

# ESSENTIALLY FREE

by Sandra Merimo

Essentially Free

Original title: I grunden fri

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Translated from the Swedish by the author. Thanks to Marianne Sheehan for helping me improving the English in my translation.

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# ESSENTIALLY FREE

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Place: An "office room" in Leo's apartment on the top floor of an apartment building, in a world which is despotically governed by Goldo from a non-physical dimension. (The stage directions are suggestions. The furniture and props on stage are not drawn in proportion to each other.)

Time: The present (The play was written in 1997.)

Characters:

## **GOLDO**

- a despotic ruler who, from a non-physical dimension, governs the world and manipulates everybody within the Goldo Hierarchy, which as a result of that consists of loyal "zombies". (Goldo can be in many places at the same time.) Goldo is neither a woman nor a man, even if Goldo's behaviour is more like that of a man than of a woman. Goldo is easily bored and thinks happiness is about having Power.

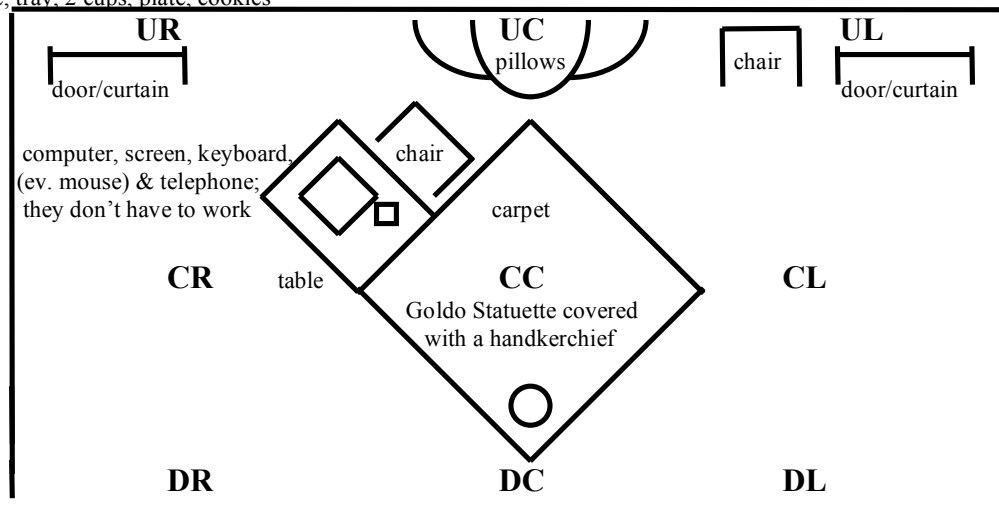
## **LEO NEWMAN**

- 34 years, recruits new members to the Goldo Hierarchy. Leo thinks he's been cornered and that happiness is about being Free.

## **SARAH WATERS**

- just turned 30 years, lives in a basement flat in the same apartment building as Leo. Sarah has a strong integrity and thinks happiness is about Caring.

gold-coloured jacket, (toy-)gun, bag  
kettle, tray, 2 cups, plate, cookies



*Goldo sits still on a pillow with crossed legs (UC) and "meditates". Leo comes into the room from the rest of the apartment (bedroom, kitchen and bathroom) through the door or the curtain (UR). He's brought a cup with him (containing a hot drink) which he puts down by the computer screen. He talks to the gold statuette (DC), the so called Goldo Statuette.*

LEO

I'm sorry, excuse me, I don't know what happened... I thought I'd set my alarm clock yesterday, but I must have forgotten. I don't know what's the matter with me... I feel so confused. I apologize a hundred times. It won't happen again.

*Leo performs a physical "morning ceremonial routine" which he concludes by bowing in front of the Goldo Statuette (DC). He kneels down and polishes the head of the Statuette (to be able to speak to Goldo personally).*

LEO

My dear Goldo. I am Your faithful servant. I would kindly ask for a favour.

GOLDO

Well then, let's hear...

LEO

Lately I've been so exhausted. Something's the matter. I guess I want to quit. That's my conclusion.

