

The Great Machine

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Characters:

PROFESSOR ASCLEPIO

YURI, THE MECHANIC

MARTA

ANITA IZA

ROMULO

ANA

NELSON

MASTER

BANKER

BUFFOON (three as #1, #2 and #3)

MADMEN

First Act: Prologue

[The three BUFFONS come in scene announcing the starting of the play at loud shouts according to the text below. Meanwhile the characters indicated below pass by, bow to the public and leave the stage:]

BUFFON#1: Attention, ladies and gentlemen! Come see a sensational change that will not transform anything! *[Pass by PROFESSOR ASCLEPIO.]*

BUFFON#2: Witness the struggle for the construction of the most useless of all machines! *[Pass by MARTA.]*

BUFFON#3: Come experience with us the drama of the betrayed husband who admires his rival! *[Pass by the MECHANIC YURI.]*

BUFFON#1: Come see the madman who brings lucidity to the village! *[Pass by ROMULO.]*

BUFFON#2: The extraordinary and beautiful romance of a young woman who abandons her home! *[Pass by ANITA IZA.]*

BUFFON#1: Let “The Great Machine” begin!

BUFFON#3: At what time will it start?

BUFFON#2: Right now.

BUFFON#3: But it is necessary to say exactly at what time, minute and second!

BUFFON#1: Why is that?

BUFFON#3: So that the audience will know when they watched the play. If they don’t know, they will be confused when somebody asks them: “When did you see ‘The Great Machine’?”

BUFFON#2: Isn’t the date enough? *[Shouts:]* Today is Saturday, 20th of October 1977!

BUFFON#3: No, it is necessary to be precise.

BUFFON#1: It is 21 hours, 14 minutes and 12 seconds.

BUFFON#3: But the play isn’t starting yet.

BUFFON#2: When I clap my hands the show will begin! And it will be 21 hours, 16 minutes and 30 seconds of the day 20th of October of 1977 in this city of Curitiba¹!

[He claps his hands; they stand in silence, waiting. Enter NELSON and ANA, pushing or carrying the BUFFONS out of scene. Then, they come back and the performance starts.]

First Act: Scene One

¹ Large city located in the south region of Brazil.

[In the beginning there are 4 boxes of different sizes in scene. One of them looks too big and heavy for a man to carry by himself. ANA and NELSON are in scene. ANA is examining and listening like a physician to the medium size box. NELSON is sitting on the top of the large box.]

ANA: Not a scream, a song, not even a whisper. It seems there is no laughter or pain inside this one.

NELSON: They are just parts, nothing finished.

ANA: They certainly killed them before packing. Life couldn't enter in these boxes. Is everything here?

NELSON: Yes. The superiors ordered us to transport this burden. And in this envelope are the instructions that we are to take.

ANA: It's a long promenade all the way there. What are we taking to the midst of those people? Is it the light, or would it be death?

NELSON: I wonder how we are we going to find the way. There is no road that goes to the village. Not even an animal that could traverse a path to that world. At least, not a beast that I know.

ANA: It should be capable of swimming through the dark lake... it would crawl and cut his back into the low narrow tunnels... climbing mountains of shinning rocks that burn like salt... No creature could take these packages there on his back.

NELSON: Except us. That's why they gave us this job. No other animal could complete this mission.

ANA: Can we? Is it possible? Look: they are four monsters.

[From this moment onwards, they start to examine the weight of the boxes by trying to lift them; while the dialogue continues.]

ANA: *[Continues]* How can we confront them? We need help. And if the birds and fishes can't help us, we should appeal to other men.

NELSON: Share the work, and we will be dishonored before the others. No way. See: I can carry one of these big ones.

ANA: But each one of us will have to carry two. That's impossible.

NELSON: We could balance one on the top of our heads, and carry another within our arms.

ANA: Even if I could lift them up, how could I bear the journey of several days? How can I cross the tunnels and slide under the short trees? How can I climb the mountains without using my hands?

NELSON: I don't know. *[Pause]* Let's take only some of them now, then the rest later.

ANA: Go there twice? That's crazy! If we get out alive from the first trip, we will have to spend the rest of our existence thanking the Gods!

NELSON: But we could take part of them, and then... *[Pause]*

ANA: So?

NELSON: And forget what's left. Take only some of them.

ANA: Nelly, don't be crazy.

NELSON: What else could we do? We're not supermen!

ANA: What if they find out? The superiors will whip us and bury us in a dark dungeon.

NELSON: How could they find out? You and me won't tell them. And no news will come out of the village. There is no communication between them and the rest of the world.

ANA: But they will know that we only took some. They will check the contents of the boxes, according to the instructions in the envelope. The whole machine must be described there.

NELSON: We can burn the envelope. Or change its contents. The villagers won't notice. And they will be unable find out the faults.

ANA: I feel at the same time a great attraction and a fright for that idea.

NELSON: There is no reason for fear. They would never suspect. They don't know anything about what we are bringing them.

ANA: But we will end up revealing ourselves, accidentally – maybe speaking while asleep... And it would be almost impossible to produce fake documents,

NELSON: It will be fun to see them struggling with an incomplete machine, trying to put it together. Let's open the envelope, let's look at the instructions!

ANA: *[listening to one of the boxes]* No noise, not even a whisper. I believe it won't take revenge on us. Open the envelope, let's look at the instructions!

[Lights fade out for changing scenes]

First Act: Scene Two.

[When the lights come up, the smallest box has disappeared. ANA is under the second largest box; NELSON is squeezed between the other two. Their clothes and looks are as before; a little untidy, but the clothes are not ripped, neither their bodies are hurt. The MASTER and the MECHANIC are also in scene. The MECHANIC takes off the envelope from NELSON's clothes.]

MASTER: Open the envelope, let's read the instructions!

MECHANIC: Yes, master! We should always follow the orders of those above us. But what should I do with those two?

MASTER: Leave them, later we shall resolve.

[With jerky movements, NELSON leaves the place where he was. While the talk goes on, NELSON helps ANA to get out from the bottom of the other box; then, ANA starts thinking about something that scares her and occasionally gets emotional. NELSON observes the dialogue and everything that surrounds him; aggressively thinking about something]

and mocking all he sees. ANA is facing inwards. NELSON is facing outwards.]

MECHANIC: Can't you see they are crazy?

MASTER: Is that new? Did any sane man ever reach in this village?
Who has ever confronted the swamps that surround us without going mad?

MECHANIC: Look at their glances: I don't like it. They seem dangerous lunatics.

MASTER: There is no danger. Read the instructions, my friend!

MECHANIC: Their eyes are popped out and their backs and arms must be lacerated from carrying the boxes. I can't understand how they got here. What if we interrogate them?

MASTER: They would only answer nonsense. Do you want to watch it?
Come here [*ANA and NELSON approach.*] Where did you come from? How did you get here?

NELSON: I came from there [*points to the place where he was.*] I got here walking.

ANA: I came from a world where there is light and shadow, however much more darkness than light. I don't know how I got here.
Something carried me, while I was dreaming.

MECHANIC: They look nervous. I fear their aggressive reactions.

MASTER: Nothing to fear. Can't you see how passively they approached? [*Directing to them*] I don't want any mess around here, did you hear? Behave well. Now, go as you please.

[*ANA and NELSON go back to their initial positions and thoughts*]

MASTER: Do you see? They are perfect children.

MECHANIC: If they are real children they are capable of evil doings.
However, since you tell me they are perfect children, I must accept that they are good.

MASTER: Quickly show me what the envelope contains.

MECHANIC: [*Opening*] There are many papers... there is a letter. Look, it's from the superiors! [*Hands it to the MASTER*]

MASTER: I don't have my spectacles and without my spectacles I can't read, so I cannot read the letter now. Tell me, what is the message?

MECHANIC: [*Reading*] It's strange... they are sending us an instrument, a disassemble device, and instructions to build it... not everything is in the boxes, there are things they know we already have, or that we could arrange... that must be the meaning of the statement: "We are not sending what you already have."

MASTER: But, what is this gift? Is it the Great Machine that was promised to us?

MECHANIC: That's what I'm trying to find out... They say: "For eons your village has been secluded from the universe, and for that

reason it didn't partake of the cosmic energies and great evolution. The communication between us is still difficult and nothing has been done hitherto to break this stagnation. However, this equipment will break your barriers, and your people will be united with the New World."

MASTER: I don't get it, is it the Great Machine or not?

MECHANIC: I don't know... they don't tell its name. Maybe it is mentioned in the other pages... [*Searching.*]

First Act: Scene 3

[*Enter the PROFESSOR ASCLEPIO and his daughter, ANITA; the PROFESSOR must be 40 years old, and the daughter about 20.*]

PROFESSOR: Good day, Master! Good day Mister Mechanic! I heard of two carriers who reached our land, and brought three packages over here.

MASTER: Yes Professor! That's right... [*Greets ANITA*] excuse me, miss, my enthusiasm; how are you? Look, Professor, here they are. [*The MECHANIC, who is ANITA's fiancée, approaches her and gives her a formal kiss; then backs off and looking at the papers starts thinking about the machine. ANITA thinks about her future life of marriage, and seems impatient with the distraction of the MACHANIC.*]

MASTER: [*Continuing*] And I believe that inside them is the Great Machine that was promised to us!

PROFESSOR: Master, are you mocking me?

MASTER: That's the pure truth, Professor – because truth is always pure. The letter that came with the carriers explains what the instrument is.

ANITA: [*referring to the carriers, now acting like crazy*] Aren't they hungry?

PROFESSOR: Well thought, dear. We should never forget our human duties towards those, who without knowing, may have brought us the supreme happiness. Bring them something to eat, quickly, from home. [*ANITA leaves*]

MASTER: What a bunch of young folks with good feelings! Happy is our friend Mechanic, who has such a caring fiancée! He will never be hungry, even if he goes mad. I must confess, myself almost forgot to feed those unfortunate people. Not for evilness, but for distraction, and also because around here there is nothing to serve, and also because I thought they didn't need, since as you, they became mad, and, besides, now is no meal time.

PROFESSOR: Yes, it was expected that they would go mad. Mister Mechanic, please give me this letter and help your fiancée in

feeding them when she comes back to be sure there will be no unpleasant situation. But tell me, Master, if this news are true, what would we do?

[The MECHANIC hands him the envelope; the PROFESSOR examines the contents.]

