

# The Advocate

by Danielle Cohen Levy

**Based on an idea by Franz Kafka**

Translated by Roi Alter | Linguistic advisor Kate Telfer

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## The Characters

**BUCEPHALUS** Alexander the Great's former horse who came to work as an advocate at the county's district attorney's office. Somewhat rigid and mysterious. The actor portraying him must have an exceptional appearance, such that would leave the audience with doubts about his identity.

**LANDLADY** Mama, Madam Karl. Runs the "Halved Knight" inn. Has a wooden leg, a souvenir from the previous war. A survivor.

**LEVEL (PELES) GREEN** Former Historian/Author. Has lived for years at the Halved Knight inn. A casual alcoholic.

**BEATRICE** Newly widowed. Resides at the Halved Knight inn.

**NICOLAS** The Landlady's ward. A young, taciturn boy.

**EBEN SHOR** An officer of the Military Advocate General. Has courted Beatrice since the death of her late husband.

**SOLDIER**

**PRISONER A**

**PRISONER B**

**JUDGE**

**COOK**

## **1. Prologue – the Advocate’s speech.**

Man’s liberty is measured by his obedience to the rules. Not because they are put upon him, but because he chooses them. The law, ladies and gentlemen, makes us - separate individuals – a society. All are equal before the law. We accept its obligations in order to enjoy its rights. We should not be misled by personal conceptions of justice, since justice for one is injustice for another, and inevitable is the loss of liberty in ruthless wars, be they waged in the name of personal justice. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, as you come to pass judgment today, remember each and every ruling has to serve as a reminder of our daily choice to partake in the delicate fabric of human society.

## **2. The "Halved Knight" inn, night.**

*[Night. The main hall in which the residents usually assemble is dark. LEVEL enters. He is in his sixties with a derelict appearance. It’s clear he knows what he’s going for, though his actions are clumsy. He makes his way between furniture scattered around the room, every once in a while bumping into something, occasionally moaning silently. He goes to a closet located upstage, takes out a bottle of wine and sits down next to a chess game abandoned mid play on one of the tables. He contemplates his next move. No sooner than he opens up the bottle to take a sip, a distant knock is heard at the inn’s gate. LEVEL recoils, scattering the chess pieces, the bottle almost slipping from his hand. He manages to catch it and sighs with relief. He waits motionlessly for a few seconds before another, more assertive, knock is heard]*

LANDLADY      *[From outside] Just a second!... Nicolas! Do you hear me? [LEVEL stands fast, hides the bottle beneath his clothes. The LANDLADY enters, a hard, independent woman. She slowly advances with her wooden leg across the stage] Nicolas. [Shouts offstage, this time towards the inn gate] Just a minute. [Rings the bell and calls again into the house] Nicolas?... I have to do everything by myself around here. [Loud] Nicolas! [She flinches suddenly, noticing LEVEL] Ah! It’s you! You idiot! [The knocking continues] Just a minute!*

*[A boy wearing pyjamas enters, his hair dishevelled. It's NICOLAS. He is a silent character whose understanding of the occurrences around him is doubtful]*

LANDLADY      Nicolas, finally. Someone's at the gate.

NICOLAS        Aha.

LANDLADY      Go ahead, see who's there. *[NICOLAS slowly toddles outside, the LANDLADY turns a grave look towards LEVEL]* Why are you so up and about?

LEVEL            Looking for inspiration.

LANDLADY      In the pantry?

LEVEL            I'm not picky.

*[The LANDLADY looks at him with evident contempt, she's about to answer him when NICOLAS re-enters, livelier than before]*

NICOLAS        Someone's there. *[Hands the LANDLADY a note]*

LANDLADY      *[Takes the note]* It's tiny, I can't... *[Hands the note over to LEVEL]* Read it!

LEVEL            *[Reads out loud]* Dr. Bucephalus. *[Looks at NICOLAS]* He gave you that? *[NICOLAS nods, LEVEL grins]*

LANDLADY      What does he want? A room? *[NICOLAS nods]* It's the middle of the night... *[NICOLAS shrugs his shoulders]*

LEVEL            *[To himself]* Dr. Bucephalus. *[Laughs, takes out a notebook and notes something in it]*

LANDLADY      What's funny?

LEVEL            Bucephalus was Alexander The Great's horse.

LANDLADY So what?

LEVEL So it seems Alexander the Great's horse needs a room.

LANDLADY Have you been drinking again?

LEVEL Would I ever...

LANDLADY A horse looking for a room?

LEVEL Everybody needs a good night's sleep.

LANDLADY Horses don't sleep. *[To NICOLAS]* Tell him to come back tomorrow.

LEVEL What about the curfew?

LANDLADY None of my business. If he's a horse he can try the stables.

*[BUCEPHALUS suddenly enters, tall and impressive. His voice is stronger and lower than expected, his speech moderate. He's holding two large suitcases. NICOLAS inspects BUCEPHALUS curiously throughout the following exchange]*

BUCEPHALUS Good evening. I gave the boy my card, but he did not return, I wasn't sure if he understood. I need a room.

LANDLADY At this hour?

BUCEPHALUS I came here on behalf of the General Attorney's Office, seventh district. Manpower reassignments due to the recent mobilization. *[The LANDLADY doesn't reply. Pause]* I've been here before.

LANDLADY I don't recall.

BUCEPHALUS A long time ago.

LANDLADY        Very long, apparently. We have no vacancy at the moment. Come back tomorrow.

BUCEPHALUS    And tomorrow you will?

LANDLADY        Perhaps. *[BUCEPHALUS hesitates and then turns to leave]*

LEVEL            He can't leave. *[BUCEPHALUS looks at him]* There's a curfew. Due to the situation.

LANDLADY        You stay out of it. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* Tomorrow.

BUCEPHALUS    If a curfew is in place, I cannot-

LANDLADY        None of my business. *[Turns to go]*

LEVEL            Business is a relative thing, like the economy. It's all a matter of supply and demand. *[Hooks his arm through The LANDLADY's]* What about the room at the end of the hall?

LANDLADY        What about keeping your nose out of it?

LEVEL            It's been vacant for a while now.

LANDLADY        *[Hesitates, looks at BUCEPHALUS]* It'll cost you.

LEVEL            Don't you worry, he's a state employee. *[Gazes at BUCEPHALUS]*

LANDLADY        Lawyers are nothing but trouble.

BUCEPHALUS    I need only a place to lay my head.

*[Pause]*

LANDLADY        Payment's in advance. *[BUCEPHALUS nods]* Nicolas, fetch the keys from the kitchen.

*[NICOLAS leaves]*

BUCEPHALUS I thank you.

LANDLADY Doesn't matter.

LEVEL She only seems tough, inside her heart is soft as butter. Professor Level Green, Historian.

BUCEPHALUS Pleasure to meet you, Dr. Bucephalus. *[LEVEL laughs]* Is something amusing?

LEVEL No, *[Laughs]* I mean, you know *[Imitates a horse]*

BUCEPHALUS *[Assertively]* Pardon?

LEVEL Your name... it's like – *[Makes another horse imitation]* that horse.

BUCEPHALUS Not "like". I am Bucephalus.

LEVEL I know.

BUCEPHALUS The – Bucephalus.

LEVEL The- The...?

BUCEPHALUS The- The!

LEVEL The... what? *[BUCEPHALUS nods]* Ha! *[LEVEL recoils]* But... how is it even possible-

BUCEPHALUS *[With slight pathos]* "In searching for the truth, we must be prepared for the unexpected."

LEVEL Aristotle! My my... *[To the LANDLADY]* He can read!

BUCEPHALUS Naturally.

LANDLADY Well excuse me, are you a lawyer or a horse?

BUCEPHALUS I am an advocate.

LANDLADY But also a horse?

LEVEL And not just any horse! A living artefact!

LANDLADY *[NICOLAS comes back, hands her the key. With contempt]* Nowadays everyone does what ever they please. *[To NICOLAS]* Help me with the bed sheets. *[Glances at BUCEPHALUS again. To herself]* A horse...

*[They leave. LEVEL, left with BUCEPHALUS, circles him from a safe distance.]*

LEVEL No, it's simply phenomenal! You should know that, as an historian, I really appreciate a living witness, like yourself. *[Takes out his notebook]* The things you must have seen – if you ever need a shadow-writer... but perhaps I should hold my horses.

BUCEPHALUS *[Seriously]* Very possibly so.

LEVEL Imagine standing at the spearhead, in the moments that define history. *[Carefully reaches out to touch BUCEPHALUS without him noticing]* My, you don't just stumble across this sort of thing everyday –

BUCEPHALUS *[Abruptly]* This sort of thing?

*[LEVEL is frightened, he moves back covering the light, a shadow is momentarily seen on the wall which makes BUCEPHALUS tremble. He stomps one foot. LEVEL becomes alarmed and withdraws]*

LEVEL *[Stands at a safe distance and gestures as though he was attempting to appease a dangerous animal]* Shhh... no need to get agitated.

BUCEPHALUS *[Mutters]* The nerve!

*[The LANDLADY and NICOLAS return with the bed sheets]*

LANDLADY *[To BUCEPHALUS, unpleasantly]* For you. And another thing, this is no stable, yes? *[LEVEL, stressed by the possibility of The LANDLADY pissing BUCEPHALUS off, tries to signal her. She ignores him]* I'll have no horsing around here... no noise, no dirt... I don't want to see any hay, any straw, any I don't know what else. Clear?

BUCEPHALUS *[Trying to control himself]* That won't be a problem.

LANDLADY You'll need to leave a deposit too, *[Points at his watch]* the watch.

BUCEPHALUS Madam! I am a state employee, you can trust me, I-

LANDLADY I don't trust anyone, especially state employees, *[Piercing gaze]* so as far as I'm concerned, even a horse is better. *[BUCEPHALUS swallows his pride, takes off his watch and hands it over to her]* Go straight on from here, all the way. Nicolas get him his suitcases. Move.

*[NICOLAS leaves carrying one suitcase, BUCEPHALUS follows, LEVEL grabs the LANDLADY just before she leaves the stage]*

LEVEL *[Whispering]* Mama, he's much more dangerous than he seems, we need to be careful-

LANDLADY So long as he pays in advance, that's none of my business, and certainly not yours.

LEVEL At least you don't need to fix his bed... *[The LANDLADY doesn't understand]* they sleep standing up.

