

**They Say...**

By Juan Carlos Vives

Translated by Mariana Carreño King

To Búho Grande Theatre

**Characters:**

Berta

Amador

Lila

The action takes place far away from the three characters, but very close to what they think it means to be intimate.

**Scene 1**

All the action takes place in Mrs. Lila Torres García's house.

Commotion on and back stage. Berta and Amador are finishing making love in the living room.

BERTA

They're breaking the good china!

AMADOR

Wait, woman, don't go out there! Button your blouse, they're popping out!

BERTA

Oh, daddy, I think this time they really-!

AMADOR

Go back to the kitchen, I'm telling you! You look like-

Lila enters.

LILA

I'm not crazy! I am not...! I'm not crazy, Gosh dang it...! Is it or is it not clear to everyone?

AMADOR

...

BERTA

...

LILA

I'm younger than I look. And I learned today that we're born alone, and we die even lonelier...! I am a...! Ah, it's so hard to say it! And not one word about this to Adriana Barbechea...! Do you understand?

AMADOR

Yes, ma'am. Understood.

BERTA

Yes, ma'am. Not one word.

LILA

Amador, pull up your pants and listen to me carefully! They say... the first step is to assess the situation. You agree with me, right? To assess the situation, the first thing I have to do, is to understand my story. Ok...? Then comes, to weigh the options, prioritize, evaluate. That's what's next... And last, and that's where you come in, Berta, last, is to take action.

BERTA

We weren't doing anything wrong, ma'am-

LILA

You are going to be my husband.

AMADOR

Me...?

BERTA

Ma'am...

LILA

Reconstruction! Yes, that's what I'll do! Gather all the little pieces and crazy-glue them! Yes, just like that. If Europe could reconstruct itself- rise from its ashes like Felix the cat, I don't see why I couldn't do the same...! Berta, pick up the china and vacuum.

BERTA

Yes, ma'am.

LILA

You're going to play my husband, Amador: you'll help me reconstruct my story... To understand it... I am a...!

AMADOR

A... what?

LILA

Ah, it's so hard to say it...!

BERTA

Should I bring the *kleenex*, ma'am?

LILA

Hug me.

AMADOR

Ma'am, I don't think I can... Like they say, I'm a ma...

LILA

What? Just say it!

BERTA

I'll bring the *kleenex*, ma'am!

LILA

It's better if you don't hug me, Amador. You're going to play my husband, and as such, hugging is not necessary. You're going to play Aldo Frídelman! It's going to be like in the theatre! Just like that: acting. Pay attention and listen carefully... "You don't need to hug me, my darling. I'm your wife and that's enough for me..." Eh...? What do you think? It wasn't that bad, right?

AMADOR

...

LILA

Berta, you hug me... Yes... You will play my mother.

BERTA

But... Mrs. Frídelman-

LILA

García Torres, if you please!

BERTA

Eh... Sorry.

LILA

It's not your fault, Berta, you're forgiven. With time you'll get used to the other me, the single me. Yes, that's right. I'm a... divorcée!

BERTA

...

AMADOR

...

LILA

Yes. I said it... It wasn't that hard... Anyone can do it if they set their minds to it.

BERTA

...

AMADOR

...

BERTA

Uuuh... Don't cry, my beautiful child... Don't cry anymore, my blessed heart. Come, my little cocoon, come, come here my baby-

AMADOR

Woman-

BERTA

Come, my pretty, baby girl, come to my arms. Come here with your mother, my sky-blue angel...

LILA

I want to die, mom-

BERTA

Don't say such horrible things, blessed creature from my bosom. Come, cry with me, my heart, but don't say such things, my treasure... Come here, let me hug you, my tender creature.

LILA

I smashed the china, mom, and it broke-

BERTA

That's why we have *Crazy glue*, my sweet darling.

LILA

I'm not crazy, mom, I'm not... But I love him so much.

AMADOR

We should be leaving, ma'am... You should forgive Mrs. Berta. Like they say, now it's my turn to apologize for-

BERTA

Amador-

AMADOR

For her: for making her do the things you're making her do. Bring the vacuum, Berta, come on! Please excuse us, but we're leaving.

LILA

No, no, no... I can't believe it... Don't you want to help me assess the situation?

AMADOR

Mrs. Fridelman, we are-

LILA

Don't you want to help me come out of this deep, black hole...?

