

Marsin

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**a cabaret
at death's Door**



e.06 Foreword

Art is not just meant to teach, to preach, to twist the reach, to find, to yield, to gift, to kneel, to make you think or make you feel, art should also bring delight, make you laugh, feel warm and light, show the world that joy's the base, if you can smile and face its face. Smile at life, it smiles right back. You'll forget what means to lack. An idea that's well regarded, newly seen or re-restarted. You've got this chance, not lust or greed, not cunning plots or aching need. You can enjoy the art you see, the beauty, learning, mystery. You can take joy in a single leaf, clear or blurred beyond belief. Moment by moment, you just feel, and then get stripped of all that's real. Then spit evaporates from lips, and local minds fall in eclipse. Distance, the painter's artful space, the draftsman's line, a sculpted face, a fall, a granddad's odd disguise, a tangled world, a strange surprise. And then you see the legacy, a mythic feud in secrecy. Maybe. Someone. Maybe me. My husband? Yes. A mystery. Forgotten tales and those retold, mythologies both bought and sold. At one o'clock, the transit fades. At two, convictions lose their blades. And all the things you memorized, why didn't you get all that's prized? And two o'clock turns all to dust, you mix what's close with what you trust. Puffing up with petty pride, bloating with the feudal side. Paid sick leave's echoed beat, a hiccup with a purpose neat. Vomit and expectation rise. You change your roles and wear disguise. The words, you have them, know their might. Speech, it is your veil of right. Renewal, you await the shift. A funeral, sectarian gift. And helpful, ancient tendencies, and guilty crowds in quantities. Here they show up, there they cheat, here they plan a sly defeat. Moments, fleeting baited time. And drama, asking, "Who's the crime?" Explorers who don't know the task, and villains drowning in the flask. Colloidal meetings, scattered views, you've got a thing that hides the bruise. You've got a thing that clears the shade. And chase the thug till you're waylaid. And chase and catch, you're now the prey. It was what it was, they say. Then changed somehow, took another way. The change, it came, decided to stay. Traditions of achieving heights. Freedoms found through doubting rites. The urge to force results to show, before old ones were let go. Timely changes, subtle ties, prayers said as lazy hope just lies. Time always wants to change for best, unless evil turns it to a jest. And smiling for a silly cause, a face lit up, a nation's pause. Eyes aglow with sheer delight, that not all humans act polite. Unity and recognition, leaving things, and new admission. And falling, and returning fire, it once held weight, now we retire. Once was much, now folks condemn. Once was plenty, now in them, a church of many and of none, the sacrilegious will be done. And inspiration's silent nod, her gentle bend, her listening plod. So many small-town dramas fester, with fresh affairs and fines that pester. Tricks and traps and practiced wiles, I'm tired of those training trials. It was what it was, and then it flipped. It lasted, or it just equipped. Discover things, don't just dismiss. Smile, don't twist what joy is. Coconut ideas, alabaster groves, coconut republics and panicking droves. Shooting road signs, picking bones with stock completely overthrown. Moments sold and jobs once trusted, clay and markets worn and rusted. Grand ideals and forest trails, or maybe switched, the dream prevails. Whatever blends and starts to grow, will you understand its undertow? It might combine, it might collapse. You've got the goods, the tangled maps. The tales of struggle, boasts of might, the style's a relic, fit it tight. Of giving, yielding, and goodbyes, when things turn serious, spirit flies. But you can smile. You must. You can discover the world. From the skies. Begin there and meet again. Smile won't run, it's not a hen. Join the silence. Smiling reel.

Join the dream, a lazy zeal. It won't act on its own, it needs your spark. Stir it gently, wake its mark. Cool it softly, send it back, as a smile upon the track. Hand it, grant it. That's the seed. Everything changes. Splits indeed. All gets joined and comes undone. It breathes, and then the pipes are spun. You wanted plenty, and you were fed. You had it, played it, now you're in bed. You wanted to make, then make it so: that what you make has natural flow. A smiling tone. Spread and wide. Maybe not wanted, but undenied. A love for ease, for pleasant weather. Spirit, challenge, or full-tethered pleasure. See it, give back what you've been shown. Rejoice, for that's why you were grown.

RESOLUTION TO IMPROVE

The art of a smile
Is known to you well

The question:
How often does it swell?

The answer:
At times, just forced into place

Confession:
Awaiting a change through grace

a cabaret at death's Door

Cabaret, Is It Life? Is cabaret just life in play, or maybe war, a scene, a fray? A form, a storm we all go through, a joke on us, or just a view? Sometimes it strikes, sometimes it slips, a joke, a laugh on tightened lips. We pay in parts, we laugh in bits, bearded truths, unfinished skits. Why the mirror? What's the twist? Life's a frenzy, barely missed. Why the masks, the ask, the clue? A question waits for answers new. Riddles wet like cloths in rain, connections made in veiled refrain. It happens, then it loops again, a sailor's smile, a friendly strain. Such are needed on this stage, life's not solved with wild rampage. Madness fails to fill the glass. It's good to have a dog, a lass. And justice might just slip away, rebirth starts a brand-new day. Moments fade, but if it's trend, we joke, we mime, and still pretend. Cabarets and comic breath, then at the end, we sigh: "Alas." We hoped for bright and joyful tones, now speak in jargon, clutching phones. It should've hit, direct and plain, instead we crumbled under strain. Who took, who gave, who set the pace? And did it really seek our face? Sneaky plots, and clever schemes, weekday drinking, shattered dreams. Stories that could not be told, chances knocking, dark and bold. End credits roll, the stage is bare, behind the scenes for all to share. How many tales, how much applause? Options smeared like makeup flaws. Ties and tangled tales unfold, crooked plots and curses told. My grave awaits, my cherished time, harsh moments dulled by comic rhyme. Declensions, tales of wealth or dearth, all merge in one chaotic birth. Whether you want it or you don't, it all comes crashing, there's your front. Discussed at once, my beer's refilled, I talk, I groan, and time is stilled. I try again to make you see, my task, my vow, a plea from me. Who breathes this air, who shapes the tone, who lives, who strikes, who dies alone? They say hot sauce affects the nose, but I'm not spicy, I suppose. I'd rather hear sharp scythes that swing, I'd rather lose a single string. Losses, wins, and biting lines, pets and traps and warning signs. Beliefs, convictions, pulling hard, tugged by winds, our spirits jarred. They call you lion, strike your core. Surprises come, and so much more. A joke, a tale, a Christmas yarn, something you'll recall with charm. These moments, fears, and hopeful gleams, betrayals buried under dreams. So much begins at journey's end, and sunlight lets the wounds unbend. Who leads the way? Who slips and stumbles? Who shouts, and who forever mumbles? Someone is, someone is not, and still I feel, this moment's hot. Inspired, I recall my kin, my kids, my wife, the world I'm in. The family whole, the tale begun, our lives aligned beneath the sun. Life's a test, not just a quest. No easy fix, no perfect rest. One pill to change the state of soul, well, I was shocked, and paid the toll. One page of tears I used to crave, now I'm content with silence brave. Addictions soft, emotions raw, rebellious hens with feathered awe. So much cause, so many fights, coalitions born of rights. Many starts, and greetings new, who told me how to breathe, to chew? Who told me how to speak or die? So many fears still pass me by. The dog devours it all, no jest. He lies there full, his hunger blessed. Renewals come, with heads replaced, hopes reborn and truths retraced. Who's the first of future kind, who will not leave my dreams behind? The twist is there, in breathless men, please let it not be us again. Not those moths in midnight air, someday I'll find a bride to share. That dearest hope, that dream embraced, the greatest love by chance encased. Faith, a loss already scored. Joy, a laugh forever stored. A different word, a sacred pyre, hope, a head, and nose to fire. These close-ups, pokes, and wide-eyed stares, morals huge, illusion flares. And still they build, and

still they climb, toward brighter days, toward warmer rhyme. So many moments laced in jest, life spun from paper, nothing less. From wicker baskets, artful bits, no scissors cut these comic skits. All measured well, then tossed again, a sale on feelings made in vain. I chose the full-priced route, no deals, I skipped promotions, went by feels. These flashes, thoughts, and dreams unspent, will I one day earn my rent? And states revealed, emotions true, my visions sparkle, bright and new. It's like a dream you're trying to keep, a delay, a pause, a thoughtful leap. Like having style, the proper move, to please the crowd, then say adieu. Someone tempts me now and then, someone showers me with zen. Who and why, and what's the reason? You count the hours, mark the season. Harshes truths and truthed delays, drifting drones and awkward plays. Given gladly, smartly posed, lightly dressed, but overdosed. Was it meant to even out? It came to pass, without a doubt. Cabaret dreams fill the sky, I float through life and summer's cry. All things collide and call for aid, a union formed in comic shade. All things at once fall in love with night, so change your stance, or lose the light. Done and done, we tell our stories, "No more cake, I've had my glories." There are moments, compositions, do you fake, or chase ambitions? Do you leave, or linger close? Which truth is your faithful spouse? And those states of smiling fear, ancient tombs we once held dear. Moments strong and far too loud, thousands wilted in the crowd. My mimosa, my obscura, stormy wagons, chaos' aura. All at once inside this show, you'll know me anywhere I go. Cabaret will help, will give, will answer, show, and help you live. Among the crowd, it finds its role. Does it sit straight? That's its goal. The jester's task, the mask you wear, the smile you show, the weight you bear. Who gave what to whom and why? Right at home or rolling eyes. Twisted words or truths declared, if you care, then be prepared. The rubbing, patching, tailored cries, so many bones, so many tries. Minds and bodies, wanderers blind, weaving threads of every kind. All is set and all renews, old replays and fresh reviews. You've got these moments, baited lines, hand-me-downs and silent signs. Will you feel life's sudden brush? Will you tell it, "You're my crush"? Life's addictive, stains your veins. With life you sense what joy remains. These tiny moments, slanted lures, diagonals with unclear cures. Everything, a proper mark. Everything, a brother's spark. The cuts, the deeds, the self revealed, mountains, sawdust, furry field. Clouds and claws, the proper dose, a gram of fact, and then, who knows? New themes, old threads to tie, deadlines stretch across the sky. Straight and crooked, all is seen, my surprises, bittersweet sheen. And cha-cha dances through the plot, you sink in trouble, like it or not. Premonition, anger's tide, pressure building, nowhere to hide. How much cabaret do we need to breathe, to laugh, to plant the seed? It's all at once, a tangled stew, your question lingers in the queue. So many threads, so many scenes, alliances and clashing memes. Extraditions, echoed cops, some folks never know when to stop. They feast on fiction every day, for breakfast, lunch, and on their way. Will it end or loop again? They skip the signs, those funny men. So much changed within our span, it's time again for one more plan. This time closer to death's door, this time someone drills your core. Not just you, a different trace, adorned, revealed, a human face. The answers come, the posture straight, who dares to nap or tempt their fate? You hold, you shift, your face you raise, emotions sharp in crafted plays. Stories growing, fashion schemes, trends injected into dreams. Mistakes in masses overflow, carols ring, and grades still glow. The weight refused to play along, though classroom cheer would still belong. You trade the singular for rule, transform, evacuate the school. No one asks, but you reply, faster now, the truth won't lie. Strength increases, charm's exposed, power sprints, and fear's deposed. So

many starts, so much to say, empty talk and roleplay day. For one or another, maybe me, I've got some soul for cabaret's plea. Straight from life, from guts and fire, these cabarets lift, then inspire. All the options, you just smile, it doesn't hurt, not even a while. Some conditions better, worse, you want it all, you lift the curse. You desire, then dive below, into the dreamstream's undertow. Shores are distant, guilt is loud, cabarets shout, "Join the crowd!" They shout, "It's fun, we've stars onstage, a show that sweeps, a light rampage!" Join us now, before it clears, laugh, rejoice, forget your fears. Joy's no valley filled with dread, joy lights up the soul you've bred. And the Word that stirs your breath, that's the point, the life and death. The good, the bad, the truth aglow, heroic chances, dreams in flow. Marked and daring, sweet and raw, cabarets begin... and thus, they must withdraw.

---1---

IN THE BASEMENT

Me: How long do you plan to keep me down here?

You: Until the world gets a better atmosphere.

Me: But the weather is utterly vile.

You: Then the world will fall asleep before you by a mile.

Me: Have mercy. I barely eat.

You: But you sure know how a shadow feels on its feet.

Me: Have mercy. Everything aches.

You: And I've got fights with my wife, for heaven's sakes.

Me: Who cares about your sulking spouse?

You: Who cares about a fool trapped in a house? That's like blaming a virgin for being polite.

Me: I'd rather be a virgin outright.

You: Then you should've done nothing your whole life.

Me: It's cold in here, I'll catch the flu.

You: Dust is everywhere, not just with you.

Me: What dust? What the hell are you saying?

You: That you're about to drop where you're laying.

Me: But I don't want to die in this hole. You'll go to prison, digging coal.

You: I like stones.

Me: In a quarry, that's where you'll stay. You'll admit I never dodged the heavy clay.

You: Admit it or not, this land's my shrine.

Me: And what's this basement bring to the line?

You: That here you feel divine.

Me: Not everyone's trapped in a cellar, you know.

You: But those who are hold truth below. They build the space. They make it hush. They bury folks in quiet slush.

Me: But I scream at the top of my breath.

You: I won't beat you, just once with a shovel to death.

Me: What's the moral, then, I pray?

You: That everyone gets buried with a spade one day.
 Me: I'll give you all I own, I'll serve. A stand, a stall, whatever you deserve.
 You: You won't con me with your cheap bazaar. I want the scent of blood. That's who you are.
 Me: Let's make a deal, I'll sit here still. I won't complain, against my will. I'll stay polite, no tricks, no spat. Just don't swing that shovel like a maniac.
 You: Then I'll just slice off your fingers, say three. Just to mark the days for me.
 Me: I know the days, it's the third, no lie. The fifth will slip right after by.
 You: Fine, but listen now, you're locked, you're mine. But how long must I feed your spine? I want to bathe in blood, divine.
 Me: Then watch this.
 You: What's going on? The room just lit like dawn.
 Me: It's me. My prayers broke through your chain. My head, my hand, behold, an angel I became.
 You: A real angel? F*** me, no way. Not till I see a print to display. I rub my eyes, I blink, I'm shook. A real damn angel, in the flesh, by the book.
 Me: I spread my wings, I rise and fly.
 You: You mess with angel eyes, you fry. Or wait, hold on, just one more tap, I'll whack you with the spade, a friendly slap.
 Me: You can't hurt me now, mid-flight. Not on the fence, nor in your spite. With winds of freedom in full glow, born of love, in dreams I go.
 You: One throw of the spade, that's the cue. Let's see what evil can really do.
 Me: Stay here in your basement, friend. I'm free now, no need to stain another end.
 You: Such waste... that fresh, sweet blood... This cellar is my sacred flood.
 Me: Maybe it was. Maybe it's gone. Only evil lingers on. You can't hurt me anymore, no game. I've caught the last remaining flame.
 You: You talk, but now you've fled. Just like a shovel blow, poof, you're dead.
 Me: No more lime. In Heaven's grove, there's quiet like a poet's trove.
 You: I'd rather chop off heads all day than live in some paradise cliché. My basement, my rules, my fun. And angels? Please, I'm done. They wander, whine, they get in my way. Whether it's a hand, a heel, or head, I say: protest comes from every toe. And I just love pure, naked woe.

---2---

IN THE JUNGLE

Me: I think we're lost, no doubt.
 You: Nah, we got our drinks in yesterday, no drought.
 Me: A liter per head.
 You: So two for the both of us, as we said.
 Me: But I'm not talking about last night's pour. Today's not working for me anymore.
 You: I don't stress when it's not my shift.
 Me: We're walking in circles, nothing gives us a lift.
 You: What, you want goats tied up at every turn?
 Me: No, but a path would ease the burn.

