

Soul Mates

(Excerpt: ACT 1: Scene 2)

Place: The home of Demian and Fiona. Well-furnished, but somewhat cluttered. The bookshelves in the living room and bedroom are crammed with books on religion, art, and philosophy. There is a reproduction of “The Scream” by Edvard Munch on the wall.

CHARACTERS

DEMIAN	School teacher, early forties
FIONA	Wife of Demian
VLAD	Truck driver, early forties
TWILA	Wife of Vlad

ACT ONE

Scene One: Evening before Halloween.
Scene Two: Halloween night.

ACT TWO

Scene One: Two days later. Evening.
Scene Two: Christmas day. Afternoon.
Scene Three: Early January. Afternoon.
Scene Four: April Fools. Morning.
Scene Five: Evening of the same day.

Soul Mates

ACT ONE

Scene two: Early evening. Halloween. Fiona and Demian's living room.

At Rise:

The lights are off except for a dim light in the hallway. FIONA is lighting a Halloween candle.

DEMIAN enters and switches on the lights.

FIONA

You're spoiling the effect. Turn off the lights.

DEMIAN

There's nothing like candle smoke to set the mood.

DEMIAN turns on another lamp.

FIONA

Demian!

DEMIAN

What we need is plenty of light to discourage your friends from digging for loose change in the couch.

FIONA

You're being ridiculous.

FIONA turns off one of the lamps DEMIAN just turned on. The doorbell rings several times over and banging can be heard.

FIONA

It's starting.

DEMIAN

(heading for the door)

The abusive little bastards.

DEMIAN leaves. FIONA lights another candle and fluffs up the pillows on the couch. Voices can be heard.

TWILA enters the living room.

TWILA

Hi, Fiona. Hope we're not too early.

FIONA

Oh, hi Twila. I thought it was the Halloween kids.

TWILA

Vlad was trying to be funny. He's outside checking the tires. He thinks one of them is low. He's always telling me I don't check them often enough.

FIONA

Men love to correct and educate, don't they?

TWILA

Well, as long as I keep pretending I don't know anything about tires, he'll keep checking them.

FIONA

You're my kind of woman.

TWILA

Those are fun candles. Where did you get them?

FIONA

Little boutique on Granville Island.

TWILA

I think they'd look cool with the lights out.

FIONA turns off the lights and they admire the effect.

TWILA

That's nice.

FIONA

(turning lights back on)

Unfortunately, Demian's not a candle person...

DEMIAN

No, I didn't think so.

FIONA

So, how was it? Did he remember?

TWILA

I'd have killed him if he forgot.

FIONA

Five years, isn't it?

TWILA

Two years longer than my first. The first one had too much hair on his body. Don't trust a man with hair on his back.

FIONA

So he took you out?

TWILA

We had a very romantic dinner – candlelight, music, wine. Vlad felt a little out of his element. Burger King’s more his style. I had to coax him through the wine list – but once we got over that hump, it was really quite a lovely evening.

The sound of the front door opening and voices.

FIONA

Where’d you go?

TWILA

Vincent’s. On Sunset Beach. Have you been there?

FIONA

No. Demian doesn’t like to eat out. He’s worried that somebody in the kitchen might spit on the food and he’ll end up with some incurable disease.

TWILA

Oh...

FIONA

He’s very focused on his mortality these days.

VLAD and DEMIAN enter.

VLAD

(to Demian)

This time of year I check the tires about every two weeks –

DEMIAN

(toying)

Only every two weeks?

VLAD

‘cause the air pressure goes down with the cold weather.

DEMIAN

Does it really? Fascinating. Not up?

VLAD

You don’t want to be sliding on black ice with low tires.

DEMIAN

I guess not. Only a fool would try.

VLAD

Hi, Fiona.

FIONA

You two must have been freezing out there. It's been unusually cold.

VLAD

(with an unhurried, self-satisfied drawl)

Well, let me tell you, where I come from, Yellowknife, land of the midnight sun, when it gets cold up there, and let me tell you I'm talking mean cold –

DEMIAN

Yes, mean cold...the worst kind of cold –

VLAD

– in less than a minute, icicles start hanging from your eyelids and if you keep your mouth open too long, well your tongue freezes to your teeth. No shit.

DEMIAN

Yes, it's amazing you have a tongue still...

VLAD

There was one time, when I was ten, and my brother wasn't much older, we decided to go out and –

DEMIAN

I hope I'm not being rude, but do you think there's a chance we might get to the end before morning?

VLAD

I think so – and we went hunting for rabbit in January, which was a real crazy thing to be doing in the first place, considering it was 60 below, and the wind was blowing, he thought he'd be funny and licked his hunting knife. Well sure enough it stuck to his tongue, and so we had to build a fire and boil a pot of water to get the damn thing loose. And that's the truth.

TWILA

Once Vlad starts talking, you can't stop him.

DEMIAN

Maybe we can shut him up with a beer.

VLAD

No, that'll get me talking even more. But I'm all for a cool one.

DEMIAN

And how about you...Wilma?

