

*Marco Ciaramella*



*The unexpected*

## CAST:

**Ezekiel:** Ophelia's husband

**Ophelia:** Ezekiel's wife

**Fanny:** The deceased

**Ida:** Gaylord's paternal grandmother

**Oswald:** Fanny's husband

**Dominic:** The doctor

**Father Peter:** Minister of the church

**Meryl:** Father Peter's housekeeper

**Gaylord:** Grandson of Ida and Fanny

**Vera:** The owner of the condominium



## FIRST ACT

*The scene takes place in the living room of an apartment building.*

*At the center of the scene we find Ezekiel sitting at the table intent on checking, equipped with a calculator and pen, the financial reports of some investments.*

**Ezekiel:** *(Satisfied)* Also this month, a good chunk of it came out for everyone. *(Hearing a knock on the door, he puts the pen behind his ear and, with the calculator still in his hand, which continues to look gleefully, goes to open it)*

**Fanny:** May I?

**Ezekiel:** I'd be a bit busy. So if that's not important, let's meet up later.

**Fanny:** *(Showing him a large wad of cash)* Is this important enough?

**Ezekiel:** What a careless! I didn't realize I was done. *(Looking at the calculator)* This was the very last. *(Referring to the calculations with which he was verifying the amount of the above investments)* Take a seat!

**Fanny:** Thanks, I do it very willingly. My legs are very tired, I haven't been well for a while. *(Then she sits down at the table)*

**Ezekiel:** *(Offering her some treats)* Maybe your blood glucose level will have dropped. After one of these you will see that you will immediately feel better. Don't worry, they're good, Ophelia didn't make them.

**Fanny:** Ezekiel don't say that about that holy woman!

**Ezekiel:** She may be a saint, as you say, but she can't even cook a poached egg!

**Fanny:** So who made these beautiful cookies?

**Ezekiel:** My mother-in-law. The harpy, unlike her daughter, really knows how to cook well. In fact, he should stay more in the kitchen and come less times here to break...

**Fanny:** I see! It doesn't matter that you go on. I accept your cookie. In fact, I also think that my tiredness is due to a drop in blood pressure, which is why, a little while ago, I ate a chocolate, but I think it wasn't enough, we might as well try again.

**Ezekiel:** Listen to an old fox like me and you will soon feel better.

**Fanny:** Maybe, unless I got some virus. Even last night, in fact, I had no appetite and I even skipped dinner. Just the thought of eating increased the nausea I already had.

**Ezekiel:** Won't you be pregnant?

**Fanny:** How stupid you are! You know well that I have now passed the fertile age for several years. *(Then, after having tasted one of those cookies)* They are good, but more than one I just can't eat.

**Ezekiel:** *(Taking the bottle of wine)* Then taste some wine, this raises the dead. My mother-in-law gave me this too.

**Fanny:** Do you even have the courage to complain about that woman? But what more do you want?

**Ezekiel:** I want her to stay at her house.

**Fanny:** *(After drinking just a small sip)* It's good, but I just can't drink it all.

**Ezekiel:** Drink, that with this you will pass all health problems! The wine refreshes and increases the pressure.

**Fanny:** Do you say?

**Ezekiel:** I say.

**Fanny:** Then I'll make a little effort. *(Then she drinks the remaining wine in the glass in one go)*

**Ezekiel:** So... what were you telling me?

**Fanny:** That I feel bad.

**Ezekiel:** Apart from that? *(Referring to the money initially shown by the woman)*

**Fanny:** Ah! Are you referring to this? *(Showing the wad of money again)*

**Ezekiel:** Exactly!

**Fanny:** I decided to invest this money and who more than you would be able to do it in the best way?

**Ezekiel:** Great decision! They will surely be in good hands with me

**Fanny:** But tell me: what rate do you ask for your advice?

**Ezekiel:** The rate is always the same: two hands.

**Fanny:** That is to say?

**Ezekiel:** I'm sorry! I assumed you were an expert in the field. *(Showing hands one at a time)* Five plus five equals ten percent.

**Fanny:** Then I will go to look for a maimed. *(Then she gets up to leave)*

**Ezekiel:** Wait up! Don't be impulsive, let's talk! *(Then hiding a hand behind his back)* Can't you see you've found him already? After all, five percent of revenues seems fair to me. But how much is the music?

**Fanny:** The music?

**Ezekiel:** This is how the subject matter experts call money in jargon. I just wanted to know how much is the amount to invest.

**Fanny:** Ah, that music! That's a hundred thousand, so make sure you make this symphony sound good.

**Ezekiel:** I'm the best conductor you could find!

**Fanny:** Every month, however, you will have to inform me about the progress of the situation, so if the notes are not as expected you will have to tell me immediately.

**Ezekiel:** Don't worry, my music will be celestial!

**Fanny:** Otherwise I would soon change color!

**Ezekiel:** No problem! You are free to terminate the "contract" at any time, however raise a little curiosity: how did you manage to accumulate so much money? You are a housewife and your husband works in the post office.

**Fanny:** Let's say I received the right postcard.

**Ezekiel:** Which postcard?

**Fanny:** Ah! Sorry... I too forgot that my jargon is for experts in the field! I mean that I received an invitation for an evening with old friends with a passion for ... *(Interrupting herself)* Who knows what my Oswald will do when I tell him... *(Interrupting herself again)*

**Ezekiel:** I get it! You don't want to tell me. But I don't understand why! Didn't that money have rained down from the sky ?!

**Fanny:** In a certain way, yes. *(Then, unable to keep the secret anymore)* I won them by playing poker.

**Ezekiel:** What an ass!

**Fanny:** This statement certainly does not give misunderstandings even to non-experts in the sector!

*Suddenly Fanny puts her hand to her chest, collapses to the ground and, after a brief agony, dies. Ezekiel, after noting the death, slips the money out of her hand*

**Ezekiel:** She is really dead! Could it be the fault of those sweets my mother-in-law made? Or maybe it was the wine? I also made her drink it all. So that witch wanted to kill me! Anyway, I keep these, so the husband doesn't know anything. But I better move the body in front of the door of her house. Since she lives upstairs, it won't be a big deal to drag her up. It is better for no one to find out that she was here, so as not to be forced to explain the reason for her visit. *(Then he hides the money in a drawer and drags the body out of the apartment)* I brought her bad luck before! I told her she was lucky, but who can say what luck is!

*Ophelia enters the scene with shopping bags..*

**Ophelia:** Ezekiel, are you in the kitchen? Not at all, he must be out! *(Then, seeing the papers on the table)* But he can't be far, he left all those papers on the table.

*Ezekiel returns to the scene, exhausted from the effort made in carrying the corpse upstairs.*

**Ezekiel:** Hi Ophelia!

**Ophelia:** Since when do you leave your door open and your papers unattended?

**Ezekiel:** *(Embarrassed, looks for a convincing answer)* It's since when ...

**Ophelia:** Have you drunk? *(Pointing to the wine bottle on the table)*

**Ezekiel:** *(He takes advantage of the opportunity and, pretending to be drunk, starts to stagger)* But how good your mother's wine is, I'd drink a barrel. *(Then sits down)*

**Ophelia:** Good or not, it hurts to drink too much!

**Ezekiel:** In my opinion, even drink little! *(Still fearing that Fanny's death was due to the wine he made her drink)*

**Ophelia:** What idiocy are you saying? As my father used to say: a glass of this, raise the dead!

**Ezekiel:** But it didn't work with him, he's passed away for ten years and I don't think I've seen him wandering around the house recently

**Ophelia:** I don't answer you because you're high.

**Ezekiel:** In my opinion this wine is not very genuine. I am convinced that she adulterate it to make me die. You know well she never liked me and I wouldn't be surprised if ...

**Ophelia:** *(Interrupting her husband)* If that were the case, do you know how long we would have buried you?!

**Ezekiel:** Maybe this time she misdosed the adulterants.

**Ophelia:** Now you are delirious! Stop blaming her for everything! And to prove you wrong, I'll drink a glass too. *(After draining the glass, she looks puzzled at her husband who is slowly counting from one to ten)*

**Ophelia:** What are you doing?

**Ezekiel:** Don't you see it? I'm counting.

**Ophelia:** And what are you counting?

**Ezekiel:** I'll tell you later. But ... don't you also feel peckish?

**Ophelia:** No, I don't feel it.

**Ezekiel:** Do me a favor anyway: also taste one of these sweets your mother sent.

**Ophelia:** *(Impatiently)* But you are really obsessed! everything my mom sends, until proven otherwise, has never killed anyone.

**Ezekiel:** Until proven otherwise!

**Ophelia:** *(She takes a cookie and devours it)* *Are you happy?* Now move your ass and finish your job! I need the table clear, I have to lay it.