MASTER: The letter says that the instrument will break the barriers. Isn't that what we were waiting?

PROFESSOR: What barriers? When the promise was made, they weren't very clear. You know I disagree with your opinion, relating to what they wanted to send us.

MASTER: To me, there are no doubts. It is freedom that comes.

PROFESSOR: I agree with your words. But I doubt that our ideas are the same. Anyway, it is our duty to build the instrument and verify its real utility. Are these all the instructions?

[The PROFESSOR keeps talking to the MASTER in low voice. ANITA came back, and together with the MECHANIC, she is feeding ANA and NELSON]

ANITA: What these people brought from the other world?

MECHANIC: Three boxes, with pieces to assemble a machine that can revolutionize the whole village.

ANITA: What kind of machine could be as important as you say?

MECHANIC: I am not sure. Before giving a valid opinion, it is necessary to study everything correctly. But it seems to me that it is something that will enable saving of labor and generate greater production, greater gain, greater progress! The letter talks about the energies that will become available to us, thanks to the instrument.

ANITA: Maybe this could be good. But there are other things more important to us, aren't there?

MECHANIC: What could be more important?

ANITA: Never mind... don't bother. Sometimes I am too egoistic; my interests are too limited.

[They continue to take care of NELSON and ANA; when finished they approach the PROFESSOR and MASTER, who are still talking.]

PROFESSOR: There are several parts that are comprehensible... others use strange symbols, and there are connections that don't seem to be correct, as far as I understand...

MASTER: For what YOU understand... and you want to criticize the great project they sent us? They are far ahead of us.

PROFESSOR: Of course. That's out of question. I completely trust in the science they have developed. I didn't think well when I said the connections were wrong.

MASTER: They trust us, and we must be successful in this task. It is necessary to think of the future, and work hard until the planned results are attained.

MECHANIC: Yes. That's what we will do! Our village will demonstrate its value! We'll construct this beautiful machine which far surpasses any other!

ANITA: Is it really going to be beautiful?

PROFESSOR: Please, Anita, now that you have taken care of the poor guys, go home and help Marta in preparing the meal. Later I will come [*ANITA leaves.*] Lunchtime is sacred, the repetition and invariable rhythm is behind all that is good.

MASTER: I can't stand women around when it's time to think and work. They are great for other moments, but just in between us, they never lose their superficiality!

MECHANIC: That doesn't matter. Everyone has his or her place. We are made for only one role, not for all. Let's get into our functions.

MASTER: Yes, let's plan everything, and distribute the roles. Each one will help with his part, then we'll get together and construct the whole.

MECHANIC: I am putting apart for myself the things I understand: [*separates a few instruction papers*] the gears, pulleys, rabbits... the rest doesn't interest me.

PROFESSOR: [*taking for himself other parts*] I'll take care of the electric section.

MASTER: Leave it to me the structure and covering...

MECHANIC: What about the rest, what none of us will take?

PROFESSOR: The rest? Don't say rubbish, dear future son-in-law. In the machine, all that is not revetment and structure must be an internal part. And the internal parts will be either mechanic, that is, possessing macroscopic movement; or electric, where what counts is the invisible movement of the electrons. There cannot be other alternative.

MECHANIC: That's true. So clear, isn't it? Thanks you are here to orient us.

[*Everybody leave*]

First Act: Scene 4

[*Changing scene: another day, at the PROFESSOR's house. In scene are MARTA (the PROFESSOR's wife) and ANITA. They think about the arrival of the PROFESSOR and the MECHANIC, talking.*]

MARTA: I believe everything is ready for the wedding, right?

ANITA: Almost everything. Even the house is rented, and the furniture is placed. What else could be left?

MARTA: However, you don't look so contented.

ANITA: In fact, I can't comprehend what I desire. I like him very much and it will be great to take care of his food, clothes, and receive his attention. But he is so distant... See, this machine is much more important than I am!

MARTA: True. But don't dream of impossible things. Men are like that; we must accept the way things are.

ANITA: I am not sure if he really wants me, or if he just wish to fulfill an obligation. Him and daddy are always postponing everything and never want to talk about the wedding...

[Enter the PROFESSOR and MECHANIC]

PROFESSOR: Hello darling, God bless you my girl.

MECHANIC: Good night Marta, Hello, Anita.

MARTA: You came late. Working until now? How is the planning of the Great Machine?

PROFESSOR: Well, everything will come to its ends. There are certain difficulties in comprehending and completing the structures, but it's all on the move. It is slowly that one gets farther. But now, please excuse us, we must go into the study to verify some ideas.

[The PROFESSOR leaves, the MECHANIC is a little bit delayed.]

MARTA: I wish I could understand this a little bit, so that I could help... I see this work is so important!

MECHANIC: The construction is too complex. Even the method of approaching requires great mental clarity. Before, we thought that three people were necessary to study it; one would take care of the mechanic part, other the electric, and the third the structure and finishing job. Then we had forgotten that there could be hydraulic and thermal details. Therefore we increased to five the number of specialists. Some time later we noticed that it was obvious the necessity of other ten people – specialist of the several types of existing connections: electromechanical, hydrothermic, and so forth. This was all progressively comprehended thanks to our Professor!

[The PROFESSOR returns in a hurry to fetch the MECHANIC.]

PROFESSOR: Well Mister Mechanic! You are going to bore the women with all those details!

ANITA: Is the machine that complicated? Can't one person by himself comprehend it and construct it? I always believe that the most important things are simple, so simple that they are difficult to explain.

PROFESSOR: Nothing is simple. Everything calls for analysis, pondering and calculation. The instrument is constructed from parts. If we understand the parts and connections, the whole can be equally understood. Isn't that logic? For that we need five people to study the five different elements, and other ten to research the connections.

MARTA: Don't be so nervous dear! You know how the youths are, they believe in magic. But we should leave this subject aside for a while and deal with something that is urgent. You know we must go talk to the priest and magistrate and set a propitious date for the wedding.

PROFESSOR: Yes, that's very relevant. But how can we think of personal problems when the future of the village is at stake?

MECHANIC: Actually I am very anxious about our wedding. But it's time to dedicate our bodies and souls to researching the machine; the marriage would produce a division of my attention, and so it's not recommendable now.

PROFESSOR: Yes, the wedding is important, but it must wait until the end of the Great Work.

ANITA: I hope this machine is really important, at last, did you find what it's for?

PROFESSOR: [*Bashful*] Well... we're studying the parts. It's not possible to have a global idea from the beginning. My hunch is that it will enable an alteration of the mental structure of those who utilize it.

ANITA: Is this change going to be good? What will be the change?

PROFESSOR: I am still not sure. Maybe we'll only find out from doing experiments.

MECHANIC: For me, I believe that this machine will substitute part of human effort. The person who uses it, will not need great power for transportation and to conduct his tasks. It will substitute a part of the man.

ANITA: Some men maybe could be completely substituted by it.

PROFESSOR: Now if you excuse us, we will go to my study.

MARTA: Of course, we don't want to disturb you.

[*Leave the PROFESSOR and MECHANIC.*]

ANITA: I feel sorry and angry about them. Sorry for all the effort the whole village is putting on this rattletrap. Angry for the stupidity of the men, who think the world should stop when they get into their ideas. And what if we stop, the women? What if they had nothing to eat or dress?

MARTA: I believe I understand them. It is worthwhile all the effort of those who try to help them, producing or lending all they have: one

ranch, one gear. They are fighting for what they think is precious. And this is beautiful. Can't you see, they almost don't even sleep in the night...

ANITA: I feel that there is something wrong, I feel they are completely wrong.

MARTA: They make mistakes but they also correct them themselves. It is true there is an essential element missing. The letter said it clearly – I even memorized the text from hearing it so many times in their discussions – “Nothing will be obtained without the use of chaos.”

ANITA: Yes, but yet they still haven't found out what piece or connection is called “chaos.” Not even know if it is something that came in the boxes, or something that must be obtained here.

MARTA: That's right. Maybe the word is wrong. Our dictionaries only bring out one meaning for the word “chaos:” confusion, disorder...Maybe all that's left is this such chaos...

ANITA: They've already mounted the pieces several times, in the ways they have imagined but nothing was obtained.

MARTA: Yes, but your father has already classified all possible positions and combinations of all the pieces. And now, following a systematic chain of alternatives, they will experiment, step by step, all the possibilities. It is mathematically proved that they will succeed.

First Act: Scene 5

[Enter ANA and Nelson, one of them carries something similar to a bicycle chain.]

ANA: Excuse us?... The Professor asked us to leave the study.

MARTA: Yes, of course.

[ANA and NELSON play with the chain.]

ANITA: I think we should help in the construction of the Great Machine. I, especially, see that without it there won't be a wedding. If I really have any interest in marrying him...

MARTA: Helping in what way, dear? We don't understand those things!

[Enter the MECHANIC followed by the PROFESSOR.]

MECHANIC: Where are those two? Oh, they're playing with the chain! My God, imagine if they disappear with that!

[Tries to take it away; NELSON and ANA run, they don't give it out.]

ANA: Let me play! You have many other ones and I don't have anything!

NELSON: Give it to me, I'll hide it!

PROFESSOR: You kids! Give it to me right now, or I'll take you to the asylum, together with the others!

MECHANIC: I need that. I'll give you something else to play.

ANA: Need it? For what? You don't know where to fit these things!

NELSON: I know, I know where you're gonna stick this thing!

PROFESSOR: Enough! Quit playing!

MECHANIC: Already, got it!

[Takes the chain; ANA stares at him with sadness, NELSON with anger; ANA takes from her pocket a gear and caresses it.]

ANA: Tell me, what are you going to do with this?

NELSON: Do you know where this fits?

ANA: *[showing]* Look, here is a hole. In which axle does it fit?

NELSON: This hole is squared. They are so imbecile that they'll look for a square shaft to fit in there.

ANA: No, he is not that foolish. He knows it is necessary to insert there a cylinder.

NELSON: Or a cone.

ANA: Or to stick in dark spheres like black grapes², which will fall one by one transforming into cherries.

NELSON: No! A carrot! A banana!

ANA: Until you don't stick in your nose and tongue in the machine, it will not work.

NELSON: You have separated the pieces according to their functions, and not for their colors. It's all wrong. Can't you see that the assembling sequence is black – white – peacock color – red?

