

# **SISTERE TEMPUS**

**Absurdist comedy**

*Arnis Aleinikovas, 2024  
(Translated into English by Saulius Venclovas)*

## **Characters:**

**DOMINYKAS (Arūnas)**

**MARIJA (Kamilė)**

**DIRECTOR**

**ASSISTANT**

**AKESO (Kotryna) (Dominykas and Marija's daughter)**

**TOMAS (Darius)**

**LIEPA (Adrija)**

**STAGE WORKERS (2)**

**MAKEUP ARTISTS (2)**

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## SCENE I

### Sistere Tempus

*(Two beach chairs are on stage. A large, plastic, lightweight, rustling transparent sheet is brought in, representing the sea, and stagehands gently wave it during the scene.)*

**MARIJA (on the phone).** No, no, everything is fine. The weather is great, the food is good. *(pauses)* Yes, Mom, okay, I'll tell him. Thank you very much. Best regards to Dad.

**MARIJA (applying sunscreen).** My mom called, she said she really misses us.

**DOMINYKAS (reading a book).** Really? We've only been away for a few days.

**MARIJA.** I think she gets attached to people too quickly, and then everything becomes about others, not about herself.

**DOMINYKAS.** I miss you even faster than she does. *(kisses Marija)* And more and more as time goes by.

*(Pause)*

**MARIJA.** You know... Sometimes I think about how strange time is. It keeps flowing, but we keep trying to capture it.

**DOMINYKAS.** ... Why did you suddenly start thinking about time?

**MARIJA.** I don't know, sometimes I just feel powerless against it... like this very moment. You try to fully live in it, to capture even the smallest details, but in ten years, you might not even remember it—or you'll remember it differently.

**DOMINYKAS.** Some say that time doesn't exist without our perception of it.

**MARIJA.** Maybe, but it still exists. In ten years, we won't look the same, we'll think about different things, maybe even act differently—and all of that happens because time changes our bodies.

*(Pause)*

**DOMINYKAS.** Do you think time stops when we sleep?

**MARIJA.** Maybe it doesn't stop, but it becomes less tangible. When we sleep, our consciousness withdraws, so the flow of time becomes less significant.

**DOMINYKAS.** But then the question arises: if time depends on our perception of it, what happens when we meditate or enter a trance state?

**MARIJA.** Sometimes I feel that it might be a path to a deeper understanding of our existence, independent of clocks and calendars. But still, despite that, we age.

**DOMINYKAS.** It's paradoxical that the more tools we have to save time, the more it seems that time controls us.

**MARIJA.** Yes, sometimes I feel that technology gives us an illusion of control. In so-called reality, we are constantly distracted by notifications, deadlines, reminders, emails, messages... But what if...

**DOMINYKAS.** What if?

**MARIJA.** What if we could abandon technology and return to a simpler way of life—would that solve the problem of time?

**DOMINYKAS.** Has anyone told you that you're getting old?

**MARIJA.** No, no, that's not what I mean...

**DOMINYKAS.** I don't think we could ever completely escape time. It will always be there—as a backdrop. No matter where you are, it will always be.

*(A moment of silence, the rustling of the "sea" is heard.)*

**DOMINYKAS.** But maybe we could at least understand it better and use it more consciously. Ancient civilizations had rituals and calendars that connected them to nature's cycles. There was a certain reverence for the flow of time.

**MARIJA.** Modern humans often forget about rituals. We seem to live between the past and the future, forgetting the present. But perhaps it is the present moments that are the true axes of our lives?

**DOMINYKAS.** Probably. Many philosophers, like Eckhart Tolle, talk about the power of the present moment. But is it possible to always be in the present?

*(Liepa enters the stage, dressed as a waitress, carrying two drinks.)*

**LIEPA.** Maybe being in the present is just a moment that constantly shifts? Sorry, I overheard your conversation... Would you like anything else?

**DOMINYKAS.** No, thank you very much.

**LIEPA.** If you need anything – you know where to find me.

**MARIJA.** But maybe it's true? Maybe being in the present is just a moment that constantly shifts?

**DOMINYKAS.** Then we live in countless moments that change rapidly and have neither a beginning nor an end.

**MARIJA.** (*cheerfully*) But maybe that's not a bad thing? If we constantly try to be in the present, perhaps we'll discover a different sense of time—one that doesn't just limit but also frees us.

**DOMINYKAS.** (*whispers to Marija*) Now is the time to show it?

**MARIJA.** Speaking of limitations, do you think humanity could invent a way to stop time? Would that be our liberation or a new kind of imprisonment?

**DOMINYKAS.** Funny you should ask, because I heard about an invention... And no, it's not science fiction. It's real! An invention that promises to "stop time."

**MARIJA.** (*curious, a bit too enthusiastically*) Really? How would that even work?

**DOMINYKAS.** (*smiling, using a commercial announcer's tone*) Imagine being able to stop the flow of time with the push of a button. Focus, forget deadlines, stress, and the constant rush. This new device—"Sistere Tempus"—allows you to "freeze" time around you. Just you and the present—without any outside distractions.

**MARIJA.** (*skeptically*) Sounds too good to be true. Would it actually change the nature of time itself?

**DOMINYKAS.** Well, it doesn't literally alter time, but rather your relationship with it. The idea is that it stops the environment, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the present moment. It could be beneficial for creativity, meditation, studying, or simply... existing.

**MARIJA.** But... isn't that dangerous? If we all had the ability to "stop time," wouldn't that lead to chaos? Time has a rhythm we can't manipulate without consequences.

