

Woman from the Past

A Play
by Roland Schimmelpfennig
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A commission for Das Burgtheater Wien

American English translation by Melanie Dreyer
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Characters

Frank, *mid-forties*

Claudia, *his wife*

Romy Vogtländer

Andreas, *Frank and Claudia's son*

Tina, *Andi's girlfriend*

The specified time jumps at the beginning of each scene must be clearly provided through visual medium, recorded announcement, or some other means.

The generous living room hallway of an old apartment. Four doors lead off the hall: a front door with two panels, a door to the bathroom, a door to the son's room, a door to the parent's bedroom. Possibly a passageway or another door to the living room and kitchen. Lots of room. Packed moving boxes sit in the hallway – no furniture or pictures remain.

1.

Frank at the closed living room door. Claudia, his wife, comes out of the bathroom in a bathrobe with a towel wrapped around her head.

CLAUDIA:

Who are you talking to?

FRANK:

Me?

CLAUDIA:

Yes, who are you talking to?

FRANK:

To – to nobody. Who should I be talking to?

CLAUDIA:

I thought I heard someone talking – you were just talking with someone –

FRANK:

No – what makes you think that?

CLAUDIA:

Because I heard voices.

FRANK:

Voices –

CLAUDIA:

Voices, yes, voices –

FRANK:

But you were in the bathroom –

CLAUDIA:
That's right –

FRANK:
Voices in the bathroom – well, you know it's probably coming from the pipes, from another floor –

CLAUDIA:
No – I mean voices here in the hallway.

FRANK:
Here – voices –

CLAUDIA:
Yes, voices – here in the hallway.

Short pause.

FRANK:
Nobody's here.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
But someone was here.

Short pause.

FRANK:
There's no one here.

*She opens the front door. In the doorway stands Romy Vogtländer.
She wears a short coat.*

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
Who is that?

Silence.

CLAUDIA:
Who is that?

Short pause.

FRANK:
That –

Short pause.

That is Romy Vogtländer.

Short pause.

That is Romy Vogtländer, who I haven't seen for 24 years.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why didn't you tell me this woman was standing at the door?

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why didn't you tell me that?

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why are you lying to me—

Short pause.

FRANK:
Her appearance took me by complete surprise.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
This man was my true love 24 years ago.

Short pause.

We were a couple back then.

Short pause.

And we still are today.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
What?

ROMY V.:
He and I – we were a couple back then, and we still are today.

CLAUDIA:
slaps Frank's face with an open hand and slams the door on Romy.

2.

Ten minutes earlier. The empty hallway. Sounds of a shower from the bathroom. The doorbell rings. Frank appears and goes to the speaker.

FRANK:
Yes?

Nothing.

FRANK:
Hello? Hello?

Nothing.

FRANK:
Hello?

He leaves. Doorbell rings again. He comes back, picks up the speaker phone.

Hello?

Nothing. He hangs up, starts to leave again. A knock on the door. He stops. Silence. More knocking. He goes back to the door.

Hello? Who's there?

More knocking.

Hello?

Silence.

He suddenly opens the door. In the doorway stands a woman in a short coat.

FRANK:

Yes?

Silence.

FRANK:

Yes, can I help you?

Silence.

Listen –

ROMY V.:

I've been looking for you – it wasn't easy to find you –

FRANK:

Oh, well, that's possible.

He closes the door, but stands there without moving.

Pause.

Knocking. He opens the door again.

FRANK:

Listen, please –

The noise in the bathroom stops.

ROMY V.:

You – you don't recognize me.

FRANK:

Recognize you,

laughs

recognize you, no, I'm sorry –

He tries to close the door again.

ROMY V.:
It's me, Romy, -- Romy Vogtländer.

Short pause.

But if you don't recognize me, then maybe you should just close the door.

FRANK:
Romy Vogtländer –

ROMY V.:
And you don't recognize me.

FRANK:
Romy – Romy Vogtländer...

ROMY V.:
You remember –

FRANK:
Yes, yes –

ROMY V.:
We were a couple for an entire summer –

FRANK:
Romy Vogtländer...

ROMY V.:
24 years ago.

FRANK:
Romy... from way back then.

Short pause.

We were seventeen then.

ROMY V.:
Seventeen, that's right, I was seventeen, you were twenty, and it was then that you swore to me that you would always love me.

He bursts out laughing.

FRANK:

Yes –

ROMY V.:

You laugh –

And I swore to you. That I would always love you.

Short pause.

Do you remember?

FRANK:

Yes – maybe.

ROMY V.:

I'm here now to keep that promise.

Pause.

FRANK:

What?

ROMY V.:

I'm here now to keep that promise. And I'm here to remind you of your promise –

FRANK:

What promise –

ROMY V.:

The promise that you would always love me, that's what you said.

Pause.

FRANK:

But – but –

Short pause.

FRANK:

I was only nineteen.

ROMY V.:
Twenty.

FRANK:
Nineteen or twenty – it doesn't make any difference –

Short pause.

What do you want?

Short pause,

ROMY V.:
You – what else could I want?
I've come here to remind you.

FRANK:
Remind me –

ROMY V.:
That we would love each other forever – that's what you said.

He thinks for a moment. The sound of the bathroom door opening. He closes the door on Romy. He hesitates. Claudia arrives in a bathrobe with a towel wrapped around her head.

CLAUDIA:
Who are you talking to?

FRANK:
Me?

CLAUDIA:
Yes, who are you talking to?

FRANK:
To – to nobody. Who should I be talking to?

CLAUDIA:
I thought I heard someone talking – you were just talking with someone –

FRANK:
No – what makes you think that?

CLAUDIA:
Because I heard voices.

FRANK:
Voices –

CLAUDIA:
Voices, yes, voices –

FRANK:
But you were in the bathroom –

CLAUDIA:
That's right –

FRANK:
Voices in the bathroom – well, you know it's probably coming from the pipes, from another floor –

CLAUDIA:
No – I mean voices here in the hallway.

FRANK:
Here – voices –

CLAUDIA:
Yes, voices – here in the hallway.

Short pause.

FRANK:
Nobody's here.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
But someone was here.

Short pause.

FRANK:
There's no one here.

*She opens the front door. In the doorway stands Romy Vogtländer.
She wears a short coat.*

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
Who is that?

Silence.

CLAUDIA:
Who is that?

Short pause.

FRANK:
That –

Short pause.

That is Romy Vogtländer.

Short pause.

That is Romy Vogtländer, who I haven't seen for 24 years.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why didn't you tell me this woman was standing at the door?

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why didn't you tell me that?

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
Why are you lying to me—

Short pause.

FRANK:
Her arrival took me by complete surprise.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
This man was my true love 24 years ago.

Short pause.

We were a couple back then.

Short pause.

And we still are today.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
What?

ROMY V.:
He and I – we were a couple back then, and we still are today.

CLAUDIA:
slaps Frank's face with an open hand and slams the door on Romy.

