

ct

Prague

de
Javier de Dios

*traducción de
Iride Lamartina-Lens*

(fragmento en inglés)

Characters:

BENI—45 years old

JAIME—40-45 years old

SUSANA—approaching 40

Setting:

The action takes place one evening at the home of BENI and JAIME located in their imperfect, chaotic and freedom loving city of Madrid (or any similar cosmopolitan city).

Prague was first staged by La Barca Teatro theater company at the Teatro Lagrada in Madrid on March 15, 2013.

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BENI is setting the table for a special supper. He's a XXL size 45-year-old man that buys shirts one or two sizes too small to show off his pectorals or muffin tops. His outfit and accessories match and are carefully chosen, and along with a well-trimmed gray beard, close-cropped hair and an impressive physique, he's quite an attractive type (at least he thinks so)—much like an enhanced version of a dock worker.

HE has rolled up his shirt sleeves and the rings on the fingers of both hands make a clicking sound when they lightly bump against the fine crystal wine glasses that HE rearranges from one spot to another, and then, yet to another, in an attempt to satisfy his personal sense of good taste. HE picks up one of the glasses and looks at it. Offstage there's the sound of an electric blender. BENI raises his voice and speaks with someone we can't see.

BENI

Do you remember when we were in Prague?

(No one answers. HE raises his voice again.)

BENI

In what year did we take that trip to Prague? Do you remember?

(Still no answer.)

BENI

JAIME! When were we in Prague?

JAIME

(In the other room the sound of the blender stops.) Did you say something?

BENI

Do you remember in what year we went to Prague?

(Pause.)

BENI

Jaime!

(JAIME appears in an apron worn as a breastplate and wielding a blender like some kind of a domesticated version of St. George in search of a dragon.)

JAIME

What?

BENI

You're becoming deafer the older you get.

JAIME

You got me out of the kitchen just to hear that?

(JAIME leaves.)

BENI

I only wanted to know in what year we were in Prague. *(Screaming louder.)* In Prague!

JAIME

(Inside.) What?

(By the sound of it, it seems that JAIME is beating some concoction by hand.)

BENI

(Beside himself.) I only wanted to know...

JAIME

(Inside.) ...Did you say Prague?

BENI

Yes, for Christ sake, Jaime, Prague, Prague, Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, flanked by the Moldova River, home to Kafka and goulash, one of the prettiest cities in Europe, the same one where you and I spent an absolutely unforgettable week when we were *(HE pauses and needs to think fast.)* when we weren't more than...well, when we were much younger!

(The noise stops. JAIME has stopped beating the mixture. A moment of silence. HE appears once again holding a whisk. BENI looks at him.)

JAIME

Do you think that four whipped egg-whites will be enough?

BENI

Four for three?

JAIME

Ah-huh.

BENI

More than enough.

JAIME

Perfect... *(HE turns around to look at BENI just before going back to the kitchen.)* In 1995. *(HE leaves.)*

BENI

That long ago? (*BENI continues to set the table.*) In 1995... (*HE refers to the wine glasses.*) Well, it's a miracle that they're still intact.

(JAIME re-enters the room, this time without an apron. HE talks to BENI without looking at him.)

JAIME

Pour the wine into the decanter so it can breathe a bit...and keep an eye on the pork loin, I wouldn't want the gravy to thicken too much...if you'd like you could start bringing in the appetizers and cut up some cheese, the aged one, that would definitely go better with the wine we bought...put it in a small dish with some crackers that way we can leave the bread for the main course, don't you think?...Or maybe just cut a few slices for the prosciutto...oh better not!...It'll be less fattening without the bread...take the prosciutto out of the fridge and let it get to room temperature and while you're doing all that I'll take a quick shower. With so much activity going on...

(BENI has been standing there motionless while listening to this litany of chores.)

JAIME

With so much activity going on I smell like a beast...

(JAIME goes up to him and pecks him on the lips. JAIME walks out of the room.)

BENI

What about it? (*Pause. He raises his voice.*) What do you say about what we were talking about earlier? (*Brief pause.*) Damn! He's as deaf as a python!

JAIME

(From the other room.) I'm as deaf as a python and you're as poisonous as a cobra...Have you seen my red shirt?

BENI

You're avoiding me!

JAIME

I refuse to talk about that issue again.

BENI

Why not?

JAIME

(Sticking his head out from the other room.) Because we've already gone over this hundreds of times and we haven't gotten anywhere. It only makes us get mad at one another.

BENI

And has it ever occurred to you that maybe that's the problem—we shouldn't be talking about it so much and instead...

JAIME

Come on, Beni, drop it...

(JAIME hides his head again.)