**DOMINYKAS.** That's exactly what I'm saying: "Use it responsibly." "Sistere Tempus" was created to give you back control over your time, but balance is key. Using it just to escape responsibility could have consequences. But what do you think, Marija—are we, as humans, ready for this challenge?

**MARIJA.** That's a question that perhaps only time can answer... or, in this case, *Sistere Tempus*. Maybe our ability to resist and remain conscious becomes the real challenge for this device. But... if it means experiencing a single moment to its fullest, maybe it's worth trying?

*(The Assistant enters the stage through the "sea," carrying a computer. The actors, who had been holding a piece of material, lower it. The Assistant holds the computer near Dominykas and Marija, alongside the Director.)*

**DIRECTOR.** (*thoughtfully, from the computer screen*) An interesting presentation, truly intriguing...

**DIRECTOR.** But as the old-school theater would say—every magic trick needs a clear motive. If we're talking about a device like *Sistere Tempus*, then the real question is—what are we actually trying to stop? Time, or our fear of the moment's impermanence?

**ARŪNAS.** We could show an ad character who hopes *Sistere Tempus* will help him escape responsibility, only to realize that stopping time doesn't make his problems disappear.

**DIRECTOR** (*from the screen*). That's very powerful. Each of us has *our own time* that we wish to freeze. Maybe, instead of presenting it as a miraculous escape, we should show how a person, after stopping time, begins to understand the weight of their responsibilities, the stagnation, even the emptiness.

**ASSISTANT** (*to the screen*). Maybe we could expand the script—show someone playing with the effect of "stopped time," only to eventually realize that every second is valuable precisely because it flows. When time stops, it loses its meaning.

**DIRECTOR.** Yes! So instead of using the device to escape, we can show that it becomes a way to dive deeper into the present moment. It's a paradox, but what *Sistere Tempus* offers isn't really stopping time—it's an invitation to live more consciously. We can experiment with visuals, lighting, and even sound to convey the slowing of moments and the insights that arise when we fully immerse ourselves in the here and now.

**ARŪNAS.** So the advertisement becomes not just a promotion of technology but also a warning. Every choice—whether to escape or to engage—comes with a price.

**DIRECTOR.** Exactly. And that's our goal—to make the audience reflect on what it really means to have the power to manipulate time. Would we really want to stop? And at what cost? Brilliant! Let's try again, but this time—make it more impactful. Imagine you're on the *Titanic*, moments before it sinks. I want to see all the agony, fear, uncertainty—and then suddenly, the idea strikes you—to use the *Sistere Tempus* device... and you survive.

**KAMILĖ** (*critically*). But... don't you think this scenario is illogical?

**DIRECTOR.** Kamilė, a gentle stream of flowing water, I respect your opinion, but I'd like to remind you that you work for me, so you'll do as I say.

*(The Assistant and the Director exit. Stage workers remove the beach chairs and stretch a large fabric across the stage. They lift the "sea," as Dominykas and Marija prepare for the scene. Now, they are in the middle of the ocean.)*

**MARIJA.** Do you remember the first time we met? That warm summer evening when you unexpectedly asked me to dance...

**DOMINYKAS** (*slightly trembling*). How could I forget? Your laughter, your eyes... That was when everything became real for me. You are everything to me, Marija. Even now, when the sea wants to take everything away, I will always remember that moment when I stepped into your world.

**MARIJA** (*enchanted, but with tears in her eyes*). And I will remember how you were always there. Even when everything was falling apart, when the world felt too big and unfamiliar. You were the only rock I could hold onto.

**DOMINYKAS** (*holding Marija tighter*). And now, when nothing else remains... When I know that our final journey will end in the sea... My greatest fear isn't dying, Marija, but losing you. Not being able to look into your eyes for even one more moment.

**MARIJA** (*crying, but bravely*). I will never let you go. Not even the sea will separate us. If this is the end, so be it—we are together. Always together, Dominykas.

**DOMINYKAS** (*his voice filled with sharp pain, but smiling*). Always together, Marija. And if this is our last breath—let me spend it loving you.

**MARIJA.** Dominykas, but we...

**DOMINYKAS.** Not now, Marija... Let's just stay close in silence.

**MARIJA.** But we...

**DOMINYKAS.** Shhh...

*(Their hands intertwine even tighter, and they gaze into each other's eyes.)*

**MARIJA** (*dropping character*). You idiot, when am I supposed to pull out the *Sistere Tempus*?!  
*(The Assistant runs in, holding a laptop with the Director on the screen.)*

**DIRECTOR** (*coldly*). Kamilė, as much as I respect you, your behavior is unacceptable. I will deduct 150 euros from your salary for wasting the entire creative team's time.

**KAMILĖ.** This isn't my fault! Arūnas didn't give me time to step in and promote the product, so how was I supposed to—

**DIRECTOR.** Arūnas, why didn't you let Kamilė say her line?

**ARŪNAS.** Well... I guess I got a little too carried away. The whole atmosphere, I got so emotional...

**DIRECTOR.** The script exists for a reason—to be followed. It's an essential part of the process. For everything to run smoothly and for the audience to experience the full emotional impact, it's crucial to stick to the script.

**ARŪNAS.** Understood, Director. I apologize, Director.

**DIRECTOR.** In real-time post-production, I edited it so that as you were speaking, *Sistere Tempus* appears on the screen and freezes the scene right after Dominykas' line: "*Let me spend it loving you.*" The frame freezes, and the audience sees our product in a close-up shot.

*(Kamilė pulls out an electronic cigarette and starts smoking.)*

**DIRECTOR.** We'll take a short break, and to make the most of today's time, we'll soon be filming you *ten years later*. This next scene will show how you happily lived after stopping time and surviving the disaster.