3.

In front of the apartment building a little later:

TINA:
Andi and I, a warm evening, our last, -- the autumn sun has begun to set, and we – we don't want to go home – we don't want to break up, but tomorrow he's moving away with his parents, far away. We love each other. He is my boyfriend, my first boyfriend. I don't want him to move away.
But everything's already done – his parents have already packed everything, these are now our final hours, we sit on the embankment in front of the house, and don't know what we should say – I love you, I'll never forget you, stay with me, what will happen, you –

we sit up on the embankment, as always, as we often have, and we see a women in a raincoat, she comes and rings the doorbell. What will become of us? I don't know, I have no idea. I hold his hand, or he holds mine, we sit there, and we don't know, how to go on.

4.

A few minutes earlier. In the apartment.

CLAUDIA:
What?

ROMY V.:
He and I – we were a couple back then, and we still are today.

CLAUDIA:
Slaps Frank's face with an open hand and slams the door on Romy.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
How – how can you do this to me –

FRANK:
Do this to you – do what to you? I haven't done anything –

CLAUDIA:
You lied to me –

FRANK:
How am I supposed to explain this woman at our door?

CLAUDIA:
This woman – your first true love, apparently –

FRANK:
24 years ago –

CLAUDIA:
Today is the first I've heard of her –

FRANK:

I'd completely forgotten about her, I didn't even recognize her at first
–

CLAUDIA:
Then tell her that!

FRANK:
What –

CLAUDIA:
Then tell her that you've forgotten her, that you didn't even recognize her, tell her that! Instead of standing there and listening while she tells me to my face that you two were once a couple –

FRANK:
This is not my fault –

CLAUDIA:
No? Whose then?

FRANK:
What am I supposed to do, all I did was open the door –

CLAUDIA:
And lie to me –

FRANK:
What do you mean lie, I couldn't –

CLAUDIA:
rips the door open again. Romy Vogtländer still stands there. Claudia cries:
And now?

Short pause.

What happens now? What should we do now?

ROMY V.:
Now –

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

Yes now –

ROMY V.:

Now – now Frank will remember what he swore to me, that our love would never end.

CLAUDIA:

I see –

ROMY V.:

He will remember and then he'll either ask me in and send you away –

CLAUDIA:

You need help --.

ROMY V.:

Or he'll put on his coat and come away with me – if, because of you, we can't stay here. I'm quite sane. I've imagined this moment for a long time.

CLAUDIA:

Only none of that's going to happen; he's not going to do any of that: neither ask you in, nor send me away, as you're hoping, nor is he going to put on his coat and leave here with you.

ROMY V.:

No? How can you be so sure? How can you know that –

CLAUDIA:

Me?

Short pause.

-- You're right, absolutely right, that's true –

Short pause.

he will leave here, -- but with me and not with you.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

What do you mean – with you –

CLAUDIA:

That you ran into us here is mere coincidence. We're moving away – tomorrow, after nineteen years.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

Where would you go with her now that I'm back again?

CLAUDIA:

Far away – far away from here.

ROMY V.:

Where?

CLAUDIA:

More than half of our belongings are already on a ship, the rest will be packed today and taken away tomorrow afternoon. The timing of your appearance is just a little too late –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

And you say nothing – it can't be true that you won't say a word to any of that.

You have to say something. You have to speak.

Short pause.

FRANK:

It's true.

ROMY V.:

What, what's true, say it –

FRANK:

It's true, Claudia and I have been a couple here for almost twenty years, we're married, we have a son who's nearly grown.

ROMY V.:

vehemently

Why – why does she have your child –

FRANK:

-- and tomorrow we're leaving here.

Short pause.

That we knew each other once is not a contract for forever.

ROMY V.:

Yes, yes it is, yes, it is exactly that: That's what you said.

Short pause.

You even sang it for me: don't you remember the song? Don't you remember the song that you sang for me?

FRANK:

interrupting her.

It doesn't matter what I said 24 years ago – it isn't valid any more. We're not a couple, we were for one or two summers, maybe, at most, but Claudia and I have known each other for two decades.

CLAUDIA:

During which, as far as I can remember, he never sang once –

ROMY V.:

I'm telling you, she doesn't really know you –

CLAUDIA:

I am the mother of his child, -- I've been with him through every important chapter of his life, I know his every thought, every gesture, every step, and he knows me –

ROMY V.:

Knows! Knows maybe, but loves – for 24 years you've loved only me, your only wife –

CLAUDIA:

That's enough. Tell her that you've totally forgotten her, -- that you didn't even recognize her at first.

ROMY V.:

That can't be true; that you'll send me away, it's not possible. A bad dream – that'll be over soon.

FRANK:

No – it's true.

ROMY V.:

This is a bad dream, I'm going to wake up any second,

Short pause.

-- and just when I open my eyes, you'll be bending over me, very near my face, and you'll ask me tenderly: how are you? Are you ok? and I, I'll say: I knew it, you've finally taken me back. And then we'll kiss.

CLAUDIA:

This I promise: he won't take you back, he will say nothing – and he won't kiss you.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

I'm closing the door now.

ROMY V.:

Until – until then – until there.

5.

A little later.

TINA:

And then, a couple of minutes later, this woman in the raincoat leaves again, she's upset, confused, I can tell, she walks a few steps, stands there, turns around, turns around again, goes a few more steps – I can't say why, but I pick up a rock.

I pick up a rock and throw it at this woman, but I miss. I hear how the rock smacks the pavement, bounces.

I take a second rock and throw again, but I miss her a second time.

The rock smacks the pavement. The woman stops moving and turns around. She wonders about the bouncing rocks, but she doesn't see us, even though she looks right at us. And then Andi lets go of my hand, picks up a rock and throws it at her – we both don't know why. He throws the rock just as she starts to go.

6.

During the previous:

In the apartment. Frank and Claudia. Both pack silently. He begins to fold together a new box. Claudia, in the meantime, has gotten dressed. She pulls a full box from the living room onto the stage.

CLAUDIA:

What's in this box?

FRANK:

No idea.

CLAUDIA:

Didn't you pack this box?

FRANK:

Maybe.

CLAUDIA:

I didn't pack it.

FRANK:

Then it must have been me –

CLAUDIA:

But you don't know what's inside.

FRANK:

No idea.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

This box is too full.

FRANK:

Too full? It's already closed.

CLAUDIA:

This box is too heavy. If someone picks it up, the bottom will break through.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

I've said it over and over – the bottom will break through if you pack the boxes too full. That why I've asked again and again.

FRANK:

That's right, you say it every time, with each and every box I pack, and then you repack those boxes, which is why we need twice as long, which is why none of the boxes I have packed have the bottom broken through – not a single one.

He is furious and goes to the box that she just pulled into the hallway. He picks it up in order to set it on top of other boxes. As he does, the bottom of the box breaks. The contents of the box fall to the floor.

