

# THE FIRST FLIGHT OF ICARUS

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*English version Ken Dean*

## **DIREITOS AUTORAIS**

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REALIZAÇÃO



Characters

A TEACHER: Mr. Marcos Dédalus

The Story of Zilah:

Zilah

Her mother

Dioni

A Drug Dealer

A Neighbour

A Boss

Zilah's friend

The Story of Leona

Leona

João Pedro

Mirinho

Zédu

Alice

Joel

The Story of Joel

Joel

His father

His mother

His friend

A group of actors and actresses with no speaking lines, who sing and dance.

## THE FIRST FLIGHT OF ICARUS

**BARE STAGE.** A GROUP OF PUPILS DANCE AROUND. IT'S THE GRADUATION CELEBRATION OF A SCHOOL IN THE POOR SUBURBS OF A CITY. IN THE BACKGROUND, PROJECTED ON A SCREEN, AN IMAGE OF ICARUS FALLING INTO THE AEGEAN SEA, WITH THE SUN BEHIND. A TEACHER ENTERS, A FIFTY-YEAR-OLD WITH BALDING, GREY HAIR. HE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.

**TEACHER** The story is told that the ingenious master craftsman Daedalus built wings of feathers and wax for him and his son, and thus they escaped from the labyrinth of Crete, where they had been left to die by King Minos. Dazzled by the sensation of freedom of flight, Icarus soared through the air, higher and higher towards the sun, until the wax on his wings melted and he fell to his death in the Aegean Sea. Women and men alike lamented the imprudence of the young man, but while the flight lasted, there was certainly no happier individual in the world, nor did anyone fly closer to the sun. (THE HARSH, GREY ARCHITECTURE OF A STATE SCHOOL IN THE POOR SUBURBS IS PROJECTED ON THE SCREEN) Ugly it might be, resembling a prison as it does, but I learned to love its cold, unfriendly corridors, because of the spirit and joy that circulated within them: full of fragile wings of feathers and wax. I am a teacher, of course. At a State Secondary school on the periphery of the city. They say that a real teacher should never lose even one pupil. I have lost some to urban violence, drugs, despair. It hurts, but these are inevitable, and I prefer to focus on success. (A PHOTO OF A GROUP OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM A SCHOOL ON THE PERIPHERY IS PROJECTED) I remember well this group, their graduation, and the stories of some of them, in particular. (THE IMAGE OF A BLACK GIRL IS HIGHLIGHTED ON THE PROJECTED PHOTO) Zilah.

## THE FIRST SONG OF ZILAH

A GROUP OF ACTORS ENTER, SINGING THE BALLAD OF ZILAH.

ACTORS

She came into this world on a night of rain  
A fitting match for poverty and pain  
A weak cry of protest in the simple hut  
As the air of life entered her tiny breast  
With the smell of squalor.  
Cardboard for a bed, her blanket is a rag,  
And besides all this,  
A father predicting with face of grey:  
Woman, I cannot lie

ZILAH

This scrap of life will not survive  
But Zilah did survive!  
By fits and starts she passed one year  
'She won't make it to two' a neighbour said  
Don't plan ahead! The doctor said: pneumonia sunk in its claws.  
The fine thread of life threatened to break.  
The baby struggled, but struggle why?  
Struggle in vain, the neighbours said,  
She's sickly, listen to what I say,  
Resign yourself to God,  
She won't last a week,  
Won't make it to tomorrow, the doctor said,  
Won't make it through the night.

ACTORS

But Zilah made it!  
She didn't have the good sense to fulfil the prophecies  
She confronted their future with attitude  
And anger. She cried "No!" to a sad tomorrow  
One day is never like the rest.  
Life is just a puff of air, take it for the best.  
Pretty girl who can talk tough  
And knows how to deal with a world that's rough

ZILAH Life is a puff of air  
My future has to be fair

ACTORS You seek what you can't find  
You want what you can't have  
Accept it, Zilah!  
But Zilah didn't accept it!

ZILAH At 15 she fell in love as 15-year-old girls do. (A BOY, DIONI, APPEARS AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. ZILAH LOOKS AT HIM AND SMILES. DIONI SMILES TOO. THEY APPROACH EACH OTHER AS THEY SPEAK)

DIONI At 15 love finds a way out through the eyes, because it's too big to be contained inside.

ZILAH At 15, one look, one smile, and we know for sure that he's the one for ever and for always. That's how it was. A look that crossed the dirt road of the periphery, the fence, the back garden, the heart of Dioni.

DIONI It was in my blood. At 15, life is pure thirst and all the water in the world will not quench it.

ZILAH At 15, love is an abyss and a refuge; it's the impossible dream within reach.

DIONI At 15, we learn the impossible, for always. (THEY EMBRACE PASSIONATELY. SUDDENLY ZILAH PUSHES DIONI AWAY FROM HER AND TURNS HER BACK ON HIM. DIONI IS PUZZLED) What is it?

ZILAH (IRRITATED) You know!

DIONI I know what? (ZILAH TURNS BACK TO HIM AND STARES AT HIM, FOR A WHILE. DIONI UNDERSTANDS) They've already told you? I thought you'd understand.

ZILAH I don't understand!

DIONI For God's sake, Zilah! All I have is a pair of trousers, a torn pair of tennis shoes and three shirts.... It's just for a while...

ZILAH It's not just for a while, and you know it!

DIONI I'm fed up doing odd jobs, never having anything. There's no alternative.

