

"Asymptotes"

An Economical Comedy

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Characters:

MAN

TELLER

WOMAN

DOCTOR



ACT 1

SCENE 1

A Bank. The MAN sits in front of the TELLER.

MAN: How much?

TELLER: Between three and half to four weeks.

MAN: Four weeks...

TELLER: Three and a half.

MAN: That's it... (the TELLER does not respond) But how can it be?

TELLER: It's basic arithmetic. You take what you have in your account, add your future income and then divide it by your expected expenses. Then you divide the quotient by seven: the integer is the number of weeks, and the remainder is the number of days. It's a pretty simple calculation, even if you didn't study Mathematics. Did you study Mathematics? (the MAN does not respond) Didn't think so. Don't see it on your face.

MAN: I... I've been saving money all my life. Pension... funds... insurance...

TELLER: Irrelevant.

MAN: I'll get a raise. Something big. I'll sell my car. My apartment. Everything I got.

TELLER: Won't help. Even if you get a raise, and even if you sell everything, and even if you get the best prices the market has to offer, and even if you manage to do that on time – you'll still have only three and a half weeks to live. That's the decision made by your bank account. It's not a figure of speech, by the way. Our bank accounts are capable of making such binary decisions. Do understand. The global economical situation is complicated. Prices go up. Life's hard. Etcetera etcetera.

MAN: (stands up) And then what?

TELLER: Most of the people go to sleep and don't wake up. As if the body

knows it's useless. The headlines in the newspapers say "Passed away after a long struggle with a grave illness". They don't want the public to panic.

MAN: It's like when we were kids and stayed in bed because we wanted to miss school?

TELLER: I've never been a kid. Never.

But yes. I understood the sensations are similar.

Except for the fact that you never wake up, naturally.

Therefore, by the way, it is impossible to define the sensation exactly.

There's no one to report about it.

The MAN sits down.

MAN: I... I... Can I get a glass of water?

TELLER: No.

MAN: There's no water?

TELLER: Do you live nearby?

MAN: Excuse me?

TELLER: I asked if you lived nearby.

MAN: Fifteen minutes.

TELLER: Fifteen minutes drive? (The MAN nods. The TELLER is relieved) You don't see the obituaries when that is the distance. Maybe you run across one a few weeks later after you forgot all about it. (contemplative) And then you don't know anyway. (shakes it off) If we're talking about people who live nearby, I take a vacation. Have to.

MAN: I was really loved once, you know? Mommy... Dad... I want to read poems... Until now I never had the patience for it... The right breath... There was always noise... I feel my body has the place for it, that I need it, now... To read poems in a comfortable chair and sigh "ho"... (stops) don't you care about me?

TELLER: I don't know you.

MAN: And in general?

TELLER: See you. (contemplative) Although, actually, I won't be seeing you anymore.

MAN: Wait.

Maybe the Subprime will go up and we'll see a positive change in the value of gold in South America?

TELLER: After you die – sure. And then all the profits will go directly to your account.

MAN: I'll still have a bank account?

TELLER: Yes. Your account goes to zero and stays active.

MAN: What for?

TELLER: I have no idea. Maybe for the resurrection?

The TELLER laughs a short laugh and exits.

SCENE 2

A room in the MAN's house. The MAN is sitting in front of the WOMAN, his wife. They are having dinner.

WOMAN: More butter?

MAN: No thanks. (and after a pause) You know what? Yes. Yes. Give me some more butter. Thanks.

WOMAN: I want us to go to Australia.

MAN: When?

WOMAN: In a couple of months. In the summer.

MAN: It'll be winter in a couple of months.

WOMAN: Not in Australia. The seasons are the other way around there. Australia is so beautiful.

MAN: What's so beautiful in Australia?

WOMAN: They say that the most beautiful beaches in the world are in Australia. They make the Caribbeans look like a pile of garbage. We'll rent a car. No. Even better: We'll buy a car. One of those trucks, four by four. Convertible. Maybe a Caravan? How many cars did you own? (the MAN doesn't answer) Five. If you can call this Fiat a car... There you have it. A chance to augment the number of cars you owned in something like fifteen percent.

MAN: I have no intention of buying a car.

WOMAN: But that's what you do in Australia, don't you get it? You fly in, you buy a truck, you drive it, you sell it for a higher price, you fly home. Did you know that they drive there on the other side of the road? Or maybe they are looking at us and tell themselves that we are the ones who drive on the other side of the road?

MAN: Thank you, it was very good.

WOMAN: You made it.
Don't you want to bathe in Australia's beauty?

MAN: I do.

WOMAN: So I'll buy the tickets.

MAN: I... I can't go to Australia. I'm not feeling very well.

WOMAN: (puts her hand on his forehead) You are perfectly healthy.

MAN: That's it? Perfectly healthy? Your hand says that I'm perfectly healthy? And what would you say if I dropped dead, right here, right now? But he had no fever? He was perfectly healthy?

WOMAN: I wouldn't say anything.

MAN: What would you do, then?

WOMAN: I don't know.

MAN: Will you cry?

WOMAN: Did something happen?

MAN: No.
I'm going to die.

WOMAN: So we can go to Greece, as well.

Ha, no. We've been there on our honey moon.

Australia is a must.

MAN: Three and a half weeks. Starting today.

I have TOS. Terminal Overdraft Syndrome. Terminal.

That's sad, right?

WOMAN: (laughs) Yes. (stops laughing) I saw a pretty good deal on flying tickets.

With a business class upgrade. It is a long flight, after all...

You're not saying anything?

MAN: No.

WOMAN: So I can buy the tickets?

MAN: Buy them.

WOMAN: Business class? I adore business class so much.

(the MAN starts weeping and then, at last, she realizes) You are serious.

Are you serious?

MAN: (still weeping) Yes.

WOMAN: How could this happen? We've been saving all our lives.

MAN: It just happened.

WOMAN: But how did this happen? (the MAN doesn't answer) how could this have happened? Has anyone explained to you how did it happen, how could this have happened, how can those things happen, how come those things can happen, how did it happen? (and after the MAN's silence) Let me take a look at the paperwork. (the MAN doesn't move) You weren't shown any paperwork? Calculations?