**Ezekiel:** One, two, three, four...

**Ophelia:** Stop counting and take all your papers off the table.

*Someone knocks on the door.*

**Ophelia:** I'll go open the door. You go to the kitchen. If he were some of your clients and he saw you drunk, he wouldn't ask you to take care of his investments anymore.

*Ezekiel leaves the scene.*

**Ophelia:** *(After opening)* Come on Oswald, what a weird face! What happened to you?

**Oswald:** *(He throws himself into Ophelia's arms and starts crying desperately)* You won't believe it, but Fanny is dead.

**Ophelia:** It's terrible! Come and sit down and tell me everything. When did it happen?

**Oswald:** I found her a few minutes ago on the ground in front of the front door that was no longer breathing. I took her inside and laid her on the bed, then I called the doctor, but I already know that there is nothing more to be done.

**Ophelia:** We await the arrival of the doctor, maybe it is less serious than it seems.

**Oswald:** I'm sure she's dead.

**Ophelia:** What if it were a trance?

**Oswald:** Maybe! It would be the best gift I could ever receive. Do me a favor, keep the keys and go check if I'm wrong. I don't have the courage to look at her, it hurts too much.

**Ophelia:** *(After getting the keys)* Okay, wait here, I'll take care of it! You, in the meantime, have a drink. *(She puts a hand on his shoulder to encourage him and leaves the scene)*

**Oswald:** *(Crying)* Why her? She was so good and selfless.

*Ezekiel enters the scene from the kitchen and, seeing Oswald with his head down on the table, approaches him to comfort him.*

**Ezekiel:** I was in the kitchen and I heard everything. Sorry I didn't come immediately, but I didn't have the courage.

**Oswald:** *(Crying)* I understand.

**Ezekiel:** Even if my words are worth nothing, I fully agree with you when you say that Fanny was a really good person.

**Oswald:** You must know that his greatest desire was to be able to buy an apartment in this condominium.

**Ezekiel:** What does this have to do with it? Don't you already have one? You are the only ones in this building to have managed to buy it.

**Oswald:** She just wanted to get another one for his grandson.

**Ezekiel:** For Gaylord?

**Oswald:** Yes, for him. Poor boy, with all the problems he has.

**Ezekiel:** But doesn't he live with the other grandmother?

**Oswald:** Yes, with Ida, that shit. My Fanny always said she couldn't stand her.

**Ezekiel:** In fact, Ida mistreats that poor boy. What is the fault of him if he was born... well... if he is not completely normal?

**Oswald:** My wife wished that, on Ida's death, Gaylord would have an apartment from which no one could evict him.

**Ezekiel:** Let's be honest, with or without an apartment, when Ida dies, that poor fellow will definitely end up in an institution.

**Oswald:** With Fanny's disappearance, I think it will be very likely that this will happen, especially if Ida dies before I reached retirement age and can take care of him.

**Ezekiel:** As long as Ida is alive, the problem does not exist, so it seems useless to think about it now.

*Ophelia and Dominic, the doctor, enter the scene.*

**Ophelia:** *(Turning to Dominic)* Come doctor, let me introduce you to Signora Fanny's husband.

**Dominic:** I am Dr. Dominic Jones and I am the replacement of his family doctor, unfortunately, after a careful examination, I have ascertained the death of his wife.

**Oswald:** This does not surprise me, unfortunately I was already sure.

**Dominic:** I must also inform you that I have reported the case to the police, so you will soon receive a visit from them to make a statement.

**Oswald:** No problem.

**Ophelia:** *(Glaring at Oswald, takes Ezekiel by the arm and carries him into the kitchen)* Come with me, maybe it's better to leave them alone.



**Oswald:** (*Suspicious of the woman's attitude*) Doctor, your gaze makes me understand that you must also tell me something else.

**Dominic:** It is not up to me to question you, but if you could provide me with a plausible explanation as to why the corpse has those bruises all over its body, I would be grateful.

**Oswald:** Are you telling me what I believe? That my wife was killed?

**Dominic:** The cause of death can only be determined after performing autopsy examinations. For the moment I can only make assumptions. The only certainty is that that poor woman is dead. However, I warn you that when the police arrive, you will have to answer questions like: if you two got along, if you had ever raised your hands on her, and so on.

**Oswald:** Everyone knows we were two soul mates. But now you can answer a question: what kind of bruises did you find on my wife's body?

**Dominic:** I have to be honest: I believe that his wife was beaten and then her body was dragged.

**Oswald:** What you are telling me is terrible!

**Dominic:** She has several bruises on her wrists, ankles and especially on the nape.

**Oswald:** Who could ever have done this to her? When I last heard from her, she only told me that she had to go and talk to someone and that when she returned she would give me good news.

**Dominic:** It is not to me that you have to tell these things. I just informed you of my doubts. Now it's late, I have to go, goodbye. (*And he leaves the scene*)

**Oswald:** (*Speaking loudly so that Ezekiel and Ophelia from the kitchen can hear*) This is a real mystery, she didn't tell me where she was going. Now what do I tell the police?

*Ophelia and Ezekiel enter the scene.*

**Ophelia:** You could tell the truth...!

**Oswald:** And what would it be, in your opinion?

**Ophelia:** Maybe you beat her, kicked her out of the house and, not having realized the strong blows you gave her, you killed her.

**Oswald:** I have never even touched her with a finger!

**Ezekiel:** Not with a finger, but perhaps with a club.

**Oswald:** So, do you think I'm a killer?

**Ezekiel:** For the moment it seems obvious to me, I have neither seen nor heard anyone beat your wife on the stairs and I assure you that I have been at home all morning.

**Ophelia:** While it is plausible that all the commotion took place inside your apartment.

**Oswald:** But I was at work!

**Ezekiel:** It's not hard for a postman to get away from work just long enough to commit murder

**Oswald:** In that case, he, *(Pointing Ezekiel)* who has been in the house all morning, would have heard noises, don't you think?

**Ophelia:** It's not hard for a man to overwhelm a woman by catching her off guard and then covering her mouth to silence her.

**Ezekiel:** Nor would it have been difficult to take a rolling pin, wrap it in a cloth and give her lots of blows. *(Simulating the gesture)*

**Ophelia:** Murderer, out of my house!

**Oswald:** But I...

**Ezekiel:** Did you hear what my wife said? Get out of here and never show up again! Am I right Ophelia?

**Ophelia:** You have never talked better than this in your life!

**Oswald:** Thanks for your trust, you are really true friends! *(Sarcastically)*

**Ezekiel:** Don't mention it! *(Pointing him the door)*

**Oswald:** *(As he leaves the stage)* I'll prove my innocence, should it take my whole life!

**Ophelia:** *(After setting the table)* Holy shit! I forgot to buy the fish for tonight, I go to the fish shop and come back.

**Ezekiel:** Take your time, I'm not hungry yet.

**Ophelia:** Then I take the opportunity to also make another commission, bye! *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Ezekiel:** *(He opens the drawer and takes out the money)* I'll keep these. Nobody suspects anything anyway. Even if the police learned of that poker win, they would think of a probable reason for accusing her husband of wanting to get her out of the way to get the money. In any case, it is better to keep the police away from this house. Maybe if I further fueled the suspicions about him... I could spread rumors that he has a lover... in this case that photo could be useful.

*Someone knocks on the door and Ezekiel goes to open it.*

**Ezekiel:** What do I owe your visit to?

**Father Peter:** Don't you remember that today is the day of the blessing of families?

**Ezekiel:** I thought you were coming in the afternoon, not lunchtime.

**Father Peter:** I know it's a bit unusual time, however, if it's not a problem for you, I wouldn't want to come back today so that Meryl is free. *(Then he calls the woman left at the door)* Meryl, come in! Ezekiel is happy to receive us.

**Ezekiel:** *(After both have entered)* Sure, I was just dying for it!

**Meryl:** Father, he hates me, because I never entrusted him my money to invest. *(Handing him the sprinkler)*

**Father Peter:** Wait up! Prayer first. Haven't you learned yet?

*After the ritual prayer, the priest blesses the person present in the house.*

**Ezekiel:** Are we done now?

**Meryl:** *(Holding the bag of offerings open, which Ezekiel pretends not to see)* O stingy, if you make an offer, your hands won't dry out!

**Father Peter:** Meryl, offers are not mandatory. People should only do them if they want to.

**Meryl:** But this is full of money! Among other things, not even his own, he manages those of others.

**Father Peter:** Don't judge if you don't want to be judged and then every job is noble

**Meryl:** *(Turning to Ezekiel)* So you throw something in or not? I got tired of being with the bag open.

**Father Peter:** Forgive her, she is a bit rustic, but she is a good woman. You have no idea how committed this woman is to the parish!