ZILAH Yes, there is!

DIONI I'm not gonna live like my dad, seeing his life and health waste away in exchange for a miserable salary...

ZILAH He's still alive!

DIONI Don't tempt fate!

ZILAH I'm not tempting fate! (PAUSES. CRIES.) I'm afraid... Don't do this!

DIONI I must. In this great country, that's all that's left for us. Poor people are like a boat capsizing in a sudden change of wind. No wind, no safe port. We're a dead weight keeling over in the face of an immutable force.

ZILAH We can't keel over!

DIONI Heaven exists, Zilah, but it's closed to us, there's an armed angel guard on the door, gun in hand. It's sad, but the world's like that.

ZILAH No, it's not, and it can't be.

DIONI Hold me tight!

ZILAH No! Don't do this!

DIONI I must, you know I must. It's just for a while...

ZILAH No, it's not. (DIONI EMBRACES HER)

DIONI Look at the moon, it's been a long while since it's been so beautiful. (THEY LOOK) We're alive, today's today, and you're the water to quench my thirst. (THEY EMBRACE. ZILAH SPEAKS FROM DIONI'S ARMS)

ZILAH The ragged huts, the dirt streets, the narrow, dirty alleyways look beautiful bathed in moonlight. The cold night calls for an embrace. I can't refuse, even with the mist of sadness which falls upon my eyes and upon my soul.

TEACHER They say that fifteen days later, during a storm, in the early hours of the morning, they found Dioni's half naked body on a piece of waste land, riddled with fifteen bullets, the blood already washed away by the rain. Sorry for the harshness of the description, but

that's how they told Zilah. It was a short flight for a drug dealer's pawn. Zilah cried for days on end. On the fourth day she took a deep breath, carefully folded up her sadness and put it away in a drawer deep in her heart. And moved on.

#### THE SECOND SONG OF ZILAH

ZILAH           With its enormous silver eye  
The moon from the heavens spied on the city  
Divided between centre and poor suburbs  
And so many short, sad stories  
And other disputes  
And in the middle of her struggle  
Zilah looks out through the mist.  
She's little more than a girl  
But a whole adult life hangs over her.  
Blind eyes try to invade the darkness.  
Don't cry Zilah, the day of yesterday,  
The day of today can light up your future.  
With its enormous silver eye  
The moon from the heavens spied on the divided girl

TEACHER       The next day Zilah went back to work, but not for long.

BOSS           Yes, I gave her the sack! Is she made of gold? She's scum! Came up to me wagging her finger in my face, and insulted me. Who does she think she is? A shop assistant with airs and graces, a gangster's moll! Get out! I shouted. Go and demand your rights elsewhere.

ZILAH         (PPOINTS TO THE BOSS) He came up to me talking rubbish and put his hands on my breasts like he owned me. I own myself! (BOSS GOES OFF ANNOYED)

- MOTHER I told you to watch your lip. How are we going to live now, with you without a job? You've got to learn how to deal with these men, my dear...
- ZILAH No way, mum! I've had enough of this poverty, this lack of dignity, lack of a future.
- TEACHER 'Pay attention!', I shouted one day. I shocked even myself with my anger, but I carried on. 'You have nothing! No money, no future, and if you let it happen, you'll carry on in the same old miserable, ignorant existence! You're the only ones interested in yourselves. Your only chance is the power knowledge provides! Impossible to change the world, you say? Well you'll have to seek the impossible, because all the possible things have owners and they're not you!
- ZILAH I remember well this tough dressing-down Mr. Daedalus gave us in class. He spoke, he shouted, he screamed at us, and left the classroom saying he was giving up teaching. He was back the next day.
- TEACHER Does anyone believe in Karma? That destinies intertwine like mine intertwines with those of these kids? If not, you'd better start believing.
- DRUG DEALER You don't know me, so allow me to introduce myself: I'm in charge in this neighbourhood, and I've had my eye on her, ever since she was still Dioni's girl. She's cute, got a nice body, wildcat eyes, I like that. I sent her silver chains, a gold ring. She didn't take them, but she's still on my list. Believe me, it won't be long before she comes crawling sweetly to me on all fours, eating from my hand. One way or another she's mine.

- NEIGHBOUR I'm a neighbour, and what I say to you I've said to her face: Zilah has no common sense. She wants to be different, seems she's ashamed to be like us. She thinks she can do anything!
- MOTHER It's not like that Cida! I told you.
- NEIGHBOUR 'Ah!', I replied. 'Your daughter was spoilt, and now you're sick, she stands around doing nothing'.
- MOTHER She can't find a job.
- NEIGHBOUR She can't keep her mouth shut when she needs to! She's after something she can't get, wants to be someone she can't be. God knows what will become of her!
- MOTHER This is what it was like. April came without much rain, and the pretty flowers I'd planted in an empty tin can in the back garden bloomed, and I was looking forward to seeing the neighbours' faces when the other flowers bloomed in the pot I'd hung on the bare wall of the hut. The winter had been harsh and had taken it out of me – all those years of sadness and hard work. My joints ached and my heart began to beat softly. I felt that if I saw in the Spring, I surely wouldn't make it to the Summer.
- ZILAH The loss. These terrible words can't express what we can't understand, so I won't try to explain. I will just say that my eyes opened wide, then drowned in a flood of tears while I learnt to deal with a new pain.
- MOTHER From the bed where I lay, I called her and told her a secret I'd kept all my life: 'Zilah', I said, I've always wanted a beautiful funeral, a finely carved, polished coffin, lined with satin and flowers, a lot of flowers.
- ZILAH I promised to do this for her. So sadness, loss and abandonment knocked on the door at that moment and came in like silent strangers who sit in our house with no time set to leave. Life is a fragile thread, but it snaps with a howl, a roar, and then just silence. That's what it was like for me. (DRUG DEALER ENTERS, SMILING, WITH TWO CHAIRS THAT HE PLACES FACING EACH OTHER. HE SITS DOWN HAPPILY.)