MAN: No need to. It's pretty straight forward. Income versus outcome.

WOMAN: You stupid jerk. Someone tells you that you are about to expire in three and a half weeks and you don't say anything. (cries) You stupid jerk.

And we were just planning to go to Australia...

MAN: Go on.

WOMAN: We have to find a solution. There must be some new treatment methods.

There have to be. I'll transfer you some money from my account.

MAN: Not talking. Crying.

WOMAN: You want me to keep on crying?

MAN: Yes. Just a little bit more. You cry with such grace.

WOMAN: (crying) We'll go online... We'll save you.

MAN: Just cry. (the WOMAN weeps in silence) I didn't think I would enjoy someone else's weeping that much.

Why are you crying? You don't love me anymore.

WOMAN: True.

MAN: Even now?

WOMAN: Do you love me now?

MAN: I look at you and I'm almost... (takes out a book)

WOMAN: What's that?

MAN: Poems. I'm planning to read it the whole night long. (opens the book)

"People will breathe heavily, as after an ancient galloping.

The city's cement belt is tight, certainly.

The heavy walls understand something and fall silently¹".

(stops) Since when?

WOMAN: Since when? What?

MAN: Doesn't matter.

Can you sit here and cry a little bit?

WOMAN: (cries) Can I talk to you as well?

MAN: No.

WOMAN: Will you read me something?

They stay like this for a few moments.

1 From "The streets take off slowly" by David Avidan

SCENE 3

Enter the TELLER.

Teller: In analytic geometry,
An asymptote of a
curve is a
line such that the
distance between the
curve and the
line approaches zero as they
tend to
Infinity.

SCENE 4

The DOCTOR's office. The MAN and the WOMAN sit in front of the DOCTOR, who looks at some papers.

DOCTOR: (looks at this watch) You're the 6:10 appointment?

WOMAN: Yes.

DOCTOR: Sure?

WOMAN: Yes.

DOCTOR: (looks at his watch again) So why did you come in now? (the WOMAN doesn't answer. To the MAN) Why? (the MAN doesn't answer. The DOCTOR stands up) Why isn't he talking? Who are you?

WOMAN: We're the 6:10 appointment, doctor. 6:10.

DOCTOR: (stands up. Goes to the MAN with a medical stick) Open your mouth. (to the WOMAN) You too.

The MAN and WOMAN open their mouths. The DOCTOR looks inside, and sits down after a few moments.

DOCTOR: Ha. "Primum non nocere".

WOMAN: What did you see there, doctor?

DOCTOR: Nothing.

WOMAN: Nothing?

DOCTOR: Nothing. You are not bugged.

Sometimes, when I lose my trust in mankind, I do this test to calm myself down. What are you doing here?

WOMAN: We heard there was an... operation?

DOCTOR: There is no operation.

WOMAN: We've heard it was a very advanced operation. Pioneering.

DOCTOR: Who told you that?

WOMAN: It's just a rumor.

DOCTOR: Pioneering? That's what they told you? Pioneering? This operation is the advance guards marching before the advance guards, the pillar of fire marching before the pillar of fire, the Avant-garde marching before the Avant-garde and then turns its head and sees a faint blinking glow called "progress". I invested everything I had for an inter cultural research and an inter continental development that gave birth to an implementary surgical procedure that creates a very positive electrical effect on the patient's bank account. From the operation room directly to the bank account! And what do all the medical committees say, when I present this innovation? "It needs to be verified", or "it has to be developed". Ha! And what does the public say, when I open up an underground clinic that jeopardizes my medical license to show all those fools that the procedure works? "It's dangerous". "It doesn't sound healthy". Ha, those ignorant ignorants. But I, I will see the day when... (stops) I mean, yes, I, I also heard of it.

WOMAN: Go on, Doctor. Go on.

DOCTOR: I didn't say anything.

WOMAN: What happens after the operation? Tell us what happens after the

operation.

DOCTOR: I perform a diligent follow up.. Using all the professional jargon...
Ha... I collect all the facts and all the findings... Ho... a fact to a fact, a
finding to a finding... Hee... I write a blasting introduction, an epic
summary and I send the article to the "Science Daily". Ha, the
"Science Daily"... A few seconds go by and I get a telephone call from
the chief editor. He sends the magazine's private jet... I fly, I meet, I
shake hands, I publish, I publish, I publish. They put my picture on the
magazine's cover. And then on every magazine's cover. (eyes shut) Berta
sees it and finally calls me. Hey, Berta...

WOMAN: Berta?

DOCTOR: (still with his eyes shut) Berta calls me... Such an appropriate ending for
twenty years of noble and pointless courting.

WOMAN: And the patient? Doctor?

DOCTOR: (opens his eyes) The patient experiences a tremendous amelioration in
his finance state. He can become a millionaire!

MAN: How will I feel?

DOCTOR: Ah, you'll be fine. Just fine.

MAN: It's not risky?

DOCTOR: How can we make history without taking a few risks?

WOMAN: But if something happens to him so the history making is cancelled,
right?

DOCTOR: The path to history is what really matters, Ma'am. The path. I can't
control a pulmonary embolism occuring in the middle of the transplant.
And theoretically, it doesn't really matter. A foot note at the end of the
paper: "by the way, X died".

MAN: But I'll be dead.

DOCTOR: Of course all of us prefer that you survive. But even if you don't, you'll
die as a medical case – the patient who almost survived a money
transplant. It will set up your wife's and children's future. Oh, wait a

minute, you don't have any children, right? More to the wife, then.

MAN: Let's go.

WOMAN: Just a sec. Maybe you won't die? Maybe all of this will be behind us in a couple of weeks and we'll be tanning on the beaches of Australia? (to the DOCTOR) We'll be able to go to Australia, right?

DOCTOR: You'll be able to go to Australia all the time. Just think of the headline in the front page of the "Science Daily": Go to sleep penniless and wake up prosperous. Maybe we should find something that rhymes better. (takes out a form and puts it in front of the MAN) Just sign right here and we'll have some Champagne.

The MAN reads the form.

DOCTOR: It's a standard insurance form.