TWILA

Twila.

DEMIAN

Twila, yes, of course. I cool one for you as well?

TWILA

Yes, I'll have one.

DEMIAN

Honey?

FIONA

Yes, darling. But not the Stout, or whatever that brown muck is.

DEMIAN

Kokanee meet everyone's approval?

VLAD

Long as it says beer on the label. I'm not hard to get along with. I'll help you pop them open.

DEMIAN and VLAD exit.

FIONA

Topaz?

TWILA

(fingering her pendant)

Blue topaz. My birthstone.

FIONA

It's lovely.

TWILA

Vlad's anniversary gift.

FIONA

I doubt Demian even knows my birthstone.

TWILA

Vlad doesn't know topaz from zirconium. I went with him to make sure he wouldn't pick out a piece of junk.

FIONA

(in a confidential tone)

Have you told him yet? About being pregnant?

TWILA

When the pecan pie came round. He loves pecan pie.

FIONA

And?

TWILA

He nearly choked when I told him, but I said, Vlad, take it like a man. I said, if you didn't want to be a father, then you shouldn't have bought those cheap condoms made in China. Well that shut him up. He's always trying to save a nickel. As if it ever got him anywhere.

VLAD and DEMIAN enter.

VLAD and DEMIAN hand over beers to FIONA and TWILA.

FIONA

No children from his previous marriage?

TWILA

No.

DEMIAN

Who's children?

FIONA

Twila's pregnant.

DEMIAN

Really? Well, I suppose congratulations are in order.

(shaking VLAD's hand)

Well done, good work, as they say.

VLAD

When I'm given a job, I do it.

DEMIAN

I'm sure you applied yourself with complete abandon.

The doorbell rings.

FIONA

It's starting.

FIONA goes off to answer the door.

TWILA

I'll come with you.

VLAD

If any of them give you trouble, let me know. I'll scare the living daylights out of them.

FIONA and TWILA exit.

DEMIAN

So you're going to be a father.

VLAD
(with a tone of finality)

Yup, I guess I am.

DEMIAN
Bubbling over with enthusiasm, are we?

VLAD
Well, I wouldn't go that far...

DEMIAN
So, what happened? Did she finally persuade you that a little squawker would make life more tolerable? Or did the condom manufacturer let you down?

VLAD
Well, it don't matter. I'm having one now.

DEMIAN
Lot of responsibility, you know. Think you're up to it?

VLAD
Oh, I'll shape him up alright. As soon as the little bugger can walk, he'll be hunting rabbit and squirrel.

VOICES yelling "trick or treat" are heard. During the rest of the scene, the doorbell will periodically RING and/or KNOCKNG will be heard, followed by the sounds of children.

DEMIAN
Suppose the little bugger doesn't want to hunt? Suppose he wants to play with dolls instead.

VLAD
Oh, he'll be hunting alright. You can count on it. If he starts whimpering, I'll leave him out in the woods for a week. That'll straighten him out.

DEMIAN
(ironically)
Make a real man out of him.

VLAD
You got it.

DEMIAN
Teach him how to keep his women in line.

VLAD
You give them too much rope, they'll hang you with it.

VLAD pulls out a lighter.

VLAD

Genuine Zippo. Twila gave it to me for our anniversary...that's a grizzly. Cool huh?

DEMIAN

I didn't think they made Zippos anymore.

VLAD

Oh yeah. No self-respecting hunter's gonna be caught without his Zippo. I lost mine couple of years back. I was hunting moose in Alaska.

DEMIAN

In the north somewhere, isn't it?

VLAD

You joshing me again?

DEMIAN

Am I?

VLAD

Well anyway, all of a sudden this grizzly breaks out not more than thirty feet ahead of me, shaking it's head, looking real mean. Well I stepped off the trail to give him some room, and ended up waist deep in swamp water.

DEMIAN

Only waist deep?

VLAD

Well, that was enough. Lucky I was still holding onto my 338 Winchester, 'cause just then that bear started coming right at me. I aimed and let him have it right between the eyes – pow! But damned if that thing didn't keep coming.

DEMIAN

Yes, stubborn things, aren't they. Don't like to die, do they?

DEMIAN begins to wander off, straightening pictures on the wall.

VLAD

I put another five rounds in him before he dropped less than six feet in front of me. All eight hundred pounds of him. I'm not shitting. You want an adrenaline rush, that'll give you one. I pissed my pants, but leastways I'm still here to tell about it.

DEMIAN

I'm experiencing a severe bout of déjà vu.

VLAD

Huh?

DEMIAN

An unsettling feeling I've heard it all before.

VLAD

Well, if you heard it before, you should have said something.

DEMIAN

I just did.

VLAD

Well...

DEMIAN

Have you ever considered keeping a list to avoid inflicting unnecessary suffering on your listeners?

VLAD

You don't have to be rude about it.

DEMIAN

Was I rude? Sorry. It's not the first time I've been accused of that sort of thing.

VLAD

I'm not going to fall apart about it.

