

Cleopatra.

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0.

Paola, in the foyer outside, watches the audience as they go in. She looks at people in the eye, studying them closely; in a few minutes she'll be sharing a fair bit with them so she's keen to see who she'll be faced with.

Dylan, inside, onstage, is prepping the stage for the performance. He's pulling together the different pieces of set and props—those strictly necessary to telling the story.

Half-undressed, he focuses on the preset, taking all the time in the world, paying particular attention to every movement and detail, as if by doing so he might be able to calm his overwhelming anxiety. He smokes continuously, one rollie after another. As he works, Vivaldi's *Stabat Mater* plays. He knows the order of the preset by heart; he repeats it over and over to himself, again and again like a mantra, as the music plays.

Isabel is sat in a corner, not overly exposed. Next to her is a small table with several books on it; depending on the day, she picks one or the other to leaf through before the show, taking advantage of these few spare moments before the performance.

When the audience have taken their seats and the preset is complete, Dylan lets the Stage Manager know so that he/she can call Paola to the stage.

1.

PAOLA

Paola, centre-stage, speaks directly to the audience.

Isabel and Dylan, either side of her, listen carefully.

PAOLA

This bloke's making a mistake. *(pause)* The Kipsta bag's there; I'm here, cowering, foetal position in a corner. He's already got me here, kicked me here and here, little bit in the head too, but I'm shielding myself. What hurts most is here, on my hand—on my ankle, and here, top of my chest. My lip's flaring up, here, and here. I'm branded for life here, here and here. The worst is on my side. Fine. They've got me. The hits have been taken. It hurts. A lot. But even that I can take. *(pause)* He feels humiliated; you gotta pay what you owe, pay the piper, and by the looks of things I'm the one who has to; I paid my pound of flesh. Nothing malicious. It's rage. There are rules: when they work for you and when they don't. That's the way it is. *(pause)* But there's a line. *(pause)* I look at Stiff and I can see that, beyond those red, red eyes: definitely not a human being that's watching me anymore. I'm just a *thing* for him now. *(pause)* And I know he's just decided that he's going to do with me what all of us do, with all things. *(pause)* He touches the buckle of his Gucci belt and he starts to unzip his Dolce & Gabbanas. In the background I can hear the voices of Juan Magán and Enrique Iglesias singing. It's coming from the club below. "Singing." Stiff pulls down his Calvins and lets his cock drop out, points it at me, swollen, veiny. *(pause)* *Dance, dance, dance, dance* – noise of the drums, the ground quivers with the bass, there's not enough light, Stiff's moving towards me, my legs are shaking, *baila de noche y de día*, he looks like a good guy, got a face like that fucking blonde guy who plays Captain America. *(pause)* He's just crossed a line. *(pause)* I can understand the rage. But other things I can't accept. The bloke's making a mistake. *(pause)* Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. Fine. Everything in its right place. *(pause)* You wanna have fun? *(pause)* I wanna have fun too. *(pause)* He fucked you. I know that what my ex- did to you was against the rules. That's fine. I don't have a problem with that, I'll pay. What's more, Stiff, I've always liked you. And you know that. *(pause)* And so I end up with his cock in my hand. *(long pause)* The Kipsta bag's there. Seven minutes ago, when Stiff

dragged me into this shitty room I suddenly saw it, zip open, white bags brimming, glowing inside. He's so fucking dim he doesn't even bother to hide it on my account; didn't even bother to zip it up, stupid arsehole. Kind of bloke that leaves a Jaguar parked with the keys in, because he knows nobody's going to be crazy enough to fuck him and nick it. (pause) I've told you that I've got his cock in my hand already, right? (pause) Twist away, smack, fall flat, look around, one of the tables, to the head, all at once, bit awkward, no time, can I hold myself up? He tries to get up, I look some more, grab a bottle, chuck it at his face, smashes, cover my eyes, gone blind, kick, got him in the ribs – I think – another kick, lower down, air kick, I can stand up, get to the Kipsta bag, take it, fuck that's heavy—next to it: a knife, bingo—take it too, he drags himself towards me. Another smack with the bag, on the mouth, you made a mistake, door doesn't open, it's locked—shit, shit, shit—Stiff is getting up. (pause) I'm dead. (pause) Kipsta bag in one hand, knife in the other, I'm not strong but I'm agile, small, Messi-style: spin round, I nail it to him here, he squirms, he's bleeding, writhing, another kick, on the door handle this time – and another, and another – he's bleeding, the door opens, I drive him back with another swipe of the knife, "you're mental", he says, "D'you know what I'm gonna do to you?". (pause) I don't know if I am mental. (pause) But I'm on my own now. (pause) Loud English girls laughing, lads vomiting, I get myself in amongst the people on the seafront so he won't find me; Stiff's running after me, loses sight of me, keeps looking for me. And I end up on the beach. Dawn's coming on now, a whole life on the run, from the moment I dropped out of my mother's womb—Kipsta bag still in my hand, it's really heavy, blood drying on my face, and the waves wetting my feet. (pause) The saltiness of my blood. Saltiness of the sea. Echo of laughter. Kisses. Arms. That blue dragon: huge, powerful, with wings and sharp teeth, tattooed on Andy's shoulder. (pause) Spaghetti. Pasta sauce. Cumin. Too much cumin. Cheese. El Caserío, the cheap grated stuff. Hummus. Cold beer. Baklava. (pause) Legs. Belly. The sex. The breeze. (pause) The sand. Bonelli Editore comic books. Cool films with Robert Downey Jr. (points to her nose). This haziness. (pause) So many fights. So much warmth. A lot of birds. (pause) Very cold, now. (pause) I remember Andy looking at me, on the other side of the sofa, his pores open, mine tied to his with the

sweat, almost one and the same body, his and mine, his feet next to my head, and his face there, his eyes, looking at me. And there, on the other side of Andy's eyes, there inside, and me getting all gooey and thinking, how wonderful...

Paola *smiles*.

PAOLA

...another human being.

Silence.

Isabel's house, lounge. Small table, wine and weed.

Isabel holds up a mobile phone, from which a constant and familiar sound can be heard.

DYLAN

Yes.

PAOLA

(still to the audience, indicating Isabel and Dylan) It's time.

ISABEL

What?

PAOLA

To go back.

DYLAN

Yes.

PAOLA

Here.

ISABEL

What?

PAOLA

Where I never thought I would.

DYLAN

A machine?

Paola moves to a corner of the stage, to put on her makeup.

PAOLA

(to Isabel and Dylan) Your go.

DYLAN

An engine?

ISABEL

Listen. Closely. *(pause)* Warmer, warmer.

DYLAN

I ...

ISABEL

You've almost got it, I can see it in your eyes.

DYLAN

... don't know.

ISABEL

A wheelie! *(pause)* You know those suitcases. With the wheels.

Isabel turns off the sound from the mobile.

DYLAN

Oh.

She picks up the remains of a spliff.

ISABEL

You sure you don't want to smoke? It just makes me feel good, you know. You know what it is? The pain. (*lighting the stub*) Look, Dylan, I've spent my whole life working, never taking a break—and I'm still working, never been able to break free of those chains—or rather, I've preferred the chains of work to other kinds, you know what I mean? Because there's nothing worse for your health; and everyone knows it, that work—and working—kills you. Everyone knows that. And so you see me like this. Depending on the day, my body aches from the moment I wake till the moment I go to sleep; and depending on how and when, it can be absolutely unbearable. And the doctors all say something different—it's exhausting, seriously—and in the end it really depends only on which pharmaceuticals pay, you know? That's the way it is, sadly, in most cases.

Dylan *lights a cigarette*.

ISABEL

And it turns out that now at my age—and I've never taken drugs, honestly—I mean, I've always indulged in what I felt like — and a fair bit of it, because I've always felt like indulging on quite a few occasions. But I've never slipped into a world of drugs the way a lot of people have: no, I haven't, no. I respect it, it's a decision like any other—another way of feeling alienated, of course — but in the same way that anything is, a way out of pulling yourself out of the quicksand we're in. But if I've got lost in life—and truth is I have got a little lost—quite a lot, in fact yeah?—anyway, if I did get lost, it was down other black holes, you know what I mean?

