

BIG SISTER

a play in one act

by

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BIG SISTER

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Alexander Manuiloff

is a 33-year-old Bulgarian scriptwriter and dramatist, a former Reuters reporter and journalist for BusinessWeek Bulgaria.

His first book, *Film*, received the Bulgarian Writers' Guild Award for the best debut book of 2005.

Alexander's first work as a dramaturge, *United Shapes of Babylon*, went into the official selection of Prague Quadrennial 2007 and was staged in the Czech capital. The same year the performance was invited to Sfumato Theatre, Sofia. In 2008 it toured in Varna as part of the *August in Art* festival.

In 2008 his second book came out, this time in Berlin: *Language Ideas*", Berlin 2008, VDM Verlag).

In 2009 Alexander's script "Who's that town?" won the support of both the National Culture Fund, Bulgaria, and the Municipality of Sofia. It was picked up for production by Martichka Bozhilova, a Silver Wolf winner at International Film Festival in Amsterdam. The film is presently in post-production.

The play *The Invisible* was developed in co-operation with award winning Bulgarian director Vasilena Radeva, and was presented as a reading/art-video performance in Sofia City Art Gallery in mid-November 2010.

In 2011 Alexander participated as a dramaturge in an international site-specific performance in Prague (as part of Prague Quadrennial 2011) and also led a theatre workshop in Sfumato theatre, Sofia, based on his play, *Big Sister*.

Several scripts for short films and three other plays are in production negotiations. One play has been optioned by a New York literary agency.

Translates English language literature into Bulgarian and writes scripts for documentaries with Bulgaria's only travel television TTVI.

A member of Actassociation, Bulgaria's organisation of independent theatre artists.

CHARACTERS

LEDA	beautiful long-haired woman in her early 30s
PHILIP	masculine young bank clerk interested in fitness and sports
NICK	refined and slightly effeminate beginning lawyer
DUDLEY	plump and unsophisticated man of uncertain age

Note: A pre-recorded TV moderator's voice is heard twice in the play and is marked as VOICE-OVER.

Note: "BIG SISTER", apart from other things, wants to show people's daily life routines, silent oddities and habits, which it leaves entirely to the actors to develop. The author believes he has written only half of what is supposed to be shown on stage.

SETTING

A house specially designed for the “Big Sister” reality show with cameras in all rooms but without any doors or windows. A bedroom and a parlour, opening to a kitchen area. An antechamber – a small room with only a big chair and a camera.

TIME

Four days in the life of the house. The present.

SCENE 1

(Sound and light effects representing the “Big Sister” show teaser.)

VOICE-OVER

Big Sister is waiting for you all.

(The special effects fade away. Standard indoor lighting in the house.)

SCENE 2

(The bedroom. Philip and Leda sitting on the bed face to face. They talk in a tender, loving way.)

PHILIP

You're so ugly. I'll leave you after the first night, of course, if we have one, because you are so absolutely unbeddable. Actually, I... I disliked you the very moment I saw you in this house, with that...short hair of yours. Oh! And I'll always keep in mind how ghastly and stupid you are – not like the other women.

LEDA

You mean I am exceptional?

PHILIP

Hell, no! Not at all! You'll always be perfectly ordinary.

LEDA

Go on! You are being so nice to me...

PHILIP

I'll cheat on you with every single bit of skirt I meet.

LEDA

Mind what you promise!

PHILIP

Ha-ha! You know, I'll never say I love the old bag you are.

LEDA

Neither will I, you, sissy!

(They kiss. Sounds from somebody's steps behind the opening where the bedroom's door is supposed to be. Philip grabs a slipper and throws it in this direction.)

PHILIP

Damn that Nick! What a spy!

(Their afternoon routines, before going to bed.)

SCENE 3

(The parlour. Dudley is huddled up on the sofa, Nick enters.)

NICK

Are you keeping silence?

(Dudley looks at Nick but doesn't answer.)

NICK

Don't you know silence is considered a tacit assent?

(Dudley looks puzzled.)

NICK

That is...if you are keeping silence while I'm asking you "Are you keeping silence?" – by not saying anything – you will confirm it and thus say the truth: which means they will have to immediately evict you from the house, don't they?