DRUG DEALER News travels fast, and a funeral like this is expensive. I know she's been desperately looking for money. She'll come to me I'm sure.  
(ZILAH ENTERS) She hasn't got her head down, she doesn't look humble, as I expected. 'My condolences', I said.

ZILAH I didn't reply immediately. I looked at that man and realised I was tired, very tired.

NEIGHBOUR I saw it when she came in. She would give herself to the gangster in exchange for help for the funeral.

ZILAH I bury my mother and dress in silk, wearing perfume and designer fashion, and lie down on satin sheets.... who cares who lies on top of me, I screamed to myself. Enough of this undignified poverty!

DRUG DEALER I looked on as her new owner and smiled in anticipation of the pleasures of her naked, warm body.

ZILAH I walked towards him with determination. Enough of this undignified poverty!

NEIGHBOUR I know what's going on inside her mind. Shameless as she is.... On the day of her mother's death!

DRUG DEALER She came over meekly. I smiled.

ZILAH I went with no regrets and no remorse. I don't care who I lie down with, I screamed again to myself.

DRUG DEALER Now I've got what I want.

ZILAH I stopped and ordered my mouth to smile. I smiled. "Bury my mother as she wished, tomorrow I'll come back and you can do whatever you want with me!" I tried to say, but my voice refused.

DRUG DEALER I don't need to look anymore.

ZILAH Enough of this undignified poverty, I repeated, but a deep echo, a fragile vibration gently moved the air which is the soul. And it whispered "no" in my ears.

NEIGHBOUR Leaving already? You've only just arrived!

DRUG DEALER Where are you going? Who do you think you are? You'll be back, you slag! You'll be back on your knees, pleading for my help for the love of God!

NEIGHBOUR Is she mad? Turning down a man like him? You've got no common sense, Zilah. It's your mother's funeral, you ungrateful daughter!  
(PEOPLE FORM A SEMICIRCLE AROUND WHAT WOULD BE A CORPSE IN A FUNERAL, MUTTERING PRAYERS)

ZILAH I put my two pieces of spare clothing and my school books in my bag, which wasn't very much to start a new life with, I thought. I leaned over my mother's body with dry eyes, and lips sealed. Only my soul cried out with love and thanks. I smiled and said goodbye. That was my prayer. I couldn't bear any more, and left to the looks of horror and recrimination of the people crowded in that little room.

NEIGHBOUR She left like the wind, she couldn't even wait for her mother's funeral. What kind of daughter is that?!

FRIEND She crossed the dirt road with dry eyes, blind to the harsh looks and ears deaf to hurtful comments. She waved to me with a slight smile and went on with the confident footsteps of someone who knows where she's going.

ZILAH May the dead bury their dead, I thought, from the depths of my soul. I know my mother lives on, and at times, her soft voice whispers in my ear.

### THE THIRD SONG OF ZILAH

ACTORS Here comes Zilah, no common sense  
She has no guide and her future's immense  
Mark my words

Where she goes

Danger lies

She looks for what she can't have

She wants what she shouldn't

Life won't be easy

Mark my words.

She's seventeen  
A woman, but hardly born  
Who does she think she is?  
The world's already here  
Why try to build it again?  
She won't take things as they are  
She doesn't know her place  
Who will bring her to her senses  
When she goes off the rails?  
Who will lead her to her great future?  
Zilah has no common sense  
That we can see  
She never knows what will be  
As she always takes the risk  
Of listening to her own heart!

THE PHOTO OF THE GRADUATION PARTY APPEARS AGAIN ON THE SCREEN. A CORNY, ROMANTIC SONG IS PLAYED, AND A PLUMP GIRL ENTERS SINGING. SHE OVERDOES THE PASSION, WHICH MAKES HER FRIENDS LAUGH. SHE FINISHES THE SONG AND THE PUPILS APPLAUD AND LAUGH. SHE GRABS ONE OF THEM AND PRACTICALLY DRAGS HIM OVER TO ONE SIDE.

LEONA João Pedro, I sang this song for you.  
JOÃO PEDRO Why?  
LEONA What do you mean, why? It's obvious, isn't it?  
JOÃO PEDRO What's obvious, Leona?  
LEONA Ah, João Pedro! Don't be difficult, no wonder they all think you're a bit soft in the head! (PASSIONATELY) Be mine! I'll be your babe!  
JOÃO PEDRO What?  
LEONA Well, not exactly..., it's just a way of saying..., 'cos I'm not like those girls..., even though sometimes I'd like to be ..., just a little.... Kiss me!