GOLDO

Quit?

LEO

Yes, I know this seems sudden... but I've thought about it for a long time...

GOLDO

You know better than to trust your feelings. They will always mislead you. Trust in me instead. I love you and know what's best for you.

LEO

I know You have done so much for me. I don't want to seem ungrateful, but...

GOLDO

That's exactly what you are.

LEO

No, no, please don't take it like that. I'll always be loyal to You. Maybe I just need a holiday. I haven't had a holiday for four years. Maybe if I could take a few weeks off and go someplace... then I might feel better when I return. I've always wanted to go...

GOLDO

Stop that nonsense. There's no limit to the amount of work needed to be done. Our world is full of confused people in search of something to believe in, something to live for... You're not allowed to quit now. We need You!

LEO

I don't really want to disappoint You, but I'm really exhausted...

GOLDO

I know what I'll do! I'll promote you! What do you say! Then you'll stay, won't you?

LEO

Actually, I've been thinking this through...

GOLDO

Good! That settles it. From this day on you'll have your own Licence of Liquidation. I hope you understand what it means. Your responsibilities will be increased, but as a reward I'll double your salary. Will that satisfy you?

LEO

I don't think You hear what I'm saying...

GOLDO

You want me to triple your salary?

LEO

Triple my salary?!

GOLDO

I should have promoted you earlier. I'm sorry. You've really done an excellent job. Maybe I haven't showed you enough gratitude? I'm glad we had this little conversation. I expect we've cleared everything now.

LEO

I'm very grateful to You, Goldo. Maybe I've been rude. I'm very sorry! It can easily happen when you're tired.

GOLDO

Don't worry. Take a little break. Lay down and rest and I'll give you of my energy.

LEO

I really want to apologize...

GOLDO

Now, that's enough.

LEO

It's only that I have so many questions without answers... Since my mother died I've dreamt about her many times and she always tells me to stop. Why does she say that? "Stop, Leo!", she says. I wonder what she means...

GOLDO

Poor Leo. Is that all? You should have come to me immediately. It's not good to keep secrets from me. You know that. You can be completely at rest. Your mother's dead and she cannot communicate with you. Such nonsense. It's only wishful thinking. You can relax. Your dream doesn't mean anything. Do you feel better now?

LEO

Yes, I do, a little...

GOLDO

Good. Just lay down and rest. Relax and let your troubles go.

LEO

Thank you very much, Goldo.

*Leo bows deeply in front of the Goldo Statuette and finishes by laying a thin, see-through "handkerchief" over the statuette. This means that their conversation is over and that Leo cannot hear anymore what Goldo is saying. Goldo can go on speaking (without Leo hearing) and also speak directly to Leo's subconsciousness. **Each time Leo cannot hear Goldo it is shown by an (X) after Goldo's name.** Leo lays down on the carpet with his feet towards the audience (DC) and his head the other way (UC).*

GOLDO (X)

My dear little Leo, you are one of my best subjects. You're so easy to fool. You should be a nice, little boy and do exactly as I tell you. I don't like being questioned.

*Leo sits up again.*

GOLDO (X)

What's the matter with you! Lay down at once. I don't have time for this.

*Leo lays down immediately and this time he lies still.*

GOLDO (X)

Shall we begin - finally!

*Goldo "hypnotizes" Leo into a zombie.*

GOLDO (X)

I, Leo, relax completely and receive the blessing from Goldo.

*A short pause when Leo relaxes.*

GOLDO (X)

My name is Leo and I am a faithful servant to my beloved Goldo. I give up my own will and I fulfil everything Goldo asks me to do. This I do gladly, because I know Goldo loves me and gives me everything I could ever wish for. My new authorization means that I at an instant can kill anyone who doesn't love Goldo as much as I do. I should never hesitate to perform these seemingly dreadful actions, because I know Goldo would never ask me to do anything unnecessary. I now receive the energy I will need to perform my new assignments.