**KAMILĖ.** But we don't have a script...

**ASSISTANT.** The Director generated the script while speaking. *(hands out pages)* You have five minutes to read your lines, and we'll start shortly.

*(The Assistant exits. The actors holding the "sea" also leave. Makeup artists enter with chairs and begin aging Dominykas and Marija with makeup. Meanwhile, stage workers bring in furniture and set up a living room.)*

**KAMILĖ.** This project is such bullshit. No one's going to believe you can stop time. Surviving the Titanic... Just think about it. What kind of idiot would come up with this when the Titanic sank over 100 years ago? Makes zero sense. And now, in 2025, like we've stepped out of the past, we're supposed to sell people some crappy time-stopping gadget?

**ARŪNAS:** But maybe this is a conceptual idea? People remember the Titanic tragedy and have an emotional connection to it.

**KAMILĖ.** What kind of connection can they have when no one actually knows what really happened?

**ARŪNAS.** Well, in their minds, there's Cameron's movie—they rely on that.

**KAMILĖ.** I wouldn't be surprised if they added that epilogue soundtrack in post-production.

**ARŪNAS.** And then the *Sistere Tempus* logo pops up (*laughs*).

**KAMILĖ.** And we're just standing there frozen like two idiots... No, I can't do this anymore.

**ARŪNAS.** Come on, we're almost done...

**KAMILĖ.** I don't want my face on some cheap ad being shoved at all those fools who, after a long workday, mindlessly scroll social media or stare blankly at the TV.

**ARŪNAS.** Maybe the ad won't run for long...

**KAMILĖ** (*to the Assistant*). Assistant! (*to Arūnas*) What's her name?

(*Arūnas shrugs.*)

**KAMILĖ** (*shouting*). Jurga? Daiva? Gražvilė?

(*The Assistant doesn't respond.*)

**KAMILĖ.** ...And seriously, how can you film something when you can't even see what you're filming?

**ARŪNAS.** He's probably got cameras set up everywhere, watching everything in real-time. (*looks around*)

(*Arūnas starts reading the next scene's script, Kamilė joins in. The makeup artists finish aging them. One of them brings costumes for them to change into. Meanwhile, the stagehands finish setting up the living room for the next scene.*)

(*The Assistant enters.*)

**ASSISTANT.** We'll be starting shortly. Please take your positions. The Director is ready.

**KAMILĖ.** Excuse me... what's your name?

**ASSISTANT.** Why do you need this information?

**KAMILĖ.** What do you mean *why*? So, I know how to call you.

**ASSISTANT.** You can call me A.

**KAMILĖ.** Just A? Like A or just a?

**ASSISTANT.** A as in A.

**KAMILÉ.** Sounds like a rehab clinic. Whatever. A, we wanted to ask—how long will this ad be used?

**ASSISTANT.** Your contract states that the ad’s usage is unlimited. That means we decide when and how frequently it will be shown.

**ARŪNAS.** No, no... but usually ads have a set duration.

**ASSISTANT.** Not in our case. You see, we don’t know if this device will be relevant to humanity in its current state. It’s possible that with today’s natural intelligence, people won’t be able to use the device properly, meaning we may have to pause the ad and temporarily suspend sales. However, believing in evolution, we may still market this device a hundred years from now—when people will likely have a more conscious understanding of time and our product.

**KAMILÉ.** Wait... so you’re saying this ad could still be shown in 100 years?

**ASSISTANT.** That’s correct.

**KAMILÉ.** Which means my face could be shown a century after I’m dead?

**ASSISTANT.** Exactly.

**KAMILÉ.** I refuse to be in this commercial.

**ASSISTANT.** Unfortunately, you can’t refuse. Your contract states that selected actors cannot voluntarily withdraw from filming. You now know too much about our product, and our competitors could use that information.

**KAMILÉ.** I refuse to be in this. (*starts walking away*)

**ASSISTANT.** If you leave the premises before filming is completed, you will face six years of imprisonment, as stated in your contract.

**KAMILÉ** (*furious*). Prison time just for refusing to act in a commercial?!

**ASSISTANT.** Exactly. You agreed with your signature. Breaking this contract would result in imprisonment or...

**KAMILÉ.** Or what?

**ASSISTANT.** Let’s begin.

## SCENE II

### Dinner

*(Dominykas and Marija are having dinner at the table. Their friends Tomas and Liepa are with them.)*

**LIEPA** *(pouring herself a glass of wine)*. So, does anyone here have better news than me? *(no one answers)* I'll go first: today, I finally finished that awful project at work. And honestly, I deserve this wine. *(takes a big sip)*

**TOMAS** *(mockingly)*. That's your best news? Seriously? I thought you were going to tell us how you saved the world.

**MARIJA** *(smiling)*. And you, Tomas? Is there anything for you to save besides the world?

**TOMAS** *(mysteriously)*. Maybe. But tonight, let me be humble and a little mysterious. I'm just contented we're all together again!

**LIEPA** *(in a more serious tone)*. But really, do you think this will become a tradition we keep? Or is it something more?

**TOMAS** *(thoughtful)*. Because simple things, like tonight, keep us going. There's nothing more to search for. Sometimes, friendship is the greatest celebration. Sometimes, meeting without a reason is the most valuable thing.

**DOMINYKAS** *(nodding)*. Just being here. Together. And realizing that all these little conversations become big parts of our memories.

**MARIJA** *(smiling)*. Alright, alright... Let's raise a glass to that. To this moment and to whatever is yet to come.

**LIEPA** *(setting her glass down)*. And speaking of what's to come... It's always strange to think about how much time we spend waiting for something, don't you think? As if life is just an endless cycle of waiting.