- JOÃO PEDRO     What?
- LEONA            A kiss! Open your mouth! Lips on lips, a delicate and short penetration of the tongue, a light suction, it's as simple as that! Kiss! Kiss! Kiss! (JOÃO PEDRO BURSTS OUT LAUGHING. AFTER A LITTLE SHOCK, LEONA LAUGHS EVEN LOUDER AND THEN MOVES AWAY, FURIOUS. You imbecile! You idiot! These boys can't do anything right! (DRIES A TEAR) Damn!  
(TELLS HER STORY) There's something wrong with me, I'm seventeen, and..., nothing, no love of my life. Even Carlucha, who's a weirdo, much worse than me, has got something on with André. They say she's even slept with him. Not me! I've had my chances, plenty of boys hitting on me, but... God! I hate myself!
- TEACHER         Leona is a fond memory, because she was a sweet soul. "My heart is bursting, it leaks out through my eyes", she wrote once in an essay. She was like that, she liked to write, and what she really wanted was to fall in love with an idea, with her work, with somebody. (READS FROM A PIECE OF PAPER) To Mr. Marcos Dédalus. It's for me, (UNFOLDS THE NOTE)
- LEONA            I don't know how to say this, so let me throw all formality aside, to penetrate and capture your soul: I love you.
- TEACHER         My dear Leona, more than me, you love words and the capacity they have to translate the whirlwinds, rapids and still waters of your soul. Marcos Dédalus. You loved me for always... for a week. (LOOKS AGAIN AT THE GRADUATION PHOTO) I remember each one of them. Cris, Téó, William, Paula, Dafé... So many that spread their wings and launched themselves into the air just to challenge gravity. That's adolescence: courage in the face of danger. The graduation night started off anxious, tense, as on any important day. (LOOKS TO THE WINGS AND POINTS OUT THE TIMID ENTRY OF MIRINHO) Here comes Mirinho. (A SHY BOY COMES IN, WITH HESITANT STEPS) He has an important role in this story.

LEONA                   Mirinho! Good to see you! Will you stay with me? (MIRINHO COMES CLOSER) Just for company, just good friends. Are you seeing anyone you like, Mirinho?

MIRINHO               (TURNS HIS BACK) Yes...

LEONA                   But I mean someone you really like..., to eat, sleep and drink that person.

MIRINHO               Yes...

LEONA                   You too, Mirinho!? Am I the only one who's alone?

MIRINHO               But the person doesn't know.

LEONA                   I think I'm as weird as you are.

MIRINHO               I'm not weird!

LEONA                   I know, I only said that 'cos you're my friend. I don't want to be the only weird one. Zedú!

MIRINHO               What?

LEONA                   Zedú.

MIRINHO               Who's Zédu?

LEONA                   Nice guy.

MIRINHO               Do you like him?

LEONA                   I will! He's great! Tall, dark and handsome.

MIRINHO               (OFFENDED) All that?

LEONA                   For me, he is. A boy like that is half the battle won. The other half I'll win myself.

MIRINHO               (ANNOYED ) I'm off!

LEONA                   No don't, stay here!

MIRINHO               So change the subject then! You just talk about guys you fancy! João Pedro, Mr. Dédalus, Zedú...

LEONA                   Hang on! You make me sound like a real slag. I was just friends with João Pedro. With Mr. Dédalus it was... God knows what that was! With Zédu it's... I don't know what it is either... Most girls would fall for him, it's just that, I dunno... there's something wrong with me, I can't manage to... but I will, 'cos it's one of them I want. You know how I started to like Zédu? Because of a letter.

MIRINHO               A letter?

LEONA A beautiful letter he wrote. A guy that writes like that, with real affection...

MIRINHO Zédu writes well?

LEONA Of course he does (PASSIONATELY) And how! I've got one of his letters here. No, two! (MIRINHO LOOKS AT HER, INCREDULOUS)

MIRINHO What kind of letters?

LEONA Love letters!

MIRINHO How did you get them? (ROMANTIC DANCE MUSIC STARTS TO PLAY)

LEONA Never mind! Let's dance!

MIRINHO I don't know how! (LEONA GRABS MIRINHO, WHO, RATHER UNWILLINGLY, STARTS TO DANCE ALONG WITH THE OTHER COUPLES)

TEACHER It was a simple graduation ceremony, from a simple school, with no airs and graces. But the most important element of any graduation was right there at the centre of things: an open spirit, anxious and fearful of the new paths ahead. (GRADUALLY, THE ROMANTIC MUSIC CHANGES INTO A LEAVING SONG. THEY ALL SING, AND THRONG TOGETHER, EMBRACING EACH OTHER, AND PARTING)

#### LEAVING SONG

How many of us  
How many of us  
Will be together  
I wonder  
We want to be  
Together for ever  
But time  
Will part us I know  
Tomorrow brings  
Another city

Another love  
Another distant school  
Let's stay together  
I wish  
But I wonder  
Work  
A new path  
Call, write,  
We'll talk  
We won't lose touch  
We won't forget  
I swear,  
Let's be together  
I'll shed some tears  
We were the best!  
May this night never end  
And tomorrow never come  
In another place  
Some job far away  
A timeless time  
Let's stay together  
For ever.

(AS THE SONG IS COMING TO AN END MIRINHO AND ANOTHER BOY, ZÉDU, SEPARATE FROM THE GROUP. MIRINHO HANDS THE LETTER TO ZÉDU. AT THE SAME TIME, LEONA SEPARATES FROM THE GROUP, WHICH SLOWLY MOVES TOGETHER, EMBRACING. LEONA DRIES HER TEARS, UNFOLDS A LETTER AND ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE)

LEONA I need to talk to Zédu. I heard that he and his family are moving to the countryside. It's now or never! Even if he doesn't care about me he needs to know he's leaving someone here who's in love with him. (READS) "Please forgive me for being so bold as to write

to you, but my heart leads me on. My heart doesn't know I'm shy, nor does it stammer when it speaks, nor tremble like my legs when I'm close to you. My heart knows no limits, it gives me courage, leads me on, and I follow faithfully. My heart brought me to you. I beg you to welcome us into your heart. Zédu" He wrote it... beautiful isn't it? It's so beautiful it doesn't matter it wasn't written for me.