DYLAN *and ISABEL take a drag on their respective smokes*.

ISABEL

So now, thanks to these pains which seem to have taken absolute control over this holy body mother nature gave me, this little lady and I (*indicates the spliff*) have, as things stand, become pretty firm friends.

DYLAN

Yes.

ISABEL

You really don't want anything to drink? (*pause*) You sure?

DYLAN

I'm good.

ISABEL

(*pause*) Are you OK? (*pause*) I've got this amazing whisky I want to christen, but I don't want to drink it on my own, as I'm sure you'll understand.

DYLAN

I'm good.

ISABEL

Did you know they wanted to ban them in Venice? Rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle. Because of the noise, because they wear away the pavement: imagine that, thousands—millions—of wheelie suitcases rolling through the same streets day after day after day after day...

DYLAN

Of course.

ISABEL

...no, and because of the noise too, and well, yes, because there are people — and I hope this isn't your case — people who are light sleepers...

DYLAN

No.

ISABEL

...that rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle, those endless hordes...

DYLAN

I'd love a little water, if you've got some.

ISABEL

Do you know how much each of these new giant streetlights they've gone and put up is worth?

Isabel goes to pour Dylan some water.

ISABEL

The ones with cameras and computers... Do you know what percentage of the budget for the regeneration of this area was spent just on those streetlights? Do you know how many bars in this area are owned by bar Pepe? Do you know how many are owned by Bar Eusebio? You know the new squares they've created? Do you know who they granted the licenses to, for the terraces they put in the squares? Do you know why they granted them the licenses for the terraces? Do you know how many holiday flats there are in this area alone? Do you know how many people lived in the buildings that were on this street before they pulled them down? Do you know where they live now? *(pause)* Do you know how long I have to live in this flat before they chuck me out too, and pull down this spot where you and I are currently sitting and having this delightful chat at this exact moment?

DYLAN

No. *(pause)* How long do you have left to live in this flat before they throw you out too, and pull it down?

ISABEL

(pause) I haven't the foggiest, Dylan. *(pause)* But all the kids have already gone. *(pause)* A street where there are no kids is a street destined to die.

Isabel and Dylan take a drag at the same time.

ISABEL

You know? I've seen a lot of things. About how the world works. I've been lucky that way. You know? (pause) And everything I've seen, I had to study closely, so that I wouldn't go completely mad—and try to open my eyes and work out this strange trip we're all living through. (pause) Do you know how I make my living? (pause) I'm a sex worker, Dylan. A whore. I've fucked half the men in this city—but before that I was able to see how they treated their money, how they touched it. (pause) Managed to work out quite a lot, that way.

DYLAN

(pause) Could I have a little more water?

ISABEL

(laughs) Oh Dylan, I went all political there, didn't I? (pause) I'm at that point in my life: that point where you hand out leaflets, sign up for causes, it's fucking horrible; what a fucking load of crap leaflets and politics are, that's what it seems like, more and more. An unstoppable rot; it stinks of mould. Politicians can only talk about themselves and their shadow – and no one pays me to be political, do they? I mean, what I want is to be rich, and stop working, am I right? Not to be giving over hours of my life for free to the reeking turd which is politics. I like singing and dancing, like people who're alive do, not politics – all those men who're dead even as they stand on their two feet.

Isabel and Dylan take a third drag at the same time.

They then stub out their respective cigarettes, again at the same time.

ISABEL

What kind of a name is Dylan?

DYLAN

It's a *mote*. *Dylan*. A nickname.

ISABEL

Was Francesc so offensive?

DYLAN

They called me Dylan, Dylan's what stuck.

Isabel pours Dylan more water.

ISABEL

As in Bob Dylan? (pause) Dylan Thomas?

DYLAN

(pause) Dylan Bravo.

ISABEL

(laughs) Dylan Bravo?

DYLAN

(pause) When I was, like, well, a few years back I...

Isabel starts to roll herself another spliff.

ISABEL

(pause) Yes?

DYLAN (pause)

I was in this movie, and the character was called Dylan Bravo, and so from then on...

ISABEL

(interrupting)

You're an artist?

DYLAN

No mames, güey.

ISABEL

Well, how's that for a coincidence. Do you know that before, no one used to call me Isabel? I had a nickname for a character too: they called me Cleopatra, and Cleopatra's what stuck. Like politicians, artists only know how to talk about ourselves – but we want to bring joy to the world; we're generous, we're generous of spirit, right? I'd leave them all there with their tongues hanging out, on Parallel. I have photos, my name, lighting up the city, Cleopatra, in huge letters, you should have seen it. It's this patriarchal, Western idea of Cleopatra as a kind of hypersexualised Mata-Hari – but at the time it was very funny. Little bit clownish, they would piss themselves laughing, and I had them all eating out of the palm of my hand. (finishing rolling her spliff) Do you want me to do my little number for you? (pause) You want me to do my little number for you.

DYLAN

No.

ISABEL

No?

DYLAN

Your pains.

Isabel walks towards the sound system.

ISABEL

Don't be a martyr, Dylan. It's only when I dance that nothing hurts.

Isabel starts playing "Cleopatra's Theme".

ISABEL

(lighting her spliff) It's not all that fun, me having to rent this room; I'm a Queen, after all, aren't I? (pause) But now that we've talked a little, I don't know, maybe – maybe it was a good idea, right?

Isabel *starts dancing on the first few bars.*

PAOLA

(to the audience) I knock on the door.

Isabel stops dancing and goes to the door. She finds Paola. From her appearance it's obvious that she's survived a beating; she carries a bulky Kipsta bag.

ISABEL

Hello.

Paola leaves the Kipsta bag where it is. "Cleopatra's Theme" (instrumental version) continues to play.

Isabel and Paola stare at each other, motionless. Dylan can't quite work out what's going on.

PAOLA

Can I (come in)?

ISABEL

(pause) Of course.

Paola stumbles in. Isabel is still frozen from the shock.

PAOLA

Do you have anything ...? (she makes a drinking gesture)

Very slowly, Paola sits down. Dylan has the water bottle; he brings it over to Isabel, who serves Paola.

Paola drinks.

DYLAN (to Isabel)

First aid kit?

Isabel points to somewhere a little way off. Dylan goes to where she pointed and looks for it.

PAOLA

Are you going to patch me up?

Isabel sits down in front of Paola.

ISABEL

Of course. What happened?

Paola looks at Isabel.

ISABEL

Paola, who did this to you?

PAOLA

(a brush-off) Doesn't matter.

ISABEL

(pause) Let's get you to the hospital.

PAOLA

(as above) I'd rather stay here.

Dylan returns with the first aid kit and hands it to Isabel, who opens it and prepares to attend to Paola's wounds.

ISABEL *(to Dylan)*

Dylan—sorry—but could you take her bag to that room over there?

PAOLA

(trying to get up) Wait.

ISABEL

(stopping her) Don't move. *(To Dylan)* Thank you.

Dylan grabs the Kipsta bag, is surprised at how much it weighs.

ISABEL

This will hurt a little. (pause) Come on.

Dylan walks off with the Kipsta bag.

Paola lets herself slowly fall back onto Isabel's legs.

ISABEL

(to Paola) This will hurt.

ISABEL

How much your body's grown, little one.

Very slowly, Isabel begins to attend to Paola's wounds. Paola stops herself from moaning from the pain.

Eventually, she falls asleep. Isabel watches her sleep, stretched out on her legs.

The music stops.

Though sitting down, Isabel ends up falling asleep too.

Hours pass. Day breaks.

Paola wakes up, finds Isabel in the same position, asleep.

PAOLA

Good morning.

Paola sits up, slightly disorientated.

Isabel wakes up.

ISABEL

Good morning.

They look at each other, one sat next to the other.

The situation is slightly awkward.

ISABEL

How are you?

PAOLA:

Fine.

Dylan comes in, on the far side from them. He is wearing a dressing-gown and smoking. He sets some water on to boil for tea.