**TOMAS** *(with light irony)*. Or a constant battle with the clock, where every second ticks like a menacing reminder that something is always approaching or slipping away.

**DOMINYKAS**. Are you... Are you expecting a baby?

**LIEPA**. Oh, come on, Dominykas, these days having a baby isn't exactly the smartest decision.

**DOMINYKAS**. Well, yeah, but... sometimes it just happens.

**LIEPA.** No, I was just thinking about time and the fact that we're getting older...

**MARIJA** (*pensive*). Or maybe time isn't our enemy. Maybe we just don't always understand how to use it properly. It's the most precious thing we have. But some people don't realize that until it's already gone. And yes, Liepa, when you look back in old age, you see all the moments where you didn't use your time wisely, all the chances you missed...

**DOMINYKAS** (*crossing his arms*). So, what do you suggest? Stop time? Live every moment as if it's the last? Easy to say, but the world constantly demands our attention and effort.

**TOMAS** (*provocatively*). Maybe time itself is lost, and we're the ones who've trapped it in our schedules and deadlines.

**LIEPA** (*seriously*). I think the problem is that we see time as linear, something that only moves forward. But what if time is cyclical? What if everything we do has already happened before—and will happen again?

**DOMINYKAS.** Now you're just reading tea leaves...

**MARIJA** (*smiling, responding to Liepa*). And what if it's true? If everything repeats, maybe we're meant to learn from our mistakes? Maybe time is just our teacher?

**DOMINYKAS** (*sighing*). If that's the case, it's a strict one. But... you know, sometimes I think we're given exactly as much time as we need. It all depends on how we choose to fill it.

**TOMAS** (*joking*). With good food, wine, and philosophical debates that never actually lead to answers.

**LIEPA** (*cheerfully, trying to lighten the mood*). Or what if we just leveled up—no more hours, only eternity?

(*A brief awkward silence.*)

**LIEPA** (*trying to justify herself*). Well, some people do believe in eternity... Or... we could just have dessert instead of debating the meaning of time! Tomas, where's the cake?

(*AKESO appears in the doorway.*)

**AKESO.** Mom!

**MARIJA.** Yes, sweetheart?

**AKESO.** Can I play here?

**MARIJA.** Well... we're talking...

**AKESO.** I won't bother you; I'll be silent. I promise.

*(AKESO grabs a jump rope and starts skipping in the back of the room. Marija returns to the table.)*

**MARIJA.** I hope you don't mind if Akeso stays with us.

**LIEPA.** Of course not, she's a very beautiful girl.

**TOMAS.** Hi, Akeso.

*(Akeso doesn't respond.)*

**DOMINYKAS.** She's a bit shy around unfamiliar people.

**LIEPA.** But we've met several times before.

**DOMINYKAS.** Yes, but she forgets faces quickly.

**MARIJA.** Which means you don't visit us often enough. *(takes a big sip of wine)*

*(A brief pause.)*

**DOMINYKAS.** So, you're really not expecting a baby?

**TOMAS.** Don't worry, we'd tell you first. Well, maybe not first, but you'd definitely know.

*(Another brief pause.)*

**MARIJA.** You know, it's strange... The weather today is nothing like last week. It's as if nature enjoys constantly surprising us—sun, rain, then suddenly snow again.

**DOMINYKAS** *(smiling)*. And the wind—how could we forget the wind? Today it nearly blew me away when I was crossing the yard. It's like the elements conspired to test us.

**LIEPA** *(calmly sipping her drink)*. But really, the weather is the best reminder that everything changes. Even when life feels stuck in place, you look out the window and—there it is! Nature already has a new plot twist.

**TOMAS** *(leaning back in his chair)*. True. And yet, some say the weather is just a conversation starter. But to me, it's something more—like a reflection of our moods.

When it rains, people feel melancholic. When it's sunny, everyone gets a little bolder, as if the light washes away our worries.

*(Akeso leaves the room, returns with a trumpet, and starts playing. Dominykas and Marija exchange glances. Everyone begins speaking a little louder.)*

**MARIJA** *(laughing lightly, speaking louder)*. And what would you say about weather, that's just chaotic? When it's warm one moment and cold the next?

**DOMINYKAS** *(thinking)*. Well, maybe it's a reminder that we can't control everything. Though the Chinese might disagree with me on that. I don't know if you've heard, but Beijing has a "Weather Modification Office," supposedly the largest in the world. This initiative involves 37,000 workers across the country, who seed clouds by shooting rockets and shells filled with silver iodide into them.

**LIEPA**: Do they really do that?

**DOMINYKAS**: Yes, just imagine—they seed clouds the way we plant potatoes. They do it to induce rain, ensure water supplies, clean the air, reduce hail damage, and even guarantee good weather for national celebrations.

**LIEPA** *(takes a sip of wine)*. Sounds like a science fiction movie.

**MARIJA**: Yes, but despite all that, weather is still one of the few things humans have little control over. And in a way, that's comforting.

**LIEPA** *(playfully)*: And at the same time, frustrating! But... spring is just around the corner. The weather will warm up, trees will turn green. I *hope*, because I've had enough of the cold wind.

**TOMAS** *(laughing)*: Speaking of spring—don't forget to invite me to the first picnic! The weather will make for a great discussion by the fire.

*(Dominykas drops his character.)*

**ARŪNAS** *(turning to Akeso)*: Do you have to play that thing right now? We're trying to have a conversation.

*(Akeso stops playing and leaves.)*

**ARŪNAS**: Seriously—who wrote this script? It's going nowhere.

**KAMILĖ**: I can't believe that, after supposedly being friends for a decade, we're standing around talking about the weather.