ZÉDU Did you bring it?

MIRINHO Yeah, but I don't know if I'm gonna give it to you.

ZÉDU Why not?

MIRINHO Because I think I'm gonna need it.

ZÉDU Don't do this to me, not today! Look! Alice's gonna end up with Joel! They've been drinking together for a while now.

MIRINHO Joel's not interested in Alice.

ZÉDU But he might start getting interested! Gimme that!

MIRINHO I dunno, I really don't know, Zédu! (THE GROUP CONTINUES DANCING TOGETHER FORMING A HALF CIRCLE ACROSS THE STAGE)

ALICE What are you thinking about?

JOEL Nothing.

ALICE Well cheer up or I'm changing partners!

JOEL OK, OK! I was thinking how difficult families are... but forget that. What are you going to do now?

ALICE I wanted to go to university but I don't have money to support myself.

JOEL I'm gonna try and get in.

ALICE You'll need to study hard.

JOEL I'm fed up with studying! (PAUSE) This is all so sad.... This great bunch of friends....

ALICE (SOBBING) No, don't start! Not again! I don't wanna think about that! (SHOUTS) Let's put something livelier on or we'll all be

crying! (FRENETIC MUSIC STARTS AND THE KIDS DANCE INDIVIDUALLY TO THE RHYTHM. ALL EXCEPT JOEL, WHO REMAINS STILL, LOOKING SHELL-SHOCKED AS HE OBSERVES A COUPLE ENTER. THE VOLUME OF THE MUSIC GOES DOWN BUT THE KIDS CARRY ON DANCING AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED)

- JOEL Dad! Mum! What are you doing here?
- FATHER Hi, Joel!
- MOTHER We just dropped in to see if you were having fun!
- JOEL I was until you arrived!
- MOTHER Don't talk to us like that.
- JOEL You've got no reason to be here! Let me live my life in peace!
- MOTHER All right, Joel, we'll go... sorry to be an inconvenience. We'll see you at home, don't be too late...
- JOEL No! I'm not going home!
- FATHER Where are you going?
- JOEL Mind your own business! Shit! Why won't you leave me in peace!  
(GOES OFF FURIOUS. THE FATHER IS ANNOYED AND STARTS TO GO AFTER JOEL BUT HIS WIFE RESTRAINS HIM. THEY STAND FOR A MOMENT, LOOKING BEWILDERED, THEN GO OFF SLOWLY)
- TEACHER Joel is a problem according to his parents. (THE MOTHER, WHO WAS GOING OFF, RETURNS)
- MOTHER Oh, God! He was such a sweet, good boy... It's the age.
- FATHER It's lack of discipline, like I've always said!
- TEACHER No, not now, please. Let's leave the story of Joel for later (POINTS TO THE WAY OFF) Please... (MAKES A GESTURE AND LEONA RETURNS) The letter.
- LEONA Ah, the letter! He wrote it for Alice and I found it on the patio. I didn't give it straight back because Alice is a drag. And why didn't

- I get a letter like that! So I kept it, I gave myself a present. Was I wrong?
- ZÉDU Give it to me, Mirinho!
- MIRINHO Do you know what, Zédu? What's written here is what I feel too.
- ZÉDU For Alice? Forget it, mate. Over my dead body! I've been after Alice for a while and you know it!
- MIRINHO It's not Alice! It's someone else!
- ZÉDU Who?
- MIRINHO None of your business!
- ZÉDU Find your own letter, this one's mine!
- MIRINHO It's not yours! I'm the one who wrote it! Shit! And how did you lose the other two!
- LEONA I don't know, but I think I'm just gonna tell Zédu what I feel about him, right to his face. If he's not interested I'll just laugh or cry, I dunno, but at least I'll put an end to all this anxiety. Where's Mirinho?
- MIRINHO You just go up and say..., I dunno, it's not easy? It's funny to like someone... She makes me mad!
- ZÉDU What are you talking about? She who?
- MIRINHO Nobody!
- ZÉDU Gimme the letter, go on. Today's my last chance.
- MIRINHO No, Zédu, I'll go one better. I'll deliver this letter to the person it was meant for in the first place.
- TEACHER What exactly is a party like this all about? On the surface it's loud music, dancing, happiness. But it's not difficult to see the anxiety, the expectations and desires pulsating in each young heart. Especially about what comes afterwards. It's the end of one chapter in life and the beginning of another, and it's a moment of high risk.
- LEONA Mirinho! Where have you been? Could you do me a great favour? Deliver a note to Zédu for me?

MIRINHO No way!

LEONA Why not?

MIRINHO Because I don't feel like it, OK? I'm fed up with hearing you talking about Zédu!

LEONA There's no need to be so rude! (MIRINHO MOVES AWAY) Where are you going?

MIRINHO Have you seen Alice?

LEONA No, why?

MIRINHO I've got a letter for her.

LEONA Who from? Zédu?

MIRINHO (INNOCENTLY) Yeah.

