

I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO KILL HIM

– a one-act play

by DANIEL CURZON (415-297-220) Copyright 2017

CHARACTERS 5. ACTORS 3 :

PROFESSOR, male, over forty, scholarly, subdued, meticulous, “literary”

GUSTAV PLYMACHER, male, over forty, talented, a prick

FEMALE, female, over thirty, plays all the female parts: Server, Partner, Maid

SCENE 1

(Lights up on PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR: (to audience) Guess whom I'm finally going to meet today?! My favorite playwright of all time! Gustav Plymacher! I've admired his work for ages, but I have never had the opportunity to meet him in person before. We've been corresponding for about a year now. And he has agreed to let me write a study of his themes, memes, modalities, and intertextualities! You have seen his plays, correct? I believe his trilogy, or *The Blue Bunny Plays*, is the finest work for the theater since Aesop of ancient Greek fame – not the Aesop wrote for the theater, of course. I have never been so moved by a theatrical performance, or performances, to be more precise. And guess what else! You can meet Mr. Plymacher as well – if you promise to be good and very quiet. Promise? Oh, I think that's him now –

(Enter PLYMACHER.)

PROFESSOR: (going to greet him) How wonderful to meet you at last!

PLYMACHER: (abruptly) Yeah, sure.

(They shake hands.)

PROFESSOR: Shall we go to the table? I've reserved one here. It's my favorite restaurant.

PLYMACHER: Whatever. Remember, I can't stay long.

PROFESSOR: Are you not hungry? We can wait. We can go to another restaurant. We can –

PLYMACHER: I'm not feeling very well.

PROFESSOR: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. Do you want to cancel? We can meet another day. We can –

PLYMACHER: I'm already here, so let's get it over with.

PROFESSOR: Do you need to see a doctor perhaps?

PLAYMACHER: No.

PROFESSOR: I can see if my physician can squeeze you in. I can –

PLYMACHER: It's diarrhea.

PROFESSOR: Oh.

PLYMACHER: Projectile.

PROFESSOR: I see.

PLYMACHER: So I can't guarantee I won't spew shit all over you.

PROFESSOR: Perhaps we can –

PLYMACHER: You've been warned. (Laughs)

PROFESSOR: Another time then, when you feel better?

PLYMACHER: I'm never going to feel better again. Let's just get it over with. Okay?!

PROFESSOR: All right then. Lunch it is!

(Brief BLCKOUT.)

(They take their chairs at a restaurant table.)

PROFESSOR: I hope this will do. (Spreads his arms.)

PLYMACHER: There's nobody here. That's not a good sign.

PROFESSOR: Yes, it's not well known. But, oh, the food is very good, I assure you. The service can be a little . . . French.

(Enter female SERVER.)

SERVER: (with an order pad and pen) (slangy) Whatcha want, assholes?

PROFESSOR: Do you by any chance have your French dish du jour today?

SERVER: It's over there on the menu. Can't you read? (Points offstage.)

PROFESSOR: (stays put, puts on his glasses, stares at the menu) Yes, yes, I'll have that, whatever it is. Is it as good as usual?

SERVER: Who knows? (to PLYMACHER) What about you?

PLYMACHER: Nothing.

PROFESSOR: He's a little under the weather.

PLYMACHER: I have projectile diarrhea.

SERVER: Some soup?

PLYMACHER: I said "nothing." What do you think that means?

SERVER: (to PROFESSOR) Anything to drink, for you two bon vivants?

PROFESSOR: Tap water.

SERVER: Sure. . . . One special, one water, one "nothing." (Leaves.)

PROFESSOR: Usually the service is a bit better than that. But the food is spectacular.

PLYMACHER: Can't wait to have my "nothing."

PROFESSOR: This place isn't ideal in all ways, but I've heard that you are a true aficionado of French food. So I –

PLYMACHER: Who told you that? I hate French food. And the French. They're rude. Who wants that?!

PROFESSOR: Next time you can choose!