(Dudley is about to say something, but then changes his mind, looking even more puzzled.)
(Pause.)

DUDLEY

Ay, yah, I am keeping silent. Silence. Yes.

NICK

Oh, my! Haven't you just said the truth? Here, here -

(Nick points at Dudley and turns to one of the cameras in the parlour speaking loudly at it).

NICK

Big Sister should notice that! Dudley has just said the truth! Dudley must be evicted from the house. I insist on Dudley's eviction!

(Long pause. Nothing happens.)

NICK

Now, that's strange, isn't it? ... What could that be? ... Lucky boy, maybe you are not to be expelled because when you said "I am keeping silence" you were actually talking, so you lied... isn't that so? Oh, my! Big Sister's very quick-witted, isn't she? Accidentally, you got away with that, didn't you?

DUDLEY

(pointing at Nick who is about to leave)

He, he – said... He said I got away with that, and I really did, so he has to be ev... evic...I insist...

NICK

"Ev", "evic", what? Insist on what? I didn't say anything - I just asked a question... didn't I? Haven't I been asking questions all day long just as you have tried to remain dumb and machoboy only used future tense, ah? "I'll kiss you on the cheek. I won't kiss you on the cheek."

DUDLEY

Er...er...

NICK

A single word and I'll catch you...hm...
won't I?

(Their evening routines at the two opposite ends
of the parlour.)

SCENE 4

(The kitchen. Leda is doing the washing-up
The men are engaged in morning
routines. They pronounce everything very
carefully as if walking on eggs.)

LEDA

C'mon, girls! The supper's ready. There is some coffee in the fridge.
Dudley, will you please pour it?

DUDLEY

(opens the fridge door)

But I don't see....

NICK

Dudley, do you really put the hot coffee in the fridge every morning?

DUDLEY

Oh, I see... But I don't see the...? Ookay.

(Dudley finds the coffee on the table, pours.)

(All of them are at the table now, eating.)

PHILIP

Mmm! Never tasted anything so strange, Leda! You are an awful cook.

LEDA

Hah! Thank you, Philip, allegedly.

(Pause.)

PHILIP

My granny called earlier to say it's the nominations day.

DUDLEY

Oh, did she? On the phone?

PHILIP

No, she faxed me.

NICK

How can you nominate when you can't say the truth?

PHILIP

That shouldn't be a problem for such a good lawyer as you... should it?

(Leda chuckles.)

NICK

I have always liked you, Phil.

LEDA

Ops. So directly!

PHILIP

Me, too, pal, we are just meant for each other.

DUDLEY

That's right, boys, why don't we simply try to be friends?

LEDA

Dudley!?

DUDLEY

Hmm... A question... wasn't it? I... I didn't really mean it, ah?

PHILIP

In fact, how does Big Sister understand who means what? What a bloody situation we are all in ... just perfect... rules...

LEDA

(nervously takes some dishes to the sink)

That's true. Nice house - nice rules; I think the more I stay here, the more I like the place: the walls, the ceiling, I can stay here for ... years.

NICK

Was it only me who didn't understand it, or you think so too?

DUDLEY

What?

NICK

Has Philip changed his yesterday's tactics with the future tense and has today put down his stake on the past?

LEDA

Ha-ha!

NICK

Well his granny called, blah, blah...

LEDA

You two are very much on the watch for each other, aren't you?

PHILIP

No, not at all, not at all. We *will* enjoy our time together – you see, we can watch the matches with Nick, hey, didn't you say, pal, you liked football?

NICK

Er... er...yeah.

PHILIP

Remember how we scored in the semi-finals last World Championship?

NICK

M.

(Dudley puts his cup of steaming coffee on the table and quietly leaves the room. Nobody appears to have noticed him.)

PHILIP

Sorry, bro, I didn't hear you?

NICK

Of course, I remember.

PHILIP

You do! – so let's play memories, ah? The seventh goal, a beauty! In the last minute! And we got into the finals. Remember we played against Brazil?

NICK

Er... of course, I do. I took a week off to stay in front of the TV.

PHILIP

And Brazil were about to beat us, but the ref was bought and he canceled two of their goals, so we were three-three and then beat them on penalties. It was so close. What a day it was! World champions!

