
Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson

Commercial of the Year

Translation: Salka Gudmundsdóttir, spring 2016

Cast of Characters

THE ACTRESS

MARÍA

THE DAUGHTER

THE OWNER

THE CLIENT

THE DIRECTOR

The original production opened at The Reykjavik City Theatre in April 2016

1.

commercial of the year

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2.

commercial of the year

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[1.1]

The advertising agency is located in a theatre. The place is full of phones, none of which are ringing. THE OWNER wears a salmon pink shirt and lies on a salmon pink sofa, demolishing a tiny doughnut. THE DAUGHTER is trying to set up a video camera to record the Owner as the audience walk in. Finally she succeeds and the audience see the image on a screen at the back of the stage. Elsewhere on stage, MARÍA lies face down, a television set in front of her.

[1.2]

THE OWNER: Why is it so humiliating to be an artist?

THE DAUGHTER: Well, you're lying there like a doughnut!

THE OWNER: (*sitting up*) Is it so humiliating to be an artist because it's so humiliating to be human?

THE DAUGHTER: Why won't you take direction?

THE OWNER: It's so humiliating to be a small town human.

THE DAUGHTER: You won't even listen to the director!

THE OWNER: Because the director has utterly failed to provoke and promote the inspiration that I so amply possess.

THE DAUGHTER: There are seven thousand million clients in the world. You only need to lure one of them in here and then I'm sure we'll be up and running again. Let's shoot the whole thing again and this time act like there's a bit of blood in your johnson.

THE OWNER stares directly into the camera as if there's a bit of blood in his johnson.

THE OWNER: A commercial is: a play or a work of art plus logo.

3.

commercial of the year

THE DAUGHTER: Sell us!

THE OWNER gets going.

THE OWNER: My grandmother punched my mother in the neck because mother had smoked her weed. We were poor people. When the school year ended, the two of them would grab me by the scruff of my neck, grandmother would shave my head, mother would steal my tobacco and together they would stuff me into a coach that would drive me far into the countryside. The last time was no different from any other. Except of course I never got picked up that fall.

As soon as I arrived on the farm, the first task of the year would be waiting for me. The farm cat had greyish pink fur and big, meaty thighs. She was anything but a one-tom-cat so the cowshed, the chicken coop and the barn were all chockablock with kittens. No two kittens looked alike, probably because the cat got around. I named half the kittens after my mother and the other half after my grandmother. The farmer gave me a crown to go to the co-op and buy a burlap sack. I gathered all the kittens into the sack while the cat watched, all stout and sexy, and then I threw the sack in the stream. The farmer had me make sure that the kittens had drowned. You see, you don't need bad people to act out a bad philosophy. A few weeks later, the sex-crazed cat had yet another litter. The farmer gave me another crown to walk out to the co-op and buy a new sack. I walked to the store but stuck the crown in my pocket. My first crown, straight in the pocket. How did I do that? Huh? That's a riddle! Am I boring you?

THE DAUGHTER: Just get to the point, maestro.

THE OWNER: How did I manage to make my first crown? Cunning little me! Well, I sensed that the universe was preoccupied with something other than myself that

day and I was filled with a thundering calm, I waded into the stream and took the carcasses out of the burlap sack. I could use the same sack again. That's how I tricked the farmer. And that illusion was my first ever commercial, a perfect commercial, much like all my commercials ever since. But as I stood there in the stream, one of the carcasses stirred, as if to give away my game. A small female, mottled like mother, although she had my grandmother's name, a tough creature, her little nose all horny. I grabbed her tail but I didn't have to hold her under the water for long. I made my first crown. Which then turned into more crowns. If I was born with a single Marxist gene, it drowned out there on the farm. And time robbed me. I am not an educated man, I had no need for any of these bloody degrees and I was thirty when I stuck the cork back in the bottle. Loose women of all ages, yours too, they go mad down there when they see a slick teat like myself, with cash money and cigar or even a newly fried doughnut. Why am I going on like this? Hello. Listen, sweetheart, you look like you're about to collapse, are you sick, I don't feel like listening to that ...

THE DAUGHTER: You're getting tired now, daddy.

THE OWNER: See how good I look on camera?

THE DAUGHTER: Can you still make commercials?

THE OWNER: What?

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, just saying.

THE OWNER: Give me a product!

THE DAUGHTER: A camera. *Silence*. Let's just do this later.

THE OWNER: Shut up. (*Voice from a commercial*) A camera - and you smile!

(*Shouting*) Cut!

THE OWNER smacks THE DAUGHTER's bottom and walks out.

[1.3]

THE CLIENT enters. He is aged around thirty, dressed in old-fashioned clothes, bald but wearing a leather wig, reminiscent of the plastic hair of a Playmobil figure.

THE DAUGHTER is clearing up.

THE CLIENT: Great commercial! What's your name?

THE DAUGHTER is startled but pretends not to be.

THE DAUGHTER: Do you always speak to people in such a condescending way or are you just being condescending to me because you don't know whether I'm a man or a woman?

THE CLIENT: Women have never taken to me, probably because I'm always a little glum, sad and downcast. Men see me as a quirky mug or a soft piece of candy in an old man's back pocket and they think, blame them if you will, that I'm the kind of charlatan who might sing tenor in a humorous choir. What I am trying to prove is that I am not afflicted by condescension. I only wanted to compliment you.

THE DAUGHTER pulls out a tarot card.

THE DAUGHTER: Death. I drew a card as soon as I saw you, Death. And then you let yourself prattle on like that, making me feel like my mouth is full of pubes. You don't think you're being violent towards me?

THE CLIENT: But doesn't the blessed death signify a new beginning?

THE DAUGHTER: Then start over again.

THE CLIENT: That was a great commercial you made, about the king of advertising. Well done.

THE DAUGHTER: So you always speak condescendingly, but especially now because I wasn't born with a vagina and not a penis either, just mush, and you think that's ...

THE CLIENT: I recall that your father once said, during a marketing lecture at the university: "Sometimes you have to drown the kittens so that the cat may live." I understand that now.

THE DAUGHTER: I have mush in place of genitals and you dare talk about the offspring of cats!

THE CLIENT: I gather it's quite common.

THE DAUGHTER: Are you saying I'm common?

THE CLIENT: Normal.

THE DAUGHTER: Hang on, are you a doctor, or ...? Did you know that your average country doctor is very unlikely to be a psychopath, while a surgeon will very likely be a psychopath. Do you think we're psychopaths?

THE CLIENT: Psychopathy has been researched and ...

THE DAUGHTER: So? By you?

THE CLIENT: No, but I do conduct research.

THE DAUGHTER: Research?

THE CLIENT: Marketing research.

THE DAUGHTER: Could you do some research on me?

THE CLIENT: Yes.

THE DAUGHTER: What?

THE CLIENT: Yes.

THE DAUGHTER: Hang on, I need to finish something.

THE DAUGHTER pulls out a grocery bag with some old chocolate. THE DAUGHTER is pouring the chocolates into a beautiful old ceramic bowl when she drops the bowl on the floor and it breaks.

THE DAUGHTER: *(looking at the Client as she picks up the pieces)* It's so humiliating to be human.

THE CLIENT: *(Reaching for the chocolate)* Can I have some?

THE DAUGHTER: No, it's for clients.

THE CLIENT: What do you think I am?

THE DAUGHTER: A puppet with a wig and a rotten wooden leg. You inherited these shoes from some middle-class but mental uncle and you polish them because you think that's so old-fashioned. And you believe that whatever's old-fashioned is either attractive or trustworthy, when it's actually deceptive, at best, because time passed is time dead, mister Client. I bet you're a deacon. Moonlighting as a debt collector.

THE CLIENT: I thought I was supposed to do research on you?

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, I don't know, I'm getting insanely bored again, maybe because you don't smell of anything at all, nothing, you smell like ice. Innocent people smell of nothing but innocent people rarely find their way into an advertising agency. I'm still waiting for you to do research on me.

THE CLIENT: You feel as if your chest is constantly full of broken glass and at the tiniest touch of another human it shakes.

THE DAUGHTER: You're the best psychiatrist I've ever had.

[1.4]

THE OWNER walks in, downcast. THE DAUGHTER pulls off the Client's wig. THE CLIENT calmly reaches into his pocket for a new wig and puts it on.

THE DAUGHTER: (*Throwing herself on the ground, crying*) Daddy, this disgusting brute raped me! Oh, God, and now he acts like he's all innocent! You have to take me to hospital where they will discover that I have functioning vagina organs and that I'm pregnant with a bald soprano and you'll have me sectioned and you'll raise the child as your own and nobody will know that I am the real mother and they'll make a movie in Sweden that's so natural that you feel like you're really there!

THE CLIENT: I think you would make a great stripper.

THE DAUGHTER: (*Perking up*) Okay, okay, heheheh. You are by far the best psychiatrist I've ever had.

THE OWNER: Just leave the envelope and I'll pay you next week.

THE CLIENT: Actually, I was going to ...

THE DAUGHTER: Do as he says, or he'll turn into a raging bull!

THE OWNER: (*Snorting*) I'll pay up next week. (*To the Daughter*) What is this man playing at?

THE DAUGHTER: He's a deacon.

THE OWNER: Oh, well, a man of the church, so he really did rape you. Listen, buddy, now go and try to rape someone who objects to it at least.

THE CLIENT: (*rapping a well-known jingle*)

THE DAUGHTER: Are you kidding?

THE OWNER: If you are some sort of comedian, from AA for example, then I want it noted that I haven't taken a single smoke of weed for 30 years, or ever since I went into rehab, and I have only had the occasional glass of wine or beer these past 30

years, apart from the times I attempted suicide by gobbling prescription drugs and heart medication that I stole from my friend, the mother of my child, my whore and wife who now has passed. Just so that I'm not accused of dishonesty.

THE CLIENT: (*rapping the jingle*)

THE DAUGHTER: Why are you making fun of us? Just leave!

THE OWNER: Yes, this is a nasty joke, boy.

THE CLIENT: Oh God, no, I would never think of pushing myself forward in the field of comedy or improvisation. I could probably memorize entire skits. But I no longer have any aspirations for fame of that kind. Life is a serious matter. You made this best and most remarkable commercial of the last century. You brought an entire generation closer to God.

THE OWNER: So you remember?

THE CLIENT: And before I forget about her, your daughter is an excellent receptionist.

THE DAUGHTER: Before you forget about me?

THE OWNER: It's so hard for a man to remember women, you're all so similar and your names always end in -ine or -a or fucking -icia. (*To the Client*) Don't get me wrong, I'm a feminist.

THE CLIENT: I know, you said so in an interview. What was that other thing you said?

THE OWNER: Advertising changes the world, because unlike the works of art that nobody can be bothered to look at, there is no escaping commercials.

THE DAUGHTER: My dad uses women in his commercials, it's all about women.

THE CLIENT: You two are closer than I would have suspected.

THE DAUGHTER: We're not freaks!

THE CLIENT: You should be close. The Advertiser only does business with closely-knit family companies.

THE OWNER: The Advertiser?

THE CLIENT: Are you adverse to flattery?

THE OWNER: Anyone and everyone is free to suck up to me.

THE CLIENT: Alright, wait a minute.

THE CLIENT just leaves. But he returns with a gigantic trash can from the early 90s, marked with a juice drink logo.

THE OWNER: I'd forgotten all about this!

THE DAUGHTER: You were talking about it this morning.

From his pocket, THE CLIENT pulls a juice carton from the same period. He drinks down the juice in one gulp, then tosses the carton into the can.

THE CLIENT: "Trash your stash for cash." The Advertiser and I thought and still think this is brilliant.

[1.5]

THE OWNER whistles loudly. A dusty DIRECTOR leaps in like a hyena, stirring up dust. THE OWNER puches the Director towards the Client as he sprints over to María who sits on a sofa bed with two duvets, watching the end of the movie Mary Poppins over and over.

THE OWNER: *(Very out of breath)* We have a client. We're in production. We're shooting this shit. We just need to kick off with massive branding - orange, I think so, it's time for orange and let's say 70-1000 people and just shoot it, put new

cameras on the accounts, get actors or, no, you want an actress - the advertising business is held prisoner by feminism. I have to have an SUV, and you ... hello?!