LEONA Lemme see. Lemme read just a bit. (MIRINHO MOVES AWAY. LEONA LOOKS DISTURBED) Mirinho, don't go! (MIRINHO STOPS, LOOKING SURPRISED) Come here, please! Don't take the letter! If you're my friend, please don't deliver it.

MIRINHO I'm Zédu's friend too, I must deliver it!

LEONA Please! (SHE SITS DOWN AND STARTS TO CRY. MIRINHO LOOKS UNCOMFORTABLE AND THEN SITS DOWN TOO. LEONA TAKES THE LETTERS FROM HER BAG AND HANDS THEM OVER TO MIRINHO) These are the letters from Zédu to Alice. One I found, and the other I took from his notebook.

MIRINHO You stole it!?

LEONA (LOOKS OFFENDED) No, I intercepted it! I know it's wrong, but when you're in love...

MIRINHO Are you really in love with him?

LEONA I don't know, Mirinho... I dunno.... but I just want to be near him. Can I? That's why you can't deliver this letter to Alice.

MIRINHO And does Zédu know?

LEONA No... That's why I wanted you to take my note.

MIRINHO I'm not gonna get involved in all this mess, Leona. Zédu is mad about Alice and you had no right to do what you did.

LEONA You don't know what it's like to wake up one morning, and with no warning, feel your heart bursting with the desire to say: I love

you, I want to love someone! But who? Someone out there amongst the multitudes, ready to welcome with open arms that most precious gift you found inside your soul, on waking up that morning. How do I find that special someone who deserves my first love? Do you realise what that means?

MIRINHO I do. (OPENS THE ENVELOPE AND TAKES OUT THE LETTER. READS IT ALOUD WITH GROWING INTENSITY) These words I devote to you. I chose every one of them as you would a diamond, searching every river that flows to my heart, and chose the most shining, the most perfect. They possess the courage I don't have, they make excuses for me, they reach out where I know I cannot reach, they carry my voice to whisper *I love you* in your ears.

LEONA (DOES A LITTLE TAP DANCE ECSTATICALLY) Ah!, that's so beautiful!! Oh, Zédu! Who couldn't love someone who wrote that?!!

MIRINHO You haven't noticed anything!

LEONA What do you mean?

MIRINHO You can't see, can you? I wrote the letters! It was me!

LEONA You?

MIRINHO Yeah, me! Do you think Zédu knows how to write? He can't even spell his own name!

LEONA You're just jealous of Zédu!

MIRINHO Have a look at the English essay marks he gets. He asked me to write them!"

LEONA But... why are you so upset? (THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER FOR A WHILE. SOMETHING SLOWLY DAWNS ON LEONA. SHE STARTS TO LAUGH) No, Mirinho, Not you! Sorry, but... You're not someone...

MIRINHO (BUTTS IN, ANGRILY)... that you'd fall in love with!

LEONA We're just friends...

MIRINHO OK. Gimme the other letters and I'll deliver them to Alice.

LEONA You're not gonna do that... (MIRINHO PUTS THE THIRD LETTER IN HER HAND)

MIRINHO            You deliver them then. And deliver this one too. I'll tell Alice you've got three letters for her. (GOES OFF. LEONA CALLS HIM AND GOES AFTER HIM)

LEONA              Mirinho! (THE MUSIC GETS LOUDER. COUPLES DANCE AROUND HER. THEY DANCE AWAY FROM HER AND SHE SINGS ALONE ON THE STAGE)

LEONA              Who rules the heart?  
Who says *No*  
When the heart says *Yes*?  
Who made me like this?

Which path should I follow?  
Which call should I heed?  
My eyes can't see  
The love that whispers  
Inside the darkness  
Whose hand  
Will touch the light  
That floods my heart?

(AT THE END OF THE SONG, THE MUSIC CONTINUES. LEONA HOLDS THE LETTERS IN HER HANDS AND WALKS TOWARDS ALICE, WHO'S DANCING WITH JOEL)

LEONA              Alice! (ALICE SEPARATES FROM JOEL AND GOES TOWARDS ALICE)

ALICE                What's up Leona?

LEONA              (AFRAID TO HAND OVER THE LETTERS) Nothing... it's just that I wanted to say sorry if I've upset you in the past... we were never close, but I just wanted to say how much I admire you.

ALICE                Thanks. I admire you too.

LEONA              Good luck to you.

ALICE                Good luck to you too.

LEONA (SHE'S GOING OFF, BUT NOTICES MIRINHO LOOKING AT HER. SHE GOES BACK TO ALICE, IN TEARS) These letters are for you. They're from someone that likes you a lot. Sorry. (HANDS OVER THE LETTERS. MOVES AWAY TO THE EDGE OF THE STAGE)

LEONA Love, sadness and solitude  
Rule the heart!  
(LEONA AND ALICE GO OFF. THE COUPLES CONTINUE DANCING, AND JOEL MAKES AN IMPATIENT GESTURE AS HE SEES HIS MOTHER ENTER AGAIN)

MOTHER Joel! (JOEL LEAVES) My boy! (TO THE AUDIENCE) Children grow up, and the world tempts them with so many unknown paths ... so much danger. Mothers learn a new form of fear.

TEACHER This is such a strange story, that many people doubt whether it actually happened. Not me. I believe in every word, every step, because some stories have to be invented to be real. For some time conflict has been growing in Joel's family.

FATHER What sort of time is this to come home? I need to have a serious conversation with him, for once and for all.

MOTHER Go easy with him, please!