PLYMACHER: What next time? I thought I made it clear that I'd meet with you one time and only one time. Didn't I?

PROFESSOR: You did. But –

PLYMACHER: But, my ass! "Don't judge a rabbit by his T-shirt. Or should you?"

PROFESSOR: What?

PLYMACHER: It's a line from my newest play. I find it rather appropriate, given your choice of restaurant.

PROFESSOR: I don't quite follow.

PLYMACHER: That's okay. I have enough followers.

PROFESSOR: And what a nice segue into your work! *The Blue Bunny Plays* by Gustav Plymacher!

PLYMACHER: Yeah, the fucking Blue Bunnies! I hate 'em.

PROFESSOR: Surely not! They have made you famous.

PLYMACHER: And rich.

PROFESSOR: And rich.

PLYMACHER: You're paying for this meal, right?

PROFESSOR: Of course.

PLYMACHER: People try to screw you when you're rich.

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry to hear that.

PLYMACHER: So what do you want to know about the fucking blue bunnies?

PROFESSOR: I have taken the liberty of schematizing your works according to theme. May I show you? (Reaches for a pad in a pocket.)

PLYMACHER: Is it going to take long?

PROFESSOR: There are five categories.

PLYMACHER: According to you!

PROFESSOR: Yes, according to me. Shall I show them to you? (Offers the pad.)

PLYMACHER: It's so . . . what is the word I want?

PROFESSOR: Flattering?

PLYMACHER: I was going for "boring."

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry. . . . But it is about you and your work.

PLYMACHER: I realize that. It's still boring.

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry again. Perhaps you don't want me to write about your plays? (Puts his pad away.)

PLYMACHER: I don't care. I used to care. Now I don't anymore.

PROFESSOR: Maybe this meeting was not the best idea.

PLYMACHER: Still, I came anyway. Okay, what are my five categories?

PROFESSOR: (taking out his pad again) Well, the first category is the Blue Bunny as metaphor for “human being,” in particular the sensitive, struggling underdog in society.

PLYMACHER: Really? My blue bunnies are underdogs?

PROFESSOR: Because they have so few natural defenses – and so many predators. Foxes, eagles, even weasels.

PLYMACHER: Is that why people go to see my plays – because they think my bunnies are poor victims? That *they're* poor victims as well? Unbelievable!

PROFESSOR: Are you pulling my leg?

PLYMACHER: Do I look like I'm pulling your leg? Does anybody ever pull anybody else's leg? What an odd thing to say.

PROFESSOR: Sorry, I just find it enlightening that our perceptions of your work are so different.

PLYMACHER: I would describe my plays, especially *The Blue Bunny Plays*, as comedies of despair.

PROFESSOR: But no one ever laughs during your plays!

PLYMACHER: Well, they're supposed to!

PROFESSOR: Would you care to hear another of your categories?

PLYMACHER: *Your* categories, not mine.

PROFESSOR: Would you care to hear another of *my* categories?

PLYMACHER: Do I have a choice?

PROFESSOR: We all have choices in life. Just like your blue bunnies.

PLYMACHER: My blue bunnies have no choices whatsoever. They are born into litters and aren't very bright. They made terrible decisions and wind up eaten by their betters.

PROFESSOR: But Mary Jane Bunny-Girl in your first play escapes the warthog villain and opens a tea shop at the end.

PLYMACHER: And you think I was serious about that? A warthog and a tea shop?

PROFESSOR: Do not misunderstand me, as I hope I do not misunderstand you. I am aware of certain ironic tonalities in your work.

PLYMACHER: Yeah, I have ironic tonalities up the yin-yang!

PROFESSOR: And where exactly is your yin-yang, Mr. Plymacher?

PLYMACHER: Please! Call me Gustav.

PROFESSOR: Gustav. Thank you. And please call me Bartholomew.

PLYMACHER: You know that Gustav Plymacher is a pseudonym, right?

PROFESSOR: I did not.