**ARŪNAS** *(mocking)*: And the wind? How could we forget the wind...

**ADRIJA:** Maybe we just need to get more into character. It's hard to focus and connect when *she (glances toward where Akeso was)* is playing and jumping around.

**DOMINYKAS** (*leaning forward*): There's no room for improvisation here at all—no unexpected reactions. And *that's* what makes stories feel alive—chaos, sudden interruptions, surprises.

*Pause.*

**DARIUS** (*to Kamilė*). I didn't like the way you looked at me.

**KAMILĖ.** And how exactly did I look at you?

**DARIUS.** A bit judgmental, like I couldn't create a character. I got a little lost, maybe that's why my delivery wasn't very natural...

**ARŪNAS.** Oh, come on, I'm sure she didn't mean it that way.

**MARIJA.** I don't even remember looking at you like that, the way you're saying.

**DARIUS.** It was after my line, "that something is always approaching or moving away". That look—it was like I didn't deliver it convincingly. I got a little thrown off and probably didn't express the thought clearly enough.

**KAMILĖ.** Listen, I couldn't care less how I looked at you or whether I even looked at you at all after whatever line. I don't give a shit. I just want to get this nonsense over with.

**ARŪNAS.** That's genuinely unprofessional. We're a team, we should be supporting and encouraging each other.

**KAMILĖ.** This isn't some after-school club where we all cheer each other on and pretend everyone is amazing, even if they can't deliver a single line properly. Honestly, I can't believe you're all just sitting here saying these lines so calmly, without even realizing that they make *zero* sense.

*(Kamilė pours herself a large glass of wine and takes a big sip.)*

**KAMILĖ.** And another thing... if you really want to know, I saw your (*points at Arūnas and Darius*) porn video online.

**ADRIJA** (*caught off guard*). You guys make porn?

**KAMILĖ.** Ohhh, and what a porn it is! (*to Arūnas*) Do you want to tell us more about it?

**ARŪNAS** (*uncomfortable*). How do you even know about that?

**KAMILĒ**. I like to keep up with trends now and then... What does it matter why I watched it?!

*Kamilė takes another big sip of wine.*

**DARIUS**. I don't see how this is even relevant to the role.

**KAMILĒ**. Oh, it's irrelevant, alright... Because people watching this ad—which, by the way, I don't even know if it's still technically an ad at this point, since I can't tell how long it's supposed to be—will recognize you and say: *Oh, aren't those the guys from that porn video? And then they'll start wondering, Maybe she does porn too? Let's check the internet for her tits...*

**DARIUS** (*interrupting*). Well, we starred in a gay porn film. So, as you know, the audience isn't *that* big.

**KAMILĒ**. But it exists. And gay men love to talk.

**ARŪNAS**. Stop it! That's offensive, stereotypical, and completely out of touch with reality.

**KAMILĒ**. Oh, out of touch with reality! You know what's out of touch with reality? *You*, with your winds and weather reports. And *you* (*to Darius*), with your damn picnics! (*mocking*) *"Don't forget to invite me to the first picnic. The weather will be a great topic for reflection by the fire!"* Oh, how deep! We'll sit around the fire and discuss how on December 13th it snowed, on December 14th it rained, then at night it froze, and the road crews didn't clear the streets in time. So, everyone cursed the road crews, but on December 15th the sun came out, and suddenly everyone forgot all about it...

*(Kamilė pours herself another large glass of wine and drinks it down.)*

**ADRIJA**. Kamilė... Calm down.

**KAMILĒ** (*still heated*). Oh, so now it's *"Kamilė, calm down."* Like *I'm* the one freaking out the most here? I'm calm. Look at me. *I'm* perfectly calm. Standing still. Not even moving. I can even stop breathing if you'd like.

*(Kamilė pulls out an e-cigarette and takes a long drag.)*

*Pause.*

**ADRIJA**. So... are you guys going to tell us?

*Pause.*

**DARIUS.** Well... I often think about who we really are and what norms we impose on each other. You know, our society still has so many unresolved issues, so many stereotypes and fears that we should never have to live with.

*(Kamilè pours another large glass of wine and drinks it down.)*

**ARŪNAS.** Everyone should have the right to love and be loved in the way they feel is right. No one should be judged for who they share their life with. I often look at the people who fear us, and I don't understand where that fear comes from. Why should it be a problem? We're just like everyone else. We have feelings, desires, hopes—we're no different.

*(Kamilè starts choking and continues choking throughout the rest of the text.)*

**DARIUS** *(delivering his monologue, slowly undressing and moving closer to Arūnas).* Yes, we live in a society shaped by certain standards and traditions. However, it is precisely these standards and boundaries that prevent us from being truly free. I like to think that we all have the right to be ourselves, even if our choices don't align with other people's expectations. Being gay is not something that should be hidden or something to be ashamed of. It is natural and human. Yes, sometimes they may face misunderstanding or even discrimination, but I believe that is merely a reflection of our own insecurities and fears.

**DARIUS** *(turning to Adrija).* What are you afraid of, Adrija?

**ADRIJA** *(hesitant).* I... I... maybe nothing...

**DARIUS.** We are all afraid of something. And why do people still feel ashamed to talk about it? Why can't we just accept things as they are? I believe that when we learn not to judge or condemn others, we free ourselves. We break the chains that tie us to old, outdated ideas that no longer make sense in today's world.