You: Oh look, a hollow tree! A bird must live there happily.
Me: I don't want birds, I want civilization.
You: But you said you craved extreme vacation.
Me: Not this extreme! No betrayal, no praise.
You: It's green, and a snake hisses through the haze.
Me: You only see that in city grime. This? I don't believe half the time.
You: I'm just being sarcastic, come on.
Me: These stages of rebirth drag on.
You: But what's the gain in walking side by side?
Me: Doesn't matter. A house, a hotel, somewhere to hide.
You: More likely a morgue and some corpse chat.
Me: We'll be fine, trust me on that. I've been trained, I'm prepared to fight whatever attack comes anywhere.
You: I don't care. It is what it is. Life's a test, a pop quiz.
Me: What are you rambling now? You've lost your mind. And why are you sitting? That's so unkind. We have to keep going, find a hut, a hole,
Anywhere! We've been sweating like mules on a stroll.
You: I've had enough. If someone told me this tale, I'd scoff.
Me: And I'd confess, I should've stayed home and laid off.
No point in leaving. What can I say?
You: Maybe you're right. TV had nothing to play. And the bottles, yeah, they were dry.
Me: Because jungle stores don't just fall from the sky. I pity your head, poor little nut.
You: Worry for yours. Mine's shut.
Me: I'm just wondering, what will we do without the button?
You: What button? Are you nuts or something sudden?
Me: The one you're sitting on now like a king.
You: Oh damn, you're right! Why didn't you say a thing?
Me: Because the button holds a spell, shows us the way home, the map, the shell.
You: Then wait, let's try. Oh magic button, point us to the noble sky!
Me: It won't speak, it's mute, a quiet tool. Rub it and look, your vision's the rule.
You: I look and see everything red!
Me: That's it! It works! Enough has been said. Now just follow the hue where it leads.
You: But that makes no sense, it feeds... my doubts. We're in the same damn place!
Everything's the same, just red in our face.
Me: That's the point! A one-hit fix, a crimson bomb for all your tricks.
You: You're babbling. Sounds like some holiday glitch.
Me: At least my head's smiling. The picture, the pitch, vision, sound, perhaps some grace,
You: You blew it with the button, it's a useless case.
Me: Lift it high, the button and you. Tell me something I never knew.
You: You're a fool, an old buffoon. That's not how the world's in tune.
Me: I see everything red and stay right here. I'm not mocking, I'm sincere. Nowhere else could beat this glow. Everything's the same, all red, you know? So why bark at fate, or shout at a pup? Why not accept and give it up? I've accepted. I've stayed true. Jungle or not, I've made it through.

---3---
AT THE DUMP

Me: I feel like a king in disguise.

You: That's 'cause you're not alone, that's wise.

Me: Maybe. It's easier to scavenge when nothing's tight.

You: We're digging through trash. Doesn't that feel right?

Me: There are worse gigs than this exploration. Like being a politician at a premiere presentation.

You: True, that guy can't even look himself in the eyes.

Me: That's the era we live in, old stew and election lies.

You: Stew? The worst one's brand new, I'd say.

Me: Leave it for a month, even donkeys walk away.

You: Look! A shiny alarm clock, what a catch!

Me: I'll make sure it rings, though we've got no shift to match.

You: But I've got a clock, so I'm not faking. I'm not broke, no need for aching. It's like scratching a spot, I always can.

Me: But you won't scratch out a job, my man.

You: The Pope doesn't work either, it's said.

Me: But you're not the Pope, you're miles from that thread. And all this trash, you've got it all, but only once it's dead.

You: Doesn't bother me. I feel just fine. These little moments of ours, they shine.

Me: Oh, come on. Digging is digging. Talking is talking. I'm not always up for either stalking.

You: But you dig like a pro, without even trying. You find the best stuff while barely prying. It's artless, effortless, and true. Just watching you makes me want to do it too.

Me: Don't flatter me. It's just collecting, that's all. Civilization rose on such a call.

You: So we're the founders, the primal clan. Lords of the dump, with a kingly plan.

Me: More like the opposite, a chronic return.

You: I don't care, as long as there's food to burn.

Me: Here, spring rolls in a box, just barely past due.

You: No need to visit Vietnam for a tasty view.

Me: The war's long over, don't you know?

You: Maybe, but stray bullets still might go.

Me: After all these years?

You: You never know. I'd rather stay here where the garbage flows.

Me: True that. I've grown attached. There's charm in this waste, perfectly matched.

You: What else are you fond of, besides this heap?

Me: Of luxury, too, I'm not that cheap. Yesterday I found someone's ZUS file, full of fees. Folks pay thousands. I give back nothing, with ease.

You: A free spirit. That I respect. No strings attached, just self-direct.

Someone: Hey you two, get out of here! Private property! No rummaging near! Bums like bums, all the same!

Me: Hey, easy now, no need for blame. Our fate's not light. A little grace would be more right.

Someone: You're gone. Vanished. I better not see you again. This is my zone. My post. My pen. I'm the guard, not some coward. So beat it! I'm sick of being overpowered.

You: I've had enough of this disgrace, this constant offense to my face. We're gentlemen, with proper style. Let's solve this with class for a while.

Someone: What, are you drunk on antifreeze? Talking nonsense with drunken ease? Take your bodies, make a dash, out! And scatter in a bash.

Me: That's no way to treat us, Sir. Coalition! Praise the deer! We'll file a complaint, and leave this hole. But mark my word, we came from a noble role. From salons and sparkling space, we were known in every place. And here? A sewer, disgraceful tone. I won't stand this. I'm proud of my suburban throne.

---4---

IN THE FITTING ROOM

She: How does this dress look on me now?

Me: Perfectly. You're stunning, and how!

She: But I wasn't asking about my face.

Me: The dress, too, has remarkable grace.

She: I think it makes me look wide. What do you say?

Me: Only if you dream it that way.

She: And green doesn't suit me, I swear.

Me: But it matches the shade of your stare.

She: Maybe... but I'm really not sure.

Me: I need some air, give me oxygen pure!

She: Don't be a clown, just advise me right. I'll try another. Don't block my sight.

Me: I'd never interfere, I'm here to assist.

She: Then don't act like last night didn't exist.

Me: Don't even remind me. You got so mad.

She: I won't accept a moment that makes me feel bad.

Me: This one's lovely.

She: I didn't ask.

Me: But it's charming

She: I stood up straight for the task!

Me: I said it looks good, what's wrong with that line?

She: You're mocking again. That tone is mine.

Me: I mean it. The dress is fine.

She: I can hear my friend's judgment in her whine.

Me: So we're taking it, and heading out?

She: Not without paying, what's that about?

Me: I assumed so! That's what we do.

She: Unless we change our minds before we're through.

Me: What? Why would we?

She: Because it's not like there's one true dress. There might be another. Or less distress.

Me: But we agreed, it fits, it's nice.

She: Something's twisting in my stomach, like mice. Must be nerves, or emotion, some clash.

Me: You just have too many choices in a flash.

She: But it's a bit pricey, too.

Me: I'll cover the rest, just let's go, you'll be first through my view.

She: What "view"? You're lounging and rambling instead. I've got dilemmas like those noblemen once had.

Me: It's settled, we're buying. That's what we said.

She: I'm not so sure. Maybe another shop instead. Maybe I'll sleep on it. See how it feels.

Me: We'll come back tomorrow, what lovely birthday ideals.

She: It's not my birthday! That's not my kin.

Me: But my time's a gift, wrapped within. For this and that, with photos galore. Of aching feet and every store.

She: One must look good, it's the way to survive.

Me: But must one trade their soul just to thrive? Is that the purpose, the ultimate pledge? You'll find your meaning in a glossy mag's edge?

She: I'll just think it over. Let's rest and roam. We'll return tomorrow, or find another home. You can't age in just one place.

Me: I already have. In this dressing-race. Fashion. Moments. Talking threads. For her, it's gowns. For me, just breads.

She: We'll get you something too, how about a scarf? Let's see if it suits, have a laugh.

Me: Never again. It's a curse. The female mind, a divine reverse. Now I must stand. Can't escape this test. Duty's chain, and fear of protest.

---5---

IN THE CAR

She: Why are you driving so slow? We're in a rush, you know. You won't hit anyone at this pace.

Me: I'm not slow, the traffic holds this place.

She: Stop making excuses, just pass that guy. Come on, faster! Or it's goodbye.

Me: Alright, alright, I'm doing what you say.

She: I saw that grimace, don't act that way. I know those faces, I've seen your kind.

Me: Relax, I'm doing what you've outlined.

She: But now you're going over the line! You know it, slow down, before you break my spine. You're crucifying me with that pedal, full blast.

Me: I don't know anymore, too slow, too fast?

She: Drive normal. Don't run folks down. But quick enough, or mom will frown. She's waiting with lunch, the cake's in the heat. I can smell it from here, it's cinnamon sweet!

Me: I'm driving like I always do. Still something's wrong, always with you.

She: You're like a moose lost in the wild. No care for others, completely riled. This whole ride's a stressful joke.

Me: Are you afraid of cars?

She: Yes, when it's you behind the spokes.

Me: And I bet my talk disturbs you, too.

She: Yes, your stubborn words just stew.

Me: I listen and do what you ask, and look! There's a hedgehog ahead, little fellow took the path.

She: Don't use the hedgehog as your lame excuse. Always with these lines, so loose.

Me: I drive how you want, fast, slow, whatever works in this traffic flow.

She: Look, the cops! Say goodbye to your cash. They'll stop you now, you speedy flash.

Police Officer: Good afternoon, sir, where are you off to so fast?

Me: Officer, everything itches, I need relief at last.

Police Officer: And that's why you're rushing, because of a rash?

Me: We'll see what happens. I've got time to crash.

She: He's an idiot, I told him, slow down, I tried. But I missed the signs flying by on the side.

Police Officer: So you're the one pushing the gas? Do you take the wheel and make it pass?

She: Don't get silly, I'm not the type. Men like you, all bark and hype. This world's gone mad, I'm done with your fines. Too fast, too slow, it's always decline. I'm off to my mom's, I'll hitch a ride. With a woman, short and thin, with pride. With pleasure, with joy, I'm out of this trap. Where's a woman like me? Not in your map.

Police Officer: Poor guy... I pity you, my friend. Go ahead and drive, may your anger end.

Me: What can I do? That's fate's design. Even my hair knows that line.

Police Officer: That's why you're bald, it's all clear. You should've listened, not chased like a dog in fear.

Me: They're all the same, it wouldn't change a thing. Just nod and smile, that's how to win.

Police Officer: That's not what freedom is for, or what this world's made to be. Unless you enjoy being someone's casualty.

---6---

AT THE GAS STATION

Attendant: Filling it up today?

Me: You think I want to go broke, no way.

Attendant: So, what'll it be for you, sir?

Me: I'd rather you just call me "cur."

Attendant: Some petrol, how much should I pour?

Me: You've got to stand there. That's what you're for.

Attendant: That's my job, that's what I do.

Me: And my dog in the car, he's priority too.

Attendant: For dogs we've got free water on site.

Me: Is it fresh? Is it pure? Is it bottled right?

Attendant: It's clean, no gunk, no grime, no fuss. No one's ever made a stink with us.

Me: But the dog drinks free, and I pay the fee.

Attendant: That's humanity's curse, you see, money vanishes constantly, and we swap it like it's meant to be.

Me: Fine then. Fill up a hundred's worth. No more. Money doesn't grow from dirt.

Attendant: Just a moment, sir, you can wait. Or come inside, don't hesitate. We've got coffee, cakes, a cozy shelf. These little things, they're good for self.

Me: I know your tricks, your salesy charm. You'll bleed me dry with gentle harm. And I'll be left with rustling coins, dancing hollow through my loins. Emptiness in wallet and heart, and still your checkout lines won't part.

Attendant: I'm only suggesting. You choose your path.

Me: All this talk has me dry in the mouth. Can I drink the dog's water, please? The free one, your station tease.

Attendant: Hmm, I'm not sure, it breaks the rules, perhaps. Never seen someone try that lapse. What if it's dirty? What if there's rot? Then comes the shouting, the angry plot.

Me: So it's safe for a dog, but not for me? That logic fails spectacularly.

Attendant: Maybe, I guess. I've never tried. I tend to keep my thirst inside.

Me: Then how about this, you test it now. Take a sip and show me how. If it's good, I'll let the dog sip too. If it cools, then I'll drink it too.

Attendant: That's like asking Russia when it will arm.

Me: I don't follow. You're losing charm. I'm thirsty, not here for political wit. Just give me water. A bit.

Attendant: I've got a bottle, clean and fine. It's better than mutt water, don't decline.

Me: Bring it then. The dog can drink free. I'll take the pet version, it's good enough for me. If I lean on something, let it not be rotten tree.

Attendant: As you wish. But pay for the gas, at least.

Me: Sure, I'm on it. Though I'm not smiling in the least.

Attendant: Here's the bottle. And there's the dog's bowl.

Me: I'm torn inside, but I won't stall. If the dog gets sick, it's off to the vet, another hundred, another debt. But if I fall? I'll suffer, recover, it'll pass like a grimace no one bothered to cover. It'll end like we ended. Quietly.

Attendant: Do what you want. That's your key.

Me: I want to, but I won't swap places. The dog and man wear different faces. One wags a tail, one smiles in line. Who's more important, who's doing fine? Who stands here honest, who hides his fear? Who deserves to stay, who's not so clear? So many flaws, so many flaws unfixed. The soul says, "Forget what memory mixed." The soul says, "Remember what matters most, not reckless steps or egotist boasts." Silly, bitter, doubtful tones, and you say, "I love all living bones."

---7---

AT THE TRAIN STATION

Me: Good evening, I'd like a ticket to Otwock, please.

Her: But it's late, near midnight's freeze.

Me: The train's due in an hour, I read.

Her: "Due", but where's a train at this time instead? They're always delayed, or skip their trip. Got better things to do, they slip. Or don't show up at all, and frankly, they're right.

Me: What do you mean, they don't arrive? You're selling a ticket, that's no jive.

Her: I sell, I warn, so you can't say I lied. Don't blame me when knowledge was supplied. It may come. Or not. Like a mountain steep. Come sit beside me, and try not to sleep.

Me: Are we neighbors, did I miss that clue?

Her: We will be. Once we ride that train through. We can sit close, I'll be brave, it's true.

Me: But you just said it might not come.

Her: I said it's uncertain, might be fun. But I bought myself a ticket just in case. And here's yours too. I printed it with grace. We'll pay and wait and see what's near, maybe turn back, or suffer here. And haven't you noticed the road is rough? Train rides feel softer, just enough. So maybe it's better if it doesn't appear.

Me: Maybe. Depends on the weather, I fear.

Her: Don't bring up the weather, don't play that game. I'm tired of men who talk so lame. Let's sit. Let's chat. Perhaps even wed.

Me: You're thirty years older, it must be said.

Her: Maybe, but sprightlier in stride and thread.

Me: Give me a break. We'll wait, just sit. But no accidental touches or flirty wit.

Her: I'll behave, I swear, but imagine the scene: a private train, completely clean!

Me: I don't know, maybe it's Easter, maybe fate.

Her: Wait here an hour, I'll nap, it's late. Wake me if it comes, I'll open an eye. Otherwise I'll sleep in this railbird sky.

Me: What jungle are we in, what tale? Your sentences crumble, they barely sail.

Her: I'm off to sleep. We'll talk again... after our wedding, when you say "amen."

Me (thinking): Another hour, and then one more. If only she were a bit less of a chore. If only she came with some safety wrap. So I wouldn't provoke existence's trap. I wait. One hour... then two, and there! The train! I jump in without a care. I let her sleep, no need for alerts. I'll brave this journey alone, no flirts.

Suddenly she leaps and lands on the track.

Her: My darling, you're back on track! This is fate, a sign divine, train's here, and so is mine! First one all week, it's our time, my dear! Don't bathe in fire, stand firm, stay near. Be here for others, don't let this slip. Where else can I find a man with grip?

Me: I changed my mind, I turned around. Too much madness, too much sound. Too many thrills, too many sighs, too many rules and social ties. Better the bus, with strangers near, than rubbing knees under tables, I fear. A handshake's fine, a nod, a grin. I'm done with women... unless they make breakfast at 7 a.m.

---8---

AT THE AIRPORT

Me: Good morning.

Staff Lady: Good morning.

Me: When does the flight to Prague depart?

Staff Lady: On time, sir, this matter's close to heart.

Me: Lovely, splendid, I'll line up and think, what's the matter that makes this tick?

Staff Lady: But wait a moment, hold on tight. Something here just isn't right.

Me: What's wrong now?

Staff Lady: Logic's gone, that's what's wrong. Your ticket's expired, it's been too long.

Me: Expired? But I bought it just last week.

Staff Lady: Did you check both sides, every date and phrase it speaks?

Me: What are you saying? Is someone losing reason?

Staff Lady: The flight was yesterday, not today. That's the confusion.

Me: Impossible! It's the ticket that's flawed! The printer messed up, don't you find that odd?

Staff Lady: I don't know, and never befriended the machine. It does its thing, it keeps things clean. But the date's wrong, facts won't bend. No face tricks will help in the end. You won't be flying, I hate to say. But I must, for me to enjoy my day.

Me: Fine then, let's trade. You take my ticket, and give me one up to date.

Staff Lady: I'll be honest. That's not our fate.

Me: Then how about this, I've got granddad's moonshine in my bag. He's been gone a while, but that bottle won't lag. A little sip for a little seat, how does that sound?

Staff Lady: You don't mop a wet floor with a rag that's just been drowned.

Me: You're talking nonsense. I don't understand. I have to fly, I can't just flap and land.

Staff Lady: You're welcome to fly alone, sir, but not today. Not with that ticket, not in this way. All flights are booked, seats tight as sin. Every moment and place, already checked in.

Me: There must be a trick, a hack, a gap. Extra seats always pop in the map. For emergencies, the rare, the extreme, and I'm here! That's me! The rarest dream. Help me, lady, I'll thank you well. In a way so rare, it'll make your heart swell.

Staff Lady: I'm sorry, truly, I can't assist. Not today. You're not on the list.

Me: I'll give you my wallet. Everything I've got.