CLAUDIA:

full of accusation

No!

FRANK:

What is that –

A pile of filled plastic bags have fallen out of the box.

CLAUDIA:

The hagstones!

FRANK:

I didn't pack that box – I haven't touched those rocks for years. I didn't know we still had them.

Claudia has taken one of the stones out of one of the bags.

CLAUDIA:

Look –

She looks through the small hole in the stone.

They say he who looks through the hole of a hagstone looks into the future.

FRANK:

Or into the past – depending on which way you hold it.

CLAUDIA:

Yeah?

She looks briefly at both sides of the stone..

FRANK:

Why did you pack them individually in plastic bags –

CLAUDIA:

Why? Look –

She holds up the bag.

-- look carefully at this bag.

*It takes him a moment to think of reading the lettering on the bag.
On the bag is a picture of the Eiffel Tower.*

FRANK:

No!

CLAUDIA:

Do you see where they're from?

FRANK:

You've had them—

Short pause.

You've had them all these years – you haven't held onto them for 19 years –

CLAUDIA:

Yes – yes I have –

Short pause.

FRANK:

Come here –

CLAUDIA:

No!

FRANK:

Come here!

CLAUDIA:
No! We have to finish packing.

FRANK:
Come –

Short pause. She comes to him. They embrace.

CLAUDIA:
in the embrace
There can only be two possible explanations for why you never told me about her.

FRANK:
Stop it, be happy she's gone.

CLAUDIA:
Either she really didn't mean anything to you – and you simply forgot about her –

Frank begins to grope her.

CLAUDIA:
Or, quite the contrary, she meant a great deal to you –

She escapes from his embrace.

and that's why you've never spoken of her. That means you've kept her secret from me.

She looks at him critically.

FRANK:
I had totally forgotten about her. I can't really remember her now.

CLAUDIA:
But you said it to her –

FRANK:
What?

CLAUDIA:
That –

FRANK:

No – that was – those were just words, some song – I don't know, I don't know any more –

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

So it's possible you did say it to her – and you just don't remember.

Short pause.

Poor woman –

7.

The lock splinters. The apartment door flies open. Short pause. Andi, Frank and Claudia's son, stumbles in. He is breathless, seemingly in shock, he cannot speak. In his arms, he carries a dead Romy Vogtländer, still in her raincoat.

ANDI:

Help—

CLAUDIA:

What—

FRANK:

What's wrong—

ANDI:

Outside, in front of the building, lay this woman –

Short pause.

FRANK:

Romy –

ANDI:

She's dead –

FRANK:

Dead?

ANDI:

Dead – yes, she lay dead on the pavement in front of the apartment building.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

That woman – dead – Why didn't you leave her lying there?

Short pause.

ANDI:

What?

CLAUDIA:

Why didn't you leave her lying there?

ANDI:

Leave her lying there? The dead woman?

CLAUDIA:

Yes –

ANDI:

I couldn't do that –

FRANK:

He can't do that –

CLAUDIA:

Why not, what are we supposed to do with her here?

Short pause.

What are we supposed to do with a dead body in the house? Take her back –

ANDI:

Back to the front of the building? I'm supposed to lay her back down on the pavement? No!

CLAUDIA:

Living or dead, that woman isn't coming into my house.

ANDI:
I can't carry her back –

CLAUDIA:
Why not, you brought her here.

Short pause.

ANDI:
it spills from him
I killed her!

FRANK:
You did what?

CLAUDIA:
What are you talking about –

ANDI:
I killed her –

Claudia attempts to close the opened door, but it is so damaged that it remains a little open, and cannot be closed even with force.

FRANK:
Lay her – lay her over here –

Andi lays the dead woman on top of some moving boxes.

CLAUDIA:
That cannot –

ANDI:
I don't understand how it could have happened –

FRANK:
What? What happened?

ANDI:
Tina and I, we both, today is our last day, the sun is already setting, and then a woman leaves the apartment building, this woman, and I can't say why, she really makes us angry, something about her, her walk, I don't know, what, her restlessness, she really makes us angry, we feel it at the same time, and then Tina picks up a rock and throws

it at her, but she misses, twice, the woman is far away, impossible to reach I thought and then I throw a rock at her, but the rock, as though drawn by her, flies right to her just as she turns around, and catches her right in the head. The woman falls down and doesn't get up again.

Short pause.

What have I done?

Pause.

For this one moment, for this one rock, I'm going to pay my entire life.

Silence. No one knows what to say.

Claudia embraces her son. Frank turns the dead woman over.

FRANK:
She's alive!

ANDI:
What?

FRANK:
Yes, she's breathing,

Short pause.

her breathing is shallow, but she's breathing –

CLAUDIA:
She's alive –

FRANK:
She's just unconscious – the rock knocked her unconscious –

Short pause.

FRANK:
You didn't kill her.

Short pause.

ANDI:
Didn't—

FRANK:

We can't leave her lying here – if she's got a concussion, she needs to be lying in the dark.

CLAUDIA:

Where are we supposed to put her –

ANDI:

On the sofa –

CLAUDIA:

The sofa is already gone –

ANDI:

Already gone –

CLAUDIA:

Shipped, already gone, like almost all the furniture –

FRANK:

She can't stay there, where she is – who knows how long it will be until she regains consciousness –

ANDI:

Then lay her down on your bed –

CLAUDIA:

Never. No way is she going on our bed.

FRANK:

What about your bed – we'll put her on your bed.

ANDI:

My bed – I – if she's on mine – where will I go,

Short pause.

Tina's coming over again, for the last time –

CLAUDIA:

You don't have to meet here –

ANDI:

But –

Short pause.

we can't go to her place, her father hates me.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

Go to the movies – there are lots of options –

ANDI:

And after that? I don't want to spend the night in bed next to this woman!

Silence.

FRANK:

You can't –

ANDI:

I won't!

FRANK:

You can't –

ANDI:

I won't do it! I never should have picked her up –

Andi leaves angrily.

Frank and Claudia remain with the unconscious Romy.

FRANK:

Let's carry her over –

CLAUDIA:

You carry her –

FRANK:

I can't carry her by myself –

CLAUDIA:

No? Is she too heavy? In the past I'm sure you could have done it –
What's that?

FRANK:
What?

CLAUDIA:
That – on the floor – there
Is that blood?

FRANK:
Blood?

CLAUDIA:
Yes –

FRANK:
Where?

CLAUDIA:
There, on the floor –

FRANK:
Actually – that's a stain, I never noticed it.
That –

He examines the stain.

FRANK:
That's blood – she's bleeding –

CLAUDIA:
Where?

FRANK:
I don't see anything –

CLAUDIA:
Then take a look –

He quickly examines Romy lying on the boxes.

FRANK:
No wound –

CLAUDIA:

The wound is hidden – under her clothing or under her hair – you have to really look. Go ahead and touch her – it's certainly not the first time.

FRANK:
Why don't you do it?