AMADOR

Believe me, I understand you, ma'am, but-

LILA

Well then, explain to me why the hell you would want me to snap out of such a tender scene, you dimwit?

AMADOR

I'm a... married man, ma'am!

BERTA

No!

LILA

A man married to me! Yes, that's precisely what I said I wanted you to play for me! And you'll both be paid accordingly like any respected actor, Gosh dang it!

AMADOR

I'm afraid that's not possible, ma'am, because first, I'm not a dimwit, like they say, and second because... well, because I'm already married.

LILA

But what are you saying? What do you mean already married?

AMADOR

And very married to... to Mrs. Berta!

BERTA

...

LILA

Is that true?

BERTA

Ma'am...

AMADOR

We're husband and wife, like they say: that's why I can't play your husband, ma'am, no matter how well you pay us... We're very much husband and wife.

LILA

...

BERTA

Do you want me to fetch the vacuum, ma'am?

LILA

No, Berta, it's not necessary... It's not... Now I understand everything... Mmmh... Husband and wife... You two...

AMADOR

We hid it from you and your husband, now your ex-husband, like they say, Mr. Fridelman, to... well, to protect our jobs.

BERTA

We didn't want to create more anxiety.

LILA

Married... Mrs. Berta and Mr. Amador are married... They've always been, and me, not even aware... Mmmh... I'm not crazy, I am not, but you want to drive me crazy!

BERTA

Believe me, ma'am-

LILA

Not one more word, Berta... Please... Two lies in less than an hour... What a shame, my god, what a shame... I don't deserve this... You're fired. Both of you.

**Scene 2**

LILA

Ah, it's you... You two... Here.

BERTA

Yes. Ma'am, we're here and... We, well... We called the number you gave us to ask about the visiting hours and...

AMADOR

Yes, and we came to... Well, to see how you were doing... And, well, we also brought you some-

LILA

You came to see how I was doing.

BERTA

Well, yes, ma'am, truth be told, yes.

AMADOR

To have a last courtesy with you ma'am...

LILA

...

AMADOR

To bring you cigarettes, like they say.

BERTA

What do you mean cigarettes? She's not in jail-

AMADOR

Well, yes, of course, I know this is not... My apologies, Mrs. García Torres, but... It was just a way of saying that... Well, that we came to visit you.

LILA

"A way."

BERTA

What Amador wanted to say is-

LILA

I know exactly what Amador wanted to say.

BERTA

Don't get upset, ma'am... Look, we feel bad over everything that's happened... And we came to see how... Well... We came to see how you were doing... We were thinking the other day and... Well, we got worried... And we came to see if you needed anything.

LILA

"Anything."

AMADOR

Yes, anything you might need, like they say. And that's why we brought you these cookies.

LILA

Cookies.

BERTA

They're the *fat-free* kind.

LILA

You two -husband and wife, married- must be very happy, right? You must be thrilled.

BERTA

Ma'am, please believe us that truly, our intention was never-

LILA

You wanted to see me like this, didn't you? To see me humiliated and mistreated right before your eyes, ¿right...? You got it! I applaud you! You don't have the slightest idea of how this darn straight jacket hurts my skin, Gosh dang it!

AMADOR

Ma'am, please allow us to tell you that-

LILA

Can you possibly imagine for one second what it is like to share the bathroom with three filthy roommates? To beg the crazy sad souls to aim every time they pee?

AMADOR

We didn't come here to be humiliated, ma'am, or to be treated like this. We're here because, like they say, blood runs in our veins. And we were concerned that, because of us, you were locked up here, so far from your home and your gym... And to bring you these cookies.

BERTA

Believe us, ma'am. It was never our intention to cause you more trouble-

LILA

I really don't know how dare you come here... There's something called dignity, and apparently, you wouldn't know it if it hit you in the face. You're not respecting your own dignity, which is not important at the moment. But you're not respecting mine, either.

AMADOR

Remember that you fired us, ma'am: just like that. We didn't even know why!

LILA

Then why did you come to visit me, uh?

AMADOR

...

BERTA

...

LILA

Now I understand everything... It's all crystal clear now... You haven't found another job, have you? One that pays minimally decent.

BERTA

...

AMADOR

Not yet, ma'am, that's the real truth.

BERTA

Times are hard, ma'am, but it was never our intention to-

LILA

To push me out of my home and lock me up within these four white walls was not exactly your best strategy! Right, Berta?