ANA: One should join the hard with the soft, cold with warm, rough to smooth...

[NELSON jumps over ANA and tries to get her clothes off. She laughs.

MARTA and ANITA leave The MECHANIC separates them.]

MECHANIC: What should I do with them, Mister Professor?

PROFESSOR: We must take them to the asylum. But before that it would be convenient to beat them. Not for evilness or revenge, of course – that would be irrational – but because psychology has proved that punishment avoids future mistakes. Negative reinforcement, you know.

First Act: Scene 6

[Enter the MASTER and the BANKER; the MECHANIC greets them by nodding and leaves taking ANA and NELSON.]

MASTER: Good evening. We were passing by and decided to enter.

PROFESSOR: Good evening, make yourself at home.

² From Portuguese: Jabuticaba. The blue-dark, round pulpy fruit of the Jabuticabeira. This fruit grows wildly in Brazil. It is small, sweet and grows off the trunks and branches of Jabuticabeira trees.

BANKER: I would like to know in which stage is the enterprise of construction of our machine, Mister Professor.

PROFESSOR: Not much advanced. The motivation is large, but the difficulties are immense. It is a project that requires the maximum of our scientific knowledge.

BANKER: But will the results compensate the effort and expenditures? All the village is sidetracking their work in the sense of cooperating with the project. This can lead to serious economical and social setbacks if it persists for too long.

PROFESSOR: The natural evolution of things cannot be speeded. It is always needed to suffer for what we desire.

MASTER: Will your plan of systematically attacking all the possible combinations work?

PROFESSOR: That's what I was discussing with the Mechanic today. I definitely proved that the plan is unfeasible. Since it would require a total time of 325 million, 836 thousand and 420 centuries, in case we employ two hours and fifteen minutes in the assembling of every possibility, interrupting the job eight hours a night, two hours for meals and a day and a half a week for rest.

BANKER: Therefore the project is absurd! We won't be able to build our machine unless we have a miracle!

MASTER: There isn't such a thing as miracle, Mister Banker. Only what is possible will occur.

PROFESSOR: But I have another solution. We don't need to execute blind attempts. We can rationally plan the machine.

MASTER: Can we? How? Wasn't that plan already rational?

PROFESSOR: We'll start from an analysis of the objectives, and develop a theoretic study that will show the way to reach that objective. When the theory is done, we can move to practice.

BANKER: But who, in our village, would be able to plan an invention like that?

MASTER: Nobody. If somebody was able, he would also be able to assemble the parts.

PROFESSOR: Nobody. Every one of us is unable of doing it. But a well-coordinated team, assisted by automatic calculators, could be successful.

BANKER: That's true Professor! We'll organize a large enterprise, which will develop the project, which will count on the local administration, and financing from our banks.

MASTER: The alliance of hundreds of specialists will allow the attainment of the great synthesis.

PROFESSOR: A work schedule will establish the stages to be reached.
We'll start with the basic researches, and preparation of technicians
for specialized labor work.

BANKER: And the trained technicians will later be useful in other
sectors of the village!

MASTER: But there is a small question, Mister Professor... we still
haven't reached a consensus on the utility of the great instrument!

PROFESSOR: This can be resolved in a logic, scientific way by a team
of specialists in decision making.

BANKER: All that will take too much time, and will spend too much
money...

MASTER: However, our grandchildren and other descendents will be
able to enjoy the results. How many years and slaves were
necessary in the construction of the great pyramids? But it was
worthwhile, right? And there are the results, that we can
contemplate and admire!

*[Disappear the PROFESSOR, MASTER and the BANKER. Come up the
three BUFFOONS, with a large banner or posters where it reads:*

*"Second Act: The great technical-scientific project for the construction of
the Great Machine." The play continues without intermission.]*

Second Act: Scene 1

[The three BUFFOONS.]

BUFFOON#1: The Research Center for the Construction of the Great Machine was established.

BUFFOON#2: A team of specialists in decision theory was nominated in order to ascertain the purpose of the equipment.

BUFFOON#3: The first step was to decide the aim of the Great Machine.

BUFFOON#2: But before that, it was necessary to define the method that was to be employed in the discussions.

BUFFOON#1: The team of decision experts set up a study group on the theoretical aspect of decisions.

BUFFOON#2: The philosophers, sages and politicians of the village were invited to compose that group.

BUFFOON#3: The next step would be to decide the criteria for choosing an objective.

BUFFOON#2: But before that, it was necessary to decide the values on which the selection of an objective would be based.

BUFFOON#1: The Professor stepped in and demonstrated that one should not require a foundation for everything.

BUFFOON#3: It was necessary to start with a preliminary tacit and conventional agreement about the values to be employed.

BUFFOON#2: The commission made a plebiscite to verify the values that should be employed.

BUFFOON#1: The public poll would allow to establish a base ground on which all would agree with.

BUFFOON#2: There were no points on which all agreed.

BUFFOON#1: Parties were established in the village, defending their opinions on the utility of the Great Machine.

BUFFOON#3: There were public debates and rallies.

BUFFOON#2: There was violence and fights.

BUFFOON#3: The order was disturbed and the police forbade public discussions.

BUFFOON#1: An Academy was created where it was allowed to present theses regarding the theory of values.

BUFFOON#3: There the utility of the Great Machine was discussed without fights, in a rational way.

BUFFOON#2: The professor proposed that the necessary scientific researches should be done at that same time; also, technicians and other specialists should be trained.

BUFFOON#1: For that purpose an University was created.

BUFFOON#3 There, all subjects were researched.

BUFFOON#1: Since an agreement on the objective hadn't been reached, any research was considered important and valuable.

BUFFOON#3: There, everything was taught.

BUFFOON#2: Since all knowledge could be relevant in the construction of the Great Machine.

BUFFOON#1: They researched the protein value of the manioc³ on the color of the eggs laid by Guinea fowls.

BUFFOON#2: They researched the annual fluctuation of the number of geckos in the village museum.

BUFFOON#3: They researched the theoretic consequences of the possible existence of angels who couldn't do mathematics.

BUFFOON#1: They taught the history of the creation of the village.

BUFFOON#3: They taught the rules of accentuation and punctuation of a pre-historic language called "capui."

BUFFOON#2: They taught the way to calculate the number of possible disposition of all the villagers around a triangular table.

BUFFOON#1: Gradually everything was normalized, and a constant rhythm of work was established.

BUFFOON#2: The debates at the Academy were on Saturday night.

BUFFOON#3: The classes during the mornings of weekdays.

BUFFOON#2: The researches in the afternoons of those days.

BUFFOON#3: Nobody rushed because they trusted in the inevitability of the victory.

BUFFOON#1: Everyone trusted on the members of the University and the Academy, but they knew it would take long to build the machine.

BUFFOON#3: Three years had passed and the first class of teachers was graduated.

BUFFOON#1: Four years had passed and the first class of philosophers was graduated.

BUFFOON#2: Five and six years had passed and the first engineers and physicians were graduated.

BUFFOON#1: Eight years had passed and the first group of contestants in the village was born.

BUFFOON#3: They criticized the Academy and The University and said that nothing would be obtained.

BUFFOON#2: Nine year had passed and the Professor requested a general assembly of the community.

BUFFOON#1: And discoursed like this:

³ From Portuguese: Mandioca. Grows as a root and is similar to potatoes as far as nutritious values and constitution.

[*BUFFOON #3 reads the discourse imitating the PROFESSOR's manners in caricature form.*]

BUFFOON#3: Honorable authorities here present; colleagues, sacred Academy and venerable University; ladies; gentlemen. Many years ago, a hope of renewal agitated this village. Three boxes with pieces and gears, today rusted and thrown in the museum, were brought from the other world by two madmen. This gave us the hope of building the Great Machine to break the barriers and to put us in contact with the New World. Up to now we haven't reached that goal. Partly because the path is long. We can't eliminate this problem, which originates from the nature of things; but we could overcome a second one; the fights and dissidence that consume most of our energies. Since diverging positions exist, I propose that each party congregate its followers and construct the machine that they fancy. All the groups may use the knowledge of the University. Instead of mutually disturbing our projects, each one shall work for his ideal. As far as I am concerned, everyone already knows: my goal is to construct an instrument capable of modifying the human mind so that we'll become as intelligent as electronic computers; and in this way we'll reach happiness. I invite all those who accept such an ideal to join me and to work in this great project. And I suggest that all others with diverse opinions should congregate in similar groups, and work for their ideals.

BUFFOON#2: Half of the population thought the Professor's idea was correct.

BUFFOON#1: The other half thought it was absurd.

BUFFOON#2: Because they were afraid that some of the groups would use the knowledge of the University in evil projects

BUFFOON#1: Even the Professor's goal wasn't accepted by the majority of the people.

BUFFOON#3: But the Professor formed a secret work group.

BUFFOON#2: Forty-two people joined the Professor to construct the machine to remodel the human mind.

BUFFOON#1: The work was planned and distributed.

BUFFOON#3: Some people accomplished their missions; others didn't.

BUFFOON#1: Some people quit, others stayed.

BUFFOON#2: In order to suit the members of the group and their new discoveries, the working plan was modified many times.

BUFFOON#3: They seemed to progress at baby steps, but many people quit.

BUFFOON#1: Six years after the founding of the secret group, there were only 12 people left with the Professor.

BUFFOON#2: They met at the planed schedule and did what was intended.

BUFFOON#1: Everything was done with seriousness.

BUFFOON#3: Three years later there were five people with the Professor.

BUFFOON#2: They were Marta, the Mechanic, and three other villagers.

BUFFOON#1: One day, those three went to talk to the Professor, outside a formal meeting.

Second Act: Scene 2

[Comes the PROFESSOR; the three BUFFOONS become the three villagers who come talk to the PROFESSOR.]

VILLAGER#1: You know, Professor... the three of us will have to leave the group. We have nothing against you or against the project. We still believe that the most noble of all goals is this one, that kept us in excitement during these nine years.

VILLAGER#2: That's right Professor. Sometimes we felt discouraged and we wanted to quit; we wished we were just normal people, like the other villagers, who don't strive for anything. But as soon as we talked to you, Sir, our motivation would come back. From listening to your ideas we felt part of another world, a renovated society. That made us proceed.

VILLAGER#1: Even though we now decided to leave this group, we don't consider this whole work a lost cause. Somebody will continue it. Who knows, with other people, it might be able to take off...