DYLAN (*singing to himself*)

Stabat Mater dolorosa...

ISABEL

Good morning.

DYLAN

I'm making tea. (*continues singing*) Iuxta crucem lacrimosa, lacrimosa...

ISABEL

Paola. (pause) Do you want some breakfast?

PAOLA

(pause) Ok.

ISABEL

(to Dylan) Would you make enough for three?

DYLAN

(singing to himself, as he makes the tea) Dum pendebat, dum pendebat filius.

ISABEL

(to Paola) Flatmate. Only been here four nights. (Pause) Dylan.

(gestures) Just for a moment.

Dylan nods and goes.

He has left the tea infusing.

ISABEL

Don't you want to tell me who did this to you?

PAOLA

(pause) Really, it doesn't matter.

ISABEL

I want to help. If I can.

PAOLA

I'm fine. Really. Had an accident. Something that shouldn't have happened. Now I'm here and I'm good. I'll get over it.

ISABEL

(pause) What can I do?

PAOLA

Let me stay here for a few days. Get some peace.

Is that his name, Dylan? What kind of a shitty name is that?

ISABEL

(smiles) Dylan Bravo.

Isabel goes to serve the tea.

PAOLA

Dylan Bravo.

Isabel serves the tea. She looks at Paola.

Isabel returns with two steaming cups and sits down next to her.

ISABEL

Do your aunts know you're here? (Pause) By now you're probably not talking to them either, are you?

Dylan comes in again and serves himself some tea. He is still singing the Stabat Mater to himself, in a low voice, as Paola and Isabel talk.

ISABEL

My sisters are what they are. (Pause) But they took good care of you.
(Pause) Didn't they?

PAOLA

There'll be time for us to talk, honestly. (Pause) Right now, a cup of tea's perfect.

ISABEL

(pause) There'll be time.

PAOLA

Yes.

ISABEL

(pause) I'll sort out the room. Do you know that since a few years ago more sunshine comes in on that side.

PAOLA

(to the audience) There's a knock on the door. My mother gets up to answer it.

Isabel remains sat next to Paola.

ISABEL

(pause) I'm glad you're here.

PAOLA

(pause) And my mother gets up to answer it.

Isabel gets up and goes to the door.

ISABEL

(walking) This tea really is good.

DYLAN

Clove.

ISABEL

Funny taste.

DYLAN

Very cleansing.

Almost imperceptibly, Dylan moves towards Paola as she speaks to the audience.

PAOLA

(to the audience) My mother opens the door and on the other side appears this small, roundish woman. *(Points out a specific person in the audience, a man)* You. *(Pause)* Stubborn-looking. *(Pause)* Warlike smile. You talk animatedly. *(Pause)* My mother quickly goes to get some papers and gives them to you. She shows them to you with pride. You look at them with this great curiosity. *(Pause)* My mother is very passionate, explaining all that these papers contain. You're saying goodbye now; but there's something in what you have in your hands which is greater than you. You look like two little girls preparing a secret plan. *(Pause)* I didn't remember her that way – but then I didn't remember that much about her either – but I do remember that, that my mother was a very passionate woman.

Dylan has now reached Paola.

DYLAN

Listen honey that's some serious kilos you're carrying around in that bag there, isn't it?

Paola, frightened, looks at Dylan.

Blackout.

2.

DYLAN

Isabel has a file in her hand. The house lights come on.

Dylan, in a corner, is getting dressed to go outside.

Paola watches everything at a remove.

ISABEL

(to the audience, to the men only) First of all, I'm sorry for not knowing we would have to put up with the noise outside. (Pause) Truth is, it took us by surprise. Above all I want to thank all of you ladies for coming here. I know that many of you don't know me; and I know that those who do, some of you may think that what I have to say is no longer valid, and perhaps you're right, I don't know. The only thing I do want, seeing how things are going, is to do my bit. (Pause) Give what can be given.

(Pause) Our current mayor says that what we do is twenty-first century slavery. Wow. For me, as things stand – and from what I've been able to work out – all that's been done to me is to be paid in exchange for hours of my life, right? Just like anyone else. Why do they enjoy making us feel so bad? Why do they insist, time after time, on comparing what we do to such terrible things? Why are they always, constantly trying to convince us that we're pieces of shit; that we have to look in the mirror and tell ourselves we're pieces of shit? (Pause) I'm nobody's slave, I don't want to feel like a slave, and I don't want there to be slaves, male or female. And I'm going to do everything I can to break your chains, and the chains of any woman around me who's enslaved, any woman.

Everything I can. But I've got eyes, I watch what's going on around me, and I don't have the faintest idea why I should have to feel worse about what I do than other people, who do exactly the same thing I've always done, which is simply to make ends meet, to make ends meet. What is this all about?

If you work with your brain you're an intellectual; if you do it with your body you're a worker—but women who do it with our sexuality are criminals? (Pause) I— I don't know, I'm sorry, I— seeing you all here is making me a little emotional; the only thing I can give to our, our group, is absolute effort, everything I've got. There's a good chance, right, that some of the tools I've been able to learn in this life might be useful in this – thrilling – adventure ...

*Dylan has finished getting dressed and rushes on.
He carries a plastic bag with two cans of beer inside.*

DYLAN

(to the audience) Sorry.

ISABEL

... which we are all ...

DYLAN

(to the audience) Sorry.

ISABEL

... involved in.

DYLAN

(to Isabel) Sorry.

My turn is – it's my – this – it's my turn now.

ISABEL

(pause) Of course.

(She goes.)

The house lights dim again.

DYLAN

(to the audience) I come in to Isabel's house, and run to Paola's room. Never seen so many hookers in one place. (Pause) I'd even say one or two definitely look familiar, maybe. (Pause) Paola.

Dylan enters the storage room. Paola is in bed, trying to read a DYLAN DOG comic.

PAOLA

I almost jumped out of my skin.

DYLAN

Me too.

PAOLA

That freaky meeting, the unbearable noise, me locked up here.

DYLAN

Honey I was coming up Radas looking over my shoulder, left, right, and I was like, "Fuck, dude these *pinche cabrones* might be right behind, and they might fucking lynch me."

PAOLA

(pause) What?

DYLAN

So much the better.

PAOLA

What?

DYLAN

That you didn't come.

PAOLA

Yeah?

DYLAN

The most important thing...

PAOLA

What?

DYLAN

... is that first of all, above all, and more than anything...

PAOLA

Tell me.

DYLAN

... you answer a question.

PAOLA

Dylan, swear on my life, I already told you. Stiff doesn't know anything about me, my mother, or this address.

DYLAN

You sure?

PAOLA

Andy and I used fake names. No facebook. Never used the same phones for more than two weeks, no email.

DYLAN

(pause) Andy knows where to find you, for sure.

PAOLA

(pause) Stay calm, all's well that ends well. And this is going to end well.

DYLAN

I know.

PAOLA

Sure?

DYLAN

Crystal clear.

Dylan reaches into his pocket.

DYLAN

I have this good feeling, you know. I don't recognise myself.

iOrale!

Dylan pulls out an envelope which is pretty full.

PAOLA

Is that it?

Dylan hesitates, puts the envelope back in his pocket.

DYLAN

Do you know why it's so clear to me it's gonna end well?

PAOLA

(pause) Tell me.

DYLAN

"I've hit the big time, *mon ami*, and I'm not saying that just for you." That's what I said to Big Gaston, the first day I went to see him, and I thought of you – I figured you'd get the reference pretty quickly, right, even though I don't know you that well: you know what Big Gaston's like? He's like Jabba the Hutt's monster, right? Exactly the same, OK, but talks French and has hair. Can you picture that?

PAOLA

I can.

DYLAN

"I got a KIPSTA gym bag that's full of snow." I said to him. "Hey, I didn't go looking for it; it came to me." (Lights a cigarette) "Dylan, *mon petit*," (*offers Paola a cigarette*), want one?

PAOLA

(pause) Go on.