NICK

Yeah, you're telling me! And then, the following year, at the European Championship we won 1-0 against Luxembourg and became European leaders for the fourth time in history. My word! A fourth European title! How many countries in the world can say they've done so... What a night! We painted the city red. Sofia couldn't get to sleep that night.

PHILIP (disgusted)

"Leaders!" "Title!" I really like talking football with you, Nick.

NICK

Yeah, our conversations are what keeps me alive in this house, *bro*.

LEDA

Hey, boys, if you're going to pat yourselves on the backs, should I go out?

PHILIP

Come to think of friendly terms, where's Dudley?

(Pause.)

LEDA

Who are you talking about?

(Pause. Nick and Philip look at her.)

NICK

Was there such a guy?

PHILIP

But...didn't he... oh, I just dunno ... any more.

(Philip drinks from Dudley's coffee cup.)

LEDA

Oh, yes, I remember now: he was a humble old man, but he was gone... long ago, no?

NICK

Yeah, I don't even remember how he looked like.

LEDA

We didn't learn anything about him. Did he like coffee?

PHILIP

Did he like football?

NICK

I wonder how is he now beyond the game?

LEDA

I don't know – nobody has come back to tell.

(At this point Nick stands up and points at Leda.)

NICK

I want Leda evicted!

(Philip also stands up and points at Leda.)

PHILIP

I want..., too, ...eviction.

(Dudley enters carrying a roll of toilet paper in one hand.)

DUDLEY

What's going on?

NICK

Hah! Leda said nobody has come back from beyond the game, which is true. And now she's got to go there. To see what's beyond the game!

DUDLEY

Wow! And how did you manage?

(Dudley points at Leda.)

DUDLEY

Leda must be evicted!

LEDA

What?! Boys, what's wrong with you? Philip, you, too? Of course. Of course. This is... this is what I have always thought of you... It now turns out you never lied to me!! You have always said the truth! ... And if I have to go now, you're coming with me! Because it means you spoke your mind!

(Pause.)

LEDA

I know you are ready to sacrifice us so that you can stay in the game, I know you would never really tell me "I love you", but do you really think I am ugly and stupid?

PHILIP

No, you are not at all ugly, nor stupid, I just...

(Pause.)

PHILIP

I love you...

(Here Leda starts throwing things at Philip.)

PHILIP

But this doesn't mean I don't want to win the game.

LEDA

Oh stop it. Just stop it! ... So your flirting with me was just to pass time, ah? Not to get bored to death with the silent dwarfish and the intellectual gay...

NICK

Can't you keep your mouth shut!

LEDA

Of course I can keep my mouth shut, but I can't always keep my eyes shut! Nor my ears. I can see through you, my dear lawyer, I can. I see the way you look at him.

(Leda points with eyes at Philip.)

LEDA

You are looking at him just as a woman would. I know you pretended you hate him, *sister*. You acted as if competing with him, but you were actually envious that *I* had him. You even tried to pick up Dudley the other day!

DUDLEY

No... he hasn't ...tried anything of the kind!

NICK

That's bullshit!

LEDA

Of course... Of course. He hasn't tried. And this is bullshit. It is true! Dudley, Nick, you have just told the truth.

(Pause.)

LEDA

Now, all of you three are dead. You can't hold out ... a proper row... to the end.

(Pause.)

NICK

(to Duddley)

Why don't you just sit down with this toilet paper!

(Dudley sits down.)

DUDLEY

Who's been drinking my coffee?

(All of them look at Dudley.)

SCENE 5

(The Antechamber – a small room with nothing in it but a camera, a sinisterly big chair and a touch of finality. Dudley in the chair, yawning, sleepy, it's late at night.)

DUDLEY

I don't want to get out of the game because here I have everything I need... friends and... No, nonsense.

I don't want to go... because... for the reason that... I am afraid. I don't know what will happen after...that. It would be painful to say goodbye to this place. And I am afraid of pain. I don't understand how it all works: you just play and play and then suddenly you have to stop playing. It's not fair. Please, don't throw me out; I won't know what to do there! All of us here – we all have just started. And I want to win the award at the end... We haven't heard from Big Sister ... she is not saying a word any more. How can I know what to do? ... They don't even let us have a glimpse of what's outside... Please... Help me, please.