Most of the things there don't even exist. In the worst case scenario you'll wake up with a slight headache.

MAN: I don't want to become a millionaire.

WOMAN: Why not? Think of the wonderful life we'll have.

MAN: It's not that wonderful right now.

WOMAN: Because we are not living it as a rich couple.

MAN: I don't want to be rich.

DOCTOR: Way to go, sir. I have never met someone like you.

Will you re-consider? For the lady's sake?

MAN: No.

DOCTOR: I salute you. Such stubbornness! You can be the case who was almost saved thanks to the operation, but chose to pass and to die a stupid death because of obsolete principals. Sounds great.

MAN: Death? Why death?

DOCTOR: I will operate only if you give your consent to perform a transplant worth of millions.

MAN: Millions? Why millions?

WOMAN: You're a doctor.

DOCTOR: So?

WOMAN: You'll just let him die in a couple of days?

DOCTOR: There are patients, ma'am, that make even medicine helpless.

WOMAN: And what about history, doctor?

DOCTOR: I've waited for 20 years, I can wait a couple of years more.

WOMAN: I'll report you.

DOCTOR: What will you say? This operation doesn't exist yet.

MAN: Look at me, for a second.

DOCTOR: I'm looking.

MAN: Don't kill me.

DOCTOR: Who are you?

MAN: I'm the 6:10 appointment, doctor. 6:10. I have so many things that I still want to say. And a lot of things to think about. Just like that, to walk in the street and feel a spark lighting up in my brain. I haven't done that up until now. Not even once.

DOCTOR: But the paper... "Science Daily"...

WOMAN: Would it be so horrible? We'll find another headline: "Go to sleep penniless and wake up happy".

DOCTOR: Now it doesn't rhyme at all.

WOMAN: We'll figure it out. And that will be only the first operation. After that you will set the terms. Your waiting room will be bursting with patients. Bursting, I said? You won't have a waiting room. Everything will be booked in advance for the next twenty years. And once a year you'll operate for free someone who has a heartbreaking story.

DOCTOR: You are very convincing. And I can see in your eyes that you are also very honest. You are honest, right?

WOMAN: Sure.

DOCTOR: (to the MAN) Sign the form.

MAN: Promise me I won't wake up as a millionaire.

DOCTOR: Sure.

MAN: Thanks, doctor. (to his wife) We'll work our asses off. We'll save. We'll take a loan with a mad interest. We'll find an online deal with the worst airline company. We'll curse all the way to Australia.

The MAN signs the form. Hugs the WOMAN.

DOCTOR: A great day to science. (take out a bottle of champagne and some glasses)

WOMAN: Is that Dom Perignon?

DOCTOR: No. But it's aged for a long time. (drinks) Ha, I dreamt so much about this moment.

MAN: When will I have the operation?

DOCTOR: Today. Pass through the secretary on your way out. She'll give you the details. Let's get her name to the history books as well, ha?
I'm going to make some telephone calls.

The DOCTOR exits. The MAN and the WOMAN drink silently.

SCENE 5

A room in a hospital. The MAN, many tubes coming out of his body, is asleep on a bed. The WOMAN sits next to him and holds his hand in silence. Enter the DOCTOR.

DOCTOR: In Mathematics,

There are two kinds of infinity:

One describing the magnitude of a not finite group of numbers,
and the other describing an infinite process,

thus meaning

how much we desire.

This kind of infinity is based on
finite elements
but behind it we find a process that's
infinite.

ACT 2

SCENE 6

A room in a hospital. The MAN is sleeping on a bed. Enter the WOMAN and the DOCTOR.

WOMAN: Well?

DOCTOR: Well...

WOMAN: Is he dead?

DOCTOR: (quickly checking the MAN) Of course not.

WOMAN: I don't believe it. He's dead. That's it, it's over, it's all over.

DOCTOR: (checks the MAN with his stethoscope) It couldn't have happened.
Couldn't have.

The WOMAN takes the DOCTOR's stethoscope. She gets closer to the MAN and puts it on his chest. At the same moment the MAN jumps from the bed and throws away the stethoscope.

WOMAN: You're alive! (hugs him)

MAN: Yes.

DOCTOR: (stands between the MAN and the WOMAN) how are you feeling?

MAN: Painful. Especially in the...

DOCTOR: (pulls out medical tools and examines the MAN) Pupils are fine.
Ears are fine. Throat... (the MAN opens his mouth) is fine. You're fine.
(hugs the MAN)

MAN: That's it? I'm fine?

DOCTOR: (still hugging the MAN) Yes, yes, you're fine. You're fine!

MAN: You're hurting me.

DOCTOR: (stops hugging him) Sorry. (Makes a phone call) The first press release:
The patient is healthy and responsive. Completely healthy. (hangs up)

The WOMAN comes near and gently hugs the MAN.

WOMAN: How are you feeling?

MAN: I have a headache.

WOMAN: It's probably the anesthetization.

MAN: And my shoulders hurt too. A lot.

DOCTOR: Your shoulders?

MAN: Yes. Is it normal?

DOCTOR: Sure. It's completely expected.

MAN: Did you bring my book?

WOMAN: Yes.

The WOMAN looks under the covers. Pulls out a gigantic pile of money bills.

WOMAN: What's that?

DOCTOR: (takes the bills from her) Interesting. It's... (to the MAN) do you mind to
hand it over to me?

The MAN hands over the money bills to the DOCTOR, who quickly pulls out a camera and takes his photo.

DOCTOR: A little historic souvenir.

The MAN takes out the poem book from under the covers.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) Thank you. (tries to read from the book) " People will

breathe”... (closes the book. Opens it again) “ People will breathe heavily, as after an ancient....” (closes the book again)

DOCTOR: You’ll be out of here soon.

MAN: I don’t need to rest?

DOCTOR: I thought you had plans. Right? To work hard. To go to Australia.

MAN: Right. And to sit around in our house. To argue.
I don’t need to rest?

DOCTOR: Home is the best place to rest in. We will have to meet every once in a while, naturally. For medical follow up.

MAN: Every week?

DOCTOR: Every hour.

WOMAN: Every hour?

DOCTOR: Yes. I have medical responsibility.