**Ezekiel:** If she did more to improve her ways, it wouldn't be bad!

**Father Peter:** I often repeat it to her too.

*The priest looks at the bottle of wine on the table..*

**Ezekiel:** *(Not finding the wallet, to free himself from the embarrassment of refusing to make an offer, he opens the drawer, where the wad of money stolen from Fanny is found, to take some banknotes. The attempt to hide the rest of the money does not go to good end, at least with Meryl, which never escapes anything. The priest, on the other hand, urged to drink by Ezekiel, does not pay much attention)* Father, drink good wine and take this offer that I do with my heart.

**Meryl:** I'd love to know who you made to die of heartbreak to have so much money!

**Father Peter:** *Grateful for the offer and for the good wine)* Now, Meryl is enough! You have exceeded the limit, immediately apologize!

**Meryl:** Sorry. *(With little conviction and glaring at him)*

**Father Peter:** Good! Now I better go and bless the family that lives above. If I stay longer, I risk finding them already at the table.

**Ezekiel:** Fanny's on a table for sure, but I don't think she's eating!

**Father Peter:** What do you mean?

**Ezekiel:** Don't you know what happened to her?

**Father Peter:** No.

**Ezekiel:** A tragedy: she died.

**Meryl:** My God!

**Father Peter:** How is it possible? She was neither sick nor old.

**Meryl:** What a pity! She was the same age as me.

**Ezekiel:** A pity indeed! Two at once would have been... *(Alluding to the possibility that the same fate had happen to Meryl)*

**Father Peter:** What do you mean?

**Ezekiel:** I was saying... that the news of Fanny's death was very painful for me and my wife, so I don't even want to think about the possibility that the same fate could happen to others.

**Meryl:** But when did it happen?

**Ezekiel:** This morning.

**Meryl:** Poor!

**Ezekiel:** Bad luck with her husband was not enough...

**Father Peter:** Why do you say that? I know Oswald well and he seems like a good person to me.

**Ezekiel:** Good people don't cheat on wives!

**Father Peter:** It seems impossible to me! And who would he betray her with?

**Meryl:** Come on say, with whom? I'm really curious!

**Ezekiel:** Sin is said, but not the sinner, you should know!

**Meryl:** And you should know that people say a lot of bullshit!

**Ezekiel:** I am sure of what I am saying.

**Father Peter:** Without proof, however, it is not good to put gossip around.



**Ezekiel:** But I have them! And now I'm going to get them. *(Then he leaves the room to go to the kitchen)*

**Meryl:** Father, I don't like that man.

**Father Peter:** Just because he's a gossip?

**Meryl:** It is not just for this reason. You must know that he keeps an avalanche of money hidden in that drawer. *(Pointing to the drawer in question)*

**Father Peter:** How do you know?

**Meryl:** *(With satisfaction)* Nothing escapes me! The banknotes he gave us he took from a roll full of money. I am also sure that that money is not his, otherwise, a miser like that would never have been so generous.

**Father Peter:** I repeat what I said to him: to accuse someone you need proof. So, no more guesswork and don't you dare pull this thing out again. Shut up! Is coming.

**Ezekiel:** Here, look! *(Showing them a picture of Oswald hugging a woman)*

**Father Peter:** What do you want to prove with this?

**Ezekiel:** Do you know who this woman is?

**Meryl:** Sure! Miss Vera, the owner of the apartments in this condominium. That's a witch full of money.

**Ezekiel:** And don't you find it strange that all the apartments in this building are her except Oswald's?

**Meryl:** He will have convinced her to sell it to him.

**Ezekiel:** Miss Vera is famous for never having sold anything to anyone. Her philosophy is to buy, not to sell. Why did he succeed in his intent? Then we add that she is a spinster and two plus two always equals four.

**Meryl:** It's enough for you to gossip! Then, what do you have to say if she a spinster is? For that matter, I am too. Do you want to know what they say about you instead?

**Ezekiel:** Certainly no one says I'm an alleged killer.

**Father Peter:** Why, who was accused of murder?

**Ezekiel:** I didn't mean it, but the doctor who analyzed Fanny's corpse claims that was beaten to death. In your opinion, who could have ever been angry with her, if not that wretch husband?

**Father Peter:** Wow, this is serious!

**Ezekiel:** So am I right or not?

**Meryl:** (*Suspicious*) We'll see.

**Father Peter:** But now let's finish it here!

**Meryl:** Okay Father, I obey!

**Father Peter:** (*After looking at the clock*) It's really late, we really have to go. God bless you!

**Meryl:** He would need at least a couple of blessings and who knows if they would be enough!

*After this statement Father Peter drags Meryl out and they both leave the scene.*

## SECOND ACT

*Same scenography as the first act.*

*Ophelia is intent on clearing the table when she hears someone knock on the door and goes to open it.*

**Ophelia:** Hi Ida, hi Gaylord! What do I owe your visit to?

**Ida:** We learned the news of Fanny's death. But it's true?

**Ophelia:** Unfortunately yes, come in that we talk about it! Take a seat where you prefer, in the meantime I finish clearing up.

**Ida:** Thanks! (*Then turning rudely to her grandson*) You sit here and don't move!

**Ophelia:** Why do you treat him so badly? If he want to move, you can do it freely in this house. He doesn't bother anyone.

**Ida:** You talk like this because you don't have to bear him all day like me. You don't know what patience I must have with him.

**Ophelia:** Poor fellow, it's not his fault!

**Ida:** But not even mine! The misfortune of losing a daughter was not enough, I also had to have a disabled dependent.

**Ophelia:** I remind you that that disabled person is your grandson!

**Ida:** I do not deny that I am starting to get a bit tired of hearing the same things over and over. Grandson or not, I would like to see you with someone like this, from morning to night! I think it would be more correct to put him with his fellow.

**Ophelia:** Excuse me Ida, but I just can't hear you talk like this!

**Ida:** Even if I were more delicate, the result would not change, he is stupid and remains stupid! However, it is better if we talk about the reason for my visit, otherwise we end up arguing. I would like to know more about Fanny's death, because I still can't believe it. She was fine yesterday. In short, recently she said she felt a little tired, but I never thought she could die.

**Ophelia:** But first let me ask you one question: why didn't she ever take care of Gaylord?

**Ida:** In reality she took care of him economically. She spent several money a month for his maintenance and was always very generous, but she never wanted him at home.

**Ophelia:** Do you think she couldn't stand Gaylord?

**Ida:** Absolutely not. When she came to see him, they spent many hours together playing and laughing, it can be said that they were made for each other.

**Ophelia:** Don't you have the same feeling she had for that boy?

**Ida:** Ophelia, it is one thing to spend a few hours together and another to take care of him night and day, with all that goes with it: preparing food, feeding him, washing and ironing his clothes and finally changing his diaper. Because, if you don't know, he is not in control of his bodily needs.

**Ophelia:** I understand, but now, what are you going to do?

**Ida:** I need to talk to Oswald. With my meager pension, I can't support two people.

**Ophelia:** Do you think he was aware that his wife was passing you money?

**Ida:** I know that Fanny did it without his knowledge. But if he doesn't help me now, I have no idea how do it.

**Gaylord:** *(Who has an obvious speech impediment)* Grandma when will you take me to the other grandmother?

**Ida:** Shut up! Then I'll take you there.

**Gaylord:** I want to go there now!

**Ida:** Do you see Ophelia? He has the brain of a five-year-old boy.

**Ophelia:** *(She approaches Gaylord and strokes his head)* I see...

**Gaylord:** *(Turning to Ophelia)* Lady do you want to play with me?

**Ophelia:** Gladly! And tell me: what game do you want to play?

**Gaylord:** To the one where you hold my hands

**Ophelia:** *(Looking at Ida with a quizzical air to understand which game the boy is referring to)* But you have to explain to me how to play.

**Ida:** You hold his hands and caress them and he pretends to fall asleep. He always played with Fanny.

**Ophelia:** I really like this game. *(Then, turning to Ida)* Maybe let's think about where we can make him lie down.

**Ida:** Let him lie on the floor, he always wants to stay there.

**Ophelia:** But then he will get sick! Gaylord, come with me to the kitchen. There is a beautiful armchair that is right for us. *(Then she takes him by the hand and they both leave the scene)*

**Ida:** How much concern! You don't ruin anything, worse than that!

*Ezekiel enters the scene.*

**Ezekiel:** *(As soon as he notices his guest, he greets her)* Hi Ida, what good wind brings you here?

**Ida:** Storm wind.

**Ezekiel:** Why, what happened?

**Ida:** Have you gone stupid too as my grandson?

**Ezekiel:** What are you referring to?

**Ida:** Do you it on purpose?

**Ezekiel:** I'm sorry, but I just don't understand.

**Ida:** Do you know that Fanny is dead or not?

**Ezekiel:** Of course, everyone knows by now!

**Ida:** Then, in your opinion, what storm was I referring to?

**Ezekiel:** *(Alluding to the rumors circulating about the mutual hatred that the two women harbored towards each other)* I honestly thought that for you it was a warm, spring breeze to enjoy for a long time.