Staff Lady: I make good money, I don't need that plot. And sweetheart, that's a no from me.

Me: "Sweetheart?" Ah, now I see! We're not so young, but we still have flair. We could help each other, right then and there! You should've said from the start, not wasted air.

Staff Lady: I misspoke, I'm sorry, I meant no tease. I'm a helpful person, I aim to please.

Me: Then help me, let me on the plane.

Staff Lady: Please stop now. Don't cause more strain. It's not my fault the cat didn't check in, at the proper time, yesterday's din.

Me: I don't know how this happened, why things changed. That printer's going down, it'll be rearranged!

Staff Lady: Alright, I'll put you on the standby sheet. If someone's a no-show, you may get a seat. But you'll have to pay for a brand-new fare.

Me: I was kidding, I've got no cash to spare.

Staff Lady: Then this is a tale of chances missed.

Me: We can strike a deal, a purr, a twist.

Staff Lady: Sorry. I loathe cats. All animals, really. I was just mocking, if I'm speaking freely.

Me: How can you hate a simple kitten?

Staff Lady: It rubs your leg, but never listens. It ruins curtains, wrecks your space, acts all sweet with a villain's face. Thank you, goodbye, this has to end. I leave you now, with no pretend.

---9---
AT SCHOOL

Me: Hey, you got the Polish homework done?

You: What kind of hen stays silent, son?

Me: What about math? You did that too?

You: Think for a sec, you already knew.

Me: Then hand me your notebook, break's almost through.

You: Not so fast, I don't owe that to you.

Me: Don't talk nonsense. Just let me copy.

You: Should've done it yourself. No need to be sloppy.

Me: I've got a sandwich, ham and mayo.

You: That's a hole I'll never burrow.

Me: Don't be cruel, time is tight. Help me out so today feels right.

You: What joy is there in copying, bro? And your take on Polish? It's bound to show. It was a written task, teacher's no fool. She'll nail us both and lay down the rule.

Me: Better copied than blank, I say. I'll tweak a word, I'll change the way. No one will notice, nice and neat. Hands on deck, judge the cheat.

You: No way. Not today. No copying, that's all I'll say.

Me: Sounds like you've joined the moral parade. You're not a saint, no accolades. But fine, I won't beg, won't plead, I'll just knock you in the head at speed. Right in that skull I don't respect.

You: Don't threaten me, I'll get the teacher direct. Or call in some older friends, big and tough. You don't solve this with fists or bluff.

Me: Just shut it and give me the page.

You: I'll let you hold one, then go climb a stage.

Me: I need to copy it all, no less. Time is ticking, I'm under stress.

You: Not my problem, you scheming brat.

Me: More like a coder, imagine that. I program my way through life, no shame. Like a king untrained, still playing the game.

You: Fine, take it. But here's the deal: today's tasks are yours to feel. And tomorrow, we swap. But make it nice, change it up, don't just copy it twice.

Me: No chance. If I do it, I keep it tight. And if you take mine, I'll report the bite. I'm honorable, pure, I hate all cheats. You'd copy it raw, then blame my defeats. I'm a straight-A kid, year after year. And what are you? A laughing sphere. I've got ribbons on every report. Hey! Don't snatch my notebook, give it some thought! I'm not done! This noise, this hall, can't concentrate at all!

You: With that attitude, you should tuck your head away.

Me: Why hide it? What would that convey?

You: With or without it, it won't really serve. At least without it, you'll remember life's curve: that work's the rule, not endless cheer. You want to succeed? Start shifting gear.

---10---
ON THE DEATHBED

Me: Who are you?

Death: Your final test, unpleasant and true.

Me: But how come?

Death: You'll find out what walks with me, chum.

Me: Honestly, I'm not that intrigued.

Death: You seem stressed, a little fatigued. Same as always.

Me: No, just on special days. When a plan gets exposed and someone claps in cruel ways.

Death: Clapping is usually quite a delight.

Me: Not when it's spiteful. Then it's a petty fight.

Death: I don't make distinctions, I don't care.

Me: Well, I find this visit unfair. Like barging in uninvited, no call, dragging mud through the hall.

Death: So I'm not welcome, that's what you claim. Familiar story, always the same.

Me: I'm not judging you, just holding my stance.

Death: That's the idea, you dance your dance, I'll do mine. No interference, we'll be fine.

Me: But you came here to take me away. To interrupt. To end my day. And you say that's not causing dismay?

Death: Death's not harmful, it frees the soul. It's also a bit sentimental on the whole.

Me: Don't try to charm me, I know your game. You're on my blacklist, get lost in shame.

Death: You won't scare me with threats, my dear. I'm Death itself, let's make that clear. You can't kill what's already gone. You can't call me back, I'm not flesh and bone. A spirit, you see, of a higher class. Orders from beyond, I don't need a pass. The moment is here, it ticks, it burns. Truth stands alone as the world turns.

Me: Maybe I'll pay you off, I've got some cash. Or take my wife, she's a well-fed stash. Big, seasoned, great at breakfast too. She'd be perfect for the likes of you.

Death: Tempting... but no. I'll ponder her fate tomorrow, though. Not today. Today, it's you. You're the one I came to pursue.

Me: I'm not going anywhere, I'm staying put. Your spirit realm's not in my route. All those heavens, all that light, it's overrated. I'm not that type. I'm not hungry, nor seeking peace. Earth suits me fine, let my life not cease.

Death: This isn't a choice, or some disguise. It's duty. Bond. With rules that rise. With pressure and order and shifting tone, death steps out hungry, but never alone. And don't mention your wife again, she's no dish. What I take is the soul's last wish. This is transfer, not a feast. I like my job, to say the least.

Me: But I don't want to leave. I don't want the end.

Death: So would you prefer a warrant, my friend? Come now. In silence. The show is near done.

Me: I'm running! No goodbyes. I'm laughing! Your wishes? None.

Death: I won't chase you, it's not my way. You won't escape, no matter what you say.

Me: I've already left, long ago. You're chasing my shadow, don't you know?

Death: What do you mean you're gone? What kind of trick?

Me: I'm nothing now, that's my new shtick.

Death: I'll take anyone, I don't mind. If there's a body, life is confined.

Me: But I don't identify with mine.

Death: What a scoundrel. And this one thinks he's fine. I'll take what I must, I'm done with the talk. You're dead and ready, now watch me walk. Another philosopher, how quaint. So many of you, it's a complaint. Should've drunk yourselves silly long ago. But fine. Blame cholesterol for this death blow. So be it, next in line. Let's go. The show must go on, with its usual flow.

---11---

AT THE FOUNTAIN

Me: Isn't it nice, on a Sunday, to stroll by the fountain?

Friend: Like remote work from a digital mountain.

Me: The kids are smiling, I'm feeling fine, only can't find that one soul mate of mine.

Friend: But you had one. She was by your side.

Me: But full of discomfort, too much to abide. That one doesn't count, not in my tale. I mean spiritual, not a reproductive female.

Friend: My wife doesn't bother, sometimes even lends a hand. Especially when it's cold in this frosty land.

Me: I've stopped caring for flings and schemes. Even spare change, doesn't shake my dreams. I'm not from the type who counts each coin.

Friend: More like the kind who deserves a statue in bronze or stone.

Me: Two mighty powers: rest and joy.

Friend: Then let's rest, not let bitterness destroy.

Me: As long as it's not political, you see. I'd rather stick to the canonical, honestly.

Friend: All rest is really the same. Politics or not, you knock on peace's frame. Seeking calm, not endless complain. Those who moan can't find relief. Those who start too much dissolve in grief.

Friend: Maybe you're right, I'll give you that. But I don't know where this scar came at.

Me: Surely not from resting the soul. Sunday's for letting such wounds lose control.

Friend: But it's etched in me, won't fade, won't run. It was left there. It's done.

Me: You can let go, release the ache. With hope and a thief's clean break. With alliance and the falling of pride. Let it all drop, just sit and abide. Live, and you'll find you're on the right side.

Friend: But I do live, I keep repeating. Sometimes I even visit doctors for inner healing.

Me: And when was your last check?

Friend: Haven't gone yet. I'm still on deck. Waiting in queues that rob me of joy.

Me: Because they're long?

Friend: And winding like toys. Endless troubles shared between boys.

Me: Problems or queues?

Friend: This world's immense. Problems build it, but not one makes any sense.

Me: And that's good, let it stay. But while you wait, choose a better way. Find a soul doctor, he'll help you cope. He'll teach you not to stand in the cold without hope. Just show up and

be. Don't hide from the light. Live with yourself, make your peace right. Enjoy. Rest. Don't just call yourself names

Friend: Or others.

Me: The innocent flames.

Friend: Sounds nice, but how do I begin?

Me: First, slay the killer of truth within.

Friend: You mean...? How? What move to take?

Me: Do your own thing, and let truth awake.

Friend: Which truth?

Me: That this fountain stands here for us two. That it exists so we may renew. That we become it, that's what is true.

Friend: That sounds like pure babble to me.

Me: Try it, and you'll count truths by the three.

Friend: I'm not judging, but this talk's getting weak.

Me: Because you haven't tried it. You'll admit it next week. Once the laughter stops and you become life. When you leave behind worries and cut all that strife. When your soul is fed and moves through the heart. Creating, not forced to make art. Multiplies, not adds to the mess. So go, feel the fountain, no need to impress. Feel that you're growing more aware and precise. Use this time, don't waste your device. Be yourself, not just prey for pity. Be whole. Be still. Be pretty.

---12---

FISHING TRIP

Second Guy: Why aren't they biting?

Me: Maybe they fear their own inviting.

Second Guy: Fear what, exactly?

Me: That the bottom's too deep, impacting.

Second Guy: Sounds a little far-fetched, if you ask me.

Me: Fish can sense what your thoughts might be. That you're hunting. Waiting in disguise.

Second Guy: Huh. That really dims my skies. If they know, they won't go for the bait.

Me: Not always true, some still take the plate.

Second Guy: They bite?

Me: But only one at a time.

Second Guy: They trudge.

Me: That's just the rhyme.

Second Guy: They scratch.

Me: And that's the waiting game.

Second Guy: Think fish have a sense of humor or shame?

Me: They don't repeat patterns, that much is clear.

Second Guy: So that was a joke?

Me: Deserved a cheer. Fish and folks, same old story. They were, they are, no need for glory. Let's cool the water, make it just right. Too hot, and fish vanish out of sight. Like us in too much sunlight.

Second Guy: Sounds natural enough.

Me: Not quite. The soul heats up when it loses sight. When it bends too far, and burns too near. When it ignores the flame it should hold dear.

Second Guy: Heat won't lure them in, that's for sure.

Me: You'd be surprised. The outcome's not so pure.

Second Guy: So they sunbathe, break stones in the stream?

Me: I'm no expert, but I block each extreme. From overthinking, from bad belief. Things touch, then twist, like autumn leaves. Even the fish knows. Even the bird. Meditation, now that's a word.

Second Guy: How long will this nonsense last? Fish have no opinions, they just swim past.

Me: How do you know? Maybe they chat. Inventing new paths to joy and all that.

Second Guy: You've been rambling for hours, pure blur.

Me: And you haven't checked your own facial stir. Is it pleased or full of strain? What's that look? What's the name?

Second Guy: What's done is done. At least things changed. A fish is a fish, always the same.

Me: Feed her well, and she'll glow. When she multiplies, sow, then grow. Reflect on how you truly feel. What brings you joy, what makes you reel.

Second Guy: Maybe. Something. Maybe somehow. We'll see. For now, I choose the here and now.

Me: Choices aren't made of idle speak. They're acts. They're floods and clogged-up creeks.

Second Guy: I'm fine as I am, won't change the plan. I don't pity fish, I'm just that kind of man. They taste good. They don't hunt us back. And they never need doctors, how 'bout that?

Voice: Doesn't matter to me, said the fish. I swim. If I die, I won't wish. I don't need applause or foreign seas. Just don't let me drown where freedom deceives. No worse fate than that, when liberty leaves.

---13---

AT THE CONCERT

Me: Do you know who's about to play?

Someone: I do. I hate just standing this way.

Me: But you're waiting for a concert, right?

Someone: Exactly. It's like hearts howling in the night.

Me: So who's playing? Just say the name.

Someone: The band's called "The Secret of the Cane", now you're in the game.

Me: But I don't know any of their hits.

Someone: They have none. No costumes, no glitz.

Me: So what do they have? What's their approach?

Someone: They're tired of wailing. They reflect and coach.

Me: So their lyrics are cheerful, I suppose?

Someone: Excessively so. Always active, never doze. I check who's playing before I go. I listen with care, I'm not just show.

Me: What does that mean?

Someone: That I'm not like someone afraid to feel. Someone who pretends, then forgets what's real.

Me: That theory doesn't quite convince. I'd rather hear Gloria, ever since.

Someone: How do you know what you like if you haven't heard this?

Me: I'm here, I'll listen. Let's not dismiss.

Someone: Live shows blur, the sound's unclear. You might not even hear what the lyrics steer.

Me: I'll try, thanks for the warning, friend.

Someone: That's me, a living footnote without end. Guiding like a dusty tome.

Me: And me, betraying shadows when nights roam.

Someone: Betrayed ones feel deceived, don't they?

Me: Not when they've seen through the game they play.

Someone: That's something else, preemptive escape.

Me: Or maybe just a quiet reshaping of shape.

Someone: But if you turn from one, you face another.

Me: Or stare into dirt, avoiding both altogether.

Someone: That I don't get. Come to a show just to sulk and fret?

Me: Just words. My speech is vague.

Someone: Art for art's sake? Life for life's drag? Is this meaning, or just a reason to raise a flag?

Me: I don't judge. I don't change me. I'll watch the concert, then maybe I'll see. These moments, these fragments.

Someone: Only the wise transform through life's amendments.

---14---

AT THE HAIRDRESSER'S

Her: Good morning.

Hairdresser: Always charming.

Her: I'd like a haircut, like that celeb on TV. No nonsense, make it look like me.

Hairdresser: But your hair's different, your face shape too. It's not a meadow of lavender blue.

Her: What lavender now? I don't want flowers. I want impact, my self-empowered.

Hairdresser: We'll try, we'll see what sticks. Something close, we've got two hours to fix.

Her: What does time have to do with hair? Just cut, don't stand and stare.

Hairdresser: It means we've got some space to shape. Big changes take time, no need to escape.

Her: Then begin, don't wave the ribbon. This isn't some parade you've been given.

Hairdresser: Maybe I enjoy it, it's my little show. I'm starting now, here we go.

Her: What's happening? It better be grand. Maybe a curl or two, but subtle, not bland.

Hairdresser: It won't be bland, or pushy or forced. Just bold. A little coarsed.

Her: Yes, exactly, a shout from within. Hair as confession, buried under skin. Murdered, chopped, a riddle exposed. A secret style only few have proposed.

Hairdresser: I'll do my best, with soul and pride. But first, let's pause till our energies align.
 Her: Juniper.
 Hairdresser: Coffee dripper.
 Her: What are you saying?
 Hairdresser: As you wish, no delaying.
 Her: You're repeating yourself. And my style's stuck still.
 Hairdresser: True beauty doesn't fear the will.
 Her: Because it's that beautiful?
 Hairdresser: Exactly. That's the pull.
 Her: Because it was done in a flash?
 Hairdresser: Yes, like his wife's bold splash.
 Her: Hairstyles don't have wives. They're straight. They crave male touch, and flirt with fate.
 Hairdresser: Fine, as you say. I'll highlight and slice. Though I fear I might mess it up despite advice.
 Her: Please don't stress me. Tuck away your pride.
 Hairdresser: I could try, but fear still rides.
 Her: How much longer? I've been sitting for hours. At this rate, I'll hatch golden eggs in towers.
 Hairdresser: Let's hope they're gold, not burdened by trouble.
 Her: We'll see what cracks from this bubble.
 Hairdresser: Look now, it's turning out fine. Fringe in place, we're nearly out of time.
 Her: But I said no fringe, like in the pic!
 Hairdresser: That was my vision, I let emotions pick.
 Her: No visions! Stick to the plan! It's hair, not some cosmic scam!
 Hairdresser: We'll fix it, repair it, now let's tackle the back.
 Her: Still waiting, how much slack? I'm turning into a tropical rain
 Hairdresser: Which kind, exactly?
 Her: The fierce kind. Full of disdain. Show me now, surely it's done?
 Hairdresser: Yes. Look in the mirror. No fringe. You're bald. All gone.

---15---

ON VACATION

Her: Heniek, take off that shirt. You'll tan better, not like some paperwork flirt.
 Him: Don't tell me what to do. I'm here to think, to shape something new.
 Her: Then think without the shirt, ideas might flow.
 Him: Maybe, if no one else shows.
 Her: What do you mean, no one? The beach is packed.
 Him: Then I won't take it off. Someone might react.
 Her: So you're asleep now? Digesting alone?
 Him: Already digested. I know your tone. You're hungry again, and food's overpriced. I'll be saving for months. Neighbors won't be enticed.
 Her: We took a vacation loan, it'll pay in time. What matters is the memory climb.