DYLAN

(gives her the cigarette and lights it) "*Ça fait des années qu'on se voit pas, pourquoi tu viens m'emmerder maintenant, hein?*" Keep up because there's a moral at the end of this one, you'll see. "*If I tell you,*" I say to Big Gaston, "*If I tell you where I got it, the earth is going to open up right now, underneath us, and I'm headed for the fiery pit below – where they've been waiting for me for a while. But that's the truth, buddy, I have a Kipsta bag so overflowing with you-know-what, and you're gonna get rich off it. "*

PAOLA

I'm with you.

DYLAN

But today when I got there with the bag and the guy gave me the money, suddenly I had, like, chills down my spine, Paola, *sabes*, "This is a trap. Obviously, logically, they're not going to just let me keep all this dough, right?". So, there I am, counting away: "*Una cabezota, dos cabezotas, tres, cuatro... "*" And, with every purple 500 that drops, the more certain I am they're gonna give me *puritito chicharrón* right there and then. Because that's always the way it's been, in my life, honey: something has always happened; always trusted people I shouldn't have, always, and let's be honest: between paying for a mountain of coke and getting a mountain of coke for free the best business option is – always – getting it free. It's blow, it's already bathed in blood anyway, am I right? (pause) Paola, old Big Gaston saw the fear in my eyes. "*Ecoute, j'te laisse garder le blé; je pourrais te buter, tu le sais très bien, mais je le ferai pas parce que j'ai des valeurs, moi,*" Big Gaston says to me. "*Des valeurs, tu comprends? Si je suis arrivé là où j'en suis, c'est justement parce que j'ai des valeurs. Et si toi, Dylan, tu es où tu en es aujourd'hui, hein, petit fils de pute de deuxième classe, pose-toi la question. Pose-toi la question pourquoi t'as fini comme ça.*"

PAOLA

(pause) Right.

DYLAN

(pause) And that's when I understood that this was going to work out fine. Yeah. I'm absolutely certain – and I am a complete fucking virgin when it comes to this feeling, particularly this time. (pause) Paola, I did this for you. You know that, right? (pause) And I've told you already that I'm in a stable phase of carnal abstinence; so, make no mistake, so this is absolutely not either a romantic or sexual question – even if, ok, that energy is always there – or, at least, I haven't managed, yet, in one way or another to – all the more because of where we are, to – what can I tell you that you don't already know? But that's not what I'm talking about, obviously. You know that.

PAOLA

I know, Dylan.

Dylan takes out the envelope from his pocket again and offers it to Paola.

DYLAN

I don't want a single note.

Paola goes to take the envelope but Dylan again withdraws it.

DYLAN

No, listen, if I had told you that I wasn't going to help with this shit you made me do – and I'm sorry to say it like this, but selling *blanca* is a huge pain in the ass, on a spiritual level above all. But if I'd said 'no' you wouldn't have rested until you'd found someone who would have done, am I right?

PAOLA

(pause) Yes.

DYLAN

You don't know how much I know that. And the most likely thing is that you'd have found someone like the old Dylan, a guy with no morals,

disturbed, a tragic case with an unhappy end for himself and everyone else.

Dylan holds out the envelope to Paola for the third time, and then pulls it back at the last minute.

DYLAN

I've seen how you treat each other. You've been here five days and you haven't spent five minutes together. You struggle to touch her. She doesn't dare look at you. (pause) Twenty years, fine – you don't know anything about one another, you don't even know how to communicate. Fine. All this (*the envelope*) is a fucking Macguffin; it's a waste of time, Paola. You can spend a lifetime realising that, and even when you do realise... (pause) It's very simple. (*holds out the envelope again*) You don't need to know someone to love them.

Now Paola doesn't take the envelope.

PAOLA

You know what this is for, don't you?

DYLAN

(pause) Yes.

PAOLA

Dylan, this *is* going to end well.

PAOLA takes the envelope.

DYLAN

Dale.

PAOLA starts to count.

DYLAN

(to himself) A beer. I can have a beer today, of all days. *(to Paola)*
Have to celebrate somehow, right?

Paola continues counting the notes. Dylan opens one of the cans of beer.

DYLAN

(to himself) *Quando corpus morietur, Fac ut animae donetur, Paradisi gloria.* *(to Paola)* Have to celebrate this somehow.

PAOLA

(finishes counting) It's all there.

DYLAN

Yes.

PAOLA

You have to have your share of this.

Dylan offers the second can of beer to Paola.

DYLAN

Linda, there are some things I can never have just have my share of.

Paola takes the can of beer. They toast and drink.

Paola's phone rings, on the bed. Paola goes to it, picks up the phone and is surprised to see the number of the incoming call.

PAOLA

(answering) Yes.

Dylan observes Paola talking on the phone.

PAOLA

Ok. *(pause)* Ten minutes, that's all.

She hangs up.

PAOLA

He's here. (pause) Andy.

DYLAN

Here?

PAOLA

In the area.

Paola starts to get ready to go out.

DYLAN

And?

PAOLA

Well, he has to say goodbye.

DYLAN

(pause) What for?

PAOLA

He has to look me in the eye. (pause) And he needs to know what I've been through.

DYLAN

Let's go.

PAOLA

I'll go. (pause) You went to Big Gaston alone because you said that was your turf, right? This is mine.

DYLAN

Yeah right, but you, you don't...

PAOLA

(interrupting) I've fought with worse fuckers. *(pause)* Listen, don't go all macho on me now; as I was waiting for you, earlier, I downloaded that film. Where you play Dylan Bravo. *(pause)* You know what? Total fucking shit. The first one is fucking great. The second one, not so much. The third – yours – is a sin against mankind. That Dylan you play? No. No way. *(pause)* Do you know, for a time we lived in this Italian's house, on the coast, with Andy and all that shit, right – no, listen, this Italian had left a box full of Bonelli Editore comics at home – Italian comics – Zeta Series, science fiction, monsters, spies, freaks, and this character, Dylan Dog – that one, yes – and when I was fucked, right, I'd get into bed, spliff in hand, when I didn't even– I'd stretch, and I'd read, for hours, days. Comic after comic. *(pause)* Dylan Dog, *indagatore dell'incubo*. The Inspector of Nightmares. Mysterious, solitary, something of the sorcerer about – a good guy, a brother, right? With all these *valeurs*.

Paola puts the envelope with the money between the pages of the DYLAN DOG comic.

PAOLA

Half of this is yours. The comic is a present. Ok?

DYLAN

Ok.

Paola gives Dylan the comic and walks towards the door. She stops short.

PAOLA

If it doesn't end for good, it won't end well.

She goes.

DYLAN

(to the audience) The night I discovered the Kipsta bag I didn't sleep a wink. Sat there like a *pinche huevón*, leaning forward, looking at it in

silence, craving the whole fuckin' night. (pause) I didn't taste a pinch. (pause) I'm fucking Iron Man. (pause) Bags of nose candy right there in front of me and I didn't taste a bit. (pause) I held strong. It was all so obvious. I don't recognise myself. (pause) And the next morning, "Listen honey, that's some serious kilos you're carrying around in that bag there, isn't it?"

PAOLA

I want to sell this, and with the money I'll turn my world inside out. Like a sock.

DYLAN

She asked when we could have a moment alone, and I – my heart went 'ping'.

PAOLA

Use this money to take care of my mother. Take care of myself. Be the architect of my own life. Like I was before.