LANDLADY *[Puts on a grave expression again]* Not another word. We have enough trouble as it is. *[LEVEL makes a gesture of locking his mouth and throwing the key]*

*[The LANDLADY leaves, LEVEL takes out his notebook and a pencil. NICOLAS comes back to take the second suitcase. LEVEL stops him]*

LEVEL Psst... Did he say anything? *[NICOLAS shrugs his shoulders]* Child, listen to me. *[Grabs him by the shoulders]* For once in your life – listen! Whatever happens, don't stand behind him, understand? *[NICOLAS is still]* Do you even know who this is? This is Alexander the Great's horse! *[No reply]* The most lethal horse in the world! Do you have any idea how many people he's killed... If you just try to get near him – pow! One kick to the head and it's over! That's a truly wild horse. The only person who ever managed to tame it was Alexander the Great. *[Beckons NICOLAS closer]* When he was just a child your age. Everybody said that horse was untamable, but he insisted. He watched it for days on end, and then one evening when the sun began to set he discovered its secret. That horse killed because it was afraid, but not of people. Not even of death, but... *[Comes closer to NICOLAS, almost whispering]* of its own shadow. *[A shadow fleets across the wall, sending a shiver up NICOLAS's spine]* Every time it catches even a glimpse of its shadow, pow! It needs to kill. As soon as Alexander realised it, he jumped on it's back and rode it into the sun. And that's how he managed to tame it! Can you believe that? No wonder he went on to conquer the whole wor-

LANDLADY *[Offstage]* Nicolas! Come here child!

LEVEL Go on. And remember, just don't stand behind it.

*[NICOLAS leaves, LEVEL looks around, takes out the bottle and drinks from it in long sips while humming to himself. Suddenly BEATRICE enters, a young widow living at the inn. She has an almost magical influence over LEVEL and she doesn't hesitate to use it]*

BEATRICE *[Surprises him]* What are you hiding there?

LEVEL *[Hides the bottle]* Ach! Beatrice, ma chère. *[Approaches her]* I could put you in a vase and just look at you all day.

BEATRICE *[Gently pushes him away]* I'm sure. What was all the noise about?

LEVEL *[Signals her to lower her voice]* I can't tell you. *[Signals her to come closer, loudly whispers]* It's a secret!

BEATRICE *[Recoils and steps away]* How much did you drink?

LEVEL I didn't drink anything. *[Pulls out the bottle]* Want some? *[Takes a sip, BEATRICE takes the bottle away from him]* Hey! Hold on, I'm not done. *[BEATRICE looks at him]* I'm not saying anything! My lips are sealed.

BEATRICE Then I'm sure you won't need this anymore. *[Turns to leave with the bottle]*

LEVEL Alright, alright. *[She stops]* But promise me you won't be angry, because I didn't do anything! *[She looks at him, he draws closer to her]* Someone came... she's showing him the vacant room... But he's only here to sleep. Although they don't really sleep... I mean they do, standing... I think... should find out about that... *[Takes out his notebook]*

BEATRICE Who doesn't sleep?

LEVEL *[While writing]* Dr. Bucephalus.

BEATRICE Who?

LEVEL Alexander the Great's former horse, him and no other.

BEATRICE What?

LEVEL *[Closes the notebook]* In short, an historical horse moved in with us tonight! *[Gets closer to her in order to try to reach the bottle]*

BEATRICE *[Slightly disappointed]* All that fuss because of some horse?

LEVEL            Not some horse, an advocate horse.

BEATRICE        Advocate?

LEVEL            No, wait... a Dr. who's a horse *[Laughs, BEATRICE looks at him with contempt, he gets serious again]* The world's most lethal horse. *[BEATRICE is not impressed]* With one kick he can shatter your skull! He almost broke my head earlier, thank god I moved aside, I swear...

BEATRICE        *[Pushes him away]* You reek.

LEVEL            Wait till you see him, that noble savage! They say whoever tames him, rules the world!

BEATRICE        *[Looks towards BUCEPHALUS's room]* What, is he a horse, horse? With all the...? With everything?

LEVEL            Yes, I mean... eh... he's... tall... and one has to be very careful... *[BEATRICE turns to leave]* Where are you going?

BEATRICE        *[Gives him the bottle]* I'm going to see for myself.

LEVEL            *[Grabs her hand]* Don't. *[Whispering]* They say his shadow brings bad luck. Better to go in the morning.

BEATRICE        *[Frees her hand from his grip]* Better not believe everything you're told. *[Quickly departs].*

LEVEL            Beatrice, wait! *[Takes a quick sip from the bottle and goes after her]* Hold on, wait...

### **3. BUCEPHALUS's room.**

*[NICOLAS drags one of the suitcases inside, while BUCEPHALUS unloads books from the other. NICOLAS looks at him curiously, but innocently. He helps him get the books out]*

BUCEPHALUS Put it down here, thank you.

NICOLAS All this is yours?

BUCEPHALUS Yes.

NICOLAS That's a lot.

*[A sound is heard from behind the door. NICOLAS recoils, BUCEPHALUS opens the door. A slightly surprised BEATRICE stands in the doorway, courageously looking BUCEPHALUS up and down anyway. LEVEL hides clumsily behind her and peeps out]*

BEATRICE We didn't want to intrude. Beatrice, I live down the hall.

BUCEPHALUS Pleasure to meet you, Dr. Bucephalus.

LEVEL *[Whispering]* That's the horse I told you about-

BEATRICE *[Looks around the room but doesn't go in]* Level tells me you're an advocate.

LEVEL And historical asset. Are you by the way specialising more in military law or in...  
eh... *[BEATRICE stamps on his foot]*

BUCEPHALUS I'm an expert in criminal law and the penal code.

BEATRICE So are we to be wary?

BUCEPHALUS Why should you be?

- LEVEL            Look at that! All that's yours, I would never have guessed. "Cave ab homine unius libri", *[To BEATRICE]* Fear the man of one book. That means we're safe. *[Offers the bottle to BUCEPHALUS]* A taste?
- BUCEPHALUS    No, thank you.
- LEVEL            *[To BEATRICE]* They don't drink.
- BEATRICE        Are you staying long?
- LEVEL            "The Last Battle", a real classic, *[Picks up the book and runs through some pages. Suddenly turns to BUCEPHALUS]* – Was he really poisoned?
- BEATRICE        Who?
- LEVEL            Alexander the Great. *[Gets into trouble trying to take out the notebook while holding the bottle]* There was rumour it was typhoid, but what's better than an actual eye witness? *[To BEATRICE]* A real archival gem... *[Still looking for his notebook while trying not to stand behind BUCEPHALUS when he accidentally pushes over one of the piles of books. He gets a fright]*
- BUCEPHALUS    Watch out!
- LEVEL            Oh, I'm sorry. You see, authentic historical sources, such as can be relied on, are so scarce – *[Tries to change position without crossing BUCEPHALUS's back but he stumbles and falls over the pile of books that just collapsed]*
- BUCEPHALUS    Be careful, you're treading all over my books! *[BUCEPHALUS gets closer to LEVEL in order to pick up the books, but LEVEL recoils and tries to keep a distance]*
- LEVEL            I'm terribly sorry *[Scared, he goes on bumping into the objects around him]*
- BUCEPHALUS    Stop! *[LEVEL keeps sliding over the books. Suddenly BUCEPHALUS shouts]* Be still!

*[Everyone becomes alarmed. LEVEL freezes. Silence. BUCEPHALUS approaches him while the terrified LEVEL folds to the ground]*

LEVEL *[Covering his head and whining]* No, no, no, no, no

*[BUCEPHALUS stands still for a moment. Everyone is looking at LEVEL]*

BUCEPHALUS Are you afraid of me?

LEVEL Who, me? *[BUCEPHALUS comes closer to take the book and LEVEL overly recoils]*

BEATRICE *[Goes to LEVEL and helps him up. With slight reproach]* He's had too much to drink. *[LEVEL slowly stands up, holding the bottle and the book very tightly. BEATRICE releases the book from his hand]* He's just tired. *[She takes a look at the book LEVEL was holding, a horse's picture is revealed on its cover. She curiously examines the book and then looks straight at BUCEPHALUS]* Here. *[Gives him the book]*

LEVEL *[Whispering]* See that? Because of the shadow.

BEATRICE All superstition. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* This room used to be mine. Welcome.

BUCEPHALUS Thank you.

*[BEATRICE drags the frightened LEVEL out. BUCEPHALUS looks at her for one more moment before turning to pick up the fallen books, helped by NICOLAS. Silence]*

NICOLAS Have you ever killed anyone?

BUCEPHALUS I'm sorry?

NICOLAS He said so.

BUCEPHALUS What did he say?

NICOLAS That you did.

BUCEPHALUS ...You have nothing to fear.

NICOLAS So did you?

BUCEPHALUS Yes.

NICOLAS Ah... *[Pause]*

BUCEPHALUS It was a long time ago. I'm changed now.

NICOLAS Ah... *[Pause. NICOLAS looks at his feet]*

BUCEPHALUS *[Approaches NICOLAS. He recoils]* No need to be afraid. Here. *[Gives him a coin]* For carrying the suitcases.

NICOLAS *[Turns to leave, then stops]* I never got to ride a horse.

*[BUCEPHALUS is speechless, NICOLAS leaves. BUCEPHALUS remains alone looking at his books. He turns on the light. A shadow is cast fleetingly across the wall. He becomes alert, trembles, then grabs one of the books as if to regain his balance]*

#### **4. The inn, in BEATRICE's room.**

*[BEATRICE is in her room. Suddenly there's a knock on the door]*

BEATRICE Yes? A moment. *[No reply is heard. She opens the door. A book lies on the floor in the entranceway. She picks it up cautiously and looks at it. Suddenly she realises it is "The Last Battle", the same book she was looking at BUCEPHALUS's room. She's surprised. A shadow passes along the wall, she looks around but sees nobody. She takes the book back inside]*

*[Meanwhile, NICOLAS finds The LANDLADY asleep in a chair in the main hall. She wakes up]*

LANDLADY Done? *[NICOLAS hands her the coin he got from BUCEPHALUS]* What's this? *[She inspects the golden coin, evidently it's valuable]* Did he give it to you? *[NICOLAS nods]* What did he want? *[NICOLAS is silent]* If you take, you owe. Remember that. *[Puts the coin in her pocket]* To bed!

### **5. The historian's speech [LEVEL].**

It's all lies. Lies wrapped up in pretty words. Liars are those who say history is written by the victors. The defeated don't write it either. History is written by those with plenty of ink, pen, and paper. It is not written by the most erudite, nor by the most powerful. That too is a lie. History is written by those with enough time, inventiveness, and wild imagination. Those who know how to tell a story others would want to listen to. The truth has nothing to do with it, nothing at all.

### **6. The inn, morning.**

*[The LANDLADY is setting the table for breakfast. BEATRICE is sitting down reading a book]*

LANDLADY *[Calls]* Nicolas, bring everything we have left in the kitchen.

BEATRICE Did you know they made it to India?

LANDLADY Who?

BEATRICE Alexander the Great and Bucephalus.

LANDLADY Ah. *[Pause. Calls again]* Got it?

*[Silence]*

BEATRICE He was only 29.

LANDLADY Who, the horse?

BEATRICE Alexander the Great. Just think about it, conquering the world at 29.

LANDLADY Bullshit.

BEATRICE Bullshit? What were you doing when you were 29?