DEMIAN

Thank goodness for that. Would you mind a little suggestion, Vladimir?

VLAD

What's that?

DEMIAN

You might want to try anchoring yourself in the present a little more. The rumor is that's where most of life happens.

VLAD

Well, right now, my bladder says its full. I'm gonna have to use your can.

DEMIAN

Help yourself. But try not to spray the walls. Fiona's always getting on my case about it.

VLAD leaves.

DEMIAN glances at his watch, shaking his head.

DEMIAN

Christ.

FIONA enters.

FIONA

It's really starting to pour down now. I don't think too many more will be coming by.

DEMIAN

Do you realize what a tremendous sacrifice I'm making having to listen to that imbecile?

FIONA

I thought communicating with imbeciles was your specialty.

DEMIAN

Very funny. What do you say we push the evening along a little faster? Let's bring out the amazing vibrating machine, a quick demonstration of the safe use of the on/off switch, and then we shove our two lovely little guests out the door.

FIONA

(peevd)

Alright, I'll get it.

(calling out)

Why don't you take a break, Twila. I don't think there'll be a lot more coming.

DEMIAN

Those candles are just smoking up the place. I'm going to put them out.

TWILA enters.

DEMIAN puts out the candles.

TWILA

I loved the little one dressed as Cinderella. Wasn't she adorable?

FIONA

I'm getting the...you know...I'll be back in a minute.

FIONA exits.

TWILA

Fiona tells me you don't like Halloween.

DEMIAN

Guilty as charged. And you?

TWILA

I wasn't allowed to go out on Halloween.

DEMIAN

No permanent scars I hope.

TWILA

My parents were Jehovah's Witness. It was considered a kind of devil worship.

DEMIAN

A little devil worship can sometimes be a liberating experience, don't you think?

TWILA

I don't think it's something to joke about. There's enough filth and corruption in the world as it is.

DEMIAN

Yes, tons of it. But I'm sure none of it creeps into your sane little corner of the world. And Vlad?

TWILA

Vlad?

DEMIAN

Yes, he's also opposed to devil worship, I suppose.

TWILA

Of course his is.

DEMIAN

But...he does like to, on occasion, when the spirit moves him, kill things...

TWILA

What?

DEMIAN

Hunting. Relieves some nervous tension, I suppose, terminating a moose or elk, anything unfortunate enough to walk on four legs.

TWILA

He doesn't –

DEMIAN

There is a smidgen of evil there, wouldn't you agree?

TWILA

(becoming uncomfortable)

I don't have to approve of everything he does.

DEMIAN

No, why should you. But, I would think...I would suspect that it's not quite your thing. Or God's for that matter.

TWILA

He eats what he shoots.

DEMIAN

Ah, does he? Very commendable. That puts it in an entirely different light then, doesn't it?

TWILA

It's not *wanton* killing.

DEMIAN

Mm, yes. Clean killing. I'm all for clean killing myself. Keeps nature tidy. And you? Do you partake? I mean, the moose steaks. Or, not?

TWILA

I stopped eating meat when I was ten.

DEMIAN

The beginning of your road to salvation, was it?

TWILA

I don't pretend to be perfect.

DEMIAN

I've never succeeded myself.

VLAD enters.

DEMIAN

(to Vlad)

Your wife, here, Vladimir, tells me she's not partial to wild moose.

VLAD

If tofu makes her happy, that's fine with me.

DEMIAN

You two seem to have a marvelous tolerance of one another. Quite rare these days.

TWILA

We'll have to be going soon, Vlad.

DEMIAN

Nonsense. You can't go. Fiona's gone to great lengths to prepare her demonstration of the vibrator. She's upstairs now polishing it up.

VLAD

She didn't have to go to all that trouble.

DEMIAN

No trouble at all. In fact, it gives her immense satisfaction to help others. Gives her a sense of purpose.

TWILA

Well, even so...we're not –

DEMIAN

There's no need for embarrassment. We're all adults here, aren't we? We all do it. We all indulge.

(shouting)

Fiona! Are you coming? Our guests are impatient to put it to the test.

FIONA

(offstage)

Coming.

TWILA

(fidgeting)

Remember, Vlad, you have to be up early tomorrow.

DEMIAN

I promise you, we won't deprive him of his beauty sleep. This won't take long.

FIONA enters.

FIONA

I had to find a fresh set of batteries. We go through tons of batteries.

DEMIAN

Yes, tons. I think Twila's feeling a little queasy. The reality of the whole thing's a bit much for her.

FIONA

I hope Demian hasn't been giving you a hard time. He thrives on giving people a hard time.

DEMIAN

Now, before we get into the demonstration, who needs another drink?

VLAD

I could use another.

TWILA

You're not going to be driving then dear.

DEMIAN

Twila?

TWILA shakes her head.

DEMIAN exits.

TWILA

(uneasily)

You didn't have to go to all that fuss. We just wanted a quick look at it.

VLAD

Well, so that's it, huh?

FIONA

Here, I'll turn it on.

FIONA switches it on. TWILA starts back.