WOMAN: If something went wrong please let us know now, doctor.

DOCTOR: Everything is alright.

MAN: The operation went smoothly?

DOCTOR: Like butter. You really have nothing to worry about.

WOMAN: How will we arrange to meet every hour?

DOCTOR: I’ll move in with you. Just for a few days.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) Can you please get me a cup of coffee?

DOCTOR: You shouldn’t be drinking coffee now.

MAN: Water, then?

The WOMAN goes out.

MAN: I don’t feel very well.

DOCTOR: You look great.

MAN: But I don’t feel great, doctor.

DOCTOR: You’re just tired.

MAN: I’m dying, right? (holds up some bills) Life is draining out of me.

DOCTOR: Not at all. All your viable signs are off the charts. Those money bills are just, eh, an abnormality.

MAN: An abnormality?

DOCTOR: A leak. Of no importance.

MAN: So why are you moving in with us?

DOCTOR: I just need to monitor you closely in order to write the summary for my paper. One week, that's all.

The WOMAN comes back with a glass of water.

WOMAN: There are so many people out there. It's unbelievable.

MAN: How do they already know?

DOCTOR: Maybe you can try to walk a little bit?

MAN: Walk? Now?

DOCTOR: Yes. Let's see if you can do it. One leg after the other.

MAN: I don't think I can.

DOCTOR: And what about sitting down?

The MAN strains himself and sits down in his bed.

DOCTOR: That's marvelous. They'll be coming to interview you in your bed in just a short while.

MAN: What? Who?

DOCTOR: I took the liberty of inviting some of my acquaintances from the media field. Do understand, the interest in you is huge.

WOMAN: He is still weak.

DOCTOR: We'll limit each interview to five minutes and will be done in two hours.

WOMAN: Two hours?

DOCTOR: Or we can do group interviews of half an hour each. The reporters will have to show a little bit of consideration.

MAN: Not now, doctor.

WOMAN: Can't we wait until we get home?

DOCTOR: That is exactly what I told to all the reporters. But they can't stop themselves. Some of them are foreign reporters. Do understand, it's history we're talking about. They won't let you get out of here without talking.

WOMAN: I'll do the interviews instead.

DOCTOR: Not bad. We'll keep them on the edge of their seats. Maybe we can have still photos taken when we exit the hospital? We'll put him in a wheelchair – face covered, as if he has just won the lottery – and you will be pushing the chair until you reach the car. What do you say? (the MAN and the WOMAN don't answer) We have to give them something. In a day or two everyone will forget about you and focus on me. (his phone rings) My telephone is ringing off the hook.

The Doctor answers the phone and turns to exit.

MAN: Thanks, doctor. You saved my life.

DOCTOR: I'd do anything for science.

MAN: You're a good man.

DOCTOR: (stops. Hangs up) No one has ever told me that.

I have done so much more than just saving you. I revived you. Yesterday you were begging to get just one look from me, and today I have made a new man out of you.

MAN: A new man with a new headache.

They laugh.

DOCTOR: And with 70 billions 150 thousands in his bank account.

WOMAN: What?

DOCTOR: I know these are not the figures we've discussed. I threw in some extra,

just for the hell of it.

MAN: But we agreed that...

DOCTOR: Of course we did. Of course.

The MAN jumps out of his bed and starts strangling the DOCTOR. The WOMAN tries to separate.

MAN: Why?

WOMAN: Let go of him.

MAN: I feel like strangling him.

WOMAN: You need him.

DOCTOR: You wanted it.

MAN: No I didn't.

DOCTOR: Your wife did. I could see it in her eyes.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) You knew about it?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) You just couldn't stop yourself on the way to Australia, couldn't you?

WOMAN: No, I swear. No.

DOCTOR: You are not asking the right questions. (to the WOMAN) Did you want it?

The WOMAN doesn't answer.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) Well, did you?

WOMAN: I saved your life.

MAN: You ruined it. (to the DOCTOR) And you, you made a promise. Why? Why?

The MAN releases the DOCTOR and breathes heavily.

WOMAN: What happened?

MAN: I have to lay down.

The WOMAN takes the MAN and lays him gently on the hospital bed.

DOCTOR: Everyone comes up with a new operation these days. Merely saving lives isn't enough anymore. I had to stick out.

WOMAN: Are there any medical risks?

DOCTOR: On the contrary. The more money you transplant, the more resilient the body becomes. Money is a self feeding cycle.

(to the MAN) I prolonged your life.

WOMAN: Why does he have a headache?

DOCTOR: It takes a little time for the body to get used to the new situation. It'll go away in a day or two.

MAN: I'll donate everything to charity.

WOMAN: And then you'll be in critical condition. Again.

MAN: I'll get a job.

DOCTOR: I knew you were the perfect couple for this. Such great public relations. I'll tell the reporters you are considering to donate everything and get a job. (puts on a tie) Excuse me. I'm about to give the first post-op interview. Maybe Berta will watch it.

The DOCTOR exits.

WOMAN: I really didn't know. You must believe me.

MAN: I believe you.

But you wanted it to happen.

WOMAN: I wanted you to survive. That's the only thing that really matters. And I don't think that having some money in the process is that awful.

MAN: "Some"?

WOMAN: It's a new experience. You have a chance to start over. We have a chance to start over.

MAN: I thought there was no "we".

WOMAN: There is. There will be, from now on.

MAN: Promise?

WOMAN: Only if your promise first.

The WOMAN and the MAN hug.

MAN: I'll get rid of everything tomorrow. Today. I'll go out tomorrow and get a job delivering newspapers. (the WOMAN starts laughing) Why are you laughing?

WOMAN: How will you get up that early?

MAN: Easily. With a smile. Coffee, two to three hours of hard work, coming home and eating breakfast with you – will not give that up – and my day goes on. A part time job here, working as a freelance there, a loving phone call in 12:30, and we meet each other in the evening and watch the news together. One night I fall asleep in front of the TV, the next night you fall asleep, the next night we have sex, the next night we remember we had sex and go to sleep early, the next night we take a walk and the next night we do a puzzle. Wonderful, right? (the WOMAN doesn't answer) It will be wonderful from now on, right? (the WOMAN still doesn't answer) We'll have the time of our lives. Right?