(Pause.)

DUDLEY (to the camera.)

Was it OK? ... Was it enough? ... Should I go now?

(Smiles to the camera as if saying "cheese".)

SCENE 6

(The Antechamber. Philip in the chair.)

PHILIP

So now there is the thing... What is it to love or not to love? And what is the truth? Of course, you can love - and in the same moment ...not love. Here...

(Philip finds an old potato and starts playing with it absent-mindedly.)

PHILIP

There is one basic principle in logic – I clearly remember it from high school – and it is that “ x is always equal to x .” For every x . And what follows from that is that “ x cannot be y ”. The very fundamentals of logic. And simply not true. Let’s say – I am an x . So how could it be that I am equal to myself? When I get up in the morning I... I am not exactly the same man who went to bed the previous evening: in the morning I already have a stubble, I’ve sweated...

(Philip looks down at his crotch.)

PHILIP

... these three things. Or, say, the boy I was in the kindergarten? Man, I couldn’t tie my shoes then! Is this the same x , as when I moved to the bank - my first workday there with all those nice girls saying ‘Hi’ and things...and chuckling. And since I am not entirely equal to myself, what’s the problem if I love and not love at the same time? X is not always x , and it can be y sometimes – because things are changing, everything’s moving. Now, this potato. Let’s, say, I drop it.

(Philip drops the potato, then picks it up.)

PHILIP

This was an x before I dropped it, right? But is it the same after the blow it got? A major blow for a potato, I should say... Of course, it’s not the same – there are so many potato molecules on the floor and a little graze here that the camera can’t show. In the same time it looks like the same

PHILIP (continued)

old potato, no? ...So... when I say I love Leda - this may be true but may be not. And that's what I think – you can't even tell a lie if things are like that. Even if you wished. I don't understand what they wanted of us... How could they know who thinks what... and ... the eviction... and all that stuff. I think we are the people and they can't have us out. That's it.

SCENE 7

(The Antechamber. Nick in the chair.)

NICK

I am in this antechamber because I have to defend myself against possible allegations of my breaking the rules. As a matter of fact, what happened was that I said I didn't quite agree when that woman hinted I had a homosexual orientation. Therefore, if I now claim to be gay, it will turn out I lied when I said otherwise, which in fact will mean that I haven't broken the rules. But what is more important – I will then be the only one to have observed the rules... And the outcome of the game will be decided. Everything depends on what I'll say now.

(Pause.)

NICK

Er...Hm....OK. I'm gay. You can't vote me out.... I'm gay, gay, gay. Gay.

SCENE 8

(The Antechamber. Leda is in the chair.)

LEDA

(sitting silent in the chair for a long time with her
eyes fixed on a point in space)

What can I say? Vote! Vote!

(Curtain.)

SCENE 9

(All lights are on, but the doors to the theatre lobby are closed.)

VOICE-OVER

Dear ladies and gentlemen, you may now use the ballot-papers you have found at your seats. By deleting a name you indicate you want a candidate to be evicted. You may, however, delete more than one name if you wish to expel two, three or even all the four of them. In case you decide to keep them all in the game, you can cast the paper as it is, without deleting anything.

(The audience may now vote. Assistants with ballot-boxes make sure the voting is finished as quickly as possible.)

(When everybody cast their votes, all the ballot-boxes are taken away. Pause.)

SCENE 10

(The parlour. All the four are sitting there looking at each other. Gradually their morning routines are replaced by lunch, afternoon and early evening activities.)

NICK

And what? We are all here.

PHILIP

Nobody's evicted.

DUDLEY

Big Sister ceased to speak to us.

LEDA

They should at least have told us what's happening.

(Pause.)

DUDLEY

Maybe they just like all of us.

NICK

Impossible!

DUDLEY

Why?

NICK

Just look at yourself!

PHILIP

It could be some kind of nasty trick they are playing on us, ah? To delay the eviction and watch the fun.

LEDA

They can't throw us all out. The show will end.

PHILIP

But it has to end some day and that's it, girl!

(Leda laughs at him.)

NICK

Wait, wait! How can they evict anybody – there were no nominations! They don't know who to vote out. Whether to evict one, two or, say, all of us. This way they have hundreds of options.