FIONA

It won't bite.

VLAD

I hope not. Never used one of those dang things before.

FIONA

Well, there's nothing to it, really. You just, you know, put it...wherever, and away you go. Here, feel it.

TWILA

(backing off)

Well, I can see what it does. I think we get the idea. Don't we, Vlad?

VLAD

Yeah, we get the idea.

FIONA

If you like, I could loan it to you.

TWILA

Oh, no, no, no, no. That fine.

FIONA

It's sterilized.

TWILA

I'm sure it is.

DEMIAN enters.

DEMIAN gives VLAD his drink.

DEMIAN

So, what do you think?

VLAD

Should do the job. I mean, as far as something like that goes...

DEMIAN

Oh, it'll go as far as you want it to go.

VLAD

Wasn't meaning that.

FIONA

You don't have to embarrass them, Demian.

DEMIAN

Top of the line. Hand made. Patented design. Here, feel the workmanship. You'll get plenty of mileage out of it.

VLAD

(handling it gingerly)

Yeah, silicone, or something like that

DEMIAN

Very supple.

VLAD

Yeah.

VLAD is left holding the vibrator, not knowing what to do with it.

FIONA

You sure, you don't want to take it home?

TWILA

No, that's fine.

DEMIAN

Pleasure's still a dirty word, isn't it?

TWILA

Love is more than just sex.

VLAD puts the vibrator down, looking relieved.

DEMIAN

Ah, but sex helps it along, doesn't it? Love wouldn't get very far without a little rubbing and grinding.

FIONA

Sex for Demian isn't far removed from sanding a block of wood.

DEMIAN

Women always want to make it more than it is. Have you noticed, Vladimir?

TWILA

It's become completely vulgarized.

DEMIAN

Yes, why don't we enshrine it, keep it at a safe distance from prying fingers. The French have the right attitude. Sex for them is as natural as having a bowel movement.

TWILA

My God!

FIONA

(simultaneously with Twila)

That's disgusting!

The doorbell RINGS.

FIONA

Here we go again.

FIONA exits.

VLAD

(jauntily)

When I was growing up, the only time sex was ever talked about was when my daddy caught me wanking my wiener. All he said was if I ever catch you again, boy, I'll cut it off and feed it to the dogs. Well, he never caught me again.

TWILA

(scolding)

There's a time and place to discuss things, dear.

DEMIAN

I gather he hasn't been making a great deal of headway in his social training.

TWILA

Somewhat more than most men.

DEMIAN

What do you think, Vladimir?

VLAD

Well, not as much as she'd like.

DEMIAN

It's a miracle of sorts isn't it? That the two of you gravitated toward each other. Can't quite get my head around it.

VLAD

Opposites attract.

DEMIAN

And capable of communicating on a meaningful level as well?

VLAD

I know what she's thinking before she even opens her mouth.

DEMIAN

Incredible.

TWILA

We're soul mates.

DEMIAN

(exaggerated astonishment)

Soul mates!

TWILA

Yes, soul mates.

DEMIAN

Real, live soul mates. Well, this is something...this is really something.

TWILA

You don't believe in soul mates?

DEMIAN

The soul's a pretty slippery thing.

TWILA

We've got nothing to hide from each other, we tell each other everything, don't we, honey?

VLAD

Well, far as I know.

DEMIAN

Transparent souls. You can't get much better than that.

TWILA

You can't have a relationship built on lies.

DEMIAN

Well, I hope this won't shock you, but it's done every day. And sometimes quite successfully.

TWILA

Not *real* relationships.

DEMIAN

Ah, the sweetness of delusion. Unfortunately, your world, my world, everyone's world is built out of the quivering jelly of words.

TWILA

It's more than just –

DEMIAN

I'm afraid the only soul mate we ever get to know is the one we've manufactured in our heads.

VLAD

Sounds like a lot of babble to me. I like to stick to what I can see and cut with a knife.

FIONA enters.

DEMIAN

Did you know that Vladimir and Twila are soul mates?

Soul mates?
FIONA

Yes, the genuine article.
DEMIAN

I'm envious.
FIONA

It's my first encounter.
DEMIAN

You don't consider yourselves soul mates?
TWILA

I'm afraid our souls have become rather ragged in the scuffle of living.
DEMIAN

Demian misplaced his soul years ago.
FIONA

Fiona thinks I'm a hopeless materialist. A crass realist.
DEMIAN

Maybe you have a weak spirit.
TWILA

You think so? Beyond repair?
DEMIAN

There's always hope.
TWILA

Thank goodness for that.
DEMIAN

Don't hold your breath.
FIONA

Soul mates know each other intimately. Isn't that how it works? Know each other inside
out?
DEMIAN

It's something you feel. You know in your heart. You can't put it in words.
TWILA

Yes, words are horribly inadequate, I'll be the first to admit, but unfortunately they're all
we have. Like reading minds, then?
DEMIAN

Yes, words are horribly inadequate, I'll be the first to admit, but unfortunately they're all
we have. Like reading minds, then?
DEMIAN

TWILA

If you want.