*Goldo blows some air straight forward and with a hand gesture the energy from Goldo is "transferred" to Leo. Leo squirms of discomfort and makes some kind of pitiful sound, as if he has a stomach ache. When Leo has calmed down, Goldo starts speaking again.*

GOLDO (X)

My dear Leo, I have an assignment for you. A very important assignment. You have a neighbour living in a basement flat. Her name is Sarah. She has resisted me for a long time and I have to admit that I haven't paid much attention to it. She's just a woman and women are, after all, only second-class citizens. However, the problem is that she seems to be happy. It looks as if she's feeling great, even though she's not a member of the Hierarchy. I'm a bit concerned that this wellbeing could spread to other non-members and of course that cannot happen. You'll have to recruit her. It shouldn't be too hard. You can scare her with the usual things. By the way: if you don't succeed I will regretfully have to kill you, but of course you know that already. Now, I think that'll be all. Good luck!

*Leo wakes up slowly. He starts working immediately. The computer (CR) is on at all times. (The computer and the telephone work in the world of the play, but they don't have to work for real: the computer screen can be turned away from the audience and the telephone doesn't ring.) He gets connected to "Goldonet", where he finds information about Sarah and for a short time he's reading about her on the computer screen. He seems to be surprised but also insulted (on behalf of Goldo) by what he reads. He phones Sarah.*

LEO

Yes, hello. Is this Sarah Waters? Good. My name is Leo Newman and I work in recruitment. I've just read through the interview made a week ago by one of my colleagues, Hubert Jacobs. There you say that you neither want to nor intend to apply for a membership of the Goldo Hierarchy. Is that correct?

*(He hears Sarah answering "yes".)*

We'll have to talk about this. Since we're neighbours I suggest that you come up to my flat on the thirteenth floor as soon as possible.

*(Sarah is protesting.)*

No, I'm sorry. It's not optional. I think you know the consequences if you refuse.

*(Sarah answers.)*

That's right. I'll expect you in a few minutes. Goodbye.

*Leo puts the phone down. He starts preparing for the interrogation with Sarah, e.g. by placing a chair for her (CL) and he takes out his gold-coloured office jacket. At the same time, when he is doing this the "zombie-effect" is about to wear off. He stops in the middle of his preparations. He feels awkward.*

LEO

I don't want to do this.

*Leo kneels in front of the Goldo Statuette and polishes its head.*

LEO

My dear Goldo. I am Your faithful servant. I'm sorry to disturb You, but I feel uneasy. I don't want to do this anymore. Why do I have to force people to join? Is there no other way? Couldn't I start a campaign where I show the advantages of being a member?

GOLDO

That wouldn't work. People don't know what's best for them.

LEO

Take this Sarah, for example: obviously she doesn't want to join. Even if I forced her she wouldn't contribute much to the Hierarchy.

GOLDO

It doesn't matter. The important thing is that everyone is a member. Within the Hierarchy everyone is taken care of. They all have food and somewhere to live... and a television of course. No one should have to be an outsider. Isn't that something good to work for? You're doing wonders every day, Leo! Don't stop now.

LEO

Do You really think so? Thank You, my dear Goldo. I apologize for having bothered You. I'll immediately return to my work.

*Leo bows deeply and lays the "handkerchief" over the Goldo Statuette. He goes back to the computer where he finds supplementary information about Sarah (e.g. about her parents, childhood, education, sex "debut", health examinations, work experience, ...)*

GOLDO (X)

Poor Leo. You're so stupid I feel sorry for you. I don't see how you can be so easily fooled. You still don't understand that there are only disadvantages in being a member of the Hierarchy. I guess I should be grateful. What would I do without morons like you?

*Goldo yawns widely. (Leo works at the computer without hearing Goldo.)*

GOLDO (X)

Sometimes I almost think it's too easy. The people are so lost and desperately searching for a leader. On the other hand, in recent days you've been protesting a few times too many. Maybe I should test your discipline: stand up!

*Leo stands up immediately.*

GOLDO (X)

Sing the Song of Goldo!