WOMAN: No we won't.

MAN: Just like I thought.
Why did you save my life?

WOMAN: For a fresh start.

MAN: A fresh and a rich start. Why did you insist on going to that doctor? You could have let me die.

The WOMAN starts to cry.

MAN: Don't cry.

WOMAN: I thought you liked it when I cry.

MAN: I'm sorry I said that.

WOMAN: I deserve it.

We used to love each other, remember? Once upon a time. We really did. For ten years, eleven, maybe. And then... I imagined you dead for so many times these past five years. Nothing violent, the not waking up in the morning style of death. I figured I'd move on easily. But I can't. I can't. I don't want to lose you again. And if you throw it all away that's exactly what'll happen. We will grow tired and bitter. I don't want to be bitter anymore.

MAN: I feel so energized.

WOMAN: That's how you feel now. But in a few months... Just imagine you come home from the, let's say, from the gym.

MAN: I hate working out.

WOMAN: I'm not talking about working out. I'm talking about going to the gym. And I have just returned from... from... my NGO.

MAN: Your NGO?

WOMAN: Yes. My NGO. With an American accent. No, British. I volunteer 3 times a week there. Both of us come back to a criminally air conditioned house in the middle of the summer. The electricity bill doesn't concern us, and neither do environmental issues: we are big donors to some of those organizations. The house is perfectly clean, a job well done by Marcellus, our foreign and illegally employed cleaner. The stereo surround plays the CD I bought for your birthday, "The Best of Jazz", and on the bar we can see two glasses: a single malt whisky and Coke to pamper the mister and a Dom Perignon Champagne with Diet Sprite to gratify the madame. Oh my god, it's beautiful. Right?

MAN: Yes, but... you're kidding, right? (the WOMAN doesn't answer) I don't need this.

WOMAN: No?

MAN: No.

WOMAN: Not even for a week?

MAN: Not even for a second.

WOMAN: Let's try. Just for a week.

MAN: You can't live like that only for a week.

WOMAN: Think of it as a holiday.

MAN: A holiday? We won't have a second to ourselves.

WOMAN: We can always go to the bank if we don't like it.

MAN: And if we do like it?

WOMAN: We'll talk about it and decide, together. It'll be a lot easier to decide after you've rested. Is the headache gone? (the MAN doesn't answer) You just had an operation. You can't go and work for 12 hours tomorrow.

MAN: I don't want us to buy anything with that money.

WOMAN: We won't. We'll just be together and fall in love. Again.
Do you love me now?

MAN: No. Do you love me?

WOMAN: No. But after spending a week as the richest couple in the world...

MAN: One week.

WOMAN: One week. And then we'll donate everything and forget all about it.

The WOMAN and the MAN hug.

SCENE 7

A bank. The MAN sits in front of the TELLER.

MAN: How much?

TELLER: Between three hundred fifty to four hundred.

MAN: Three hundred fifty.

TELLER: Four hundreds. Billions.

MAN: But it's only been a week. How did I earn so much money in just one week?

TELLER: You're a real financial genius, sir.

MAN: I didn't do anything.

TELLER: And that has been the best policy.

MAN: It doesn't matter anyway. I want to donate everything.

TELLER: OK.

MAN: You're not going to stop me.

TELLER: You are a grown up. Right?

MAN: Yes.

TELLER: Then surely you understand it's impossible.

MAN: Impossible? Why?

TELLER: You have too much money. People who have that amount of money can't donate all of it. Dumping it all will crash the markets. It's a...

MAN: Self feeding cycle.

TELLER: How did you know? (the MAN doesn't answer) Anyway, you can't do it. It's impossible.

MAN: Let the markets crash. See if I care.

TELLER: You will be sentencing millions of people to death. Millions of innocent people who were just starting to believe they can have a better future...

MAN: I'm also innocent.

TELLER: No, you're not. You are rich.

MAN: I never wanted it.

TELLER: My heart goes out to you.

MAN: Really? (the TELLER doesn't answer) Tell you what. I'll hire you as my private accountant. Your job will be to get rid of all my money, in a responsible and quiet manner, as soon as possible. What do you say?

TELLER: Do you want to die?

MAN: I want to be an ordinary man, with an ordinary job. What do you say?

TELLER: No.

MAN: You can get the biggest salary you ever got. Just pick a number.

TELLER: I have a certain responsibility, sir. I can't let the richest man alive become ordinary. What kind of message will that send to our financial system? All the customers of this bank will sell everything they got in order to be "ordinary".

MAN: You have to help me. Please.

TELLER: I already have.

The TELLER laughs a short laugh and exits.

SCENE 8

A room in the house. The WOMAN and the DOCTOR are having dinner. There are many plates with extraordinary dishes on the table.

DOCTOR: Why aren't you in Australia?

WOMAN: Why didn't you publish your paper?

DOCTOR: I just sent it. Should be hearing from them soon.

WOMAN: You wrote it pretty quickly.

DOCTOR: All this luxury really inspired me. What a shame I can't say it about your dear husband.

WOMAN: He'll get used to it.

DOCTOR: Well, there's a difference between getting used to it and enjoying it.

WOMAN: Is that so?

DOCTOR: It's two different worlds. So let me ask again, why aren't you in Australia?

WOMAN: I don't want to go there by myself. So I'm waiting until he'll get used... start enjoying it.

DOCTOR: Come with me.

WOMAN: Come with you?

DOCTOR: Yes.

WOMAN: Are you serious?

DOCTOR: I'm always serious.

WOMAN: You don't even know my name.

DOCTOR: And you don't know mine. (gets closer to the WOMAN) Starting tomorrow I'll be the most famous doctor in the world. I'll have no one to celebrate it with. Maybe we can celebrate it together?

WOMAN: I thought you were looking for Berta.

DOCTOR: I am.

WOMAN: So I'll function as a temporary replacement?

DOCTOR: There is nothing temporary in money. That's right. I'm willing to offer, for your escort services, to perform my innovative money transplant on you. I'm certain that unlike my first patient you'll be able to appreciate it.

WOMAN: But I don't love you.