DEMIAN

I don't want to put you on the spot. I'm merely curious. I'm an absolute idiot when it comes to these matters. Fiona will attest to that.

FIONA

Yes, I'll attest to that.

DEMIAN

And so, if say, Vladimir were asked a question about you, how you feel about things, he'd be able to answer? Is that right?

TWILA

Yes, that's right.

DEMIAN

Would you mind? A little demonstration? Vladimir? Show Fiona and myself what we've been missing? The huge hole in our inner life.

VLAD

I don't mind but I'm not promising nothing.

DEMIAN

Good, good.

TWILA

We really should be going.

DEMIAN

And leave us hanging. You stun us with this amazing revelation, and now you want to run off. Hardly fair.

VLAD

We can stay a bit.

FIONA

(ironically)

Yes, Demian and I certainly don't want you rushing off, do we?

DEMIAN

(to Fiona)

Can we get some chips or something for our guests. They'll be able to think more clearly with a little something to snack on. And perhaps another beer for Twila. She looks a little on the dry side.

FIONA

Twila?

TWILA

I'll just have a glass of water, if you don't mind.

Just water?

FIONA

Yes.

TWILA

FIONA exits.

So, shall we proceed?

DEMIAN

I'm game.

VLAD

DEMIAN

I like your enthusiasm. Alright then, let's see...questions... questions for our charming soul mates...

The doorbell RINGS.

TWILA

Shouldn't somebody be answering that?

DEMIAN

Don't worry yourself about those little devils. Here's what we're going to do.

TWILA is picking some lint off her clothes.

DEMIAN

I need your full attention. Good. I'll present you with several questions...questions designed to...get at the very essence of the soul mate experience.

VLAD

Where you going to get these questions from?

DEMIAN

(tapping his head)

It's all up her, Vladimir. Right in here. The accumulation of years of experience planting tiny seeds of knowledge in the minds of addle-brained little brats...Don't worry...we'll start with an easy warm up exercise. And to make things more interesting, let's throw in a little reward for good performance.

TWILA

A reward? We don't want any reward.

DEMIAN

You're not opposed to a little fun, are you?

TWILA

Of course not.

DEMIAN

Well, that's a relief. Alright, here's how it goes. If you answer all the questions correctly, you'll be certified as 100% genuine soul mates, which of course is the anticipated outcome, and you'll receive a prize of one slightly used, but fully functional vibrator, complete with batteries and a bottle of rubbing alcohol.

TWILA

We don't want the vibrator.

DEMIAN

Well, no need to make up your mind yet...

VLAD

Go on. What's the first question?

DEMIAN

We'll start off with something simple to get your souls synchronized. I'm going to have you face away from each other.

DEMIAN swings a couple of chairs around and motions VLAD and TWILA to sit.

TWILA

I don't see the point of this.

DEMIAN

We don't want any surreptitious body signals. Go ahead, sit down.

Looking somewhat out of their element, VLAD and TWILA sit down in the chairs, their backs toward each other.

DEMIAN

Excellent, we're all set. Vladimir, you're on the chopping block.

VLAD rubs the back of his neck.

VLAD

(taking a swallow of his beer)

Well, here's hoping I don't get axed.

DEMIAN

Ready?...What color are Twila's eyes?

VLAD

Her eyes? I figure they're the same as always...bluish gray...

TWILA

(groaning)

Vlad!

DEMIAN

Now, now, no coaching.

VLAD

...more bordering on light...brownish-gray...green.

DEMIAN goes up to TWILA and inspects her eyes.

DEMIAN

Not an inspiring performance, Vladimir, but, being in a generous mood, I'm going to give you a marginal pass.

TWILA

I can't believe you don't know the color of my eyes. Who have you been living with for the past five years?

VLAD

(still facing away from Twila)

I seized up for a second, honey bunch.

DEMIAN

Yes, a small attack of test anxiety. I'm sure it will pass.

FIONA enters.

FIONA

What's going on here?

FIONA passes the chips to VLAD and gives the glass of water to TWILA.

DEMIAN

Everything's under control, dear. Your turn, Twila. The color of your true love's eyes?

TWILA

(slightly cutting)

Light blue. Last time I checked.

DEMIAN

Very nice. Well done.

VLAD starts digging into the chips.

TWILA

(to Fiona)

He didn't know the color of my eyes.

FIONA

It's the simple things that stump them.

TWILA

(to Vlad)

How could you not know? Can you explain that?

VLAD

Well, it's not easy to put a color into words, dear. I knew what it was.

TWILA gets up from the chair and VLAD keeps sitting with his back to the others.

TWILA

Olive green. Is that so difficult?

VLAD

You want to put me on a spit and roast me? Go ahead.

TWILA

I don't want to do anything of the sort.

VLAD

I wouldn't mind another beer. Might help sharpen my focus.

DEMIAN

Honey, can we get another one?

FIONA

I'm not your bloody slave.

DEMIAN

Yes, as you've never failed to remind me. But, could you make this one small exception, please? Thank you...So then, have we recovered from the first round?