FATHER I've been going easy with him for too long! He does what he wants, doesn't say where he's going, or when he's coming back. He comes in and out of this house as if he were stranger! And worst of all, he treats us like strangers!

MOTHER Try and calm down. He's coming (ENTER JOEL)

FATHER OK, son! It's time we had a chat! (JOEL NOTICES THE PRESENCE OF HIS PARENTS AND REACTS WITH DESPAIR)

JOEL Oh my God. They're driving me mad.

FATHER Well, you're gonna talk to me before you go mad!

JOEL I've got nothing to say to you.

MOTHER (TRYING TO CALM THINGS DOWN) OK, Joel.... Some other time...

FATHER You might not have anything to say, but I do!

JOEL I'm not listening (STAMPS OUT HEAVILY)

FATHER Come back here, kid! (GOES AFTER JOEL, BUT IS RESTRAINED BY HIS WIFE)

MOTHER Leave it for another time!

FATHER (SHOUTS, SO HE CAN BE HEARD BY JOEL) This boy, it's time he became a man! (JOEL RETURNS, FURIOUS)

JOEL Then let me find my own way!

FATHER What does it mean for you, to be a man? Going out God knows where, at God knows what time of day or night, with people we don't know? At your age...

JOEL You're not my age and I'm not yours!

MOTHER It's for your own good...

JOEL For my own good, mum? Please!

FATHER That's enough! From now on, inside this house, you're gonna do what I want! I say what happens here!

JOEL I'm leaving, then! I can't stand it any more!

MOTHER Please...

FATHER I'm the one who can't stand it any more! (JOEL LEAVES. THE FATHER SPEAKS TO HIMSELF) I work like a dog, ten, twelve hours a day... I don't deserve this, I really don't deserve this!

MOTHER It's just a phase... mixing with the wrong crowd...

FATHER I don't know... we're living our lives, time goes on and one day, without realising it, the kids aren't kids any more, they grow away from us... Do remember how close we used to be? Hand in glove. Now I don't know what to say to him, how to get through to him, and he doesn't want to listen. I don't understand how all this happens...

MOTHER I'll talk to him. His place is here at home. (MOTHER LEAVES)

TEACHER On graduation day, I had a few words with Joel, and he seemed a little tense, cut off in his own world. "All OK Joel"?, I said... "All OK", he replied.

FRIEND “Hello mate! How are you doing”? I said, as soon as I saw him. I realised immediately that all wasn’t well, when Joel dropped in after the graduation party. “Let’s have a chat”, I suggested. I’m a good friend, and I saw he needed me. I told my dad, and we went out. The moon was high and bright, really beautiful, and we talked until the early hours. He just talked about leaving home, getting out into the world, it was fixed in his mind. I suggested he stay with me for a few days to get his head together. He thanked me for the offer, but just walked off into the night... He looked a bit lost.

JOEL I walked up and down my street several times before deciding to go in. I knew what I was going to say, knew what I should do, but at times like this you need to pluck up courage. I stopped, took a deep breath, opened the door and went in: they were there.

MOTHER He came in. I don’t know why, but I was afraid when I saw my son come in. I felt in my heart it would be the last time I saw him. But I refused to believe it.

JOEL Do what you have to do, Joel! I tried to give myself strength, I saw the hard lines of my father’s face and then the fragile expression of my mother and lost all courage. I felt angry with my eyes as they filled with tears.

MOTHER Your father and I were worried sick...

JOEL Be quiet, mum!

FATHER (TRYING TO CONTROL HIMSELF) Don’t speak to your mother like that!

MOTHER We’re not going to argue with you again, Joel. We just want to talk...

FATHER Life’s not a bed of roses, my son! You need to prepare yourself for the world, to have a profession, a career...

MOTHER Your dad’s right! You don’t take care of yourself... These funny friends of yours... You’re never in!

FATHER We just want what’s best for you... and don’t make that face, kid! We have a right to...

JOEL You have no right whatsoever! And don’t call me kid!

FATHER I'll call you whatever I like! And don't raise your voice with me!  
We have every right to say what we want to say! We earned it  
through years of hard work, worry and sleepless nights.... We  
have every right!

JOEL You're driving me mad!

FATHER You're driving us mad! Your mother cries and worries herself to  
death when she doesn't know where you are!

JOEL But it's my life, dad!

MOTHER (IN TEARS) It's our life! We're still a family.

FATHER (RUSHES TOWARDS JOEL) From now on kid... (JOEL INTERRUPTS  
HIM, SCREAMING)

JOEL Dad! Mum! For God's sake! You're dead! (SILENCE. FATHER AND  
MOTHER EXCHANGE GLANCES, LOOKING LOST) Remember? I  
only found out the next day. "It was a dark night/ very foggy/there  
was a crash/ motorway pile-up/ fifteen cars/your parents/  
they're dead Joel!" That's how aunt Alzira told me. She could  
hardly get the words out.

MOTHER What are you saying, son?

FATHER (AFTER A MOMENT, COMES TO HIS SENSES) Leave it, dear...

MOTHER What do you mean leave it? How can he say something like that...?  
(A PAUSE. MOTHER LOOKS AT JOEL AND THEN LOOKS BACK AT  
HER HUSBAND. HE NODS HIS HEAD. MOTHER REFUSES TO  
RECOGNISE THE TRUTH, AND SIGHS) No... (FATHER EMBRACES  
HER)

JOEL You must leave me in peace!

MOTHER But Joel, my dear son...