*Leo stays where he is (CR), but turns towards the Goldo Statuette (DC) and sings.*

LEO

"Goldo, Goldo, You are the greatest, I will always serve You well,  
C B A G A G F G C G G B C D G G

Goldo, I completely surrender until I'm a zombie,..."

C B A G A G F G C G G B C D G

GOLDO (X)

That's enough, thank you. Now, what more...? Would you please turn around and scratch your bottom?

*Leo turns around and (with his back partly towards the audience, although Goldo has a good view) he scratches his bottom.*

GOLDO (X) *laughs*

Hi, hi, hi. That's always so funny. Ha, ha. Could you fart as well, please?

*Leo makes a long-lasting farting sound.*

GOLDO (X) *laughs*

Ha, ha, ha. I haven't had this much fun for a long time. Oh, my... But now back to "business": Sarah will soon be here. Don't trust her. She'll probably want to kill you. Take out your gun, just to be on the safe side.

*Leo goes into the apartment through the door/curtain (UR). He gets his gun from the bedroom (out of the audience's sight) and comes back into the room. He looks at the gun.*

LEO

Why am I holding this one?

GOLDO (X)

You might need it. What if she threatens to kill you? Be prepared! Don't trust anyone.

*Leo feels uneasy. He stands still and listens for sounds. He cocks the gun and goes towards the door/curtain that leads to the hall (UL). He can't hear anything so he goes back into the room and uncocks the gun. He relaxes. At that moment the door bell rings, which makes him jerk. He hides the gun inside the belt at his waistline, puts on his (gold-coloured) office jacket and goes out (UL) and opens the outer door. Sarah comes in first and Leo follows. She stops and waits by the door/curtain until Leo shows her the chair (CL) where she sits down. Leo puts his chair opposite to her (CR).*

LEO  
All right, let's begin. Your name, please.

SARAH  
Sarah Waters.

LEO  
Personal code:

SARAH  
F67E122-9.

LEO  
Goldo Status:

SARAH  
None.

LEO  
You're now thirty and you still refuse to become a member.  
Do you understand what that means regarding your future?

SARAH  
Yes.

LEO  
You'll never obtain a working permit which means that you  
will be unemployed permanently and at the same time your  
life subsidy will be cut by half; you won't be allowed to  
raise a family; you'll be denied good and nourishing food;  
if you get sick you won't receive medical care... Shall I  
continue?

SARAH  
No, I know all that.

LEO  
And you still won't become a member?

*Sarah doesn't answer.*

LEO  
I've looked through your life history. You received good  
grades which means that you could live a good life within  
the Goldo Hierarchy. You love children. Have you never  
wished to have a family?

*Sarah doesn't want to answer.*

LEO

You're good at economics. There you have a career possibility. The Hierarchy is always searching for good economists. You could get a better flat at the same time. It must be tough living in your flat. About the size of a wardrobe, isn't it?... Your life could improve in an incredible way. All that is needed is your signature on a membership application...

*Sarah sits calmly, waiting for the interrogation to end.*

LEO

There might be some things you haven't thought of: times are getting harder as you know. In a few years membership will be necessary. The resources won't be enough to go around, so priorities'll have to be made. And of course, members of the Hierarchy will be first in line to all of life's necessities. Not being a member will lead to a sure death.

SARAH

It wouldn't have to come to that.

LEO

Oh, my! I made you speak. That's good. This is interesting. How could even less resources still be enough for everyone?

SARAH

Less resources might stretch to everyone, but they are diminishing because of mismanagement and nothing else.

LEO

Now, really! How dare you question the administration of the Goldo Hierarchy!

SARAH

You asked a question.

LEO

Maybe I did, but you're not supposed to have any smart answers, d'you understand!

*Sarah doesn't answer.*

LEO

You're making this unnecessarily difficult. You know that you'll have to be a member sooner or later. Why not now?

SARAH

I don't want to.

LEO

It's not a question about what you want. It's about what you'll have to do to save your life.

SARAH

I want to live, but not within the Hierarchy.