FIONA exits.

TWILA

(to Vlad)

I hope you're going to put in a little more effort.

VLAD

You can count on it, honey. I'm gonna roll up my sleeves, put my nose to the grindstone, and pray for a miracle.

TWILA

That's not funny.

DEMIAN

Now, now, let's try to get along.

FIONA

Vlad, why are you still sitting like that?

VLAD looks around, and then awkwardly stands up.

VLAD

Well, somebody could have said something, instead of making me look like an idiot.

DEMIAN

No harm intended. So, then, everyone ready? Next question. New category. Sexual grievances. I've been told soul mates usually do very well in this category.

TWILA

I'm not going to discuss our sex life.

DEMIAN

You're not.

TWILA

No, we're not.

DEMIAN

I see. You're speaking for Vladimir as well, are you?

VLAD

There's nothing wrong with our sex life.

DEMIAN

Nothing? Well, well. So I've finally stumbled on the exceptional couple. Nothing on your wish list? Nothing that needs a little tweaking?

FIONA enters.

TWILA

We've got no complaints.

FIONA gives VLAD the beer.

VLAD

Thanks.

FIONA

Demian, their sex life is their business. Just drop it.

DEMIAN

Well, it's obvious we've reached an impasse. Understandably, we're venturing into a delicate area, so let's see if we can melt the ice, as they say.

FIONA

Don't you think you've taken this far enough?

DEMIAN

Right. As you might have guessed, Fiona does not own a vibrator merely for the purpose of demonstrating it to her friends. In fact, she uses it with dedicated regularity. Isn't that right, buttercup?

FIONA

And why is that?

DEMIAN

Precisely the point I'm coming to. Because as a maturing woman, her sex drive has catapulted far ahead of mine.

FIONA

He has trouble getting it up.

TWILA

We don't need to know the details.

DEMIAN

So, you see, we're hardly in a position to judge or condemn the rest of the copulating world.

VLAD

Well, it's not that my engine doesn't want to crank up. More like my engine gets heated up too fast...

TWILA

Vlad!

DEMIAN

Yes, it's all in the timing, isn't it? Well, as it happens, there are millions of other ordinary folk just like ourselves, Vladimir, who fall short in the timing department. Certainly nothing to be ashamed of.

(picking up vibrator)

And that's why these clever little life savers were invented.

VLAD

You put it that way...

TWILA

I don't think we need to go into any further detail, Vlad.

FIONA

Demian likes to get reactions. It makes him feel virile.

TWILA

Our body is our temple...

DEMIAN

Yes, we mustn't have too much fun with our bodies, must we? Two, three a month? What do you figure, Twila? Any thoughts? What would be a respectable number of orgasms?

TWILA

I'm not discussing this further.

FIONA

Demian, you are being obnoxious.

DEMIAN

But then, it's all in the name of love, isn't it? The love of two soul mates? We're not talking about raw, animalistic flesh thumping, are we?

TWILA

That's not what it's about, is it Vlad?

VLAD shrugs his shoulders.

DEMIAN

No, I imagine that Vladimir is much more attuned to the poetic, sensual nature of love.

TWILA

It'd be nice if you supported me a little more, Vlad, instead of just staring off into space.

VLAD

I'm not going to disagree with you, honey.

DEMIAN

Said like a true soul mate. Mutual tolerance of quirks and emotional shortcomings is a defining feature of soul mates, wouldn't you say, Twila?

TWILA

I think we should all learn to be more tolerant of each other's differences.

DEMIAN

I couldn't agree more.

FIONA

Are we finished with this nonsense?

DEMIAN

We've barely scratched the surface, dear.

FIONA

Really?

DEMIAN

We're discussing the mystery of emotional bonds. I don't think that's nonsense. I don't think our guests consider it nonsense. In fact, they've been very candid and obliging.

FIONA

I didn't know it was such a burning issue for you.

TWILA

I'm not answering any more questions about sex. That's something private between two people.

DEMIAN

(helping himself to chips)

Objection noted. No more questions about sex. We are now going to descend into the moral and spiritual centre of the soul mate experience. I'm sure this will be of intense interest to Twila. Fiona, if I could impose on you one very last time. We need some writing materials. Those big flip charts in the study and some felt pens would do nicely.

FIONA

Flipcharts? You've got to be kidding!

DEMIAN

No, I'm not kidding. We don't want them blurting out the first thing that comes into their heads.

FIONA

Is this really necessary?

DEMIAN

Yes, it is.

VLAD

We have to write something down?

DEMIAN

Precisely. Fiona, the flipcharts please.

FIONA

Yes, your highness.

FIONA exits.

DEMIAN

Let's turn these chairs around.

DEMIAN and VLAD turn the chairs so they face each other.

DEMIAN

Okay, anyone need to empty their bladder before we move on? Sure you wouldn't like a beer, Twila?

TWILA

I'm fine.

Vlad? DEMIAN

I'm still good. VLAD

We're all good then? DEMIAN

FIONA brings in the flip charts and pens and hands them out.