JOEL It's my life, mum! How can I live with you persecuting me every  
day, your eyes following me everywhere...

MOTHER It's love...

JOEL It's suffocation, mum. Suffocation! And your cruel look of  
displeasure, dad, when I don't live up to your expectations... That's  
why I'm leaving home. I need to get your harsh look out of my  
mind, dad, and forget your desolate, loving face, mum.

MOTHER (TO THE AUDIENCE) It's the separation that hurts much more than death, says my heart softly. But love is tough too, I reply. I manage to calm my heart and, with an effort, smile. (TO JOEL) Stay here, son. Your father and I will go. (THEY STAND TOGETHER IN AN EMBRACE FOR A WHILE LOOKING STEADILY AT JOEL, THEN START WALKING SLOWLY BACKWARDS) My desire is to hold you to my breast in another time...

FATHER Take care of yourself son. Don't forget us. (THEY STOP. MOTHER EXTENDS HER ARMS IN JOEL'S DIRECTION. HER HUSBAND CONTINUES EMBRACING HER AND TOGETHER THEY GO OFF. AT THE EDGE OF THE STAGE, MOTHER COMES BACK AGAIN, SMILES, AND GOES OFF. LIGHTS GO DOWN)

Epilogue

(LEONA AND MIRINHO ENTER WITH CHAIRS AND SIT ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE WITH THEIR BACKS TO EACH OTHER. AT THE SAME TIME, THE DANCING COUPLES COME BACK ON STAGE. THEY SING)

ACTORS The long journey's  
About to begin  
We'll take the path  
Whatever state it's in  
We'll follow the moon  
Until we win!

(WHILE THE ACTORS SING, LEONA AND MIRINHO MOVE THEIR CHAIRS NOISILY IN ANNOYANCE, FIRST TURNING THEM TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE, THEN FACING EACH OTHER. THEY GET UP AND AFTER A MOMENT OF IRRITATED INDECISION, LEONA GOES OVER TO MIRINHO)

LEONA Ah! What's the point!

MIRINHO            Yeah, what's the point?

LEONA                They're playing the last song, and I don't want to be sitting down on my own, looking stupid.

MIRINHO            I can't dance and I'm not in the mood to learn.

LEONA                Don't be so rude, and get up on your feet! (MIRINHO GETS UP WITHOUT MUCH ENTHUSIASM. THEY START TO DANCE, BOTH IN A BAD MOOD) You don't need to look so miserable! I'm not exactly over the moon either. (MIRINHO STOPS DANCING)

MIRINHO            That's enough!

LEONA                Don't you dare abandon me in the middle of the dance! (THEY START DANCING AGAIN) Sorry. It's just that it's all wrong. You shouldn't have said that.

MIRINHO            That's what I think too.

LEONA                We're just friends and it doesn't work between friends. Besides, nothing personal, but I never really fancied you... The chemistry's not there...

MIRINHO            OK. Let's leave it and just dance, all right? (THEY DANCE IN SILENCE. THE ACTORS SING)

ACTORS              Unfurl the sails  
                          And learn to navigate the seas  
                          Leave the port behind  
                          And let the wind take us  
                          We'll follow the moon  
                          Until we win!

                          (THE ACTORS CONTINUE DANCING. ALICE AND ZÉDU, DANCING WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS PASS EACH OTHER AND STOP DANCING. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER)

ALICE                 Did you write the letters?

ZÉDU                  No, but that's what I was feeling. And I still do. (THEY DANCE TOGETHER. THEIR PARTNERS FORM A NEW COUPLE AND DANCE TOO)

- LEONA I'll miss all this. They were the best years of my life! (MIRINHO JUST LOOKS AT HER) Haven't you got anything to say? What are you looking at me like that for? I didn't want to quarrel with you... We've always been friends...  
(ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE) And that's when it happened; a light shone from deep within his eyes and drew me to the safety of his arms. I said 'No, I don't want to!', but my fingers were already gently massaging his shoulders.
- MIRINHO I said yes, I'll shelter and protect you. I felt faint, my body trembled in delight, a smile came to my face and my fears disappeared.
- LEONA I still tried to remain in control of my emotions. I stopped dancing and stepped back. I was short and sharp: 'No! You're not the one for me!', but my heart was out of control, running free like a child in a park.
- MIRINHO She came back and looked at me as if she'd just seen me for the first time.
- LEONA I could only see the bright light shining from deep within his eyes. I laughed inside, and I laughed out loud. I was all smiles. (THEY KISS AND CONTINUE TO DANCE)
- ACTORS Set out to sea  
A shipwreck it may be  
But love and be loved  
Storms, sun in the sky  
Where the moonlight shines  
My ship will come in  
  
(MR. DÉDALUS LOOKS AT HIS PUPILS, WHO DANCE WHILE LOOKING AT THE SCREEN)
- TEACHER My name is Dédalus, like the master craftsman of the myth. I'm a master craftsman too, but my craft is the little known and obscure future I work to create, in the classroom, with these kids. Knowledge is a fragile substance in a world of power and

privilege. But my vocation and my motivation drive me on. Like the master craftsman in the myth, I also teach how to build fragile wings of feathers and wax, Flying is a risky business, but so is prison. These three souvenirs of mine fly towards the sun with their fragile wings, and the flight will never end. They will never reach the sun, and the sun will never melt the wax of their wings. None of them will fall like Icarus. I do not believe in God, but this is my prayer.

THE END