MARÍA: I got the bus yesterday and I sat on a piece of gum and I spilled Pepsi Max all over myself.

THE OWNER: Listen, darling, you just name a number, it's one of those clients.

MARÍA: Does everyone think my breath smells? It isn't my fault, what happened was that the root of my wisdom tooth grew to down below the bone, into my throat, into my stomach, and every now and then the end of the root seems to stick to some old and chewy and rotten beef steak and toss it back into my maw. Ssssplatz, ssssplatz. Of course you grow isolated. Stuck to a piece of gum on a bus. Maybe it's a sign. Can you smell it?

MARÍA blows into the Owner's face.

THE OWNER: You'll just have to floss and flirt with the Client.

MARÍA: (*desperate*) But can you smell the rot?

THE OWNER: Sure.

MARÍA: Thank you for smelling the rot.

THE OWNER: I could do it myself, of course, I just want you to ...

MARÍA: And another thing. Can you see this hand, don't look! (*Whispering*) Can you tell how convex it looks. Puffed up or swollen like I have arthritis. It's filling up with liquid and in the end the liquid will burst the skin right off my hand. I can't raise it at all. What kind of artist is unable to raise their hands? If we were still in the business ...

THE OWNER: We are back in business!

MARÍA: Then I would ask you.

THE OWNER: And I am trying to give you an answer!

MARÍA: If the skin burst right off my hand ... what do you reckon I could get for it? Enough for a plane ticket? I can't work here. (*Gets down on her knees*) Just let me ...

THE OWNER: (*punching her in the neck*) Yuck, I don't want a dirty hippy psychic hag nibbling on my johnson!

(*MARÍA goes back to watching TV.*)

MARÍA: I'm an absolute mess, I can't hold anything down, I'll have to have another nap.

THE OWNER: Fuck me, but María, I have a daughter, (*wailing*) do you want her to starve to death? Make this commercial for me.

MARÍA: Just imagine if I was looking after children.

THE OWNER: (*pointing to the TV*) Things didn't turn out too great for Mary Poppins.

MARÍA: Don't you talk like that!

THE OWNER: The children don't give a damn that Mary leaves in the end. Children are instinctively full of misogyny, that's why women want children, because women need hate and adversity in order to draw breath. No man has ever wanted a child.

MARÍA: I don't care if you all starve to death!

THE OWNER: If you come and do this gig you can have complete control.

MARÍA: I don't need to win and earn every day in order to feel like I have a right to exist, mister Low Self-Esteem.

THE OWNER: Well, then that's as far as that goes. I'll just go and tell them the world's most famous babysitter is refusing to come flying on her umbrella to save us.

MARÍA: No, shut up!

THE OWNER: I'll have to tell them something.

MARÍA looks at the TV.

MARÍA: Stop it!

THE OWNER: I'm not doing anything.

MARÍA: Don't torment me.

THE OWNER: You make one final commercial for me and then you can fly out of here.

[1.6]

THE CLIENT is chatting to the Director and the Daughter.

THE CLIENT: I knew about the Owner, “stash your cash for trash” and so on, but I might have known the Owner would be working with such a, I don't know what to call you ... a philosopher?

THE DIRECTOR: And I am filled to the brim with historical delicacies. The first commercial is not new.

THE DAUGHTER: Then what is it?

THE DIRECTOR: Old. Jesus Christ. Oh, yes, I can tell you that Jesus Christ was the first advertising campaign, produced by God.

THE CLIENT: Amazing.

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, stop your nonsense.

THE DIRECTOR: You stay on the phones.

THE DAUGHTER: *(singing to the Client)* Fuck me tender ...

THE DIRECTOR: The Jews wanted to get Jesus Christ off the market. The common harlots were all mad for the boy and they gossiped about him. All Jesus did was

exist but the gossip found its way into number one bestseller The New Testament.

And then time passed, people started to have doubts. And those doubts turned Jesus into an immortal brand: Did he exist?

THE CLIENT: You exude the most extraordinary power. Is this advertising agency like Jesus and will die for its clients?

THE DIRECTOR: No.

THE CLIENT: (*disappointed*) Oh.

THE DIRECTOR: We die for our art. You see, a commercial ...

THE DAUGHTER: (*goes on singing*) Fuck me true ...

THE DIRECTOR: You see, a commercial, just like all true art and Jesus, is about making the world a more beautiful place by any means possible.

THE CLIENT: Any means possible ... wow, so you people will die for the commercial? That strikes me as very professional. Could you show me an example of what you are teaching me?

THE DIRECTOR: Yes.

The director dashes out.

THE CLIENT: I think you just might be the most intelligent person at this agency.

THE DAUGHTER: Not much competition. But did you feel it?

THE CLIENT: What?

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, I thought you were totally spiritual, that you'd have felt it ...

THE CLIENT: Felt what?

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, I felt as if my dad could see right through you. He finds it so easy to read intellectuals like yourself. Ordinary people think people who work at

advertising agencies make fun of the most difficult clients but we make fun of the slimiest clients.

THE CLIENT: Do you think I'm slimy?

THE DAUGHTER: Do I? No! I think you're fantastic, you're one of the least bad psychiatrists I have ever had. *(Pause)* Should we kill someone?

THE CLIENT: Aren't you supposed to be sitting in reception answering the phones?

THE DAUGHTER: No-one ever calls. We're dead broke and nobody wants to do business with daddy anymore; nobody gets treated as badly as men over fifty in advertising.

THE CLIENT: Oh, really?

THE DAUGHTER: You know it's true. What on earth are you doing here? What are you advertising, the services of a deacon? I can just picture a bus stop ad: A deacon - when not even a priest can be bothered talking to you!

THE CLIENT: I am not about to advertise anything.

THE DAUGHTER: Oh well, then we'll just bill your for preparation and estimated costs. *(Pause)* Are you lonely? I really need an editor, a clever man. I want to write a true children's book where the father realizes during a meeting of the residents' association that at the end of the day he's pansexual and doesn't have to get the mother sectioned even though she has schizoaffective disorder because she can be talked into eventually letting the home health nurse in.

THE CLIENT: I am working for an Advertiser. He is going to advertise.

THE DAUGHTER: Here?

THE CLIENT: Yes, he loves family businesses. And what about the book?

THE DAUGHTER: Ah, no, I have writer's block.

THE OWNER appears.

THE OWNER: Listen ... Client.

THE CLIENT: The atmosphere here is so lovely.

THE OWNER: Yes. I, uhm, went over your case and ...

THE CLIENT: ... mine and the Advertiser's.

THE OWNER: Yes, and the Advertiser's. And unfortunately, we are swamped with work so we couldn't possibly take on your complicated and extensive project.

THE CLIENT: That's what I thought, that we were too late.

THE CLIENT starts to walk out.

THE DAUGHTER: But daddy, I was going to make him my boyfriend and we were going to take windy walks together and he would say:

“Did you know that avocados are also called alligator pears?”

(delighted) “No, I did not know that.”

“Did you know that the lupine will give way to other vegetation?”

(delighted) “No, I did not know that.”

THE DIRECTOR comes running with a big smile on his face, he carries a writing pad from which he reads.

THE DIRECTOR: I wrote lots of stuff down. Okay, so listen. Advertising was the only art form invented in the 20th century.

THE CLIENT: Well, I'll be.

THE DIRECTOR: It stole the message from all other art forms. A movie tells you to be kind to your fellow man. A commercial is clearer and more practical and describes exactly *how* you can be kind to your fellow man: “Be kind to your fellow man - buy him a Pepsi.”

THE OWNER: But as you can hear, the staff are so excited about these exciting opportunities and your financial capabilities are so vast that ...

THE CLIENT: Yes.

THE OWNER: That I will take on the project.

THE CLIENT: Thank God! Now I have to call the Advertiser and give him these wonderful news! And who will be in charge of conceptualization? Not you? Are we in for another stroke of genius?

THE OWNER: No. It will be none other than María.

THE DIRECTOR: What?

THE CLIENT: Oh, María, I've never heard of her, but what a genius.

[1.9]

THE CLIENT makes a phone call.

THE CLIENT: Of course they'll do it. No, I don't know their star signs. (Pause) No, I haven't met any bloody actress, all they talk about is some lady called María who's obviously completely mental. No, I don't feel like listening to the speeches you're writing. No, I am not rebelling, I am just bored. Yes, I'll talk to you later.

[1.10]

THE DIRECTOR: Why are all the hospitals full?

THE OWNER: María will take on the job. This place is going to be full of clients!

THE DIRECTOR: We build a new hospital and it fills up. Even the mental hospitals are full, and why? People want to be sick: 70% of patients will claim to be sicker than they actually are so that they can stay in the hospital for longer. Why?

THE OWNER: You can be assistant director. We'll be the marketing company of the year.

THE DIRECTOR: Old people, disabled people and fat children, nobody gives a shit about those people and they have nothing to come home to. They need something. They need something urgently. And what do they need? We sell it. Precisely what they need. The very thing that makes people discharge themselves from hospitals, go home from work, skip a walk on a windy day. I could do that sort of conceptualization on my own and turn it into the commercial of the year.

THE CLIENT: Or you could go back to working in movies?

THE DAUGHTER: (*To the Client*) And what are we supposed to advertise for you?

THE DIRECTOR: Don't be so rude.

THE CLIENT: Well, when it comes to advertising I am not the same inexhaustible fountain of wisdom and eagle of knowledge as you people, but I am right in assuming that it is primarily a question of *how* we advertise?

THE OWNER: Absolutely. And María will be here any minute to take control of the whole thing, she's extremely down-to-earth but arty, like you simply have to be.

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser could be a little more down-to-earth, but he is an artistic businessman.

THE DAUGHTER: Could you tell us about him? Is he living in an open marriage?

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser turns supermarkets into shopping experiences. He turns drugstores into lifestyle emporiums. And now he's started something completely new ...

THE DAUGHTER: Which is?

THE CLIENT: I am bound by the strictest confidence.

THE DAUGHTER: But aren't we supposed to advertise this "completely new" thing?

THE OWNER: We're just supposed to sell it, not buy it for ourselves. Until after the campaign, of course.

THE CLIENT: I don't know if this will help you, but there is one thing about the financial plan.

THE DIRECTOR: I could make a commercial for 10 dollars.

THE OWNER: What is the thing about the financial plan?

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser says: "To create is to spend and only a nonentity would decide the price of magnificence beforehand."

THE DIRECTOR: I simply have to say, you two are incredible businessmen.

THE CLIENT: Nonetheless, there are rules. But there's only two of them. I will start by telling you about number one: transparency. More on that later. Number two is about what I said before: there is no budget.

THE DAUGHTER: Now wait a second ...

THE CLIENT: Your father will cover all expenses. But once you've made a commercial that simply leaps out of every screen, we'll pay any price, whatever you ask for.

THE OWNER: Being a genius doesn't come cheap.

THE CLIENT: So let's go back to rule number one. You see, the Advertiser, he was a child model.

THE DAUGHTER: So was I, I was such a slutty child.

THE CLIENT: So he has always been adored by everyone. (*THE CLIENT's eyes well up with tears*) And he is such a humanist that he collects art by young people and doesn't wear socks in his shoes and owns an old Range Rover and doesn't want any expensive wine, just homemade.

THE DAUGHTER: Like moonshine?

THE CLIENT: For example moonshine, because it's all about transparency. We want to see everything, keep an eye on everything. Including in here.

THE DIRECTOR: And moonshine is transparent, I get it.

THE CLIENT: And so I ask, how can I pour moonshine over this place and see? How might I keep an eye on everything?

THE DAUGHTER: There's no guardroom in here.

Pause.

THE OWNER: But maybe we could put up a tower?

THE CLIENT: You just can't stop thinking in solutions!

THE DIRECTOR: Then we could put a camera in the toilet and link it to the tower.

THE CLIENT: You must be strong, guys, you are so manly. Creative men, that's just what the Advertiser loves. Please be so kind, I am so tired, please run out and get our little treat.