DOCTOR: Of course you don't. Do you love him?

WOMAN: Well, I... Do you love me?

DOCTOR: Of course I don't. Does your husband love you?

WOMAN: I did save his life.

DOCTOR: So did I. And he doesn't seem to even like me.

My life will change soon. It will be such a shame if I couldn't share it with anyone. And I don't expect you to feel any obligation to me. I don't expect you to feel anything at all. You'll just have to feel hunger, because you'll need to have an occasional dinner with me every once in a while. What do you say?

WOMAN: I don't know, doctor...

DOCTOR: Let's see. (comes closer and kisses her on the cheek) Now, that wasn't so bad, was it?

The DOCTOR kisses the WOMAN again. The MAN enters. The WOMAN and the DOCTOR immediately resume eating.

WOMAN: What did they say in the bank?

MAN: I got rid of everything.

WOMAN: You what?

MAN: You heard me. We said we'd try it for a week and the week is over.

The DOCTOR starts laughing.

MAN: What's so funny?

DOCTOR: They wouldn't let you do it. Money is a self feeding cycle.

Have some dinner, please, and stop talking nonsense.

The WOMAN laughs and resumes eating. The MAN sits down but doesn't eat a thing.

MAN: I made them do it.

WOMAN: (stops eating) really?

DOCTOR: (still eating) I don't believe you.

MAN: So we'll just have to wait and see.

DOCTOR: How did you do it?

MAN: Easily. I bought the bank.

DOCTOR: (looks at his mobile phone) Nothing in the news.

MAN: It's still top secret. Let's just wait. I guess we'll be feeling it in a little while.

The DOCTOR stops eating. The three of them sit and wait for a few moments.

MAN: My headache is getting worse.

WOMAN: I have a headache also. Oh my god, it's happening. It's happening.

Doctor, you must save me. Save me and I'll go anywhere with you.

MAN: You'll go anywhere with him?

WOMAN: What do you think? That I'll stay here and die with you?

MAN: We said we'd try it for a week, and now the week is over.

WOMAN: That doesn't mean my life has to be over also.

MAN: I thought that after a week maybe we'll...

WOMAN: I have no idea what made you think that. Doctor, please.

The WOMAN kisses the DOCTOR.

DOCTOR: That was very nice. You're a good kisser, unexpectedly. But he's bluffing. Most certainly. (to the MAN) Please eat something. Unless your new plan is to starve to death. The free market won't allow that, as I'm sure you already know.

MAN: Pass me the butter. (the DOCTOR passes him the butter. The MAN tastes it) Tastes the same. Maybe not as good as the usual butter, even. More expensive, that's all.

WOMAN: We can afford it.

MAN: We?

WOMAN: Yes, we. I forgive you for that trick you pulled.

MAN: You forgive me?

WOMAN: Yes. I've gotten soft, I know. But I forgive you. Let's have a nice dinner and discuss all the wonderful things we'll purchase when we'll finish eating.

MAN: I can buy everything, ha?

WOMAN: Everything.

MAN: Give me the phone.

The WOMAN gives the MAN a golden phone.

MAN: (to the phone) The “Science Daily”, please. Ah-ha. Ah-ha. Three. Three and a half. OK. (puts the phone down)

DOCTOR: Did you just buy the “Science Daily” magazine?

MAN: We won’t be publishing your paper.

DOCTOR: But... But I have a meeting with the founder.

MAN: It’s cancelled.

The MAN laughs and continues eating.

The DOCTOR gets up.

MAN: Please, doctor, have a seat. Maybe you’d like some bread?

DOCTOR: What do you mean “cancelled”?

MAN: I just bought the “Science Daily” magazine and my first order of business will be to abstain from any contact with you, including meetings and publishing of papers.

DOCTOR: Are you serious? (to the WOMAN) Is he serious?

MAN: (to the woman) Am I serious?

WOMAN: Are you? (looks closely at the man. Kisses him) Yes. (kisses him again) Very very serious.

MAN: (to the DOCTOR) Bread?

The DOCTOR sits down.

The MAN passes him some bread. The three of them eat.

WOMAN: What will be your next purchase, dear?

MAN: I don’t think our relationship reached the stage when you can call me “dear”, dear.

WOMAN: Honey, maybe?

MAN: Maybe.

WOMAN: Your latest purchase, and your ability to purchase everything, excite me

so. Please, forgive me.

MAN: They excite me as well. Forgiven.

DOCTOR: My paper will increase the magazine's circulation.

MAN: I know.

DOCTOR: It will position the "Science Daily" magazine as the most cutting edge medical magazine in the world.

MAN: I know.

DOCTOR: It glorifies patient X and leaves no clues about his true identity. Unless patient X wishes his true identity to be known, of course.

MAN: No thanks.

DOCTOR: So why won't you publish it?

MAN: Because I can. It's one of the few things I'm actually capable of doing at the moment.

DOCTOR: So this is what I get after saving your life.

MAN: Well, considering I am the richest man alive and that death is a pretty cheap commodity these days, it's not such a bad deal, is it?

WOMAN: But honey, I'm sure there is something our sweet doctor can do in order to publish his paper. Look at him. It's very very important for him.

MAN: (to the DOCTOR) Is it?

DOCTOR: It's my life's mission.

MAN: More important than Berta, even?

DOCTOR: Excuse me?

MAN: Berta. Your most precious Berta. Will you give her up in order to publish your paper?

DOCTOR: Did you contact Berta? (to the WOMAN) Did he contact Berta?

WOMAN: Berta? of course.

MAN: Berta? No way.

The MAN and the WOMAN laugh.

DOCTOR: I can't give Berta up. I don't even know where she is.

MAN: It doesn't matter. You just have to say you give up on someone, you just have to utter the words, and it's done.

DOCTOR: I can say whatever I want. It won't make any difference.

WOMAN: Yes, it will. You'll know you've said it the next time you'll meet her. You probably won't even recognize her. You'll just look at her with a curious gaze, trying to remember where do you know this woman from.

DOCTOR: Words are not that powerful.

MAN: They are. (to the WOMAN) Do you love me now?

WOMAN: Oh, I love...

MAN: (to the DOCTOR, fast) See?