PLYMACHER: Let me ask you something, Bart. Have you ever actually read my plays? Or seen them performed?

PROFESSOR: I have read every single one of them. And perhaps six performed.

PLYMACHER: (doubtful) Really?

PROFESSOR: Of course I read them in translation. I don't know Flemish, I'm sorry to say.

PLYMACHER: I wrote, and write, them in Flemish because that was my mother's native tongue. I lately have been translating them myself into English. I find that I get a more accurate rendering that way.

PROFESSOR: And what would you say are the major problems you've encountered in the translations that others have done?

PLYMACHER: They keep wanting to sentimentalize my rabbits.

PROFESSOR: Oh?

PLYMACHER: The original Flemish is "*steenhoniyn*," meaning "Flemish giant rabbit, raised as meat." Which is not "bunny." What I was aiming for was something close to "big, dumb, low-IQ rabbit, who gets what it deserves."

PROFESSOR: Sounds somewhat cruel.

PLYMACHER: There has been a concerted effort to soften up my creatures, to make them more palatable. I call them "meat bunnies," but my publisher keeps changing them to "blue bunnies. That's why from now on I alone do the translations of my plays. Period.

PROFESSOR: I confess I have read only the English versions.

PLYMACHER: There are in twenty-six languages, including Tagalog and Urdu, at last count.

PROFESSOR: It must be thrilling to have to much interest in your work.

PLYMACHER: Not if they aren't making it say what I really want it to say.

PROFESSOR: Well, do you believe your work would be so widely produced if your true intentions were known? Or become known?

PLYMACHER: I don't care. I'll be happy when my audiences leave the theater screaming and gouging their eyes out.

PROFESSOR: You're not serious.

PLYMACHER: I'm dead serious.

PROFESSOR: You aren't going to tell me that the "blue" in your "blue bunnies" isn't code for "race."

PLYMACHER: Oh, give me a break! It never crossed my mind that "blue" would be interpreted as anything but "blue." And I didn't choose blue. If I thought I was writing about "race," I'd kill myself. Could there be anything more tired and boring?

PROFESSOR; (unsettled) I see.

PLYMACHER: But I don't think you do see. And I don't want want my work reduced to some bullshit "intertextuality" about race relations. As somebody so wisely once said, "Oh, give me a break!"

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

(PLYMACHER is lying on the floor, with a quill, ink pot, and scroll.)

PLYMACHER: (after writing on his scroll) Love it! (after reading a laughing at what he has written)
Love it, love it, love it!

PARTNER: (played by Female Actor) (knitting or sewing) What are you working on, hon?

PLYMACHER: None of your business.

PARTNER: Is it about me?

PLYMACHER: No.

PARTNER: You seem to be enjoying it.

PLYMACHER: I'm finally writing it the way I want it, the way no translator can change it!

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PARTNER: Do you not want me to look it over?

PLYMACHER: When did you learn to read?

PARTNER: You're not being very nice.

PLYMACHER: Who ever said I was nice? I'm writing!

PARTNER: I might leave you, you know.

PLYMACHER:(flippantly) Good-bye!

PARTNER: You don't mean that.

PLYMACHER: Good-bye!

PARTNER: I will, one of these days.

PLYMACHER: You like the hot sex too much.

PARTNER: What hot sex?

PLYMACHER: Good-bye!

PARTNER: Oh, you!

PLYMACHER: Oh, me! I told you what you were getting into if you hooked up with me.

PARTNER: I thought you were kidding.

PLYMACHER: What is it about me that so many people can't seem to believe me when I say what I say?

PARTNER: Maybe they wouldn't like it.

PLYMACHER: Aren't we profound today.

PARTNER: I'm profound every day.

PLYMACHER: Yes, my little blue bunny. You're a veritable Emmanuel Kant. (pronounced "kont")

PARTNER: Don't you call me a "kont"!

PLYMACHER: I'm comparing you to a philosopher.

PARTNER: You are not! You're using the c-word! I know you.