[1.11]

THE DIRECTOR and THE OWNER dash out. MARÍA comes in as Mary Poppins.

MARÍA: Could you pay for my taxi? I forgot my wallet.

THE DAUGHTER: Don't you live in the next room?

MARÍA: Oh, you're here, hii, I couldn't see you or maybe I just couldn't sense you. So little presence.

THE DAUGHTER: I've managed to stay thin.

MARÍA: I dyed the city harbour pink.

THE DAUGHTER: Doesn't the colour wash away on the waves?

MARÍA: Yes, that's the artwork. It's called Vagina because all vaginas are giddy and they dissolve in the relentless violence of the days.

THE DAUGHTER: As interpreted by the waves?

MARÍA: That's your interpretation, I couldn't possibly interpret my own work.

THE DAUGHTER: But is it so very different from the time when you spread the pink canvas across the fjord?

MARÍA: Ahahah, oh yes oh yes oh yes, another vagina altogether and another piece altogether and another intent. And of course that time I had a choir of older women screaming: "Men hatch adder's eggs and feed women on them!" - which is quite true, of course.

THE DAUGHTER: (*Whispering*) I hate you.

MARÍA: That's your opinion.

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser is very arty and spiritual.

MARÍA softly sticks her finger in the Client's mouth but is startled and pulls out a white mess.

MARÍA: Does the root of your wisdom tooth grow to down below the bone? (*To the Daughter*) Did he come here on the bus? Is he a chimneysweep? Don't you know anything, you who are such a sensitive type.

THE CLIENT: I clearly need to see a dentist.

MARÍA: No doctors!

THE CLIENT: A general practitioner?

[1.12]

THE OWNER and THE DIRECTOR come on stage, struggling to bring in a gigantic glass tower of at least four floors. At the top of the tower, there is a dome big enough for one person. There might be screens there as well.

THE DIRECTOR: Nobody in here is seeing any doctor, the only thing that's sick in here is your brand and we'll cure it.

MARÍA: I'm not really the advertising type, just an artist, but my thinking was more that the market was sick and only your product could cure it?

THE CLIENT: How fascinating!

THE OWNER: Very good, María.

THE DAUGHTER: We don't know what the product is.

THE DIRECTOR/THE OWNER/MARÍA: Doesn't matter.

THE OWNER is huffing and puffing, he lies down on the floor to eat a sneaky doughnut.

THE DIRECTOR: If I was in charge of this commercial then I would retreat on my own right now and just think and think and think, because, I mean ... what was it you called me earlier?

THE CLIENT: I can't remember.

THE DIRECTOR: A philosopher.

MARÍA: *(to the Director)* Ooooh, you're so old school, baby. Let's just go back in time while we're at it, blow ten grams of coke into your asshole and go bust. Hahahah.

THE DIRECTOR: Okay, if this commercial was an animal, which animal would it be?

THE DAUGHTER: Animal of the year.

THE DIRECTOR: No, but what if it was a colour?

THE DAUGHTER: Colour of the year.

MARÍA: Look, (*pointing at the ceiling*) that's where creation is to be found and creation makes up the lungs of any commercial. When you talk, creation drowns in boredom.

THE CLIENT climbs up the tower.

THE DIRECTOR: But we have to do branding! What emotion is this commercial?

MARÍA: Anything but desperation.

THE DIRECTOR: Did you know that the idea of twenty year old debt is not old?

THE DAUGHTER: Then what is it?

THE DIRECTOR: New. The Marxists would write off their citizens' debt after five years, even the church would write off debt after ten years but nowadays ...

THE DAUGHTER: (*Interrupting*) If I could just. Look, the thing about these stories you tell. And about men like you. You admire your stories, they're so very clever and witty and it's all very sweet. But the rest of us are turned into prisoners who have committed no crime. We writhe from sheer emptiness and disgust ... and do you know what the worst thing is? It's not how inappropriate the stories are, always and everywhere, but that you never know how long they're going to last. Is this a joke that will take one minute? Or is your whole life at stake, do you get me? How long will I have to stand here and listen to you? You put my life on hold.

THE DIRECTOR: A pig is a piglet for just a few months but a baby elephant is a baby elephant for twenty years.

THE DAUGHTER: Is this how moral decline begins? I don't know.

THE DIRECTOR: Out of all humans, psychopaths are the best in bed.

MARÍA: Okay, this line that you just said, that was a nice length, fifteen vowels, that's the absolute max for you.

MARÍA pulls dozens of credit cards out of the Owner's pocket and a lump that turns out to be a giant cheque from a bank.

MARÍA: Let's go.

THE DAUGHTER: I'm going too.

THE OWNER: No, you take care of the Client.

THE OWNER gives THE DAUGHTER a kiss on the mouth, then smacks her bottom.

MARÍA takes the credit cards from THE DAUGHTER. THE OWNER, MARÍA and THE DIRECTOR leave. THE CLIENT is standing on top of the tower.

THE DAUGHTER: Why did you let them all go, you fucking idiot?

THE CLIENT: I wish The Advertiser was here. He would know what to do about your emotional state.

THE DAUGHTER: He doesn't even know me!

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser turns supermarkets into shopping experiences and drugstores into lifestyle emporiums. He is a storm; neither young nor old, man nor woman. If you think he loves you, he hates you, but just when you're absolutely sure that he hates you, that's when he loves you better than anyone. Maybe he's just the Advertiser because that's what we call him. But I can promise you one thing, he does exist.

THE DAUGHTER: And can he make me feel better?

[1.13]

THE ACTRESS marches onto the stage and takes a look at the Client and the Daughter. She wears sunglasses and a dramatic hairstyle that just won't end and she carries a very full plastic bag from a drugstore.

THE ACTRESS: Or you could just act it out.

THE DAUGHTER: What?

THE ACTRESS: That you're feeling better, what a fucking farce this is. Where is María?

THE CLIENT: I think the girl could strip.

THE ACTRESS: Yeah, for sure, but María shouldn't be here, nobody should be here. Where is María?

THE DAUGHTER walks up to the Actress, pulls down her own pants and shamefully shows the Actress her genitals.

THE ACTRESS: *(Pushes the sunglasses up to her forehead, then pulls them down again)* Oh, I've seen stranger things. Where's María?

THE DAUGHTER goes over to the tower and starts rubbing herself against it.

THE ACTRESS: Listen, girlfriend, there's a big difference between acting and pretending. You're pretending now, but acting is about suffering for real while someone watches. What's the pole for?

THE CLIENT: The tower.

THE ACTRESS: *(Mockingly to the Client)* Nice hair ... What's the pole for?

THE DAUGHTER: The pole is for dancing.

THE ACTRESS: No. *(Going over to the tower)*. What a stripper pretends to do is try and get the pole inside her. But the pole is bolted to the ceiling so that's impossible. So when she's tried and tried and tried she starts looking at the

audience (*nodding towards the audience*) in order to get onto their poles.

(*Stretching her foot up against the tower*) And that, my dear friend, is illusion, and illusion, my dear friend, is art. (*Lowering her leg*). And now tell me one thing, Baldy and Little Freak, where the hell is María?

THE ACTRESS looks for MARÍA on stage.

THE ACTRESS: María! Come here!

THE ACTRESS rummages through things and by coincidence she finds her old actress dress and some doughnut dough. THE ACTRESS starts putting the dress on, speaking to THE DAUGHTER, THE CLIENT, but mainly the audience. THE ACTRESS kneads the dough.

THE ACTRESS: I want the elevator to crash, the headache to be a stroke, the earthquake to be strong enough. I want a hairdryer to fall into my foot massager. I never know what's insight and what's paranoia. I have a grain of salt in my heart. I wish I wasn't so weird, that I could control it, that all the advise I've been given would work, that the medicine didn't just make me fatter. I always think the chair is going to break, that I won't get through the door, that the clothes won't fit. (*THE ACTRESS starts ascending the tower.*) Nothing works, I never change and the worst thing is that I used to be good sometimes, too good, and at other times decent, but the plunge always comes again and it lasts and it's getting too troublesome to rise up. When we were together I was good and I forgot to think about death. I made myself so pretty, I would put on a cape and invite a hundred people over but only five could make it. Why are you all so happy? Happy people are so tiresome, they make me insecure and put up no defense for anyone.

THE ACTRESS climbs over the railing on top of the tower and prepares to jump.

If anyone should have been able to save me, it would have been you. There was nobody like us.

Total blackout. We hear a thud.

Lights!

The lights come on. THE ACTRESS is trying to get back over the railing.

Help me!

THE CLIENT runs up the tower and helps her get back over the railing. THE ACTRESS coughs, she's out of breath.

This is art.

[1.14]

MARÍA, THE OWNER and THE DIRECTOR come in. They are all wearing childish parkas. THE DIRECTOR carries a brand new camera (projected onto the screen) and drags in a trampoline, a soap bubble machine, three big chairs, a colourful table and enormous, transparent plastic bags full of popcorn. THE OWNER drags in an entire ball pit, he's never been sweatier in his entire life. MARÍA is holding a cocktail with an umbrella in one hand and several very light children's parkas in the other. She tosses one parka into the tower for the CLIENT and one to the DAUGHTER. When MARÍA finally notices THE ACTRESS she is very alarmed.

THE ACTRESS: All this crap just for one commercial?

THE DIRECTOR: *(Vomits)* Yuck, how old is she?

MARÍA: Nobody knows.

THE OWNER: Hello there, once again.

THE ACTRESS: You've aged. Isn't there a warning out for you on one of those pervert websites?

THE OWNER: All people of talent are controversial. (*Gesturing to THE DAUGHTER to clean up the vomit*). Chop chop, my little honey bee!

THE ACTRESS: (*About MARÍA*) Why have you dragged her yet again into this rectum of all creation?

THE OWNER: Because the childcare thing wasn't working out too well. Are you her support worker now, or ...?

THE DIRECTOR: What's going on? (*To MARÍA*) Did you bring this crap in here? What's wrong with her, is she an orphan?

THE ACTRESS: Yes, but I was adopted by my fans and they are my family. Let me have a look, are you dead?

THE CLIENT: I feel like I have a headache.

THE OWNER: There, there, let's give her something, don't we have a yo-yo or a piggybank or something, we need to get rid of the old hag.

THE ACTRESS: That's the Owner I know.

THE DIRECTOR: I bet she's disabled or something.

MARÍA: No, she's just older.

THE ACTRESS: Come on, María.

MARÍA: We're making something.

THE ACTRESS: Come on.

THE ACTRESS drags MARÍA away.

THE CLIENT: We're making something that might be right for you.

THE ACTRESS: I won't audition for a bunch of neurotics in order to advertise trash for trash.

MARÍA: (*very patiently*) It's just a formality. And millions will see you.

THE ACTRESS: And never in my life have I performed for such a small and sick group as you people.

THE OWNER: She's old, she's mad, she's sexy - I get it 100% and you have my permission.

They set up for an audition and THE ACTRESS is left standing on her own.

THE DIRECTOR: So what are you going to do for us?

THE OWNER: She's hired, let's shoot this thing, let's do it!

THE ACTRESS stands and stares at them, pop-eyed. A long silence.

THE ACTRESS: Well, what do you want? Ophelia? Juliet? Nora?

THE CLIENT: I'm not having enough fun.

THE ACTRESS: María, we're leaving right now!

THE OWNER: Since you want to do something, might we lighten things up with a little joke?

THE ACTRESS: What do you think I am, some comedian?

MARÍA: Just a little joke, darling.

THE ACTRESS: Once there was a man in a liquor store in America. (*THE OWNER laughs*) He bought some champagne to take back to his hotel. He was awfully skinny and weak, being an end-stage alcoholic (*THE OWNER laughs loudly*). When he finally made it back to his room he couldn't get the cork out with his hands, no matter how he pulled, tore and tugged. He gave up, raised the bottle of champagne up to his lips and bit the cork. The cork came loose and shot into the alcoholic's throat, and he was surprised but mostly stimulated because he was a homosexualist. (*THE OWNER goes mad with laughter*). The man from the liquor store in America was all alone in a hotel room with a double bed when he choked

to death on a cork. It was the playwright Tennessee Williams who died such a horrible death.