DOCTOR: I won't do it. I must find Berta and marry her. It's my life's mission.

MAN: I thought that publishing your paper in the "Science Daily" was your life's mission.

DOCTOR: I won't do it.

MAN: Leave, then.

The MAN and the WOMAN continue eating.

DOCTOR: And what about the possible post operation complications?

MAN: I don't really care.

DOCTOR: You may die.

MAN: Oh no.

WOMAN: I'll cry.

MAN: Really?

WOMAN: Yes. Rich tears of a rich woman. And then fix my make up.

The MAN and the WOMAN laugh.

DOCTOR: You should be ashamed of yourselves.

MAN: I'm ashamed of myself. What about you, honey?

WOMAN: I'm very ashamed of myself. So very ashamed.

MAN: I think we're done here. Please go. No, let me rephrase: get the fuck out.

The DOCTOR walks away. Returns.

DOCTOR: Publishing my paper is more important for me than Berta.

The MAN and the WOMAN stop eating.

MAN: Well, well, well. You've finally said it. How does it make you feel?

DOCTOR: OK. I mean, strange.

MAN: Do you feel a great loss?

DOCTOR: Most certainly. The biggest lost I have ever felt.

MAN: Nah, I don't believe you. Do you believe him?

WOMAN: No.

DOCTOR: I said what you wanted me to say. Now let me publish my paper.

MAN: Not yet. We have to make it official.

DOCTOR: Official?

MAN: Yes. (to the WOMAN) Stand in front of him.

WOMAN: Me?

MAN: Yes, you.

WOMAN: Why.. why me?

MAN: You're the only woman here.

The WOMAN gets up reluctantly and stands in front of the DOCTOR.

MAN: (to the DOCTOR) Look at her. Does she resemble Berta?

DOCTOR: (looks at the woman) No.

MAN: Not at all? Eyes, nose, cheeks?

DOCTOR: No.

MAN: Who's prettier?

DOCTOR: Well, I'm not sur...

MAN: Who is fucking prettier?

DOCTOR: Berta.

MAN: That's what I thought. You don't have to be respectful because she's my wife. OK?

DOCTOR: OK.

MAN: You don't have to be respectful at all. (to the WOMAN) Honey, take off your clothes.

WOMAN: What?

MAN: I'm sorry, what was I thinking? Honey, take off your clothes, please.

WOMAN: Why?

MAN: Because I'm rich and I want you to.

WOMAN: You're kidding, right?

MAN: (laughs, and then, immediately) No.

WOMAN: (shaken) But why?

MAN: We're trying to find resemblance between you and this Berta woman. Had no luck with the face. Maybe the tits and ass will save us.

WOMAN: And what if I refuse?

MAN: But I thought you loved... How can you refuse your loved one?

WOMAN: And even still?

MAN: You'll smash the doctor's dream. The doctor who saved your husband, and not only saved him but made him very wealthy, wealthy to a degree that he, your husband, that is, may have the power to hurt anyone, man or woman, a complete stranger or someone very close, who happens to disobey him.

WOMAN: I'll do it.

MAN: Of course you will.

WOMAN: But then we'll end this little game.

MAN: I promise.

The WOMAN takes off her clothes.

MAN: (to the DOCTOR) Well? What do you say?

DOCTOR: It's.. it's nice.

MAN: Forget "nice". Do her tits resemble Berta's?

DOCTOR: I don't remember, it's been a while since I've seen them.

MAN: Touch them. See what they feel like.

WOMAN: No. Please, don't.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) Turn around. (the WOMAN turns around. To the DOCTOR) What about her ass?

DOCTOR: I really can't say. Can we please stop?

MAN: You're right, it's too much. Just give her a hug.

DOCTOR: A hug?

MAN: Yes, a hug.

The DOCTOR approaches the WOMAN and hugs her. Lets go.

MAN: Not such a casual hug. Hug her like you'd hug Berta. Feel her body.

The DOCTOR approaches the WOMAN and hugs her again for a longer period of time.

MAN: How does that feel?

DOCTOR: It feels... It feels... It's wonderful.

MAN: (to the WOMAN) And you?

The WOMAN doesn't answer. She starts crying.

MAN: Can you visualize Berta?

DOCTOR: (shuts his eyes) Yes, yes, Berta... It's Berta.

MAN: (to the DOCTOR) Now tell her that you are letting her go because publishing a stupid paper is more important to you. Come on, tell her.

DOCTOR: (to the WOMAN) I'm sorry, but...

MAN: Don't be sorry. If you were sorry you wouldn't do it.

DOCTOR: She's crying.

MAN: Very good. Berta is crying.

DOCTOR: (to the WOMAN) Please, don't cry... (to the WOMAN) what's your name?

MAN: Her name is Berta, doctor. Berta.

DOCTOR: Please, don't cry, Berta. I know you've been waiting for me all those years. I know I've been waiting for you. I searched and searched for you and couldn't find you. And now, that I have, we must part. I must publish this paper, Berta. I must be successful. Even if the price is to be lonely as well. But I must, you see? I must. You are the only one who can understand it. So long, Berta. Goodbye.

The DOCTOR and the WOMAN cry. The MAN claps his hands.

MAN: Bravo. Bravo.

The MAN falls to the floor.

MAN: Ha.. My heart... My heart is broken.

WOMAN: That's not funny.

The MAN doesn't move. The WOMAN rushes to him.

WOMAN: Doctor, do something. Please.

DOCTOR: You love him, don't you? You can't help it.

We can leave him like that. Go to Australia.

MAN: My heart...

WOMAN: Help him. Please help him.

The DOCTOR takes the MAN's pulse.

DOCTOR: Get him a glass of water.

The WOMAN exits.

DOCTOR: (examines the MAN) The human heart is a strong muscle. The strongest muscle in our body. It doesn't get broken so quickly.

MAN: (wakes up) Who are you?

DOCTOR: Your doctor.

MAN: Who am I?

The MAN faints. The WOMAN returns with a glass of water. She is crying.

WOMAN: It's all over. Over.

DOCTOR: You've got nothing to worry about.

WOMAN: The stock market crashed.