*(Darius and Arūnas kiss. Kamilè lies motionless on the floor. Adrija tries to process what just happened. Akeso enters with a fan, turns it on, and stands in front of it for a while.)*

*(The Assistant enters, holding a laptop with the Director on the screen.)*

**ASSISTANT.** The Director is pleased with your performance and would like to say a few words.

**DIRECTOR.** Yes, thank you. I am deeply moved by your acting. You listen to each other so well and complement one another beautifully. It's—

**ARŪNAS.** Director...

**DIRECTOR.** I wasn't finished. That was very rude, Arūnas. Kamilė, your fantastic outburst of anger gave such vitality to this scene. Your choking on the wine was convincing and not overdone.

*(Kamilė gets up and casually returns to the table. Stage workers begin dismantling the set.)*

**KAMILĖ.** Thank you.

**DIRECTOR.** Darius, Arūnas, your monologues at the end—deeply touching. It is very important for us to promote inclusivity, encourage tolerance, and so on... With the *Sistere Tempus* device, people will be able to stop time and not have to hear Marija's offensive words. By freezing time, they can pause their surroundings at any moment and change them. This is a great, great commercial I came up with and a truly brilliant invention!

**ADRIJA.** Director, I'd like to ask... I started to notice that my role in the previous scene and in this one is the smallest, and I was wondering if maybe I could get some additional lines? You know, just to maintain balance between all the characters...

**DIRECTOR.** My dear, little ray of sunshine, light of my eyes, butterfly, chocolate drop, deep lake creature, sky blue and fluttering little bee, everything is perfect. You are the counterbalance to chaos. You are the link that connects and separates everything. It is through you that the audience will try to understand what just happened, and you will remain silent—not because you don't understand, but either because you didn't fully grasp it or because you did, but like most intelligent people, you don't waste your energy on empty chatter. Brilliant!

**ASSISTANT.** At this moment, we are in the final stages of post-production. As we speak, the director is already editing the final product and will keep only the most essential aspects, so you don't need to worry. I understand that it's very important for actors to have time to immerse themselves in their roles, and I also understand that actors often feel that if they don't have a lot of lines, they aren't main characters—but that is false.

**ADRIJA.** Yes, but I still feel like...

**ASSISTANT** *(interrupting)*. As the director already mentioned, we are currently working on the editing and final soundtrack. So, the commercial should be ready very soon. Only the last scene remains.

*(The Assistant and the Director exit. Stage workers finish dismantling the living room set.)*

**ADRIJA** *(to Kamilė)*. Do you think they're not giving me more lines because I can't deliver them naturally?

**KAMILĒ.** I don't think so, and if I were you, I wouldn't worry about it at all. No one's going to watch this crap anyway.

**ADRIJA.** I get that, but at the start of your career, you always want to give your best effort because when one door opens, others might follow... You know what I mean.

**ARŪNAS.** If I were you, Adrija, I really wouldn't worry about it.

*(Everyone leaves, only Akeso remains on stage.)*

## SCENE III

### *Healing*

*(During Akeso's monologue, Makeup Artists throw artificial snow into the fan, spreading it throughout the space. Dim lighting. As Akeso delivers this monologue, Tomas and the Stage Workers enter the scene like wolves. They "search for food" for a while, acting from the perspective of wolves)*

**AKESO** *(facing the audience)*. I am Akeso, daughter of Asclepius, God of medicine, and Epione, goddess of pain relief. My father is known for curing the physical ailments that plague the body, and my sisters—Hygieia and Panacea—are praised for their work with cleanliness and universal remedies. But my mission is different. I am a goddess of healing, yet not of immediate cures. I am the one who nurtures the slow and steady process of recovery.

When someone is ill, pain can be quickly alleviated with medicine or magic, but true healing—true recovery—takes time. I exist in that gradual healing, carefully nurturing both body and mind. I observe the moments when fever subsides, wounds close, and strength returns. I am a silent presence—unseen, yet ever constant—guiding the soul and body through the gentle process of becoming whole again.

Those recovering from illness or injury often pray to me, seeking comfort in those quiet moments when the worst has passed, yet the journey to full health is not yet complete. I soothe the mind, reminding it that healing requires patience. And in doing so, I bring hope—that one day, health will be fully restored.

Though my role is subtle, I am no less important. I stand beside my father and sisters, reminding the world that recovery is not just about curing—it is about the time it takes to heal, the patience required, and the belief that, in time, all will be well.

*(At the back of the stage, Marija appears in an elaborate gown.)*

**MARIJA**. Those hours that with gentle work did frame  
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell  
Will play the tyrants to the very same  
4And that unfair which fairly doth excel;  
For never-resting time leads summer on  
To hideous winter and confounds him there,  
Sap checked with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,  
8Beauty o'er-snowed and bareness everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

*(Dominykas crawls onto the stage. He is covered in blood.)*

**DOMINYKAS**. Help... Someone, please help me...

*(The "wolves" coming closer to Dominykas.)*

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<sup>1</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> sonnet by William Shakespeare

**MARIJA.** Then, were not summer's distillation left  
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,  
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.  
But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet,  
Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.<sup>2</sup>

**DOMINYKAS** (*pleading*): I beg you... Someone help me... (*collapses*)

(*The "wolves" are now beside Dominykas, preparing to "feast." Marija halts them with a loud sound, and they remain seated next to Dominykas. Marija slowly approaches him.*)

**MARIJA.** Oh, my beloved, my heart aches, for the shadows around you grow darker. I feel as though your eyes, like the setting sun, are dimming, and your light is fading.

**DOMINYKAS** (*speaking with difficulty*). My dearest, your voice is the final whisper of music in my soul, the song whose longing I will carry with me into the depths of darkness. I regret nothing—nothing but leaving you, you who were my light, my refuge, my shelter.