PLYMACHER: It's a "k."

PARTNER: I'm no "k-word" either! So there!

PLYMACHER: You must leave me . . . to my writing for a while.

PARTNER: Why do you always write laying on the floor with a feather?

PLYMACHER: It's called a quill, and I use it to put me in touch with my forebears.

PARTNER: It's only *three* bears, Mr. Smarty Pants!

PLYMACHER: My intellectual forebears, who used a quill to write their savage satires. Like Jonathan Swift and . . . and –

PARTNER: Jonathan Shit? Is that one of them?

PLYMACHER: You got it, babe! Jonathan Shit, author of the blue bunny on her chamber pot.

PARTNER: You're disgusting!

PLYMACHER: You ain't heard nothin' yet, sweetheart. (Waves the quill.)

PARTNER: Nobody's gonna put on your theater (pronounced the-ay-ter) if it's too nasty.

PLYMACHER: What, dare I ask, is too nasty?

PARTNER: Well, for one, who wants to see a blue bunny on a chamber pot?

PLYMACHER: You think rabbits don't defecate?

PARTNER: Uh, don't use words like that!

PLYMACHER: I believe it's the preferred word – Latinate.

PARTNER: It still sounds awful.

PLYMACHER: Everybody goes, including bunnies. And trust me, they don't use chamber pots.

PARTNER: I know that! Everybody knows that! We don't go to the the-ay-ter to see bunnies shit!

PLYMACHER: For the last time, it's pronounced *theater*. And this is a theatrical breakthrough! (Shakes the scroll) The Chamber Pot Plays by Gustav Plymacher!

PARTNER: Well, I, for one, am not going to see plays of that nature!

PLYMACHER: You, for one, don't go to see plays of any nature!

PARTNER: People just want a good time, for God's sake.

PLYMACHER: I don't care! I'm not going to give them a good time anymore.

PARTNER: By the way, that professor called. He wants to meet up with you again.

PLYMACHER: Tell him I'm dead.

PARTNER: He mentioned that he's written the final chapter on your early plays.

PLYMACHER: On my "intertextualities" or my "modalities"?

PARTNER: What?

PLYMACHER: Exactly!

PARTNER: What should I tell him if he calls again?

PLYMACHER: That I have ceased to care what critics think of my work, or audiences for that matter. I've sucked up for the last time. (He writes something on the scroll with the quill.)
Aha!

(The telephone rings.)

PLYMACHER: I'll get it. (Gets up, sticks the quill into Partner's hair.) (Answers the phone.) Yeah?
(Listens.) Yes, Professor, I heard you called.

(Lights up on PROFESSOR, with a cell phone.)

PROFESSOR: I was wondering if we could possibly meet again. I've been working on my project about your work, and I think you might like it.

PLYMACHER: I doubt it.

PROFESSOR: (taken aback) You doubt it?

PLYMACHER: I thought I made that clear at our first – and last – meeting in that restaurant.

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry that didn't go well. My fault. This time you select our meeting place.

PLYMACHER: How about Hell?

PROFESSOR: I don't know it. Is it close?

PLYMACHER: I'm not trying to insult you, Professor. It's only that I'm busy writing some new stuff, and I can't get away.

PROFESSOR: Oh, yet more plays?

PLYMACHER: Afraid so.

PROFESSOR: I guess I'll have to kill you.

PLYMACHER: What?!

PROFESSOR: It's a joke. To stop you from writing more plays. I'll never be able to complete my study!
(Laughs.)

PLYMACHER: (with fake laugh) Ha, ha, Professor. Well, I've got to go.

PROFESSOR: Wait! Just one more meeting, please. I think I have almost enough to finish my study.
Just a tiny bit more. Please!

PLYMACHER: If you can catch me! (Hangs up the phone.)

(Lights out on disappointed Professor.)

PARTNER: That wasn't very nice.

PLYMACHER: But effective! Some people don't know "no" when they hear it!