LEO

Don't you hear what I'm saying: you'll never survive outside the Hierarchy!

SARAH

I'll take that risk.

LEO

You know, don't you, that I can assign you at any time to one of our Brainwashing Institutions. You'll never be the same, I can assure you.

SARAH

If you'd read my life history carefully you'd know that I've already been to one.

LEO

That's true. I forgot. That leaves us with the ultimate solution: that I'll kill you!... You've openly defied Goldo which is something I can't tolerate. You've got five minutes to regret your statements and apologize!...

*Sarah shows no reaction.*

LEO

Why don't you say something? Do you think you're tough, now?... Can't you squeeze out a small apology? I hope you understand that I don't really want to kill you.

SARAH

So why are you going to do it?

LEO

It's not up to me. It's up to you.

SARAH

I must have a right to live!

LEO

You might think so, but it's not for certain.

SARAH

You've got no right to kill me!

LEO

Oh, yes, I have. I've just received my Licence.

SARAH

From Goldo?

LEO

Now, that was a stupid question: of course from Goldo.

SARAH

And you think Goldo can give you the right to kill?

LEO

What's the matter with you? Goldo is the greatest and can therefore decide who's to live and who's to die.

SARAH

Goldo is a coward who only creates fear.

*Goldo gets a sudden fit of coughing.*

LEO

I think you should take it very easy now... You're going too far and I'm losing my patience with you... I'll give you one more chance, but I emphasize, this is your last one.

*Sarah nods.*

LEO

I don't understand why you don't become a member of the Goldo Hierarchy? Tell me!

*Goldo starts talking to Leo's subconsciousness.*

GOLDO (X)

Don't listen to her!

SARAH

As you've read in my life history, I've naturally passed the obligatory Goldo School. I was happy there and did well. Of course I'd planned to apply for membership and I wanted to make a career in economics. I'm not really sure how it happened, but suddenly one day I saw through everything: the whole structure with Goldo on the top of the Hierarchy. Everything seemed so empty and hollow. I lost my desire to reach for the top. It was no longer important.

GOLDO (X)

Hrrm!

LEO

Not everyone reaches the top. You could still be a member and benefit from its advantages.

SARAH

I thought so at first, but in the end it didn't work. It felt like someone was watching me, even when I was alone. I sensed being ruled by someone or something.

GOLDO (X)

Are you really going to listen to this?

LEO

Aren't you scared of being alone?

SARAH

No, not anymore. In the beginning it was hard, of course. There was hardly anyone I could talk to, so I thought sometimes I was going mad. It took many years before I started to trust myself and my intuition.

LEO

Go on.

GOLDO (X)

You idiot!! How can you let her ramble like this?

SARAH

I started to take long walks in the forest. Sometimes I talked to the trees and the plants and sang together with the wind. I'd never done that before. I found peace inside of me. I wasn't frightened anymore. I'd been scared of so much.

LEO

Of what?

*Goldo mimics Leo:*

GOLDO (X)

"Of what?"

SARAH

First of all scared of dying, naturally. I'd always been scared of that. Or actually I'd been trained to be. I don't think death frightened me as a child... And also scared of violence, knives and guns and so on... I didn't understand how I'd be able to defend myself. Some people seem to go berserk for no reason...

LEO

Aren't you scared when someone threatens your life?

SARAH

I defend myself, of course, but I can't say that I'm scared. I know that the ones using violence are much more frightened than I am.

LEO

I don't believe that.

SARAH

Believe what you want.

LEO

If it's true what you're saying: how do you find this peace you're talking about?

GOLDO (X)

I seem to have misjudged you. I thought you'd be able to withstand her...

*Goldo keeps watching quite agitated but are unable to do anything.*

SARAH

It's quite simple. It's within me. It's within you too, but you'll have to search for it. The problem is that Goldo and the Hierarchy always want us to have our attention on something outside of ourselves, so that we'll never discover the riches within us. They see to it that we're always distracted by something, for example by television or computers. We're taught to think that we're not good enough and that we shouldn't trust ourselves. They want us to be under stress and to feel powerless, so that we'll search for guidance within the Hierarchy.