Excellent. We can get underway...Sit down, make yourselves comfortable. DEMIAN

Well, I'll tell you, English never was my best subject. VLAD

We won't be checking your spelling and grammar. All set? Good. So, then, next question. Hm...What was the most humiliating moment in your soul mate's life? Go ahead. Write it down. DEMIAN

Well, that could be any number of things. VLAD

TWILA puts down the flip chart and gets up.

I don't think I want to do this, anymore. TWILA

You don't have to. Demian has this delusion that the world is his classroom. FIONA

Well, what's the problem? A sudden case of cold feet? DEMIAN
(to Twila)

I don't need to give a reason. TWILA

No, you certainly don't. This isn't a prison camp. DEMIAN

I'll tell you my most embarrassing moment. I was needing a new pair of runners, since my old ones had worn right through, and I went into this store to try some on, and when the sales guy came over and sat me down, and started to take off my shoes, well I noticed there was a big piece of dog crap stuck to my shoe and we both just kind of looked at it and... VLAD

TWILA

You know, Vlad, sometimes I have to wonder if you were raised in a barn. That kind of sewer talk is so inappropriate.

VLAD

Well, it happened.

TWILA

That's not the issue.

DEMIAN

Well, it's clear that concepts of etiquette are not compatible. I think that's a fair appraisal, isn't it, Twila?

TWILA

I don't want to play this game anymore.

FIONA

You're harassing her.

DEMIAN

If they can't tolerate the smallest difference between them, is that my fault?

FIONA

Is anything ever your fault?

VLAD

Well, I never did know when to shut my mouth.

TWILA

Vlad, stay out of it.

VLAD

I'm just trying to look at it with a level head. We don't need to start a third world war over it.

TWILA

There you go again. Telling me I'm too emotional.

VLAD

You can be as emotional as you want. I'm not putting you down about it.

TWILA

Yes you are. And I don't like it.

DEMIAN

Let's move on.

TWILA

I don't want to.

DEMIAN

(to Twila)

And why not? Are you afraid of what you might find out? More truth than you care for?

TWILA

I'm not afraid.

DEMIAN

Well what then?

FIONA

(short)

Oh, leave her alone, Demian.

DEMIAN

I think she's quite capable of defending herself.

TWILA

Yes, I am.

DEMIAN

Aren't you in the least curious to find out what Vladimir's really about? Or doesn't that interest you?

TWILA

I know what he's about.

DEMIAN

(to Vlad)

She knows what you're about.

VLAD

Well, I got nothing to hide, but maybe some things are better left unsaid.

TWILA

(challenging tone)

Like what?

VLAD

Well, like...I don't know...I'm just saying in general...

TWILA

What? What are you talking about?

VLAD

Nothing. Just...well, you're getting in a flap, so maybe some things are better left unsaid. That's all.

I'm not getting in a flap.

TWILA

You say so.

VLAD

(insistent)
Well, are you hiding something from me?

TWILA

I'm not hiding nothing.

VLAD

Well, it seems like you are. I've always had the feeling you hold back. That you're hiding something. If you are, come out and say it.

TWILA

I'm not holding back nothing.

VLAD

Well, why did you say you are?

TWILA

I didn't say I was.

VLAD

Yes you did.

TWILA

(To Demian)
Now look what you've done.

FIONA

There's nothing to know.

VLAD

(To Twila, firmly)
You think it's nothing? Or something?... You want to know what Vladimir's really got on his mind? That important to you or not? Or do you prefer to fabricate your own truth? Is that your kind of spiritual truth?...

DEMIAN

TWILA hovers undecided. She looks at VLAD, then DEMIAN, then FIONA. Everyone's waiting. Then finally, she slowly goes over to the couch, and picks up the flipchart.

DEMIAN
That's the spirit. Alright, I think we're back on track. Let's proceed. New question. The two of you have been captured by terrorists and –

VLAD

Now that sounds more like it. A bit of danger and excitement.

DEMIAN

And they've told you that they're going to chop off your heads unless your soul mate agrees to do one of these things...have sex with a terrorist who may have AIDS...

VLAD

Holy shit!

DEMIAN

or...your soul mate could choose to go and blow up a bridge that will cause the death of a few innocent lives, or...your soul mate, if so inclined, could cut off the other soul mate's hand.

FIONA

(simultaneously with Twila)

That's crazy!

TWILA

What!

DEMIAN

Pick one of the three choices. Write it down.

TWILA

It's not very realistic.

DEMIAN

Quite to the contrary. The true nature of soul mates is revealed in times of moral crisis.

FIONA goes over and whispers with TWILA.

DEMIAN

(to Fiona)

Let her work on her own.

FIONA

I am.

DEMIAN

We want her ideas, not yours.

FIONA

Don't worry.

DEMIAN

(to Vlad)

Go on, write something down.

FIONA

Don't rush him. Let him think.

DEMIAN

By the way, if you choose option three, a clean axe and sterile bandages are supplied.