PARTNER: You'd better watch how you treat that guy. After all, he can kill you in his book.

PLYMACHER: That will only make me more fascinating than I already am.

PARTNER: You're full of yourself.

PLYMACHER: I am as God made me. And finally I am coming into my own as my own true self,
both personally and creatively.

PARTNER: (taking the quill out of her hair) He who . . . He who . . . (Can't find the words.)

PLYMACHER: Yeah? He who what? I'm waiting. . . . He who can't make up an aphorism shouldn't
open their mouth?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

PROFESSOR: (calling to his Maid) Rosetta, have you dusted the dog?

MAID: (entering with a duster) Yes, sir.

PROFESSOR: I don't know why it keeps gathering so much dust. Perhaps I should throw it out.

MAID: I'm sure I don't know, sir. Maybe you should move it.

PROFESSOR: It's been there since I moved in here, seventeen years ago. I'm not going to move it now. I've grown rather fond of it, actually. You do know, don't you, that it is a replica of my late real-life Mastiff, Griselda?

MAID: I think you told me, sir, several times.

PROFESSOR: I'd get a new dog, but it will just die too.

MAID: That happens, sir. But your maid just goes on and on.

PROFESSOR: I do appreciate all your effort, Rosetta. I want you to know that.

MAID: Thank you, Professor. I'd better get back to work.

PROFESSOR: So should I! I've got to get that awful playwright to let me finish my work on his work!

MAID: Is there some problem?

PROFESSOR: He's a jerk!

MAID: Why are you bothering with him, if I may ask?

PROFESSOR: Because I love his early work, just not *him*.

MAID: I'm glad I'm not a professor, Professor.

PROFESSOR: I've made my Procrustean bed, and now I must lie on it. . . . I've left your check on the table, as usual.

MAID: Thank you, sir. (Bows and leaves.)

(There is a knock at the door, offstage.)

PROFESSOR: (calling) Just a moment! (Goes offstage, returns leading PLYMACHER.) I'm so pleased that you agreed to meet with me again!

PLYMACHER: It's the absolutely last time, I swear.

PROFESSOR: I think I have some news that you will like.

PLYMACHER: I doubt it.

PROFESSOR: Would you like something to eat or drink?

PLYMACHER: Got any Imodium?

PROFESSOR: Imodium?

PLYMACHER: I still have diarrhea.

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry to hear that. But I'm afraid I don't have any Imodium.

PLYMACHER: Then I can't say your furniture is safe. (Sits in a chair.)

PROFESSOR: Well, let me speak fast then. I believe I have discovered a route to your work, a methodology whereby a full critical appreciation of it can be had.

PLYMACHER: And that would be what – to just read the damn stuff?

PROFESSOR: Deconstruction!

PLYMACHER: My heart is sinking already.

PROFESSOR: Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault!

PLYMACHER: I know. I hate them.

PROFESSOR: But the bias of logo-centrism may be what's standing in the way of true critical understanding of your plays!

PLYMACHER: I'm doing all right.

PROFESSOR: But are you? Most plays do not survive their own time. And I mentioned you to a colleague, and he had never heard of *The Blue Bunny Plays*.

PLYMACHER: I'll live.

PROFESSOR: I mean to go far deeper than mere “intertextualities,” which in a nutshell merely mean references, allusions between one text and another.

PLYMACHER: (upset) I've never plagiarized anybody!

PROFESSOR: I'm not saying you have. I'm saying your texts, i. e., *The Blue Bunny Plays*, are best appreciated when viewed not through the derivative analysis of Julia Kristeva but

but through a return to the original deconstruction of Derrida!

PLYMACHER: Derrida analyzed my bunnies – my rabbits?

PROFESSOR: I'm not saying that. But if he had!

PLYMACHER: And just what would this deconstruction theory say about my work? Not that I care.

PROFESSOR: That there is never a moment when meaning is complete and total!

PLYMACHER: What bullshit – and I mean complete and total!