Him: You mean we'll tell the whole fam how we danced, and who caused the jam.

Her: Oh, I'd love some wine with lunch. Let's go eat now, just a hunch.

Him: May your life be short and sweet.

Her: What's my life got to do with your heat?

Him: It interferes with mine. Constantly bumps the line.

Her: Come on, Heniek. Take off the shirt.

Him: I've got a weird daze, mental dirt.

Her: You're faking just to skip the café.

Him: They'll kick you out, too loud a display.

Her: So I talk loud, that's my sin?

Him: You're hopeless, locked within.

Her: I just like to speak.

Him: And dig deep, week by week. How's a man to live in peace when girls and thieves never cease?

Her: Where do you see thieves, exactly? Though you're right, one can't be too slackly. Hide your wallet, trust yourself.

Him: Trust was shelved.

Her: And take off that damn shirt! Your face is red, use some cream, it's in the bag near the bread.

Him: You measure creams now? Got nothing else to fry? Maybe you'll roast clothes till they wave goodbye.

Her: You're sunstruck, talking nonsense full-blown.

Him: The sun stirs truth, I feel life in my bone.

Her: Let's eat something. Or nap. Or swim. Or just watch our stuff, no one's that prim.

Him: It's the sun, everything wobbles. Let's go back to the hotel before we start troubles. Or at least sit in the shade, like the locals do.

Her: It's vacation, you need to tan too. Don't blame the clouds if you never shine through.

Him: People will believe it, vacation is a right.

Her: Not for all. I'll spill tea at dinner tonight. Hanka and her guy? Big fight. They're not going anywhere, pure spite.

Him: I wish we hadn't come to this inferno. Living in heat makes us all feel like zero.

Her: Don't complain, you've got a great wife. A job, a crown at the plant. That's life.

Him: A crown made of toilet roll.

Her: Wipe with it, I won't patrol.

Him: Doesn't do me any good.

Her: Still, it's life, not just neighborhood. At least we're not broke in the hood.

Him: Luxury is cracking a beer in the park. With a buddy. Laughing till it's dark.

Her: I don't forbid you to laugh, go ahead.

Him: Just can't find the mood, with your serious head. It strangles my smile like a rope from a beam.

Her: Your theories again. Just enjoy the sunbeam.

Him: Fine, on command. I'll drop the shirt. Maybe I'll burn. Front-page alert.

BY THE BARREL FIRE

First: Man, it's freezing today.

Second: As long as warmth has plans on the way.

First: You'd rather live in Kamchatka, huh? I'd take warm days on constant rerun.

Second: You're always dreaming of the heat.

First: Heat is a smile that can't be beat.

Second: I can laugh even in the snow.

First: What matters is to play fair, you know.

Second: What's unfair in what I said?

First: Your words are slippery, go ahead, pour instead. You say you love the frost, yet warm your hands like me. That's double-speaking, can't you see?

Second: My hands are full, no single to spare. Pass the ladle, don't just glare.

First: Here's a sacred spoon of wood.

Second: What do I need that for?

First: It's eco, forged in warmth for the greater good. Carved far away, in lands of bamboo, tall, misunderstood.

Second: What on earth are you even saying?

First: That winter's not yours to be obeying.

Second: I wouldn't want it anyway.

First: A good player knows when to play.

Second: I feel fine when it's cold, and fine when it's hot.

First: That kind of talk don't impress a lot.

Second: Why not? It's the honest truth I share.

First: I need more than truth, I need some flair.

Second: Then how about a slap upside your head? Maybe you'll understand, instead of staying misled.

First: What's wrong with the way I think?

Second: Nothing. Except it's starting to sink.

First: Moments, pauses, next round starts.

Second: To me, people are all broken parts.

First: Cold's messing with your brain, for real.

Second: Cold thinks too. It makes you feel.

First: And what does cold give me, pray tell?

Second: That a man can improve and do quite well. Awake. Alert. Not just nodding to his wife's dessert.

First: I don't remember my wife at all. There were holidays once, snow would fall...

Second: That's the heat talking. You forgot. Probably didn't ask Santa for a lot.

First: I asked. I got zilch.

Second: That's rough, buddy. Didn't mean to pinch.

First: So tell me, friend, what do you live for?

Second: I'll say if you sip once more.

First: Sip. So, what keeps warmth alive?

Second: Sip. That it somehow continues to survive. And cold?

First: Cold breathes for one true thrill.

Second: That someone, somewhere, still needs the chill,
to reach for a cup and share the still.

---17---

IN THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Principal: You again. We keep meeting, what a trend.

Student: A tradition of mockery, that never seems to end.

Principal: You've got no excuse this time, I bet.

Student: Whatever I say, you'll call it regret.

Principal: Perhaps that's true. A sign of the times. But how should I punish you? Suggest some crimes.

Student: No need for punishment. No need for hope. Let's split them equally, learn to cope.

Principal: The teachers can't stand you. They beg, they yell, they plead, but still can't get through.

Student: Can't, or won't? Maybe you can't either, Sir.

Principal: With hope that distant seas still might stir.

Student: The sea never really stops its roar.

Principal: Knowing how to hear it, that's a bit more.

Student: Hopes still burn. Maybe you'll beg someday too.

Principal: I won't beg. I won't convince you. But know this: if you won't change, you'll be dismissed. A different school, a different face, maybe you'll find some saving grace.

Student: Don't threaten me, don't act all brave. I am what I am, not some polished slave.

Principal: It's not a threat. It's a fact, a sign. Just words that stand, no line is mine.

Student: I don't take you seriously. Emotions vary, decisions flip. I'll go do my thing, not engage in this power trip.

[...]

Principal: What trip? Go back to work. Give your all. You'll see, the factory's not a crawl. Not drunk, not bitter, just proud and driven. Not always right, but for meaning we're livin'.

Student: I'll work my own way. The job's too hard. It pushes others away.

Principal: The world is built on hard work, not flair. Make a plan. Or you'll get fired, just fair.

Student: Don't boast, big boss. Without us, you'd be at a loss. Just dust and echoes. It's our kind who lift you from woes.

Principal: I've got five waiting to take your chair. I don't need to beg. Others work fair. Not everyone's a hassle. Not everyone fakes. Some don't stall. Some do what it takes.

Student: I work calm, at my pace. I'm not fake, I face my space. I am who I am, and I like things in place.

Principal: Everything's in place, until you shake it. One moment's peace, and then you break it. Always bitter. Always sour. Passing complaints like they've got power.

Student: You exploit people. Just trying to live. All they get is lashes, nothing to give. No respect. Just surprise. As if being poor was some disguise.

Principal: Then quit. If it hurts so bad. Your choice. That's the freedom you had.

Student: I'm still here from some shred of grace. You rise on my back, I'm your staircase.

Principal: Like I said, the road is yours. Do what you want. That's what this force explores. But give your all. You know it's true. If nothing changes, we'll find someone new.

Student: You're repeating yourself, dear principal man. Let me tell you how this story ran: I won't be used again, never again. School, job, it's all the same pain. Nailed to the cross without relief. Tired of your polite little grief. Of bleeding on cue. Of suffering clean. I'm done playing dead in this routine.

Principal: So it's clear. This is goodbye.

Student: I'll slam the door, then come back and try. Where else would I go? This school, this mess, still feels like home, I must confess. It'll never feel good. But good isn't my fit. Hoping for better's okay. But this? This is it. Habit stays where habit must sit.

---18---

BY THE BEER STAND

First: Beer's never tasted this good, I swear.

Second: 'Cause beer-talk's the best kind anywhere.

First: But today's got that extra kind of feel.

Second: Maybe it's a holiday. Time to get real.

First: I'm already changed. I see life's core.

Second: And that core leads to this beer-store?

First: Yep. Everything points to this little shack.

Second: Sometimes being led ain't such a setback.

First: You gotta be led, sometimes you guide

Second: But where's the meaning when hopes just slide?

First: Beer is the meaning. A frothy bit of sense.

Second: I don't know... I'm in a mental trench. Work's a mess, school was hell. And jobless days? A bottomless well.

First: That's why I drink, do the math. How much, how many, then pour the path.

Second: Life just rushes on without us. Smokes us out like fish, bones and fuss.

First: I don't complain. Not when I sip. And if I don't wait, I just let it rip.

Second: You know what kills? Women. Demanding. Preaching. Never still.

First: That's why beer's better. I raise my glass. To hell with women, let 'em pass.

Second: And all this eco-rant, electric cars, no smoke stacks, mountain chants.

First: Sledding down with broken wings.

Second: Wings, how poetic this whole world clings. Worst of all? Politicians.

First: Like holes drilled straight through your missions. Boiling blood, empty cries

Second: Political echoes in human disguise.

First: Maybe. Sure. Maybe not. I'm like a beer, just give me a shot. Always foamy, never flat. Let me stand right here, imagine that.

Second: So here you stand, not thinking, not judging?

First: What good are moans and endless grudging? Beer gets it. It stays quiet.

Second: I'm sick of beer's silent diet.

First: You want it to talk? To make you feel grand?

Second: Yeah. Then bury me with a beer in my hand.

First: I don't think about death, not even close. I skip the sorrow, skip the dose.

Second: I envy your chill, your calm state. You don't care which way they pull the crate.

First: Beer don't pull me. It gently sways.

Second: Maybe I'll try beer's clever ways.

---19---

ON THE VERANDA

Me: And who might you be?

Bailiff: Evil itself, that's me.

Me: Then we won't get along, that's clear.

Bailiff: We must, your debts brought me here.

Me: Me, in debt? Oh please, be gone. Let the dog chew those papers you're on.

Bailiff: Not so fast, I've got the claim, your car, your house, all in your name.

Me: Stop it already, I'm done with your games. Your forms are like the Paralympics in flames.

Bailiff: Not this time, you won't escape. You won't block the door with a rock and drape.

Me: That rock's in the shed, I'll grab it, just wait. Your paperwork's perfect kindling for fate.

Bailiff: I've got you now, my little chum. No help, no mercy, no place to run.

Me: I don't get your metaphors, some frozen crowd? Just say what you mean, not poetic and proud.

Bailiff: Strength won't help, your house is mine. The auction is set, the notice was fine.

Me: Not my debt! I was framed! Some servant's game, I've been named! Like a trap for mice, tight and sly. You got me, and I don't know why.

Bailiff: There's no escape from owed collections. No dodging fines. No protections. Names are matched, lines connect, doesn't matter what you reflect.

Me: I never even gave you my name.

Bailiff: But this is your house, all the same.

Me: No, not mine! I'm just the cleaner. Yard work, trash, no secrets between us. The owner's away, due back next week. Maybe. It's vague, the schedule's weak.

Bailiff: I don't believe you. Playing dumb. Speaking words, but chewing gum. I don't accept. I know your game. I see through bluff and borrowed name.

Me: Listen here, you sneaky swine. I'm not inventing stories divine. Go auction, go publish, go knock on doors. I've got no chips on financial wars.

Bailiff: Then tell your boss. The file's complete. The reason is clear, the claim is neat. Let him know I was here today. This ain't some casual café.

Me: I'm not your messenger. I won't pass notes. You want that favor? Bring biscuits and coats. Don't barge in with papers and threats in your hands. I don't play by bureaucratic demands.
Bailiff: Difficult. I'll leave, but I will be back. And this time I won't trip on a crack. I'll return with thoughts confirmed. About your master, so crooked it burns.

Me: Goodbye, without fondness. No speech to deliver. No messages, no sugar, no shiver. I don't have a master, I've got a wage-giver. A boss, a pal, a publisher sliver.

Bailiff: We'll meet again, no doubt.

Me: Maybe, unless I stone the whole house out.

...

Me: Nothing like a chat about debt and doom. Bailiff desires, like weeds, they bloom. Pretending, deflecting, dodging the chase. Can't pay myself, can't save face. Those damn interests, they rise and vanish. Like wages lost in a puff of anguish.

---20---

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Child: Daddy, daddy! I've got this one question. I'm waiting here, full of anticipation.

Father: What do you want? How can I assist? Or maybe you do the dishes on our list?

Child: But I'm too little for dishes, come on! But I still want to know, what is sex, and can you sit on one?

Father: Sex?! Where did you hear that, my sprout? Who told you that? You're too young to find out.

Child: At preschool they said parents "sexed." It's nice, they say. Some kind of love complex.

Father: It's not so complex. Nor something rare. It's a grown-up thing, not child's affair.

Sex is a bond, a kind of love, when grown-ups share what they're thinking of.

Child: So if I love you and Mom with all my might...

Father: No, not like that. That's not quite right. You need a mom and a dad for the plot. Kids don't do it. No matter what.

Child: But kids come from it, right? Like me?

Father: That's true. You came from love, you see.

Child: Then maybe I can do it too! I'll make a brother with you!

Father: No, no. Not how it goes. That's not the path a child knows.

You need a mother and father, dear. Not two kids playing house in here.

Child: So you love Mom, and not me, cause you won't "sex" with me, obviously?

Father: I love you tons! But kids don't do sex.

They hug and play, no complex.

Child: Okay. But why do people do it naked?

Father: Is that what your preschool group debated?

Child: Everyone knows, like with Santa Claus. He doesn't bathe. That's what the rumor was.

Father: Santa doesn't bathe? That's quite odd.

Child: Or where would he hide gifts from the squad?

Father: So dirty folks are gift-stuffing pros?
Child: And dirt scares off bad kids, that's how it goes.
But back to nakedness, what's it about?
Father: When you change clothes, aren't you nude for a bout?
And now I really must go, my shift is near.
Child: But you said it's naked love that makes adults draw near!
Father: That's not the full truth, but it's a start.
It's a conversation with too many parts.
One day you'll be grown, and then you'll see.
Your wife will explain it all, maybe at tea.
I can't tell you more, this talk's a trap.
Words are sharp. And I need a nap.
Just promise me this, don't run around bare.
And be polite in preschool, sit nicely there.
Sex isn't something to shout or parade.
It clouds your view and makes feelings fade.
What matters more is to show respect.
For friends, for girls, don't neglect.
Child: But I want to know it all! Be clever and grand!
Like a king on his throne, ruling the land!
Father: And just like a king can't drive a car,
You're not big enough, you're not there by far.
All in good time, no need to rush.
Go ask your mom, now she can hush.

---21---

IN THE CIRCUS

Me: That clown isn't funny at all.
You: But at least he's kind of jolly.
Me: So much money for the ticket...
You: That's how choices work, like a crooked picket. Not always right. Not always spot-on.
Me: Should've sent my wife here instead, she'd be gone.
You: She likes clowns?
Me: Don't know, but she loves to ramble on. Pointless talk, endless frowns, we've got that at home.
You: So you play clowns together? Sounds like a pleasure.
Me: No, more like arguments, a shared treasure.
You: But clowns don't argue, right?
Me: They fight themselves inside before their souls take flight.
You: I don't even know anymore.
Me: Just have seven ideas, nothing more.

You: I rarely have even one at a time.

Me: Says the guy whose thoughts don't even rhyme.

You: My life's better than yours, by far. A nicer wife, a better car. Kids that shine like morning dew.

Me: A monopoly on success? Good for you. I prefer stability over glory, too.

You: That's what you think. Everyone wants to be like me, it's not just a fling. They cry when I leave, they cheer when I stay.

Me: Maybe. Look, there's a seal. Think she ever loses balance on a wheel?

You: I'm waiting for the tightrope guy. Let's see him soar, let's see him fly.

Me: What is this, a steam engine show? Are you here to enjoy, or just for the flow?

You: If you ramble, it's brilliant, if I do, it's nonsense? What kind of deal is this?

Me: I never said a word about a beaver!

You: But I could tell, you're a beaver believer.

Me: There's your tightrope act.

You: A piece of my circus pact.

Me: But why do you even care? All those emotions? I prefer still air.

You: Got a ticket, I'm making the most. Not whining like some haunted ghost.

Me: What's in front of your eyes is what really counts.

You: I'm here now. Your complaints? They don't amount.

Me: The circus just isn't my place.

You: Then why come? Stay home. Find your space.

Me: Time without the wife, now that's pure gold. Even in the circus, stories unfold.

You: I wrote my will already. Not out of fear, just ready.

Me: And I play the clown, with a faun's charm and frown.

You: From that movie?

Me: No, from my brain.

You: So many skills, but used in vain.

Me: Hey look! The tightrope guy's falling! No bounce, no roll, just sprawling.

You: Smashed. Broken. Tiny bits. Not even a stain where he hits.

Me: Worth the ticket, then, wouldn't you say?

You: Nothing beats a man's death the masculine way. No taxes involved, just a little dismay.

Me: I thought my mind was a tight, locked bay.

You: Don't tell me you didn't enjoy the flight!

Me: What matters is, he reached the end all right.

You: No turning back halfway through the air.

Me: Just like with life, take the horns if you dare.

You: Horned life. Horned fate.

Me: He met that fate, straight and great.

You: I'd prefer a watered-down version, though.

Me: At least a wish fulfilled, that's how we grow.

You: Not some...

Me: Undefined.

You: In its such-ness.