BENI

I say it's not that complicated really. A child is not like getting a mortgage or writing a doctoral thesis...if you think about it too much you'll never do it ... for certain things in life sometimes you just have to have the balls and go for it...Am I right? You have to follow your gut feelings and just go for it, period. Hey, did we think about it so much before deciding to live together? Did you think about it that much? *(Pause.)* Did you hear me?

JAIME

(From the other room.) Yup.

BENI

Do you realize what would've happened if before making a decision you had stopped to think about what your family or mine thought about us or about coming out of the closet or about how difficult it was to start a serious relationship with a guy twenty years ago. Huh? You didn't make it so complicated then. And why not, eh? What's going on? Are you scared now, or what? Don't you realize what's really important? *(Pause. JAIME doesn't answer.)* Let me say this as clear as I can to you: for me, the most genuinely important thing is...

(JAIME goes up to BENI from behind and gives him a hug.)

JAIME

The most important thing is to love one another. "*L'important c'est d'aimer*".

BENI

What?

JAIME

Romy Schneider and Fabio Testi, directed by Andrzej Zulawski. We saw it at the art cinema and you loved it. Don't you remember?

BENI

Not really.

JAIME

Well, you loved it. You said, "Oh, how I love a good drama once in a while."

BENI

Jaime, don't change the subject.

JAIME

I'm not changing it, I'm ditching it...

BENI

But we agree! I think that loving one another is the most important thing too.

JAIME

So, if you love me, forget about this...

BENI

And if you love me, don't turn a deaf ear to what I'm saying. What's the problem? Loving one another is basic and at the top of the list, ok, we got that. It's absolutely essential for a couple to love one another so that a child can also feel loved, right? Above all, a child needs love to grow up in a secure and safe home, just like this one, eh? A welcoming environment surrounded by happiness and comfort.

JAIME

That's right. For a child to grow up right, his surroundings should have some of the best of everything: I'm talking about values, education, financial security and experiences. And that's why, Beni, don't even think about it.

BENI

Oh, I see...Do you think you have *so many* flaws in *every one of those aspects* that you couldn't possibly be a father?

JAIME

It's not that.

BENI

No, no. It's much worse: your flaws are not allowing me to be one...

JAIME

Oh, come off it, Beni ...

BENI

Well, then what?

JAIME

We're too old for that!

BENI

What?

JAIME

You heard right. It's too late to have a child. Plain and simple.

BENI

Just before that your excuse was that there wasn't enough room in the house. Now, all of a sudden, there's a new and more compelling reason: you think you're too old!

JAIME

Well, yes...I mean too old to have an adoption agency place some rebellious teenager with who knows what kind of genes and worldviews in our home who will lay around the house all day long trying to control the urge to smack me in the face every time I give you a kiss, and all that, I mean all of it, because I just turned forty-five...what else can I say, man...I feel a little too old for that.

(BENI doesn't answer. Muddled and confused, he goes up to the table and tries to fold a napkin but he can't. JAIME looks at him. A moment of silence.)

JAIME

Don't you understand, Beni?

(BENI doesn't answer.)

JAIME

Can you please tell me what you're trying to do with that napkin?

BENI

A flower.

JAIME

Come on, Beni, that's so gay...

BENI

(Rude.) No, you don't need an adopted teenager to do it. I'll gladly smack you myself!

JAIME

Now you understand why I don't want to talk about this!

(The doorbell rings.)

JAIME

Oh shit! I look like a pig!

BENI

Amen to that!

(JAIME goes running to the shower. BENI throws the napkin any which way on the plate. The doorbell rings again. BENI opens the door and SUSANA lets out a shriek of joy. BENI immediately responds in a similar fashion. Laughing, BENI and SUSANA enter the room arm in arm.

SUSANA is about to turn forty but she proudly displays the energy and physique of a thirty-year old woman. SHE exudes an aura of youthful spontaneity by deliberately choosing an informal, fashionable style that showcases her splendid legs and cleavage topped by eye-catching matching accessories of all kinds including earrings, bangles, rings and pocketbook—she flaunts them all. SUSANA likes herself this way. Her self-confidence stands out.

BENI lifts SUSANA off the floor and drops her onto the couch while both are giggling and SUSANA is trying not to drop the shopping bag she's holding.)

SUSANA

Damn, what a man!

BENI

Where?

(They laugh.)

SUSANA

Don't pretend you don't know... I bet there's a waiting list...

BENI

Oh, stop, you sweet-talker you.

SUSANA

So good-looking! *(Glancing around the room.)* Where's Jaime?

BENI

In the shower.

SUSANA

Soooo...

BENI

What?

SUSANA

You.

BENI

I what?

SUSANA

What are you doing here?

BENI

Oh, you little pervert you!

SUSANA

Oh, my sexy hunk of a man!