PROFESSOR: Now, Mr. Plymacher –

PLYMACHER: My plays are about rabbits! Big, meaty rabbits! I watched lots of rabbits at our rural home when I was a kid, and I'm just reporting the horrors I saw!

PROFESSOR: That's author's intention, which we now know is a fallacy.

PLYMACHER: I write about rabbits, and they don't mean anything else but rabbits. Got it? Rabbits!

PROFESSOR: Well, if that is indeed so, nobody in the world of literary criticism will pay the least heed to your fine work. Are you aware of this?

PLYMACHER: I don't care. Let me put it another way: I don't fucking care!

PROFESSOR: Surely, you don't want your plays to evaporate once you're dead – not performed, not discussed?!

PLYMACHER: Don't call me “Shirley.” Now there's “intertextuality” for you!

PROFESSOR: Meaning?

PLYMACHER: There's no deep meaning. It's a line from a movie. You either get it or you don't.

PROFESSOR: I don't go to movies.

PLYMACHER: Of course you don't. Not high brow enough. By the way, I've started a new play.

PROFESSOR: Have you now? How many will that make?

PLYMACHER: I've lost count.

PROFESSOR: I haven't.

PLYMACHER: Guess what! It's about rabbits.

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PROFESSOR: Indeed?

PLYMACHER: Only this time about honest-to-god rabbits.

PROFESSOR: Dare I ask exactly how?

PLYMACHER: They have anuses and vaginas and diarrhea.

PROFESSOR: How charming.

PLYMACHER: They are not charming. That's the point. I'm becoming Beatrix Potter with a hard-on.

PROFESSOR: You're what?!

PLYMACHER: Wrong metaphor. I'm becoming Beatrix Potter with diarrhea!

PROFESSOR: Are you sure this is an advance in your work?

PLYMACHER: Yes.

PROFESSOR: And not a regression to a more infantile subject matter?

PLYMACHER: They *have* been infantile! But now I'm liberating my bunnies! Goodbye, cute!

PROFESSOR: I can understand wanting to deepen your subject matter, as many in the critical world think your plays border on the sentimental. But diarrhea hardly seems the answer.

PLYMACHER: I can't wait to see the audiences' faces.

PROFESSOR: You didn't ask me, but I cannot actually encourage this “development” in your plays. Really, I can't.

PLYMACHER: I'm not asking for your approval. Did I ask for your approval?

PROFESSOR: You did not. But as the leading champion of your work, I feel it my obligation to counsel you.

(Enter MAID.)

MAID: I'll be leaving now, Professor.

PROFESSOR: Oh, yes, very good, Rosetta. Did you get your check?

MAID: I did, sir.

PLYMACHER: Is this your maid?

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PROFESSOR: Yes, this is Rosetta. Rosetta, Mr. Plymacher.

PLYMACHER: Let's ask the maid what she thinks of the new "development" in my bunny plays, shall we?

PROFESSOR: I don't think so.

PLYMACHER: I think so. Tell me, Rosetta, not to condescend, of course, but have you ever seen or read anything called *The Blue Bunny Plays*?

MAID: I can't say that I have, sir.

PLYMACHER: Good! A fresh approach. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions, Rosetta?

MAID: (looks to Professor) I suppose not.

PROFESSOR: I don't know what this will prove, and I –

PLYMACHER: Rosetta – and I assume your last name has to be Stone , does it not?

MAID: No, it's Pebble.

PLYMACHER: Rosetta Pebble? Very wonderful. Tell me, Rosetta Pebble, who do you think of a series of plays about bunny rabbits with intestinal problems?

MAID: With what?

PLYMACHER: Diarrhea. Maybe shigella?

MAID: And bunnies?

PLYMACHER: Yes.

MAID: I don't think I'd want to see that, sir.

PLYMACHER: No?

PROFESSOR: No.

PLYMACHER: That's why I say yes! What could be better than plays that nobody wants to see?!

MAID: I see enough of that kind of stuff in the houses I clean. . . . Sir.