VILLAGER#2: I heard that the Electrician was thinking of joining the group. And the Ice-cream man too, I think.

VILLAGER#1: The group will not die. But each of us has his own problems. I haven't had enough time to devote to my family; and I see that the only thing that I can quit in order to have that time is our work. If I were single that would be easier... I can't stop working, I need to make money. If our work was paid, and if we had the time to dedicate ourselves only in this cause...

VILLAGER#2: Of course I shouldn't interfere in your private life, Professor. But I think you should also think about your family more often. Can't you see that Anita is still waiting for the completion of the project to get married with the Mechanic?

VILLAGER#3: We all have been struggling to keep united. But it's so hard. He *[points to VILLAGER#2]* has been much criticized at work, by the colleagues who don't agree with our plan.

VILLAGER#2: Of course that's not the reason why I was discouraged. The recent illness of mine made me feel very weak. And since that I don't feel capable of doing anything anymore, except fulfilling my obligations at home and job. Who knows, when I recover, maybe I can join the group again...

VILLAGER#3: You know, Professor... the most important thing to us has always been this project. Several times I have sacrificed other interests, you know that sir, for the sake of our work. It was the first thing that I ever treasured in my life. But I see that everything is so difficult that I no longer have strength... And now to make myself happy I must do something that only depends on me; and that I should be able to take all the way to the end. Some near goal, palpable, and not as obscure as the one we've had. For that reason I decided to study law at the University. I think it's better this way. At least I will reach the end. I haven't told you this yet, but I've already applied and I was accepted. Now I need all my free time to study. But I am still interested in the project, and you can count on me any time you need me. I just can't participate in the meetings any longer, but I'll still be with you, in spirit.

[The VILLAGERS slowly move away from the PROFESSOR.]

VILLAGER#1: Anyhow, there are still left Marta and the Mechanic.

VILLAGER#2: Yes, you can restart the group. You might bring in more people.

VILLAGER#3: We are with you. You can count on us.

Second Act: Scene 3

[The VILLAGERS leave stage. During the monologue, only the PROFESSOR is strongly illuminated.]

PROFESSOR: One sets aside for more tangible goals: the family. Another one is defeated by his efforts and is swollen by the dragon of discouragement. The third one escapes for an individualist solution: he will become a lawyer. If those are not their reasons, there might be others, it doesn't matter. They will all leave. *[pause]* This is not the first time that such thing happens to me. In other times, there were other people, other situations. But everything ends up being the same. The world is monotonous. *[pause]* Once we wanted to make a garden – not just a little retreat, but yet to cover this whole mountain with shadows, trees and flowers. *[pause]* Another time we wanted to distribute in one single day whistling stick suckers to all the children in the village; and in the evening we would put all adults to dance ring-around-a-rosy, all night long, and nobody would feel ashamed; and in the next

morning nobody would be able to pretend or to forget they played with the children. There would be no way to go back and destroy the past, since there would still be left the sticks from the suckers on the ground and the worn soles of their shoes; and the marks on the floor from the dances. And then every week the party of the suckers would be repeated again, and again. On another occasion we would build a raft out of palm tree trunks and big oil drums; and we would travel boarding the coast, eating the fish we would pull from the sea and the rice we would plant on the mast, which would also work as the sailing canvas. We would tell stories of serpents and fairies in every harbor we stopped, whether or not there were people to listen. *[pause]* All those times I was left alone. And why would I alone build a beautiful grove in the mountains and then flood it with my tears in solitude? Why would I make the people dance if I couldn't be with them? Why should I confront the dark seas and cross the great water, if in there I couldn't find my mates? Now, once again the dream is over.

Scene Act: Scene 4

[Slowly come the BUFFOONS. The PROFESSOR gradually falls down on the ground.]

BUFFOON#1: A soul is dying.

BUFFOON#2: All hope is gone.

BUFFOON#3: The cherished craving is broken.

BUFFOON#1: There are no more plans.

BUFFOON#2: No ideals left.

BUFFOON#3: It all came into emptiness.

BUFFOON#1: Who knows, start all over?

BUFFOON#2: Shut up! No more attempts!

BUFFOON#3: Who knows, with other partners...

BUFFOON#2: Leave! Free yourself from illusions!

BUFFOON#1: He carried on his back the sins of the world.

BUFFOON#3: He lived the life of the human-hero.

BUFFOON#1: He suffered the curse of the abandoned.

BUFFOON#2: Enough! Impossible desires!

BUFFOON#3: Enough struggling, struggling, struggling...

BUFFOONS: I will no longer struggle for the machine!

Second Act: Scene 5

[MARTA comes.]

PROFESSOR: Marta, my friend; my neck and shoulders are in pain. My back is worn out and bent, I can't get straight and lift my face. Do me a favor: a little bit of massage here, until these tensed muscles soften, until the mask on my face is loose, until the weight is taken from me, so that I can have dreamless sleep.

[While the PROFESSOR talks, MARTA approaches. She massages him a little bit, he lies down; she continues for a little longer. He seems asleep. Marta examines him, as checking if he was dead. Walks away from him and comes closer to the audience.]

MARTA: Asclepio is sleeping.

BUFFOON#1: Professor Asclepio felt asleep, he abandoned the struggle.

MARTA: Asclepio is sleeping. He was tired.

BUFFOON#1: He is weak, too. Of course he got tired.

MARTA: Asclepio can do nothing by himself.

BUFFOON#1: Everyone have their excuses. He also has his own.

MARTA: Asclepio strived more than any one else.

BUFFOON#1: For a foolish dream, which now he has abandoned.

MARTA: No, for a noble dream, which he didn't betrayed.

BUFFOON#1: That now he has betrayed, since he's sleeping without dreams.

MARTA: The dream that was his own, since he put in eighteen years of his life!

BUFFOON#1: But he killed that dream, Marta, at last he killed it!

[MARTA with anger turns to BUFFOON#1. Pauses. Then turn back to the audience. The BUFFOONS also walk to the proscenium and stare at the audience.]

MARTA: Yes, it's true. Asclepio is weak. Asclepio has quit the struggle and won't return to it. He was defeated, yes. But tell me, you: who has ever fought more than him?

BUFFOONS: Who is better than Asclepio? You? *[Repeat several times to the audience.]*

MARTA: Maybe you have never abandoned a dream, since you've never had one.

BUFFOONS: Have you ever tried to build the Great Machine? *[Repeats.]*

MARTA: Not even for a moment you've embraced a noble struggle. Of those who wanted to build it, who hasn't abandoned it? Who hasn't betrayed it?

BUFFOONS: By the way, do you live your dream? *[Repeats.]*

MARTA: Who hasn't desisted from the machine?

BUFFOONS: *[From the stage or invading the audience:]* You, also, gave more value to your bourgeois life... You felt lonely and ran after the warmth of the mediocre masses... You quit because you saw you were weak, and the dream was greater than you... You

wanted to be different from the others. You wished to rise, to break the barriers, to reach a New World. But you've ran off and you're still here... You backed off, ran away, and tried to forget it all. Pretending you've never had a dream, or that they're worth nothing... You are sunken in mediocrity, lying to yourself, accepting other people's lies, pretending you haven't betrayed yourself.

MARTA: Who hasn't quit the Great Machine? [*yelling:*] Traitors!

Murderess of your own souls! Bastards, sons of a bitch!

[The BUFOONS and MARTA leave quickly. The other actors walk into the audience giving away popcorn during intermission.]

[if this play is well performed, there will be no applause from the audience.]

Third Act: Scene 1

[Come up the BUFFOONS holding banners or posters saying: "Third Act: Chaos, or the destruction of The Great Machine." ASCLEPIO is in scene; lying exactly on the same position from the end of the second act. But when he gets up, everybody will see that now his appearance is of a 20-year-old. Two of the BUFFOONS who are in scene first look at ASCLEPIO. MARTA enters in silence and checks if ASCLEPIO is alive, then leaves.]

[From this act on ASCLEPIO is no longer playing the PROFESSOR, therefore he must be called by his first name instead of the title PROFESSOR.]

BUFFOON#1: Asclepio slept for nine months.

BUFFOON#2: Asclepio woke on the tenth month, stretched and looked around. *[ASCLEPIO rises, awaking.]*

BUFFOON#1: And he laughed a bitter laugh like a hyena. *[ASCLEPIO laughs.]*

BUFFOON#1: After he awoke, Asclepio knew that Anita had already gotten married with the Mechanic.

BUFFOON#2: And Asclepio laughed a bitter laugh like a hyena.

BUFFOON#1: Now on Asclepio's face the caricature of a laugh was engraved.

BUFFOON#1: A picture of the disgust for himself, for everyone, and for the world.

Third Act: Scene 2.

[Leave the BUFFOONS; enters the MASTER, aged.]

MASTER: Good day, Professor!

ASCLEPIO: Hi, Master. How is everything around here today?

MASTER: Everything is fine. Since now you are recovered, it will be even better when you start again teaching and working in the Great Machine.

ASCLEPIO: I was hoping you would touch this point; for me there is no more Machine.

MASTER: What? My God, what has happened?

ASCLEPIO: Man, no more fooling around. All of that was a big comedy, and it doesn't interest me anymore.

MASTER: I think it would be better to talk about it another day, Sir.

ASCLEPIO: Why not now? I feel very well, be sure of that. I've never been as lucid as now. I used to be mad, like many still are, but now I am awoken.

MASTER: Doesn't the Machine interest you any more? What is your motivation now? What change of values was this?

ASCLEPIO: Values? Nothing, Master. Nothing is worth anything. Nothing motivates me anymore. From now on I will live with a bare face before the madness that makes this world. We create for ourselves Gods, Myths and Ideals. But nothing is valid, nothing has any sense.

MASTER: Mister Asclepio. We heard you several times defending your believes. I could describe them by heart. The ultimate purpose of mankind is happiness; and you want to help our city to reach that goal. Happiness is reached when life doesn't present any more problems. And to solve the infinite and immutable problems that surround us, it is necessary to use intelligence. The increase of intelligence will bring happiness. Therefore it is valid and important to construct the machine your group has devised... Just between us, I still think that our problems could be solved if we could get in contact with the other world; but I respect and admire your work.

ASCLEPIO: "Increase knowledge, increase pain..." [*Eccl. 1:18*] Never heard that? Look, Master, happy are the fools, not the intelligent. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heavens." [*Matthew 5:3*]

MASTER: The history of mankind is the history of the evolution of thought and intelligence...