DYLAN

Real fucking cable tv story this one, am I right? How many times have you told yourself this fucking story, Dylan? (Pause) I didn't know what to say. I ran. Shitting myself. That girl, I mean fuck she's beautiful, isn't she? *Stabat Mater dolorosa. Iuxta crucem lacrimosa.* (Pause) I went up there, below the mountains, with the statue of Carmen Amaya and all the foreign ravers getting fucked up, I was just trying to breathe ... Argh! On the ground, everywhere on the grass, there were eight, ten, twelve, rats, at a glance: hairy, black, round, among the bushes. Twenty? Even more? (Pause) "*La rateta eta eta eta eta*". (Pause) Perhaps you know my father. One of those rubbish seventies singers – Catalan, bearded, corduroy jacket, Catalan Workers Party card. If you were kids at that time – sons and daughters of the liberal left – or Catalans, you would definitely have sung his songs: "*La rateta eta eta escombrava l'escaleta, era molt boniqueta, la rateta eta eta*"—yeah? Inside of my nose is starting to sting a lot. Yes, some of you, yes, some of you must have sung that fucking song, yes *mamasita*. He'd come out at the concert with

the *rateta*, mouldy old costume, huge black nose, dusty. My mother would wear it, it was my mother in the costume – yes, she was the *rateta* – and my father, happy bastard, singing: "*The rateta eta eta*". All the kids loved him. (Pause) All you kids loved my father. (Pause) One day, at lunch, I walked out of school. My mother had died a few months before, I was twelve years old, and that day there was chickpeas for lunch – and I couldn't stand chickpeas, so I left the dining hall to go home to eat. I wanted to make some *pan con jamón*, that was all I could think of: a couple of slices of *pan con jamón*. And when I got home – did I say I was twelve? – when I got home, yeah, on that day, there, on the floor, was my father, stretched out, on the floor, next to the sofa, in a pool of shit. He never was a very tidy bloke, my father, really, and his head like this, in this ridiculous position, not breathing, eyes open. And he was smiling at me.

(Pause) And of all the rats enjoying the grass, there's one of them there munching this piece of shawarma someone's thrown away, and that one raises its head and looks at me. (Pause) Looks me in the eye. (Pause) Intently. (Pause) And he smiles at me. (Pause) Yeah. He was smiling at me. As if to say: "Don't worry, everything will work itself out." (Pause) And now she's just run off, alone, and I already know, I'm absolutely certain – because I've seen it in her eyes, and because we all know it – I'm absolutely certain what will happen when she, the girl, Paola, comes face to face with him, Andy, the boy.

I already did what I had to, right? I can't do any more, can I? I know that if I listen very carefully, yes, I can locate this certainty in the lining of my gut that tells me that if I stay very, very still – right here – if I don't let myself be dominated by this hole – my chest is burning – the hole which is growing inside me right now – stratospheric, atomic – if I don't leave this room and I do not move from these geographical coordinates, if I chew it over and clench my fists, my jaw, as tightly as I can – if I bury myself under the sheets and don't venture into the outside world until a new day breaks tomorrow, that might mean I've proved – and now it strikes me – that, Jesus Christ, I'm no longer a slave? (pause) I run out the door. (pause) But before I do I grab the money, instinctively, keep it here, inside, and run out the door.

Isabel, still in her meeting, among all the whores; I run to the door, down the stairs, dust of the buildings being demolished floods the air – they're pulling down the building right next to ours – rubble, stones, sand, I'm running, Plaza Navas, the night, foreigners walking up the street, their suitcases on wheels, rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle-rattle, pornstar *gringa* girls, Neon – like a Playmobil version of Las Vegas – Arab kids, they're laughing, internet café call centres, an ad for a drink, looks like a blowjob; I'm sweating, my nose is stinging a lot, I cut down Carrer d'Elkano – hipsters, artists, the envelope with money still there, soon it'll be a full moon, I don't forget the envelope for a second – plaza del Surtidor, Rihanna, people drinking outside, no no no no, my mouth shaking; Carrer de Blai, my dick's burning up, Kilim, La Tieta – no no no no no – eyes like golf balls, Carrer de Tapioles, sound of *reggaeton*, mulato girls, twerking – inside of my nose really stinging a lot – no, Carrer del Poeta Cabanyes, no, Nou de la Rambla, no, the bomb shelter, no, Roser, Margarit, Vilà Vilà, transsexuals, tits, hot, *joder*, no, no, no. (pause) Frankfurt. Apollo. Yes.

He lights another cigarette. His hands are shaking.

DYLAN

Paola and this tall guy, bald, moustache; he's shaking, crying, these tattooed arms. Andy. Two greasy burgers that neither of them dares touch. I hide behind a car, and watch. Paola's very sad, she puts her arm around Andy's, strokes it. (Pause) Andy looks up at Paola. (Pause) My *verga's* burning up. Paola and Andy walk under the huge streetlights, go into a hotel in the Parallel, *pinche* sweet hotel. I look up at the windows, from the street, at the room the two of them go into, they turn on the light, kiss. I go into the hotel, right in front of me, this *pinche* sweet hotel – are all the *pinche* hotels posh around here now or what? I ask for a room, on the same floor as Paola and Andy's – one of the purple ones from the envelope does the job. In the room, sit down, the window. (Pause) Paola's skin. Soft skin. Smooth. Andy's skin. Grainy. Strong. Paola laughs. (Pause) The mini-bar. One more cold beer? (Pause) Just one more.

Dylan opens a third can. He drinks and smokes, shaking.

DYLAN

There's a blue dragon on Andy's back – huge, powerful, with wings, sharp teeth – it rises up, imperial, with this enormous mouth, blood-red gums– bites her, devours her. (Pause) Paola disappears. (Pause) The dragon lets out a burp, and spits out Paola's soul.

ISABEL

Where's Paola?

DYLAN

What?

The living room of Isabel's house. Isabel smokes weed as she reads. She has half a bottle of whiskey and two glasses. Dylan has just come in.

ISABEL

Weren't you with Paola?

DYLAN

No. (pause) You're not sleeping?

ISABEL

No, tomorrow's a big day; I need to relax a little before I lie down.
(pause) You don't know where she is?

DYLAN

(pause) No idea. (pause) The Meeting went well, didn't it?

ISABEL

Well, yes, the process is always slow so, each part takes its time to speed up and, yes, it went well.

DYLAN

Good.

ISABEL

Do you want some? (the whiskey) A little. (pause) Don't go holding back now, you stink of booze – go on, get a glass – go on, Dylan, I got it out for you. (pause) Grab a glass.

DYLAN

(pause) Oh, I have to – I better get to bed.

ISABEL

Dylan. (pause) I'm a woman of a certain age. I'll be brief.

DYLAN

(pause) One drink and I'm off to bed.

ISABEL

(pause) One drink and that's it.

Dylan moves towards the table, pours some whisky into the unused glass and sits down.

ISABEL

You're adorable.

Dylan lights a cigarette.

ISABEL

Don't you want to know why tomorrow is a big day?

DYLAN

Why is tomorrow a big day?

ISABEL

We've got a meeting with the mayor, Dylan. (*offering him the spliff*) Sure? "The world's no fool by half: it needs poison to make it love and laugh," eh? Anyway I was saying that, following the meeting a few of us

are going to meet with the mayor, right, tomorrow, first thing in the morning,, in a few hours; that's it.

DYLAN

Good.

ISABEL

It's a breakthrough, right?

DYLAN

Yes.

ISABEL

Did you see them? They saw you. (pause) I don't know if you've noticed, but there's all sorts; and with everyone's fears, it's not easy agreeing on things, not easy to trust anyone – because it's hell, on the street, with the persecution that's going on, right? Every day the area is smaller – now they no longer have San Ramón, and Robadors is smaller, all very clear, isn't it? (Pause) They don't understand, Dylan: erasing us is the only solution for them. Drink, Dylan, don't torment yourself, it's not poison.

Dylan takes a first, small sip.

ISABEL

They don't dare look us in the face. Drink, man. That is why tomorrow what we've achieved is a huge success: the Mayor is sitting down with a few of the committee; just three of us – protocol and all that shit, fucking shitty politicians – and I'm one of the three, right. Listen, do you know what we want to talk to him about? What we want to explain? (pause) Is the whisky good?

DYLAN

(pause) Very.

ISABEL

(goes to a specific place) I keep it for special occasions, Dylan. *(She stops suddenly)* I'm a little bit peace and love now and then, aren't I? I want to believe in people, you know what I mean? I have more than enough reasons not to trust – anyone – but when I do, listen to me, only when I do trust people do I find the strength to get up in the morning and enjoy the hours and seconds that life gives me, to be able to be with people and so that the bad stuff doesn't hurt me as much; do you understand? *(Pause)* A lot of the girls find it difficult, they don't know me, I haven't worked the street for years, I never did that much of it, I've been a working woman from head to toe, my whole life. But an hour out in the rain, no way, I'm from a good home, and I'm an artist, in my soul that's what I am, at the root, an artist – and fuck whoever doesn't understand that, they can shove it up their arse – artists are all unhappy, disgusting egotists same as fucking politicians, but I am an artist and not even I can change that.