BERTA

No, ma'am, it wasn't.

LILA

Right, Amador?

AMADOR  
No, Mrs. García Torres.

LILA  
No, it wasn't!

AMADOR  
...

BERTA  
...

[Back to present time]

LILA  
Ok, this is good... This is good... Let's stop the scene here, thank you... Berta, help me take off this robe, please... That's good, congratulations to both... Really, very good... Put it over there, Berta, I'm sure we'll use it again in the future.

BERTA  
Yes, ma'am.

LILA  
And you, please help me clear out this area, yes, Amador? So we can set the next scene.

AMADOR  
Right away, ma'am.

LILA  
These three chairs turned out to be very useful... We won't need this mental hospital again... Let's set everything for the next.

### Scene 3

BERTA  
Why do you mean why? So that the missus doesn't suspect anything.

AMADOR  
I know what I'm doing, woman.

BERTA  
...

AMADOR

Move over, I tell you. I can't see if you're blocking the light.

BERTA

You should've bought different cables, more discreet ones, not red. Like the metallic ones, I don't know, so you could kind of hide them. What? They didn't have any?

AMADOR

Pass me the screwdriver and tell me the time.

BERTA

It's almost six. Here.

AMADOR

And what time did the missus say she'd come to rehearsal?

BERTA

She said five, so we have plenty of time.

AMADOR

Hold this, please? Help me.

BERTA

What is this?

AMADOR

Just do it, like they say.

BERTA

Hey, if you know so much about cables and electric installations, how come you've never fixed the foyer?

AMADOR

Now pass it.

BERTA

I'm just saying, so we can have light there too.

AMADOR

We'll take care of it over the weekend.

BERTA

We'll use it over the weekend.

AMADOR

We'll take care of it over the weekend. Friday then.

BERTA

Friday we go to court, according to this.

AMADOR

Then over the weekend.

BERTA

We're away during the weekend.

AMADOR

Then next weekend.

BERTA

Next weekend we're out of town.

AMADOR

So why don't you put up with your dark foyer, as you've been doing since we don't have a lights in the foyer?

BERTA

Because I didn't know you knew how to do this electricians type of things.

AMADOR

You never asked, like they say. I'm not only a gardener. What? You only know how to cook...? No, right? So...?

BERTA

But if you're seeing that the foyer is dark since I don't know when, how come you didn't-?

AMADOR

Done! It's ready.

BERTA

All I'm saying is, you don't have initiative.

AMADOR

That's it. As soon as she sits here, she'll get electrocuted.

BERTA

Anything for anybody else? There you are. But why can't you have initiative at our home?

AMADOR

Don't you sit there, eh?

BERTA

Listen to me, Amador. Put that tool down. I know we make a living serving other people, but this is important for us too.

AMADOR

Berta-

BERTA

Listen to me, Amador-

AMADOR

Look, just pass me the phone so we can tell Mr. Fridelman that everything is going as he said it should.

BERTA

Some day you're going to value me like the wife I am to you: everything I've done and said for you, that you don't see nor value.

AMADOR

Where did you put the card with the boss' number?

BERTA

This situation is giving me indigestion.

AMADOR

I told you not to sit there!

BERTA

...

AMADOR

You scared me! Thank god I hadn't plugged in it yet.

#### **Scene 4**

LILA

Action.

AMADOR

So, yes...

BERTA

So... well, yes...

AMADOR

...

BERTA

...

AMADOR

So Adriana Barbechea is your best-

BERTA

Ever since elementary school, yes... And since we've kept the friendship going, you know? And since she's a close friend, well, she...

AMADOR

So she invited you, of course. She invited you here to-

BERTA

Yes, to come here... The four of us. To come here.

AMADOR

Yes, the four of us... Did you notice-?

BERTA

Yes, I noticed. They've no shame.

AMADOR

Terrible, right?

BERTA

Yes, terrible... All chipped. Look at this.

AMADOR

They don't take care of the details.

BERTA

What would a decent one cost them? A porcelain one... There are some made of Chinese porcelain that...

AMADOR

Yes, they've fallen on hard times... They weren't like this before-

BERTA

No, they were never like this... The service, like this, no, never.

AMADOR

...

BERTA

Maybe they have a new owner.

AMADOR

I don't think so... Well, who knows? Times are hard.

BERTA

I don't think they're the same owners anymore.