ASCLEPIO: And the evolution of wars, of the exploitation of man, the increase of his capacity of evil doing, and of his selfishness.

MASTER: ...freeing himself from his instincts, from his animal necessities, leading to a spiritual life.

ASCLEPIO: Freeing himself? Freeing himself from instincts? No, Master. The instincts and necessities are still here, Maybe in disguise, but still here. What moves us, all of us? It certainly is not reason. We spend many days convincing ourselves that something is valid and good, and then we don't take an action. We do what our appetite tells us to do. Our egotistical and petty interests, which are nothing more than our instincts in disguise. Why was I interested in the Great Machine? Altruism? No. Vanity, and gregarious instinct. I wanted companionship, as animals also search for a play-partner. Only that.

MASTER: I hope, Sir, you'll at least intend to continue teaching.

ASCLEPIO: Of course I will. Do you know why? Because it gives me pleasure to show that I know more than the students do. Because I like to humiliate them and make them suffer, studying and trembling before the exams. Yes, I will continue to be a professor.

But now I will teach the history of mankind. The true story of the evolution of the mistakes and absurdity. I'll make them see what man really is – this absurd, meaningless machine, although endowed with consciousness, its supreme purpose being to find out its own irrationality. I'll teach them to despise humankind, as much as the doctors hate us; because they know us. And I'll teach them to despise themselves, and myself, and to hate me; because I hate them and I want to destroy their paradise.

Third Act: Scene 3

[While ASCLEPIO is talking ANITA enters; she listens to the end of his conversation and understands his disposition.]

ANITA: You can destroy everything Asclepio. You can prove we're worth nothing, that we are stupid, and that it is impossible to build the machine. But there was a certain beauty in your old goals, and that doesn't exist anymore. Your dedication, and your enthusiasm were so beautiful. Now, what is left of you? No, you can't destroy the past and the beauty we saw.

ASCLEPIO: So what? Does beauty make any difference? It is comforting, but it is more important not to lie to ourselves.

[They quickly stare at each other. ANITA turns to the MASTER.]

ANITA: Master, there are people looking for you. A man from the Other World has just arrived.

MASTER: Don't you say! It's been a while we haven't received anything from out there!

ANITA: He is a madman.

MASTER: That's expected. Nobody crosses the great swamp without going mad. What has he brought?

ANITA: Nothing.

MASTER: Nothing? That has never happened. Nobody comes here, unless he is sent. And whoever is sent here brings some message.

ANITA: He brought nothing.

MASTER: Tell them to bring him here please. *[ANITA leaves. The MASTER talks to ASCLEPIO.]* This is strange, isn't it?

ASCLEPIO: Somebody's got lost and ended up here.

MASTER: Yes, that could be true. But I don't like it. It has never happened before.

ASCLEPIO: Now it has. It bothers us to have a break in our habits, doesn't it? But the world doesn't care if that bothers us. It is here; it does whatever it wants.

MASTER: Look: he's arrived. Get closer!

Third Act: Scene 4

[ROMULO enters.]

MASTER: Looks like he hasn't brought anything. Tell me, have you brought anything to us? Any message from the other world?

ROMULO: I brought everything you need.

MASTER: Then, where is it?

ROMULO: Here. [*He doesn't move.*]

MASTER: [*Approaching and searching ROMULO.*] No... nothing here. They must have already searched him. He is an idiot.

ASCLEPIO: You are much more clean than any other who has arrived here. Where did you come from?

ROMULO: From the street.

MASTER: No, you idiot. Before that, where were you?

ROMULO: In another street.

MASTER: It is useless. Let's put him together with the others.

ASCLEPIO: Is there still room for one more in the asylum?

MASTER: Well... The old asylum collapsed three months ago due to rain. The madmen are temporarily relocated to a room in the museum.

ASCLEPIO: In the museum! Aren't they going to destroy everything?

MASTER: There is no danger. They are occupying rooms that are almost empty. There, only the old pieces of the Great Machine were left. The pieces were already completely studied and reproduced – they can be destroyed without any serious consequences.

ASCLEPIO: I'd like to look at the machine again.

MASTER: There is not much to see. It's all rusted and worn out.

ASCLEPIO: Rusted, broken... it doesn't matter. Isn't everything else like that too? Under a clean look, everything is rotten. Under a smooth coat, the guts are disarranged. At least I will be able to see something authentic: something really dirty and worn, that nobody tries to occult. Here is beauty: in the courage of exhibiting ugliness. Because we all are ugly, horrible beings. Tell me, Master, have you ever carefully observed a naked man? Is there something uglier than his sexual organs? I doubt there is something more disgusting. But we all have them, right? We're all the same, here! It would be better to expose this ugliness, then hiding it.

MASTER: Mister Asclepio, I will go away. It would be better for you to take some rest...

ASCLEPIO: Are you shocked? It doesn't matter. Shall we go to the museum and take this new citizen?

MASTER: Another day. In another day. Now I must go. Take care of yourself Sir...

Third Act: Scene 5

[The MASTER and ROMULO leave. ASCLEPIO stays alone, turns to the audience and mocks.]

ASCLEPIO: I'm too aggressive, ain't I? I am annoying everyone, so what? They also annoy me. With their mediocrity and hypocrisy. Do you know the story of the wolf who dressed in a lamb skin? That's it: some have forgotten they were wolves when they looked at their images on the water. And then, after a while, when a new wolf with a lamb skin joined the herd, he found out that the rest of them were just like him. Everyone hides from themselves what they really are. Some of them don't even know what they are.

You over there, you also annoy me. People from my village! You are a bunch of idiots, that's what I think. Lucky I am here on the stage, and you in the audience. I can say whatever I think, and you are paying me to insult you. If we were face to face, on the street, do you think I could say that? Here I can. Idiots! I know none of you will come up on the stage to confront me. Neither are you going to get offended and leave. Because this is just a play, isn't it? Since all I am saying is in the text approved by the censorship, whoever assaults me will be arrested. Therefore I can call you idiots. For you what matters are the papers, the documents form the censors, right? You don't care if I really intend to offend you. You could explain it very simply: "They offended us but just as a joke." Right, idiots! This is for real!

What are you? You are shells. You are just pretty paper wraps, appearances carefully constructed and maintained. Masks. The clothes to hide the disgusting body. The make up on the face to hide the wrinkles, holes and blemishes. The hair dye. The fake eye lashes. The theatre, to create a cultural shell and to hide the emptiness of the human beings. Why are you sitting there instead of doing something productive? You are passive. What really matters is to sit properly, with an intelligent look, being careful not to yawn, to belch, not even to fart, not letting the air to escape from any extremity, so that nobody will notice that inside yourself are rotting, in fermentation and full of soda.

And what do I think about me? Another piece of crap. I use this actor shell to insult you. I also have my guts full of decomposing food and shit. And urine. And I am sweaty and stinky. Does anybody want to smell me? No? You just want to watch me and to listen to

me, from a fair distance, right? It's a lot more hygienic, more civilized. Who wants to lick me and touch me? Anybody? So, there is nothing better to do except to continue the play. Otherwise it would be improper, right? If I stop acting now and leave, what would you think? Modern? Avant-garde? Foolishness?

Look, I think we already have your money. We could stop now. But then the story will not conclude, right? Is your life concluded? Does your life make more sense than what we have shown you? If it did, you wouldn't be here, trying to forget about your life for a while. You want the play to make some sense, to have a purpose to fill the nothingness in you, to complete the incomplete story that each of you must live.

All right. I will continue. Because I think you are so despising that you deserve what you wish.

Where did we stop? Oh, I wanted to go to the museum, and the Master didn't want to take me. I waited for a few days and went by myself. Here I come. [*Walks through the stage*] I've arrived.

Third Act: Scene 6

[*ANA, NELSON, ROMULO and the other Madmen show up.*]

ASCLEPIO: Look, there are the madmen.

[*The Madmen are not standing still; they are on continuous action, similar to rituals, which adapt to the following text of ASCLEPIO. However, although ASCLEPIO is describing everything they are doing as negative, there must be something of beautiful and strange about the Madmen. The four boxes of the Great Machine are in scene.*]

ASCLEPIO: [*Continuing.*] Do you think there is anything interesting here to see? No, there is nothing. The madmen are boring and charmless people, just like us. They repeat monotonous actions during long periods of time. Like you, when practicing your habit of reading the paper or watching TV. It is monotonous. Always the same emotions. Or when you masturbate; a monotonous action. The rhythmic motions are very common, among them and among us. Music and dance have their origins there, from the same source of the act of suckling.

The madmen also enjoy very much to drool and put things in their mouths. They suck their thumbs or any other round surface. They use anything, and it is disgusting to watch. Not like a cigarette that smokers find so enjoyable. It doesn't even look like a substitute for mummy's breasts that have stopped feeding you so early.

Sometimes a crazy person does something interesting, different. The children also do. That's because they haven't learned to repeat our

habits. They are spoiled machines. They make curious things, like those that can happen when you hand a canvas and paint to a chimpanzee; or when they randomly hit the keys of a typewriter. From those faults and irregularities the human evolution is set on pace. Geniality is just this: the emergence of things that do not belong to the natural constant rhythm. We, the well behaved, take madness and systemize it into a new form of monotony. That's how we evolve. Here you can see it by yourselves. Your shadows, the infantile remains of ourselves, the thing we wish to hide from ourselves. Look: I will take away this thing from the madman. [*He takes away an object from NELSON; The Madman has an ambiguous reaction of fear and anger, aggression and escapism.*] Saw it? He cries and screams, he tries to attack and yet he is fearful. He is a child. They are you. Don't you feel angry for what I've done? You identify yourselves with the madmen! Or else, with me, which would be even worse. I am a son-of-a-bitch. If you don't get angry at me for teasing those people, that's because you are just the same sort of son-of-a-bitch as me.

I prefer the ones who identify themselves with the mentally ill. They have less barriers, less protections, a thinner shell. They are closer to our true nature. Their mind is chaos, but at least is not as monotonous. Look, we all dress the same way, right? If I were mad, I could have a different look, like that one there. I could dress the shirt as it was pants, the pants like a shirt, and put my underwear on the head, like a hat. How about it? Is it ugly? It's different, right? It's against the rules. That's the way it should be. I want to awaken you.