PROFESSOR: Thank you, Rosetta, for your assistance. I'll see you next week.

MAID: Sure thing. Is that all for now?

PROFESSOR: That's all. Good day.

(The MAID leaves.)

PROFESSOR: Did you ask that to see what the “peasants” think?

PLYMACHER: Sort of.

PROFESSOR: Well, she isn't a “peasant”!

(The MAID steps back in, holding her check out.)

MAID: Professor, I hate to bother you, but you forgot to sign the check.

PROFESSOR: I'm sorry, Rosetta, I'm getting forgetful. Here, let me sign it. (He does.) I hope that you don't think we were talking about you just now.

MAID: And whether I'm a “peasant” or not? No, sir, I certainly didn't. (Exits.)

PROFESSOR: (turning abruptly on PLYMACHER) Frankly, Mr. Plymacher, don't you think you've written enough plays already?!

PLYMACHER: But I want to do *The Unreadable Plays*. Surely, Professor, you can't wait to analyze them, can you?

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

(The same restaurant as before.)

PLYMACHER: (seated at a table, with a paper bag) (impatiently) Where the fuck is he?

(Enter Server.)

SERVER: Oh, you're back.

PLYMACHER: I'm expecting someone.

SERVER: The usual – nothin'?

PLYMACHER: I'll have water.

SERVER: Still or sparkling?

PLYMACHER: You decide.

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SERVER: How about tap?

PLYMACHER: Good choice.

SERVER: You're gonna die if you don't eat. (Leaves.)

PLYMACHER: (going through his manuscripts in his paper bag), then seeing the PROFESSOR)
At last!

(Enter the PROFESSOR carrying a briefcase.)

PROFESSOR: Don't get up!

PLYMACHER: Was I going to?

PROFESSOR: Of course you weren't. How silly of me. (Sits.) Well, we meet again!

PLYMACHER: Only because I want to show you in person the accurate translations of my new plays.

PROFESSOR: Did you say *plays* – plural?

PLYMACHER: Yeah, I've had a brainstorm since I finally let myself go and started writing what I really want to say.

PROFESSOR: How many?

PLYMACHER: Twenty.

PROFESSOR: You've written twenty plays since I last saw you?

PLYMACHER: Plus I just had an idea for another one.

PROFESSOR: And I've been writing as well. (Takes a manuscript out of the briefcase, plops it down on the table.) Here's my manuscript on your works. It's finally polished and finished. Or so I thought. (Gestures at the paper bag.)

PLYMACHER: You know I don't want to read it, especially now that it's based on incomplete information.

PROFESSOR: I was going to ask you to verify a few details. But now I suppose I'll have to revise the entire thing.

PLYMACHER: It seems to me that you'll have to incorporate the new plays plus revisit the early plays in light of the new translations, which I have now completed. Thank God Almighty!

PROFESSOR: You do realize how much trouble that's going to be?

(SERVER enters with a glass of water.)

SERVER: (putting the water down near PLYMACHER) (to PROFESSOR) You want a meal?

PROFESSOR: Just some oyster crackers.

SERVER: (disgusted) Just some oyster crackers! This place is gonna go out of business with customers like you two! (Exits.)

PLYMACHER: (to PROFESSOR) Yes, I do fully understand that you're going to have to revise your book, but you chose me as your subject, not the other way around.

PROFESSOR: I guess I'll have to kill you and destroy your new plays.

PLYMACHER: Not funny.

PROFESSOR: It seems like you'll never stop writing as long as you are living.

PLYMACHER: I can't help myself, it seems.

PROFESSOR: And your new plays are going to undercut the older ones.

PLYMACHER: I can only hope.

PROFESSOR: But your reputation is built on the *earlier* plays!

PLYMACHER: Based on mistranslations, misinterpretations by people who didn't even know me or what I wanted because of my publisher.

PROFESSOR: Maybe they know better than the writer what the plays should be.