DUDLEY

That's right – they can't have a quorum.

NICK

Oh, Dudley, it's lucky we have got you here – so you can sweeten our lives!

DUDLEY

What did I say again?

LEDA

Nothing, nothing wrong. It is perfectly true, in fact. The dear audience can't form a quorum. Whatever they vote – we are here.

PHILIP

Hah! There we have a crack in the system!

(Philip goes to one of the cameras and starts pulling faces.)

PHILIP

Come! Come! Vote. Let's see what you'll figure out. Who is in the big house, ah? Hah!

(Philip keeps showing muscles in front of the camera.)

DUDLEY

(pointing at Philip)

That's why Big Sister doesn't say a word.

LEDA

Ah! A word!

DUDLEY

It's true. There has come no voice for so long. We are all alone.

NICK

You can never be alone, Dudley. But what I am wondering now is if there is a Big Sister at all.

LEDA

How's that?

NICK

Well, do you remember who said we shouldn't tell the truth? ... The big fat lying and all that?

(Pause.)

LEDA

But... that's been known from the very beginning...

NICK

What's been known?

LEDA

Hm... er...

(Leda rotates her wrist in hesitation.)

NICK

And from what beginning? From the kindergarten?

(Philip studies with great interest the camera he was previously pulling faces in front. Then moves to inspect every single camera in the parlour.)

DUDLEY

So...that's it! I think there is a plot against us. A giant plot.

LEDA

And what a plot! We are here in this fantastic house, full board, and we are ruling their ... prime time.

PHILIP

Bloody bastards! The cameras don't work.

LEDA

(jumps to her feet)

What do you mean they don't work?

NICK

(also stands up)

Are you crazy? How come they don't work?

(they all gather around Philip)

PHILIP

You see – the dot is not blinking.

LEDA

What dot?

PHILIP

A small little dot inside – it should be blinking. I saw the other cameras, too. No blinking. Nowhere.

NICK

Why do you think there should be a blinking dot inside?

PHILIP

„Why do you think there should be a blinking dot inside?“ Because I work in a bank and I know what cameras do.

NICK

Well, these are not bank cameras. They're more sophisticated.

LEDA

I think they produce a gentle buzz.

PHILIP

(to Dudley)

Do you hear anything?

(Dudley strains his ears.)

DUDLEY

Yes... No...

DUDLEY

(to Nick)

And you?

(Nick tries to hear something.)

NICK

No... I don't know!...I don't know if I hear anything, you are breathing in my ear!

LEDA

OK, but at least they move.

NICK

Nothing moves.

LEDA

Yes, they do. Yesterday when I started shouting at you all the cameras turned to me.

PHILIP

Bullshit.

LEDA

But... don't you remember?

NICK

I didn't look at the cameras.

LEDA

I am sure they turned to me.

PHILIP

And maybe you turned...

(Philip makes the sign for "crazy".)

(Leda sees him and threatens him with a finger.)

PHILIP

... to them.

(Pause. Everybody inspecting the cameras.)

DUDLEY

Buzzzz.

PHILIP

Dudley!

NICK

Idiot!

LEDA

That's it. That's it. We're... we are just locked in a house we cannot walk out of! Just a house we cannot get out of!

(Leda goes out distressed.)

PHILIP

Leda!

(Pause.)

(Philip takes out a bottle of whiskey and puts it on the small table in front of the sofa. Then drops on the sofa.)

PHILIP

We all need a sip, don't we.

(Philip fills up a giant glass for himself.)

(Dudley goes after Leda.)

(Nick drops on the sofa next to Philip.)

PHILIP

Hey, you sit a bit away from me, ah?

(Philip pours whiskey to Nick.)

SCENE 11

(The bedroom. Leda is on the bed, face in hands. Duddley enters. At first he stands still staring at her, then goes closer.)

DUDLEY

Leda, please, don't worry. Everything will be fine. Believe me. Don't think the worst.

(Leda starts sobbing, Duddley comes closer to her and puts his hand on her shoulder. For a moment they just stay in this position.)

LEDA

I can't take any more. Just can't. I am trying to keep myself together, to cope with everything, but I have the feeling that... that the rules are changing ... constantly. Sometimes ... I simply feel that there are no rules in this ... this house at all.