Third Act: Scene 7

[*ANITA enters a few moments before ASCLEPIO's monologue is done and waits.*]

ASCLEPIO: [*Noticing her presence:*] Hi Anita! Come here. Have you been looking for me?

ANITA: No. I came to see them [*points.*] I took advantage since I heard you were here.

ASCLEPIO: Why? Are you afraid? They are so harmless that they can freely walk around the streets. There is nothing to fear. What we fear is our own shadow, not them.

ANITA: No, I'm not afraid of them. I like the madmen. I like watching them and try to capture the mystery of their actions. I feel so close to them... But my husband doesn't like me to come here. He gets upset. Therefore, since you were already here, I decided to come

today. [*ROMULO is blowing soap bubbles.*] Look, how pretty that soap bubble is!

ASCLEPIO: Yes, nice. The colors are the result of the light interference on the walls of the transparent membrane

ANITA: It grows, grows, swells... You know, I had a dream, last night.

ASCLEPIO: Really?

ANITA: The bubble made me remember the feeling I had, at a certain time. Do you want to hear my dream?

ASCLEPIO: Go ahead, I will try to analyze it.

ANITA: In that dream...

I was walking on the streets of a city. It could have been this one, or any other. There were a lot of people around, sleepwalking; deaf and blind. Moved by their habits, doing everything mechanically. I am not sure if they are human beings or machines, robots.

I am also walking, but I want to stop. I want to awake, and tell them to wake up and look around, and see the beauty around and that there are people around. I want to show them that it is possible to act awoken. That all action or work can be done with beauty and love, even the most simple ones. I want to stop them, to talk to them, to scream at them. But I am also walking without stopping. I walk all day. I am exhausted. I walk and I can't get done what needs to be done. My body aches, I am anguished.

The night falls and I am in a suburb of the city. I am sitting on the gutter and I don't know what to do. I am empty. There is a dirty and beautiful child standing on my left. I caress her head but she jumps, runs around me several times laughing, as if she was mocking me but I don't get angry. Then she leaves skipping. I get up and follow her.

Now I am outside the city, walking in the woods. I walk blindly; I don't know where the girl is and I don't know what to do. I stop in a glade. Everything is dark and frightening. I am alone, surrounded by mute trees, but they creak and mutter. I look above and see the sky. The stars are shining. The stars! My stars! That's the place I want to reach. But they are far away, blinking, just as lonely as I am...

Suddenly I feel my body swelling. It grows like a soap bubble, my head is rising, it passes over the top of the trees! I am huge and shining! I stretch out my arms and get on the tip of my toes and my fingers touch one star. There is an explosion of light and colors around me, a dive and a drop, astonishment and fading, or awakening. I see myself fallen, laid down on the ground. It is day, there is a beautiful sun in the sky and in front of me there is a trail that goes through the woods. I get up gladly and walk through it. I don't know

where it will take me, I don't care, what matters is to walk through it. It is beautiful. There is no more anguish or tension. I am in peace, and I wake up [*pause*].

That was the dream Asclepio.

ASCLEPIO: Do you know what the dream means? The interpretation is quite clear.

ANITA: No, I don't know. I know that everything seems to come from afar, from a place that I don't even know, from another reality. I know that the dream seemed to be very important, and for that reason I wrote it down.

ASCLEPIO: Yes, it comes from a distant place... from your subconscious. The end of the dream, you know, it's very simple. You swell, become shinny, your head rises and reaches the stars. And that solves the problem. Do you know what this is? Freud explains. Come on. You know. What does rises and swells, growing in size? There it is, I wouldn't even have to say. It is the phallus, the penis, the man's dick. Do you know the origin of the word "phallus"? It means shinny, lightened. The erection makes you reach the stars, and when you touch them, you reach orgasm. After that, you feel light and relax. You don't think about anything else. Walking without aim, and you don't have any more problems.

ANITA: Do you think this is all that we have inside? Only sex?

ASCLEPIO: What else? Only the instincts are fundamental. The rest is just a shell, a wrapping.

ANITA: But the dream was so beautiful... it seemed to be so important, I felt so pure...

ASCLEPIO: Behind that purity, there is nature, sex. The instincts!

ANITA: But the attempt to approach the people in the street, and to show them the beauty in themselves, in what they do, in the world... What does this mean? Is there something obscure there too?

ASCLEPIO: It is the infantile discontentment, the desire to return to paradise. Do you remember the girl in the dream? I know what you felt, because I already felt the same too. I will tell you another story, this is mine.

Once upon a time there was a boy. He was like every other child, very clumsy and could not do anything right. The parents and older brothers used to mock him. He realized he couldn't do anything right. That beauty and perfection were distant from him. He thought only the grown ups knew how to do things right, perfectly.

Then he kept growing up. He decided that when he gets big he would be like his parents and brothers. But he still couldn't do anything that would satisfy himself. When he was fourteen, he started realizing that the elders also didn't know how to do things right. And he

became a criticizer, and his criticism turned now to the outside. And his first victims were those around him; his brothers and sisters and parents. He saw that they were ugly and fake puppets that had tricked him. That they weren't moved by love and beauty and that they couldn't produce such things. He tried to forgive them, but he couldn't. And the hatred exploded against the fakeness he lived in. Then came disillusion and disgust for those who lived with imperfection and ugliness. He left home, and searched for new idols. He met many, but destroyed all of them. He couldn't find anyone whom he could admire. So he turned his back to the human kind and shouted: "You are worthless! You shit heads, you can't love beauty and perfection! You can't do anything right, you are nothing, you mother-fuckers!"

He decided to flee from society, but he still believed in himself and believed that it was possible to reach the top of the mountain. The hardest awakening was when he realized that he was just like the others. But he didn't want to pretend anymore. He looked for the pariahs, the social outcasts, the filthiest and the ones that didn't pretend they knew anything; so he joined them.

ANITA: And then?

ASCLEPIO: Then nothing. There is nothing else. He found the truth about mankind, and reached the end of the trail. You haven't got there yet.

ANITA: Maybe I am close to that. Too close Asclepio. But isn't there anything else after that?

ASCLEPIO: Another interpretation? Can you see another interpretation?

ANITA: No. Maybe this is all that there is.

ASCLEPIO: You can't expect anything more beautiful from me. Here there is also no beauty, only hate and low standards. Do you want other interpretation? You should ask somebody else. For instance, that madman [*points to ROMULO.*] Look at his clothes, how interesting. They say he is an artist, that he makes beautiful things.

ANITA: Don't mock him Asclepio!

ASCLEPIO: I am serious! I'm not mocking! Come here, you! [*ROMULO approaches.*] What is your name?

ROMULO: I don't want to tell, you wouldn't understand it.

ANITA: I've heard your name before, don't they call you Romulo?

ROMULO: Yes, people call me Romulo.

ASCLEPIO: Listen Romulo: Anita had a dream and she wants to know what it means. I want you to help her to understand what it means. Come on, tell him Anita.

Third Act: Scene 8

[ANITA is in doubt. ROMULO calls the other madmen to come closer and they surround her. ANITA makes up her mind:]

ANITA: The dream was like this:

[The recorded voice of ANITA telling the same dream is heard. ROMULO takes her by the hand, and together with her and the other madmen they theatrically portray her dream without using words. At the end Anita and ROMULO hug each other, and slowly leave the stage walking side by side. The madmen applaud, and ASCLEPIO keeps an imbecile's face. The madmen show another banner: "Fourth Act: the building of the Great Machine," and leave the stage.]

Fourth Act: Scene 1

[Only ASCLEPIO stays in scene. He is leaving the museum thoughtfully.]

ASCLEPIO: I guess she found what she wanted. You must know that insane people possess an extraordinary strength. Besides, the ones who are not impotent are true studs. She will easily reach her stars.

[The MECHANIC is standing still at a corner; ASCLEPIO approaches him.]

ASCLEPIO: The one who will not like this stuff is the Mechanic. Hello! Listen, are you impotent?

MECHANIC: I don't understand.

ASCLEPIO: Are you functional? Can your dick still screw?

MECHANIC: You really feel like annoying everyone, right?

ASCLEPIO: Do you know that Anita is sexually unsatisfied? And now she must be fucking like mad, a madman.

MECHANIC: Don't you have anything better to do? Go away and mind your own business. Don't come and put more problems in my head because I already have too many.

ASCLEPIO: Well, if you prefer, just don't believe what I've told you. See you later.

[ASCLEPIO leaves.]

Fourth Act: Scene 2

[The MECHANIC is standing still at the same place, imagining what must be happening. He thinks that ASCLEPIO just wished to trick him, but sometimes starts getting jealous and fears that it could be true. The internal struggle is demonstrated on his face. The Mechanic will remain still, visible and thinking until the next scene.]

[Meanwhile, on the other half of the stage, there is a scene between ROMULO and ANITA. A recording with their voices is heard using the lines below; while it follows a representation without words of the initiation ritual between them, in a bare stage, and at the same time the projection of images of the same ritual performed by them outdoors in a field is seen.]

ANITA: Come on, do something beautiful. I want to learn to do what you do.

ROMULO: You can't do what I do. You can do what you do.

ANITA: Do anything, I want to watch.

ROMULO: Can you see this? What is it?

ANITA: It's a tube.

ROMULO: No, it's a mountain. You don't see correctly. Try again.

ANITA: Now you've already told me, it is a mountain.

ROMULO: But you couldn't see it, and it isn't anymore. Let me put this way, it's not only that. What else is it?

ANITA: I don't know. I think it's a beautiful rusted tube.

ROMULO: Can't you see the bark? It is a tree trunk!

ANITA: Yes, there is some resemblance. But what is this game for? Would any answer be ok?

ROMULO: Of course not. This isn't a lake. But it is your vertebrate spine.

ANITA: I know... this is a serpent! [*touches and feels the tube.*]

ROMULO: Right! You are picking it up!

ANITA: No, I'm not picking it up... but now it seems to be a fish... these are the scales... a fish that will jump off the water!

ROMULO: Exactly!

ANITA: It is something that can't be understood: it is a mountain, a serpent, a tree...

ROMULO: It is the plow that impregnates the earth. Treat it with care. The whole world depends on it.

ANITA: How do I take care of it?

ROMULO: It is necessary to anoint it with saliva or butter and rub it very well.