Me: Unrefined.

You: Like a flight that sweeps its tail.
Me: Over the fence, without a trail.
You: A chuckle ends the tale.

---22---

PICKING CURRANTS

Me: This bush is a real pain
You: Why are you whining again
Me: I'm just saying it's in the way
You: Then maybe move it some day
Me: But how long can you keep on picking. Currants gone sour. One side ripe, the other still lacks power
You: It's unsure what it wants to be, like kids unsure of identity
Me: It's trying to cancel itself, I swear. I know the feeling. It's in the air
You: I wish currants just fell when ripe. No picking, no bending, no reaching ripe. Lay down something soft and let them drop. Instead of twisting, stretching nonstop
Me: Fair enough. You may be right. But still, who's tall and who's light
You: Like a dress maybe. A wispy one. I think a lot too, where I'd go for fun. If I had cash. If I were flush. The world is vast, but currants are hush
Me: In the world they know when they're done. Ours just hang and block the sun
You: What can you do. The world's a mess. Like currants. Or a standardized test
Me: A test of life, everyone must take. Some get reward, others just ache
You: And someone always trips at the start
Me: Like runners in snow, slipping apart
You: So much weight and what's the point. Who's a friend, who's just a smiling decoy
Me: Who's known for what and why they scheme. Who's setting up, who lets others dream
You: So many options, and yet that's the trap. Hits keep coming, like a silent slap. Who do you know, what's their reply. Another hit, and nobody knows why
Me: I'm not sure what we're even discussing. My summer plans might need adjusting
You: Tests or no tests, what's the goal
Me: To better understand the crowd as a whole
You: What do we use, and what just hides
Me: I don't mind. I take it all in stride
You: But the currants aren't ripe all the way
Me: They wish they were, but still delay
You: Caught in-between, too scared to drop
Me: Don't sell me fear as growth non-stop
You: It's losing part of itself, you see. Its fruit. Not gracefully
Me: But it'll grow again. It's a phase. Blooming, picking. Nature's ways
You: Like failing tests

Me: Or failing to produce
You: But fruit's not really what we deduce
Me: Maybe. You've hit a truth right there
You: That's what makes a currant fair
Me: Not too small, not bitterly green
You: Just perfect. Like meat crisp and clean
Me: But not burnt
You: Currants with a grill
Me: And wishes to fulfill
You: A grill with intrigue
Me: And another monologue fatigue
You: Think we've said it all, don't you?
Me: Currants and life, both crave being true
You: And currants, do they even care to shine?
Me: Depends on the currant you dream to define.

---23---
AT RECESS

Me: You must have a lot to do
Janitor: If I did little, I'd be through
Me: That broken handle, wasn't me
Janitor: What matters is if I learned from what I see
Me: So did you learn anything?
Janitor: You're the student here, try learning more than just wandering
Me: But you must've not learned much, fixing windows and doors like such
Janitor: I like to give off false impressions
Me: I don't follow your confessions
Janitor: It means I've got quite a few professions
Me: And that's why you're the janitor here?
Janitor: I deal with fears that others fear
Me: I wanna be an astronaut, not fix handles like you do
Janitor: What matters is not causing problems, that's true
Me: Were you a good kid in school, or a mess?
Janitor: Hard to recall. Memory tends to compress
Me: Oh look, there's the kid who broke the door
Janitor: I wouldn't brag. Might get detention and what for? Best to keep some things behind a quiet door
Me: Did you ever rat out classmates back then?
Janitor: You don't ask cows why they moo in the pen
Me: I don't know cows, I'll admit
Janitor: I know too many words that don't fit

Me: Hey, the handle's fixed.
Janitor: Until next time, problem nixed
Me: So what will you do now with it done?
Janitor: Wait for more, until the day is gone
Me: So if we break stuff, it gives you purpose too? Better than you sitting with nothing to do
Janitor: I like when peace is all that stays. Hope it stays that way always
Me: Do you actually like me or not?
Janitor: Depends on which beer I've got. Haven't had one yet today, maybe that's why I laid down halfway
Me: And got late to work this morning
Janitor: Not everything in life comes with a silver serving
Me: Well, I'm off to class
Janitor: I'm off to the second floor, there's a churchy mass
Me: Just for janitors?
Janitor: Don't get too clever, Mr. Banter
Me: I am the cleverest, no doubt
Janitor: I thought sneakiest, with that pout
Me: Mom says I never finish my milk at dawn
Janitor: Listen to your mom, good ears bring gates wide open on
Me: Then I'll listen and gift her something rare
Janitor: What's the gift you'd dare?
Me: I'll say I talked to you, and you told me what's true
Janitor: That all jobs matter in their own way?
Me: No, that being a janitor takes courage every day.

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AT THE DENTIST

Me: So, how do my teeth look today?
Dentist: Not great. Top and bottom, I'd say.
Me: But which one's better, upper or lower?
Dentist: That's really your own little horror.
Me: But if we're talking about me, how many need repair?
Dentist: A bit of drilling, and you'll come up for air.
Me: So, what, two, maybe three?
Dentist: Thirteen. Don't moan. That's how it be.
Me: Thirteen what?
Dentist: Thirteen teeth on the naughty list. Ready for the dentist's twist.
Me: A mime show of pain?
Dentist: Fireworks in the brain. But don't start to whine, could be worse, no care at all, no line.
Me: Then I'd rather wait, even if it's late. How much will it cost?
Dentist: Your house, your car, and that's not the final exhaust.

Me: You're quite the comedian, I see. Always something new, what a jolly spree.

Dentist: Should I cry instead? My teeth don't hurt. Yours are the ones digging into dessert.

Me: That's fair, I admit. I'll just leave you this emotional kit. Will we be done by vacation time?

Dentist: Doubtful. But I won't draw the line.

Me: I'd prefer someone who decides with justice and spine.

Dentist: Justice is for heaven. Maybe. Not mine.

Me: Then please just fix what's broken, with grace, by God's token.

Dentist: God's not into tooth repair. Divine care doesn't cover dental despair.

Me: But if I pray nicely, who knows, maybe?

Dentist: Him, her, or fate, each has its say, eventually.

Me: So, will we start today or soon?

Dentist: Starting isn't simple. I need X-rays, tools, a nurse, a spoon. Prep time, you see. It's not just for show.

Me: So when exactly will we go?

Dentist: A few months, give or take. Depending on fabric, fate, or a scheduling quake. I'll let you know. Meanwhile, keep brushing slow.

Me: A few months with holes in my teeth? They'll fall apart, like dry autumn leaves.

Dentist: Perhaps. Or maybe it's fate. Not every dentist works under hate.

Me: A little compassion, a bit of a vow. Help me now, before I chew through a cow.

Dentist: Here's the deal, I'll fix your teeth, but you must crown me king underneath.

Me: Golden teeth are a bit much, no?

Dentist: How'd you know I wanted to make you glow?

Me: That poster, "Gold redeems." Can't miss it, screams and beams.

Dentist: Yes, gold shines, catches light.

Me: And charges per tooth a real estate price

Dentist: But hardly anyone has them, it's chic, refined. Timeless and aligned.

Me: I'm out. I'll live with the holes. Feels better on my soul.

Dentist: As you wish. That's your line. But gold, what an offer, divine.

Me: Wrong era. Wrong feel. Millions in savings aren't part of my deal.

Dentist: If you change your mind, give a ring, or leave a note with Stefan, the receptionist king.

Me: And if you change yours, and want to heal the thirteen beasts, or anything less grotesque at least, let me know.

Dentist: Gold.

Me: Or let it go.

Dentist: To hell with toothy doom.

Me: Your sense of humor could fill a tomb.

IN LINE FOR WATER

Me: How much longer do we have to stand?

You: We simply stall, as if that were planned.

Me: Water should be for everyone here.

You: Not just for the privileged, crystal clear.

Me: The chosen few.

You: Maybe. But this world is built skewed, hidden behind curtains, illusions renewed.

Me: I didn't design it, never applied.

You: Just woke up on it one day, wide-eyed.

Me: A world where water's missing feels fake. And without water, life's a big mistake.

You: And nothing makes sense, no matter the crowd.

Me: Urgency. Fear. And memory too loud.

You: More events, more strife. And look, the result: life.

Me: What's it like, being born without water to drink? To need, and suffer, and be forced to shrink?

You: What's it like to echo yourself? Hide in corners. Collect on a shelf.

Me: You must. And the guilt of the innocent. And summoning others, just as persistent.

You: I've stood here four hours today. But if someone asks, I'll say I'm okay.

Me: How many moments, how many scenes. Relentless incidents. Repetitive routines.

You: I don't know. Life's overwhelming. And air, ever enveloping.

Me: I queued for air just yesterday. Took a few breaths. Felt okay.

You: Lucky you. I've got seven air coupons.

Me: But you said it surrounds you, like ribbons.

You: That's just the smell, it chokes and binds.

Me: Scent never fed a single mankind. Without air and water, we starve in silence.

You: Who would've guessed. Or confessed. That this is the end. With a warrant addressed.

Me: What did you do, tell me it wasn't about a fight for water.

You: I stole some. Just a little. No slaughter. Drank it down. Figured, no harm. But that's a crime. Alarm.

Me: So you broke the code. You breached the rules. You see no more meaning in these parched pools.

You: I've spent it all. Everything mine. Water, air, ambitions divine.

Me: I can tell. But once, you were glad. And you don't seem scared, that's not half-bad.

You: That's what I've kept. It's what I do well. I like this world, even in this cell. Millions of sighs, of events unspoken. You can't escape once you've burned and broken.

Me: A lot's happened on this poor Earth. A lot still wants, though it's lost its worth. But look, it's our turn. A bottle awaits. Let's fill it, for life, for peace between states.

You: All this wait for a tiny bottle. I'll drink it straight. Not grovel, not coddle. I won't become part of a grazing herd. Even if I talk with elegance preferred.

Me: No one's forcing. No one's pretending. No one's pushing or condescending. It's all here. Just for you. This sip of water. A coupon for air too. Whatever you dream, wait, and it's yours. Even food. Even truth. Even the chores. And time, of course. It's been waiting too.

You: I've waited. Only time didn't wait for you.

IN LINE FOR THE TOILET

Me: I swear, I can't hold it anymore. I'm gonna lose it. Hold me.

You: Same here, it's twisting me inside out. My guts are trying to crawl out.

Me: I'm nauseous, I swear. It's a horror show. Nothing mellow there.

You: It's worse than dying. Slow death, bladder-crying.

Me: Who the hell invented queues? Doesn't matter how bad you need to go, bad news. No exceptions, no mercy, no grace. You line up and wait, no matter your face.

You: And you're not even afraid of death.

Me: Not death. Just... messing myself. Soiling the self. That changes a man.

You: Becomes truly human, shame reshaped again and again.

Me: You're labeled a limping deer. Not fit to live.

You: Nature's surplus. A product of love.

Me: I honestly think dignity dies in the need to shove.

You: Maybe a crap-filled philosophy. God, I'm at my limit. It's an awful comedy.

Me: Division. No distinction.

You: Separation. End of conviction.

Me: At least there are public toilets, not just the ones at home, exclusives. What would we do in the city lights? Events, concerts, all those fights?

You: True. Good point, signed and sealed. Another spectacle, barely concealed. Strange phenomena, twisted nights. Who did what, and for what heights.

Me: I can't hold it. I'm leaking thoughts. Let the dog witness my bladder's knots.

You: Just three more ahead. Stay calm, you're next to be led.

Me: What inn? There's no inn around. Just this sad loo, halfway underground.

You: Yeah, nothing new. Lines everywhere. I don't even care, it's always like this, I swear.

Me: People made it to the moon, it's true. I just wonder if they built a toilet too.

You: I think they must've. With a lunar shower nearby.

Me: A space shower. Don't ask me why.

You: Then don't speak. I know what I know. But I wonder, do moonmen queue in a row?

Me: All I care about is this toilet here. The one right now, the one that's near.

You: Weird how many folks showed up in this wasteland.

Me: Just like you and me. With no patience to withstand.

You: Queue law's been ancient since man knew fear.

Me: If you wanna crap, best ask your dear.

You: Or the toilet, if it even feels like it.

Me: Unless you storm in and start a riot.

You: There's queues, and then there's jungle law.

Me: If you're not sure, don't waste my time with your blah-blah.

You: Screw it, I'm done waiting. I'm charging, I'm escaping!
Me: And he fell, brave soldier, on the toilet field. Defeated by pressure and vines unrevealed.
You: (dying) It was worth it. A shitty world. But honestly... it was all in my mind, unfurled.

---27---

AT THE MILITARY AIRFIELD

Other: Who's supposed to fly that jet?
Me: Me. I'm the pilot, don't you forget.
Other: But you haven't logged any flight time.
Me: It's a plane like any. Should fly just fine.
Other: Not even in a simulator?
Me: And you? Ate your lunch only to barf it up later.
Other: What if you crash it? Big trouble, man.
Me: Already sewing my memorial ribbon? That's your plan?
Other: That's not it. You know who commands our squad.
Me: Couldn't care less. I'm the flight. I'm the god.
Other: No way, I can't just release the jet.
Me: So fly with me. You know the tech, don't fret.
If I screw up, you take the lead.
Other: This'll blow up. That's guaranteed.
Me: Every second guy's flying drunk, and no one minds.
I just want a go, test the fancy kind.
That American one, you know, the flippy-flappy flyer.
Other: You know what that plane costs? You're not even worth the tire.
Me: That's why I'll handle it with care, polish it with prayer.
Other: What if they catch you?
Me: I'll say I admire them. Let them nap, admire the wire.
No cops are hiding in the bushes here.
Only you're sobering up in fear.
Other: I'm responsible for this thing, you fool.
If it goes down, we're fossils on some cave school.
Extinct. Mammoth-stomped.
Brains clonked.
Me: Alright, come on, let's fly. We'll switch seats mid-sky.
Other: If anything goes wrong, I was never there. No lie.
Me: So many buttons. I'll guess. Or smash them all, I confess.
Dream my way to skill.
Other: Don't say you don't know how to fly that grill.
Me: Relax. You're ready to cry.
I'm not, though I don't know which lever makes her fly.
Maybe you messed it up on purpose. Switched stuff. Sabotaged the surface.

Other: There's only one homeland. You defend it with pride.

Me: Sure, you dream of flags at night. That much I buy.

And between us two

Which farm girl will you make your bride?

Other: She's not born yet. I'm soldier-certified.

Me: Whatever. Screw this fancy tin can.

I'm off to my trusty Il-2, my ancient flying van.

This new toy? Just one lever that twitches.

The rest? Confetti switches.

Not better than Soviet steel, no way.

Old-school birds flew straight. Today's jets just play.

Fall apart midair. Crash into barns.

All gloss, no arms.

I'll take my Il. I love how she charms.

Other: Now we're talking. Less damage to count.

If you crash in that one, they'll just chalk it down.

You and that Il. You fit like gloves.

Like a vodka-soaked general mourning old loves.

Me: A solemn flight of the old drunk poet.

Knows he's doomed, but still wants to show it.

Knows he'll never rise above.

But his ego foams, froths, falls in love.

---28---

AT THE DEAN'S OFFICE

Me: Good morning. Is the Dean in today, by any chance?

Lady at the Office: Back to the line. No answer. No advance.

...

Me: I've been standing. Long enough. Can you reply now, or is that too tough?

Lady: What kind of nonsense runs through your brain?

Me: I just want to know if the Dean would approve me repeating the year again.

Lady: Again? You want to do this again? That's a shock. If all students were like you, we'd need to change the clocks.

Me: Don't exaggerate. These things happen to all. I'm not here to preach, just want to make a call. Handle my case. I know the Dean quite well. We're basically pals, as far as I can tell.

Lady: You've sent him so many forms, you must love his pen strokes. You've learned to doodle smileys. Killed a thousand flies with your bureaucratic jokes.

Me: I know our correspondence might someday prove vital. Some future scholar may read it and grant me a title. "This student climbed a hill steep and long, yet he made it." Maybe others will follow, maybe they'll take it.

Lady: I doubt there'll be any fans or followers. Maybe a few, reckless wanderers. I'd rather see kids today actually try. Study, not add weight to the system and sigh.

Me: So, is the Dean in today? I need to catch him now. Or else you'll send the letter, and I'll be gone somehow. That "exmatriculated" stamp, that student death sentence. How do I explain that? What's the weight of such a sentence?

Lady: Not my fault you failed all your exams. Things happen, but the system adds the sums, not I, ma'am. I don't make the rules, I just see them kept. Not here to hold hands, or hear how you wept.

Me: I'm doing my best. Just doesn't seem to go right. Life hits me in episodes, even during the night. What if I dropped a donation in the coffee jar? A little bribe, nothing bizarre.

Lady: Won't work on me. Don't even try. I gave up sweets. No more sugar high. I stopped dieting, what's the use? My figure's admired, no need for excuse.

Me: I wasn't going to flatter or disturb your calm. Just saying, we're both prisoners in the same bureaucratic psalm. I get you. Maybe you get me. You could whisper a word to the Dean, secretly.