**Ida:** *(Surprised and indignant)* How badly you age!

**Ezekiel:** *(Convinced that the woman actually rejoices over Fanny's death)* Instead you, from now on, we will see you rejuvenate!

**Ida:** I don't know what you drank today, but it sure hurt you!



**Ezekiel:** You're not the first to tell me this.

**Ida:** If you continue like this, I won't even be the last!

**Ezekiel:** Stop being a hypocrite! Everyone knows that you hated Fanny and that the feeling was mutual.

**Ida:** I don't know whether to laugh or slap you, in the meantime that I decide, I'll tell you: fuck off.

**Ezekiel:** Now that she is dead you pretend to be sorry, but when she was alive you talk badly about her, shame on you! *(Ezekiel makes this statement to see Ida's reaction and understand what the real relationship was between her and Fanny)*

**Ida:** Besides being stupid, you are also a big gossip! How could I speak ill of her if for so many years she had given me the money for the maintenance of Gaylord?

**Ezekiel:** *(Thinking aloud)* So that wasn't the first win!?

**Ida:** What are you babbling about?

**Ezekiel:** Oswald told me that, in his opinion, Fanny hated you.

**Ida:** Fanny pretended to hate me just to keep her husband away from my house. Her was a simple misdirection to keep him from discovering that she was spending all that money.

**Ezekiel:** You're not telling me the truth, because Oswald knew everything. In fact, she said that Fanny was tired of being morally blackmailed by you and that, sooner or later, she would turn off the taps.

**Ida:** This is just a gratuitous spite that coward must have put around, hoping to get us to bicker.

**Ezekiel:** Smart the boy! He wanted that money to stay in his pockets. So, since we're talking about him, I have two more things to tell you.

**Ida:** Come on, I want to know everything!

**Ezekiel:** The first is that he is accused of his wife's death.

**Ida:** Nooooo!

**Ezekiel:** Yeeeee!

**Ida:** But how was he going to ...

**Ezekiel:** Wait up! I'll tell you this later. Now listen to the second: the motive for the crime is passionate, it seems that he has a lover.

**Ida:** It is not possible!

**Ezekiel:** And I also know who the lover is.

**Ida:** (*Ida, intrigued, seeing that Ezekiel has a moment of hesitation, in fact he is thinking, she urges him to say the name*) Will you tell me or not?

**Ezekiel:** (*In a low voice, as he is pondering*) This looks better to me.

**Ida:** Speak loudly, I'm old and deaf, if you whisper I don't understand anything!

**Ezekiel:** Hold on tight!

**Ida:** (*Holding firmly to the chair*) Yes, fear not!

**Ezekiel:** What are you doing?

**Ida:** I hold on tight.

**Ezekiel:** It was a way of saying, however forget it! Osvaldo's lover is Meryl

**Ida:** Who? The one who lives in this building? Father Peter's housekeeper?

**Ezekiel:** Just her! I would recognize her hairstyle among a thousand.

*Ida starts laughing.*

**Ezekiel:** Why are you laughing?

**Ida:** For a moment, I imagined her while ...

**Ezekiel:** Explain yourself better!

**Ida:** While... well... under there. (*Still laughing*)

**Ezekiel:** Where? In the sacristy?

**Ida:** You are really dumb!

**Ezekiel:** Maybe I will also be dumb, but it was I who saw those two enter the vacant apartment on the first floor. In my opinion, this is the place where their clandestine meetings took place. I saw Osvaldo with my own eyes looking around cautiously, opening the door, passionately drawing Meryl to him and then closing it again.

**Ida:** And how did he get the key?

**Ezekiel:** Do you remember when, some time ago, thieves entered that very apartment? After the intrusion, Vera, the owner of the condominium, had the lock that had been forced replaced. Do you remember who volunteered to do the job? Oswald. On that occasion, he must also have had a duplicate of the new key made.

**Ida:** What a wretch, right under his wife's nose! But then, wasn't he afraid that Vera would find out with his lover? She had the key and she certainly didn't need permission to use it.

**Ezekiel:** I think that the clandestine meetings between the two took place when Miss Vera, every month, went to visit her sister.

**Ida:** And to think that they would seem such an ill-matched couple: he a very distinguished man and she more boorish than me.

**Ezekiel:** Love blooms where you least expect it!

**Ida:** It may be, however, those two together I just don't see them! But tell me: how would that scoundrel have killed his wife?

**Ezekiel:** He beat her up and then dragged her to the landing, staging an attack by strangers.

**Ida:** What a scoundrel!

**Ezekiel:** I totally agree with you! It is for this reason that, as soon as we found out what he had done, Ophelia and I immediately kicked him out of our house.

**Ida:** You did well! Kill that poor woman like that!

**Ezekiel:** It is better for you, however, not speak ill of him with other people, I remind you that you must ask him for help, now that his wife is dead.

**Ida:** You are right. I can't afford to do it otherwise...

*Ophelia enters the scene and interrupts the conversation.*

**Ophelia:** Gaylord fell asleep, what do you say, is it better to let him rest?

**Ida:** Yes, if he sleeps it doesn't bother!

**Ophelia:** But he doesn't seem so comfortable in the armchair, I wouldn't want him to get a stiff neck.

**Ida:** The stiff neck comes to me but if you wake him up! He always wants to lie on the floor and, at my ripe age, raising him does not help my cervical arthrosis.

**Ophelia:** I should go shopping now.

**Ida:** If that's okay for you, I'd go with you. I would take advantage of the moment when the other is asleep to buy something in peace. When I take him to the grocery store with me, he always destroys half the shop.

**Ophelia:** Sure, come on! Afterwards I also help you to take the shopping home.

**Ida:** Thanks. Then let's go immediately, let's not waste any more time!

**Ezekiel:** Why?

**Ida:** In the meantime, I would not want the idiot to wake up and cause too much trouble.

**Ophelia:** Don't worry! If he wakes up, Ezekiel will take care of him.

**Ezekiel:** *(Taking the calculator)* But I should do some calculations.

**Ophelia:** Not even if you had to do the liver ones, you could be relieved of the task of looking after the boy, do you understand?

**Ezekiel:** *(Raising his hands in surrender)* It will be a real pleasure!

**Ophelia:** Very well, come on Ida, let's go! *(She takes Ida by the arm and together they leave the scene)*

*Gaylord enters the scene. Ezekiel looks at him strangely.*

**Gaylord:** Hello little boy!

**Ezekiel:** I am not a little boy, I am a man.

**Gaylord:** *(Running to hug Ezekiel)* So you know my dad?

**Ezekiel:** Your dad? Yes... I met him a long time ago... we were friends.

**Gaylord:** Do you also know my mom?

**Ezekiel:** Yes, I knew her well too.

**Gaylord:** Can you call them? I want to play with them.

**Ezekiel:** I can't do it, but I can tell you that they are here and that they are looking at you.

**Gaylord:** But I don't see them.

**Ezekiel:** Dear Gaylord, things are not always as they seem.

**Gaylord:** If I put myself on the floor, do they let themselves be seen? *(Without waiting for the answer, Gaylord lies down on the floor)*

**Ezekiel:** Get up boy, it's not necessary.

**Gaylord:** Grandma says that if I stay still and good then she'll buy me ice cream.

**Ezekiel:** I'll buy it for you if you stand up.

**Gaylord:** Do you also buy it for mom and dad?

**Ezekiel:** Gaylord, it's time for you to understand that your parents died in a tragic car accident.

**Gaylord:** Grandma told me too, but I want to be with them and play the hands's game.

**Ezekiel:** Can't you do it with me?



**Gaylord:** *(Crying)* No, I want to do it with them.

**Ezekiel:** *(Hugging him)* Okay, I'll do everything I can, but now stop crying, otherwise this wish of yours won't come true.

**Gaylord:** *(Squeezed in the man's arms, he suddenly stops crying)* I'm hungry.

**Ezekiel:** This is a good news! Come on, let's go to the kitchen, there are some good cookies my mother-in-law made.

**Gaylord:** I don't want them, I don't know her.

**Ezekiel:** In fact, you do not miss anything by not knowing her! So, do you know what we do? Let's go for a walk. *(After which the two leave the scene)*

*Father Peter, Meryl, Ida and Ophelia enter the scene.*

**Ophelia:** Come in. *(After having a look in the other room)* There is no one there, Ezekiel and Gaylord must have gone out.

