

THE JEWISH WIFE from Fear and Misery in the Third Reich by Bertolt Brecht /
Translated by John Willett

I never told you I wanted to go away, have done for a long time, because I can't talk when I look at you, Fritz. Then it seems to me there's no point in talking. It has all been settled already. What's got into them, d'you think? What do they really want? What am I doing to them? I've never had anything to do with politics. Did I vote Communist? But I'm just one of those bourgeois housewives with servants and so on, and now all of a sudden it seems only blondes can be that. I've often thought lately about something you told me years back, how some people were more valuable than others, so one lot were given insulin when they got diabetes and the others weren't. And this was something I understood, idiot that I was. Well, now they've drawn a new distinction of the same sort, and this time I'm one of the less valuable ones. Serves me right.

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Yes, I'm packing. Don't pretend you haven't noticed anything the last few days. Nothing really matters, Fritz, except just one thing: if we spend our last hour together without looking at each other's eyes. That's a triumph they can't be allowed, the liars who force everyone else to lie. Ten years ago when somebody said no one would think I was Jewish, you instantly said yes, they would. And that's fine. That was straightforward. Why take things in a roundabout way now? I'm packing so they shan't take away your job as senior physician. And because they've stopped saying good morning to you at the clinic, and because you're not sleeping nowadays. I don't want you to tell me I mustn't go. And I'm hurrying because I don't want to hear you telling me I must. It's a matter of time. Principles are a matter of time. They don't last for ever, any more than a glove does. There are good ones which last a long while. But even they only have a certain life. Don't get the idea that I'm angry. Yes, I am. Why should I always be understanding?

Life of Galileo by Bertolt Brecht / Translated by John Willett

Galileo: It is my prophecy that our own lifetime will see astronomy being discussed in the marketplaces. Even the fishwives' sons will hasten off to school. For these novelty-seeking people in our cities will be delighted with a new astronomy that sets the earth moving too. The old idea was always that the stars were fixed to a crystal vault to stop them falling down. Today we have found the courage to let them soar through space without support; and they are traveling at full speed just like our ships, at full speed and without support. And the earth is rolling cheerfully around the sun, and the fishwives,

merchants, princes, cardinals and even the Pope are rolling with it. The universe has lost its centre overnight, and woken up to find it has countless centres. So that each one can now be seen as the centre, or none at all. Suddenly there is a lot of room. Our ships sail far overseas, our planets move far out into space, in chess too the rooks have begun sweeping far across the board.

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The Very Thin Monk: They degrade humanity's dwelling place to a wandering star. Men, animals, plants and the kingdoms of the earth get packed on a cart and driven in a circle round an empty sky. Heaven and earth are no longer distinct, according to them. Heaven because it is made of earth, and earth because it is just one more heavenly body. There is no more difference between top and bottom, between eternal and ephemeral. That we are short-lived we know. Now they tell us that heaven is short-lived too. There are sun, moon and stars, and we live on the earth, it used to be said, and so the Book has it; but now these people are saying the earth is another star. Wait till they say man and animal are not distinct either, man himself is an animal, there's nothing but animals!

The Catch by Bertolt Brecht / Translated by John Willett

Fisherman: (*raises his head from the table:*) My head's buzzing. Like a roundabout. And that damned curtain. Mac! Rotten drunken bastard. Drinks like a fish. As if it was free ... Where's the bugger got to? Aha! Pull yourself together, Hansen, and get sober. On your feet! Attention! Right wheel, quick march. (*Goes upstage left to a bucket of water. Knees bend! Now the high dive! Dips his head. Brr! A pan falls in the kitchen. Hullo, what's going on? Steps over to the right, stooping with his head down dripping water, and listens. Then unsteadily back to the left.*) Missus! Now get a move on. Coffee! Do you want us to stay up all night? Won't it boil without a kick up the arse? (*Ties his Wife's apron on her.*) And you wear that. Want me to fetch the parson? Quick march! (*Gives her a kick, and she goes off right. He sits at the table, thinking.*) Tisn't boiling over. He's pissed as arseholes. She's half naked, the little tart. Anyhow, I'm going to sleep. Sleep! Don't care if he does her or not. Sleep. Birds of a feather flock together. Under my own roof, too. Suppose I chuck him out and bolt the door, then they'll slip the bolt and laugh like drains. And if I stop them getting down to it here, then she'll nip off and I won't see what happens. Shit. The bleeders. Sleep, that's the answer.

Mr Puntila and His Man Matti by Bertolt Brecht / Translated by John Willett

Milkmaid: Here's the sort of life I lead. Half past three I have to get up, muck out the cowshed and brush down the cows. Then there's the milking to do and after that I wash

out the pails with soda and strong stuff that burns your hands. Then more mucking out, and after that I have my coffee but it stinks, it's cheap. I eat my slice of bread and butter and have a bit of shut-eye. In the afternoon I do myself some potatoes and put gravy on them, meat's a thing I never see, with luck the housekeeper'll give me an egg now and again or I might pick one up. Then another lot of mucking out, brushing down, milking and washing out churns. Every day I have to milk twenty-five gallons. Evenings I have bread and milk, they allow me three pints a day for free, but anything else I need to cook I have to buy from the farm. I get one Sunday off in five, but sometimes I go dancing at night and if I make a mistake I'll have a baby. I've got two dresses and I've a bicycle too.

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Telephonist: I can tell you that. Here's the sort of life I lead. My pay is fifty marks, but then I haven't been able to leave the switchboard for thirty years. At the back of my house I've got a little potato patch and that's where I get my potatoes from; then I have to pay for fish, and coffee keeps getting dearer. There's nothing goes on in the village or outside it that I don't know; you'd be amazed how much I do. That's why I never got married. I'm secretary of the working men's club, my father was a cobbler. Putting through phone calls, cooking potatoes and knowing everything, that's my life.