Long silence.

THE DAUGHTER: I remember you in Peter Pan.

THE ACTRESS: You talking about Mrs Beaver?

THE DAUGHTER: Yeah. I thought you were alright.

THE ACTRESS: I knew Tennessee Williams. When I was just about to drown myself in the pond, he came running and said, full of understanding: No, no, no! Don't do this. You are the greatest actress in Scandinavia. Call your friends and have them commit you to a mental hospital, I shall go with you, and we will share a room. And then I said: I never talk to my friends, because they have never listened to me. Let's go together, into the pond, it will be art, Tennessee, we will be art, Tennessee ...

MARÍA: (*interrupts angrily*) And what was to become of me?

THE ACTRESS: Of you? You turned my theatre into an advertising brothel. And I am so beat up by life that I sleep next to a woman who thinks she's Mary Popp ...

THE OWNER: (*interrupting*) There, there, little pussies. How about a song?

THE ACTRESS: I don't know if I can, my voice is off ...

THE OWNER: Well, then maybe just ...

THE ACTRESS sings her favourite song full blast. The agency turns into a theatre and back into an agency while THE ACTRESS sings.

MARÍA: (*serious*) If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?

THE ACTRESS: I don't understand the question.

MARÍA: Of course not.

THE OWNER: I don't understand it either.

THE ACTRESS: And I don't give a damn about those millions of people who are supposed to see me squeezing a flask of Pepsi between my tits, María. You shouldn't be doing this, you should be working on the two of us.

THE CLIENT: May I call you Shirley Temple?

THE ACTRESS grows thoughtful. THE DIRECTOR picks up the camera and starts shooting what is taking place.

THE DIRECTOR: Why does everyone keep talking to her?

THE OWNER: Go make the commercial!

THE CLIENT: (*To THE ACTRESS*) You find it easy to visualize things?

THE ACTRESS: Otherwise I wouldn't be able play Nora.

THE DAUGHTER: Hang on, isn't this Nora woman supposed to be like thirty?

THE CLIENT: (*Pretends to take out a telephone*) Hello!

THE ACTRESS: (*Slowly pretends to pick up the phone*) Hello ...

THE CLIENT: Is this Shirley Temple?

THE ACTRESS: Yes.

THE OWNER: What the hell is happening?

THE CLIENT: Sssh, sssh. It's Bob Williams, Tennessee's son. He loved you.

THE ACTRESS: All the gays love me 'cause they know I carry the burden.

THE CLIENT: I saw you in the Commercial of the Year and I want to make a movie with you, I'm a very famous producer.

THE DIRECTOR grabs the microphone and starts singing My Way.

THE DIRECTOR: And now the end is near/ and so I face/ the final curtain ...

THE CLIENT: Frank Sinatra was a dishonest suck-up and a disgusting Casanova!

THE ACTRESS: Oh, was he?

THE DAUGHTER: Didn't I just say this isn't allowed?

THE CLIENT: Pretending to be a cool cat but never rising up against anyone and obeying every single person who shouted at him.

THE DAUGHTER: You men and your endless fucking stories.

THE CLIENT: Once, and this is a true story, Sinatra woke up in such terror that he went to the FBI and offered to become an informer.

THE DAUGHTER: How long is this boring anecdote going to last?

THE CLIENT: He was going to blow the lid off all the mobsters ...

THE DAUGHTER: 80 seconds?

THE CLIENT: ... the politicians ...

THE DAUGHTER: 80 minutes?

THE CLIENT: ... and the crooks.

THE DAUGHTER: 80 years?

THE CLIENT: What do you think the FBI said?

THE DAUGHTER: And what's with the sentimental look?

THE CLIENT: FBI took one look at Frank Sinatra and they said: No, we don't want you ...

THE DAUGHTER: You're disgusting.

THE CLIENT: I absolutely agree with her.

THE DAUGHTER: Yeah, don't you?

MARÍA: Everybody out! I need to create a commercial.

THE OWNER: Yes, get out.

Everyone exits except THE ACTRESS, THE CLIENT enters the tower and shuts the door.

[1.17]

MARÍA: I was going to spend my life with someone who makes price comparisons and enjoys spending time in stores that sell gift items that I've designed. That my children would feel sick on our Sunday drive and I would try to fix it. That someone would come knocking at the front door everytime I got up on a chair to change a lightbulb. That people would make a hole in me so that I would leak. That people would invite me to Christmas concerts and I'd say: why are all the divas so fat? I would find myself constantly parking the car. I would say good day to the mentally disabled. I couldn't be bothered picking out a colour for the hallway carpet. I would be too sad to grill a piece of wonderful salmon. I would travel to exciting places in Norway where I would enjoy the ride while the travel agency took care of the rest. I thought I'd be someone who couldn't imagine complaining about the food in a restaurant. With stretch marks on my stomach and not wanting salad for dinner. I would buy a magazine in a gas station and ask myself on the way out: why did I learn how to read? A fireplace wouldn't change a thing. But then I became obsessed with you and everything became so exciting. Suddenly I was this drunken woman in the middle seat on an airplane, a woman on the bus and pepsi and the bus gets a puncture. A woman who doesn't make it to the toilet in time so she colours her underpants, not so that people would notice, no smell or anything, but in a way that only I know, so I hurry back home, I'm always hurrying back home and I haven't got the time to be normal. I am a mouse barking at a deaf lioness. Everything

shames me. But then when I think what it would be like to be Mary Poppins, to always be able to do magic and leave ...

THE ACTRESS pulls out a very big electric cigarette.

THE ACTRESS: A mouse who is found alive in the lioness' den is quite something.

MARÍA does her jumper down to reveal her breasts. Goes over to THE ACTRESS and snuggles up to her and they start fucking.

MARÍA: Fly away from here without my hat blowing off. Be able to change children into humans and adults into children. Pull out the rotten teeth. I want to break the spell.

THE ACTRESS: *(Pulling María's hair)* Why are you acting like this?

MARÍA: I'm sorry. I'm just going to finish this commercial and then ...

THE ACTRESS: *(Interrupting)* Who am I?

MARÍA: The Actress.

THE ACTRESS: What do I do?

MARÍA: Act and sing.

THE ACTRESS: And dance. And what did you do?

MARÍA: Attract attention by telling the men off.

THE ACTRESS: And?

MARÍA: And by asking like an idiot: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?

THE ACTRESS: I haven't performed in public for years! Who am I?

MARÍA: The one person who will never leave. *(In a childlike voice)* Oh, mummy, let me stroke your wounds. Look after me; you're my lioness, you make me feel so secure and so frightened.

MARÍA tries to kiss THE ACTRESS who looks around and gets up.

[1.18]

THE ACTRESS: (*Singing*) How much is that doggie in the window?

THE DAUGHTER appears to the audience, she's holding a big knife and pressing it to her arm.

THE DAUGHTER: Woof woof.

THE ACTRESS: The one with the waggly tail. (*With lots of vibrato*) How much is that doggie in the window?

THE DAUGHTER: Woof woof.

THE ACTRESS: I do hope that doggie's for sale.

THE ACTRESS: Nobody wants an actress who's an open wound. So you shouldn't kill yourself, you should get someone else to do it.

THE ACTRESS pulls a face and puts on a very pouty look without saying anything.

THE DAUGHTER: Oh, so you're depressed?

THE ACTRESS: Thank you for seeing me the way I advertise myself.

THE ACTRESS puts on a beaming smile.

THE DAUGHTER: Now you're being hypomaniac.

THE ACTRESS nods. THE DAUGHTER goes over to the tower and starts rubbing against it. She has obviously been practicing. THE ACTRESS comes up to her and does a bit of directing. MARÍA puts her clothes back on.

THE ACTRESS: Such beautiful eyes you have, crystals like the eyes of an actress. I was Gertrude in Hamlet and it was opening night and Hamlet was standing in front of me, screaming his text at me. I was centre stage and then it happened. For the

first time in my life, and the only time too, I had an orgasm. (*To MARÍA*) Are you leaving?

MARÍA: For now, I'll be back in a little while to finish this commercial. Then I'll leave you and you won't miss that.

THE ACTRESS: (*Singing*) How much is that doggie in the window?

MARÍA/THE DAUGHTER: (*Exiting*) Woof woof.

THE ACTRESS: The one with the waggly tail (*nobody barks*). How much is that doggie in the window?

THE ACTRESS is left alone on stage.

[1.19]

There is a brown leather armchair on top of the tower. THE CLIENT appears wearing a white suit, he sits on the chair.

THE CLIENT: You direct your attention to your hands and you can feel the oxygen tickling the tips of your fingers. You concentrate on your forearm that's lying on the seat rest or on your hanging belly and it grows comfortably heavy. The backs of your hands begin to grow heavier, comfortably heavy. You can feel the roots of your hair in your scalp and how the scalp reaches around your skull and you begin to feel drowsy. Your wisdom teeth rest in your gums and your gums grow comfortably heavy. You can feel your eyelids resting easily on your eyes. Perhaps you feel a sensation of tranquillity coming on, just like when you fall asleep in the daytime. Now you can feel your right leg. It's pressing down and growing heavier, your leg is growing comfortably heavy. Your hands continue to swell and grow heavier. You grow more relaxed at each word I say to you, your hands are heavy, your leg is

heavy, your wisdom teeth are heavy. Your whole body is becoming comfortably heavy. You fall deeper into this comfortable state of rest. Deeper at every single breath. Deeper at every single word I say to you. Deeper and deeper. I will now count down from five to zero and at each lower number you fall deeper down. Five, deeper down, peace and rest. Four, even deeper into peace and rest. Three, deeper and deeper into peace and rest. Two, even deeper into peace and rest. One, deeper into peace and rest. Zero, you continue to fall deeper at every breath. You can smell your own breath and you fall deeper. A sense of security stirs within you. Perhaps you feel like you're in a familiar place. Gradually you feel the effects of relaxation. Just as you can now feel peace and rest, you also begin to feel a similar sensation of calm within you, while the intermission lasts. You will feel this calm whether you're in the toilet, at the bar or purchasing merchandize from Commercial of the Year. You focus your whole attention on the merchandize that will demonstrate your own talents to you and provide you with physical wellbeing. Your stamina improves and your subconscious goes on and on. The merchandize from Commercial of the Year will provide you with security and rest so you can enjoy every passing moment. You will enjoy the experience better in every way. All these words I have spoken to you will continue to have an effect on you without any effort and you will feel their effect growing and growing. I will now wake you up from this state. At three, you will rise up, wide awake and perky, feeling very good in every way. Hands, leg and gums naturally light. One, two, three. You will never wake up completely.

The working lights are turned on. A full-size wax figure of María is revealed to the audience. There is a wick sticking out of the figure's head, María has been on for quite some time so that she's beginning to drip.

The agency's staff roll in the merchandize. THE DIRECTOR walks among the guests, explaining how business is not the same as capitalism. There are toilets in the middle of the stage where THE OWNER leads people with a frequent need to urinate. THE DAUGHTER hands out tiny bottles of Pepsi Max. Salespeople walk around the audience with card machines selling the following items:

1. Maria candle with wick, around 40 centimeters tall (and full-size)
 2. Headshots of the Actress
 3. A life-size cast of the Daughter's genitals
 4. Blood-spattered umbrellas
 5. A badly photoshopped picture with several of the play's characters depicted as satyrs eating fillet of horse
 6. Children's onesie with the inscription: I am the Commercial of the Year and all I got was this lousy t-shirt
 7. A CD with the music from the play or just some other music
-

Big brains fall down to the ground. The staff take a seat on the brains that are actually bean bags whose covers resemble brains. MARÍA gathers brainstorming cards from everyone.

THE OWNER: I had you confirmed, didn't I?

THE DAUGHTER: Of course he had me confirmed.

THE OWNER: Didn't I come pick you up in a limo?

THE DAUGHTER: He picked me up from school in a limo.

THE OWNER: I am no brute.

THE DAUGHTER: And we drove around for an entire weekend.

THE OWNER: I was Daddy of the Year.