LANDLADY I had an inn to run. After those soldiers - who were regulars here - decided to kill the old man one day and leave me with this *[Knocks on her wooden leg]* I couldn't exactly travel. *[BEATRICE is still]* All just a load of bullshit.

BEATRICE *[Silent, then suddenly contented]* Still, it must mean something that he came here of all places...

LANDLADY He's a horse.

BEATRICE So?

LANDLADY He came here because they wouldn't let him stay anywhere else. *[She suddenly seems to regret her last words]*

BEATRICE *[Surprised]* Do you think that's why –

LANDLADY Enough!

BEATRICE Don't you care about anything?

LANDLADY For the third time this week there was no bread at the market, not to mention cheese or meat – which we haven't seen for months. This I care about. People paying in advance, this I care about. *[BEATRICE turns away from her. Short pause. The LANDLADY suddenly approaches BEATRICE]* Listen, I don't want your officer coming

here anymore. Times are tense and people are already talking about the soldiers hanging around in here. Better to lay low for now.

BEATRICE You should say that to Level, he's the one encouraging him.

LANDLADY You know exactly why he comes around. So you take care of it. We had enough trouble with your previous one.

*[Tense moment, LEVEL enters]*

LEVEL Good morning to the loveliest women I know.

BEATRICE You mean the only women you know.

LANDLADY *[Calls]* Well, Nicolas?

LEVEL But still lovely.

*[NICOLAS walks in holding 8 carrots]*

LANDLADY Only carrots left? *[NICOLAS shrugs his shoulders]*

LEVEL God! What are we, horses?

LANDLADY Well how about that, the parasite has complaints!

LEVEL *[Approaches The LANDLADY]* Mama, you know I contribute when I can.

LANDLADY Only you never can. So deal with it. *[Sticks a carrot in his mouth]* And not a word. *[To NICOLAS]* Go to the market, buy whatever they have, anything. If it's edible, buy it, understand? *[NICOLAS nods, she gives him some money]* I'm going down to the cellar *[Turns to go then addresses BEATRICE]* Do what I told you. *[Leaves. NICOLAS takes a carrot and goes out the other way]*

LEVEL What was that all about?

BEATRICE Nothing.

LEVEL *[Looking at his carrot]* Ach, no inspiration! *[Nibbling on the carrot]* My, what I would give right now for a glass of Cognac, a hunk of bread, and a thin slice of ham. Just ham, I'm not picky. I'd settle for anything, even horse meat, as long as it's – *[BEATRICE looks up from the book and looks at him in rebuke. LEVEL loses his balance]* you know what I mean, whatever I could get... never mind... *[Takes a flask out of his pocket and finishes it in one gulp]*

BEATRICE It's still morning and you're already drinking?

LEVEL To live, one needs a respectable dose of forgetfulness.

BEATRICE I thought historians were meant to remember.

LEVEL Historians too have things they'd rather forget. *[Looks at the book]* Since when do you read?

BEATRICE Since always *[Goes back to her reading]*

LEVEL *[Looking at his carrot]* How depressing. *[He nibbles on the carrot mechanically and looks back at the book]* He gave it to you?

BEATRICE ...yes.

LEVEL *[Off handedly]* He didn't conquer India in the end.

BEATRICE *[Sarcastically]* Why not ruin the surprise?!

LEVEL I thought you knew... *[Can't hold it in]* well, it was because he became too arrogant. *[BEATRICE puts the book down angrily]* The sun began to set, and as Bucephalus saw his shadow growing bigger and bigger he just dropped Alexander to the ground and ran off.

BEATRICE That's not what it says.

LEVEL Sometimes you need to read between the lines.

*[EBEN walks in, an officer in uniform. He's self-confident and feels at home at the inn. He is covertly holding a package]*

EBEN Good morning. I heard the bread was out, so I brought a few leftover loaves from the camp. I hope you don't mind. *[Takes out loaves of bread from his package]*

LEVEL Eben, where would we be without you. *[Takes the loaves]*

EBEN And this is for you of course, Professor. *[Takes out a bottle of wine from an inner pocket]*

LEVEL At last! *[Kisses the bottle. To EBEN]* I'll end up marrying you. *[Opens the bottle and drinks]*

EBEN *[Gives BEATRICE a quick glance]* What are you reading?

BEATRICE A book.

EBEN Aha... *[Takes out an apple from his pocket and shyly gives it to her]* For you.

BEATRICE Again? I don't need special treatment. It'll get you in trouble.

LEVEL Beatrice, darling, our officer here is going far and beyond the call of duty. Where is your compassion?

EBEN No. no. That's why I love her. Every day she teaches me something new. She cares for me *[Comes closer to her]* Beatrice, I don't mean to press, but... have you made up your mind yet?

BEATRICE When I know you'll know too. Don't worry.

EBEN            You are right, I'm sorry. Take all the time you need, but in the meantime, please hold on to this. *[Takes out a ring]*

BEATRICE       Eben!

EBEN            Until you decide...

BEATRICE       You shouldn't have. *[Takes the ring]*

EBEN            But I wanted to. *[To LEVEL]* So how have you been doing, Professor?

LEVEL           *[While eating and drinking]* You know, life, always waiting for some small piece of history to happen. What about the border, things getting warm out there? Any hair-raising manoeuvres? Anything to commemorate?

EBEN            Not especially. *[Glancing at BEATRICE]* Oh, and how about that horse you have over here? Now that's a hot topic around camp.

BEATRICE       *[Raises her head from her book]* What are they saying?

EBEN            All sorts... like, that he can't really be Alexander the Great's horse. As then, well, he should be... how old... *[Tries calculating. To LEVEL]* When was it actually...?

BEATRICE       He's an advocate too, you know.

EBEN            So I've heard... *[Smiles]* but not the way I am.

BEATRICE       Why not?

EBEN            *[Smiling embarrassedly, looking at LEVEL for help]* well, you know... because he's a...

BEATRICE       What?

EBEN            Because he's a... *[LEVEL stomps, EBEN laughs]* exactly.

BEATRICE He is working for the attorney general.

LEVEL An advocate scared of his own shadow. *[Neighing, they laugh]*

EBEN Beatrice, not just anybody can...

LEVEL Your honour! *[Neighs and gallops around, BUCEPHALUS enters, LEVEL bumps into him. Everyone becomes tense]*

BUCEPHALUS Good morning.

LEVEL Oh my, Dr. we were just talking about you.

BUCEPHALUS So I hear. *[Embarrassing silence]*

EBEN An honour, I'm sure. Eben Stone, Officer with the Military Advocate, 5<sup>th</sup> Division.

BUCEPHALUS Dr. Bucephalus, Military Advocate General.

LEVEL *[While trying to avoid standing behind BUCEPHALUS]* Two advocates, under one roof. May I just state for the record: I'm innocent!

EBEN *[To BUCEPHALUS]* I didn't think you'd be...

BUCEPHALUS What?

EBEN Well, you know... *[Looks at LEVEL]*

LEVEL So tall, Dr. Would you like some bread? Or don't your lot eat...

BEATRICE Dr. since you're here, perhaps you will share with us your opinion. We were just discussing whether it was moral for Eben to steal bread from his unit for us to-

LEVEL To not famish of course! *[Looks at BEATRICE]* Child!

EBEN That's alright. I would in fact love to hear the – Dr.'s scholarly opinion. *[Grinning]*

BUCEPHALUS If you take something that is not yours, it is theft.

EBEN Under any circumstances? Even if you have food but your dearest ones have nothing?

BUCEPHALUS Acts that stand in contradiction to the law are unjustifiable.

BEATRICE Exactly what I was saying.

EBEN And what about moral discretion, or the human sense of justice? *[Winks at LEVEL]*

LEVEL Robin Hood, in the flesh!

BUCEPHALUS You seem to be confusing Law and Justice. Justice is subjective. What if everyone did as you do?

EBEN Then the world would be better

LEVEL Amen!

BUCEPHALUS Or worse. What is the meaning of your moral discretion, as you call it, if justice to you is injustice to me? That is why we have rules.

BEATRICE I agree with every word.

EBEN *[Alert]* Exactly the opposite! Rules are just reminders. Humans, habitually, would choose to do good, *[Looks at BEATRICE]* That's at least what I believe.

BUCEPHALUS What one believes is irrelevant. What one obeys is what matters.

EBEN I obey my inner moral code. *[Adversarially]* But maybe we are too different.

[A shiver runs up BUCEPHALUS's spine, he approaches EBEN threateningly, LEVEL senses the change in mood]

BUCEPHALUS Different how exactly?

LEVEL Why don't we turn on the light. *[To BEATRICE, whispering]* We should be careful about the shadow...

BUCEPHALUS Answer me, how are we different?

EBEN You speak of the law as though it is the only thing keeping us in line, and I don't believe that.

BUCEPHALUS It is indeed the only thing keeping society intact.

EBEN Maybe to you it is.

BUCEPHALUS Human beings need rules, or they will stop at nothing. It would be stupid or naive to think otherwise. Alexander the Great used to say: "On the behaviour of the one, depends the fate of all." We must choose to obey.

EBEN And I would say it's quite arrogant of you to read a few books and immediately claim to have deciphered the human essence. Maybe you are afraid to take responsibility for your actions, but I refuse to watch my comrades starve. *[Sarcastic]* And that, I suspect, just might be beyond your grasp.

BEATRICE Why is that?

EBEN Because he was trained!

BEATRICE Eben!

EBEN It's true! He used to be a savage, the whip is all he knows. By what right does he preach morals? *[The LANDLADY comes in, EBEN continues]* Who does he think he is, telling us how to live!

BUCEPHALUS *[Vehemently]* The choice to partake in human society is a privilege for me. But you seem to be taking it for granted.

*[BEATRICE seems impressed by his words]*

EBEN You are wrong, there are things you'll never be able to understand. *[To all present]* It's late, I should head back. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* We'll meet again, I'm sure. *[Looking at BEATRICE]* Beatrice, I'll drop by again in the evening, I hope I'll see you then. *[Leaves in anger]*

LEVEL Say what you may, officer Stone has a heart of gold.

BUCEPHALUS It so often happens that people don't believe in what is true, but in what they wish to be true.

LEVEL Aristotle?

BUCEPHALUS Julius Caesar.

LEVEL *[Pause]* Well... seems like today is carrot day. *[Takes a few carrots, hesitates and then takes the wine bottle too]* Excuse me. *[Exits. Silence]*

LANDLADY That's yours, *[Gives BUCEPHALUS the coin]* he doesn't need that.

BUCEPHALUS He did me a service, I gave him what he earned.

LANDLADY He gets by. Everyone should take care of themselves. *[Exits]*

*[BEATRICE, until now standing off to the side, is now left alone in the space. BUCEPHALUS approaches her]*

BEATRICE Thanks to him we always have food here, he's a good man.

BUCEPHALUS Good men also make mistakes.

BEATRICE        Since my husband died he has come here every day. I never thanked him for that.  
*[BUCEPHALUS is silent]* Don't you sometimes have doubts?