Lady: Out! You lazy twit, you drain. Talking to me about "fulfillment" again. We're not here to play fairy godmother. We send folks like you to go get another, Another job. Another taste of pain. Real life, you'll see, will tighten that brain. It's done. You'll be removed. Simple as that. No more excuses. No more chat.

Me: Be a human being, dear lady of fate. Don't make me beg God at the last minute gate.

Lady: Beg all you want. Maybe He'll hear. But don't forget to add: "I don't regret, oh dear."

Me: Regret what? I had a blast. I studied, I partied, I made it last. I hugged these studies like a warm dog at dawn. I wooed them, I danced with them. Nothing felt wrong.

Lady: One day you'll pay. For the debt you drew. You partied hard, and the reckoning grew.

Me: But I came, I saw, I tried, and I don't regret. Studying's my fate. Haven't lost that yet. Maybe I'll switch to an easier track. Just want to stay in this city. On this bar-crawling map. And the cat still wears boots. And dreams wander free. This doesn't end. Not between you and me.

...

Lady: The Dean refuses. That's the end. Your tale loses. Full stop. No appeals. That's the rules, no more excuses.

Me: So what now? My destiny's broke. Guess I'll cook that poor man's sauce I knew before college spoke. Wanted to stay, but fate slammed the gate. So I stayed. And became the janitor. Ain't that great.

---29---

IN THE ARMORY

Me: Hey, long time no see.

Other: Yeah, right. Yesterday. Did they rip your memory out?

Me: I missed you, that's why it felt longer.

Other: You want something, don't you? Smells fishy.

Me: Nah... well, maybe. Since you're in charge of the weapons stash, it's like having all the mushrooms in the forest. Why do you need so many?

Other: The inventory has to match. No fairy tales.

Me: Lend me a rifle for the evening. Or two rifles. And two evenings.

Other: Did I hear that right? That's a new one. Never heard such nonsense before.

Me: What's wrong with it? We'll shoot at cans. Just practice. Then we'll count all the bullets. Return it like new. Polished. Shiny. Like a poem. A burning topic.

Other: Forget it, you maniac. I'm not giving you a weapon. It's government property. Defense defends itself.

Me: Then come with me. Join tonight's party. There'll be a grill. Your weapon. A forest. You know the vibe, you're a soldier.

Other: I'm not coming. Neither is that weapon. Orders are clear. Rules are rules. And with rules, you become a slogan: No firing off duty.

Me: Such false hope... Look around. Hunters shoot. Cops got dirt under their nails. But you won't give one to a friend? From training? We know each other like two bears in a den.

Other: 'Cause you're nuts and a drunk. No telling what would pop into your head. You don't need a gun. Just enjoy your quiet Sunday.

Me: Let's enjoy it together. Armed. We need to train somewhere, even if we've had a few. Think about it: in real war, you won't be sober. You drink to numb it. That's the approach. That's how you go through it. In wars, everyone's drunk. It's a tradition. And we Poles are known for fighting while tipsy. Living for the booze. Growing old with it, or dying young because of it.

Other: I'm not stopping you from drinking. Just not giving you a gun. Lend, sell, borrow? Forget it. Not for you. Military property. Hold on, I got a call. Someone's bugging me again.

...

Me: If you're busy on the phone, I'll just grab the rifle myself. Return it tomorrow. Or the next day. Once I get the itch to shoot. You talk away, enjoy your call. There'll be a party. You're invited. Loud and loaded. At my dacha. After ten. We'll drink till sunrise. Straight up. No rope needed. And the gun, oh, we're not parting with that. We'll see who pulls guard first. Or we'll stage a re-enactment. Battle of Aleppo. And what a finale that'll be.

Other: What are you saying? I can't hear, I'm on the phone. Happens sometimes. Wait here, I'll be right back. Gotta argue with someone over this call.

Me: Cool, I'm taking the mags too. Just in case. I used to visit my cousin a lot. She's all grown up now. And I'm all worn out. I only shoot when I have to. Don't even know why I used to bother.

...

Me: He's still not back. Someone's gotta let me out. Maybe he won't notice. That'd be slick. But hey, it's open! Someone left the door ajar. Beautiful. The plan is unfolding. Now to the car, unnoticed. Off we go. Like it's war. A dream come true. I've got everything ready for conquest. The world is mine, like bullets in a mag.

Other: Where's that party animal? Gone. Poof. That'd be a disaster if he got a weapon and started shooting drunk. Countrywide scandal. Who'd collect the bodies? Where are these guys born, and why do they vanish? Life, chances, fantasies of big kids. Good thing people like me keep their heads on straight. Thanks to us, the world stays free of carnage.

ON A PILGRIMAGE

Second: How's the walk treating you?

Me: It's bearable, though I'm broke too. And you?

Second: I'm mostly hiding from myself.

Me: You mean "I'm hiding."

Second: From that too. Just you wait, stealth in stealth.

Me: So, this pilgrimage. You excited to reach the end?

Second: Not convinced. I'm not pretending to comprehend.

Me: But there'll be cheering crowds at the holy painting.

Second: To be honest, I'm not into that sainting. I walk, I walk. I'll get there, maybe. And maybe they'll zap me, electric, just maybe.

Me: Who'd zap you? Who's pulling that lever?

Second: Beats me. Safer to duck now than be clever.

Me: You're babbling nonsense, just so you know.

Second: You're the one shadowing me, walking toe to toe.

Me: We're walking together. Don't act so sly.

Second: I know what you're thinking. My funeral's nigh.

Me: What? You're nuts. That's some next-level fiction. All this slang, it's pure affliction.

Second: I'm crooked. My slang's all dented, shaggy. Like a gang of brothers, bent, not braggy.

Me: Everyone here's a brother or sister in grace. You, with that mouth, you're from a whole other place.

Second: From a cherry tree. I'm a girl, actually. Just disguised as shrubbery.

Me: I don't judge, but really, tone it down. Sing the hymns. Praise the Lord, not the cherry crown.

Second: But cherries grow for cake, don't they? Add some flavor, even for the halfway cray. I'm the cherry in the pilgrimage stew. A tasty twist in this marching zoo.

Me: I've not seen lunatics here, though you're borderline. Do what's right. Stop crossing the line.

Second: I am! I walk like the rest, just slightly sloped. That's how the cherry tree coped.

Me: Be happy, be grateful. Walk this trail for Him. There's a finish line, even if your vision's dim.

Second: If everyone griped like you, my friend, only fleas would find this world their godsend.

Me: Ideologies, rituals, sci-fi religion. Spiritual seances, holy collisions. The world shocks me, weighs on my brain. You spit on it as I do. In vain. Spitting at the system, oh what a thrill. Surprise, surprise, like a madhouse pill.

Second: How did you know? You called me "occasion." Guessed the twist. Perfect recitation.

Me: I know your kind. Your tricks. Your flare. Your silence. Your jump-scares. Your unblinking stare.

Second: One-nil for you. But I'll come back swinging. My thoughts will crush yours. Hear the choir singing. March on, if you must. When you reach the shrine, you'll be just another ghost, toeing the line.

Me: I won't change for your little tease. Temptation's a trend. It's a fleeting breeze.
Temptation's a log. A mutual waste. We lose time on you, with unholy haste.
Second: Freedom's no loss. Freedom loves a brother's smile, not just his cross.
Me: Timing is everything. Illusions fade. Collegial trash. Celestial cascade. Bodies diagonal.
Stories crude. The finish line's near. Heads up, don't be rude.
Second: Don't mock my severed head that rolls. Your joy is half-earned. Your luck, full of holes.
Me: Maybe so, maybe twisted. But joy, he's my brother. Firmly enlisted.

---31---

AT THE FUNERAL HOME

First: Hello.
Second: For us, it's always a noble hello. What brings you in today, though?
First: Orders from above. My mother just died.
Second: Nothing I can do. You can't replant a tree once it's dried.
First: But trees can be transplanted.
Second: Only when there's life inside. Once it floats off, toss it by the roadside.
First: So I should toss my dead mother by the fence?
Second: Surprises come in many forms, no offense. But we'll handle the burial with care, of course, unless you're poor. Then things may take a different course.
First: Everyone deserves to be buried, rich or poor.
Second: No set date yet. But our prices start at the hard-core. No discounts here. If your dead one was ugly, it'll cost even more.
First: So what should I prepare to pay? Can we do the burial in two days?
Second: Anything's possible, with enough pay. We'll even do her makeup. We like your mother, in a general, respectful way. What kind of ceremony are we looking at?
First: I'm about to lose it. What's religion got to do with that? She wasn't religious. Nobody'd deny it.
Second: See, all coffins come with a cross. That's our default diet. But for non-believers, we have to remove it. That's extra labor. We can't just fake it or smooth it. Instead, we suggest, get this, an emoji face. Or an xD. Screwed in right at the place.
First: What emoji? What the hell is this? There'll be mourners! This isn't a joke, it's serious biz!
Second: I mentioned xD 'cause maybe your mom wanted to be a man. Hid it her whole life, could've been part of her plan. A funeral coming out! You never know. Hope doesn't die just 'cause the soul says go.
First: Absolutely not. My mother was normal. No sewn-on anything. Keep it formal. I want a real funeral.
Second: With the cross removed.
First: If that's too hard, I'll do it myself and save a few bucks.
Second: Not just a few, five hundred for that deluxe. That's our fee for unscrewing the sign. We honor grief, but the price is mine.
First: You've got to be kidding. How much for makeup, then?

Second: Two thousand. No joke, my friend. That's my signature trick. A smiling corpse, we make death feel slick.

First: No thanks for the smiles and all those "upgrades." I want dignity, not disco and backstage raids. I want silence, not back-pocket trades.

Second: How'd you know we stash goods for the black hour? She waited her life. This is her flower. The black hour deserves its own supply. But don't worry, we won't call the cops, no need to lie.

First: Maybe it's the black hour, sure. But my mom on drugs? I'm not so sure. She just stole my cigarettes sometimes. No narcotics. Not in her lines.

Second: That's how it starts, with smokes. In heaven, they see how the ranking works. Trust us, we're pros. Let us handle the prose. We won't deliver any blows.

First: Then give me basic. Straight. Nothing shady. No drugs, no emoji, no cross. Just flowers for a lady. She loved cornflowers. Always sweet when they bloomed.

Second: We'll do it right. We'll arrange the gloom. No cornflowers, but we'll gather some pinecones. Trust us, it'll suit the tomb. Just relax and key in your card digits. PINs and PUKs included, don't fidget. All for mom. We'll handle it well. Unless you die before and end up here yourself.

---32---

IN THE DESERT

First: Greetings, traveler.

Second: A moment, he appears, doesn't vanish ever.

First: Where are you dragging yourself to?

Second: Home. I'll drag through.

First: How far from here is your goal?

Second: The far end of the desert, whole.

First: Still a bit of a stretch. No shrine along the way, no soul to fetch.

Second: I'm not waiting for shrines or any confession. I keep my mind on water, my only obsession.

First: Well, let me comfort you a bit. I've got some to spare. I'll sell you some, unless you drink it all then and there.

Second: I won't drink it all, no need to freak. How much for a liter, and can I take it this week?

First: Two camels, or your wife. Depends what you hand me for this liquid life. I'll take it fast, before you swing or dive.

Second: You must be joking. A liter or two, for my freedom too? No camels, no wife, what kind of future would that brew?

First: But your thirst will be quenched. One more breath, and you're drenched.

Second: But what would I be worth then, with nothing to own? Like an old deck of cards, all bent and overthrown.

First: This is a chance. I say it and I say it again. It's the desert. I didn't design the terrain. It's as it was, for thousands of years. And you've still got a long road ahead with all your fears.

Second: True. It's far. But this isn't some deal, it's some religious ordeal.

First: I don't sell icons or beads. Holy water? Much more steep. I've just got dirty stuff. The kind you gulp and weep.

Second: I don't want lashes or to be demeaned. I had better plans for life, or so I dreamed.

First: Just buy the water. I'm being real. It'll go down smoother than a bike wheel. Without a wife. Without camels. You'll ride so free. Nothing to drag. Nothing left to see.

Second: I don't carry camels on bikes, nor my wife, you see. What are you even talking about? Speak clearly to me.

First: So, deal? Trade? Time for a shift? A change? And maybe you'll find your luck might lift.

Second: Fine, give me the water. Take the wife. I'll pay the price. Let it ruin my life.

First: But note, she's got tiny breasts. That's just half a liter, no more, no less.

Second: Don't complain. She's young and bright. That's a whole liter, priced just right. You say it's a loss? You're losing your sight.

First: But I need a shadow under her bust. Otherwise, I'm just desert dust.

Second: That's your own invention. But you didn't change my direction. You take her, no shade, no vow, or we part ways, here and now.

First: Let it go. Desert extortionists, you make me cry.

---33---

AT THE VEHICLE INSPECTION STATION

First: Hello there. I've come for a check-up stamp.

Second: We'll see what verdict this test will clamp.

First: Everything's working fine, I swear. This technical review'll be a laugh, I swear.

Second: I see nothing funny here, at first glance.

First: Just making light of this inspection dance.

Second: First look already says: not great. But let's dive deeper, don't tempt fate.

First: Bodywork can be hammered out flat.

Second: Please drive over the pit. Follow the line, just like that.

First: A yearly check doesn't hurt, after all.

Second: Leave it in neutral. We'll see if it stands tall. And whether a stamp you'll take home, we'll find out after it's done.

First: Brakes were replaced not long ago. I wanted it perfect, on point, you know.

Second: Handbrake cable snapped. Right off the bat. Brake discs worn down to the mat. Metal-on-metal, pads completely gone. That's how this list of faults goes on.

First: No way. Put your glasses on, my friend. Machines can fail, this one's pretend. It still brakes. It squeals, but stops like a dream. German precision. Bavarian beam.

Second: No LPG noted in the registration. Installed illegally, against the regulation.

First: My brother-in-law's a pro, did it after work. Runs smooth, no turbo jerk.

Second: Low beam's out. Turn signal's dead.

First: Oh come on, such tiny things. Not something to dread.

Second: Gearbox sounds like it's dying. Grinding loud. Press the clutch and it groans out proud.

First: That's how the Germans made it, so you feel the ride. Feel the machine. Let the fear subside.

Second: And the windshield's cracked, a spiderweb break. That crack's a threat, make no mistake. One bump, and it spreads. Disaster on the go.

First: We're close to victory though. Don't let small flaws dim what still glows. It all mostly works. Like a molehill dug by pros. Here, a little bottle, to make your evening bright. Just give it a stamp. Don't ask me to bend over right. The paint still shines. Acceleration squeals, kids stop to stare. Like a Formula One car, tuned with flair. Time's the only one bending it slightly.

Second: I didn't even mention the rust holes, rightly. But as for stamping this wreck, I nearly lost my mind. I will never sign off on this, not even blind. Safe driving is basic, my man. With this, a crash is part of the plan. No stamp. No blessing. Go try your luck elsewhere. Best if you scrap it. Stop pretending it's fair.

First: This car is my love. Though it doesn't duel the new crowd. And love, you know, is blind, it's proud. It blinded me so much I didn't see, how her technical state was dragging me down, quietly.

---34---

AT THE TICKET BOOTH

First: Hello. How much for a concert ticket?

Second: 100 zł a pop. This ain't just some cheap gimmick.

First: I'll give you 50. For two, you see.

Second: Seems like your brain decided to flee.

First: You won't sell them all anyway. Take this as beer money for the day.

Second: That's not how it goes.

First: Same with the weather. Till it up and froze.

Second: Everyone comes in on the same conditions.

First: That's what you all say, then comes the favoritism traditions. This one's a buddy, that one's a pal. And soon tickets fly out cheap to every gal.

Second: Not here. 100 per ticket. Final, dear.

First: For that, it's not worth even standing. All spots are taken, no cover from the sun demanding. Nothing but crowd and noise and pain.

Second: That's what builds atmosphere. You're buying thrill, not disdain.

First: Alright, fine, I'll pay 70 for two. Let me lose. These are the times. I accept the ruse.

Second: 200 for two. Our price won't move. Famous band, long lines, birthday groove. People are pumped, the mood is pure flame. Not moaning around like you, shifting blame.

First: I just need to know I spent wisely today. 100 for both, and I'll walk away.

Second: No chance. 200. No change, no play.

First: 120. That's my final deal. 60 a piece. Doesn't that appeal?

Second: It's an international band, half of Europe they crossed. And you're still bargaining over a few coins tossed?

First: Let me at least feel like I scored a bargain. Not like strawberries sold wholesale in a market garden. Prices sky-high, and the manners sting. Nothing charming about this ticket thing.

Second: What exactly was rude in what I said? We've been patient, not gone off our head.

First: 200. How many times must it be repeated? This banter's getting me overheated.

Second: It's the set price, we're not retreating.

First: I know your pattern, I've seen this game. Eventually we compromise. Call it by name. A golden middle. A handshake. A grin. Not this pressure cooker I'm in.

Second: 200 for two.