THE DAUGHTER: The party cost a fortune.

THE OWNER: Don't you think your old man remembers? Then I took you and the boys out for a fancy dinner!

THE DAUGHTER: Wild boar buffet.

THE OWNER: And I sang arias from The Marriage of Figaro. It was glorious.

THE DAUGHTER: Yes.

THE OWNER: And then later I threw a party in here with some pin-up girls, remember? Bit porky, though, weren't they?

THE DAUGHTER: I fell asleep in the limo.

THE OWNER: Well, you were an ungrateful brat.

THE DAUGHTER: Plus I wanted the party to be in orange, not black as was the fashion.

THE OWNER: It's not as if your confirmation dress was black!

THE DAUGHTER: I was confirmed in black. And the cake was black.

THE OWNER: I sang arias from *The Marriage of Figaro*!

THE DAUGHTER: Whistling through your fake teeth.

MARÍA: Maybe we ought to put the whole thing off.

THE OWNER: *(To everyone)* Every man gets one good chance in his life. What we all have in common is having lost ours. Today, thanks to *(points to THE CLIENT)* ... to the sheriff here, we have been granted another chance. Stop your blathering and don't mess this up for me!

THE DAUGHTER: Absolutely.

[2.3]

THE DIRECTOR: I'll just go on developing my commercial *(points to his head)* in here.

MARÍA: An outstanding leader with an excellent degree in human resource management never uses his own ideas, only his underlings' idea. *(Grabs a brainstorming card off the ACTRESS)* That's not an idea, that's a picture of you taking a bath!

THE OWNER: Do we need a staff day with a BBQ, scavenger hunt, beer and games?

EVERYONE: No.

THE DAUGHTER: I feel like we're making a machine that's going to drive all over us.

THE CLIENT: What kind of machine?

THE DAUGHTER: Machine of the Year.

THE OWNER: Don't we need a staff day with a BBQ, beer and games?

THE CLIENT: *(To THE OWNER)* What day is it today?

THE DIRECTOR, THE OWNER and THE CLIENT are drinking champagne.

THE DIRECTOR: Have you forgotten that the Advertiser is the patient? You are the doctor!

THE OWNER: Are you asking me to play doctor?

THE DIRECTOR: This Commercial of the Year isn't going to happen without competition and results. We'll have to make two commercials.

THE OWNER: I'm no doctor. Doctors reattach limbs to cats and men.

THE DIRECTOR: Then who are you ...?

THE OWNER: I am the one ...

THE DIRECTOR: Who ...?

THE OWNER: Who makes sure that all the world knows there is a doctor who reattaches limbs to cats and men! We'll make ...

THE DIRECTOR: *(Hopeful)* What?

THE OWNER: María's commercial.

2.4.b.a

b.

MARÍA: Okay, I need: the scent of the hollow of a young woman's knee. A jockey without a horse. A horse with a jockey. Toothpicks. A super sensitive yet jolly chicken that sleeps in its own bed but takes anti-depressants because you can never be too careful.

THE DAUGHTER: Okay, so we're talking rural idyll, from countryside to city, home on the farm ...?

THE ACTRESS: Those are some strong ideas, María.

THE DAUGHTER: Now I can tell you're acting.

a.

THE DIRECTOR: The state is screwing me - that's how we all feel. No human being ever really transgresses, they're all just exacting revenge. And we take revenge through black turnover, bankruptcies and tax avoidance. It all links up because everyone's taking revenge. The Commercial of the Year needs to tap into the audience's desire for revenge.

THE OWNER: Go do as the girls say.

THE DIRECTOR: (*Anxiously*) Golf.

THE OWNER: Golf?

THE CLIENT: Golf?

THE DIRECTOR: Oh, yes. Golf! You know, boys' talk. (*Pointing to THE OWNER*) This guy had just hired me and he wanted to reward me with a hooker but it was a Monday and hookers have the day off on Mondays except this one hooker somewhere on the outskirts of the city but this guy here said she was a bit old, you know, a bit older and that's all fine and dandy, except I was drunk so this guy decided we should just walk out there so that I'd sober up, so that I'd really enjoy being with the hooker. And then we get there and I realize that the woman isn't just a bit old, she's older than the Old Testament. And this guy acted like it was nothing and just started to fuck her and I found it so disgusting that I became hard as a rock. Then this guy finally finishes so I decide to just go and go at it hard, to fuck her like she's a a symbol or whatever for all the hookers who look at you as if you're a three-legged dog. So I fucked her, in the vagina, just completely normally but quickly, because I was so afraid I'd go soft and fucking such an old lady without

coming is just such a perverted thing to do. So I was banging her like crazy but I decided to ask how she was digging it except she didn't say anything! And I'm just like, fuck - I've killed this chick! So I started fucking her even faster, you know, because I'm no necrophiliac, but then she shits herself. She must have just been sick or something. And splattered shit all over me. Fucking whore. But then I remembered this Icelandic movie where they said that if you dream about shit you're going to get rich so surely if some old bag takes a shit on you, you'll be filthy rich. It's just mathematics. Except it's precisely the other way round, like a negative squared. If some old hooker out in the middle of nowhere takes a shit on you during a work trip on a Monday with the people from here then you'll be poor for the rest of your life, with no opportunities to get yourself out of that poverty. What do you say, boys, we're really bonding, aren't we? *(pause)* Golf!

THE CLIENT: I don't know if the Advertiser would find it professional for his employees to sit around and talk about golf.

THE OWNER: The commercial is in safe hands with María.

THE DIRECTOR: He said he didn't know!

THE CLIENT: I know.

THE DIRECTOR: And what?

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser would love all this talk about golf.

THE DIRECTOR: Did you hear that? The Advertiser loves golf!

THE CLIENT: *(Humming the same jingle as previously)* What do you say?

THE OWNER: In my old head there's an old idea for a commercial for you, and only a good idea manages to become an old idea.

THE CLIENT: What's the idea?

THE OWNER: It's coming back to me ...

THE CLIENT: Isn't today Monday?

THE OWNER: Well, it's definitely day.

THE CLIENT: So you're just going to use this María and her actress?

THE DIRECTOR retches.

[2.4.b.b]

b.

THE ACTRESS puts on a mask of a very young woman (preferably someone famous).

THE DAUGHTER: Oh yes, still acting.

MARÍA: (*Looking at THE ACTRESS*) With the liver of an air hostess and the thighs of a nanny - your sorry days will soon be numbered. (*Snaps open her umbrella into THE ACTRESS' face*).

[2.4.a.c]

a.

THE DIRECTOR: So I was in seventh grade and they were all much older and they were so funny that they all shot their wads into the soap in the brown shower room. Everyone knew, except me of course.

THE CLIENT: Very good story.

THE DIRECTOR: So I went to take a shower after gym class and not knowing anything I washed myself in the cum and they laughed and laughed. This is one of my best humorous anecdotes. I have even more and dear God, how I want to tell them all.

THE CLIENT: (*Giving him a hug*) Everything you say would make a glorious movie about a bungling oaf.

THE DIRECTOR: Thanks.

THE OWNER: I have always truly believed in you, otherwise I never would have saved you from the humiliation of film-making.

THE DIRECTOR: Really?

THE OWNER hugs THE DIRECTOR.

THE OWNER: I ask you, master of illusions, to make a commercial too. How would the Advertiser feel about everyone here competing for the chance to serve his incredible vision?

THE CLIENT: Two commercials? I bet he will be happy to pay for two commercials if they're good enough for him.

a. and b. become one

THE ACTRESS: How am I supposed to get into character for two commercials? I picture myself playing a crazy young bitch who meets a mature woman who makes a real person out of the little bitch.

THE CLIENT ascends the tower and THE OWNER and THE DIRECTOR exit.

MARÍA: I keep seeing these romantic commercials about couples who only need one thing, like bubblegum or a mortgage.

THE ACTRESS: We have to find you a good psychiatrist.

MARÍA: I don't need any medication! Why do you keep fucking me while I'm asleep? It's very tiresome. My hair's a mess when I wake up.

THE ACTRESS: María.

MARÍA: I wake up to you, going at it.

THE ACTRESS: Can you hear yourself?

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: Can you see yourself?

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: So you realize how pretentious you are. And cold. And fake? María.

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: There's no way of getting to you when you're awake.

MARÍA: But that doesn't mean anything.

THE ACTRESS: It means I have to love you in your sleep, that's how I can reach your subconscious, reassure you that you are loved, try to install some security, cure you. You're never truer to yourself than while you sleep, you know that, otherwise you just lie there and talk nonsense. I love you, not the character you try to show to the world. Now would you try not to disappoint me for one minute. Prove to me that you love me.

THE ACTRESS closes her eyes. MARÍA walks up to her and raises THE ACTRESS' skirt with her umbrella. MARÍA slowly gets down on her knees.

THE ACTRESS: Come on. There's something wrong with your generation. Like your bones have been boiled. *THE ACTRESS groans heavily.* And you're all so lazy and fat and self-centred. Make me properly happy!

MARÍA: *(Sticks her head under the skirt, THE ACTRESS moans and MARÍA pulls her head back out, laughs)* It's turning into the roots of an old yucca ...

THE ACTRESS: Stop humiliating me!

MARÍA: *(Getting up)* I'm shooting my commercial later, I'll see if I can squeeze in a part for you, maybe you could play a yucca.

MARÍA walks out.

[2.6]

THE ACTRESS tramps around the stage and the only costume she find is a clown costume. Puts it on.

THE ACTRESS: I want the elevator to crash, the headache to be a stroke, the earthquake to be strong enough. I want a hairdryer to fall into my foot massager. I never know what's insight and what's paranoia. I have a grain of salt in my heart. I wish I wasn't so weird, that I could control it, that all the advise I've been given would work, that the medicine didn't just make me fatter. I always think the chair is going to break, that I won't get through the door, that the clothes won't fit.

THE ACTRESS starts climbing the tower.

Nothing works, I never change and the worst thing is that I used to be good sometimes, too good, and at other times decent, but the plunge always comes again and it lasts and it's getting too troublesome to rise up. When we were together I was good and I forgot to think about death. I made myself so pretty, I would put on a cape and invite a hundred people over but only five could make it. Why are you all so happy? Happy people are so tiresome, they make me insecure and put up no defense for anyone.

THE ACTRESS climbs over the railing at the top of the tower and prepares to jump.

If anyone should have been able to save me, it would have been you. There was nobody like us.

THE ACTRESS takes a bow and prepares to jump.

[2.7]

THE CLIENT: Could you put your suicide on hold for a moment?

THE ACTRESS: No!

THE CLIENT: I want to ask you a favour. You see, I was watching you and I felt like you might be feeling, or that you were being ...

THE ACTRESS: Humiliated?

THE CLIENT: Yes, the thought did occur to me. (*Fetches a chair from the room in the tower and helps THE ACTRESS get back over the railing*) But balanced nonetheless.

THE ACTRESS: (*Surprised*) What?

THE CLIENT: Or, you know, that you've seen it all.

THE ACTRESS: Yes, I know what it's like to be human.

THE CLIENT: So if someone might be missing a limb ...

THE ACTRESS: I play all my characters with a limp.

THE CLIENT: So you have seen it all. Might I sit with you?

THE ACTRESS: If you're about to ask for advice, I can tell you that whenever great artists call me up, if I talk to them for long enough, they start to cry, without exception.

THE CLIENT: I can imagine you have plenty of good advice. Do you mind if I turn the lights off?

THE ACTRESS: Will there be light on me?

THE CLIENT: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: Then I don't give a damn.

THE CLIENT turns off the lights.

THE CLIENT: And the unexpected doesn't frighten you?

THE ACTRESS: Let me take just one example. I get eighteen red roses delivered and there's nothing remarkable about that except the days pass and I come out in my

silk robe to get some red wine and what do I see, they're starting to droop. Then what? You don't think I know what to do?

THE CLIENT: Yes, I happen to think you know precisely what to do.

