges – asked too many questions. I pleaded guilty. The case was closed right away. As for prison...not even a day: a couple of guarded weeks in a clinic, two, three four evaluations...after which came a pathetic verdict, just to be reminded that one shouldn't kill anybody, including a son...Excuses, parole...and then I was released. A ton of money in lawyers...and that was all!

*(The Bum enters, or perhaps already did, or, he will soon: his shirt is stained with blood at the height of his heart.)*

I had nothing left inside, I didn't want to live. I'd go to the cemetery every day, I'd speak to him...When he was alive it was him who talked all the time: but now he was dead, so I was able to speak, little by little, a bit at a time.

Then...

*(The Gentleman enters, or perhaps already did, or, he will soon: he has a rope around his neck, worn nonchalantly like a scarf.)*

...it was the other one whom couldn't take it any longer. They found him in the bathroom of his office: he had left a note saying: "Enough!"...That's all.

THE GENTLEMAN

That was all.

THE WOMAN

Not even a word to his mother: "Forgive me", something like that. So they left me alone with the factory.

*(She laughs with bitterness)*

Then the vultures came. They were popping out of every corner...until I finally said...take it. The damned factory! But the workers didn't know what to make of it! So...

*(She makes a vague gesture with her hand. Pause.)*

THE GENTLEMAN

"Forgive me, eh? Forgive me for what? Why? Besides: weren't you the one who should've asked forgiveness?"

*(Pause. The Woman cries in silence)*

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- THE BUM                    Leave her alone! Would you...for once, can you leave her alone?  
(*He moves towards the Woman.*)  
Come Mom. It's over. There's nothing left anyone can do now!
- THE GENTLEMAN        Is it really over?! What if it starts from here?  
(*To THE WOMAN changing tone*)  
Mom...I must've asked you at least a thousand times, but you never  
answered me. Why did you go away with him – that time?  
(*The Woman doesn't answer*)
- THE BUM                    Go on, Mom. Tell him. I'd like to know also.
- THE WOMAN                ...Once...many years ago, when he was still little...I was working, I  
had been out of the house all day. I got home very late, he was going  
to bed. He was rude to me and refused to give me a kiss goodnight.  
Then he told me: "I needed you...but you weren't there. Now I'm  
sleepy."
- THE GENTLEMAN        (*Surprised, not understanding. Pause*)  
So what?
- THE WOMAN                Nothing.  
(*The Gentleman makes an impatience gesture.*)
- THE GENTLEMAN        So that's why? Come on, Mom: you've got to be kidding?  
(*Pause. The Woman falls on her knees, crying silently*)  
Did you understand?
- THE BUM                    Leave her alone. What does it matter?
- THE GENTLEMAN        (*Becoming more impatient*)  
When she doesn't know what to say, she starts to pray!
- THE BUM                    Would you let her pray in peace?!  
(*The Woman doesn't pay attention to them.*)
- THE WOMAN                Virgin Mary! Tell me...you whom saw your own son on the cross.  
Tell me...do you feel guilty? Could you have stopped him? Could you  
have kept him from growing? Don't you have any regrets? Have you  
ever thought of giving him what he was looking for, so he didn't have  
to get himself killed? Were you a bad mother also?
- (*Of the two men, the Gentleman has a silent reaction of astonishment:  
his expression is cross between bewilderment and disdain. He moves  
his hand up and down with his fingers close together as if to say:  
"What is this woman talking about?"*)
- (*With a gesture the Bum invites him to be quiet, not to disturb her.  
Then with a dismissive movement, invites him to step aside and leave  
the Woman to her thoughts. The two men withdraw; perhaps they turn  
their backs to her.*)
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*(The Woman hesitates, reluctantly starts to talk, little by little her speech becomes clearer, more precise. A bit at a time, due to the impact of her words, the Woman comes out of her character to become the voice of a feeling and a reason which merge into a warning...She speaks with sincere warmth: neither the character nor the interpreter must be afraid that the speech may sound like a sermon or a lecture...)*

## THE WOMAN

- During my free time – and I’ve got lots of it! – I thought of you, my children and of your father too, but... particularly of myself...Oh, believe me, not for me: but for you! I tried to understand what I could reproach myself about; what I could’ve done differently, I don’t know how, but... thinking it over, perhaps...I could’ve prevented or tried to, when you were still kids, or later, or may be right before you ended up the way you did...that’s when my son told me that I should’ve been the one to ask for forgiveness...

No, please, don’t say anything!...Perhaps you too, as an adult, missed me, just like your brother did when he was little...perhaps you too needed me...and I wasn’t there.

However, if this is the way it went...(which is what I’ve come to believe!)

It isn’t because it had to be this way. So little by little...like peeling an onion, I stripped the truth off myself, as if it were flesh and veins...so my eyes could slowly open, the fog lift and...everything appeared simple and clear...it devastates me to hear that it’s of no use anymore, to think it would’ve been so easy at the time!

What else do I have left, if not to hope – granted if I knew how! – that it could help others?

Here’s my life: I’d like to sit on the edge of a road, where people go by more than ever on automobiles and less and less by foot...watch the men getting busier and the women follow suit...