Dylan takes a second sip of whisky.

ISABEL

(serving herself more whisky) Now I only have two or three fixed clients, you know? I'm one of those on a grand a month but I don't work more than ten hours, and with that I have what I need, if we can't abolish work, right? What I wanted to tell you, Dylan, don't make me lose my train of thought, eh? There's always this mistrust, right, but there's also this enormous solidarity: they're all my mates, every one of them. I'm everyone's mate.

Dylan finishes his glass of whisky with a third sip.

ISABEL

More? *(Pause, serves him)* Go on. *(Pause)* I went through a crisis years ago. *(Pause)* A real one. *(Pause)* You know what I'm talking about, right? *(Pause)* So I decided to go to university. I must have been your age and I started anthropology; you didn't know that about me; we haven't talked, we haven't had much time, these last five days, have we?

Dylan drinks.

ISABEL

At first I worked in a flat, with more girls, you know, and when there were no clients I would study like crazy; I don't know, it probably sounds like bollocks to you but studying I found this great, theoretical, nourishment that I needed, for a lot of things I didn't understand, and to understand myself, and then after the 15 May protests happened, well, that's it, right there, a lot of things happened to me, a lot of things ... *(she stubs out the joint)* Am I talking too much?

DYLAN

(pause) You've got interesting things to say.

ISABEL

(pause) You really are adorable. Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, that is what I wanted to show you.

Isabel runs back to the specific place. Dylan returns to his drinking, but suddenly stops and pushes the glass to one side.

ISABEL

Do you know what we're going to talk to the Mayor about? My dissertation, from my degree, "Sex worker cooperatives through the ages". Free men and women, right? Who have exercised their right to use sex as a way of earning a living and who have organized themselves collectively to carry that out. Empowerment. *(The whisky)* Is this good or what? And when, Dylan, when I knew that my girls were getting themselves organized – it's not always easy, you know, when they started to kick people out of this street we didn't know how to organize ourselves, we lost that battle, as you can see now. No, with my girls there's something else. *(Takes out the dossier)* It cost us a lot. *(holds out the dossier to Dylan)* There are some ideas here for which, well, I feel responsible for this too, partly; I have my hand in it – and yes, I'm being vain, right, by saying so, but yes, of course my hand is in this too.

DYLAN

(reads) "The only thing we can't change is the sun rising in the east and setting in the west."

ISABEL

We would manage the premises ourselves. Without anyone else. To do our job. In two years we could make it entirely self-sustainable. They have the building, we have the idea. And the organization. They don't want us on the street. What can they give us in exchange?

DYLAN

(pause) And is this what you're going to talk about tomorrow?

ISABEL

I have nothing to get out of this, now. I just want to know that I changed something. (pause) You want to change a few things too, don't you?

DYLAN

(pause) I'm sorry?

ISABEL

The meditation. The music. (Pause) I'm not spying, but I do want to know who I've taken in to my house.

DYLAN

Obviously.

ISABEL

And the water, the herbal teas, the constant smoking; it's clear, isn't it? Obvious. And the face you have, your look. You're running away, aren't you? You want to let go of certain habits, am I right? (Pause) What do you think of Paola?

DYLAN

(pause) What?

ISABEL

What do you think of Paola? (Pause) You talk, you're never apart from her – ever since she arrived. You didn't know each other, did you? We haven't talked for five minutes, she and I, we're in my house, aren't we? (Pause) "There'll be time." And the time never comes.

DYLAN

Right.

Isabel starts to roll a new spliff.

ISABEL

Fucking guilt. Fucking stigma. It gets to you, here, makes you believe you're a piece of shit. I paid, you know, money. Every month, religiously – never was there a better word – even if none of them spoke to me, my sisters, family, and they made it very difficult, to communicate – but they took the money, didn't they? Never had any problems with a whore's money. (Pause) Twenty years of not being a mother because they'd made me think I was a piece of shit. (Pause) I shouldn't be talking to you about this, should I?

DYLAN

(pause) No.

ISABEL

Exactly. "There'll be time." (Pause) Did you say anything to Paola about my pains? (Pause) My pains. Did you say anything to her?

DYLAN

No.

ISABEL

No? (Pause) For all your meditation, Francesc, you know, for all the

fucking piece of shit Christian music, the important thing isn't what you let go, darling.

DYLAN

I'm not all that...

ISABEL

It's not what you run from; it's what you grab on to.

DYLAN

... all that well.

ISABEL

Listen to me. All the more so, if you can't cling to anything, if you don't believe in people, you only create pain around you. That I choose to wear this veil of naïveté because that's the way I fell out of my mother's pussy does not mean that I can't see people as they are, what the fuck do you think?

Isabel lights the spliff. Dylan, gets up, dizzy.

DYLAN

Goodnight.

ISABEL

Yeah my girls noticed you. (*Serving him again*) Little more, go on. I don't know if you noticed them but they saw you – we'll finish the bottle tonight – you were a client, for two or three of them. (pause) Very cool. (*serves herself*) Drink, man, drink, Dylan, drink. (pause) Dylan, the bad lad of Las Vegas – the Mexican. Dylan, Pancho, Nacho, Sonny, Tico, Marco. Gambles, cheats, steals, defrauds, and deals ... Am I right? Am I on the right track?

DYLAN

(pause) Maybe, yes.

ISABEL

Right from the start. I've met a lot like you – too many. I don't know, I guess I looked at your shirt collar and I figured you weren't a pig, I don't know.

DYLAN

(pause) *Orale*, Isabel.

Dylan gets up, goes to a corner and puts his four possessions into the Kipsta bag. Isabel serves herself more whiskey; she does not see Dylan take out the envelope with the money and leave it on the bed. The DYLAN DOG comic, on the other hand, he puts inside the Kipsta bag. He heads for the door, carrying the Kipsta bag.

ISABEL

I know your sort pretty well. Harridan mothers, weak simpering fathers. They damned you, told you you were kings. And you're the children of error. The ones that always run away. The ones who always hurt others. The ones that make sure everything ends badly.

DYLAN

(pause) I hope everything goes well for you two.

ISABEL

Disappear. (Pause) Out of respect.

DYLAN

I'm leaving Poble Sec. And Barcelona.

ISABEL

"Fuck with fire and you'll get your cock burnt."

DYLAN

I hope it goes well tomorrow. (*To the audience*) Someone knocks on the door. (*To Isabel*) I'm going anyway.

Dylan opens the door: someone punches him and he falls to the floor. An UNKNOWN MAN comes in, attacks Dylan and starts to beat him up.

ISABEL

Dylan!

Black.

3.

Isabel.

Isabel collects all elements of the set, putting them away in boxes. She takes her time.

Paola comes in; she has just finished getting dressed and is drying her hair with a towel.

ISABEL

Hi.

PAOLA

(pause) Hi. (pause) I've come to say goodbye.

ISABEL

Aha.

PAOLA

I hadn't seen you and, well, I took the opportunity to jump in the shower. I was a bit taken aback when I saw the boxes.

ISABEL

In the end it's all moved pretty quick: they told me three days ago. They're pulling this one down next week.

PAOLA

Goodness.

ISABEL

Strange to think it'll all be rubble in no time, isn't it?

PAOLA

Have they got you another flat?

ISABEL

In Sant Martí; just on the border with Badalona.

PAOLA

Oh.

ISABEL

Looking forward to seeing the world.

PAOLA

(pause) That's great.

ISABEL

And you?

PAOLA

We're heading off now. (pause) I'm waiting for him to call me.

ISABEL

Yeah?

PAOLA

The motorway, few CDs, s'all good.

ISABEL

All good.