THE ACTRESS: I run the tap, boiling hot. I know everything about floriculture and volcanic eruptions and knives, and I stare at the squirting water until a cloud of steam is rising off it. Squirt, my dear client, is a wonderful word, sounds a bit like cunt but a squirt is in fact a slender cock. Then I stick the end of the stalk underneath the water, I hold it there for one minute and then I cut off the part of the stalk that was underneath the water. So the stalk becomes a stub, really.

THE CLIENT: And you don't mind that the stalk has turned into a stub?

THE ACTRESS: No, I actually feel even more fond of the flower once I've saved it.

THE CLIENT: And it's a lovely stub?

THE ACTRESS: It is, and now listen for a moment. Then I put the stub in some ice water and guess what? The rose stops drooping, it straightens up and has another chance to live and then die again.

THE CLIENT takes off one shoe. Grabs the ACTRESS' hand with determination.

Looks into her eyes. THE CLIENT rolls up the legs of his trousers. He is wearing a plastic prosthetic leg. THE ACTRESS takes the leg off to reveal the stub. THE CLIENT makes her stroke the stub.

THE CLIENT: *(Whispering)* The Advertiser says the stub is keeping me down.

THE CLIENT gets THE ACTRESS to simultaneously stroke his stub and his bald head.

You don't mind?

THE ACTRESS: No.

THE CLIENT: What about María?

THE ACTRESS: I don't know, I spend an awful lot of time alone in the bathroom, trying to spruce myself up for her. Make sure I take my stomach medication, soothe my bowels.

THE CLIENT: And I bet she's always taking you from behind! The woman is sick!

THE CLIENT presses THE ACTRESS' hand harder to his stub. THE CLIENT pulls down the wig to cover his face. THE CLIENT starts to masturbate.

THE ACTRESS: I went through puberty at the age of nine so the other kids used to call me the Ogre.

THE CLIENT: *(sobbing)* It will have made you stronger, Ogre. Were you very, very heavy?

THE ACTRESS: I was fat. Everything about me was fat. Especially my hair. But I had long, thin piano fingers, and the skin on my hands was perfectly dry. I stole a purple diamond ring and I put it on and went to school. Then I waited all day for the kids to notice my hands and stop calling me an ogre.

THE CLIENT: Yes, like public relations or a commercial for beauty, I get it.

THE ACTRESS: But nobody saw my hands - they couldn't take their eyes off my tits and my stomach. Real beauty can only be found in the unlikeliest of places. And all my life has revolved around just that, around showing people the beauty that they would otherwise miss. For that, I thought you would be eternally grateful to me.

THE CLIENT masturbates at great speed and THE ACTRESS laughs at him. He gives up on masturbating. THE ACTRESS wipes THE CLIENT's face with his wig before putting it back on his head.

THE CLIENT: Do you ever get the feeling that you're making a mistake?

THE ACTRESS: If I did, I would truly be humble.

THE CLIENT: Don't you have to pretend to be?

THE ACTRESS: We have been humbled, you and me.

THE CLIENT: So can't I, so can't we be humble?

THE ACTRESS: We could always act as if we are.

THE CLIENT: I'll just pretend to be humble and call the whole thing off.

THE ACTRESS: We can't handle it.

THE CLIENT: What if I'm making a mistake here?

THE ACTRESS: Then you'll just have to hold your head up high and go through with it.

THE CLIENT goes into the tower to shower.

[2.8]

THE ACTRESS plunks herself down and rubs her swollen feet.

THE DAUGHTER: You can't laugh and point at me because we're equally worthless. We belong to the same 2-for-1 special.

THE ACTRESS: Not anymore.

THE DAUGHTER: Where would you run to? What have you been doing since you were such a passable actress that daddy's theatre went bankrupt? Stinking?

THE ACTRESS: Yes, sinking.

THE DAUGHTER: Sinking?

THE ACTRESS: I am a diver. I learned diving in Iceland and then deep sea diving in Thailand even though I was seventy already and I rode a shark like a man would ride a four year old mare.

THE DAUGHTER: Shut the fuck up.

THE ACTRESS: No, no, it's true, I mean, you heard me sing, big lungs, I can sink.

THE DAUGHTER: No?

THE ACTRESS: No?

THE DAUGHTER: What do you do?

THE ACTRESS: I dive.

THE DAUGHTER: All you do is get in the way.

MARÍA: Okay. So you will be playing a naughty little boy.

THE DAUGHTER: Why can't I be a naughty little girl?

THE ACTRESS: Because you have a penis.

THE DAUGHTER: And a bit of a pussy.

THE ACTRESS: Why don't you choose one?

THE DAUGHTER: Why should you always have to choose between a and b? It's not a choice, it's just a question of whether you want to be dead or stone-dead. Do you want red trousers or blue trousers? I want chequered trousers!

María comes in holding costumes for a girl and a boy.

MARÍA: Okay, you play the little girl. And you're the little boy.

THE ACTRESS: Oh yes, the perfect casting and not beneath my respect at all. Why did you stop telling me pretty stories?

MARÍA: You two come running up to me and you say: Yay, finally, María, finally you're back!

THE ACTRESS: María, darling, is this how you rehearse in the advertising business?

MARÍA: Why don't you just kill yourself?

THE DAUGHTER: She never pulls it off.

THE ACTRESS: Thankfully! What would have become of you? You have delusions about becoming a nanny in a movie. This world of yours where everything will be

alright, if only you can get away, only then, when this changes and when that changes, when I change or something comes to an end - then everything will be alright. It won't be alright. It's always the same, not bad but incredibly anticlimactic and the key is to realize that there's nothing quite like the smell of oranges.

MARÍA: When you were truly trying to kill yourself there was an excitement about it and your breasts smelled of death. Now you're so afraid of dying that you cling to the handrail when you walk down the stairs and you make sure the bathroom floor is never wet. Is it any wonder that I want to leave?

THE DAUGHTER: We're supposed to deliver the Commercial of the Year in just a few minutes!

THE ACTRESS: I've grown more careful because nobody looks after me anymore! If I died you wouldn't find me because you wouldn't come looking for me and eventually the state would have to bury a decomposed corpse.

THE DAUGHTER: Are you two stuck together like my willy and my pussy?

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: Yes.

THE DAUGHTER: So?

THE ACTRESS: And she wants out.

THE DAUGHTER: Are you telling me you haven't gotten used to people leaving you
by now?

THE ACTRESS: I haven't, and I never will. So you're leaving when this is over?

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: To disappear into a musical inside a movie based on an old book?

MARÍA: Yes.

THE ACTRESS: How long does it take for a body to decompose?

MARÍA: That's none of my business. You're just the way you are, somehow.

THE ACTRESS: Thanks.

MARÍA: And it's not working.

THE ACTRESS: And being a nanny is working out just great?

MARÍA: It's working out better than this.

THE DAUGHTER: Shouldn't we rehearse this stuff?

THE ACTRESS: It's not about rehearsing, it's about making things look like they've been rehearsed. Don't you work here? Don't you know anything at all?

THE DAUGHTER: Wow. Wow, you really are old. I think the funniest thing would be if you choked to death on a hot dog because that would be just perfect.

THE ACTRESS: María.

THE DAUGHTER: Remember when you saw me earlier and I was stripping and you were going to save me? "I am an old bitch and I'm going to save you." Hah, I'm not just a great actress, I also do impressions.

THE ACTRESS: The Client doesn't like impressions.

THE DAUGHTER: What?

THE ACTRESS: No, what the Client is asking for is simple, disgusting, yet original. Behave yourself a bit better and who knows, you might also get asked up to the tower.

MARÍA: Stop tormenting her.

THE DAUGHTER: He's always asking me up to the tower and on a cruise and a wedding ...

THE ACTRESS: The first thing María told me was the story of when a bowl breaks in Japan.

THE DAUGHTER: And I have my own room in the tower ... and a key, the only key that opens the room so nobody else can get in except with my permission and the door can't be broken in and there's a pool with ocean water on top of the tower.

THE ACTRESS: When a bowl breaks in Japan, they don't throw the pieces in the trash.

Silence.

THE DAUGHTER: Then what do they do when a bowl breaks in Japan?

THE ACTRESS: And they don't even glue the pieces back together to hide the fact that it's been broken.

THE DAUGHTER: Then what do they do with a broken bowl in Japan?

THE ACTRESS: They put it back together with pure gold.

[2.9]

The entire staff of the agency are running around. THE CLIENT descends from the tower.

MARÍA: I sent a letter to a serial killer in Texas. I wanted to thank him for doing something. I'm always sitting around on my sofa bed and saying: "Tomorrow I'm going to go swimming," and we have a glass of red wine and I drink a toast: "Here's to swimming tomorrow!" But I don't have a swimsuit. Meanwhile, the Texas serial killer is all: "I'm going to stab someone tomorrow." And so he does.

THE CLIENT: Making use of the possibilities that come with being childless. Did he reply to your letter?

MARÍA: Oh no, he was probably busy, there's no need to give up killing just because you're in prison, ahahah.

THE DAUGHTER rubs up against THE CLIENT who exits.

THE DAUGHTER: (To THE ACTRESS) I would never go for just any old pussy, I would get myself a mini pussy. Doesn't your pussy grow bigger as you get older?

THE ACTRESS: It grows tired.

THE OWNER: We're starting in twenty seconds!

THE DIRECTOR: This reminds me of this story about this one time when I was on this flight, it was probably around 1990 or 1991, yes, '91, but early in the year though because as I remember it was freezing cold, no, you're not getting how cold it was, but it wasn't exactly winter and not spring either but more like a day that doesn't belong to any season, and what do you know, I'm sitting there and flying second class, no, first class, or 1991, and then ...

MARÍA: The time is not ripe to talk about flying!

THE DIRECTOR: ... and so I was just flying there without a care in the world when what do you know, I ...

THE DAUGHTER: What's wrong with you? Are you going through some kind of psychological change in your life? Are you trying to establish a comic side to your personality?

THE OWNER: Stop! Positions, everyone. We'll start with your commercial, María. (To THE ACTRESS) Get on stage.

THE ACTRESS: Let's call this off.

THE OWNER: On stage!

Commercial of the Year

The commercials are done through a live-feed; performed on the stage while appearing on the screen in the background.

[2.10]

Commercial of the Year 1:

MARÍA is vigorously prepping the set. The stage is full of light and sound gear, like on a film set. The child mannequins have been dressed up in national costumes with smiling, laughing masks. There is fake grass on stage to resemble an old farmyard. The backdrops portray nature and mountains but they don't need to be consistent, they could be from different places. There is a church made of toothpicks somewhere on stage. MARÍA is filming the church, inside which there are people made of toothpicks wearing Adidas sweaters. There is a turfed farmhouse in the middle of the grass. MARÍA raises the arms of the mannequins so it looks as if they are running and arranges them in a circle around the farm. MARÍA sits on a chair attached to a track that circles the set. THE OWNER is behind her, ready to push.

MARÍA: Action!

The Commercial of the Year appears on the screen. A youth choir enters and sings Jón Leifs' Requiem op. 33b. The choir has enormous, coarse angel wings.

THE DAUGHTER comes running on set wearing a national costume. She acts (smiling and pouting by turns) and starts running around the farmhouse, now just smiling. THE ACTRESS walks on in slow motion, obviously in a lesser role. THE ACTRESS attempts to trip THE DAUGHTER but doesn't succeed.

MARÍA: Run, girls! You're having fun!

THE DAUGHTER and THE ACTRESS run and MARÍA moves in circles around them, occasionally an image of the church is inserted and nature is given its moment to shine. The commercial looks very good on screen.

MARÍA: *(into a microphone)* Integrity, honesty, prescience, the legacy of the sagas, a bright future, equality. All this - and more.

THE ACTRESS and THE DAUGHTER press the palms of their hands together and gaze into the audience.

MARÍA: This couldn't be done better.

[2.11]

Commercial of the Year 2

THE DIRECTOR turns on the working lights, grabs the camera from María and gently lays THE DAUGHTER on her back, pointing the camera at her face. THE DIRECTOR pours a bit of Pepsi on her face.

THE DIRECTOR: What do you need?

THE DAUGHTER: *(Laughing)* Stop it!

Pours some more.

THE DIRECTOR: What do you need?

THE DAUGHTER: Help!