BENI

(Teasing her.) I get it, you want all three of us to shower together!

(They laugh some more.)

SUSANA

Of course, Beni, you never change.

BENI

What for if I'm fabulous.

SUSANA

Fabulous? You're truly shameless, that's what you are. And I adore you.

BENI

I always knew that you and I were meant for each other.

SUSANA

Violins, please. And you said *I* was a sweet-talker? *(Pointing to the shopping bag.)* Here, take this and put it in the freezer but don't forget to take it out in time before it bursts.

(BENI looks at her mischievously. SUSANA catches the double meaning and laughs.)

SUSANA

You're such a pig!

BENI

(Referring to the bottle he just took out of the bag.) So, what does it say here? I don't understand a word. Where did you buy it, at the Chinese store?

SUSANA

What do you mean the Chinese store, bitch? I've been lugging that with me all the way from Athens. This is first class ouzo. You've never had anything like this in your life...

BENI

(Going towards the kitchen.) That's one less thing...

SUSANA

Ok, Mr. Sobriety, Jaime and I will have to drink it all by ourselves to celebrate our future plans...

(BENI stops short. Pause.)

BENI

No.

SUSANA

No what?

BENI

(Moving up closer to her and saying it privately.) You're not going to celebrate that because I

haven't told him anything yet.

SUSANA

(Perplexed.) Ok, then...

BENI

Ok nothing.

SUSANA

But, didn't we agree that...

BENI

No, Susana, tonight's not the night, period. You had to see him a minute ago, it was as if he was possessed.

SUSANA

Let me take care of it.

BENI

No.

SUSANA

Why not?

BENI

I have to be the one to tell him.

SUSANA

Are you sure that's the reason?

BENI

Yes.

SUSANA

No...I don't believe it...that's not the reason why...

BENI

Oh, please.

SUSANA

Coward.

BENI

I'm a coward?

SUSANA

Actually, you don't dare do it: you're all talk and no action.

(BENI fools around and immobilizes her in a bear hug.)

BENI

Let me hear you say that now, huh?

SUSANA

The bottle!

BENI

I'm the coward?

SUSANA

Ok, ok, I give up! *(Straightening up.)* God, where on earth do you hide when I need a hug like that?

BENI

I'm not the one who hides, sweetie. You're the one who's always running away...

SUSANA

You know what? I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that.

BENI

Take it easy. You're not the only one.

(Pause.)

SUSANA

After you and I spent endless hours on the phone and tied all the loose ends, and went over all the pros and cons, and after so many plans we made, now at the moment of truth you chicken out and run out on me...?

BENI

I run out on you?

SUSANA

You run out on me!

BENI

Really? *I'm* the one who runs out on *you*?

SUSANA

You run out on me!

(BENI cracks up laughing. JAIME enters.)

SUSANA

You're impossible!

JAIME
I totally agree.

SUSANA
JAIME!

(SUSANA and JAIME give each other a hug, a tender and longer than usual hug...)

BENI
(Clearing his throat.) I was just thinking that being that I'm standing here all alone holding a bottle of god-only-knows-what while you two are hugging, I might as well get a knife and start playing a tune on bottle while I sing you a song...

SUSANA
Oh Beni, please, don't be so grumpy!

BENI
What a great friend!

SUSANA
(Snatching the bottle away.) Hand it over! And it's not a "god-only-knows-what"; it's *ouzo*, pronounced ou-zo with a hard s sound.

(SUSANA goes to the kitchen. JAIME walks toward the table and notices that everything is exactly like it was before he left to take a shower. BENI has not done anything he was asked to do. JAIME is annoyed and he points it out as he silently asks for an explanation. BENI answers him in pantomime showing no signs of guilt, "What do you expect, huh? Susana just arrived." SUSANA returns with a bottle of wine.)

SUSANA
Why didn't you ask me to bring some gravy for the meat?

JAIME
Oh shit! The pork loin!

(JAIME makes a mad dash for the kitchen.)

SUSANA
You weren't kidding when you said he was acting a bit strange...

BENI
Especially with me...

SUSANA
Why?

BENI

Susana, please, I beg of you, don't say a word about what we were talking about.

SUSANA

Ok, ok, calm down...

BENI

Would you help me finish setting the table?

SUSANA

You could have called to tell me to come by later. I have a feeling that I caught you smack in the middle of everything. As usual, I'm in the way...

BENI

Lucky you. I think the opposite.

(JAIME enters with a platter of prosciutto and a corkscrew. He hands the corkscrew over to BENI to open the bottle of wine.)

JAIME

Everything under control.

SUSANA

Great.

JAIME

It's imported. Really delicious. Try some.