BUCEPHALUS    You don't win a war if you have doubts.

BEATRICE        Thank you for the book.

BUCEPHALUS    Did you like it?

BEATRICE        *[Distracted, looking after EBEN who has left]* Yes, even though it's sad.

BUCEPHALUS    Sad?

BEATRICE        Don't you think?

BUCEPHALUS    It's a true story, how can it be sad?

BEATRICE        *[Surprised by the answer, laughing]* True stories can also be sad sometimes. *[Comes closer to BUCEPHALUS, acting as though she wants to say something more, but just then NICOLAS enters. He is pale, carrying a crate full of cauliflowers. Something has rattled him. He bumps into something and falls along with the crate, scattering the cauliflowers]*

NICOLAS         War's broken out! *[The LANDLADY comes in, pointing at the cauliflowers]*

LANDLADY        What's this?

NICOLAS         That's all there was.

## **7. The SOLDIER's speech.**

They challenge the very heart of our existence. They want to destroy everything we've built, to burn it to the ground until nothing's left but ruins, ash and dirt. They leave us no choice! We move forward as one, to fight, for war is the world's only hygiene. Righteous are the strong, the young,

the joyful, whose future lies ahead, whose every muscle quivers with vigour and excitement. We were promised this will be the war to end all wars, and is therefore righteous. And we believe. We must believe if we wish to make it home one day. A good cause justifies a war, this we know. But a good war, a good war justifies any cause!

## **8. The inn, dusk.**

*[A distant explosion is dimly heard. NICOLAS is standing on a chair by one of the closets, the LANDLADY giving him instructions. Cauliflowers are scattered all over the stage]*

LANDLADY      Check the top one. See anything? *[NICOLAS nods]* Show me. *[NICOLAS takes out a few porcelain plates and gives them to the LANDLADY]* Take out all of them.

*[LEVEL walks in, he's clearly spent most of the day drinking. Looks at the scattered cauliflowers]*

LEVEL            *[Picks up a cauliflower and starts eating it]* What are we up to? *[The LANDLADY points at a paper nailed to the door, LEVEL goes and reads it aloud]* "Order for the nationalisation of civilian property: Porcelain, oil, and animals." I suppose they're opening another front in the west. See child, the army requires, we oblige.

LANDLADY      They're going to suck us dry. What do they need porcelain for?

LEVEL            Porcelain is a cheap, explosive material. If you mix it with a bit of gun-powder-

LANDLADY      Alright, beautiful.

NICOLAS        Do they make weapons out of it?

LEVEL            Not exactly. *[Pulls out his notebook to write something]* What's today's date?

LANDLADY      *[To NICOLAS]* Hurry up, they're coming for it today.

LEVEL See if you can find any bottles up there.

LANDLADY Thanks to you there's nothing left.

LEVEL Doesn't hurt to double-check.

LANDLADY You're drinking too much.

LEVEL What do you expect me to do? History is taking its time and I haven't written a word for three months. *[Looks at the cauliflowers]* That's refreshing. I bet the horse would like it. *[NICOLAS continues to hand porcelains to the LANDLADY, who's stacking them up]* Have you ever noticed that a cauliflower is actually made up of many smaller cauliflowers. Here, *[Takes a cauliflower floret]* that's a cauliflower in itself.

LANDLADY Of course that's a cauliflower.

LEVEL No, I mean, every little part of it is a cauliflower in its own right. *[Shows her]* That's a cauliflower, *[Picks out a smaller floret]* and that's a cauliflower too. See?

LANDLADY Yes, I understand, a cauliflower. Thank you.

LEVEL No, no, no. I mean that the cauliflower, is in fact a structure within a structure within a structure... it's a whole system of structures reflected within themselves... like a... say a... *[Looks at the order]* like the army!

LANDLADY Like the army?

LEVEL Yes! Exactly! Here, this is the army *[Picks up a large cauliflower and starts breaking it apart]*, and the army is made up of divisions, and each division is made up of brigades, and each brigade from battalions, and every battalion from companies, and a company - from platoons, and a platoon - from soldiers... each part is built like a whole army and conducts itself like a whole army. Even a single soldier can be an army. *[Displays the small piece of cauliflower left in his hand, salutes and eats it]*

NICOLAS        The army is like cauliflower?

LEVEL            Yes! Exactly

*[NICOLAS hands the LANDLADY a decorated porcelain urn]*

LANDLADY      No.

LEVEL            No?

LANDLADY      No. I won't give that away... *[Refuses to take the urn, NICOLAS is left holding it. To LEVEL]* It's my only keepsake... inside... *[Glancing at NICOLAS, then to LEVEL, hushed]* it's the old man's ashes... what should I do, they're coming for it today.

NICOLAS        May I get down now?

LANDLADY      No.

LEVEL            *[Munching on the cauliflower]* Why not just drop it?

LANDLADY      Never!

LEVEL            That's what they'll do with it anyway - grind it down for raw material-

LANDLADY      Enough!

NICOLAS        What should I do?

LEVEL            Go on, drop it. *[NICOLAS lifts the urn over his head, as if going to drop it]*

LANDLADY      *[Shocked]* Nicolas don't you dare...

LEVEL            *[Approaches The LANDLADY, still munching]* Just pretend I was looking for something in the closet, not very carefully, you know how clumsy I am. I made one false move and it fell-

LANDLADY Don't you dare!

LEVEL If you won't break it - they will.

LANDLADY I can't.

LEVEL If it's gone it can't hurt you.

LANDLADY I'm not breaking it!

*[Tense moment, nobody moves. EBEN enters holding a gift for BEATRICE and surveys the scene]*

EBEN So what are we breaking?

LEVEL Porcelain for the war effort.

EBEN But why break it? *[LEVEL shows him the decree on the door. To the LANDLADY]* Don't worry, I'll take care of that.

LANDLADY We don't need favours.

EBEN You can trust me, no one will come here to take anything.

LANDLADY No. You need the urn, so take it. *[Exits. Tense moment]*

NICOLAS *[Still holding the urn above his head]* I'm dropping!

LEVEL No!

EBEN *[To NICOLAS]* The urn stays. Put all the plates back too. Carefully! *[About the LANDLADY]* Why the attitude?

LEVEL Don't take it personally. You saw, she's even ill-tempered with the boy. *[They watch NICOLAS in silence as he slowly returns the urn and the plates to their places]* So, are we going to stand here all day looking at plates?

EBEN *[Smiles at LEVEL and tosses him a bottle of wine]* Do the honours?

LEVEL I thought you'd never ask. *[Pours wine for both of them]* A match?

EBEN Just until Beatrice comes down. Come on, let me give you a beating.

### **9A. BUCEPHALUS's room.**

*[BEATRICE is returning-BUCEPHALUS his book. She looks about the room]*

BEATRICE I read it with bated breath, it was so sad. *[Provocatively]* Who would have thought history books could be so intriguing... *[Hands him the book, continues looking around. She suddenly speaks]* "Dans un chemin montant, sablonneux, malaisé, / Et de tous les côtés au soleil exposé, / Six forts chevaux tiraient un Coche."

BUCEPHALUS What is it?

BEATRICE A poem. *[Comes closer to him]* It left a huge impression on me, so I memorised it. Six strong horses are carrying a wagon up the mountain, in the sun... a picture you can't forget.

BUCEPHALUS I don't read poetry.

BEATRICE Have you never read a poem to anyone? *[Walking around the room]* All these books, and not a single poetry book?

BUCEPHALUS They are law books, I use them to study.

BEATRICE How many laws are there that you need so many books?

BUCEPHALUS It's not only law, but also verdict and interpretation. It's more than just the laws themselves...

BEATRICE *[Laughing]* When you talk about it like that, it sounds almost exciting...

BUCEPHALUS It is exciting... there's nothing else like it in nature, only humans choose their own laws and abide by them. *[Becoming excited]* Choice is the true essence of human society.

BEATRICE And I thought the true essence was love, but maybe I'm just a romantic.

BUCEPHALUS Everything derives from choice. Including love, I assume.

**10A. In parallel: The inn, dusk.**

*[LEVEL and EBEN are playing chess. EBEN is looking at the present he brought for BEATRICE]*

EBEN Why doesn't she come down? Was it the apple? I was only trying to help.

LEVEL Maybe she doesn't want help.

EBEN Why would anyone not want help?

LEVEL Look. You can drag a dead horse to the river, but no matter how much you insist, it still won't drink. *[Pause]* Eben, your move.

EBEN Right. Do you think I shouldn't have offered?

LEVEL What's done is done.

**In parallel: 9B. BUCEPHALUS's room.**

BEATRICE      May I ask you something?

BUCEPHALUS    Yes.

BEATRICE      Is it true what they say about you?

BUCEPHALUS    What do they say?

BEATRICE      That... hmm... whoever rides you will conquer the whole world. I mean, it's just a myth, right? *[BUCEPHALUS looks at her in silence]* So is it true or not?

BUCEPHALUS    What do you think?

BEATRICE      I think it's a myth. After all, Alexander did not conquer the whole world in the end... and what about the other thing they say?

BUCEPHALUS    What thing is that?

BEATRICE      That it's dangerous to come near you... is that also true?

BUCEPHALUS    You shouldn't believe everything people say... *[Hands her a book]* Here. I believe this one isn't so sad.

BEATRICE      I think you misunderstood something.

BUCEPHALUS    And what is that?

BEATRICE      I like sad stories.

**In parallel: 10B. The inn.**

LEVEL          Eben, you're distracted.

EBEN I'm in total concentration.

LEVEL So why are you letting my horse take your queen at C 5?

EBEN Damn it! I wasn't paying attention *[Changes his move]* You're too good for me.

LEVEL Stop thinking and start playing.

**In parallel: 9C. BUCEPHALUS's room.**

BEATRICE *[Suddenly straightforward]* Is there anything you regret?

BUCEPHALUS *[Short pause]* No.

BEATRICE *[Looking around her]* My husband died right here, you know? *[Pause]* He was lying with his eyes open, like he was surprised at the new state of affairs. You could almost feel sorry for him like that... when he drank, he'd turn into somebody else... see for yourself. *[Exposes a scar on her back]*

BUCEPHALUS I am sorry, I didn't know.

BEATRICE Nothing to be sorry about. You always pay in the end. *[Pause]* Anyway, that's what I did, and I don't regret it either.

BUCEPHALUS *[Finally realises what was hidden from him until now]* So you... you did it... you killed...

BEATRICE It was him or me. And here I am, still alive. *[Pause]* Let's go away, just the two of us!

BUCEPHALUS Go away, where?

BEATRICE Far away from here. From the war, from these people, from everything...

BUCEPHALUS *[Takes a step back]* I don't think it is a good idea.

BEATRICE Don't you think I'm pretty?

BUCEPHALUS You are very pretty. Too pretty.