VLAD

(in a chirpy mood)

Just want to make sure I understand something. Are there any female terrorists? I mean, you know...if they're all males...

TWILA glares at him.

VLAD

I'm not saying I would pick that one, but...

DEMIAN

Yeah, there's some female terrorists.

VLAD

Okay. With AIDS? Or not?

DEMIAN

Could be.

VLAD writes down "sex with female" with "female" underlined, and TWILA writes down "cut off hand."

DEMIAN

Alright. Twila let's start with you. What do you think your soul mate would do?

TWILA

(aggravated)

I know what he'd do. And that's what totally disgusts me. Sex. You picked "sex" didn't you?

VLAD

Yep, you got it right.

TWILA

You'd have sex with a total stranger with AIDS!

VLAD

Well, we don't know what she's got for certain.

TWILA

As if that matters. You'd be willing to disease yourself and ruin our lives for a moment's pleasure?

VLAD

That's not it at all. You want me to cut off your hand? Is that what you want? You want to live the rest of your life with one hand?

TWILA

You can't blow up a bridge?

VLAD

And kill innocent people? Is that Christian? You of all people, I figured you'd understand that.

TWILA

What I understand is if somebody gives you a pretext to *bang* somebody, you don't hesitate to jump into action.

VLAD

That what you think of me?...So what'd you pick?

DEMIAN

(interrupting)

No, no, you're supposed to tell us.

TWILA whips her chart around and waves it in front of VLAD's face.

TWILA

Here! Here's what I'd do. And it'd serve you right!

VLAD

Jesus Christ!

TWILA

You don't have to use the Lord's name in vain.

VLAD

Well, what the hell you want to cut my hand off for?

TWILA

(shouting)

'Cause I'm not going to get myself screwed by some pig with AIDS, okay!

FIONA

I think you made the right choice, Twila. I would have done the same.

VLAD

(hurt)

I didn't know you had that kind of violence in you.

DEMIAN

Human nature does have its dark corners, doesn't it? Well, that touched some raw nerves. So, where are we at? I'd say that was a serious miss for Vladimir and a lovely hit for Twila. What do you think, Fiona?

FIONA

It's gone far enough. Give it up.

DEMIAN

We're almost there, dear. One final and ultimate question. The question that goes to the marrow of our soul. The question that reveals the true stuff we humans are made of –

FIONA

Twila, you can stop. Don't let him bully you.

TWILA

(wearily)

It doesn't matter much one way or the other now, now does it?

DEMIAN

This will separate the genuine soul mates from the imposters. Okay, pads ready?

VLAD

You okay, honey?

DEMIAN

She's fine. Holding up remarkably well. Alright then, here's the scenario. A sadistic killer has set up an explosive device. Each of you are standing on a deadly trigger switch. If you both let go of your trigger switches and try to make a run for it, you both get blown to bits.

VLAD

Wow!

DEMIAN

On the other hand, if you both wait around for longer than one minute you also both get blown to bits. However, if only one of you lets go of the trigger switch, he, or she, can escape, but your better half, unfortunately, ends up a mess of blood and guts. Alright, what would you do? Write down your answers.

VLAD

That's a tough one.

TWILA

Is it?

VLAD writes down "Save her butt" and TWILA writes down "Leaves me behind to die" The exercise has become dead serious. The two stare at each other.

DEMIAN

What have we got? Vladimir?

VLAD

(displaying his answer)

Like I said that's a tough one, but I'd stay behind, so that she'd be able to save her butt.

TWILA

I don't believe you. You're just saying that now to look noble.

VLAD

I'm not, honey. Honest. That's what I'd do. Really.

TWILA

But I'll tell you, if you tried to make a run for it, I'd let go of the trigger so fast –

VLAD

And kill the both of us?

TWILA

I'd be willing to die for you.

VLAD

You just said the exact opposite.

TWILA

Because I know you wouldn't die for me.

VLAD

I said I would.

TWILA

(on the verge of tears)

No, no you wouldn't, you only care about yourself.

VLAD

Where you getting that from? Did I say that?

TWILA

TWILA throws down her flip chart and starts to leave.

VLAD

You know I care about you. Where you going?

TWILA

You never really cared about me. It's all a sham. A total lie!

VLAD

Was not! Twila! Will you hold on?

TWILA storms out. VLAD runs after her.

VLAD

Twila! Will you wait a minute! honey, wait!

VLAD exits.

FIONA

I hope you're proud of yourself.

DEMIAN

They're being a bit dramatic, aren't they?

FIONA

What was the whole point?

DEMIAN

It was their own undoing. They've never had an honest moment in their life. Can't you see that?

FIONA

All you ever see is what *you* want to see. Did it ever occur to you that other people have feelings too?

DEMIAN

By tomorrow, they'll have forgotten the whole thing. They'll be snuggled in their safe little cocoon, spinning wonderful lies. It's the way human nature works. Don't worry, they'll be fine.

FIONA

Fine. Like we're fine? That kind of fine? Hm? Is that the kind of fine your talking about? Because guess what? We're the farthest thing from fine.