CLAUDIA:
Me? Absolutely not. I won't touch that body.

*He examines Romy Vogtländer's body while Claudia watches.
After a moment –*

CLAUDIA:
Well?

FRANK:
Nothing –

CLAUDIA:
Does her body feel the same as it did back then?

FRANK:
stops, looks at Claudia. Then continues his examination.

CLAUDIA:
Well? Does she feel the same as she did? Do you remember now? Is it all coming back?

FRANK:
Here –

He shows his bloody hand as proof.

Here – under her hair – here's the cut.

Short pause.

We need to bandage it –

CLAUDIA:
Bandage it –

FRANK:

Yes – look for some dressing – she’s still bleeding –

CLAUDIA:

making a helpless attempt to open a box --

How am I supposed to find a bandage – everything is already packed!

FRANK:

Then I’ll go to the car –

CLAUDIA:

You –

FRANK:

To the car –

CLAUDIA:

And me?

FRANK:

You stay here with her -- until I get back –

CLAUDIA:

No – I’m not staying here alone with her! You can’t leave me alone with her – what will I do if she wakes up – don’t forget what I said to her!

FRANK:

Then you go and I’ll stay with her.

CLAUDIA:

You’ll stay with her –

I’m supposed to leave you here alone with her –

FRANK:

Someone has to go –

CLAUDIA:

Why don’t we shake her awake and set her down in front of the door –

FRANK:

In her condition -- be glad she isn’t dead.

CLAUDIA:

Maybe that would have been best –

FRANK:

Go to the car and get a bandage –

CLAUDIA:

Why don't we go together –

FRANK:

beginning to raise his voice

You can't leave her here alone. Go -- !

Claudia goes hesitantly.

8.

Frank and Romy. He sits next to the woman lying on the boxes, holding her head the entire time. Nothing, other than this image. He looks at the woman. He looks to the front. She opens her eyes and looks at him for a long time, he doesn't notice her at first. Then:

FRANK:

How are you? Are you ok?

ROMY V.:

I knew it, you've finally taken me back. Finally –

FRANK:

No –

ROMY V.:

Yes, yes you have,

Short pause.

otherwise I wouldn't be here –

She sinks back into unconsciousness. Pause. He continues to sit on the boxes and hold her head.

Then he stands with her in his arms and carries her to Andi's room. An empty stage. His wife returns in a hurry with the bandages.

CLAUDIA:

Here –

No one is there. She stands alone in the hallway.

9.

Later that night, around three thirty in the morning. The empty hallway. Romy Vogtländer emerges in the half darkness from the son's room with a bandage on her head. She stands motionless in the hallway. Then she sits down on a box in the hall. Stillness.

Andi comes through the apartment doorway – which has two or three moving boxes just inside, precariously piled atop one other. He pushes the boxes aside with the door panel. With that, the top box falls down. Some old toys and matchbox cars scatter on the floor. He turns on the light but only sees the floor –

ANDI:

My box – it would have to be my box.

He begins to put his things back in the box.

Why did my box have to be there.

ROMY V.:

Don't be scared –

ANDI:

startled

Oh –

Short pause.

ANDI:

stops cleaning up

Where are my parents –

ROMY V.:

They're sleeping –

Short pause.

ANDI:

And you?

ROMY V.:

I'm awake.

ANDI:

Yes –

ROMY V.:

And you?

ANDI:

I'm awake, too.

ROMY V.:

Where did you just come from?

ANDI:

From outside –

ROMY V.:

It's three thirty in the morning. Aren't you tired?

ANDI:

No –

ROMY V.:

Don't you want to lie down?

ANDI:

No, no –

Short pause.

Aren't you tired?

ROMY V.:

No –

Short pause.

ANDI:

The bed is for you

ROMY V.:

For me?

Short pause.

But it's your bed –

ANDI:

Yes – nevertheless.

Pause. No one says anything. Andi suddenly turns and scribbles a sign on the wall, some type of lettering, with a black pen that he has taken from his pants pocket. Then he turns back to Romy Vogtländer and looks at her.

Pause.

ROMY V.:

What is that?

ANDI:

My sign.

ROMY V.:

Your sign – what kind of sign –

ANDI:

My sign – it's like my name – it belongs to me.

ROMY V.:

Why do you do that?

ANDI:

That's my sign – anyone who sees it knows I was here.

ROMY V.:

I see –

ANDI:

Yes.

ROMY V.:

But who's going to see –

ANDI:

What –

ROMY V.:

That you were here.

Pause.

ANDI:
No idea.

Short pause.

We leave tomorrow.

ROMY V.:
They'll probably repaint here.

Short pause.

ANDI:
Nevertheless – I was here.

10.

TINA:

We can't go to his place because the woman is there, the one he hit in the head with a rock, and we can't go to my place because my father hates him. My father says he doesn't trust the way he looks.

We meet at twilight at the top of the embankment like always, and then we go to the movies.

The film is a story about a woman who has to find Pandora's box before the box falls into the hands of a man who wants to threaten the whole world with it. The chase covers several continents, she goes from Greece to England to Russia, China to Africa, the cradle of civilization.

We travel with the heroine in a U Boat, on motorcycles, in Jeeps, with parachutes, on ships, on horses, we hang on helicopters.

Afterwards we drive back home. It's eleven thirty, and we're outside again, on top of the embankment. It's cold and I'm not wearing enough clothing, but it's still too early for me to go.

At twelve thirty I can't stand the cold anymore and we go to my place. I go in through the front door, and Andi waits in the backyard in front of my window.

In the house everything's dark, everything's quiet, my parents sleep upstairs on the second floor. My bedroom's in the basement. Andi climbs soundlessly through the small window. Everything's quiet.

In the darkness, we lie quietly next to one another on my small bed. No music. The house is above and all around us – like an ancient tomb – in the basement there’s a small bathroom, my room and the tool closet, on the first floor the kitchen and the living room, above that my parents’ bedroom and a second bathroom.

Naked, we begin to walk through the house. In the darkness, we move soundlessly through the rooms, the hallway, the steps up and down. We stop in front of my parents’ room and then continue, out the front door, naked, in spite of the cold, to the backyard and onto the grass and back to my room again.

Suddenly my father is standing there in the room, in his pajama pants and an undershirt.

“Out, get out right now” – and then he grabs Andi and hauls him past my screaming mother, up the stairs and throws him out of the house. I run back down the stairs, lock the bedroom door from the inside and climb out the window with our things. My father bellows after us.

On the way to his parents’ apartment, Andi takes out a pen.

Everywhere, on every wall, on every protrusion, on every garage door, we leave our sign, his name and next to it mine, Andi, and next to it, Tina. The pen goes from him to me and back again. No plus, no heart, just our signs – just as they are, next to one another, on everything the entire way to his place.

And as we stand in front of Andi’s doorway, he says: well, ok then –

Short pause.

I love you, but we won’t see each other again. Yes, I say, I know. Take care of yourself. Farewell.