DUDLEY

Leda, please, don't. Don't say things like that...

(Leda puts her hand on Dudley's, turns her face towards his, then pulls him towards herself. He sits on the bed. Their faces are very close to each other and she kisses him. The lights fade away.)

SCENE 12

(The bedroom. Duddley and Leda in the bed under the blanket.)

DUDLEY

Well, how much did you think seven inches are?

(Leda shows with hands at least twice as much.)

DUDLEY

Oh, that's why women can't park.

(They laugh.)

(Leda gets up, starts dressing. Dudley stretches hands in bed watching her.)

DUDLEY

Aaah! I feel like Adam and Eva. I mean... as if we were the first people on earth...the only ones. We can populate the whole house with little Duddleys and Ledas. We can ... we can do anything.

(Leda ruffles his hair and keeps dressing. Their morning routines.)

SCENE 13

(The parlour. Nick and Philip, embraced, are asleep on the sofa. The bottle of whiskey is empty. Leda enters.)

LEDA

Hah! Boys!

(Leda goes to the kitchen area and starts preparing the breakfast, begins singing.)

LEDA

„I look at you all, see the love there that's sleeping
While my guitar gently weeps
I look at the floor and I see it needs sweeping
Still my guitar gently weeps”¹

(Dudley enters.)

DUDLEY

Oh! Girls!

LEDA

„ I don't know why nobody told you
how to unfold your love
I don't know how someone controlled you
they bought and sold you”...
Common, boys, girls! Breakfast's ready! There's some coffee, too!

(Philip and Nick wake up.)

(Philip rubs his eyes as he sees Dudley and Leda kissing in front of the kitchen sink, then he realizes he is embraced by Nick.)

¹ The Beatles. The White Album. Permission to perform this song should be procured from the respective copyright owner.

PHILIP

This I call a nightmare!

(to Nick)

Oh shit! Get lost!

(Nick and Philip get up. Leda and Dudley are hugging.)

PHILIP

What's going on here?

LEDA (catty)

That's what I wonder, too... Come on, everybody, breakfast time.

(All of them gather at the table.)

NICK

So, here we are, all of us, uh?

(Pause.)

LEDA

I don't feel like talking about that. Let's change the topic.

NICK

(to Leda)

Would you pass me the salt?

LEDA

Here.

DUDLEY

It's very tasty, Leda. You're a wonderful hook.

LEDA

What?

DUDLEY

Er... a wonderful cook, I mean.

LEDA

Ha-ha! Thanks, Dudley.

(Leda reaches out to clean a spot on Dudley's shirt.)

PHILIP

What's going on?

LEDA

Nothing but enjoyable things. Did you sleep well?

NICK

Hmh. Let's change the topic.

PHILIP

(Philip reaches out to clean an invisible spot on Nick's shirt watching Leda in the meanwhile.)

(Leda laughs.)

(Pause.)

NICK

OK, what do we do now?

LEDA

Maybe we should try to find a way to get out of here.

PHILIP

But the last one to stay may actually win the award, isn't it possible?

DUDLEY

Can somebody finally tell me what the award is?

(Pause.)

NICK

Maybe, being adults, we should simply stop asking silly questions.

NICK (continued)

(to Leda)

Will you, please, pass me the milk?

LEDA

(passes the milk)

Yes, there are some things that are better not discussed.

PHILIP

And what? What should we do? Wait? Is that how we are going to pass our days? Just passing the salt and the milk?

DUDLEY

Even without anybody watching us...

(Pause.)

DUDLEY

Shall we play something?

(The three look at him.)

LEDA

I think I'll go back to my yoga exercises again.

(Leda stands up, finds a mat, puts it on the floor in the parlour and starts doing her exercises.)

PHILIP

OK. Let's play! Do you play chess?

DUDLEY

Yes, but be careful, I'm very good.

(Philip goes and fetches the chess. They put the figures on the board.)

PHILIP

How much good, I wonder.

DUDLEY

Let's bet something.

PHILIP

Absolutely. Fantastic idea!

DUDLEY

But what?

PHILIP

Something very precious!

(Dudley looks around.)

PHILIP

There's nothing in this house I can't get anyway. There is only one truly interesting thing.