BEATRICE Am I not smart enough?... *[Comes closer to him]* Or is there someone else?

BUCEPHALUS There's no one else, it's not about that...

BEATRICE We are not so different, you and I... *[He surrenders to her touch which sends shivers down his body]*

BUCEPHALUS Beatrice, you don't know me.

BEATRICE I can see through your words, you don't have to hide, don't be afraid.

BUCEPHALUS *[Stiffens]* I am not afraid. *[Turns away from her]*

BEATRICE *[Taking his hand and putting it against her chest]* Can you feel it? It's alive and beating fast, just like you. I will teach you.

BUCEPHALUS I can't. What I used to be... it isn't... I'm changed now.

BEATRICE You're wrong!

BUCEPHALUS *[In anger]* You don't know what I was!

BEATRICE It doesn't scare me! Only those who have killed to survive know anything about being human. There is so much power in being without regret. *[Comes closer]* We are the same. *[Touches his face]* Don't try to pretend. This is your true wild nature. No suit can hide that. I can see it right in front of me. *[Caressing and kissing his face]* You were meant to survive, like me.

BUCEPHALUS I can't. It's dead.

BEATRICE It never dies. Let it burst out. Let the horse... come to me. *[BUCEPHALUS, torn between letting go and staying in control, slowly surrenders to her]*

BUCEPHALUS No. Stop, Beatrice, please. I can't. I can't. *[All of a sudden he gives in and grabs her passionately. She recoils momentarily before allowing herself to be swept along. In the heat of the moment a lamp is knocked to the floor casting a large shadow of a horse across the wall. BUCEPHALUS scares and makes an unusual sound. His body stiffens again, he freezes. BEATRICE touches him] Stay away! [Clenching his teeth]*

BEATRICE Don't be afraid, look! It's you! *[She touches him again, the shadow grows to cover almost the entire room. An uncontrollable force bursts out of BUCEPHALUS, he fends off BEATRICE, knocking her to the ground]*

BUCEPHALUS No, I said! No! I won't! I'm no murderer! *[The shadow slips away. BUCEPHALUS, stunned, tries to approach BEATRICE] Beatrice!*

BEATRICE *[Overwhelmed] Stay away from me, liar! Liar! Liar! [She throws the book in rage and exits. BUCEPHALUS remains, alone]*

**In parallel: 10C. The inn.**

EBEN What am I supposed to do?

LEVEL Move your pawn from B7 otherwise you lose.

EBEN Maybe I should go and talk to her? Or write to her? You can tell me what to write...

LEVEL Just give her time.

EBEN *[Playing distractedly]* If she leaves me I'm done.

LEVEL Checkmate.

- EBEN            Damn! That horse. If he touches her... *[He stands and paces restlessly around the room before stopping in front of the order nailed to the door. He reads it again]*
- LEVEL           Another game?
- EBEN            *[Distracted]* Fine. *[LEVEL starts organising the chess pieces on the board]* Listen Level, I love her. I truly love her. When I first laid eyes on her at the funeral, I knew this was the woman for me. How she stood there, tall, an unbreakable woman. If she says yes, I'm marrying her today! I'll do anything for her! This is killing me. *[Returns to his seat]*
- LEVEL           *[Pause]* You want to be white or black?
- EBEN            *[Looks at the board]* Black.

### **11. The survivor's speech [LANDLADY].**

Only when a person's hungry is their true nature revealed. Who would share their last crumb with a stranger, and who would be the one to survive. Human nature can only be revealed when the sentence is struck; life, or death. Generous truly are them that give when they have nothing more to give. Compassionate are they who are in want of compassion, yet find the strength to give it to others. Those bleeding hearts are the greatest victims of all. In winter, at dusk, that's when Man's true nature comes to light; When paces hasten and raincoats are buttoned all the way up to the collar, then it's every man for himself. Human nature is to live. To survive. Always. All the rest is by the by.

### **12. BUCEPHALUS's room, later that evening.**

*[The room is untidy. BUCEPHALUS stands silently at the desk. LEVEL enters abruptly]*

LEVEL Am I interrupting?

BUCEPHALUS *[Silent]* ...no.

LEVEL I feel we might have started out on the wrong foot - *[Looks around]* What happened here? *[BUCEPHALUS doesn't answer]* Listen, I came to tell you that... she's already spoken for.

BUCEPHALUS Who?

LEVEL Beatrice. Eben has intentions, you see? Don't let her spin you 'round her finger too. He's her best chance. He's already proposed, so-

BUCEPHALUS She will do as she pleases.

LEVEL Look, what do I know... this story can go different ways... *[Suddenly distracted]* What's that? *[Points to the pages on BUCEPHALUS's desk]*

BUCEPHALUS These are...

LEVEL *[Reads]* "Riding to the end of the world", *[Triumphant]* so you are writing your memoirs!

BUCEPHALUS Not exactly, just some notes.

LEVEL You can call it whatever you like... *[Draws closer, mischievously]* but riding alongside a narcissistic megalomaniac hothead who believes he's going to conquer the world is definitely memorable.

BUCEPHALUS He was the most decent human being I have ever known, with a war ethic-

LEVEL "War ethic", like there is such a thing.

BUCEPHALUS You didn't see the things I saw. I would follow him without hesitation, and that remains as true today as it was then.

LEVEL Only a madman goes to the front a second time, having survived the first.

BUCEPHALUS Imagine following a fearless leader who fights with his sword in one hand and a flag in the other so that his soldiers may see him from every corner of the battlefield, their leader, fighting alongside them. We were ready to die a hundred times for him.

LEVEL Pretty words for the trail of corpses you left behind.

BUCEPHALUS An iron foe should be dealt a hand of steel. We brought education and progress, a new dawn to the darkest places. For some, liberation must come by force.

LEVEL And some don't need to be liberated at all. She's confused enough as she is. Good night.

*[On his way out mischievously snatches some pages from the desk. BUCEPHALUS, distracted, does not notice. LEVEL is evidently contented as he leaves the room with his handiwork, then jots some notes in his notebook. BUCEPHALUS stays in the room. A faint knock is heard at the door. NICOLAS enters hesitantly, his hand in his pocket. As BUCEPHALUS sees the child his expression softens]*

BUCEPHALUS Child, it is you. Is everything in order? *[NICOLAS looks around the room, still hesitant]*  
I see. I don't feel like talking sometimes either. Humans can be difficult to comprehend.

*[BUCEPHALUS sighs, closes his eyes perhaps. NICOLAS approaches and touches BUCEPHALUS gently on the shoulder. BUCEPHALUS looks up. NICOLAS takes out a small bundle of grass from his pocket and hands it to BUCEPHALUS]*

BUCEPHALUS What is this?

NICOLAS I picked it for you.

BUCEPHALUS *[Looks at the grass, astonished]* Child, I am not - *[He suddenly loosens]* thank you.  
*[Taking the grass]* Thank you.

*[NICOLAS looks at his own feet then suddenly runs out]*

### **13. The seductress's speech [BEATRICE].**

A person alone is an empty vessel. A hollow superfluous ventilator. Only the Other's gaze inspires the body to come to life. The ear-lobe takes form through a whisper; the tongue through confessions of love. The yearning look invents the eyeball reflected within it, the touch of the hand draws the very curves of the body in its craving for another, so as to remember it exists in itself. That it is not alone. There are others like it. Others that can see it, feel it, caress it, taste it. Every rib cage is a gaping abyss waiting to be filled with love.

### **14. The inn, night.**

*[In the middle of the night, a loud knocking is heard at the gate. The LANDLADY enters]*

SOLDIER *[From outside]* Open up!

LANDLADY Who's there?

SOLDIER *[Further knocking]* Open up in the name of the law. Open up.

LANDLADY Just a minute. Damn it... *[Calls]* Nicolas! Na, he's stone deaf.

SOLDIER *[Continued knocking]* Open up!

LANDLADY Just a minute! *[Calls]* Nicolas! Nicolas! *[NICOLAS enters]* Open the door! Hurry up!

*[NICOLAS leaves to open the gate. LEVEL enters, evidently drunk]*

LEVEL What's all the turmoil?

*[NICOLAS returns with the SOLDIER who storms in behind him, nervous and agitated]*

SOLDIER What took you so long?

LEVEL It's the middle of the night.

SOLDIER Some things can't wait. Are you the owners?

LEVEL She is. *[Points at the LANDLADY]*

SOLDIER *[To her]* Fine. Your inn has received a closing order. You need to leave immediately!

LEVEL What do you mean "leave", she was born in this place!

SOLDIER New regulations for the enforcement of Directive 106.

LANDLADY What's Directive 106?

SOLDIER *[Points to the paper nailed to the door]* A directive ordering the nationalisation of civilian property, can't you people read? *[Reads it aloud slowly]* "Porcelain, oil and animals."

LANDLADY Yes, but-

SOLDIER But! But! Disobedience will carry severe consequences. You have failed to deliver the animal you own to the municipal headquarters!

LANDLADY *[Baffled]* I own no animal.

SOLDIER        *[Reads from his papers]* The "Halved Knight" Inn: one horse.

LANDLADY      There aren't any horses here.

SOLDIER        There are. It's written.

LEVEL          *[Suddenly understands]* Dr. Bucephalus.

SOLDIER        Huh?

LEVEL          Dr. Bucephalus resides here, he's also a horse –

SOLDIER        Well, now we're getting somewhere. You need to give up the beast, otherwise we shut you down. Is that clear?

LEVEL          He's not a beast, he's a lawyer and a horse, and a Dr. –

SOLDIER        Quiet! *[Hands the LANDLADY a form]* Sign here to confirm your horse is now property of the armed forces.

LANDLADY      I can't. *[Gives him back the form]*

SOLDIER        What's that?

LANDLADY      The horse is not mine.

SOLDIER        So whose is it? *[To LEVEL]* Whose is it? *[To the LANDLADY]* Now pay attention, I have three more houses to visit tonight, so don't get clever with me, whose is it?

LANDLADY      He is his own.

SOLDIER        Are you joking? *[Grabs her]*

LEVEL          Leave her be.

SOLDIER *[Pulls the rifle on LEVEL]* Stay out of it. *[To the LANDLADY]* The horse goes. Now sign it!

LANDLADY He's not mine, so I'm not signing.

SOLDIER Shut your mouth and sign, or I'll break your teeth, every last one of them.

LANDLADY Won't help you, 'cos with or without teeth, I'm not signing.

SOLDIER Pity. *[Viciously kicks her in her good leg, she falls to the ground]* Maybe now you'll reconsider.

LANDLADY *[Collecting herself. Mutters]* Over my dead body. *[The SOLDIER, still holding The LANDLADY, flies into a rage]*

SOLDIER Then let's see how your son feels about it... *[Approaches NICOLAS]*

LANDLADY No!

LEVEL He's not her son, leave him alone. Wait, wait... *[To NICOLAS]* Child, go and fetch him. Come on, hurry! *[NICOLAS leaves for BUCEPHALUS. To the SOLDIER]* Here, he went to fetch him, let her go. Please.