The DOCTOR's phone starts ringing immediately. He answers it and starts taking dates for operations as he exits.

ACT 3

SCENE 9

A bank. The MAN sits in front of the TELLER.

MAN: How much?

TELLER: Between three to five.

MAN: Five...

TELLER: Three.

MAN: That's it... But how is that possible?

TELLER: The world economy experienced yesterday one of its greatest crashes in history. Lifetimes worth of savings were gone in just a few seconds.

MAN: I felt it here... (points to his chest) here.

TELLER: Everyone felt it. Even I did. Did you see all the bodies in the street?

MAN: No.

TELLER: The city is starting to fill with obituaries and stink. You need to plug your nose and to shut your eyes at the same time. It's pretty hard for people with no coordination.

MAN: Can I.. Can I have something to drink?

TELLER: It's against the bank's policy.

MAN: Not even a glass of water?

TELLER: Not in the current fiscal environment.

MAN: Are you always like this?

TELLER: I'm like this. And that's it.

MAN: How do you feel?

TELLER: I'm fine at the moment.

MAN: Fine. Of course. Tellers... You're always fine. You always survive everything. Where did you put all the commissions I've been paying you? Switzerland? Monte Carlo? The Seychelles? You'll be partying on my expense in a few days?

TELLER: My account was emptied almost immediately. A few decades were gone

in an hour. Poof. I actually saw it happening. With my own eyes. (looks at his watch) I don't have a lot of time left.

MAN: I'm sorry to hear that.

TELLER: Why?

MAN: You are the only friend I have left.

TELLER: I don't think we are friends.

MAN: Yes we are. That's what I decided.

TELLER: I don't even know your name.

The TELLER stands up.

MAN: Where are you going?

The TELLER exits and comes back with a pitcher of water and two glasses. Pours a glass for the MAN and is about to exit.

MAN: Thanks. That's very friendly. Drink with me.

The TELLER pours himself a glass of water.

MAN: Cheers.

They drink together. As the MAN begins to speak, the TELLER starts to gurgle. The MAN doesn't respond to that.

MAN: I'm going to Australia tomorrow.

TELLER: (starts gurgling) Australia?

MAN: Yes. The tickets are really cheap now, and my wife insists. She says that the air there is great for the heart. (the teller gurgles) Don't worry. I know that as my personal banker, who happens to be a close personal

friend, you would rather I spent as little as I can these days. (the TELLER gurgles) That's exactly what I told her, but she keeps on insisting. (the MAN laughs. The TELLER gurgles) It'll be our last trip, actually.

The TELLER dies.

The MAN exits. Enters again.

MAN: Why don't you come with us?

The TELLER obviously doesn't answer and the MAN exits.

SCENE 10

Enter the TELLER.

TELLER: Zero is a
Number that precedes the number one and is
preceded by the number minus one.
Zero is the
Smallest non negative integer there is,
And as a quantifier it
Indexes a group that is
Empty.

SCENE 11

A beach in Australia.

The MAN and the WOMAN sit in wheelchairs. They stroll on the beach and sometimes stop and cough.

MAN: Oh, that is really something, isn't it?

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: It's lovely here, isn't it?

WOMAN: Lovely. Yeah.

Are you having fun?

MAN: No. And you?

WOMAN: No.

MAN: Not even a little bit of fun?

WOMAN: Not even a little bit of fun. I can't stop thinking about it.

MAN: Stop looking at your watch. It'll happen when it happens.

WOMAN: Don't you want to know when exactly will it happen?

The MAN stops his wheelchair and faints.

WOMAN: No. Wake up. There is still time. There is still time.

MAN: (wakes up) Why are you yelling?

The MAN quickly stands up.

WOMAN: How are you feeling?

MAN: I feel I'm... I feel I'm strong.

WOMAN: Don't get over excited. You passed out.

MAN: I didn't pass out. I rested. Ha, this air. This air! (starts jogging)
Tomorrow morning I'll go jogging on the beach. The recession must be over. The stock market is up up up and the money will soon resume feeding itself. Give me a hug.

WOMAN: You want to hug me?

MAN: Yes. Is that.. is that OK?

The WOMAN gets up from her wheelchair and hugs the MAN.

WOMAN: Let's stay... just like this. On the beach in Australia... Just like this.
(coughs)

MAN: Am I hugging you too tightly?

WOMAN: No. It's perfect.

MAN: Here we are.

WOMAN: Yes. Here we are.

MAN: How is it?

WOMAN: Perfect.

MAN: Yes. Perfect.

The MAN starts to cough.

WOMAN: Is everything alright?

MAN: (continues coughing) Yes, yes.

WOMAN: Everything is still perfect?

MAN: Yes.

The MAN continues coughing.

MAN: I prepared a little surprise for you.

WOMAN: Really? What is it?

MAN: You'll see. I did it because... I did it because I... I did it because I love...
(drops) Ouch. (dies)

The WOMAN falls on her knees next to the MAN.

A blast of trumpets is heard. The TELLER enters and picks the MAN up.

MAN: You?

TELLER: Yes. Me.

MAN: You were death that whole time?

TELLER: No. I was me – a teller.

Don't make a face. No one came to take me when I died. Not to mention the trumpets. Come on.

MAN: Wait. I must be special if death made my dying so special.

TELLER: You're not special. The world bank probably crashed completely and that's why death sent a bank teller to do the job. Death is very fond of symbolism.

The TELLER takes the MAN by his arm and leads him out.

MAN: Where to?

TELLER: The water.

The TELLER puts his arm around the MAN's shoulders and directs him to the water's direction. The MAN exits.

TELLER: (gives a card to the WOMAN) The doctor's whereabouts. Your husband made sure you'll be his pro-bono case this year. He's expecting you.

The TELLER exits.

The WOMAN rises to her feet. She throws away the card and starts exiting from the stage, to the water's direction, while talking.

WOMAN: In analytic geometry,
An asymptote of a
curve is a
line such that the
distance between the
curve and the
line approaches zero as they

tend to

Infinity.

Generally speaking

one can say that

Two curves approach each other

Asymptotically

If the distance between them tends to

Zero.

Exit the WOMAN.

We hear sound of the waves.