LEO

Aren't you being a bit paranoid? Goldo loves us and only wants what's best for us.

SARAH

I know you believe that, but it's not true. Goldo is an absolute ruler and uses us human beings in every possible way. We're manipulated as guinea pigs in a laboratory. We're trained to develop a desire to reach the top of the Hierarchy and to think that the purpose consecrates the means. We become efficient zombies who work without questioning anything. Goldo loves to give us impulses which make us frightened, which often leads to us using violence against each other. When we think that we live in a dangerous and uncertain world, then we become even easier to manipulate.

LEO

I don't want to kill you.

SARAH

So don't.

LEO

I do things I don't want to and I can't stop myself.

SARAH

Just take it easy. Listen to yourself for once.

LEO

I would if I knew my own voice. I don't even know who I am. I need help.

GOLDO (X) *rises*

I'm here to help you, Leo.

SARAH *goes up to Leo*

Take it easy. Don't panic now. Don't you understand that's exactly what Goldo wants: that you should feel so helpless that you'll give up your own will.

GOLDO (X)

Listen to me, Leo. You know what to do.

LEO

I want to believe in what you're saying, but on the other hand you could be sent from the Elite to test my loyalty?



SARAH

Don't be stupid. Can't you hear how daft that sounds.

LEO

I don't trust you.

SARAH

You don't have to trust me. You're supposed to trust yourself.

GOLDO (X)

Don't forget our deal.

LEO

Why can't you just sign an application...

SARAH

You know I won't do that. That'd be the same thing as giving up my life.

GOLDO (X)

Remember what'll happen if you fail.

LEO

I'm scared.

SARAH

I know. That's why Goldo has power over you.

LEO

I can't think straight.

GOLDO (X)

What are you waiting for?

SARAH

Relax. Take charge of your life. Don't let Goldo decide your actions.

LEO

I feel so weak.

SARAH

Let me walk out of here.

LEO

You know I can't do that.

GOLDO (X)

Well done.

SARAH

I'll disappear for good. You can report me as being dead.

LEO

Where would you go?

SARAH

I can't tell you.

GOLDO (X)

Don't let her fool you.

LEO

If you get caught you'll only blame me.

SARAH

And if I did, who would believe me?

LEO

No one.

SARAH

So let me go.

LEO

I can't.

GOLDO (X)

She's going to kill you, Leo!

*Leo takes out his gun and points it at Sarah, who backs off. He rises (if he hasn't done so already).*

LEO

I don't want to do this.

*Goldo laughs and enjoys the situation.*

SARAH

You will regret it.

LEO

You're going to kill me.

SARAH

Are you mad! Why would I want to do that?

LEO

That's why I'm going to kill you. I'm only defending myself.

*Goldo is excited.*

SARAH

Goldo's playing you as if you were an instrument. You're being used like a machine running errands for the Hierarchy. What do you get for killing?

LEO

A better life, much better than I've ever had before.

SARAH

You'll lose yourself in the process.

LEO

That's enough. I've worked hard to be promoted. I'm not going to fail now. Do you have anything to say before I delete you?

*A short pause when Sarah doesn't know what to say. Goldo is expectant.*

SARAH

You've been completely deceived.

*Leo cocks the gun which he keeps pointing at Sarah.*

GOLDO (X)

Good boy, and now let's shoot. Come on.

SARAH

You can still change your mind...

LEO

Shut up!!

*Leo keeps standing, gathering courage to be able to shoot.*

GOLDO (X)

Don't think! Fire!

*Leo is going to shoot, but realizes suddenly what he's about to do. He slowly lowers the gun. Goldo is disappointed and goes to sit down (UC).*

LEO  
You can go. Go, do you hear!!

*Sarah goes towards the door/curtain (UL) but stops and turns around.*

SARAH  
Thanks.

LEO  
Bloody hell, just go!!

*She looks at Leo who has sunk down.*

SARAH *says calmly:*  
Essentially, you're free.