AMADOR

Yes, maybe that's why... Because they treated you differently. No? Before.

BERTA

Definitely... Before they treated you differently.

AMADOR

Differently... Yes. Definitely.

BERTA

...

AMADOR

Maybe we should've gone to the-

BERTA

I suggested it, too, to both of them: that's a much better place, way more decent. I told them from the beginning but-

AMADOR

Yes, they didn't listen to me either. And trust me, I insisted to Joaquín, and he said no, because here is-

BERTA

Yes, because I don't think this is such a-

AMADOR

Yes, no, me neither-

BERTA

Such an intimate place, like they said. They wanted something intimate... I mean, intimate for us...

AMADOR

...

BERTA

...

AMADOR

And I told them that I'm not too much into-

BERTA

No, me neither! Actually, today is the first time that I-

AMADOR

Yes, me too. Definitely. Can you imagine-?

BERTA

Because Adriana Barbechea is a very close friend, since elementary school, and believe me when I tell you that I've never before-

AMADOR

Yes. I think they should be here shortly.

BERTA

Yes, right?

AMADOR

Of course... I think... How long can they take...?

BERTA

...

AMADOR

So you're really into Chinese porcelain-?

BERTA

I'm crazy about it.

AMADOR

...

Well... BERTA

Well... AMADOR

... BERTA

Let's go to my place. AMADOR

Excuse me? BERTA

Yes... Well, only if you want. AMADOR

Well... Yes... Yes, of course... Let's go. BERTA

We are adults, right? AMADOR

Yes, of course... We're adults. BERTA

That's why we came, right? AMADOR

Yes, of course... If not for that, what else? Whatever you want. BERTA

Good: Let's go... You do want to...? AMADOR

... BERTA

[Back to real time]

LILA

Let's see, let's see... Thank you... The scene is very good, very close to what actually happened, yes. But... Let's see... What do you think, Berta?

BERTA

Well, ma'am, it's just that... Truth be told... I couldn't tell you about the acting, because I don't know anything about that, but... Wasn't I just going to play your mother?

LILA

Berta, we discussed this for a long time and it was clear to everyone, right? Then it's final.

AMADOR

...

BERTA

Well, I... honestly couldn't go with a gentleman I just met just like that, when I just met him, even if it's Mr. Frídelman.

LILA

Well, that's your opinion. Don't judge your character. That's a very bad idea if you want to interpret her well... And also, remember that your character is me, so be careful what you say about her. About me. About the character! You know what I'm talking about...! It's so easy for everybody to have an opinion about everybody else, right? Until you put yourself in somebody else's shoes you can't truly understand what's going on with that person, right?

BERTA

Yes, you're right. I'm sorry again, ma'am... I said what I said because you asked me... I mean, I respect the fact that you did that, but me... Well, truth be told, I don't know what to tell you.

LILA

And you, Amador, how did you feel in the scene? How did you feel being my husband, but with your wife, who's me, but who's really your wife, who is not me?

AMADOR

Don't even ask me, Mrs. García Torres. I'm not an actor.

## Scene 5

LILA

And you liked the sweater I gave you, darling...? Did you notice that it's the same color as your eyes...?

AMADOR

And she was the last one to leave, I think... She didn't want anybody to go with her... She's always the last one to leave. Ay, Adriana Barbechea. Ever since you introduced me to her, I could tell she was like that.

LILA

When are you going to wear it, my love? When are you going to let me see it on you...? Mmmhh? Aldo Frídelman... So I can take it off... Come here...

AMADOR

Even before anybody could offer her a ride, she'd already called a taxi...

LILA

Ah, at last you're mine, Aldo Frídelman... *(Singing)* *Cuando calienta el sol...*

AMADOR

Hey, I didn't even tell you- I loved what your mom said to us after the cake...

LILA

*Aquí en la playa...*

AMADOR

She was so sweet. And then she gave me these cookies, just in case you feel like having them later.

LILA

*...Siento tu cuerpo vibrar...*

AMADOR

I'll leave them here, my love, next to the...

LILA

*...Cerca de mi...*

AMADOR

And what about Joaquín, eh? He went overboard with what he said during the toast, in front of everybody. Why did he have to say the stuff about the restaurant?

LILA

*...Es tu palpar...*

AMADOR

Mostly, I was sorry for you mom. Joaquín always has to say something that's not... Ouch!