Women: there we are! I’d like to stop you all, one by one: and tell you, sit right here, near me...Let’s have a talk! Don’t follow the men! Let them run towards their trials, their heart attacks, let them drive themselves crazy with their money, their carriers, their despicable suicidal wars...

You stay here with me! I’ll tell you my story...together, we’ll understand. Many things will come to light! You’ll see!

To all women, I’d like to say: open your eyes! Haven’t you noticed we were cheated on? That’s right, when men told us: “You and us are equal! We must all have the same rights, be on the same level! Why be locked up in the house, stuck in the kitchens, tied up to the cribs, not knowing neither how to read nor write? All of you also, like us:

should be pursuing a career, power, money..."

When they told us this, why didn't we understand the terrible trap we were falling into? On the contrary, we believed in it and fought for it so it could succeed!

"Men and women are equal" says the men. It's us women who make the men, creating them inside our wombs, fiber by fiber, like the oyster makes the pearl, and then raising them with the milk from our breasts, as always, like animals do: the cows, the sheep, the monkeys! In the same exact way, as it should be: because there's no other way but... the law of nature, to which women are anchored to and from which everything is born. On the other hand – men – build: cities, kingdoms and civilizations, so they can destroy them with wars and revolutions. They call progress: being able to live in different houses, to run or fly always a bit faster, to increase our life expectancy, to write music and books they call timeless, yet, that time devours and makes them ever so incomprehensible. So they get swallowed into a vortex where any new discovery will generate new slavery! One extra penny today, will call for two pennies tomorrow!

A more efficient tool won't alleviate hard work but give these nitwits a one more reason to work harder! A bigger and faster road will soon be invaded by these mad men so they can give free rein to their desire to go faster, to plot, to do more things, to be there, up and down, everywhere, without sleep, without peace...just like the drop of water that caught in the current turns into a waterfall!...

So this wild running around for a crumb of wealth, a trace of glory, a moment of power, will continue until the prick of a pin will deflate this big lie and pull the curtain over this ridiculous farce!

This is the History of mankind. Newspapers and books talk about it all the time! The names, the dates and faces change, the big lie transforms itself like a chameleon, it updates its make up but under the disguise there flutters the same swarm of drones, reaching higher and higher, attracted to the light that blinds and pierces them.

Next to and behind all this...there's us women! Intact, untouchable,

Vestal virgins in our collective unconscious, confident of our duties! How does it compare then – to men's stupid game- what we're capable of doing through a divine gift and nature's choice? All this for ever and ever a guarantee that life goes on, that mankind will prevail and that it could also be better, granted, those sons whom so generously we give to the big river of life, will not, once grown into men, fall into the vortex like new drones reaching higher towards the reflection of the light that already pierced their fathers!

Let's open our eyes women of the whole world! You whom call yourselves free, and you whom are called slaves! Careful now!

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Men grant us freedom only as long as it won't interfere with their desires or interests, only as long as it will free them of their fear of us!

To think that we – who think of ourselves as free – fought so they could free us, so that history could free us from the role that up until that moment – they had tied us to! We fell in the trap: we walked down the streets, we fought, we had heroines and martyrs ...all this so we could conquer the right to be called crazy like them, so we could abdicate our role, our throne, we, whom hold life in our hands, we the queens, we the omnipotent ones!

I'd like to say to every woman that passes by me, who sees me and hears me! Let's save ourselves. Let's save them, because by saving ourselves we'll save them also! Let's make better men! Let's stay close to the children that come out of our wombs! Let them not follow their father's footsteps! Let's stop them if we see them building their Babel's tower.

When they call us...let us be there! Let's teach them the wisdom of being attached to the true things of life, unlike the things of the world built by men! Let us renew life there where the stupid and useless destructive power of men passes through.

We must go back to nature, which we should never have abandoned!

Let's not relinquish our boundless and necessary power of motherhood for a bowl of chicken soup of something called equality that humiliates and empties us!

Let's laugh in their faces when they allure us: let's nod our heads in sign of pity, like we would do with retarded people. Their plan has failed! Each day declares and proves their failure! Theirs was not the road to undertake! Ours is! Ours is the truth, ours is the wisdom! Our womb is the master of the world! Not the money, not the progress, not the power of the phonies and liars who dictate the rules of their stupid game, shrines on which they blindly and unconsciously hold their sacrifices!

You too, be careful...you too who are called – slaves – shadows without faces, veiled bodies without a soul! Even if the very high wall of ignorance and darkness stops these words before they can reach you.

Be careful, when your time will come, be careful to choose a different road from ours: that your freedom may not bring you to abdicate your role, as we've abdicated ours!

I said everything I wanted to say to the woman who passed along the road and stopped near me, sat and heard my story.

I close my eyes, and I wish I could go back...

*(She closes her eyes. The men slowly turn their heads towards her.)*

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THE BUM                      Mom!...

THE GENTLEMAN      Mom!...

THE WOMAN            (*Distant, with simplicity*)  
Yes, my children. I'm here...

Slowly fade into dark.

**The End**

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