ANITA: And what will we do with it?

ROMULO: Now that you know what it is, we can do something. Which position should it be?

ANITA: Upright, of course.

ROMULO: Yes, but not in the vertical. Tilted towards the North.

ANITA: The base is linked to the ground...

ROMULO: On its top there is green...

ANITA: Above are the clouds that surround the apex!

ROMULO: Inside is the sacred fire that gushes out from its end.

ANITA: Beautiful! Beautiful!

ROMULO: Divine trunk, be auspicious.

Fourth Act: Scene 3

[*ROMULO and ANITA leave. The MASTER approaches the MECHANIC.*]

MASTER: Mister Mechanic, we are seriously concerned about your wife.

MECHANIC: Yes? What is it? Asclepio has been telling you nonsense too, right?

MASTER: Asclepio? No. It is that I saw her playing with the madman. They were burying an old tube in the ground, and covering it with

leaves and flowers. She seemed to be enjoying that, taking it seriously.

MECHANIC: Well, there is nothing bad about that.

MASTER: I just wanted to let you know. Take care. [*The MASTER leaves.*]

Fourth Act: Scene 4

[The MECHANIC remains thinking. ANITA and ROMULO, once again become visible standing on the same place. After a little while the MECHANIC leaves in search for ANITA. He passes close by the spot where she and ROMULO are without seeing them. Meanwhile, ANITA and ROMULO perform a scene of solitude and mutual search. The corresponding images are projected and their recorded voices is heard.]

ANITA: This hollow sphere is the moon.

ROMULO: It is also a well. In its bottom there is water.

ANITA: But it doesn't have a bottom. It is a tunnel without an end, the soul of Earth. By looking through it you can see the sky.

ROMULO: It is a mouth. Here are the teeth.

ANITA: It swallows the souls of the dead.

ROMULO: It is a drop of water from the sea.

ANITA: It is a shell. There is a pearl inside it.

ROMULO: There are shimmering treasures hidden inside.

ANITA: Its surface is moisten with drops of sweat.

ROMULO: She swallows these blue flowers.

ANITA: Here is a mirror. And she is her own reflection.

Fourth Act: Scene 5

[ROMULO and ANITA are still visible. The MECHANIC and ASCLEPIO enter the scene, from different spots and meet at the center.]

MECHANIC: I went looking for Anita and I didn't find her.

ASCLEPIO: She was in the museum, she must still be around there.

MECHANIC: I looked for her all over the town but I didn't see her.

ASCLEPIO: Let's look together. I know where she should be.

[Leave ASCLEPIO and the MECHANIC.]

Fourth Act: Scene 6

[ANITA and ROMULO's scene continues. They get closer and their arms and hands start to intertwine. At the same time their recorded voices can be heard and the projection of images continues.]

ANITA: This chain carries the motion from one side to the other.

ROMULO: It is the bridge of energy between the sky and the Earth.

ANITA: The sky fertilizes the Earth with the falling rain.

ROMULO: A chain of crystal flakes descends through a tube of light.

ANITA: From the Earth grows the flowers, which thank the skies for the rain.

ROMULO: Vapors arise, and the water returns to the sky.

ANITA: Sky and Earth are linked and united.

ROMULO: These are the branches and roots that spread and link the tree to the world.

ANITA: It is light that binds our eyes.

Fourth Act: Scene 7

[ROMULO and ANITA are still visible. The MECHANIC and ASCLEPIO enter in scene together and pass close by ANITA and ROMULO without seeing them.]

ASCLEPIO: Where could they have gone?

MECHANIC: It is strange... they should have been here! I feel they are near by. But I can't find them.

[The MECHANIC and ASCLEPIO leave.]

Fourth Act: Scene 8

[The scene between ROMULO and ANITA continues; now they kiss each other continuing with the ritual, images are still being projected and recorded voices are still being heard.]

ANITA: Who is he?

ROMULO: This one, whom I place on top and worship is the Sun. Look how he shines. He's made of living gold. *[a wheel or gear.]*

ANITA: I can feel the heat of his rays on me... I can't touch him, he would burn me!

ROMULO: He will wound and kill you if you approach him in an improper manner. You must approach from the front. And worship him before you touch him.

ANITA: Lord, friend, my heat, source of my ardor! Here I am, and I want to dive into your light, and receive and feel your energy vibrating inside me! Be kind to me, for I know you can destroy me!

ROLUMO: The others who see him might not recognize him! Let's show them who he really is. Let's dress him with his rays which make the herb in the fields to shoot.

ANITA: His rays are beams of wheat.

ROMULO: His gleam is this bunch of white flowers that bud from his face.

ANITA: Oh Sun, my God, there is no beauty compared to you.

ROMULO: He smiles at us, can you see? He thanks our attention. We've worshiped him. Farewell, master and friend!

ANITA: So long, my Lord!

Fourth Act: Scene 9

[ANITA and ROMULO stop kissing each other in scene. They separate for a little while, give hands and amorously walk on stage. The projection and recorded voices are finished. ANITA separates from ROMULO and examines the things around her (the pieces of the Great Machine). They speak in scene:]

ANITA: I begin to understand each one of the pieces... but these are just parts. What about the complete machine? Can't we build the Great Machine?

ROMULO: The Machine! Do you want to build it?

ANITA: Yes, I would like to. I'd like to see the whole, the unity.

ROMULO: The Machine! You want to build it! For so many centuries I've been waiting for this day, the day I would meet a mate for the Great Work! From now on you will have a new name: you will be called Iza. And this name will mean: "the one who searches for infinity".

IZA: *[Shouting]* Iza, my name is Iza.

ROMULO: I've been here for so long, just to assemble the Great Machine... and only now somebody asks me to do that... we will build it, Iza.

IZA: Let's collect all the pieces.

ROMULO: Yes, let's hasten. Today it will be completed!

IZA: Why haven't you built it yet?

ROMULO: I can't do it by myself. Two people must die in order to put it together. One alone couldn't do the job.

IZA: So, we will die? But I want to live!

ROMULO: Don't try to understand it and stop the movement! Let's go!

IZA: Let's go!

[IZA and ROMULO leave.]

Fourth Act: Scene 10

[*The MECHANIC enters thoughtful and tired; ANA and NELSON appear at a corner, they are crouching.*]

MECHANIC: The night is almost over and I haven't found them... Looks like they have evaporated, or moved to another dimension. It is as if... I don't know what's going on...

ANA: [*whispering*] Mechanic!

NELSON: [*whispering*] Listen!

ANA: We saw them both!

NELSON: They were in the museum!

MECHANIC: But how could...!? I passed by there several times! Were they hiding?

ANA: No.

NELSON: Yes.

ANA: They were there.

NELSON: Next to the lobby.

MECHANIC: By the museum lobby there is no place where they could have hidden. I would have seen them

ANA: They didn't want to be seen by you.

NELSON: They were gathering all the pieces of the Great Machine.

ANA: They are going to build it.

NELSON: Or they have already built it.

MECHANIC: If she is there I will go get her.

ANA: Don't go.

NELSON: Asclepio is there.

ANA: He is watching them.

MECHANIC: Anita hasn't come home tonight. I'm not going to wait anymore, I'll go look for her.

ANA: Anita doesn't exist anymore.

NELSON: But when she died, Iza was born.

ANA: And soon she will have no name to be called.

[*ASCLEPIO comes in thoughtful,*]

ASCLEPIO: I saw them, Mechanic, they are in the museum.

MECHANIC: What are they doing there? Why didn't you bring Anita with you?

ASCLEPIO: I didn't think of it. I was just observing. [*pause*] They were assembling the Great Machine.

MECHANIC: So what? That doesn't interest me. Have you forgotten that we were looking for Anita to bring her back home?

ASCLEPIO: She surely will not come except by force. And that I wouldn't do.

ANA: She wouldn't come, except by force.

NELSON: And that, Asclepio wouldn't do.

ANA: That's why he was able to see them.

MECHANIC: I will go there. [*The MECHANIC leaves.*]

ASCLEPIO: What a strange thing they were doing... all crazy, but I can't stop thinking about it. It's as if there was a meaning...

ANA: [*from the dark*] There was a meaning.

NELSON: They were doing strange things.

ASCLEPIO: They were handling the pieces with tenderness, they were talking to them and uniting them according to absurd guidelines... by the similarity of texture, taste, shape...

ANA: The pieces are alive.

NELSON: They gave them souls.

ASCLEPIO: They added flowers, and then they stood in the middle of the assembled parts... they attached pieces to their bodies and entered into the mechanism...

ANA: They are part of the machine.

NELSON: It's all a single thing.

[*NELSON and ANA disappear.*]

Fourth Act: Scene 11

ASCLEPIO: I spent hours observing them without being noticed. I don't believe that the connections they've done are going to work, but everything really impressed me. I'd like to understand... it is as if there was something hidden, behind all of that...

[*The MECHANIC enters slowly carrying some papers. He stops.*]

MECHANIC: Asclepio!

ASCLEPIO: Didn't you find them?

MECHANIC: No... They weren't there.

ASCLEPIO: You must be blind!

MECHANIC: But there were some things written, around there... on the walls, on a piece of paper, on the floor and on a dry leaf. Looks like it was written with blood. It was Anita's handwriting.

ASCLEPIO: And what was written there?

MECHANIC: I copied it. Listen:

"The work is complete. The union was perfect, and now that which is inside is like that which is outside."⁴

"The great light approaches. I tremble with fear, anxiety, however I walk towards it. It burns me, destroys me and now I am also light."

"Now everything shall start. The great march towards the other shore that I have foreseen. I shall not be a serpent, a horse or a lion. That which has no name, that I shall be."

⁴ "True, without error, certain and most true: that which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is that which is above, to perform the miracles of the One Thing." (*The Emerald Table*)

"Now I leave this world. Goodbye my Mechanic! Goodbye Asclepio, Marta, Anita. I follow my dream and I walk towards the woods and the stars."

Fourth Act: Scene 12

[*NELSON and ANA appear.*]

NELSON: They crossed the barriers.

MECHANIC: They went towards the swamp!

ANA: The Great Machine disappeared.

MECHANIC: They're gone! Anita has become totally mad!

ASCLEPIO: I can't believe that. No, neither of them is mad. They are not like us, but they are not mad.

[*MARTA enters; the MECHANIC in pain doesn't notice.*]

MARTA: What has happened to Anita?