THE DIRECTOR: What do you need?

THE DAUGHTER: I need you to stop.

THE DIRECTOR holds her down, all but drowning her in Pepsi.

THE DIRECTOR: Wrong answer *(pouring even more into her mouth)*.

THE DAUGHTER: Stop, please stop.

The rest of the agency stare in awe at the screen and the beautiful commercial that appears up there.

THE DIRECTOR: You need ...

THE DAUGHTER: I need...

THE DIRECTOR: You need...

THE DAUGHTER coughs up the Pepsi and THE DIRECTOR pours some more in her face.

THE DAUGHTER: I need whatever you think I need.

THE DIRECTOR stops pouring. THE DAUGHTER coughs.

THE DIRECTOR: And say thank you.

THE DAUGHTER: Thank you.

THE DAUGHTER coughs and recovers, THE DIRECTOR gets a good shot of her breasts and then her face.

THE DIRECTOR: Smile as if you're scared.

THE DAUGHTER does as he says.

THE DIRECTOR: *(To all the others)* And that's how you do it.

THE DIRECTOR turns off the camera. THE OWNER nods and starts clapping, the rest joining in.

THE ACTRESS: *(Muttering)* Well, this was like a bad rehearsal in an amateur drama club, plus the text was awfully flat.

[2.12]

THE OWNER: *(Knocking at the tower)* Listen, champ, wouldn't it be best if you get this to the Advertiser and then you can let us know which way he wants to go?

THE CLIENT is nowhere to be seen. THE OWNER bangs on the tower.

THE OWNER: (*Shouting*) Hey there, champ!

THE CLIENT enters carrying grocery bags.

THE ACTRESS: Well, well, well, have we been shopping? Didn't happen to buy a pair of compression socks, did you? Take a look at my feet, it's like walking on raw meat.

THE DAUGHTER: Would you like a wheelchair?

THE ACTRESS: Oh, sure, because I'm the one who's disabled in here ...

MARÍA: (*To THE CLIENT*) So you didn't see any of it? You weren't even here?

THE DAUGHTER: Maybe it doesn't matter that he wasn't here. (*To THE CLIENT*) I felt like you were here and actually, I feel like you're always present, wherever I am.

THE ACTRESS: And you don't think that has anything to do with the fact that the man has built a tower in the middle of a theatre?

THE DAUGHTER: Advertising agency - you and the theatre were shut down.

THE ACTRESS: Whereas you should definitely be hired, because there are oh, so many parts for a character with a crotch full of mush.

THE DIRECTOR: (*To MARÍA*) I love how you have complete control of your artistic team.

MARÍA: Girls!

THE ACTRESS: What girls? I'm sixty and she has a joke between her legs.

THE DIRECTOR: And this thing about girls, jeunism results in very young girls being placed in sexual positions ...

THE ACTRESS: Didn't you just piss all over her breasts until she nearly died?

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser saw the Commercial of the Year.

Silence.

THE OWNER: Excuse me, buddy, who was that again?

THE CLIENT: It hurts me and literally wounds the Advertiser to hear a family in a family business arguing.

THE ACTRESS: Since when does family include some random people you meet?

THE DAUGHTER: (*To THE ACTRESS*) There's a phonecall for you.

THE ACTRESS: Really?

THE DAUGHTER: Your family.

THE ACTRESS: (*Happy*) Are they worried about me?

THE DAUGHTER: No, they're all dead, they drowned.

THE ACTRESS: Oh, stop it.

THE DIRECTOR: I want to ask you, although completely without aggression, to be quiet.

THE CLIENT: Thank you. And although I don't know, I suspect the Advertiser has seen the art and the integrity in your commercial.

THE DIRECTOR: Well, it is a feast for the eyes.

THE CLIENT: And the ears!

THE ACTRESS: Dear God.

MARÍA: If you want me to see this Advertiser then it needs to happen now because I'm leaving.

THE CLIENT: Unfortunately I haven't been completely honest with you, but as you know, in this business it's hard to always speak the truth. You see, it's no good handing over all the information.

THE DAUGHTER: That's okay, I never know anything.

THE OWNER: Somehow I never know anything, or yes, I was thinking I might take a tango class. Or a course. Is that how you say it?

THE CLIENT: Now listen to me, you all know the Advertiser, some of you better than the rest, but you do all know him.

MARÍA: Okay, is this the start of a long 'The Advertiser Is Everywhere' speech?

THE CLIENT: The Advertiser isn't everywhere, he's here.

General bewilderment.

[2.13]

THE CLIENT turns his back to the actors and the audience and rummages around in his grocery bag. He puts a black compression sock on his hand and a small wig, identical to the one he is wearing. The Advertiser is a compression sock. At first, the audience only hear the Advertiser's voice, before they see him.

THE ADVERTISER: *(Pulling out a piece of paper)*

My dear compatriots.

If is often said that we are like one big family, demonstrating a true sense of solidarity whenever a blow is dealt to us or when natural disasters threaten our livelihoods. In crucial times, solidarity has proved to be a catalyst, and today we are yet again reminded of the victories brought about by solidarity.

Distinguished scientists, entrepreneurs, delegates, ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a great pleasure to welcome you all to this comprehensive, path-breaking gathering.

Solidarity has ever proved its value when meticulous methods are needed, been a true guiding light through challenging terrain.

THE DAUGHTER laughs awkwardly.

THE CLIENT: Well. How's the Advertiser?

The Advertiser: Don't know, I feel like I'm starting to run. Hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Wouldn't say no to someone darnin' my hole. Hmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

THE CLIENT: We're not on our own now, and there are people here who aren't getting your sense of humour.

The Advertiser: Oh, great thinker, I wonder if that's because a certain someone is bald?

THE CLIENT: God, I am sorry.

The Advertiser: Who would laugh at a bald man? A psychopath. Are you saying these people are all psychopaths?

THE CLIENT: No, no.

The Advertiser: That I would hire a group of psychopaths?

THE DAUGHTER: No, that's not what he's saying. *(Hands him the tiny wig)* There you go.

THE OWNER: Hello there. I didn't know you were black, but that's okay, I'm a feminist with no prejudice whatsoever.

MARÍA: I sort of have to get going, so ...

THE DIRECTOR: Which commercial are you going to use?

The Advertiser: I do believe that all this world's faults come together in this one sentence: Which commercial are you going to use?

THE CLIENT: Dad, just pick, they're getting so tired.

The Advertiser: *(Screaming)* You don't think it's tiresome being me?

THE CLIENT: I've done everything the way you want, I just, I think to wrap up my research I...

The Advertiser: (*Interrupting*) And don't you call me dad, I can't imagine anything worse than having created ... I don't know what you look like ... you're too stingy to give me a pair of eyes.

THE DAUGHTER: You can have my eyes.

The Advertiser: When one of our senses fails, the next becomes even sharper, am I right?

THE DAUGHTER: Yes.

The Advertiser: And I can tell by your smell that your eyes are a bit funny, like mush?

THE DAUGHTER: Have you noticed how he doesn't smell of anything? (*Pointing at THE CLIENT*).

The Advertiser: Maybe he doesn't smell of anything because he doesn't exist.

The Advertiser makes out with THE DAUGHTER.

THE CLIENT: Dad, stop it.

MARÍA: Excuse me, sir, I was just wondering, which commercial will you choose?

THE ACTRESS: Hello again. I would like to stop this play for just one moment to conduct a quick poll.

THE OWNER: Listen, love, we've already done all the research for this particular project, the colour is orange and people want all sorts.

THE ACTRESS: Might I ask those who believe that this particular compression sock is a) a human being and b) a filthy rich advertiser, to please raise their hands?

The Advertiser: What if I tell you there's a third commercial?

EVERYONE: What?

THE CLIENT: No, dad, just pick either of the ones we have already.

THE DIRECTOR: The third commercial, interesting.

THE ACTRESS: What if this man is just some guy who walked in here with a compression sock in his pocket?

THE CLIENT: Would you like us to go or ...?

THE DAUGHTER/THE OWNER: No!

MARÍA: (*To THE ACTRESS*) Just relax.

THE ACTRESS: Why am I getting shushed while the compression sock talks crap?

The Advertiser: Oh, dear intelligent lady, you have grasped the situation quite correctly, of course: I am but a simple compression sock.

THE ACTRESS: Yes!

The Advertiser: And you are the artist who sacrifices herself while we make nothing, just chasing after whatever's happens to be in.

THE DAUGHTER: (*to THE CLIENT*) I'm in love with your dad.

THE DAUGHTER pulls out her knife, cuts some of her hair off and places it on the Advertiser.

THE ACTRESS: There is a limit to how long I can be bothered listening to a compression sock.

The Advertiser: God, don't listen, you can't start doing that now. This woman believes the audience has betrayed her, the directors, theatre managers, film directors, and now, finally, the advertising business.

THE ACTRESS: I have changed the world!

THE DAUGHTER: He must be a psychiatrist.

THE ACTRESS: The one thing I want to say is that all the happiness I enjoyed was with my audience. Thank you.

The Advertiser: But look at her (*pointing to THE DAUGHTER*). She looks up to you and all she wants is for you to teach her to act. María can't stop loving you, no matter how hard she tries, and this champion here ...

THE OWNER: Hi ya.

The Advertiser: He went broke for you so that you could play Juliet at the age of fifty, Juliet who's always just as sixteen. He was a fool.

THE ACTRESS: Don't you call him that!

The Advertiser: Then he came to his senses. Might not the issue be that you have never helped these people here, who so sorely need help? You are making me, a simple compression sock, save their finances and their lives, and then you dare be rude to me. I could leave.

THE CLIENT: Leave her alone.

The Advertiser: What would this agency be like if you had been kind to them?

THE ACTRESS: I am a broken bowl.

The Advertiser: Thanks!

THE ACTRESS: I just want them to ...

The Advertiser: Buy into your commercial about an actress who changes the world, a woman who won, a girl who beat the odds. And they bought you, a no good product, because the commercial was so well made.

THE DAUGHTER: Say it!

MARÍA: What do you want her to say?

THE DAUGHTER: (*spitting the knife out*) María, you are such a wretched little liar that I wish you'd drown in your own vagina out in the harbour. Make your mind up! It's all her fault.

[2.15]

The Advertiser: The third commercial. (*To THE DIRECTOR*) Which is your commercial, such innovation, AND (*to MARÍA*) your commercial, such an understanding of woman's true nature, brought together in one commercial. With a little extra something.

THE DAUGHTER: Yes, obviously we want to fulfill your needs.

The Advertiser: My needs are irrelevant, what with me being so humble.

THE DAUGHTER: And sincere, who doesn't love a sincere man?

The Advertiser: But the shareholders' needs are great. (*To THE CLIENT*) You did ask, didn't you? Hello?! You definitely asked?

THE CLIENT: Yes.

The Advertiser: And what did they say?

THE CLIENT: That they would.

The Advertiser: Listen, down here we don't understand you. Would do what?

THE CLIENT: Would die for the commercial.

The Advertiser: Exactly. Well. Weeeeeell. (*To THE CLIENT*) No sentimentality, I can smell a little something, a little acid, you're getting excited now.

THE CLIENT: Heheh, yes.

The Advertiser picks up the camera and hands it to MARÍA. MARÍA turns it on.

THE CLIENT: Okay, at least explain it.

The Advertiser: Killing people is part of our genetic makeup. But that is less important than what I am about to tell you: it is part of our genetic makeup to enjoy watching other people being killed. If people see other people being killed, they come alive.

THE DIRECTOR: And this would be the third commercial?

The Advertiser: It's the Commercial of the Year. The shareholders who don't have time to look at the crap you cook up, they will be forced to look up from their phones, from their children, because the Commercial of the Year will certainly be the Commercial of the Year. We shall be the first to take life for our shareholders!

THE OWNER sneaks a doughnut into his mouth.

THE DIRECTOR: And you're sure this third commercial would be the Commercial of the Year?

The Advertiser: Yes, my boy.

THE DIRECTOR falls to his knees and cranes his neck.

THE DIRECTOR: Chop. Chop my head off!

THE DAUGHTER: What's wrong with you?