11.

Two days earlier. The apartment is nearly empty. The parents are packing. Andi carries a box from his room and sets it in the hallway. No one notices. He stands there a moment.

Then he turns to the wall and with a big black pen, scribbles a sign, a coded symbol on the wall, and a date.

FRANK:

Stop that –

ANDI:

Why –

FRANK:

You can't do that –

ANDI:
Why not –

FRANK:
You'll ruin the walls –

ANDI:
The walls –

FRANK:
Yes, the walls –

ANDI:
The walls are already ruined –

Short pause.

Day after tomorrow the painting company is coming, and everything here will be completely repainted–

FRANK:
Ruined? The walls are not ruined. A little worn maybe but not ruined – you're ruining them – no one can paint over that mark –

ANDI:
So much the better –

Frank has a small container of emulsion paint and he rolls paint over the mark.

FRANK:
Do you see that – it's not going away,

He paints again over the mark –

keeps coming back through – look at that –

12.1

Two days later, middle of the night around three thirty.

ROMY V.:

Fumbles with the bandage on her head, through which blood is slowly seeping.

What happened to my head? Do you know?

ANDI:
No –

ROMY V.:
No?

ANDI:
You're hurt.

ROMY V.:
Yes – and I don't know what from. Something must have hit me.

Short pause.

And when I woke up, I was here again.

ANDI:
shrugs his shoulders.
I was outside – I don't know what happened before that.

ROMY V.:
Then how did you know I was here?

No answer.

You knew that I'd be here when you came back. Didn't you?

No answer. Andi continues to put things back into the fallen box. He examines individual items from his childhood as he does this. Cars, Indians, legos. Silence. He holds a matchbox car in his hand.

ANDI:
This is an old race car, a car with wings –

He demonstrates how the doors of the car open by swinging upward.

The doors are like wings.

Then he throws the car into the box.

ROMY V.:
Who knows how long I've loved you
You know I love you still
Will I wait a lonely lifetime
If you want me to – I will

Do you know that?

ANDI:
That song? Of course –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
You know it?

ANDI:
Of course I know it.

Short pause.

But how do you know it?

He throws some last things into the box. Everything's now back inside. He closes the box, which is not overly full, and marks it with his sign.

ANDI:
You see?

ROMY V.:
What?

ANDI:
That sign – before this was just any box. And now – now it's mine. That's what the sign's for. This box belongs to me. This is the only one I have – I don't need more than one box.

12.2
Later that same night.

ANDI:

It was a rock.

ROMY V.:
What was a rock –

ANDI:
It was a rock that hit you.

ROMY V.:
No –

ANDI:
Yes – it was a rock – about so big – it hit you here, on your head.

ROMY V.:
How do you know that?

12.3

*A little earlier the same night:
He closes the box, which is not overly full, and marks it with his sign.*

ANDI:
You see?

ROMY V.:
What?

ANDI:
That sign – before this was just any box. And now – now it's mine.
That's what the sign's for. This box belongs to me. This is the only
one I have – I don't need more than one box.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
Do you have a girlfriend?

ANDI:
Yes.

ROMY V.:
What's her name?

ANDI:
Tina.

ROMY V.:
Where is she now?

ANDI:
At home. Or on her way there.

ROMY V.:
Why isn't she here.

Short pause.

ANDI:
No room.

ROMY V.:
I see –

Short pause.

Why aren't you with her –

ANDI:
I was – until a little while ago.

ROMY V.:
Do you love her?

ANDI:
Very much.

ROMY V.:
How much do you love her?

ANDI:
I will always love her.

ROMY V.:
Always?

ANDI:
Always –

ROMY V.:
Does she know that?

ANDI:
She knows that.

ROMY V.:
Have you told her?

ANDI:
I've told her.

ROMY V.:
Yes?

ANDI:
I've told her, yes – that I'll always love her.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
What does she look like?

ANDI:
I'd paint her if I could – but I can't.

Short pause.

I'd paint an entire wall with her, the side of a building covered with her body. I'd paint a forest on the wall, a forest made from her body, branches, twigs, leaves, everything living, indestructible, growing before your eyes, on this wall her body would be made of blue leaves, bending along the way. A wall and a forest and a body – dark, radiant. That's how I'd have to paint her, fathomless, bewildering – with animals, voices. A surprising light green, like when I wake up next to her. Black in the background. Tigers. Parrots. A place that couldn't exist. Anguish, beauty, darkness, her body is all those things at once. A darkness in which one could never live. A few rays from the sun fall onto the sea. Someone is swimming there, a couple. That's what must be painted on the side of the building, roots, and fish. That's my girlfriend's body, her youth, and everything still to come: other men, another life. Children. The way she moves.

A wall painting made of nothing but forest, the forested side of a building, broken only where someone has punched tiny windows out way up high.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
And her face?

ANDI:
Her face –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
Her face –

ANDI:
Her face is the sky. The sky above the building, above the wall. The chimney is her neck. The clouds are her hair, and in the sky, translucent and bottomless, her eyes.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
Unbelievable how like your father you are. When he was young.

Short pause.

ANDI:
It was a rock.

ROMY V.:
What was a rock –

ANDI:
It was a rock that hit you.

ROMY V.:
No –

ANDI:
Yes – it was a rock – about so big – it hit you here, on your head.

ROMY V.:
How do you know that?

ANDI:
I know because I threw the rock.

ROMY V.:
You –

ANDI:
Me, yes. It was me.

ROMY V.:
Then it was you who brought me back here –

ANDI:
Me, yes –

ROMY V.:
You brought me here – not your father.

ANDI:
No, I – I thought you were dead –

ROMY V.:
goes to the young man and kisses him passionately.

12.4
Shortly before:

TINA:
He said we'd never see each other again. He said he loves me but that we'd never see each other again.

Short pause.

And then he disappeared into the apartment building. And I – I think he'll come right back. Sure he said it – that we'd never see each other again, but what's he going to do there in that apartment. Which has no room for him. Inside he's turned on the light – but I can't see anything more.
I stand in front of the building and wait for him to come back, it's cold.

Short pause.

I wait five minutes, ten, but he doesn't come.
I stand alone in the darkness at the foot of the embankment, directly outside the light from the street lamp. Everything is sleeping. No cars. No voices. Above me, high in the air, an airplane. What's it like there now, in that airplane?
No one on the street. I wait some more. And he doesn't come back.

12.5

A little later. Andi and the woman in the hallway. She's had sex with him.

ROMY V.:
What about your girlfriend now –

ANDI:
What about her?

ROMY V.:
You promised to love her always – didn't you promise her that –

ANDI:
laughing
I did, yes –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
And?

ANDI:
It doesn't matter –

ROMY V.:
Why not?

ANDI:
Because I'll never see her again.

ROMY V.:
You won't?

ANDI:
No, I'll never see her again.

ROMY V.:
How do you know that –

ANDI:
I know it –

ROMY V.:
You could stay here.