PLYMACHER: Nobody knows better than the writer what the plays should be! Got that? Perhaps you should repeat that after me."Nobody . . ."

(Enter SERVER with regular crackers.)

SERVER: Here's your crackers, the only kind we got. (Slams them down on the table.)

PROFESSOR: Hey! Don't break them! (Grabs the crackers.)

SERVER: (insincerely) Sorry! (Exits.)

PROFESSOR: I was prepared to argue the case for your earlier works over your current ones and, evidently, any proposed future work. However, I don't believe it would do any good. Hurrah for the true bowel movements of the Flemish giant meat-rabbits. Or are they called hares?

PLYMACHER: Oh, let's not split hares.

PROFESSOR: So I suppose I will have to abandon my book on you, and the years involved, altogether.

PLYMACHER: Shit happens.

PROFESSOR: Even though I received a handsome advance on the proposal, and the book is set to come out soon.

PLYMACHER: Well, don't let it. Not until you find some way to fuse the new with the old, or, better still, write new chapters to replace your manuscript. I've brought the new stuff.
(Goes through the paper bag, shows some pages to the PROFESSOR.)

PROFESSOR: I hope those aren't your only copies.

PLYMACHER: You know I like to write them by hand and let the publisher's typesetter type them over.

(The PROFESSOR looks knowingly at the audience.)

PLYMACHER: Why are you looking out there? There's nobody there.

PROFESSOR: Let me present my dilemma to you, Mr. Plymacher, if I may, as cogently as I can.

PLYMACHER: No need to. I write too much, and you can't keep up. I'm writing new stuff that you don't approve of, and I'm revising my early stuff so that it's unrecognizable. Plus you'll have to return your advance on your completed book. It all puts you in a pickle, I guess. Anything else I should understand?

PROFESSOR: Yes, one thing more. You're a complete and utter shit – from your projectile diarrhea to your behavior and attitude about . . . about everything!

PLYMACHER: I told you I didn't want to meet in person.

PROFESSOR: Don't you realize how flattering it is to have someone write a book about you?

PLYMACHER: But not just any book! I'm not that needy. In fact, I'm not needy at all. It's very liberating to know that about yourself.

PROFESSOR: I was counting on this book to cap my promotion to full professor. Are you aware of that?

PLYMACHER: I love critics! They are the dung beetles of literature! We create. You capitalize.

PROFESSOR: We clarify and elevate your neuroses and scribblings to coherency and meaningfulness.

PLYMACHER: Well, let's not argue about it. I doubt that we're ever going to see eye to eye, are we?
So I'd better leave.

PROFESSOR: No, I'll leave. (Grabs his briefcase.) Do you mind if I have your glass of water?

PLYMACHER: Go right ahead. I haven't touched it.

(The PROFESSOR drinks some of the water, puts the glass down.)

PLYMACHER: Goodbye, Bart. I don't imagine we'll ever meet again, will we?

PROFESSOR: I don't think we will.

(The PROFESSOR gathers himself and his briefcase and leaves.)

(PLYMACHER does not watch him go.)

(But the PROFESSOR does not exit. Instead, he stops a few steps behind PLYMACHER. He takes a garrote out of a pocket and stretches it out. Immediately, he comes up behind PLYMACHER and puts the garrote around his neck and tightens it. PLYMACHER is able to get his hands under the cord.)

(Despite his struggles, the playwright is unable to stop his strangulation. He stops struggling and remains sitting upright.)

(After a check to confirm the playwright's death, the PROFESSOR removes the garrote from around his neck and puts it back into a pocket.)

(The PROFESSOR takes PLYMACHER'S paper bag, looks inside to verify that the new plays are inside and closes it up. He walks off, not looking back.)

(We see the dead playwright sitting upright for a moment. Then the SERVER enters.)

SERVER: So your friend left? (No response.) Need anything else? (No response.) (She shrugs.)
Whatever! (Exits indifferently.)

(Spotlight on the dead body as the head slumps forward.)

BLACKOUT