**MARIJA.** Nothing can compare to the pain of witnessing a cherished heart waver between life and the beyond. Are the gods so cruel that they must take from me what is most precious? What crime have you committed to deserve such a fate?

**DOMINYKAS.** Do not let your tears wash over your face, my love. Fate was inscribed long before I found you. And if I could choose again, I would still choose you—you and the fleeting moments we were granted. I do not lament eternity, only the love that is slipping away.

**MARIJA.** Oh, how I would hold onto you if only the hand of fate allowed it, if time itself would let me stop! Do not take your hand from mine while the breath still lingers on your lips. Leave me a word, a final whisper of your soul.

**DOMINYKAS.** Marija, my heart, your hands are the last thing I feel in this world. Let them remember me not as a fading body but as one who loved with all his soul. May our love be an eternal bond between earth and sky.

**MARIJA.** I swear, Dominykas, your name will live within me like the lifeblood in my veins. (*She pulls out a kitchen knife.*) You will remain in my songs, in my prayers. You...

(*She raises the knife, preparing to strike Dominykas in the chest.*)

**DOMINYKAS** (*breathing heavily*). My soul... is rising... Forever... you...

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<sup>2</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> sonnet by William Shakespeare

*(Akeso, who has been standing in the depths of the stage throughout this scene, pulls out the "Sistere Tempus" device and freezes time. All actors remain frozen in their positions. She restarts time, then quickly pauses it again, repeating this several times. Finally, she approaches Marija, takes the knife from her hands before it can pierce Dominykas' chest, and replaces it with a sausage. She then drags Dominykas offstage.) (Akeso returns to the stage and resumes time.)*

*(Marija, seeing a sausage in her hand instead of a knife, is bewildered but cannot recall exactly what happened before. She takes a bite of the sausage and offers a piece to one of the wolves.)*

**MARIJA.** Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea  
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?  
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out  
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,  
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?<sup>3</sup>

*(Marija exits, leading the "wolves" with her. At the same time, Liepa, dressed as a nurse, wheels in a cart with Dominykas seated in it.)*

*Pause*

*(Akeso approaches Dominykas and takes his hand. They remain silent for a moment. Marija and Tomas enter. They, too, stand in silence.)*

**LIEPA.** Dominykas, I have good news for you. The doctors have reviewed all your test results, and though your journey to full recovery is still ahead, I am here to tell you—you will survive. Your body is strong, and your spirit is even stronger. I know this has been difficult for you, but today, we take the first step toward a brighter tomorrow. You fought, you didn't give up, and now—this is the beginning of your victory. I am here to support you every step of the way.

*(Liepa exits. Dominykas slowly opens his eyes and lifts his head.)*

**DOMINYKAS.** Here I am—broken, exhausted, and seemingly defeated, yet still breathing. The past never taught me to let go easily or to turn my face toward darkness. It showed me how to sit with pain, to remember the battles lost, but never—never—to close the door to the future. We, with all our scars and mistakes, are more than mere shadows of the past. This is not a closed circle. This is a path that continues. I know there were days when it felt easier to surrender, to lower my hands, to retreat into the shadows. But each of those days was a test—one that appeared only to strengthen my resolve. We cannot allow the past to consume us. This is our fight, our

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<sup>3</sup> 65<sup>th</sup> sonnet by William Shakespeare

way forward—with pain, yes, but also with hope. Because only through suffering, we discover within ourselves a strength we never knew we had.

*(He lowers his head, pauses briefly, then raises his eyes again.)*

**DOMINYKAS.** If I am to be an echo of the past, let it be one that declares—do not give up! Life is not here to make you happy. Life is here to challenge you. Even when everything feels meaningless, when the only companion is the shadow—because from that shadow, light will always emerge. And I believe that even this battle is worth all our tears and desires. We will live not because it is easy, but because it is hard—and that is the true victory.

**TOMAS:** My dear, how I love you.

**DOMINYKAS:** I love you too.

**MARIJA:** I love you too.

*(Marija kisses Dominykas. Akeso releases Dominykas' hand. Adrija enters the stage and gives Dominykas some medicine to drink.)*

*(A moment of silence.)*

**ADRIJA** *(hesitant but speaking clearly)*. You just drank rat poison. It will slowly paralyze your body even further.

**TOMAS** *(to Liepa)*. You gave him poison?!

**MARIJA** *(to Dominykas)*. My love, look at me. You're going to be okay; you will get better. *(to Liepa)* Why did you do this?!

**ADRIJA.** Of all people, you should know... Jealousy is a small, clinging creature that lives inside me like an uninvited guest. Its' quiet breath can only be heard when everything around falls silent. I can't say exactly when it appeared—perhaps it has always been inside me, growing with me, feeding on my thoughts like a parasite. But now, it has grown too big, too heavy to ignore. Sometimes, jealousy roars like a beast—lunging at my throat, tearing apart any illusion of peace. But most of the time, it is quiet. It lingers in the shadows, whispering in my ear how everyone else is better, more beautiful and stronger. How their hands can achieve what mine never will. How their gazes reach places where mine only wander in pain. I envy not only people but things, moments. I envy the wind, which can touch whomever it wishes. I envy the pages of books, turned by hands that are not mine. I even envy the stones, for they know their place in the world. And I... I never have.

**KAMILĒ.** Yes, but that doesn't mean you have to poison someone!

**ADRIJA.** And you... I smeared your costume with botulinum toxin. When inhaled, it paralyzes the nervous system... Don't you feel it yet?

**KAMILĚ** (*hysterically starts tearing off her costume*). You're insane! You want to kill us all—for what?! Just to get a bigger role?!