SUSANA

Mmmm...*(Pause while the three eat this delicacy.)* You know what? But don't laugh when I tell you. I know you guys probably will... Or you can laugh if you want to, I don't care, I'm going to say it anyway...*(Pause.)* Coming to your home always means a lot to me. You might think it's dumb but I really mean it when I tell you that when I come here to see you it's like...it's like saying, "Finally! I'm finally in Madrid! My Madrid. Home. With my friends, in my world...I mean, I've been here several days already and you know, I went shopping, ran around here and there, I saw my mother and sister...but the truth is guys, and I admit it might sound strange, but for me Madrid isn't Madrid without this home, without these moments, without everything we share... that's so rare and unusual.

JAIME

Really rare: the years fly by in between one visit to the next.

SUSANA

What an exaggeration!

JAIME

Isn't it so?

SUSANA

I really mean what I'm saying, guys. Maybe you remind me of the past.

JAIME

Oh, am I hearing that the present doesn't deserve your affection?

SUSANA

It's not that, silly...It's just that...I mean damn, look at you, we look like the same way we did twenty years ago: all dressed up and ready to go out and have a wild night out on the town!

BENI

(Handing each one a glass of wine.) To conquer the night or whatever came along, honey...you were really picky-picky. *(They laugh.)*

JAIME

I wouldn't say we were always lucky...

BENI

Speak for yourself.

JAIME

Precisely, I brought home a good catch.

BENI

(To SUSANA.) Do you think that was a compliment?

(SUSANA laughs aloud.)

SUSANA

I love you...*(Pause.)* Do you remember... *(SHE'S laughing.)* Do you remember one night when the three of us went out dancing, the night we made a bet? Do you know which one I'm talking about? I bet you unlimited free drinks all night long if you dared to walk the entire length of Main St. hand-in-hand like a pair of lovey-dovey lovers, like a married couple...

BENI

Oh, yes, I remember that now!

JAIME

Today it's unusual if two guys walking down Main St. aren't a couple or trying to be one...

SUSANA

...And didn't they stop us somewhere near the Hard Rock Café?

JAIME

Hard Rock Café! That used to be an underground landmark disco buried beneath a clothes store...

SUSANA

It was late and there was a huge crowd of people on the street, so many people from one side of the street to the next because there were discotheques and people were getting out of the movie theaters...

JAIME

Don't talk to me about movie theaters! The cinematic memory of generations, eh? I said, *generations*, sold to traders! Oh, farewell to our cultural legacy! I'm telling you this city is hopeless.

SUSANA

Poor Jaime!

JAIME

Yes, it's one of a kind, but beyond help.

SUSANA

Ok, ok already. You sound like a prophet of doom.

BENI

Of course, honey... "ouzo", "hard ssss", "prophet of doom"... So, there you go to Athens and you come back like...like...a Minerva...

JAIME

Minerva was Roman.

BENI

Ahha.... *(Pause.)* Really? Like the scale and the aqueduct? Or Roman more like calamares? Please do clarify that for me, you're the know-it-all.

JAIME

(To SUSANA.) You tell him. Am I right or wrong?

SUSANA

Stop it!

(SUSANA pours herself more wine.)

SUSANA

Let's make a toast to us. To our reunion. To harmony.

(They clink their glasses and drink while looking at each other straight in the eyes.)

SUSANA

Hey, you know these glasses are perfect.

BENI

We brought them back from Prague.

JAIME

The truth is we fell in love with them the second we set eyes on them in a little neighborhood shop in Castillo.

BENI

Super expensive, right? Thank goodness, we know how to take good care of them.

JAIME

Authentic Bohemian crystal.

BENI

Authentic, authentic. A treasure.

SUSANA

To the treasure!

(The three of them drink again. SUSANA caresses JAIME.)

SUSANA

Red always looked good on you. You look very handsome, Jaime.

JAIME

In spite of being a “prophet of doom”?

SUSANA

Very handsome...as polished as always.

BENI

I’m going to slice some cheese and serve the vichyssoise...

JAIME

Don’t bother, I’ll go. Let’s take our time and finish our wine. We’ll eat supper as soon as Beni is ready to set the table.

BENI

Here comes the scolding!

(JAIME exits. BENI walks toward the table to get some prosciutto and stands beside SUSANA. Once she’s sure that JAIME can’t hear her, SUSANA speaks.)

SUSANA

I’ll give you a scolding alright! You’re a coward and a grump. I stand by what I said earlier.

BENI

He’s the one who’s itching for a fight all the time!

SUSANA

Shhhhhh...Just humor me for a minute, Mr. Know-It-All. Is this your idea of a dialogue? Is this how you intend to convince him and make him switch over to your side by not accepting what's before your very eyes? Because whether you like it or not, Minerva was Roman...