First: You're looping like a scratched cassette. But I won't pay that much, you can bet. It's an attack on my freedom, you see.

Second: Then kindly leave. We're done here. People behind you aren't full of plea.

First: I'm not like the rest. I'm better, unique. Got a reverse gear, not just full-speed freak. I see what I pay for. I pay with intent. I drive with feeling, not just engine scent.

Second: You mean, you don't burn out the engine, not you don't tremble the engine.

First: Same thing. Alright, I'll give 250 for two. Bleeding me dry, but what can I do. Just not 200. Don't expect that from me. I won't conform. Set my dignity free. Here's 250. Let's close this deal. Don't leave me hanging in panic and fear I feel. I'm not like those guys, born to obey. You say 200, they pay, like lambs every day.

Second: We don't have change from 300. You'll be owed a coin.

First: Eh, keep the coin. You've got to lose a bit, to rejoin.

---35---

AT THE AQUARIUM

Child: Dad, is that shark real?

Dad: Of course it is. Only the weirdest things in here, for real.

Child: But I think it's battery-powered.

Dad: Where did you get such nonsense showered?

Child: Well, it doesn't eat people, and it should.

Dad: There are no people in the tank. Shark's not misunderstood.

Child: But if I jumped in, would it eat me or just swim around kindly?

Dad: Hard to say. Might not like your taste. Or regret it, blindly.

Child: Then I'll try.

Dad: Don't you dare.

Child: I'm just thinking it through, I swear.

Dad: You've got many virtues. Sharks like people without virtues. They're easier to chew.

Child: But how do they know? Is it something in tailbone shape or toe?

Dad: You nailed it. It's exactly that. So don't waste time, onward, stat!

Child: Nooo, I want to go to the shark!

Dad: Not my fault if you miss your mark. Sharks are here just for a while. But you're here forever. Don't stab yourself for style. You won't sleep well.

Child: Me or the shark? Actually, when do sharks sleep? Do they have beds, like humans keep?

Dad: Their bed is the seabed, murky and dark. They bury in the muck, classic shark trademark. You won't see them snore, it's true.

Child: And when they wake to feed, what do they do?

Dad: Then they show up, but only for a sec. Usually after biting something's neck. That's your tip of the day.

Child: So we're jumping in with the shark, okay?

Dad: I see that satisfied face of yours forming. Mine wouldn't be. I'd be the one storming. Fleeing, refusing to surrender. Staying far from danger's blender.

Child: You don't get it. I'd just remove its batteries.

Dad: That's a whole new level of insanity.

Child: Sharks are kid stuff. Just part of the game.

Dad: I'm afraid you're wrong. That shark's no plush frame. It'll eat you and end your vacation. Just like that. No more station.

Child: Fine. I'll vacation far from the shark's location. I like relaxing more than risky flirtation.

Dad: Good. No more nonsense. Let's go see the octopus.

Child: I don't want to. Everyone in that tank looks wild and ominous. I want the shark. Dad, please. Let me in.

Dad: And that's how family tragedies begin.

Child: What tragedies?

Dad: Wailing. News headlines. Disasters within.

Child: Just because you won't let me in with the shark? I'll tell Mom. And Granny'll hear my remark.

Dad: I guess I'll have to live with that, no matter how stark.

Child: There is no life that starts with "I guess" as a mark.

Dad: For me, your safety comes first, you know.

Child: And for me, adventure is life's true glow.

Dad: I won't let you end up in a shark's jaw.

Child: He'll run out of batteries and nap with me in awe.

Dad: Sleeping with sharks, now that's new.

Child: A cuddle buddy. My dream come true.

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AT THE SCOUT CAMP

Child: When are we going to learn how to make fire?

Scout Leader: First, we fish. So change that inquiry, sire.

Child: But I have no intention to fish. I'm a vegetarian, that's my wish.

Scout Leader: What? You won't eat fish with us all?

Child: No fire? How will you cook tofu at all?

Scout Leader: What tofu?

Child: We'll have to gather it in the forest. It's got to grow in a toforest.

Scout Leader: Turf. But tofu doesn't grow in turf, believe me.

Child: Then let's cook bigos. Only mushrooms inside. Kosher cabbage too, nature-approved pride.

Scout Leader: You won't find cabbage in the woods either. But the river has fish. That's where you cast your tether.

Child: I'm not eating fish. Not now. Not ever. I want to light a fire and find needles, very clever.

Scout Leader: You'll find pine needles, but not the sewing kind. What's up with you? I'm losing my mind.

Child: I need to sew a badge. "Tofu Forager Class." Not the "Fishing Clown" that'll never pass.

Scout Leader: There's no tofu forager badge. Tofu doesn't grow in turf. As I've said, it's not a mirth. I should've had a word with your mother. How will I feed you, if you'll eat no other?

Child: No animals, no birds, no fish. Just tofu. Or veggie spring rolls, now that's a dish! With soy sauce drizzle, it's a divine spark. But needs fire. Hot rolls like a godly lark.

Scout Leader: Where would I find spring rolls in the Bieszczady mountains? Unless it's on some survival challenge with moral fountains. No way this will fly. No way I'll make peace with your tofu cry.

Child: Oh, a branch. We could burn it.

Scout Leader: Burn all the branches you want, there's no veggie feast. This is the forest, son, not a vegan priest.

Child: Then let's make Neapolitan pizza. I've got one in my bag. We'll bake it up quickly, it won't lag.

Scout Leader: I don't know how to build a pizza oven from moss. Or decayed pine logs. Not even if I were boss. What else is in that backpack of yours?

Child: Sweet potatoes. They sleep better when baked in campfire snores.

Scout Leader: You throw those, not cook them. Potatoes go in the ash, not sweet imposters you chuck in a flash.

Child: Mom made dill sauce for them, but I forgot it. She kinda kicked me out. We had a big hit.

Scout Leader: What did you do to upset her so?

Child: I told her to eat the chickpea patty herself. I wanted a real soy one, not that fake health shelf. She went old-school. I wanted gourmet. She acted like a tyrant, keeping tofu at bay.

Scout Leader: Tyrant, or tyrant-ess? Yours is a hard life, like a sign on a door that always says: distress. Always hung up, always pulled down. Never repaired, just tossed around.

Child: I don't get it. But my nutritionist said: "Potatoes are turtle food." Not for people, unless you like to brood.

Scout Leader: Kids don't play with matches. I'll make the fire. You go with the others to the river. Let's admire.

Child: But what do I expect from the river?

Scout Leader: Expect to be shaken. To stop being clever. That nature will wake you and make you wise. Not act like some tofu-eco surprise.

Child: If you tried ramen, you'd understand me. That veggie food is tasty, not bland, see?

Scout Leader: Even ramen should have meat inside. Without animals, no real Japanese pride.

Child: I don't get what this camp is for.

Scout Leader: To break you free. That's the score. The highest badge will go to the one who sets you free, a sage with spine and clarity.

Child: But I am already free.

Scout Leader: Cold as a frozen fish, you see. While we catch fresh ones, sharing the truth of the land. That eternal nature's laws are still in command. Not these new-age lies, all soft and polite. "Be yourself"? Sure, but don't start a fight. Be real, not a trend. Be grounded, not pretend.

---37---

AT THE DOCTOR'S

Pensioner: Good morning, I'm here for some medicine.

Doctor: What kind, ma'am? Be honest, don't begin fibbin'.

Pensioner: Whatever you prescribe. The stronger, the better. But let's keep that whisper light as a feather.

Doctor: What's the ailment, then?

Pensioner: My old friend left me. That's the pain again.

Doctor: That's a matter for the church, not a chart. Here we treat what ails the heart... well, medically speaking.

Pensioner: But meds are free since July! For us seniors. Means less stealing, that's why.

Doctor: Who's stealing?

Pensioner: The government. That's my reply.

Doctor: Still, meds should match a diagnosis. If nothing's wrong...

Pensioner: Then jot down a prognosis. Alzheimer's, perhaps, sometimes I forget what I last did. Or where I last hid.

Doctor: That's not quite Alzheimer's. Any sleep trouble, ma'am?

Pensioner: Sure. I fall asleep in half an hour. I'd prefer instant, for my family's sake and power.

Doctor: Hip pain, maybe?

Pensioner: I bumped it once. But it healed fine, you see.

Doctor: Headaches, perhaps?

Pensioner: Those who lead have trouble with that, perhaps.

Doctor: Hot flashes? Cold sweats?

Pensioner: That would be real regret.

Doctor: Maybe vision issues?

Pensioner: I've got good genes, no tissues.

Doctor: Hearing then? All sounds are clear?

Pensioner: I can hear mice dancing in the barn from here.

Doctor: So just forgetfulness?

Pensioner: I forgot what I had for breakfast last month. That's stress.

Doctor: Fine, I'll write you something strong. With a supplement too. And something to calm you all day long.

Pensioner: Anything for wisdom?

Doctor: Ask Athena. She'll know the system.

Pensioner: I want to solve crosswords better. The big ones. No stutter.

Doctor: We'll stimulate the brain, like poetic trainers. Ever written verse?

Pensioner: No, worse.

Doctor: Then you'll start now, wisdom first. I'm not from here, to be frank. I forget faces. Everything hurts. I need a boy with crutches just to walk to banks. But I'll write your scripts. On the house, you'll see. Senior care is what's free.

Pensioner: Then maybe you should see a doc yourself, respectfully.

Doctor: Oh no, not yet! I'll wait until the meds are free for me. Then I'll cure it all, on paper, officially.

Pensioner: No one hands out papers saying you're healthy, though.

Doctor: Unless you need a job, then fake it, as you go.

Pensioner: Sick ones diagnosing others, that's rich.

Doctor: They'll stamp anything. Health's just a glitch. Not me, of course, I jest. But folks like me, we know best. To your health.

Pensioner: But I didn't sneeze.

Doctor: Still, to your health. May it age with grace and ease.

Pensioner: I don't want healthy aging, that's just poor timing. I'd rather be sick, get meds, and keep climbing. Then people feel sorry, they stop and they chat. A sickness gives purpose. What's more real than that?

Doctor: Then I wish you buckets of poor health, no jest.

Pensioner: Finally, a clever word that truly impressed. Gave me such joy, now my head hurts, I confess.

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BUYING A USED CAR

First: Hello, I came to see the car from the ad.

Second: Should've called first, no phone at hand?

First: I live nearby, thought I'd drop in.

Second: And maybe I'll drop my whole schedule in the bin?

First: So, will you show me the car?

Second: Sure, come on. It's the village's brightest star. My pride and joy, my shining feat.

First: So you had to fix it up quite a bit?

Second: Nah, not fixed, just expensive. No welding tricks or defensive.

First: Looks like brand new, the paint gleams like a dream. Bet every child stares, like a popsicle team.

Second: The ladies, my friend. This car turns heads. Step on the gas, watch what romance spreads.

First: What's the fuel usage?

Second: Tiny. Like a tear in a kitten's eye. Costs you nothing, give it a try.

First: Engine size?

Second: Two-liter beast. You'll fly like wind from the east.

First: Insurance must bite.

Second: Bite? Nah, light. Costs pennies, it's German, built tight. Precision-built by beer-drinkers, not our clumsy thinkers.

First: And the mileage?

Second: Barely touched. Just warmed up, not rushed. Only driven by gentlemen in suits.

First: Meaning?

Second: Fancy Germans. CEOs in polished boots.

First: Any crashes?

Second: Only cuddles. Price is low 'cause it's imported, no troubles.

First: Imports are cheaper, that's a new trick. Really not even a single nick?

Second: As I love my wife, and don't cheat at all, it's untouched. Though don't measure paint thickness, lest illusions fall. Germans like thick coats, see, a factory wall.

First: Something's fishy. That oil puddle?

Second: That's from my junker, the one in the huddle. This one's pristine. A gem, a pearl. Say otherwise and I'll hurl.

First: Your vocabulary's suspiciously slick.

Second: From emigration, mate. I've seen the market, quick pick.

First: Any guarantee?

Second: Sure. Until the gate. After that, it's all fate.

First: What if it's not as you claimed?

Second: Then it's fate's fault. Or the stars misnamed. Buy it, and you'll see what German magic's made of.

First: Can we talk price?

Second: Want more thrills? You're really into dice. Floor mats included, brand new, a steal. Enough to tempt any rookie to seal the deal.

First: But I'm no rookie.

Second: That's why it's perfect for you. Buy it, and mornings will feel brand new. The gents will adore you, and so will the dames. Like Heaven's showroom, minus the flames.

First: I'm gay, though.

Second: Even better. Car lovers are seekers, no matter the sweater.

First: So... wanna grab coffee sometime?

Second: Ehh... truth is, I've got errands. Maybe next lifetime.

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ON THE SPACESHIP

First: Hello there, I also bought a ticket to space.

Second: Getting there and back isn't always a grace.

First: What do you mean by that?

Second: That it's not all like the dreams we've had.

First: What's wrong with this ship exactly?

Second: The pilot, and that's just the first anomaly. I chatted him up, turns out he's Ukrainian. I've seen those under my building, same situation.

First: But maybe he's a specialist.

Second: Like the whole crew, doesn't speak English. And the manuals are in English. But hey, not my business.

First: So the ship was made by Brits?

Second: Nah. Belarusians. At least they're white, I guess. Could've hired Eskimos instead. Or hunters. But no, here we are. Metal on metal. Bolts over blubber.

First: Sounds like you've got some prejudice. I paid a lot for the ticket. Had to pawn my wife's heels. People fly. They return. Maybe the sales guys had some deals.

Second: What kind of deal? That it's dangerous? Or some sort of salvation? To me, you've got to be stupid. Or fine with dying with a touch of foundation.

First: It must be safe. Otherwise, they wouldn't advertise it so loud. All those smiling faces. A shiny cosmic crowd.

Second: Americans did the ads. You trust their grin? That's like hoping truth falls out of a magician's tin.

First: So we've got something in common with the States. Let's just go. My confidence awaits.

Second: You know we don't even have parachutes here? If something happens, it's just... poof. No bunker, no fear.

First: You're awfully negative. Why are you even on board? Doesn't seem like you wanted this. Or did fate pull a cord?

Second: A bet, my dear sir. With my darling wife. One of us would fly, the other gets an easier life. She'll be a widow. Young and proud. I lost. She laughed. Signed the crowd.

First: I don't believe you. This all feels too fancy. Too fairytale. We're flying. We'll return. It's business, not some jail. They wouldn't risk it. They want profit, not death.

Second: Sure, profit, in bad reviews and lost breath. Look at my wife, smiling like she won the lottery.

First: I think there's no turning back. We'll see space, return, have a snack.

Second: You sound naïve, classic Polish root. Believing once you've paid. What a sweet suit. You think death's not expensive? You'll see.

First: I won't die. Not planning to. Russians know space, I trust what they do. I'll see what's mine, I'll float and I'll land. Unlike your tribe, who don't understand. Always grumpy, always bitter. I'm the only one who sees things clearer.

Second: That's right, because unlike you, I at least know a good joke when I hear her.

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DRIVING LESSON

Instructor: First gear, please. Let's go.

Student: But... where exactly are we going though?

Instructor: Straight ahead. I'll tell you more later.

Student: My head's spinning already from all this chaos.

Instructor: We haven't even moved, and you're already complaining.

Student: Because I don't know what's waiting at the end of this road.

Instructor: Clutch and gas. Release the brake.

Student: Yesterday I saw a pleco stuck in the mud.

Instructor: What are you even talking about?

Student: It just popped into my head.

Instructor: You're made of nothing but random memories. And now the engine died. Try again. But don't ride the clutch or you'll fry it.

Student: It's making a weird bzzz sound.

Instructor: Because you're revving it in neutral. That won't get us far, just so you know.

Student: There's too much to do at once. Gas, clutch, brake... Why can't they just simplify the setup? Like building with cinder blocks. Nothing else. Back then it was hotter and simpler.

Instructor: You know as much about building as you do about driving. And keep both hands on the wheel, stop messing with the indicators.

Student: You're being mean. And not understanding. Feminists would've smacked you by now.

Instructor: Good thing they're not here. You'd probably run them over. Then sue me for discrimination.

Student: From the grave maybe, 'cause if I ran them over, it'd be a done deal.

Instructor: I just wish you'd actually start driving. And... it stalled again. Start over, please.

Student: Maybe the battery's weak. The lights are on, see?

Instructor: When the engine dies, the lights do come on.

Student: But I'm starting it, not killing it!

Instructor: The lights still flicker, get excited again.

Student: You're the one getting excited. No sympathy for my struggle.

Instructor: What struggle? It's just driving. Headlights, up-down.

Student: But it's bright outside. What's the point of headlights?

Instructor: Didn't you read the rules? Lights must be on. Just like rocks are hard.

Student: I actually prefer riding my bicycle.

Instructor: You know what? I think I'm starting to like you. And... stalled again.

Student: It's that airplane. I saw it flying and got distracted.

Instructor: Look how it just strutted in, showing off.

Student: Alright, I'm starting over. This lesson is a joke. And now the car's jerking. I can feel it in my lungs.