SOLDIER I'll let her go when I see him!

*[LEVEL looks at the LANDLADY broken heartedly. Her face betrays nothing though her pain is evident, but her disgust with the situation leaves no room for displays of weakness. A riled BUCEPHALUS enters along with NICOLAS, who is dragging him by his coat]*

BUCEPHALUS What happened? The child didn't say –

LEVEL There he is.

SOLDIER Are you a horse?

BUCEPHALUS Sir, I am Dr. Bucephalus, Advocate.

*[The SOLDIER violently drops the LANDLADY to the floor. LEVEL goes to help her up]*

SOLDIER Are you - a horse?

BUCEPHALUS Well...

SOLDIER Horse or not?

LEVEL He's a horse!

SOLDIER Good, *[Points at the LANDLADY]* and she is your owner?

BUCEPHALUS No.

SOLDIER *[Comes closer, threateningly]* Don't lie to me!

BUCEPHALUS I have no owner, I am... my own.

SOLDIER *[Gazes at him, thinking, while trying to fill-in the forms]* Fine. So, eh... you are the owner of the horse which is... you?

BUCEPHALUS You may say so.

SOLDIER Well. *[Changes something in his form and hands it over to BUCEPHALUS]* Sign here.

BUCEPHALUS *[Taking out a document from his pocket]* Soldier, Sir, this must be a misunderstanding. I am an advocate in the service of the state, *[Gives him the document]* and as you may know I am therefore not obliged to join the army. Amendment to auxiliary order no. 35 –

SOLDIER *[Ignores the document]* Listen to me carefully, tomorrow morning you can tell the judge all about your amendments. Now sign. Otherwise I have a closing order for this place.

LANDLADY I spit on that order.

SOLDIER Shut it. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* Are you signing or not?

BUCEPHALUS *[Takes the order and reads it. To the SOLDIER]* Sometimes "the greatest wisdom is knowing when to obey." *[Signs the order]*

SOLDIER Finally some sense, straight from the horse's mouth. *[Restrains BUCEPHALUS]* You are under arrest for failing to transfer ownership of the horse which is... eh *[Looks at the form]* yourself, into the hands of the state. Now, let's go.

BUCEPHALUS May I take a few things with me before we go?

SOLDIER *[Thinks for a moment. After all, BUCEPHALUS has made a positive impression]* Promptly.

BUCEPHALUS *[To the LANDLADY]* I'm so sorry it came down to this. Tomorrow when I see the judge...

SOLDIER Promptly I said! *[BUCEPHALUS leaves for his things]*

LANDLADY Go with him, child. *[NICOLAS follows him]* May God be with him.

LEVEL When a person boards a ship they ought to pray once, when they go to war – twice, and when they go to court – three times, at least.

SOLDIER You'd be wise to pray too. *[Rips the order from the door]* We're not done with you yet. *[Leaves]*

**15. BUCEPHALUS's room.**

*[BUCEPHALUS packs his things. NICOLAS stands beside him looking at him pack]*

NICOLAS        Are you afraid?

BUCEPHALUS    Sometimes.

NICOLAS        But you're so tall.

BUCEPHALUS    So?

NICOLAS        *[Pause]* Sometimes I'm afraid the morning will never come. *[Pause]* What are you afraid of?

BUCEPHALUS    *[Stops packing]* Of things that have no name.

NICOLAS        *[Looks about him]* Why are you taking these books with you?

BUCEPHALUS    When I read them I am reminded some things cannot be taken away from you.

NICOLAS        *[Pause]* The books tell you that?

BUCEPHALUS    Yes, there are books that set us free.

NICOLAS        *[Pause]* Will you come back?

BUCEPHALUS    Yes.

NICOLAS        I have a secret. *[Nears BUCEPHALUS]* When I grow up I'll be a horse.

**16. The inn, later that night.**

*[Everyone's gone, except for the LANDLADY sitting in the main hall, her head between her hands. BEATRICE enters to stand at the edge of the room. She watches The LANDLADY in silence]*

BEATRICE        Eh...

LANDLADY        They took him. *[Silence. BEATRICE stays a moment, then exits. NICOLAS enters from outside and looks at The LANDLADY expectantly]* Locked the gate? *[He nods]* Then it's done. Let's go to sleep. *[He remains still]* In the end, after it's all over, either you have something, or you don't. *[Stands up slowly and stiffly]* One day the war will end, people tend to forget that. But I don't *[Knocks on her wooden leg]* All wars end, only thing that matters is who's left standing. Come here. I want to show you something. *[Takes NICOLAS to the corner of the room]* Whatever happens, remember there's something here for you too. *[Points at a loose wooden plank]* Pick it up. *[NICOLAS lifts the plank and looks underneath. She takes out a bundle of paper money from a hidden pocket and stashes it in the hole]* See? We're lucky he didn't take that too. Now close it. *[NICOLAS closes it]* You're the only one I trust, child. Alright? *[NICOLAS looks at her]* For god's sake child, say yes or no.

NICOLAS        Yes.

LANDLADY        And if... if they ever get here, are you listening? You go inside and close it behind you, and only after it's been quiet longer than you can bear, then and only then you come out. Clear? *[He nods. She sighs]* Remember, people are nothing but trouble. Now to bed. Tonight will be quiet.

**17. The JUDGE's speech.**

Law is blind. Thus at the summit of every fat pile of legal books must sit a judge; whose crown reaches the lofty heights of the gates of justice; whose eyes are open and heart benevolent. Books cannot read those wise words written in blood. They cannot hear the victims' accounts. They cannot caress the head of a child with a comforting hand. Therefore shall I be their ear – eye - heart, and with a letter-opener razor-sharp, browse the fine pages of these books of law. I shall read them again and again, and study the mistakes we'll forever be making.

**18. In the prison cell.**

*[PRISONER A, more senior, is lying on the bench. PRISONER B is standing, restless. BUCEPHALUS enters, holding some books. The door closes behind him. It is clear he is in unfamiliar territory]*

PRISONER A     *[Lying face away from the entrance]* What was that?

PRISONER B     That's, eh... *[Staring at BUCEPHALUS]*

PRISONER A     What?

PRISONER B     Em... *[Mimes something. PRISONER A doesn't understand]* Come on! *[Angrily]* That's the horse they talked about...

*[Silence]*

PRISONER A     Does he have cigarettes?

BUCEPHALUS    I don't smoke.

*[Silence]*

PRISONER A     Cards then?

PRISONER B It's a horse!

PRISONER A Does he have them or not?

*[PRISONER B looks to BUCEPHALUS, who shakes his head in negation]*

PRISONER B Not.

PRISONER A Pity.

*[Silence. PRISONER A whistles. BUCEPHALUS approaches the one vacant bunk]*

PRISONER B Hey! Hey! [Stops him] What are you doing? You don't sleep here.

BUCEPHALUS Why?

PRISONER B *[To PRISONER A]* He's not sleeping here.

PRISONER A What's the problem?

PRISONER B *[To PRISONER A, quietly]* I'm not bunking with a horse.

PRISONER A What's wrong with that?

PRISONER B I'm calling him... *[Turns to the door]*

PRISONER A You're not calling anybody.

PRISONER B I'm not sleeping with him. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* What are you looking at?

BUCEPHALUS Nothing.

PRISONER B Don't piss me off!

PRISONER A Leave him alone.

PRISONER B No. No. He's not staying here. I don't bunk with animals. I'm calling him... guard!

PRISONER A Shut up I said!

BUCEPHALUS *[To PRISONER B]* It's only for one night.

PRISONER B Stay away, you stink.

*[BUCEPHALUS retreats, and while still standing slowly takes out one of his books and starts reading]*

PRISONER A *[Lights up]* Only one night?

BUCEPHALUS There was a mistake, tomorrow it will be rectified. I don't need a bed.

PRISONER A *[Getting curious]* What mistake?

BUCEPHALUS Draft order.

PRISONER A *[Sits]* Are you a pacifist?

BUCEPHALUS Absolutely not.

PRISONER A But they came for you and you didn't go!

BUCEPHALUS Yes.

PRISONER A That's what matters! Long live the struggle!

BUCEPHALUS *[Lowering the book]* You are not listening, there was a mistake.

PRISONER A Doesn't matter, in here we're all the same.

PRISONER B *[Angrily]* Bullshit! I'm not even supposed to be here, and now they're bringing in animals!

PRISONER A Everyone does his bit. *[Points at PRISONER B]* This one was selling military property on the black market. Didn't even realise he was doing it for the struggle.

PRISONER B I was set up I'm telling you.

PRISONER A Did you not sell your gun?

PRISONER B I sold what they gave me. It was mine.

BUCEPHALUS The arms, and the soldiers they are entrusted to, are both military property.

PRISONER B What are you now, a lawyer?

BUCEPHALUS I am.

PRISONER B Ah! I'm only here because of your kind!

BUCEPHALUS You are here because you have committed theft.

PRISONER B Who's a thief?

BUCEPHALUS Ignorantia legis non excusat.

PRISONER B What's that?

BUCEPHALUS Not knowing the law, does not redeem-

PRISONER B Shut your pie hole or I cut you-

BUCEPHALUS If you break the law, there is a price to pay.

PRISONER B I'll give you a price to pay! *[Pulls a knife from his shoe and jumps BUCEPHALUS. PRISONER A hurls himself over to try to separate them but BUCEPHALUS, his wild instincts awoken, throws PRISONER B to the wall with incredible force. Silence]*

PRISONER A Wha-?

BUCEPHALUS *[Frightened by his own reaction, he approaches PRISONER B]* I didn't mean... *[PRISONER B recoils]*

PRISONER B Stay away! *[To PRISONER A]* He's a bloody animal. He broke my arm. *[PRISONER A picks up the knife and puts it in his own shoe]* Now you just wait...

BUCEPHALUS *[Rattled. To PRISONER A]* He attacked me with a knife... I wasn't...

PRISONER B Damn animal! He broke my arm. I'm gonna call-

PRISONER A *[Closing in on PRISONER B]* You're not calling anyone! Understand?

PRISONER B But-

PRISONER A Shut up right now, *[Takes out the knife]* or you won't have a tongue.

PRISONER B *[Whining]* He broke my arm!

PRISONER A *[Tosses him a blanket]* Dress it. *[PRISONER B tends to his broken arm, whining to himself while stealing glances at BUCEPHALUS. PRISONER A approaches BUCEPHALUS]* That was very impressive.

BUCEPHALUS *[Pushes him away]* It was self-defence.

PRISONER B See that? There he goes again!

PRISONER A *[Calming BUCEPHALUS down]* On the contrary. *[Lowers his voice]* We need exactly ehh... something... like you, to step up the struggle...

BUCEPHALUS *[Restless]* What struggle?

PRISONER A Against the system. Everyone in here is part of the struggle. We're all the same.