**Father Peter:** I stay only a few minutes then I go to give the blessing to Fanny's poor remains.

**Ophelia:** If you don't mind, I'd like to come with you to give Fanny a final farewell

**Father Peter:** No problem.

**Ophelia:** Ida, what do you want to do? Are you staying here waiting for Ezekiel and Gaylord to come back?

**Ida:** Yes, I will stay here.

**Ida:** Meryl, won't you want to go with them?

**Meryl:** Yes, why are you asking me?

**Ida:** I'd like you to stay and keep me company. The dead are impressive to me and then I go up the stairs badly, so I'd rather stay here.

**Meryl:** If Father Peter can do without my presence, I will very gladly stay.

**Father Peter:** Sure! Your presence is not always essential. Then we go.

*Ophelia and Father Peter leave the scene.*

**Meryl:** Without me that man would be armless! He forgets everything and then has the courage to say that I'm not indispensable! Modesty aside, I can guarantee you that I am really good at these things.

**Ida:** Not only in these.

**Meryl:** In fact, I'm good at everything I do.

**Ida:** We noticed!

**Meryl:** Finally my work is appreciated. You don't know how I enjoy hearing me say it.

**Ida:** I can honestly imagine this!

**Meryl:** On the other hand, it is right for everyone to take their own merits, whether he is a priest or a parishioner.

**Ida:** In my opinion it is the parishioner who gives the most satisfaction.

**Meryl:** Even with the priest there can be.

**Ida:** Perhaps the taste of extreme transgression!

**Meryl:** It is not a question of transgressing, far from it! I would say that the intent is to make others feel good.

**Ida:** Ah, I don't worry about that, I think only of myself and I only look in my house!

**Meryl:** Speaking of home, there are always strange annoying noises coming from your apartment that prevent me from sleeping. Could you do something to stop them?

**Ida:** It is Galiberto who lies down and plays on the floor, so I can do little about it. However, speaking of noises, but of a very different nature (*Maliciously*) someone told me that you are responsible for those coming from the empty apartment on the first floor. So I decided to blackmail you.

**Meryl:** Who would you like to blackmail and for what?

**Ida:** Silence is golden and, in this case, it amounts to a monthly payment to be paid twelve times a year.

**Meryl:** A monthly payment?

**Ida:** Whether you pay or he, it does the same for me. The important thing is that someone fork out the money.

**Meryl:** Now I understand from whom he inherited that mental deficit Gaylord... from you.

**Ida:** Do not provoke me! Otherwise, as soon as Father Peter returns, I'll tell him everything.

**Meryl:** Are you talking seriously?

**Ida:** I never joke about money.

**Meryl:** And would you like them from me? Tell me what prompts you to make this imaginative request of yours. Also who would this other person be?

**Ida:** If you want me to speak freely, I'll do it right away.

**Meryl:** I don't know what else are you waiting for!?

**Ida:** Someone has seen you sneak into the empty first floor apartment several times with Oswald, so if you don't want to be accused of complicity in murder, find a way to pay the sum you made me lose when you killed Fanny. In return, I will keep my mouth shut.

**Meryl:** *(Laughing)* So do you think I'm having a romantic relationship with Oswald?

**Ida:** Why not? You are a spinster and he is an inviting little morsel. I may not have understood what he finds in you, however this is not important.

**Meryl:** But if I've never talked to him in my life!

**Ida:** It will mean that you had sex in silence.

**Meryl:** Is it possible to know who put this nonsense in your head?

**Ida:** Someone who is sure of this.

**Meryl:** And would this person have seen me enter that apartment in the company of Oswald?

**Ida:** Yes, he said your hairstyle is unmistakable.

**Meryl:** Would that make me a husband-stealer and a murderer?

**Ida:** I don't care what you are, I just want the money.

**Meryl:** Tell me the name of this liar.

**Ida:** Suffice it to say that he is willing to declare in court, what I have just told you.

**Meryl:** Ida, tell me who this person is, because I'm losing my patience!

**Ida:** Ezekiel.

**Meryl:** In order to turn me against people, that man would say anything.

**Ida:** In my opinion he tells the truth.

**Meryl:** I'm sorry to disappoint you, but even if it were true that Ezekiel had seen someone enter that apartment, it certainly wasn't me! However, I can't wait to meet him and have him repeat everything in my presence.

**Ida:** It will mean that we will wait together for his return and see who is right.

**Meryl:** I don't even think about it. I don't like your company anymore, I prefer to reach Father Peter. I can't stand these insinuations, I might not answer for my actions. *(She goes to the door, as soon as she opens the figure of the priest stands out in front of her)*

**Father Peter:** Meryl, were you leaving?

**Meryl:** I was coming to you.

**Ida:** I better go away, otherwise someone is in trouble.

**Father Peter:** Who?

**Ida:** *(Sarcastically)* My grandson, of course! It's better find him before he makes a disaster. *(Then leaves the scene looking at Meryl defiantly)*

**Father Peter:** *(Taking advantage of the absence of Ezekiel and Ophelia, he fills a glass of wine)* Something made me thirsty, I feel my throat is parched.

**Meryl:** Father Peter, did you eat anything salty today?

**Father Peter:** Nothing salty.

**Ezekiel:** *(Who overheard the conversation on returning home)* Sometimes even sweet dishes can make you thirsty. Father, have another glass of wine and you will see that you are better!

**Father Peter:** I actually ate a chocolate. Anyway, since you insist, I take advantage of it. *(And he drinks again)*

**Ezekiel:** My mother-in-law's wine is exceptional, right?

*Father Peter does not have time to answer because he falls badly on the chair due to fainting.*

**Meryl:** My God! Father Peter, what is happening to you?

**Ezekiel:** Damn, here we go again!

**Father Peter:** What do you mean?

**Ezekiel:** *(Looking for an excuse to justify his claim)* It's just that that wine is very alcoholic and often those who drink it have this reaction. *(Then, sarcastically, alluding to Fanny's death)* Anyway, one way or another, it passes!

**Father Peter:** *(Turning to Meryl)* Don't worry! I'm already better.

**Meryl:** Can I help you get up?

**Father Peter:** It is not necessary, I can do it myself.

**Ezekiel:** Father, can I do something for you?

**Father Peter:** Yes.

**Ezekiel:** What?

**Father Peter:** Change winegrower.



### THIRD ACT

*Same scenography of the two previous acts.*

**Ezekiel:**

*(Sitting at the table with the wad of banknotes in hand)* So Fanny hadn't won only these, otherwise how could she give the money to Ida every month?

*Someone knocks on the door and Ezekiel goes to open it.*

**Vera:** I came to collect the rent.

**Ezekiel:** I had already prepared the money, it is on the table.

**Vera:** *(After sitting down and counting the money)* Good! However, from next month, there will be an increase.

**Ezekiel:** This is already the second in two years, look that by dint of pulling the rope, someone chokes.

**Vera:** I limit myself to applying the provisions of the law which established the adjustment of the annual fee of 0.75%. Those who cannot pay are always free to leave.

**Ezekiel:** More than free, they are forced!

**Vera:** Patience! What can I do about it?

**Ezekiel:** You property owners, you do not realize the current situation.

**Vera:** What do you mean?

**Ezekiel:** That people can no longer cope with the crisis that there is.

**Vera:** I don't care.

**Ezekiel:** Be careful though, because, continuing at this rate, you will no longer find anyone willing to shell out these amounts, so you will stick all your apartments in your ass.

**Vera:** Before all this happens ...!

**Ezekiel:** Unfortunately, much sooner than you think! At that point, don't tell me I didn't warn you!

**Vera:** *(Putting money in her pocket)* Thanks for the advice! For now, though, I'm bagging these!

**Ezekiel:** Vera, before you go, I should ask you...

**Vera:** *(Interrupting him)* Do you want to ask me for a rent reduction?

**Ezekiel:** Absolutely no! I would like to buy the apartment.

**Vera:** I don't sell to anyone.

**Ezekiel:** I wouldn't tell anyone, to the one who lives upstairs you sold it.

**Vera:** It was the classic exception that proves the rule.

**Ezekiel:** And if I'm not too indiscreet, why did you do it?

**Vera:** It's none of your business.

**Ezekiel:** Then, now, if you don't mind, I'm busy. *(Accompanying her to the door)*

*After a few moments someone knocks insistently on the door.*

**Meryl:** *(Screaming impatiently)* Open up great son of a bitch, open up!

**Ezekiel:** *(After opening)* What do you want, other offers? For today I have already given!

**Meryl:** But you haven't received yet.

**Ezekiel:** What?

**Meryl:** *(With a stick in her hand)* A blow to the head.

**Ezekiel:** Do you want to stop screaming? I remind you that there is a dead woman upstairs.

**Meryl:** I scream all I want, because I want everyone to know how much a liar and a thief you are!

**Ezekiel:** *(With a lightning move he takes the stick out of her hand, covers her mouth and then closes the door)* Are you crazy?