PAOLA

His parents have found us a flat, we'll be close by, we'll get along fine.

ISABEL

Absolutely.

PAOLA

(pause) He knows he made a mistake, but deep down Andy's a good guy, you know. (pause) Have you spoken to Dylan?

ISABEL

(pause) No. (pause) You?

PAOLA

I'll call him.

ISABEL

Me too.

PAOLA

Over the last few days I had to be with Andy; I had to. But I will call Dylan. (pause) To thank him.

ISABEL

At least you didn't have time to spend the money.

PAOLA

(pause) Thank you. To you above all.

ISABEL

No.

PAOLA

Yes, thank you. It shouldn't have... I know.

ISABEL

It's fine.

PAOLA

No, I shouldn't have picked up that bag filled with shit. I shouldn't have it brought here. The selling, the money, I shouldn't have, forgive me. I shouldn't have put you at risk. If it hadn't been for you, you know, I, I don't know...

ISABEL

No.

PAOLA

... I feel like, I'm so sorry because Stiff, this guy, with nothing to

lose, and nothing in his head, that piece of shit – I'm sorry because if it weren't for me that shit would never have come here, to your house, and he wouldn't have, I mean fuck he wouldn't have given poor Dylan a beating, and he's, well he's alright – he doesn't deserve – and you don't deserve to have seen that, you don't deserve that, fuck, just as well he didn't manage to...

ISABEL

(pause) Those are the kind of people that scare me the least.

PAOLA

Right.

ISABEL

The good thing is that you wouldn't have spent the money.

PAOLA

It was a shit situation. (pause) And you sorted it out.

ISABEL

Stiff won't be bothering you again. That's what counts.

PAOLA

(pause) Thank you.

ISABEL

(explodes) I mean what the fuck were you thinking?

Paola picks up her things, set on leaving.

PAOLA

Sometimes things are hard.

ISABEL

(pause) Have you had breakfast?

PAOLA

I'll get something on the way.

ISABEL

Yeah?

PAOLA

We'll stop somewhere.

ISABEL

Do you trust Andy?

Paola makes her way towards the door.

PAOLA

It's late.

ISABEL

Would you like a couple of apples?

PAOLA

(refusing) Thank you.

ISABEL

Listen, I know – wait, please – I know that I let – Paola, wait – I know that I have let life, people, whatever – myself – I, have let myself– I've suffered a lot, do you know that? *(She interrupts Paola)* I should have been there. *(pause)* In your life. *(pause)* With you. *(pause)* But I really, truly, felt like I was a piece of shit. I would hear it from people who supposedly loved me. *(pause)* Fuck. What kind of twat would leave her daughter to rot in the company of a piece of shit?

PAOLA

(pause) There'll be time.

ISABEL

You're on your own, that's my fault, it is, but you're about to jump in a car with...

PAOLA

Don't go there.

ISABEL

That's it though: a bloke who abandoned you, who put you in danger, who tells you he's gonna change but, deep down, even if he doesn't know it, he's gonna drag you down a hole with him...

PAOLA

Listen to me. If I've taken all the shit they've put on me, all the – shut the fuck up for once – if I have decided, if I look at you and I stick to what I see, fine, just with that, and I forget everything else – all the other crap I can throw away. No, Isabel, shut up, the woman I have in front of me is a good woman, I believe that, beyond the fact that you're my – beyond the fact that I came out of you, beyond that – which is important but it's not the most important thing – I look at you – I've been looking at you, I've been listening to you – even if you say we haven't spoken, even if you've felt very far away from me, I've been here, by your side, for a few days, okay, but, I think I know who you are, right? Who you are now, and you're a good woman, for Christ's fucking sake. Ok? (pause) And if I've decided not to judge you, and to me – no, not now – what you are, the work you do, what you fight for – the only thing I can really judge is that you've not been, that you've not been there, for whatever reason; you said it yourself, didn't you? And until – and I can even understand that, Isabel, a lot, but you haven't been there, you said that didn't you? (pause) And if I don't judge that either, it's already too late: if you didn't do it then, you can't do it now. No, don't you dare. So let me do what I have to, to be happy. Respect who I choose to have at my side. And I don't give a shit if I fuck it up. No. You're welcome to be part of my life, do you hear? I want to be in yours. (pause) And if you think I'm wrong, or you assume that, love me the same and keep your fucking mouth shut.

ISABEL

(to the audience) Someone knocks on the door.

Dylan comes in wearing a t-shirt branded with Robert Downey Jr. as IRON MAN. He walks on crutches and is visibly frail. He carries a plastic bag from a well-known supermarket.

DYLAN

(to Isabel) Morning all. (pause) Just come to pick my stuff up. (to Paola) Hi.

Paola and Isabel watch as Dylan enters and walks, with great difficulty, like a war casualty, to his room, where he grabs the Kipsta bag, which still contains his things.

DYLAN

They kicked me out – well, actually they didn't but to be honest I can't stand hospitals.

ISABEL

How are you?

DYLAN

Fresh as a newborn babe.

PAOLA

(pause) You look well.

Dylan reaches the table, as best he can, carrying the supermarket plastic bag and the Kipsta.

DYLAN

Orale. (pause) Would you mind if I made a few slices of *pan con jamón*? Before I go. For breakfast, I mean, so that I can be on my way with something inside me. (pause, to Isabel) Then I'll be off.

ISABEL

(pause) Of course.

PAOLA

Well, I'm ...

DYLAN

(*interrupting*) A few slices of *pan con jamón* isn't the kind of breakfast you have every day of the week – not very *kosher* – is it? But you know, now and again, on special days, as a, like, well, as an exceptional thing they're, well they're pretty fucking awesome, aren't they? (Pause) I mean, I bought enough for you, if you want.

PAOLA

I'm leaving town.

DYLAN

Right. (Pause) You don't want a couple for the road? (To Isabel) You don't mind, do you?

ISABEL

(pause, to Paola) He hasn't called yet.

Isabel sits down at the table.

DYLAN

(to Paola) Make one and you take it with you. Make two, one for Andy.

ISABEL

Yeah, that *jamón* is good.

DYLAN

(to Isabel) I had five euros left, all my savings, and I spent them on this *jamón*. What the fuck was I gonna do? Spent my whole life lusting after glory – what is glory, if not *pan con jamón*? (To Paola) *Linda,*

eating is unavoidable.

Dylan gives Paola a slice or two of bread and gets up to fetch some glasses; he pours the orange juice that was in the plastic bag into these.

DYLAN

I know it's a bit of a freaky combination, *jamón* and supermarket orange juice ; I wasn't gonna start squeezing anything like this was I, and hey, I don't have much of a palate anymore – that's what years in the fucking US of A will do to you, you know?

Dylan serves himself and sits back down, passing a tomato to Paola.

DYLAN

That's the cherry on top right there.

PAOLA

Thanks.

DYLAN

Isabel.

ISABEL

Yeah?

DYLAN

How was the meeting? (To Paola) You know, right? She explained to you, about the meeting?

ISABEL

We haven't had time.

DYLAN

Really? (To Paola) Your mother is smashing things up.

PAOLA

That I already know.

DYLAN

...with the Hooker Revolution. (to Isabel) That's what you call yourselves, right? Or ... (to Paola) well, whatever it is, the point is they've got themselves organised to ask for a- (to Isabel) Well fuck, you explain it, how was the meeting with the mayor?

ISABEL

How was it going to go?

PAOLA

With the mayor?

ISABEL

Awful.

DYLAN

Awful?

ISABEL

You win some, you lose some; what difference does it make? We're not gonna keep quiet now, we're united.

DYLAN

iDe poca madre! That's the way.

PAOLA

This ham really is good.

Paola's phone rings. All three stop eating. Paola answers the phone.

PAOLA

(on the phone) Andy. (Pause) Perfect.

She hangs up.

PAOLA

He's in Plaza España.

DYLAN

(pause) Why don't you do your number? (To Paola) Do you know your mother used to do this Cleopatra cabaret number?

ISABEL

Dylan.