Instructor: Bouncy starts. You have to release the clutch gently, not like you're tossing bricks.

Student: You know what? I'll just buy a monthly bus pass. And your whole driving lesson? I couldn't give a damn.

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BEFORE THE PARACHUTE JUMP

Rookie: I don't think I can do this.

Instructor: Relax, I've got patience in surplus.

Rookie: But it's so high up.

Instructor: Just like the ocean is so deep down.

Rookie: I looked out the window just now, and nearly burned out my brow.

Instructor: That's only three thousand meters up. You won't need two sweaters, just some guts.

Rookie: We're flying and flying... and nothing is changing. Whether I jump or not, still human I'm remaining.

Instructor: What are you rambling on about? Nonsense, full throttle. Just wait and see me jump, it'll be colossal.

Rookie: Wait, with me? Mid-air like that?

Instructor: In full flight, straight into fright. Just a moment of panic, then smooth like a kite.

Rookie: But I don't want to panic. I don't want to fall.

Instructor: The fall is delightful. Pure thrill, pure awe. Staying in the plane would be a pity, a bore.

Rookie: I like flying. Planes, I mean. Not dangling upside down with my stomach in between.

Instructor: You'll remember this for life. What a gift, the adrenaline, the dive.

Rookie: I'd rather collect stamps or coins instead. Not fall headfirst and wind up dead.

Instructor: Your wife got you this as a surprise. Parachute jump. With skies in your eyes.

Rookie: She was hoping the chute might fail, that's my read. I trust her. But I still don't want to bleed.

Instructor: Old age doesn't hold many thrills, my friend. Here's excitement, flight and a beautiful end.

Rookie: That's not comforting. Man, get a grip. Think. People die from this, I've seen clips.

Instructor: Get ready. We're climbing to jump height. Then it's go-time, alright?

Rookie: Not me. I'm not going. Four and a half thousand meters? I'd rather keep rowing. No need for these stunts.

Instructor: You're going, pal. Get strapped in. No ifs, no buts.

Rookie: You're insane. You've lost your mind. I want to live. Back home, where life is kind. I want a kid. A respectable career. I want to shoot bears, with a camera, I mean. A click, not fear.

Instructor: You'll be taking pics of your own terrified face. You'll see. It'll be over fast, just a quick embrace. Wife will be proud. Flash of the eye. And poof, you're the sky guy.

Rookie: No, no. I'm not jumping. No way. I'll faint. Can't see straight. I quit. You can have the film roll. Take your jokes and fly solo. No bouquets for me. I'll take a sedative on the ground. If the plane lands, I'll still be around. I'm a man of reason.

Instructor: Time to jump. Don't look down just yet. Mid-air, then you can fret. It's now or never. 3... 2... 1... toss the coin together.

Rookie: No way, man. You need meds, hardcore ones, for your head.

Instructor: And jump...

Rookie: But I had dreams, Jesus of Nazareth! Let me live, bless me with breath!

Wife: Rafa! Wake up! Stop screaming like a nut. This ain't a church. Jesus doesn't live in every rut. Quit your babbling and get out of bed. It's time for work, and wipe that sweat off your head. Were you dreaming you were at a construction site again? Must've been one hell of a flight.

Rookie: I landed. Finally.

SANDBAG CONVERSATION

Shouts: Guys, it's a flood, bring the sandbags, no tricks. We're saving the houses, hurry, and quick! Our belongings must stay, no time to delay. Don't just stand there, grab a sack right away! Lay down the barrier, brick by brick. Fast and smooth, and nice and thick. The water is rising, threatening the land. Only sandbags can make a stand. We build like sentences, syllable by sound. Bag after bag, tightly bound. Fast and dense, without a gap. So what matters won't sink in the watery trap.

Bag 1: I wanted to build a house, be part of a home. Be useful and proud, not swallowed by foam. Now I'll vanish beneath the tide, such a waste. All that mud, never even laid in place.

Bag 2: I was meant for a sandbox, for kids and for fun. To soak in the sun, not to drown on the run. No one asked me, they just tossed me ahead. Even some lady screamed till my threads turned red.

Bag 3: I was for tiling, a job neat and tight. Meant to hold patterns, keep floors looking right. I was made to last, not get washed away. The river will take me, no time to say.

Bag 4: I trained for the long jump, to catch flying feet. An athletic support, a moment so sweet. Now I'm dumped in the current, what a mess. Instead of applause, I get sogginess.

Bag 5: I was promised a place with fish and delight. In an aquarium glowing with color and light. But they flung me straight in, no care, no flair. Didn't open the bag, just drowned me there.

Bag 6: I was destined for art, an installation so fine. To be praised by the pretty, admired in line. "Exceptional sand," they'd whisper and nod. Now I'm sludge in the river, how tragic, how odd.

Bag 7: I was headed to a beach, to join kin and kin. To bask in the warmth, feel the salt on my skin. But no, I stayed bagged, and dumped in a stream. That wasn't my journey, nor was it my dream.

Bag 8: I'm sand for use, and I don't complain. Let others whimper, I carry the strain. I don't seek fame, or a stylish role. I help where I can, and that makes me whole. They took me from the river, and now I'm back in. But they treated me kindly, that's still a win.

Voice: 8 bags. 8 tales. All used to protect. What matters is service, not glam or effect. When the flood's gone, they'll return to their place. Fulfilling their purpose, bringing a face. A smile, a thought, a value in time. Not chasing illusions or glory that climbs. Priorities count, not lofty dreams. Greatness often just splits the seams.

Every bag tells a tale, each with a part. And one of them lives in your very heart. Which one are you? Which will you be? Were you already, or will you see? You'll become yourself, eventually.

OLD AGE

First: I'm ninety-five. Everyone's already gone. Wife, brothers, parents, friends, every one. They all got bored of living, gave in. I'm the only one left, worn thin. Time has drained me, made me ache. But death won't come, no matter what face I make.

Second: Then jump off a bridge, or turn on the gas. Why stretch the torture? Let this phase pass. Sooner or later, you'll curse life, no doubt. Might as well now, just check yourself out.

First: I walk to the park, I sit and I stare. The trees lean over, the kids play fair. The children run wild, dogs at their side. I watch how they giggle, and how they collide.

Second: Strange children aren't comfort, just passing noise. You're tired of life, admit it, old boy.

First: An old man's life stumbles like his knee. And laughs in your face with a tone that's snide and free.

Second: I tell you again, and I won't stop. Let the bitterness rise, let the curtain drop. Everything's got its time, yours has passed. That clock stopped ticking, too slow, too fast. You come here to chat, but the end is nigh. We'll face it together, you and I. You won't die alone, soldier, stand proud. Rewind the tape, wear the shroud.

First: That's what you want, to drag me to death. But your nasty talk just steals my breath.

Second: Talking never killed anyone, come on. What if it worked, and pain was gone? You'd be at peace, no more pain or dread. You're lonely already, what's left unsaid?

First: Sunrises that smile down on me. Trees and shrubs that lean in gently. Yells of the youth, lovers that fight. It's all so lovely, life is a light. It's not gutting fish or slicing spleen. It's raw, it's messy, but oh, it's clean.

Second: You're spouting nonsense, what a flair. Old man's babble, stale as air. Old age is cruel, I've studied it right. It haunts you with youth, then blocks the light. It's a hobbling curse with no control. A tragic collapse, a sinking soul. Nothing invites you to stay on this ride. You're alone, like a hole in the classified.

First: But the whole world is alone, that's no sin. I am the world, with all that's within. I am the joy, the sunbeam's flicker. Though old and stiff, I'm still a kicker.

Second: Give it a rest, this tragic parade. You're no wedding waltz, no sharp-edged blade. You're not the dawn's kiss, you're not its theme. You're just the world's exhausted dream.

First: Old age is harsh, it truly hits. But I like its sorrow, its moody fits. It moves me deeply, and then I know. I've not much time, I've got to show. To be right here, to fight the Now. To hear the fly's buzz, wipe sweat from my brow. To check if my scarf's dry on the hook. To ask for the price of a wrench, then look. To laugh at what the world laughs at too. And to laugh at you, for what you do.

Second: What are you laughing at, exactly?

First: At you, for trying to leave so tactfully. For begging me to desert this scene. For listing reasons, desperate and keen. But I like it here, among the crowd. I talk to hot tea, and tell it to cool down. I talk to cold tea, and say warm it again. That's how I restart joy now and then.

Second: Joy? Do you even know what it means? Old age's robbed you of all your dreams. It's blinded your logic, dulled your flame. You had your turn, now end the game.

First: Joy is a word that floats in the air. Joy is a coin a child holds with care. Joy is a glass of water that's clear. And freedom of choice, that's joy, my dear.

Second: Then how about this, you're already dead. I'm Death. You can't hide or be misled. I tried to help, to see you through. But you won't come nicely, now I'm through. I'm taking you now, straight to Hell. You've got a record, and sins as well.

First: Then I've nothing to say, except this one thing. I don't give a damn, not even a wing. Save your speeches and petty deceit. I'm going to the park, where the trees greet. Then I'll visit my

wife, light a candle, kneel. Say a prayer, remember what's real. So one day I'll vanish and still know the way. Never forget her, come what may. That evil only grants us breaks on holiday.

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IN HEAVEN

Poet: Jesus, how's all of Heaven constructed?

Jesus: You know it well, no need to be instructed.

Poet: But I ask why it works this way, not another.

Jesus: Good and evil, that always stirs a brother.

Poet: Even before you walked the Earth, it all looked the same.

Jesus: Up here in Heaven, it's always the same game.

Poet: And who cleans up when someone makes a mess?

Jesus: That story's from a crystal screen, no less. Everyone cleans their own mistake. Conscience tells you what road to take. If you said something wrong, you'll know. Even here in Heaven, that's just how things go.

Poet: And if someone doesn't know you, or worse, never prays, are they sold in some shop on discount days?

Jesus: What shop? No one's forced to pray. In Heaven, you merge with God, not like Russia, okay?

Poet: You don't like the Russians, huh?

Jesus: I never said that, bruh.

Poet: Thought I had you, I was sure I'd trap you.

Jesus: I see no difference between the flags. My work's with souls, not waving rags.

Poet: A good soul stirs the heart, right?

Jesus: As long as no evil pushes it into the night.

Poet: So what are the rewards, and when do they come?

Jesus: Bliss is the prize, forever, for some. Eternal joy, always in supply. Luckily, no expiry date applies.

Poet: And what if someone doesn't enjoy the place? Gets bored of joy, wants out of grace?

Jesus: Then they fall in the void, total abyss. But honestly, that's never happened, pure bliss.

Poet: And if someone wants to peek at Earth's news?

Jesus: Earth's full of thieves and... girls with tattoos. But seriously, only angels may descend. Intervene. Cool the air. Help it mend. Regular souls stay in Unity's flame. Rejoicing, glowing, it's never the same.

Poet: Angels are different. Can you become one of them?

Jesus: It's the highest honor, Heaven's emblem. If you're pure, changed through love alone. White on your own, and grown from stone. You'll receive more, and angel you'll be. In silence and beauty, you'll serve, you'll see.

Poet: So angels really walk the Earth again?

Jesus: Depends on the task, but yes, now and then. No need to debate or hold a poll.

Poet: And they meddle in human affairs as a whole?

Jesus: Of course. Otherwise, it's all fake. Earth must serve its purpose, to give and take. A proving ground, a place for choice. To come near God, to lose your voice.

Poet: You mean drawing near to the Divine?

Jesus: What else would it be? That's the grand design.

Poet: I don't judge, I just inquire. I teach, I don't aim or conspire.

Jesus: Then learn this one truth, and hold it steady. God is love, not just when you're ready. To love is to live. To love is to crave. Peace and calm, it's how you behave. The rest you'll figure on your own wave.

Poet: And if I wanted to help someone down there? Watch them grow fat in a kitchen chair?

Jesus: A soul gains or loses by their own dance. It's not your job, not even by chance. There are angels, and God in the heart. A soul in Heaven lives its own part. It glows like a fire that will never depart.

Poet: Are there folks up here who didn't believe in the skies?

Jesus: Of course, if their hearts were clean, no lies. If they listened to conscience, that's what matters. God shapes the faithless too, like clay that shatters. Faith doesn't count for much, you see. It may be tiny, but still sets you free.

Poet: And if you had to tell a joke? Is there laughter in Heaven's cloak?

Jesus: A joke is what you're worth, dark and dry. It lasts forever, doesn't even try.

Poet: Your sense of humor's a bit dead.

Jesus: Comes from Heaven's heights instead. Values shift, they twist and sway. Until they reach Heaven's gates and stay.

Poet: So in Heaven, you can't change who you are?

Jesus: Haven't noticed, you can still go far. Into something better, if you mean it from the start. But that's a joke too, everything here is art. In the end, you find out what you're worth, but not with a broken heart.

Poet: That's interesting, though it feels kinda dull. Everything's same-same, not so full. I hoped for contrast, a little mess. Change makes life spicy, I must confess.

Jesus: Then you always have the other address.

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IN HELL

Poet: So how does it all work down here in your lair?

Satan: You'll be surprised, the circumstances play fair.

Poet: Is it about flesh, or complaints laid bare?

Satan: Warmth, that's what we've got plenty to spare.

Poet: It's pretty stuffy here, no air con or breeze.

Satan: In Hell we've got different features to please.

Poet: You hold the tempted, you run full-time?

Satan: All day, all night. No breaks, no prime.

Poet: Isn't it true that bad folks become worse, turn to evil spirits and deepen the curse?

Satan: Nah, Hell's full of regular folks gone astray. They messed up a little, then slipped all the way.

Poet: Or they signed up here of their own free will?

Satan: Yeah, those are the eager ones, first at the grill.

Poet: And what's the reward for those who arrive?

Satan: They get dismissed, they fade, not thrive.

Poet: Any benefits? Anything real they get?

Satan: Hell is betrayal, of good, don't forget. They didn't stand firm, they bent, they broke. And so, in this fire, they vanish in smoke.

Poet: But how can goodness knock someone flat?

Satan: If they're always unsatisfied, imagine that.

Poet: They wait for a better good, one they think they deserve?

Satan: Exactly, they had it all, but still they swerve.

Poet: That's a strange version of Hell you explain. Just grumblers, complainers, who live in disdain.

Satan: But that's how it is, it comes on repeat. Everyone gets to know Hell's heat. Not all stay, some mistake it for Heaven. That's the thing with Hell, confused, yet even.

Poet: So all it takes is just to enjoy?

Satan: Not so fast, you can enjoy being a bad boy. And wish that goodness would just end. Some root for us, thinking we'll defend. They think evil's golden, served on a plate. That's not how it works, it's a different fate.

Poet: So you don't offer perks to those who assist?

Satan: Oh, they can help, but no gains exist. Don't count on fairness, Hell doesn't do fair. Just mockery, and that's where it ends, right there. Those who serve us best fall the worst. No medals, just torment, raw and cursed.

Poet: And demons? The ones who tempt and prod? Blend humans with evil, nod by nod? How does one get such a devilish role?

Satan: We craft them ourselves, they're made from soul. Pulled from the worst in the human stew. A hundred damned souls, I squeeze out a few. Three abominations, ripe for decay, who lead others further and drag them away. But no, a man can't turn demon just like that.

Poet: What if I wanted to be a warden or clerk? Manage Hell's books, some admin work?

Satan: No recruiting. Your tale's not done. You still might change, still might run. You're under the same protocol, nothing elite. It's Heaven or Hell, not a desk-bound seat. You're not above others just 'cause we chat. This is a talk, now think on that. The question's not mine, it's yours to solve. Do you betray yourself? Do you dissolve? Do you fall with joy, dragging others down? Do you trample lives to lift your crown? Hell must be earned, just like grace. You don't get in by hiding your face.

Poet: Then I'll take some time, I'll think it through. I'll answer one day, when I'm ready to.

Satan: Stall, stall, then try to crawl. But no one's ever dodged our hall. Things are what they are, even in a gale. Even when the man's built like a sail.

Poet: So maybe you'll end with a joke or a punch?

Satan: Joke all you want, you'll feel truth's crunch. It's funny and real, we've got jokers galore, now living in panic like never before.

Poet: So you laugh and you joke and then go to Hell?

Satan: Laugh without respect, that's my favorite spell.



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Marsin

born December 2, 1986 – present

What might occur, when one helps oneself for sure. Author of books that move the soul. Sometimes written in rhyme, sometimes not at all. But can we survive, without the rhymed kind? Marsin's books are available for free online. You can find them at: wilusz.org Under the cycles section. There is also an "in English" tab.

Everything might unfold, when we look into the soul, out in the cold. The court belongs to the Lord, and the story will be explored. You can read two beautiful spiritual guides by Marsin: "lectures. the mystical Path" and "letters. a journey into the Self." A great addition to these works is a set of parables under the title "tales with Meaning". In English, Marsin also published a poetry collection about Love: "the centipede they called Love" and four debut short stories gathered into one work titled "with a touch of Irony". It's worth it, the pages are still wet with

fresh paint. And so it shall remain, the human task, clear and plain.

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