DUDLEY

And it is?

PHILIP

Life.

DUDLEY

What?

PHILIP

Are you afraid?

(Leda stops doing her yoga exercises, watches them.)

DUDLEY

Who? Me? Never afraid. How's it going to happen?

(Nick brings a bottle of detergent.)

NICK

Very simply.

(Nick fills up a glass of detergent.)

NICK

The loser drinks up the detergent. It's enough to kill a horse. Not immediately. There is a certain period of absorption and you'll be foaming at the mouth for a while ... but it'll work.

PHILIP

Perfect!

DUDLEY

Perfect. Black or white?

PHILIP

Will toss up. Nick!

(Nick searches his pockets for a coin but doesn't find one. He picks a black and a white figure from the board and puts his hands behind his back then shows his fists to Philip and Dudley. Philip touches one of his hands and Nick opens his fist.)

PHILIP

White.

DUDLEY

White, my ass.

(Dudley stands up to see what colour the figure is. Also asks Nick to show what's in his other hand.)

DUDLEY

Good, OK.

(Philip and Dudley start playing. Philip moves a figure, Dudley follows.)

PHILIP

Ha! Spanish game!

(Philip moves a figure.)

DUDLEY

Yes. Predictable until the fourth move.

PHILIP

Then it becomes very interesting.

(Philip moves a figure.)

(Dudley moves a figure.)

(Philip moves and takes one of Dudley's figures.
Their movements become increasingly fierce.)

(Dudley moves and takes one of Philip's figures.)

(Leda comes to the table, messes up their figures
and pushes the glass on the floor.)

LEDA

Are you crazy?!

(Pause. Leda, panting, glowers at them.)

LEDA

You'll kill each other, are you insane? You just can't stand still for a second... lead a quiet life. This is... this is real hell... to be here with the likes of you.

(to Philip)

And you - what do you think? That you are a great hero? What did you think you were doing?

PHILIP

What I think is my business.

LEDA

You are revengeful, you are.

(to Dudley)

Well, and you? Why?

DUDLEY

Me? Because, because – for the game’s sake. And because if Big Sister sees that one is about to die, she should say something... or intervene...

LEDA

And you were ready to do it, my pretty little scapegoat. If only Big Sister intervened so readily...

NICK

We have to figure out what to do. We can’t keep on like that, we’ll butcher each other here.

LEDA

And it’s you who says that? You can keep pouring detergent to other people’s glasses and we’ll at least solve the butchering problem.

NICK

That wasn’t detergent – it was grapefruit juice. Exceptional flavour. It’s a pity you spilt it.

(Nick picks up the glass from the floor and puts it next to the bottle on the table.)

LEDA

Grapefruit juice? From this bottle?

NICK

Yes – it’s a new marketing strategy.

(Nick pours some liquid from it into the glass and drinks it up. Then pours what is left over to Leda. Leda takes the glass and first smells it.)

LEDA

Well it smells fruity. Bitter. Grapefruit, OK.

(Leda sips, then drinks it up.)

LEDA

Mmm. Is there any more of this?

(Dudley finds another bottle on the shelf, opens it and raises it to his mouth.)

(Nick jumps and knocks the bottles out of Dudley's hands.)

NICK

Can't you read the labels? This was real detergent!

(Pause.)

PHILIP

A wonderful marketing strategy! Does it sell?

LEDA

And how it sells! As if for the last time.

(Blackout.)

SCENE 14

(The parlour. All of them are there looking low-spirited. Afternoon. Everything is pronounced slowly and gloomy.)

PHILIP

So, what do we do now?

DUDLEY

Nobody tells us nothing.

NICK

Why does somebody have to tell you what to do?

DUDLEY

It would be better, no?

PHILIP

In any case it would be easier.

LEDA

It would be more interesting, because we could decide not to do what we are told.

NICK

Oh, what a rebel you are. How many times have you done the opposite of what you were expected to?

LEDA (loudly)

OK, I am a creep, I am an insect. And you? What have you done to improve things?

(to Nick)

You? What have you done?

LEDA
(to Dudley and Philip)

You? You?

NICK
Leda, please, take into consideration the fact that we don't care to see noisy rows any more. The question is what we can do now.