Short pause.

Or come back.

ANDI:
No.

ROMY V.:
Why not?

ANDI:
Because it's over. That simple.

He now bends to her and kisses her. During the kiss, she grabs for one of the plastic bags that appeared earlier during the bandage search and gets a hold of the one with the Eiffel Tower on it. They disappear into his room.

12.6

About ten hours earlier.

CLAUDIA:
Look –

She holds up the bag.

Look carefully at this bag.

It takes him a moment to think of reading the lettering on the bag. On the bag is a picture of the Eiffel Tower.

FRANK:
No!

CLAUDIA:
Do you see where they're from?

FRANK:
You've had them—

Short pause.

You've had them all these years – you haven't held onto them for 19 years –

12.7

About ten hours later.

Andi and the woman. Shortly after they disappear into his room, they come out again. They kiss, he laughs and tries to kiss her some more, during which, as she kisses him, she tries to pull the plastic bag over his head.

They disappear into his room again.

They reappear a second time, this time she's pulled the bag down over his eyes during their kiss, he half-heartedly attempts to free himself as he doesn't completely understand what is happening. They disappear again into his room.

On the next entrance, he tries to free himself but he doesn't succeed, she's pulled the bag over his head. He grabs at the air. He can't breathe. He's going to die.

Back into his room. He fights his way back into the hallway, blind and suffocating, she pulls him back into his room.

From another door – in underwear and a big T-shirt – Claudia emerges. She is half-asleep. Did she hear something?

CLAUDIA:
Andi?

Nothing. She goes into the bathroom and closes the door behind her. Sounds from the bathroom.

Andi, in his final struggle with death, has made it to the hallway again, the sound of the toilet flushing. Romy Vogtländer pulls him back into his room.

Claudia comes out of the bathroom and goes back into her room. Andi crawls half out of his room one last time.

Romy Vogtländer pulls him back.

13.

Sometime the following morning. Frank and Claudia in the hallway. Andi's sign on the wall.

FRANK:

You've gotten old.

Pause.

You look old.

Pause.

CLAUDIA:

You, too.

FRANK:

Old and used up.

CLAUDIA:

softly

Like you.

Short pause.

But in contrast to you, I'm not a coward.

FRANK:

You're old, used up and ugly.

Short pause.

He closes a box.

Not much left.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:

What you just said –

Short pause.

You don't say that – what you just said – not after nineteen years of marriage.

Short pause.

You don't say things like that.
Not after I've raised your son. And certainly not, if one wants to share a future – as we do.

Short pause.

You just don't say things like that.

14.

A few minutes earlier the same morning. Frank in the hallway, Claudia enters.

FRANK:
Sleep well?

CLAUDIA:
Bad dreams. I had bad dreams half the night.

She opens her son's room.

FRANK:
She's gone. No one's there.

CLAUDIA:
Where's Andi?

FRANK:
Andi? He's not there – his room is empty.

CLAUDIA:
Where is he?

FRANK:
I don't know – probably at Tina's.

CLAUDIA:

I doubt he'd be there – her father hates him.

FRANK:
He'll turn up somewhere.

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
That's too bad.

FRANK:
Hm?

CLAUDIA:
I said, that's too bad.

FRANK:
What do you mean –

CLAUDIA:
That she's already gone – I'm sure you think it's a shame.

FRANK:
Why do you say that?

CLAUDIA:
Because it's true –

FRANK:
What –

CLAUDIA:
It's just too bad for you that she's already gone.

FRANK:
Why is it too bad for me – what makes you think I have regrets –

CLAUDIA:
Because you would have loved to talk to her.

FRANK:
Yeah?

CLAUDIA:

Yeah-

FRANK:
About what?

CLAUDIA:
About what?

FRANK:
Yes, about what? What would I have loved to talk to her about -

CLAUDIA:
I have no idea - you would know better than I -

FRANK:
I don't understand what you're talking about.

Short pause.

FRANK:
If I did want to talk to her, then I would have just asked her in.
Yesterday. Instead of throwing her out.

CLAUDIA:
I see -

FRANK:
Yes -

CLAUDIA:
But you didn't throw her out.

Short pause.

I shut the door not you.

Short pause.

You carried her to bed. You bandaged her head.

FRANK:
What was I supposed to do -

CLAUDIA:

Nothing –

FRANK:
Nothing –

CLAUDIA:
In spite of that, you kept going back to that room and checking on her to see how she was doing – although she wasn't even conscious!

FRANK:
That's why. She was badly injured. I was afraid she wouldn't wake up.

CLAUDIA:
This fear – it now appears – was completely groundless. This fear was merely a pretext. A pretext to look at that woman.

Pause.

And on our last evening here.

FRANK:
You've gotten old.

Pause.

You look old.

Pause.

CLAUDIA:
You, too.

FRANK:
Old and used up.

CLAUDIA:
softly
Like you.

Short pause.

But in contrast to you, I'm not a coward as well.

FRANK:
You're old, used up and ugly.

Short pause.

He closes a box.

Not much left.

Short pause.

CLAUDIA:
What you just said –

Short pause.

You don't say that – what you just said – not after nineteen years of marriage.

Short pause.

You don't say things like that.
Not after I've raised your son. And certainly not, if one wants to share a future – as we do.

Short pause.

You just don't say things like that.

Romy Vogtländer enters. She comes through the open apartment door.

ROMY V.:
The door is completely broken – the lock is nearly broken off. How did that happen? What happened?

Short pause.

It can't be fixed.

Silence.

I came back. Hello.

Silence.

CLAUDIA:

I'm going to leave the apartment now. In twenty minutes –

She looks at her watch.

in twenty minutes I'll be back, and if this woman is still here, I'll leave forever. If this woman is still here in twenty minutes, everything that's ever been between us is over.

Claudia leaves. She slams the door, which, of course, opens again.

15.

About twenty-five minutes later.

Claudia comes into the apartment. The hallway is empty. Noises from the bathroom. She stands and listens. She goes into the adjoining rooms, looks. No one is there. She comes back, stands in front of the bathroom door, listens again:

CLAUDIA:

I'll be damned.

Short pause.

I'll be damned, she's gone!

Short pause. She's pleased.

I almost didn't think you had it in you.
Almost.

She turns back to the open apartment door and tries again to close it. As she does, she becomes more and more violent and finally slams the door in such a way that it actually remains closed.

I fixed the door.

Quietly.

The fucking cunt.

At the bathroom door:

Can I come in?

The door is locked.

I almost didn't think you had it in you.

Short pause.

Are you taking a shower?

Exuberantly.

Our nineteen years of marriage are holding fast. You can't just throw them away – it won't work – they're stronger than one summer.

Short pause.

Was that Tina that just came out of the house? I thought I saw someone –

She finds a small wrapped package. Speaking in the direction of the bathroom –

What's this? Is this from Tina? How nice of her. That's really nice of her – how delightful. Do you know what's inside?