BUCEPHALUS You are a parasite and that one's a thief - we have nothing in common.

PRISONER A Call us what you like, the bottom line is we're still sitting in the same cell. You have to understand, they're trying to take advantage of us and we must resist if we want to protect ourselves.

BUCEPHALUS The law is protecting us.

PRISONER A The law has put you here! Look around, the law is only there to serve the economic systems subjugating us to a predetermined fate! We're being sent to die in a war just so someone can make a profit. Someone always makes a profit. We must resist, in force.

BUCEPHALUS Obedience is the basis of human society.

PRISONER B A horse tells us how to be human.

PRISONER A Shut up! *[To BUCEPHALUS]* Don't you get it? To be human is to be alive.

BUCEPHALUS A vegetable is alive. More is needed to become human.

PRISONER A If they treat you like an animal you have no choice. Do you prefer being military property? They use whatever they can. Have you ever seen a person starve? There's nothing human about that.

BUCEPHALUS No one wants war, but sometimes there is no choice. The enemy is barbaric.

PRISONER A Who isn't barbaric? War is barbaric... don't you get it? There's no food all along the frontier. Nothing. I watched a man go literally insane with hunger. *[Lowers his voice]* If you obey the law, you become cannon-fodder, or worse, just fodder... they make what they want out of you.

BUCEPHALUS It is this kind of thinking that revokes any hope for humankind.

PRISONER A But you're not listening!

PRISONER B *[To PRISONER A]* What are you talking with him for, can't you see he's an animal?!

PRISONER A See? That's how much your opinions matter. If they decide you're an animal, you'll end-up like an animal and nothing in the world will change it! Now listen, what you've just done here, do the same out there. Be a horse! And when they come for you kick with everything you have, or do... I don't know what - just as long as you resist!

BUCEPHALUS I believe in Mankind.

PRISONER A *[Bitterly]* And I know him.

### **19. PRISONERS' speech [the anarchistic and the egoistic].**

Every border will eventually be crossed. Every law is born out of a breach. Only the blood of those who resist boils warm in their veins; to adapt is to degenerate. To be silent is to approve; to stand by is disgraceful collaboration. Only struggle - the constant ruthless grind into indistinguishable atomised shards - is the true meaning of the word Life.

My only want is to wake up tomorrow morning. *[Pause]* To wash my face with cold water. To eat something. And then the world and beyond. But if you fail to wake up in the morning, why care for all the rest?

### **20. At the court.**

*[The JUDGE is busy with the papers in front of him and stays fixed on his task as EBEN and BUCEPHALUS enter the court]*

JUDGE What is it about? Please be brief.

- EBEN Your honour, the matter concerns the emergency orders.
- JUDGE Again? On and on with these orders. I have 10 more files to handle before lunch. *[Looks up and recognises BUCEPHALUS]* Dr. Bucephalus, what a surprise. I'd heard you were dispatched to our region. I am, if I may say, a great admirer of yours. To think of all you have accomplished. Believe me, if we only had an Alexander the Great here with us now, things would be different. Well, *[Rubbing his hands together]* what do we- just a moment. *[Calling]* Tell them outside there is a delay. *[Back to BUCEPHALUS]* Right then, what is the matter at hand?
- EBEN Your honour, I am the prosecutor...
- JUDGE You? *[Inspects them both with a grin]* Go ahead. Let's hear it.
- EBEN Dr. Bucephalus here, was ordered to transfer ownership of Bucephalus - the horse - to the army.
- JUDGE Pardon?
- EBEN Your honour, *[Hands him a form]* emergency directive 106: Nationalisation of civilian property. All animals across the region have been nationalised as part of the war effort. *[The JUDGE inspects the form]* According to the veterinary department register, Dr. Bucephalus is a horse and therefore required to report to the shipment leaving today for the front.
- BUCEPHALUS Are you finished? *[EBEN nods]* Your honour, Amendment to auxiliary directive 35: "Compulsory enlistment does not apply to citizens employed by the Attorney General." And since the court acknowledges me being an advocate, I am to be exempted from compulsory enlistment.

EBEN           Your honour, releasing him will create a precedent enabling any horse owner to claim their horse is "exceptional" too. The emergency orders explicitly demand handing over all horses to the army.

BUCEPHALUS   The Civil Rights Act, paragraph C: "Basic human rights regarding the freedom of any citizen must be maintained even in times of crisis"

EBEN           My esteemed colleague is asking the court to put his own personal freedom above the security of the state. We are at war, your honour, and if I am not mistaken it was Alexander the Great who said: "In the conduct of one, lies the fate of all." First and foremost, he is a horse.

JUDGE          Now, hold on! *[Pause]* What essentially makes him a horse?

EBEN           *[Confused]* According to the veterinary registry-

JUDGE          Enough with the veterinary! I know a few people who should be sent there way ahead of him, who is without doubt more humane than most people I know. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* Dr. Bucephalus, if I may make a suggestion: The court - exceptionally and beyond the letter of the law - can sign an official affidavit stating that, despite past circumstances, and in light of changes thereof, it finds today that you are no longer a horse.

*[A shiver runs up BUCEPHALUS's spine]*

EBEN           Your honour, this is outrageous!

JUDGE          Listen here... what was your name again?

EBEN           Eben Stone, Officer of the Military Attorney General.

JUDGE          Look here Eben, I am asking you to momentarily shut it. *[To BUCEPHALUS]* Well?

*[Silence]*

BUCEPHALUS No.

JUDGE What do you mean?

BUCEPHALUS It is not the truth.

JUDGE Think about it reasonably, Dr., what is it that still makes you a horse? Consider the current situation a chance to legally acknowledge what has evolved naturally. You are no longer a horse, that is quite evident, and the court would be happy to sign an affidavit stating so.

EBEN Your honour, he is a horse to all intents and purposes, and nothing can change it.

JUDGE *[Irritated]* He's-not-a-horse! Enough! Look at him!

BUCEPHALUS Your honour, *[Hesitatingly, as though the words he says are new to him]* but, I am a horse.

EBEN *[Triumphantly]* There you are!

JUDGE Oh nonsense - why insist just for the sake of it?

BUCEPHALUS *[Turning away]* You are demanding the impossible. To forget I've ever been. To disappear and then reappear hollow. I cannot. I am a horse.

EBEN Your honour, the horse has made up his mind. Every person's liberty is only as valid as his obedience to the law, not because it is coerced upon him but because he chooses it.

JUDGE The law... the law... the law in its egalitarian reign forbids the stealing of bread from the rich exactly as it does from the poor. *[Short pause]* So, gentlemen, now that all arguments have been presented, the court finds to rule that the horse known as "Dr. Bucephalus" will be drafted into the military in the capacity of a

warhorse. Valid as of now, the ownership of the horse Bucephalus is hereby transferred from the civilian Bucephalus to the army. Case closed. Take him away.

### **21. The horse's speech.**

I am being drafted as a horse, which is appropriate. I am a horse. The first words I made sense of were like a flash in the dark. In a split second, the sugarcane became "Sweet". Then I discovered the meaning of the word "war", after which came only void. No thought. Only the will to live. The jaws lock-on. Charge.

I shall never let go of the words I have learned, read, that have carved themselves into my memory. They fear I may not obey, they fear having to pull my bridle until it tears the skin around my mouth; until I foam in defiance; they fear I will kill again. But I was tamed. I am an animal no more though neither am I human.

*[Throughout the monologue BUCEPHALUS's shadow continues to grow]*

### **22. Ruins of the inn, dusk.**

*[LEVEL sits in silence, frozen. The place is ruined. On the last table left intact stands a half empty bottle. The room is dark with objects scattered all over. EBEN enters].*

LEVEL            *[Raises his head]* What have you done? *[EBEN doesn't understand]* They took him.

EBEN            I know.

LEVEL            The soldiers, it was terrible... they hurt the madam, broke everything...

EBEN            I didn't know. I'm sorry.

LEVEL            You didn't have to do it.

EBEN I had no choice. It was my duty.

LEVEL They took everything, don't you understand! Behind our backs, just like that...

EBEN *[Baffled]* Behind your backs?

LEVEL What did she ever do to you? You shouldn't have told...

EBEN Told what?

*[LEVEL sighs, shaking his head, BEATRICE enters]*

BEATRICE Where is he?

EBEN Sent to the frontier. Like you said, no one is above the law.

BEATRICE Is that why you came?

EBEN No, I came to tell you everything is taken care of. The inn won't be shut down.

BEATRICE You are all the same.

EBEN *[To LEVEL]* I'm sorry. Tell it to Madam. *[Turns to leave]*

BEATRICE You must be happy he's gone. *[EBEN stops and returns]*

EBEN I don't know *[Turns to leave but stops again]* But I do know that a tamed horse can never be its own master.

BEATRICE Unlike yourself?

EBEN What do you want?

BEATRICE Still, he was better than you.

EBEN Oh really?

BEATRICE He had ideals.

EBEN He's a horse!

BEATRICE That's worth a thousand of you.

EBEN Maybe.

BEATRICE Definitely! *[Spits in his face]*

EBEN And you must be so proud of yourself.

BEATRICE I've nothing to be ashamed of.

EBEN Neither do I. I wasn't the one who reported the horse. Maybe someone else wanted him gone.

BEATRICE Who would want that?

EBEN You tell me.

BEATRICE You... *[Suddenly with rage]* you'll never be like him! *[Moving closer to EBEN]* I hate you. I always hated you. I'll never marry you. There's nothing to love about you! *[Throws her ring at his feet and exits, passing NICOLAS who is just on his way in]*

EBEN *[To LEVEL]* I'm sorry. *[Notices NICOLAS]* I won't bother you anymore.

*[EBEN leaves]*

LEVEL *[Still sitting, to NICOLAS]* I knew the shadow would bring bad luck. What have we done?

*[Takes the bottle and exits. NICOLAS looks around the ravaged room before beginning to organise the scattered chairs. As he does so, he accidentally steps on BEATRICE's ring. He picks it up and looks at it,*

*hesitates, then goes to the hiding place and places the ring inside. He returns to organising the room as the LANDLADY enters. She limps over to the hiding place]*

LANDLADY      Look what they did. *[Opens the hiding place]* At least everything is still here. *[Notices the ring]* What's this? *[NICOLAS looks at her silently]* Come here, what's this? Where did you get it? *[NICOLAS approaches her and looks from the ring to the LANDLADY. She slaps him]* We are neck deep in trouble as it is, don't you ever make me regret taking you in. Understand? *[NICOLAS looks at her]* Go to your room. *[NICOLAS looks at her and exits. She collapses onto a nearby chair and begins to cry].*

### **23. Man's speech [The COOK].**

My grandmother used to say the heavenly court only judges you for what you've done, not for what you wanted to've done. And that on judgement day all good intentions go to hell. She said it so every night before bed you'd have to ask yourself if you added anything to your list today. 'Cos even if you just peel an onion for somebody else so they don't have to cry, you might've done that one good deed enough so that, at the end of the day, the scales of justice will tilt in your favour. Then you can sleep another night in peace.