The Advertiser: Yes, we need to be careful that we're not too old-fashioned.

[2.16]

THE OWNER: My mother was a lighthouse keeper.

MARÍA points the camera at THE OWNER.

THE DAUGHTER: What?

THE OWNER: Or, well, officially my grandmother was the lighthousekeeper but my mother took care of the job. And I helped out, I was the man of the house. It was always just the three of us, I mean, would anyone here pop over to a lighthouse for

a visit? And they were awfully rowdy. And every Sunday morning, my mother would put on her bodice and walk up the crest because she was going to throw herself off. My grandmother would wake me up and I'd go running after her. The people on the neighbouring farms always watched and they probably thought I was a clever little negotiator because she always held my hand on the way back and on Mondays we would oversleep on purpose. I never knew who followed her up the crest every Sunday when I was sent off to the countryside, but she always came to pick me up in the fall. Until the fall when she didn't come.

THE CLIENT: Do you have any recordings of this?

THE OWNER: No.

THE CLIENT: Or, you know, a recording of her killing herself?

The Advertiser: This won't do. (*To THE CLIENT*) Or what do you think, as an ... Advertiser?

THE CLIENT: As an Advertiser I say: No! This won't do!

THE OWNER chokes on a doughnut. Everyone retreats and MARÍA records the event. He is just about to choke to death when he coughs up the doughnut.

The Advertiser: Wow, did you feel that? (*They felt it*) Phew, doughnuts are pure hell, so much wheat.

[2.17]

The Advertiser: Who wants to be neeeeeeeext?

THE ACTRESS: Now listen to me for once, you idiots, these men need to get the fuck out of here! Get out of my theatre, you bastards! Out! Out!

THE ACTRESS starts to push the tower out.

THE OWNER: Stop it, you old hag!

THE CLIENT: Dad, help me!

THE ACTRESS: Just go, leave us alone.

The Advertiser: I get asked to come but never to go, while you on the other hand ...

THE ACTRESS: (*interrupting*) I want the elevator to crash ...

The Advertiser and THE ACTRESS: ... I want the elevator to crash, the headache to be a stroke, the earthquake to be strong enough. I want a hairdryer to fall into my foot massager. The Advertiser: Yeeeeees, finally! Go on!

MARÍA hands the camera to THE DIRECTOR and picks up her umbrella.

THE ACTRESS: I never know what's insight and what's paranoia.

The Advertiser: This is insight!

THE ACTRESS: I never know what's insight and what's paranoia. I have a grain of salt in my heart. I wish I wasn't so weird, that I could control it, that all the advise I've been given would work, that the medicine didn't just make me fatter. I always think the chair is going to break, that I won't get through the door, that the clothes won't fit. (*MARÍA walks over to THE ACTRESS and kisses her forehead.*) Nothing works, I never change and the worst thing is that I used to be good sometimes, too good, and at other times decent, but the plunge always comes again and it lasts and rising up is getting hopeless. When we were together I was good and I forgot to think about death. I made myself so pretty, I put on a cape and invited everybody and María, María, you came ... why are the rest of you so happy?

The Advertiser: Because people who aren't upbeat are so tiresome!

THE ACTRESS: Happy people are tiresome and they make me insecure. (*MARÍA sticks the umbrella underneath THE ACTRESS' skirt, gives her a kiss.*)

And someone saved me and it was you, María, and the rest of you. If I knew how to be grateful, I would be grateful now. There was nobody like us. We were ...

MARÍA plunges the umbrella into THE ACTRESS. Meanwhile, THE DIRECTOR keeps the camera pointed at THE ACTRESS' face. There is nothing to be seen except for the screen where THE ACTRESS stares into the camera, full of terror, the light in her eyes goes out and finally she lies there, dead.

[3.1]

The Advertiser is wearing sunglasses and dishes out cards, cheques, cash, medals and trophies to THE DIRECTOR. THE OWNER sits nearby.

THE DIRECTOR: Of course we were a hit, the Commercial of the Year is the Commercial of the Year is the Commercial of the Year.

The Advertiser: *(Distracted)* Yes.

THE DIRECTOR: Listen, could you tell me, what product were we advertising? Not that I care or that it's any of my business.

The Advertiser: Alright.

THE DIRECTOR: Alright. So we're allowed to know what we were, you know ...

THE CLIENT: *(Interrupting)* Umbrellas.

THE DIRECTOR: Oh, well, what fun. The amazing thing about umbrellas is that, you know, when they're in use, you know, open, they're completely harmless and in fact very sensitive because the slightest gust of wind can easily kill them. But when they're not being used, then, somehow, they're lethal.

The Advertiser: Bye.

The Advertiser wants to rush out. THE DIRECTOR locates the fake leg. THE DIRECTOR rolls up the leg of the CLIENT's trousers, pats the stub and attaches the leg to THE CLIENT.

THE CLIENT: I just want to say that, well, I think it's very ...

THE DIRECTOR: *(interrupting)* Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes, and many people think it's very and well yes and well would you believe that ... *(The Advertiser gets THE CLIENT going and father and son exit)* ... that yes yes yes, bla-dee-bla. Excuse me. Once the Client came to the advertising agency where I work *(startled)* and it must have been in 1991 or yesterday, and blablablah and let's just shoot this thing and I saved the day ahahahah and the agency and the clients and the stories and educated and blablablah *(walking over to the bowl of doughnuts)* and it was all true and correct and blablabla *(starts to stuff his mouth with doughnuts)* and *(filling his mouth with doughnuts)* blablablah blablablah blaiaaaaaah. *(THE DIRECTOR's mouth is so stuffed that eventually he's unable to speak.)*

[3.2]

THE OWNER is on stage when THE DAUGHTER enters.

THE OWNER: Oh, how wonderful that it's just the two of us, my darling little honey bee. Just think, you with all your fluctuations and troubles and me always there for you. I feel like I'm forever saving your life and that's an awfully good feeling, my little star.

THE DAUGHTER: Let me go with the Client.

Pause.

THE OWNER: Of course. Just go.

THE DAUGHTER: Okay, thanks for everything.

THE OWNER: Running up the crest to jump.

THE DAUGHTER: I bet he would catch me, even if he'd drop me again.

THE OWNER: Monday's a good day to go, too, start a new life with a new week.

THE DAUGHTER: It's Saturday.

THE OWNER: It's all just days. Or am I talking nonsense?

THE DAUGHTER: Goodbye and thanks for ... the collaboration.

THE OWNER: Yes, the collaboration. Good to start a new life with a new week.

THE DAUGHTER: Daddy, it's ... (*says nothing*)

THE OWNER: Maybe I drowned too many kittens.

A small kitten appears on stage.

THE DAUGHTER: Well, you didn't manage to drown them all.

THE OWNER: (*Sees the kitten and gets up*) This one will be easy to drown, it's so confused.

THE DAUGHTER: Or you could just help him.

THE OWNER: Yes, because he's a lot like me?

THE OWNER takes the kitten and sits down.

THE DAUGHTER: Can I sit with you?

THE OWNER: You're far too big to sit on my lap.

THE DAUGHTER: Are you saying I'm fat?

THE OWNER: Perhaps more like a bit chubby.

THE DAUGHTER: But can I sit next to you without anything happening?

THE OWNER: I'm sure. *THE DAUGHTER sits.* Everything's in turmoil somehow but I always thrive in a crisis.

THE OWNER is about to get up but THE DAUGHTER pulls him back down.

THE DAUGHTER: New life with a new week.

THE OWNER: Yes.

THE DAUGHTER: I'll definitely do it.

THE OWNER: What?

THE DAUGHTER: Never mind.

THE OWNER: *(holding up the kitten)* Is everything in turmoil?

THE DAUGHTER: No, nothing's in turmoil, everything operates according to a system. The Advertiser didn't want commercial number one, not commercial number two, he wanted commercial number three. I don't have a penis. I don't have a vagina. Only mush. One, two, three. The third eye, the third commercial, the third set of genitals - it's all just the sum of one plus two. Nothing new. No new truth. Nothing special, just the mush that everyone needs to believe is either art or God. The third theatre. But nobody knows this ... except me and now you. My mush completes their genitals. Daddy, we're going to be rich.

THE DAUGHTER takes off her genitals, fills them up with Pepsi Max and starts to drown the kitten. One phone begins to ring. Then the next and so on, until dozens of phones are ringing. Some of the ringtones reference famous jingles. THE DAUGHTER walks over to the phones. THE OWNER is confused and possibly slightly frightened.

THE DAUGHTER: *(Into a phone)* Yes, we're open. Yes, this is the Owner speaking.

[3.3]

MARÍA wraps a strap around THE ACTRESS who is lying on the ground with the umbrella sticking out of her.

MARÍA: Don't act like you're afraid, you know it will be alright. I will cure you and you will cure me and we will cure them. *(MARÍA gets up and opens her umbrella. She flies and THE ACTRESS takes off with her, hanging down from underneath MARÍA)* And now the wounds will close, and you won't have to be afraid anymore. Everyone will remember you now. All the wounds will turn into scars and the scars into little stories that we tell before the children fall asleep, you and I. *They fly over the audience, accompanied by the appropriate music.*

A screen comes on behind the stage. It's the scene from Mary Poppins where Mary appears for the first time. MARÍA's face has been pasted onto Julie Andrews' face and THE ACTRESS is attached to Julie, growing out of her waist like a Siamese twin. The scene continues and slowly, THE ACTRESS opens her eyes, leans into MARÍA and smiles. The scene goes on.

Darkness.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson's award winning plays have been featured at Festival d'Avignon, La Mousson d'été and during Island, terre de théâtre at Théâtre 13 in Paris. In January 2020 his play *Helgi Comes Apart* was a part of the 2020 Nordic Spirit Festival in Chicago. In October the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw will perform a reading of Tyrfingur's *The Potato Eaters* which will also be a part of the final event of Fabulamundi in Rome. Toneelgroep Oostpool has bought the rights to that same play in The Netherlands. Tyrfingur's plays have been translated into Dutch, Italian, French, Polish, German and English.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson was born in 1987 and grew up in the small town of Kópavogur, Iceland where all his plays take place. He studied at the Iceland University of the Arts, Goldsmiths University of London and Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts.

Tyrfingur's first play *Grande* was his graduation piece from the Art Academy and earned him recognition in Reykjavík and a nomination to Gríman, the Icelandic Theatre Award. Two years later *Blue Eyes* premiered at the Reykjavík City Theatre where Tyrfingur was made resident playwright.

Tyrfingur has received seven Gríma nominations and won the award once and is now up for the Play of the Year for *Helgi Comes Apart*. In the fall of 2018 *The Potato Eaters* were nominated for the Cultural Awards (Menningarverðlaun DV). He has taught at both The Iceland Academy of the Arts and the University of Iceland.

Blue Eyes (Bleus) was given a staged reading at the Avignon festival in July 2018 during a forum dedicated to contemporary writings. *Bleus* was also performed at La Mousson d'été in France in August 2019.

The Potato Eaters received five star reviews, with critic Jakob S. Jónsson naming Tyrfingur as Iceland's preeminent playwright. *The Potato Eaters* were featured at Théâtre 13 in Paris during the festival on contemporary Icelandic playwriting called Island, terre de théâtre in April 2019. In September *The Potato Eaters* will be read at the final event of the Fabulamundi project. And in October 2020 the Drama Theatre of Warsaw (Teatr Dramatyczny) in Warsaw will perform a reading of *The Potato Eaters* as well.

His play *Helgi Comes Apart* premiered at The Reykjavík City theatre on the 17th of January 2020 to raving reviews: "Chekov is fine and Bulgakov is fine, but they do not raise the audience's blood pressure. Tyrfingur's work does." *Helgi Comes Apart* was featured at the 2020 Nordic Spirit Festival in Chicago in February.

Blue Eyes and *Helgi Comes Apart* were performed online by the ensemble of The Reykjavík City Theatre in April 2020.

Tyrfingur's next play *Seven Fairytales about Shame* will premiere on the big stage of The National Theatre of Iceland in April 2021.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson lives in Amsterdam.

www.tyrfingsson.is