*(Adrija laughs, then suddenly turns serious.)*

**ADRIJA.** They told me that jealousy is an emotion one can learn to control. But how do you control something that has no form, something that manifests as a shadow and becomes my own face in the mirror? When I look at my reflection, I don't see myself—I see jealousy. Its smile is cruel, and its eyes gleam not with joy, but with hunger. I tried to ignore it. I told myself that jealousy is meaningless, that it corrodes me just as rust corrodes iron. But the more I fight it, the deeper it sinks its roots into my soul, holding me in place. And the scariest part? I don't want to let it go. Jealousy has become a part of me, like a heart that, though it beats unevenly, keeps me alive.

*(She pulls out a gun, pointing it alternately at Marija, Dominykas, and Tomas.)*

**DARIUS.** Adrija, you've completely lost your mind. You can't tell reality from illusion anymore. That... that's a real gun. Where did you get it?

**KAMILĚ** (*weaker than before*). Please, I just want this madness to end.

**ADRIJA** (*spitefully*). Shut up! You were always closer to each other. You were always a team, always getting the better roles. Not that those roles matter now—no one will remember your faces anyway. Actors change too fast, movies have become predictable, and people now fast-forward through them. No one has time anymore, or maybe they are not even capable to engage with complex situations. They rush to conclusions, categorize everything before they even comprehend what truly happened, and then they go to sleep for their eight hours.

**DARIUS.** Adrija, put the gun down...

**ADRIJA.** Darius, you're hilarious! I found your porn video, and even there, you weren't doing so well. Get out of here. I said get out before I blow your brains out!

*(Darius hurriedly leaves. Adrija laughs. Her laughter fades into quiet sorrow.)*

**ADRIJA.** When I was little, I thought meaning lay in those grand moments they promised us. Love. Friendship. Success. Recognition. Career. But when those moments came, I felt nothing but emptiness. As if meaning had been a promise that no one ever intended to keep. Those grand things—they were just events, without depth. Meaning is our own invention, created only so we don't go mad from uncertainty. It's like an old, dusty clock that stopped long ago, yet we still believe in it. Isn't that funny? Time doesn't even exist—it's just a record in our minds.

And yet, I keep searching. Like a foolish mouse trapped in a maze, I run through the corridors, hoping that somewhere around the corner, an answer awaits.

*(Adrija steps backward, keeping the gun pointed at Arūnas and Kamilė, who barely move)*

**ADRIJA.** But... behind the door, there's another door. And another door. And another...

*(Adrija shoots herself.)*

*(Marija and Tomas exchange glances. Marija is confused, unsure whether this is really happening or if it's a newly inserted scene she wasn't aware of. Adrija doesn't move.)*

**KAMILĖ.** She...

*(Kamilė cautiously approaches Adrija and nudges her leg with her foot. Adrija remains still.)*

**KAMILĖ.** Alright, that's it. I don't know who came up with this nonsense, but it has completely lost any meaning, and it needs to end right now. RIGHT NOW! She shot herself. DO YOU HEAR ME? I swear, I'm calling my agent, and I am not letting this go.

**ARŪNAS** *(shaken)*. She was waving a gun. For a second, I hesitated—was it real? But it was... I thought maybe it was just part of the scene, but those eyes... they were wild...

**KAMILĖ.** Oh, I am surely not letting this go...

*(Kamilė exits. Arūnas stands up from the wheelchair.)*

**ARŪNAS.** Kotryna, are you coming?

**KOTRYNA** *(calmly)*. I'll catch up with you.

*(Arūnas wheels himself offstage. Kotryna remains on stage.)*

*(A computer mounted on a remote-controlled car rolls onto the stage, displaying the Director.)*

**DIRECTOR:** Bravo! What a brilliant, heartbreaking, motivating, inspiring, and uplifting ending. Such a philosophically profound and emotionally stirring text—an unforgettable performance! The sincerity and emotions you conveyed made your character truly memorable, Arūnas. For such an outstanding performance and precise delivery, I want to award you... *(realizes the actors are no longer on stage; the car spins in a circle) ...* Well, you're probably in the dressing room. *(driving away)* Kotryna, why are you still here?

*(Pause.)*

**AKESO:** My final monologue...

**DIRECTOR:** Ah, yes, yes! I forgot—I'm just so excited!

*(The Director's car rolls offstage.)*

**AKESO** *(after a pause)*. Now you're waiting for me to say something. To explain what was real and what was just an illusion. What actually happened and what you imagined yourselves. You're waiting for me to somehow solve this puzzle. But I'm just an advertisement—one you will skip or quickly forget. I am here only to offer you a choice – to heal or to ignore the problem, to stop time or to rush at immense speed into the unknown. I'm only here to invite you, one last time, to witness the coming of the night and allow yourself to sink into it.

Just as one sometimes lowers one's head to reflect, thus to be utterly lost in the night. All around people are asleep. It's just play acting, an innocent self-deception, that they sleep in houses, in safe beds, under a safe roof, stretched out or curled up on mattresses, in sheets, under blankets; in reality they have flocked together as they had once upon a time and again later in a deserted region, a camp in the open, a countless number of men, an army, a people, under a cold sky on cold earth, collapsed where once they had stood, forehead pressed on the arm, face to the ground, breathing quietly. And you are watching, are one of the watchmen, you find the next one by brandishing a burning stick from the brushwood pile beside you. Why are you watching? Someone must watch, it is said. Someone must be there.<sup>4</sup>

*(Akeso presses the time-stop button. For a moment, she stands in silence on the stage.)*

**THE END**

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<sup>4</sup>“At Night”, a piece of prose by Franz Kafka, 1910-23 *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* by Franz Kafka, Max Brod - 1991