**Meryl:** No, the crazy one is you who go around saying that I have a romantic relationship with Oswald.

**Ezekiel:** What can I do if someone has seen you together?

**Meryl:** I know it's you who say you saw me with him!

**Ezekiel:** There must have been a misunderstanding.

**Meryl:** But what misunderstanding?! Ida told me that to buy her silence, I would have to pay a monthly amount, more clear than that!

**Ezekiel:** *(Reflecting aloud)* She must be really desperate, to get to blackmail!

**Meryl:** What do you want me to care about her desperation! It's my reputation that interests me, so now you must right the wrong immediately.

**Ezekiel:** Okay, don't get mad! I only told her that I saw a lady with a hairstyle like yours enter that apartment, nothing more.

**Meryl:** Problem is, you added that that haircut also had a name: *(Screaming)* mine!

**Ezekiel:** If you stop screaming, I'll fix everything, otherwise...

**Meryl:** Otherwise nothing! If you don't fix it right away, I'll tell everyone about your big suspicious wad of money.

**Ezekiel:** *(Embarrassed)* What wad of money?

**Meryl:** Don't play dumb, I saw you pull that wad from the drawer when you took the money to give to Father Peter.

**Ezekiel:** And with this? That money is mine.

**Meryl:** Really? So it won't be a problem for you if I ask Ophelia for confirmation? I want to hear what she will say when I ask her why she keeps all that money in the house. I don't know why, but I have the feeling that she doesn't know anything about it.

**Ezekiel:** I will deny everything and I am sure she will believe me and not you.

*Someone knocks on the door.*

**Ophelia (off stage):** Ezekiel, come and open me, I forgot the keys.

**Ezekiel:** Sure love, I'll come right away.

**Meryl:** *(With a lightning gesture, taking advantage of the moment when Ezekiel goes to open, opens the drawer where the money is stored, takes it out, shows it to Ezekiel who, under his wife's urgent request to open, cannot go back to remove the money from Meryl's hand)* You can say goodbye to this money. *(Then she puts it in her pocket)*

**Ophelia:** *(On the threshold of the door)* What took you so long, who were you talking to?

**Ezekiel:** I was talking to Meryl.

**Meryl:** Hello Ophelia!

**Ophelia:** Are you still here?

**Meryl:** Yes, but now I think it's time for me to go.

**Ophelia:** *(Noticing the way Meryl looks at Ezekiel)* Got a weird face, some other bad news?

**Meryl:** It depends.

**Ophelia:** Depends on what?

**Ezekiel:** Meryl meant she went to the doctor and is staying waiting for the response which can be positive or negative.

**Ophelia:** Could you be serum positive?

**Meryl:** But in this family you all mistake me for one of those woman...?

**Ophelia:** I certainly didn't mean this, also because there are different ways to be infected and besides, who else would have called you a prostitute?

**Ezekiel:** Nobody. It's just that I made a joke on her earlier and she thought I was serious. Sorry Meryl, it was certainly not my intention to offend you.

**Meryl:** So do you understand?

**Ophelia:** *(Who looks at them dazedly)* While you clear up, I take the groceries to the kitchen. *(And she leaves the scene)*

**Ezekiel:** Okay, I'll withdraw everything I said to Ida! But now give me the money before Ophelia gets back.

**Meryl:** Do you solemnly swear?

**Ezekiel:** Yes, now move, if she comes back...

**Meryl:** I don't trust, so we'll do it this way...

**Ezekiel:** In which way?

**Meryl:** *(Taking half of the money)* I'll give the rest of the money back to you when the rumors stop.

**Ezekiel:** Absolutely!

*Ophelia enters the scene.*

**Ophelia:** Aren't you two done yet? I would need help.

**Meryl:** Yes, we're done. I'm leaving immediately.

**Ezekiel:** I'll walk you to the door.

*Ezekiel holds out his hand to Meryl to greet her. At that juncture she passes him half of the money that he hastily puts in his pocket. Turning his back to Ophelia, Ezekiel manages to hide the maneuver.*

**Ophelia:** Finally! But how many coaxing with that one, you will not have fallen in love with her?

**Ezekiel:** For God's sake! Don't get into gossip too, it would cost me too much.

**Ophelia:** What would it cost you?

**Ezekiel:** All the respect I have for you, my love.

**Ophelia:** I'm glad to hear you say that! Also because if not... *(Having the scissors in hand, she mimes the cut gesture)*

**Ezekiel:** *That only at the thought seems to already feel the pain)* Oh! I'll come right away to help you. *(After which the two leave the scene)*

*Someone knocks on the door, Ophelia returns to the scene and goes to open.*

**Ophelia:** Come doctor, take a seat!

**Dominic:** I was looking for Mr. Oswald and, not having found him upstairs, I thought he had come to seek some comfort from his friends

**Ophelia:** Lately we are no longer friends. Since he is suspected of the murder of his wife, we have broken off relations.

**Dominic:** Then I'll leave immediately.

**Ophelia:** While you are here you could give us some news on the outcome of the autopsy.

**Dominic:** I could not do it, however, very soon, the result will be in the public domain, so I can make an exception to the rule. According to the report, the lady was first poisoned and then violently hit in the back of the head.

**Ophelia:** Wasn't it enough to poison her?

**Dominic:** The mystery is just that.

**Ophelia:** Poor Fanny, what a terrible death!

**Dominic:** It seems that these blows to the head occurred immediately after the death, as if there had been a rage on the victim's body by the murderer.

**Ophelia:** Then I think her husband is really in trouble, it will be difficult for him to prove his innocence.

**Dominic:** The victim, however, may have died in another place and then been dragged to the door of her apartment.

**Ophelia:** If the events had happened in this way, someone would have seen or heard something.

**Dominic:** There may also be the possibility that the killer lives in this condominium.

**Ophelia:** In this condominium?

**Dominic:** It could be someone who lives downstairs.

**Ophelia:** But we are the ones who live downstairs!

**Dominic:** Bruises on the back of the neck could be the result of the impact of the woman's head against the steps.

**Ophelia:** Excuse the question: did you come to look for Oswald or to accuse us? Because, in this case, I tell you that both my husband and I had no reason to commit the murder, so get this strange conjecture out of your head.

**Dominic:** I certainly didn't want to accuse anyone, I was just putting forward an alternative hypothesis.

**Ophelia:** Then you put forward another one, I don't like this one!

**Dominic:** However, investigators will be the ones to shed some light on the case. In addition, there would be an element to your advantage.

**Ophelia:** Really? and what would it be?

**Dominic:** According to autopsy results, thallium, that is the poison that caused the poor woman's death, was taken in small doses, so the killer must be someone who had the opportunity to administer it daily.

**Ophelia:** So this clears us.

**Dominic:** Up to a certain point. Because there was another factor that precipitated the situation, leading the woman to an instant death.

**Ophelia:** We had no reason to poison her, we were friends.

**Dominic:** However now I have to go, I still have to visit some patients, I greet you and I apologize for wasting your time.

**Ophelia:** *(She walks him to the door and after letting him out calls for her husband)* Ezekiel, come here!

*Ezekiel enters the scene.*

**Ezekiel:** Tell me love.

**Ophelia:** Doctor Jones, the one who ascertained Fanny's death, has passed.

**Ezekiel:** What did he want?

**Ophelia:** He insinuated that either you or I were involved in the murder. I am sure I have a clear conscience, but I would like to know if you too can say the same thing. You're not hiding something, are you?

**Ezekiel:** *(Hesitant)* And what should I hide?

**Ophelia:** Your way of answering already makes me suspicious.

**Ezekiel:** How else should I answer you?



**Ophelia:** You don't convince me.

**Ezekiel:** I assure you I don't know anything, how should I tell you? In Chinese?

**Ophelia:** So the day she died, you didn't see Fanny?

**Ezekiel:** Absolutely not!

**Ophelia:** I want to believe you, but only for the fact that you have no reason to lie to me, even if...

**Ezekiel:** *(Worried)* Although, what?

**Ophelia:** For the moment let's leave alone! I still have to go and buy the vegetables to grill.

**Ezekiel:** Don't forget to go to the doorman to collect our mail.

**Ophelia:** All right. *(Before leaving)* If I asked you about thallium, what would you tell me?

**Ezekiel:** What would it be?

**Ophelia:** Nothing important, you already answered me. *(After which she leaves the scene)*

**Ezekiel:** I think Ophelia is starting to get suspicious. I couldn't hear what the doctor said. I only heard that, from the autopsy, the blows on the back of the head resulted. I was really naive. I had to be more careful, but I was in a hurry to get her back to her house and she was so heavy, I was forced to drag her. Let's hope nobody saw me.