ASCLEPIO: She and Romulo spent the whole night assembling the Great Machine. And they did it. Now, they have crossed the borderline.

MARTA: However, they can't be too far. Can't you stop them?

ASCLEPIO: No. We can't reach them Marta. Look, let me try to explain. I think I understand it. I can't apprehend the details, but I know they are far sounder than us. Look Marta, in one day they have accomplished what I always wished! That which I deemed impossible, they've made it. They've reached perfection and beauty, and by those means, happiness.

MARTA: How did they do it?

ASCLEPIO: It's too complicated, or too simple to be conceptually understood. They used parts of the mind and body that I've never thought of. They used the unconscious, emotions and intuitions. They used their mouths, skin and hair. They used everything to assemble the Machine, and now they are free. Romulo maybe already was before, but now Anita is also free. No, not Anita. It was Iza who found freedom.

MARTA: And what is this Machine?

ASCLEPIO: It has no significance and it doesn't exist without them. Only its construction is what matters. And every person would have to find out how to build it.

MARTA: Then were you right about the function of the Machine?

ASCLEPIO: No, I couldn't understand it correctly. Now I think I know it, but I can only say very little. Its function is to link us to the universe, to allow us to partake of the energies of the great cosmic evolution. It destroys stagnation, breaks the barriers and takes us to the New World.

MECHANIC: All I know is that they are far away. They followed their dream and crossed the borderline. Maybe they are dead or have gone mad by now.

MARTA: You don't believe that. You pretend to believe, but you have no faith in it. You've always thought they were mad from the beginning.

MECHANIC: Maybe. But if they could only come back I would try to understand them,

MARTA: Understand them, as Asclepio?

MECHANIC: Maybe; [*pause*] or as Yuri.

MARTA: Yuri?

YURI: Yes, that's my name.

ASCLEPIO: "If they could only come back..." why bother with that? We've had an opportunity and we didn't learn all we needed.

MARTA: They'll come back, I know.

ASCLEPIO: Hoping is a pleasant thing.

MARTA: One day I will shout: "They are back Asclepio!"

Fourth Act: Scene 13

[*The three BUFFOONS come in.*]

BUFFOONS: They are back Asclepio!

ASCLEPIO: When? Where are they?

BUFFOON#1: Romulo and Iza.

BUFFOON#2: Have arrived to the village.

MARTA: How are they?

BUFFOON#1: Happy.

BUFFOON#3: Could they be otherwise?

BUFFOON#2: They hung a beautiful stone wrapped in liana and red flowers on the Master's window.

BUFFOON#3: They brought news from the Other World.

ASCLEPIO: What do they tell us from there?

BUFFOON#1: They say it doesn't exist.

BUFFOON#2: That the whole universe is here.

BUFFOON#3: That there is no swamp to cross.

YURI: That's not possible. What about all the madmen who came from there?

BUFFOON#1: Romulo says they are not mad.

BUFFOON#2: And that they've never came from any place.

BUFFOON#3: Actually they are just like us.

YURI: But where are they? I want to see them, I want to see how Anita is doing.

BUFFOON#1: Anita is dead.

BUFFOON#2: Forget about her.

YURI: I wish to understand them. I want them to guide me and show me their world.

BUFFOON#1: They may take you.

BUFFOON#2: But won't guide you.

BUFFOON#3: They surely won't.

YURI: Do they despise me like that? Look, it is essential to tell them that I only want to learn, that I have nothing against them.

BUFFOON#1: We can tell them.

BUFFOON#2: But they'll teach you nothing.

BUFFOON#3: They certainly won't.

YURI: Am I mistaken about them? How can they refuse accepting me? Tell me, are they angry at me?

BUFFOON#1: No, they are not.

BUFFOON#2: They like you.

BUFFOON#3: They'll be glad to see you.

YURI: So, how can they hold from me this happiness since they have already reached it? Why can't they guide me, why can't they teach me how to be like them?

[*IZA and ROMULO enter.*]

ROMULO: If there is no guide, how can somebody be guided?

IZA: If there is nothing to learn, how can we teach you something?

ROMULO: We have nothing, except love.

IZA: Give me a hug. Don't ask us for anything else. [*hugs YURI.*]

ROMULO: You don't need anything.

ASCLEPIO: It's nice to see you again. Only now I understand what you've done.

IZA: And what have we done?

ASCLEPIO: It is useless trying to explain it. If I try, you will make me confused and tell me that it isn't right. But it's necessary to explain. It's all done. You've assembled the Great Machine.

MARTA: Where is it?

ROMULO: That? That one doesn't interest us anymore.

MARTA: Where did you leave it?

ROMULO: It is here.

IZA: There are other ones to bring together. The village is full of disjointed things and people.

ROMULO: There is no end in time.

IZA: The assembling must continue, always renewed, at every moment, with new people and new pieces.

ROMULO: I saw evergreens near the pigsty. And there is a beautiful broken bottle out there.

[The BUFFOONS, ROMULO and IZA leave. They walk towards the exit of the auditorium, where they will keep playing with flowers, pieces and assorted objects, etc. YURI thinks a little bit, then he follows them.]

Forth Act: Scene 14

[MARTA and ASCLEPIO are in scene. Silence.]

MARTA: Why don't you follow them?

ASCLEPIO: I'm thinking about it.

MARTA: But you know that just thinking is not enough.

ASCLEPIO: I know. I'm still thinking.

MARTA: Don't you want to learn with them?

ASCLEPIO: Yes, I do.

MARTA: No, you don't. You can't.

ASCLEPIO: I do.

MARTA: No, you're unable to do that. Don't try.

ASCLEPIO: Why not?

MARTA: Because you understood them. Following them now would be no madness. It would be like playing with marked trumps.

ASCLEPIO: Yes, I would understand everything they do. But I'd still be an outsider, an observer.

MARTA: That wouldn't be honest.

ASCLEPIO: That wouldn't work. That... I don't know. Actually I can't go with them. For that I would have to be in a state of madness, and I can't do it. I can only understand and admire them.

MARTA: Yes. I can't go either.

ASCLEPIO: You are my sister. You are like me.

MARTA: Yes, we think on the same way. It wouldn't work for us.

ASCLEPIO: But many other people can go.

MARTA: Yes, many who are around here. We can at least show them the way. It is also a beautiful role, isn't it?

ASCLEPIO: *[Turning to the audience:]* All of you, what are you doing there?

MARTA: Friends, you are in the wrong place. The right place is out there.

ASCLEPIO: Iza and Romulo are by the Theatre's exit playing.

MARTA: Whoever feels like going there to play with them just do it. Really, anybody may go.

ASCLEPIO: No, not really. Look: not everyone can play with them.

MARTA: You must believe they are mad. You must distrust them, you should doubt everything they do. You should not have understood a word of what Asclepio has said.

ASCLEPIO: You should believe that their games will not take you anywhere.

MARTA: But, in fact, you must feel that their madness is beautiful.

ASCLEPIO: And you should dive into it, with your body and soul.

MARTA: All those who are able to go, please go.

[The theater lights are turned on.]

ASCLEPIO: Only those who agree with me please stay. Those who agree that they should leave, but can't do it.

MARTA: Only those who are unable to play, please stay.

ASCLEPIO: Those like us.

MARTA: Like us. *[long pause]* What about this person? What about us?

ASCLEPIO: Romulo's way is proscribed to us.

MARTA: Would there be another way?

ASCLEPIO: As straight forward as this one, no.

MARTA: Would there be another? *[pause]*

ASCLEPIO: I don't think so. Anyhow, we can still help them, talk about them, bring more people to meet them.

MARTA: If you couldn't understand them...

ASCLEPIO: It's not possible to follow their way if it is understood and reduced to reason.

MARTA: If there was another way, an absurd way...

ASCLEPIO: Only faith in the absurd can lead to freedom.

MARTA: *[Rejoicing]* There is somebody we may follow.

ASCLEPIO: Who?

MARTA: Somebody we can't trust. Somebody whose ideas and methods are absurd and lead to nothing.

ASCLEPIO: There are many like that. But we wouldn't be able to follow them because we are rationalists. For example, would you follow the Master?

MARTA: No, but there is at least one person whom we could follow.

ASCLEPIO: I doubt it.

MARTA: It is Asclepio.

ASCLEPIO: Me? How could I follow myself?

MARTA: You can. And you should.

ASCLEPIO: I don't know if I understand... *[begins to rejoice.]*

MARTA: Neither do I. But look what a strange idea came to me: since you can't follow Romulo, we know that you are a perfect idiot.

ASCLEPIO: I agree.

MARTA: We have arrived to the conclusion that thinking is not the way to happiness.

ASCLEPIO: I agree.

MARTA: Therefore it is useless to continue doing what you always used to do.

ASCLEPIO: Exactly!

MARTA: And therefore we want to change. Let's do something absurd instead of being rational. And that absurd thing that we'll do is to be rational to the last consequences.

ASCLEPIO: And that won't take us anywhere! [*They hug each other*]

MARTA: Isn't it beautiful? Isn't this our way?

ASCLEPIO: It's very beautiful... it's our only way out.

MARTA: Wrong. We have no way out. We're lost.

ASCLEPIO: So let's dive heads into it!

MARTA: Body and soul!

ASCLEPIO: Let's get to the bottom of this bottomless thing. Let's develop our rationality, intelligence, and help others to do the same, even though we know that it won't lead to happiness.

MARTA: Yes. And since it's an absurd that it would lead to happiness, of course it will take us there.

ASCLEPIO: It's clear. And since it's clear it won't work.

MARTA: [*To the audience:*] Dear public! The play is over.

ASCLEPIO: We won't act anymore. The show is over. Enough of theatre. Now we have better things to do.

MARTA: Maybe some of you must have found our last conversation completely mad.

ASCLEPIO: Whoever wants to join us in our madness, please stay here to talk to us. The others may leave.

MARTA: Please stay only those who don't understand well our dream but would like to follow it.

ASCLEPIO: Only those who would like to participate in the construction of the Great Machine should stay here with us.

[A banner shows up: "General meeting of the study group of the Great Machine: here, now." MARTA, ASCLEPIO and others begin a meeting with the interested people while ROMULO, IZA, YURI, ANA and NELSON play with whoever wants to follow them, wherever they like.]

NO END

[If this play is performed correctly, there won't be applause from the audience.]