DYLAN

(to Isabel) You told me you'd do your number. Look, now I have this expectation, that's the point, and you can't live like that, with so many expectations that never materialize – and of course since you told me all these things have happened, a lot of fucking things, tough things, but you did say you'd do your number, if I'm not mistaken? The Cleopatra number. And you're a woman of your word. And I'll leave – I'll be out of here, in five minutes – and your daughter will leave – and we'll leave without seeing the number, and that's not fair is it? (Pause, to Paola) *Elle adore faire son numero, ma petite. Elle adore le faire.*

ISABEL

You're unhinged. (To Paola) Aren't you expected in Plaza España?

PAOLA

(pause) Let them wait a little longer.

DYLAN

It's showtime, folks!

ISABEL

(pause) You're a right pair.

DYLAN

Don't believe that.

Isabel prepares to do the number: music, a costume ... Suddenly she stops.

ISABEL

Wait, just a second, before I— see, I love it, right? But it's like a very personal thing. I like it, it brings back good memories, but let's be clear that this idea of Cleopatra as this man-eating seductress is horrible. I mean if you stop and think for a moment it's this distorted historical presentation that the Romans ...

PAOLA

(interrupts) Mum. *(Pause)* Your audience is on its way out.

Isabel nods. She starts the music and "Cleopatra's Theme" begins to play.

Dylan and Paola watch Cleopatra's number, leaning on the breakfast table.

ISABEL

(singing)

The wise men say
everything's been invented.
Last night to my ears
came a peculiar sound:
when in my dreams I flew
two thousand years
and discovered that the Egyptians
already knew about jazz.

Cleopatra had a jazz band
A big old jazz band.
And every night they had a slow jam
in her peculiar style.
She seduced Marc Anthony

with a syncopated harmony.
Conquered his heart and taught it to fret
with a Charleston step.

The moon and the pyramids
well they witnessed her love.
The Sphinxes sighed;
The Sun King moaned.
And that's how she fooled the Romans,
That fell into her hands:
She turned them into a chain gang
For a dixie and foxtrot show.

The Romans wanted to be free,
The wise men said,
From Cleopatra's yoke;
And her tricks like no other.
Julius Caesar didn't wanna fall
Into the grip of that swing,
So he surrounded Cleopatra,
Put an end to the whole damn thing.

Cleopatra had a band
A big old jazz band.
And every night they had a slow jam
in her peculiar style.
Seduced Marc Anthony
with a syncopated harmony.
Conquered his heart and taught it to fret
with a Charleston step.

Punished for her rebellion,
Without her big old band,
She couldn't feel the rhythm,
Like a fish outta water, trapped in the sand.
A hot-blooded woman

Who let the serpent's venom
Sink its teeth into her rhythm
and then let up her dancing.

At some point, Dylan lights a cigarette and Paola asks him for a couple of puffs.

Isabel is finished. Paola and Dylan clap.

ISABEL

Thank you, thank you, thank you very much, dear audience.

The phone rings again. Paola puts it on silent.

PAOLA

(pause, to Isabel) Now I have to.

Paola gets up and goes towards the door. Isabel goes with her. Dylan watches them from the table.

ISABEL

We'll be in touch, won't we?

PAOLA

(nods) Once we're settled in Andorra, come. If you want.

ISABEL

Same to you.

PAOLA

Great.

DYLAN

(pause) Have a good trip, little one.

PAOLA

(pause) Thank you.

ISABEL

Aren't you taking anything?

*Paola moves to Isabel and lets herself be given a hug. A long hug.
Paola and Isabel separate and look at each other.*

PAOLA

(smiles) Cleopatra.

*She leaves. Isabel stands at the door. Dylan watches her, leaning against
the table.*

ISABEL

(pause) If there's one thing to be abolished it's the idea of "the
couple".

DYLAN

Totally.

*Dylan, carrying the Kipsta bag, walks as best he can towards the door.
Suddenly, he stops.*

DYLAN

One thing. When I was there – there on the floor – and he was really
going at my face, I looked at you, Isabel. I looked at you for a moment,
in the eyes, and I saw – damn, it really got me. (Pause) I was feeling a
lot of physical pain, of course right, and it's not the first time; what
I mean is – I also felt happy, I was a little happy, I mean, I don't want
to be corny about it.

Dylan puts the Kipsta bag down.

DYLAN

I looked into your eyes and I saw there was someone there, do you know what I mean? After all I've done – I mean, I don't know– with all the shit that being Dylan means, being me, at least there was someone in this world to whom I mattered a little. (pause) That's *bien chido*, you know? (pause) It's what I always say, isn't it, you don't have to know someone. (pause) For them to matter.

ISABEL

(to the audience) And then I walk towards Dylan. Without deciding anything. Just letting my feet carry me. Without deciding anything. And I bring my face to his. And I look him in the eye. (Pause) And I kiss him. (Pause) Long kiss. (Pause) The kind of kiss I haven't had for centuries. (pause) And as I'm starting to kiss him, at the very moment I'm starting to bring my moist lips to his, and I open my mouth just a little to offer it to him, I have this doubt, this fear, whether he'll respond the same way or he'll just close his mouth and push me away. (Pause) And I love that feeling. I love not knowing, just for a second, whether I'm wanted or not. But I will be a lot more pleased to see that, yes, he will put his lips to mine, moist too, and he will open his mouth, and with this unexpected shyness he'll offer me his tongue, (strangely) viscous, boiling. I will like that. I will like that a lot more, truth be told. (Pause) I'll feel the heat of his body. The shape of his chest. Of his belly. Of him getting bigger. The shape of his strong hands grasping me by the shoulders. His smell of hospital, ham and tobacco and supermarket orange juice. And I will feel very comfortable, suddenly, with his body. (Pause) And we will look at each other, again, in the eyes, and I will see his as happy, grateful – a little afraid too – and we will allow ourselves another kiss, little by little, very slow this time, now that we both know we want one another; with great care, aware that our bodies share this pain and fragility, but also wanting to savour every second of a moment we know is exceptional, because we both know the value of a first kiss. (Pause) Am I right? (pause) And then I'll take him to my room. (Pause) And then, against all odds, we will never part again. (Pause) We'll be a couple, Dylan Bravo and I. (Pause) Yeah. We won't decide on it, we won't do anything for it to happen– at the beginning at

least— but we will be a couple; we'll be inseparable. A strange couple, maybe, but a couple. (Pause) We'll live together. We will share a lot. We'll have a lot of fun. And we'll fight a lot, too. We will be happy about 20% of the time. But what a 20%. Impressive. And the other 80% won't be a case of a lack of happiness, but a lack of habit. (Pause) We will have innumerable fears. Fear of trusting. Fear of sharing. We'll be like two hedgehogs learning to hold their spikes in. But both of us will want to discover the other, and to learn, to keep playing, this time without hurting ourselves. We'll fuck a lot. We'll fuck very well. And I'll have to put up with his shitty religious music, and how he'll disappear from time to time without ever saying where he's going. And he'll have to put up with my keeping my couple of regular clients, plus extras – because I'll find out he's jealous. (Pause) But he'll have to stick that in his pipe and smoke it. (Pause) And he'll take care of me. He will take good care of me. (Pause) I'll do what I can. (Pause) Continue my fight with the girls. You'll hear about us. We'll do things. We'll do great things. But more than anything we won't be invisible anymore. And nobody will tell our story, because we'll do it ourselves. (Pause) I'll get back in touch with my sisters. A little, not too much. They'll still be arseholes, but at least we'll break the silence. After twenty years, I'll hear my sisters' voices again. (Pause) With Paola's help. (Pause) I'll be in Paola's life. And she'll be in mine. At least until I die. (Pause) I'll die soon. About three years from now. (Pause) I'll die of cancer. (Pause) The good news is that my death will be very quick, so I won't see my daughter suffer on my account. (Long pause) In the end the girl will have been proved right. (Pause) There'll be time. There'll be time to enjoy each other, a little.

Isabel looks at Dylan. Slowly, she goes to him, until they face each other. They look at each other.

They are about to kiss, but just before they do...

Blackout.