Short pause.

And Andi? No Andi? Where is he? Does he have just this one box?

She almost opens his box to see what's inside, but then she stops. She takes the package and goes to her room. On the way, she tears off the wrapping paper. She stops short in the doorway, bewildered.

16.1

About twenty-five minutes earlier. The apartment door slams shut and swings open again. Claudia has left the apartment. Frank and Romy Vogtländer are alone.

Short pause.

FRANK:

And now?

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

Now we'll just have to wait until she comes back.
And then we'll finally be alone.

FRANK:

No!

ROMY V.:

Alright – we could go before she comes back –

Short pause.

Good – then come –

She goes to the door. He doesn't move.

FRANK:

No –

ROMY V.:

No what –

Short pause.

FRANK:

I don't want you to be here when she comes back.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

You want me to go?

FRANK:

Yes.

Short pause.

I want you to go. And do it now.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
I have a gift for her –

FRANK:
For who –

ROMY V.:
For your wife –

FRANK:
She won't open it.

ROMY V.:
Who knows –

FRANK:
So –

Short pause.

Take your gift and go –

ROMY V.:
I don't believe you.

FRANK:
What –

ROMY V.:
That you want me to go. That you want to stay here. I don't believe you.

Short pause.

You won't send me away. You carried me into the bedroom. You bandaged my head.

FRANK:
Yesterday evening yes – you were badly injured. You needed help.

Short pause.

But now – now you're feeling better.

Short pause.

Suddenly you're back again. Why? What do you want?

ROMY V.:
I want to be with you, what else –

FRANK:
But you see how things are.

ROMY V.:
I see that, yes.

FRANK:
So –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
You love me.

FRANK:
What makes you think that?

ROMY V.:
Because it's true.
And your wife just left your apartment. We're finally alone. She'll be back in twenty minutes. And then she'll be gone forever.

Short pause.

That's how it will be.

FRANK:
That's not how it will be.

ROMY V.:
Why not –

FRANK:
Because we've been married for nineteen years.

16.2

A few minutes later.

FRANK:

Alright – let's go.

He looks for his jacket.

Let's go. You're right.

Short pause.

There's not much more here anyway – not much left.

ROMY V.:

Your wife –

FRANK:

My wife is gone – and she'll see that it's over. That simple.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:

What about your son –

Giving up your wife isn't enough. The same applies to your son.

16.3

A few minutes earlier.

FRANK:

What makes you think that?

ROMY V.:

Because it's true.

And your wife just left your apartment. We're finally alone. She'll be back in twenty minutes. And then she'll be gone forever.

Short pause.

That's how it will be.

FRANK:

That's not how it will be.

ROMY V.:
Why not –

FRANK:
Because we've been married for nineteen years.

ROMY V.:
Those nineteen years of marriage – I don't see them.

FRANK:
At this moment, those nineteen years fill an entire moving van!

Short pause.

Seventy boxes!

ROMY V.:
And where is that moving van?

FRANK:
Gone! The rest will follow –

ROMY V.:
There you are –

Short pause.

What do you think? How do you think I spent all that time? The last twenty four years? What was there then? Men – not just one, many, one after the other, pick a profession, assistants, doctors, lawyers, artists, what shall I tell you about? About the apartments, the cars? The vacations? Or the break-ups? How do you think I spent the last twenty four years? I was seldom alone, but I always waited – because none of them, not one of them was like you were back then, none of them measured up to what it could have been like with you – there was nothing then, no freedom, nothing, planning year after year, scheming, calculating. Don't tell me now – don't tell me now that you're exactly like them.

Short pause.

FRANK:
Alright – let's go.

He looks for his jacket.

Let's go. You're right.

Short pause.

There not much more here anyway – not much left.

ROMY V.:
Your wife –

FRANK:
My wife is gone – and she'll see that it's over. That simple.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
What about your son –
Giving up your wife isn't enough. The same applies to your son.

Short pause. He doesn't understand.

FRANK:
How am I supposed to give up my son?

She shrugs her shoulders.

FRANK:
I mean, even if I leave here, my son will remain.
-- he will always be there – just as there will always be those twenty
four years – all that time without you.

ROMY V.:
I must insist, I have to hear it –

Short pause.

or we won't be happy –

FRANK:
What? What do you want to hear? You want me to come with you,
I'm ready, what more do you want?

ROMY V.:
You have to say it,

Short pause.

you have to say it out loud, that all those years didn't happen.

FRANK:
No.

ROMY V.:
No?

Short pause.

Then I'm leaving –

She goes to the door.

FRANK:
They did happen, they happened here – what should I say –

ROMY V.:
Then at least say it would have been better without a wife, without a marriage, without a son.

FRANK:
That's not possible.

ROMY V.:
It has to be.

FRANK:
Why –

ROMY V.:
It can't be otherwise.

Pause. Nothing. She turns toward the door, takes the handle in her hand, leaves –

FRANK:
Yes! Maybe –
It could be that –

She comes back.

ROMY V.:
What –

FRANK:
That it would have been better,

ROMY V.:
What –

FRANK:
That it would have been better not to have had a wife and a son: it
could be, yes, maybe – come back –

She comes back and kisses him. They kiss for a long time.

ROMY V.:
And now sing –
sing the song.

Pause.

FRANK:
I can't –

Short pause.

laughs:
I haven't just forgotten the words, I can't remember the melody –

ROMY V.:
You've forgotten the song?

FRANK:
No – I – I just don't know how it goes anymore –

ROMY V.:
sings "I Will" from Lennon/McCartney

Who knows how long I've loved you
You know I love you still
Will I wait a lonely lifetime

If you want me to -I will

love you forever and forever
love you with all my heart
love you forever and forever
love you when we're apart

For if I ever saw you
I didn't catch your name
But it never really mattered
I will always feel the same.

Love you forever and forever
Love with all my heart
Love you whenever we're together
Love you when we're apart.

And when at last I find you
Your song will fill the air
Sing it loud so I can hear you
For the things you do endear you to me
You know I will
I will

ROMY V.:
Do you remember now?

FRANK:
Yes -

ROMY V.:
What else do you remember?

FRANK:
Everything -

ROMY V.:
What -

FRANK:
You -

ROMY V.:
What -

FRANK:
Your room. The school. Your parents.

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
What was the name of the park – do you remember the park?

FRANK:
The park – I don't know – did it have a name?

ROMY V.:
But you remember the sunrise in the park –

Short pause.

FRANK:
The sun was still deep in the east, behind the hills, slowly it became light and little by little the birds began to sing in the dark trees. The edge of the forest behind us. A wall of forest. No one was awake but us. Just us. Without sleep. In love. We were often there in the summer and we were never cold.

ROMY V.:
I mean the sunrise when I gave you the gift –

FRANK:
The gift –

He has no idea what she's talking about.

ROMY V.:
The gift – don't you remember the gift?