DUDLEY
OK, what can we do now?

(Pause.)

PHILIP
Nothing.

LEDA
Nothing is what we can do, that's right.

(Pause.)

NICK
We can do ... nothing.

(Pause.)

LEDA
There are no doors – to go out.

DUDLEY
Nor windows – to look out.

NICK
So long, Big Sister! We have it! We've worked out the solution.

(The other three look at him.)

NICK

There is no out. And there is no problem. And we don't have to do nothing really. Just a little bit of positive thinking!

(Nick jumps with excitement.)

NICK

As psychologists say - there is a problem only when you think you have a problem. We just ignore the problem! Literally – do nothing! Just stop thinking about it. That's how kids control their parents – they just ignore the absolute power their dads and mums think they have over them.

PHILIP

And what? Should we drop on the floor weeping “I wanna toy train! I wanna toy train”?

NICK

No! Not at all...But do you really want ... a train?

PHILIP

No...

NICK

Ok, what do you want?

PHILIP

M.

(Pause)

NICK

So, Leda, what is that you want?

LEDA

Are you a psychologists or what? ... I just want not to be bothered!

NICK

And you, Dudley? How are you?

DUDLEY

I'm...I'm fine, thanks.

(Pause)

NICK

You see, Dudley is ... fine. Leda wants not to be bothered, and Philip... doesn't want a train... So where's the problem here?... Leda, who cares to bother you? Philip, where's your train? Dudley is ok, while I found ...some pleasure ...in being in this house, too. It seems we can live happily here... We have to be united, isn't that so? I think there's only one thing we can do and we should try to enjoy it. Simple:

(Pause)

NICK

I'll cook you supper. A fantastic, exquisite, delicious supper, the best supper you'll ever have. A breathtaking supper. The ultimate supper.... But there are some preparations to be done.

(Pause.)

LEDA

Supper sounds super. I'm tired of cooking for you, actually.

PHILIP

Yeah, I feel like having a bite, too. What will it be?

NICK

Uhm, fish...

DUDLEY

Fish, oh, I like fish.

(Nick starts opening kitchen drawers.)

NICK

Leda, do you think we still have some of the...

LEDA

(Stands up heading to the kitchen.)

Oh, dear! You boys are totally useless, aren't you.

(Philip prepares the dinner. Blackout.)

SCENE 15

(The parlour. Everybody's engaged in ordinary Sunday evening activities. Leda gets out of the bathroom in a gown, her hair wrapped in a towel. Philip is examining his muscles in the mirror. Dudley is playing with a key and a an old door handle. Nick is cooking the supper.)

NICK

Let's have supper.

(Philip, Dudley, Leda one by one finish what they are doing and set off for the table. Nick serves the supper. They start eating.)

PHILIP (to Dudley)

So what are you doing with this handle – there are no doors here.

DUDLEY

Uhm, nothing, just... wonderful old things.

(All of them gradually take their places around the table, they are strangely happy or extremely tense.)

DUDLEY

Mmm. Delicious.

LEDA

How do you cook it?

NICK

The fish is just steamed – suspended over boiling water with all the spices in it.

PHILIP

What spices? Very interesting taste.

NICK

Rosemary, oregano and some sweet basil. The best for steaming a fish.

DUDLEY

Mmm. Would you pass me a slice of lemon?

LEDA

Here.

(They eat.)

NICK

And there is a little secret. I put some oak-aged balsamic vinegar in the water...

LEDA

Ah, that's where this elegantly bitter aftertaste comes from.

[Scene 15 until this line may be repeated twice exactly in the same manner and the third time it continues:]

(Nick fetches two bottles of detergent-grapefruit juice and plays with them as if in a TV commercial.)

NICK

Buy two bottles of detergent and collect your free bottle of grapefruit juice.

(They laugh.)

(Nick pours.)

NICK

That's it. Cheers!

(They smile.)

DUDLEY

Cheers!

LEDA

Cheers! A notre sante!

(They smile.)

DUDLEY

Drink up!

PHILIP

Down the hatch!

DUDLEY

Cheers!

(They smile, showing their brilliantly white smiles.)

NICK

And let the music play!

(Music. It could be “While my guitar gently weeps” again. The lights fade away.)

(Curtain.)