### **24. The border. The horse and the COOK.**

*[The COOK is slowly peeling a small turnip. BUCEPHALUS enters]*

COOK            What do you want?

BUCEPHALUS   I was sent here. *[Hands him the form]*

COOK            What for?

BUCEPHALUS "You don't always need to have an interest in war, sometimes it's war that has an interest in you."

COOK Alright. *[Reads the form]* Eh... this yours?

BUCEPHALUS Yes.

COOK Are you a horse?

BUCEPHALUS Yes, *[With pathos]* I Bucephalus, Alexander the Great's horse, shall gallop the battlefields once more.

COOK *[Chuckles]* When was the last time you saw horses on the battlefield? *[Reads the form again, to himself]* a horse... *[Turns to pick up a knife]*

BUCEPHALUS Is there a problem?

COOK You sure this is yours?

BUCEPHALUS Yes.

COOK Well. Stand here.

*[BUCEPHALUS stands aside looking at the COOK who has taken an onion and begun slicing it]*

BUCEPHALUS Is this where you go to the front?

COOK From here you go nowhere. *[BUCEPHALUS is baffled, the COOK softens]* From here you go only to the mess hall. *[Hesitates]* Show me that again. *[Takes the form and reads it again]* God damnit.

BUCEPHALUS What is the problem?

COOK *[Gives him a plate with some onion on it]* Here, eat that.

BUCEPHALUS Thank you, I am not hungry. *[The COOK turns away from him angrily]* Will it take much longer?

COOK I wouldn't ask that if I were you. *[BUCEPHALUS is about to say something, but the COOK shushes him]* Listen, I'm not used to it being talkative, so if you could just shut it. *[Sharpens his knife]*

BUCEPHALUS Not used to what being talkative?

COOK The food I have to serve!

BUCEPHALUS Which food? What are you talking about?

COOK Damn it, oh, God damn it, damn it!

BUCEPHALUS Tell me what's going on! I deserve to know-

COOK You wanna know?! Fine! Type A supplies - guns. Type B supplies - medical equipment. And Type C supplies - is food. It says here type C! *[BUCEPHALUS starts realising]* Aaah! Damn it! Why'd you have to ask!

BUCEPHALUS Is that what it says? *[Takes the form]*

COOK Yeah, couldn't you just shut up? What am I gonna do now?! What-am-I-gonna-do? I... you should know that every animal, before I... I feed her... so she wouldn't feel... *[Strives to find the words]* so she wouldn't know... when an animal's scared her blood poisons. And then the flesh is sour. But you just had to ask didn't you. What am I gonna do now?! *[Desperately]* Damn it, why did he have to come to me?

BUCEPHALUS I... they sent me here...

COOK Damn it! *[Pause]* Listen, if I read what's in this paper you're done for, and if I don't read it I'm done for, understand?

BUCEPHALUS *[Short pause]* Yes.

COOK Now pay attention, I am not telling you what to do, but do you see this knife?  
*[Points the knife at BUCEPHALUS]* If you don't disappear right now I'm gonna have to use it. *[A shiver runs up BUCEPHALUS's spine]*

BUCEPHALUS I can't go.

COOK Go? Run! *[Whispers urgently]* You idiot, run! *[BUCEPHALUS stays put]* Look, I'm s'posed to read and obey. The next supplies only comes three weeks from now and I can't be picky. I've one hundred twenty soldiers outside and I can't hold 'em any longer, so do me a favour and get lost.

BUCEPHALUS *[BUCEPHALUS finally notices the shadow which up to this point has been sneaking behind him. He stares at it. His voice breaks]* But I can't.

COOK I'm begging you!

BUCEPHALUS *[Pleading]* I must stay.

COOK Die we must, to live is up to you!

BUCEPHALUS Dura lex, sed lex - the law is hard, but it is the law.

COOK You don't get it! Non ut edam vivo, sed ut vivam edo!

BUCEPHALUS What is it?

COOK It's Latin for "don't live to eat, eat to live."

BUCEPHALUS I understood, only I've never heard it before. Whose is it?

COOK My grandmother's, how should I know. *[BUCEPHALUS looks at him fiercely]* It's from a song she'd sing to me when I refused to eat.

BUCEPHALUS *[Repeats to himself]* "Non ut edam vivo, sed ut vivam edo". It's part of a poem. How does it continue?

COOK I don't remember... doesn't matter, look, you need to disappear right now. *[Peeps outside]*

BUCEPHALUS I never learnt a poem by heart... *[His gaze is still fixed on the shadow. He pauses, slowly coming to a realisation]* Everything is backwards... everything... I never learnt a poem... no way out... I... like a Gordian knot...

COOK Like what?

BUCEPHALUS Gordian knot. Many years ago, King Midas created a knot impossible to untangle. It was said only he who untangles that knot could conquer Asia.

COOK God in heaven, what do I care about Asia now?

BUCEPHALUS When we arrived at Frigya, Alexander asked for the knot. He was so stubborn. It was a mass of entangled ropes with no beginning and no end. I remember he looked at it for a short moment then all of a sudden drew his sword and cut it apart in one swipe, like that! People rebelled - said he cheated! *[Pause]* But he, he went on to conquer Asia anyway.

COOK What are all these stories about, what the hell do you want from me?

BUCEPHALUS Some knots can only be untangled one way. Give me the knife.

## **25. The border. EBEN and the COOK.**

*[EBEN sits as the COOK serves him a plate of food. The COOK looks at him hesitantly, as though hiding something]*

COOK If I only knew you was coming, Sir, I'd have prepared something in advance.

EBEN Never mind.

COOK We don't have a lot, and no one said there'd be visitors...

EBEN I prefer to keep it discreet. *[Eats]* Not bad.

COOK Thank you Sir.

EBEN I'm looking for someone and I need your help. But it must stay between us, understood soldier?

COOK Yes Sir.

EBEN Good. *[Lowering his voice]* I am looking for a horse by the name of Dr. Bucephalus.

COOK *[Gulps]* A horse?

EBEN Yes. I must find him. You understand?

COOK Yes.

EBEN So I need you to think really hard.

COOK A horse, a horse... No, I don't remember nothing...

EBEN *[More threateningly]* Soldier, I don't appreciate being lied to so don't try me! I know a horse arrived here.

COOK A horse. Now that you say it like that, maybe he was here.

EBEN And where is he now?

COOK Where is he...? Where is he...

EBEN *[Grabs the COOK's head and forces it down to his plate]* Listen soldier, I know a delivery of horses was sent here from the rear, it's all registered. So start talking!

COOK There weren't any "horses", there was just one horse. One horse for one hundred twenty soldiers!

EBEN *[Loosening his grip]* And what happened to it?

COOK Eh... he ran out.

EBEN What do you mean ran out? Where's the horse? *[Tightens his grip and shoves food from his plate into the COOK's mouth]* Now listen, if you don't tell me now where I can find that horse, I'll personally make sure you are the last soldier to return home. Understand? *[The COOK nods. EBEN releases him]* Where's the horse?

COOK We finished it. For three months we didn't get any supplies. We ate anything we could cook. And then anything we couldn't cook. Dogs. Rats. Anything. And then that ran out too... some even ate their leather belts. And then when we finally got some supplies... that was that... we ate it all.

EBEN Ate?

COOK Yes.

EBEN *[A shadow passes along the wall. EBEN gulps]* All of it?

COOK Yes

EBEN Nothing was left?

**26. The inn, dusk, some time later.**

*[LEVEL is teaching NICOLAS Chess. The LANDLADY slices bread]*

LEVEL           No no no. Not like that! Come on child, you can't just move it wherever you want. Remember there are rules. The horse can only move two forward and one to the side. Can't you grasp anything? *[NICOLAS drops one of the pieces he is holding, knocking over others on the board]* What are you doing? Damn. Now we have to start again.

LANDLADY       Nicolas, get the sausage from the pantry.

*[NICOLAS exits]*

LEVEL           I keep explaining it to him, but whatever for?

LANDLADY       Leave him alone.

LEVEL           I'm just trying to get something into his head to get it working.

LANDLADY       It won't, so leave him be. Don't you have some writing to do?

*[EBEN enters]*

LEVEL           There's a face we haven't seen for a while.

EBEN            Good evening.

LANDLADY       What are you doing here?

EBEN            I apologise, maybe I should have notified you first. I'm here about Bucephalus.

LANDLADY       That again. *[Turns away from him]*

LEVEL           So what's the news?

EBEN            Is Beatrice here?

LEVEL In her room.

EBEN Perhaps- *[NICOLAS enters with the sausage and gives it to the LANDLADY]*

LEVEL Nicolas, fetch Beatrice. *[NICOLAS exits]* How about a quick match?

EBEN This time I decline.

LEVEL I'm being forsaken in the rear without a worthy opponent.

EBEN And I'm sorry for it. *[Pause]* I heard about the book.

LEVEL *[Self-satisfied]* Yes.

EBEN Not very accurate, but still good.

LEVEL Only those who sleep don't sin.

*[Tense silence. BEATRICE eventually enters]*

BEATRICE Nicolas said... *[Sees EBEN]* Oh... *[Turns to leave]*

EBEN Wait!

BEATRICE I have nothing to say to you.

EBEN Wait. I'm sorry. *[Pause]* I came to tell you... look, I was wrong. He was sent to the border. *[Pause]* I went there... I'm so sorry... *[A grave realisation descends on all present]* He was sent there... they have no food over there... he was sent... because they had no food. *[A shadow passes through the room]*

LEVEL Wait...

LANDLADY No.

BEATRICE What?

EBEN I got there too late.

BEATRICE Too late for what? I don't understand.

EBEN *[Sits down, he can't say it] I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.*

BEATRICE I don't understand! I don't understand! *[LEVEL hugs her]*

LEVEL Dear God.

*[Everyone but the LANDLADY keeps their position. BEATRICE cries on LEVEL's shoulder, EBEN sits with his head hung low, NICOLAS eats his sausage. The LANDLADY goes to the shelf and takes down the porcelain urn. She looks at it briefly then lets it fall and shatter on the ground]*

## **27. Epilogue.**

*[Same positions, different light. NICOLAS looks out of the window. BUCEPHALUS passes by. NICOLAS gets up and goes outside]*

BUCEPHALUS Hello child, I brought you a book. I think you'll like it. *[Gives NICOLAS a book, NICOLAS hesitates]* Don't worry, I'll read it to you. *[NICOLAS hugs BUCEPHALUS abruptly and firmly]* Want to hop on?

*[NICOLAS looks at the inn, then at BUCEPHALUS. BUCEPHALUS lifts NICOLAS onto his shoulders. NICOLAS laughs for the first time]*

## **28. The child's speech.**

*[From BUCEPHALUS's shoulders]* And now I'm a horse! *[Whinnies]* Here I am.

END