*Someone knocks on the door and Ezekiel goes to open it.*

**Oswald:** Can I enter or are you still of the same opinion as before?

**Ezekiel:** I only let you in because I'm curious to hear what you have to tell me.

**Oswald:** I don't understand how you can believe me guilty. You, most of all, who were once my friend, should know how much I loved my wife and that I would never hurt her.

**Ezekiel:** If you are innocent as you say, then I'll be your friends again, but you have to tell me something.

**Oswald:** All that you want.

**Ezekiel:** Did your wife have possessions that you were unaware of?

**Oswald:** I was only informed by the police today, how did you know?

**Ezekiel:** I took a guess, when there is a murder, the motive is either passionate or economic.

**Oswald:** Would this support the thesis of my guilt? Because, in that case, I inform you that the money my wife receives from these possessions is credited to a bank account in Gaylord's name. So explain to me what I would have to gain by killing her?

**Ezekiel:** And didn't she have anything else?

**Oswald:** You seem to know more about Fanny than I do. Apparently she had recently received a sizable donation, but no one knows where the money went. It is for this reason that investigators now consider me the main suspect.

**Ezekiel:** Did you also have a joint bank account?

**Oswald:** Yes, but there is little money left on that. I was never interested in our bank movements, but today I also discovered that, for years, my wife has been withdrawing a sum every month that I knew nothing about. Maybe someone was blackmailing her. What if this person was the one who killed her?

**Ezekiel:** The goose that lays golden eggs is not killed.

**Oswald:** Maybe she refused to keep paying. That's what I have to find out! Thanks anyway for listening to my outburst, I really needed to talk to someone.

**Ezekiel:** You did well and, since we are making confidences, would you tell me how you managed to convince Miss Vera to sell you the apartment?

**Oswald:** It wasn't difficult. She has always been in love with me. She even told me once that, sooner or later, she would be able to marry me.

**Ezekiel:** Wow! A strong statement! And what did your wife think?

**Oswald:** Fanny never knew. It seemed pointless to me to make her feel bad about something that would never happen.

*Someone knocks on the door.*

**Ezekiel:** *(After looking through the peephole)* It's Meryl, sorry, but I have a very important matter to solve.

**Oswald:** Thank you very much for the demonstration of friendship you are giving me.

**Ezekiel:** *(He dismisses him quickly and walks him to the door)* Okay, but now go!

**Oswald:** Hi Meryl!

**Meryl:** *(Turning to Oswald)* For the moment I don't even want to say hello, when you are declared innocent, then we'll talk about it again. *(Looking at him badly as the man goes away)*

**Ezekiel:** I very much hoped you would come back, because I solved everything.

**Meryl:** So let's hear, how would you have done it?

**Ezekiel:** I will say that it was Miss Vera who had an affair with Oswald and that I was wrong because she has a hairstyle identical to yours, you will see that I will be believed.

**Meryl:** I like this version.

**Ezekiel:** Now you can give me back what you know... *(He holds out his hand and receives the rest of the money, in the meantime he sees Ophelia coming back into the house and runs into the kitchen to hide it)*

**Ophelia:** Are you here again?

**Meryl:** *(Looking for an excuse)* Ezekiel let me in, but I actually came looking for you.

**Ophelia:** Where is he?

**Meryl:** In the kitchen, he said I could wait for you here.

**Ophelia:** Then? What did you want from me?

**Meryl:** There are strange rumors about me and I wanted to tell you that they are not true.

**Ophelia:** What rumors?

**Meryl:** It is said that I have romantic relationships with this and that.

**Ophelia:** However, you contribute to fuel these rumors! Whenever I come home, I always find you alone with my husband.

**Meryl:** *(Indignant)* It's not my fault.

**Ophelia:** And whose would it be?

**Meryl:** Your husband's. It was he who spread the slander of my alleged affair with Oswald. To make him stop slandering me, I took him half of the money he kept in that drawer. *(Pointing to the drawer in question)*

**Ophelia:** I didn't know Ezekiel kept our money in a drawer.

**Meryl:** In my opinion that money is not even his. However, now I had come to return it to him, so, as you can see, there is no inappropriate relationship with anyone.

**Ophelia:** I realized he was hiding something.

**Meryl:** I saw the wad of money when your husband made the offer to Father Peter.

**Ophelia:** The wad of money?

**Meryl:** How else can such a sum of money be defined?

**Ophelia:** Thanks for the information! It will come in handy for me to torture him.

**Meryl:** These words are music to my ears!

**Ophelia:** For what reason?

**Meryl:** Old rust and nothing more! But now I better go. *(As she walks to the door to exit, she observes Ophelia looking at the kitchen door like a predator waiting for her prey)*

**Ophelia:** *(As soon as Meryl leaves)* Ezekiel, run right here!

*Ezekiel enters the scene.*

**Ezekiel:** I was eavesdropping, so I know you know.

**Ophelia:** So if you don't want me to file for a divorce, explain everything to me now, before I lose my temper. *(Screaming)* Come on!

**Ezekiel:** The wad of money Meryl saw was from Fanny.

**Ophelia:** How is it possible? You told me you hadn't seen her.

**Ezekiel:** I lied to you, but I swear to you I didn't kill her, I think she got something like a heart attack while she was in our house.

**Ophelia:** So, let me guess, she had brought you some money to invest and you, seeing that she was dead, thought to take her to her front door, so as not to have to explain her presence in our house and keep the money.

**Ezekiel:** Yes, because that's a lot!

**Ophelia:** *(Screaming)* What a bastard you are! Aren't you ashamed to steal other people's money? But then you didn't even scruple to abuse that poor woman's corpse, making her bang her head on every step.

**Ezekiel:** But she was already dead!

**Ophelia:** *(Increasingly indignant)* Shut up, you lousy worm! Do not you dare to say more and, when I have solved this matter, you will see what punishment awaits you! You also spread rumors that Oswald had a lover to accuse him of the murder. Besides, you prove that you are really stupid to choose Meryl as a scapegoat.

**Ezekiel:** Initially I thought about Vera then...

**Ophelia:** Shut up!

*Ezekiel mimics the gesture of closing a zipper on his mouth. Suddenly a doubt arises in Ophelia.*

**Ophelia:** Wait a minute, who did you name earlier? *(Receiving no response)* I grant you permission to speak.

**Ezekiel:** *(With a faint voice)* Vera.

**Ophelia:** Go call her immediately, but first get the money out!

**Ezekiel:** *(He goes into the kitchen to get the money. When he comes back, reluctantly, he gives it to his wife)* Here.

**Ophelia:** How much is this money?

**Ezekiel:** *(Crying)* One hundred thousand.

**Ophelia:** If you don't stop immediately, I'll make you cry, but for something serious!

**Ezekiel:** I can't resist!

**Ophelia:** *(After glaring at him)* Do you think Oswald loved his wife?

**Ezekiel:** Yes, I'm sure he didn't kill her.

**Ophelia:** I think this too. Now tell me: how did Fanny want to invest her money?

**Ezekiel:** She wanted to use it to buy an apartment to Gaylord.

**Ophelia:** Very well! Now that I understood the situation I know what to do. Are you always here? Didn't I tell you to go get Vera?

*Ezekiel leaves the scene as Ophelia makes a phone call. Shortly after, the man returns with Vera. On his return he sits in an armchair to listen to the conversation between his wife and the new arrival.*

**Vera:** What do you want Ophelia? Your husband stopped me on the stairs saying it was urgent, so I really hope it is.

**Ophelia:** It is better if you sit down.

*Vera complies with Ophelia's request, proving, however, somewhat annoyed.*

**Ophelia:** Would you like a coffee? *(Pouring it into the cup)*

**Vera:** *(Without drinking it)* Why this courtesy? Would you like to ask me for a discount on the rent?

**Ophelia:** No, I won't be asking for a discount but you. And I am not referring to the pecuniary one, but to a penalty discount.

**Vera:** *(Laughing)* You make me laugh!

**Ophelia:** I don't think you'll laugh again when I tell you what I found out.

**Vera:** Who would accuse me?

**Ophelia:** Your answer, or rather your question, confirms my suspicions.

**Vera:** For what reason?

**Ophelia:** If you had a clear conscience, you would not have asked for the name of the accuser, but for the charge. But maybe you already know that!

**Vera:** I haven't been accused of anything at the moment, so it seems logical to have asked who would to do so.

**Ophelia:** I'm the one accusing you of Fanny's murder.

**Vera:** Then tell me how I would have killed her and above all why.

**Ophelia:** The way is very simple: with coffee. Isn't it true that you offered her one every day?

**Vera:** Impossible, I never met her!

**Ophelia:** The doorman is of a completely different opinion. He says he has seen you look out on the stairs very often just to invite her to have a coffee at your house.