FRANK:
Yes –

Short pause.

ROMY V.:
You have no idea. You have no idea what I'm talking about.

Short pause.

You don't remember the gift.

Short pause.

FRANK:

The gift – what gift – it was so long ago!

Short pause.

I can't just skip over the time that's passed.

ROMY V.:

That means you're not coming.

Short pause.

You said it yourself: you're coming with me.

Short pause.

But you just can't do it.

Short pause.

You can't even remember!

FRANK:

What – what should I say – I don't know what you gave me.

ROMY V.:

Then I'm going to leave here alone and you'll remain here with nothing.

Romy Vogtländer leaves the apartment.

17.

Frank alone in the hallway. Motionless. He unbuttons his shirt, he heads toward the bathroom. Someone knocks on the door that is already ajar.

Nothing. More knocking. Nothing.

TINA:

Hello?

No answer. Frank stands in the hallway as though paralyzed.

TINA:
Hello?

Pause.

FRANK:
The door is open.

Tina enters shyly and hesitantly. Tina and Frank stand across from one another.

FRANK:
Tina –

Short pause.
Tina is surprised that otherwise there appears to be no one else there.

TINA:
I would like to speak with Andi.

FRANK:
With Andi?

Short pause.

He's not here.

TINA:
He – he's not here?

FRANK:
No – he isn't – I thought he was with you?

TINA:
No, he isn't –

Short pause.

He has to be here –

FRANK:
But I'm telling you he isn't –

TINA:
He has to be here – he can only be here –

FRANK:
What makes you think that –

TINA:
I saw him go into the building –

FRANK:
When?

TINA:
Last night –

FRANK:
He wasn't here last night –

TINA:
Yes he was here – I saw it myself and besides:

Short pause.

that's even his sign! He was here.

FRANK:
Ok –

Short pause.

Maybe he was here briefly – and then he left again.

TINA:
He didn't.

FRANK:
Why not?

TINA:
Because I waited for him in front the apartment building.

FRANK:
Since when?

TINA:
Since last night, it was about three thirty.

He looks at her questioningly.

FRANK:
Since three thirty in the morning?

TINA:
Yes – since he went into the building.

FRANK:
You've been waiting in front of the apartment building since three thirty in the morning?

TINA:
in tears
Yes – but he didn't come out again.

Pause.

FRANK:
His room is empty. I'm sorry. He isn't here.

Tina looks into the empty room.

TINA:
running out in tears
He has to, he has to be here.

Frank stands again in the hallway. Then he picks up the paint roller lying on top of the small container of emulsion paint, but he changes his mind: he doesn't paint over the sign. He lays the paint roller back down. He takes off his shirt. He goes into the bathroom and locks the door behind him.

18.

Claudia comes into the apartment. The hallway is empty. Noises from the bathroom. She stands and listens. She goes into the adjoining

rooms, looks. No one is there. She comes back, stands in front of the bathroom door, listens again:

CLAUDIA:
I'll be damned.

Short pause.

I'll be damned, she's gone!

Short pause. She's pleased.

I almost didn't think you had it in you.
Almost.

She turns back to the open apartment door and tries again to close it. As she does, she becomes more and more violent and finally slams the door in such a way that it actually remains closed.

I fixed the door.

Quietly.

The fucking cunt.

At the bathroom door:

Can I come in?

The door is locked.

I almost didn't think you had it in you.

Short pause.

Are you taking a shower?

Exuberantly.

Our nineteen years of marriage are holding fast. You can't just throw them away – it won't work – they're stronger than one summer.

Short pause.

Was that Tina that just came out of the house? I thought I saw someone –

She finds a small wrapped package. Speaking in the direction of the bathroom –

What's this? Is this from Tina? How nice of her. That's really nice of her – how delightful. Do you know what's inside?

Short pause.

And Andi? No Andi? Where is he? Does he have just this one box?

She almost opens his box to see what's inside, but then she stops. She takes the package and goes to her room. On the way, she tears off the wrapping paper. She stops short in the doorway, bewildered, and looks at the gift – it appears to be nothing more than a plastic bag with the Eiffel Tower on it – looks back at the bathroom. She goes to her room. Shortly after she's off: a piercing scream.

19.

TINA:

I can't go – away from here, I can't go.

Short pause.

I can't leave the place where Andi must be and isn't. Where could he be? He has to be there and he isn't there. I pace anxiously back and forth, I wait above on the embankment, where we always meet, where we –

Short pause.

where we threw the rocks, I sit there, alone, I even throw a rock, at nothing, because no one comes and goes, except for Andi's mother once, she goes into the apartment building, and then I pace around again, back and forth, here and there, finally I walk around the building, from back behind the building, you can see into Andi's parents' bedroom, there's the closet and the big bed and then suddenly Claudia, Andi's mother, stumbles into the room, bewildered, confused, in her hands she holds a plastic bag, I realize that I've seen that bag before.

Short pause.

She stands in the doorway, unsure, hesitant, then she goes into the room holding the bag, she doesn't understand something, I can see that. She reaches into the bag, from here it looks empty, and at that moment, the moment she reaches into the bag, it looks like, at least through the window, it looks like her fingers, her hands, her arms suddenly burst into flame. The entire woman catches on fire in her bedroom, she burns, her entire body burns, she burns so quickly and so terribly – it seems that she can't scream anymore, through the closed window I hear nothing but her mouth is open, ripped open in agony, she screams but she doesn't scream - I scream, I scream as loud as I can, but who's going to hear me – and then Andi's father appears in the doorway, he sees his wife, incinerated, with the rest of the melted bag in her hand, and he stands there – motionless, before he disappears from the doorway again. I run. The moving van comes down the street and stops in front of the building. Where is Andi –

20.

One moment earlier:

Frank comes out of the shower, a towel wrapped around his waist, otherwise he is naked and a little wet.

He walks down the hallway and falls heavily when he steps on a matchbox car. The car shoots out from under his foot. Frank gets up, and steps painfully on a little plastic Indian. Incredulously, he picks up the Indian. Then his gaze sinks to the floor. Slowly he discovers a number of small toys strewn about; most of them he finds behind Andi's box. He gathers together what he finds and goes to put them in Andi's box. Frank opens the box and discovers the body of his son.

Speechless horror. He lets everything he's gathered together fall. He heads toward his wife in the bedroom, falls again on a matchbox car, maybe one of those he just dropped in shock.

He gets up, falls again, perhaps he's torn a ligament or something. He hobbles and crawls to the bedroom, opens the door and stands silently and motionless in the doorway – he sees his incinerated wife – where to now? In deep horror, he tries to get to the apartment door.

Walking, hobbling, falling and crawling, he manages to reach it. He turns the door handle.

The door won't open. He doesn't understand. He turns the handle again.

The door is wedged so that it won't open. The doorbell rings. He can't stand up again. Both knees are gone. The doorbell rings again. He can't open the door and he can't reach the speaker.

THE END