**Vera:** It will have happened once or twice! You know how shy and reserved Fanny was. She would never have agreed to come to my house so often.

**Ezekiel:** She would have done it, instead, having with you a debt of gratitude for having sold her the apartment. Probably, giving her that opportunity was the very first move of the plan. First you won her sympathies and then you killed her. You really are a diabolical person!

**Ophelia:** I don't know, though, why you hated that poor woman so much.

**Ezekiel:** Because she had married the man for whom the lady here has been sighing for years. You must know that this criminal had sworn that one day Oswald would be hers. For some time she waited, then, not seeing his wish come true, he decided to force the course of events and the epilogue was the one we all know.

**Ophelia:** Now we also have the motive.

**Vera:** Nothing is true!

**Ezekiel:** If you want we can ask Oswald for confirmation.

**Vera:** And do you think I would have killed her with coffee? I had no idea that caffeine was so harmful!

**Ophelia:** It wouldn't be alone, but mixed with small daily doses of thallium...

**Vera:** I don't know what you are talking about.

**Ophelia:** Even if you pretend to fall from the clouds, I assure you that soon there will be someone ready to get you off the ground, rest assured!

**Vera:** *(Defiantly)* And who would it be?

**Ophelia:** I have informed the police of my suspicions and now are already searching your apartment and the one on the first floor. I am willing to bet that in one of the two the police will find thallium or in any case traces that show that you have been in possession of that poison. Not to mention Fanny's DNA.



**Vera:** You forget that no one can enter anywhere without my consent!

**Ophelia:** I'm sure that with a good search warrant, you won't be able to prevent anything. Indeed, do you know what I tell you? You better run and check if you don't believe what I'm saying.

**Vera:** You are a bastard! However, I would do it another thousand times. I've always loved that man, but he wanted to stay with his wife, so I was forced to do it, do you understand?

**Ezekiel:** Now you have to explain it in court, we'll see what the jury will think.

**Vera:** I'm leaving but it doesn't end here.

**Ophelia:** Instead it ends right here.

**Vera:** I hate you, damn you! (*After which she leaves the scene*)

**Ezekiel:** You have made a new friend! But how did you know that she was the murderer?

**Ophelia:** It was you who inspired me. Your fear that my mother was poisoning you slowly, suggested to me that someone might have chosen just that way to kill Fanny, so as not to arouse suspicion. Having received that information from the doorman, I realized that the only person Fanny frequented every day, with the exception of her husband and Ida, was Vera. Since we had rejected Oswald and that Ida would only have to lose from the death of Gaylord's benefactress, there was nothing left but her. However, don't digress because now it's your turn!

**Ezekiel:** What do you mean?

**Ophelia:** Now I'll explain. With Fanny's money, which you stole illegally, and if that's not enough, you'll add more, you'll buy an apartment for Gaylord.

**Ezekiel:** (*Alluding to the money he will lose*) So is it good that I say hello to these little ones now?

**Ophelia:** Not only that, from now on you will take care of Gaylord day and night.

**Ezekiel:** But doesn't Ida take care of him?

**Ophelia:** She is too old, it is right that she finally take some rest. We will apply for custody of the boy.

**Ezekiel:** Do you want revenge for telling you that lie?!

**Ophelia:** Exact! And finally, I inform you that my mother, from today, will be living in our house, so you will have to take care of her too.

**Ezekiel:** Night and day?

**Ophelia:** Yes, diapers included!

**Ezekiel:** No diapers, please!

**Ophelia:** Not only that, you will also think about Gaylord's, because, for your information, he also brings them.

**Ezekiel:** Even him?

**Ophelia:** You wanted it, my dear!

**Ezekiel:** I promise you I won't do it again!

**Ophelia:** It's too late! *(Then she leaves the scene, leaving the door open)*

**Ezekiel:** *After despairing, ponders aloud* And to think that if I had kept the first version and not blamed Meryl, I would never have put myself in this situation. *(More and more desperate)* How do I get out of this mess now? Taking care of Galiberto can also please me, but I don't want to do it with my mother-in-law, that absolutely not! *(Then trying to remember)* What was the name of that poison?... Thallium?

*Finding the door open, Dominic enters the scene.*

**Dominic:** Just what I found in my blood tests!

**Ezekiel:** And how would it end up there?

**Dominic:** Because of a chocolate.

**Ezekiel:** What can I say? The desserts of yesteryear no longer exist!

**Dominic:** You don't understand. That was deliberately adulterated.

**Ezekiel:** What?

**Dominic:** Well... someone had put poison in it.

**Ezekiel:** How did you find out?

**Dominic:** By analyzing the other one that I had brought home.

**Ezekiel:** Tell me right away where you bought those chocolates, so I won't make the same mistake.

**Dominic:** I hadn't bought them.

**Ezekiel:** Don't tell me you stole them!

**Dominic:** They were in plain sight and I confess that I just can't resist chocolate..

**Ezekiel:** Why, where did he get them?

**Dominic:** In the victim's house.

**Ezekiel:** Do you know that you are quite a weird? Do you steal chocolates from the home of someone who you thought might have been poisoned?

**Dominic:** I did it without thinking. It was an instinctive gesture. I only realized after I committed a nonsense.

**Ezekiel:** *(After reflecting)* Now, however, I also understand why the priest felt ill. He probably must have the same weakness as you too.

**Dominic:** Don't tell me that he too...

**Ezekiel:** I believe that that poison mixed with alcohol, even in small doses, must have a devastating effect, especially if a person takes it for a long time.

**Dominic:** That's right! I had a meltdown too, once I got home, after drinking rum. But how did you understand it?

**Ezekiel:** I am a smart person.

**Dominic:** It will not be that...

**Ezekiel:** *(Interrupting him)* How did you connect your malaise to that chocolate?

**Dominic:** When I felt sick, I immediately went to the hospital where they did blood tests. Having not ingested anything that I had not already eaten in the previous days, other than that chocolate, I deduced that it could be that the responsible. So I called a colleague of mine who works in a research laboratory and had him analyze what I still had in my pocket.

**Ezekiel:** Father Peter also felt ill immediately after drinking some wine and, if I remember correctly, right after returning from Fanny's apartment. Evidently he too must be greedy for chocolates and must have taken advantage... *(Then, pausing)* But this means...

**Dominic:** That the victim's husband is responsible for the wife's poisoning. Who better than him could know the tastes of that woman? He probably left the chocolates in plain sight, knowing she wouldn't be able to resist.

**Ezekiel:** But Miss Vera admitted that she poisoned Fanny with coffee.

**Dominic:** It means that there were two people who poisoned that poor woman!

**Ezekiel:** This would also explain why Vera didn't mention her accomplice's name, maybe she didn't know that Oswald was also poisoning Fanny.

**Dominic:** How impudent that man! Knowing that the blame would fall exclusively on the other responsible, he was happy to collaborate with the police.

**Ezekiel:** Of course! That arrogant was in a hurry to get rid of her!

**Dominic:** Who are you referring to? To his wife?

**Ezekiel:** Not only that, even to the lover.

**Dominic:** He wanted to get rid of both at once, a true genius!

**Ezekiel:** However, if he had been a genius, as you say, he would have got rid of the poisoned chocolates too.

**Dominic:** Maybe, in the excitement of the moment, he forgot them or he simply underestimated the effect that even one of them could have caused.

**Ezekiel:** Or he tried the effect on himself, but not having mixed them with alcohol, he had no side effects, so, feeling safe, he didn't think about making them disappear.

**Dominic:** This could also be a possibility.

**Ezekiel:** That man is really diabolical! He was really convincing as he played the part of the innocent!

**Dominic:** Knowing that his lover was slowly poisoning the victim, he felt sure that the blame would never fall on him.

**Ezekiel:** And he also knew that his lover would never have the courage to say that he knew everything. *(Then, sighing)* Ah, love, what can it lead to!

**Dominic:** Sometimes in jail. He hoped, as his wife had been suffering from heart disease for some time, that the doctor would confirm the death of natural causes. He didn't think I would ask for an autopsy to be done. It's really true: the devil teaches how to make pots but not lids! Destiny, in fact, wanted death to happen just when the family doctor was on vacation and while the woman was somewhere else. *(Looking mischievously at Ezekiel)* It was precisely those suspicious bruises that led me to request that all necessary investigations be carried out.

**Ezekiel:** Never reckon without the innkeeper!

**Dominic:** *(Realizing that it was Ezekiel who dragged the corpse upstairs)* And above all, never change the cards on the table, you could get in trouble. Remember it!

**Ezekiel:** How would I forget it? Also because the only things I can change from now on will be a lot of diapers!

**THE END**