*Leo looks up when Sarah leaves (UL). He curls up on the floor.*

GOLDO (X)  
You're really pathetic. I guess I was wrong to promote you. I'll have to prepare for your deletion... On the other hand, this was the first time I asked you to kill someone. Maybe I should, after all, give you a second chance, what about that? I can be good when I want to.

*Leo sits up.*

LEO  
"Essentially, you're free", what did she mean?

GOLDO (X)  
You could create fear among the children in kindergarten. You should be capable of that. Children are easily scared.

LEO  
It's gone too far. I almost killed her.

GOLDO (X)  
Or, I know, even better: you can spread a deadly virus which only attacks youngsters. That would create chaos and put pressure on them to apply for membership as soon as possible...

LEO  
It was so close.

GOLDO (X)

Of course we'll offer them complete recovery within the Hierarchy...

LEO

How could I be so stupid to accept a Licence of Liquidation? Of course I was flattered, but still...

GOLDO (X)

What are you blabbing about?

LEO

I've been a complete idiot.

GOLDO (X) *laughs*

Well, I can't argue with that...

LEO

It's now or never. If I don't do it now I'll never do it...

*Leo takes off his office jacket and puts it together with the gun in front of the Goldo Statuette. Then he bends down and polishes the head of the Statuette. During this conversation Goldo walks around the room, while Leo all the time sits in front of and talks to the Statuette (DC).*

LEO

Goldo, I can't do this anymore. I quit now. I know You'll say that I shouldn't and that I can't do it, but I have to do it. I apologize ever so much. I'm a lousy servant.

GOLDO

I know you didn't manage to delete her. I've already forgiven you for that. You'll get a new chance.

LEO

I don't want a new chance! I want to be released from my membership contract!

GOLDO

That's impossible. You're a member for life.

LEO

It says in the contract that I can withdraw at any time.

GOLDO

True, but that's a lie.

LEO

Of course...

GOLDO *smiles*

I can make you do anything.

LEO

Why don't you let me go! I hate you! You're making my life hell.

GOLDO

Hell? Maybe I should go there for vacation?

LEO

You want me to feel like a victim: to feel small and scared seeking your protection. You're the one who's made me believe that life is dangerous and you always threaten me with death if I don't obey you. I've been so scared of you...

GOLDO

...,which I recommend.

LEO

People will get tired. They'll be so bored that their fear will disappear. What will you do then? Start a war which'll kill everyone?

GOLDO

Sure, why not. It's worked before.

LEO

How could I ever have admired you? I thought you had the answers to all my questions.

GOLDO

I do. I'm the greatest of all beings and I own the whole world!

LEO

Maybe there are beings greater than you are?

*Goldo gets an acute fit of laughing, (but really, this is exactly what Goldo is secretly afraid of):*

GOLDO

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha... You actually have a sense of humour. Hi, hi, hi... Now, I think it's time we had a serious talk: you've signed a contract which means that you're obliged to work for me. So what are you waiting for? I'm giving you a second chance: you can choose between scaring children and spreading a deadly virus among youngsters. You'll get a bonus if you spread the virus.

LEO

You're totally insane! I almost killed her! I'll never work for you again.

GOLDO

Oh, dear, what strong words from such a weak man...

LEO

You've completely manipulated me. I can see that now... What are you going to do?

GOLDO

You're wondering if I'm going to kill you, aren't you? No, not personally. I can influence someone else to do it. Or else I can make you suicidal... You feel strong now, after having listened to that girl, but it won't last very long. Soon you'll be crawling back, and then I won't be as kind, I can assure you.

LEO

If you're not going to kill me, does that mean I'm free to go?

GOLDO

Free? Ha, ha, ha... You can never be free. You've got nowhere to go. How will you get food when you have no money? Who will take care of you when you get sick? Who will help you when you become a victim of crime? Who will you turn to when you're feeling lonely and abandoned?

LEO

Not to you, that's for sure.

GOLDO

Excuse me?

LEO

I've made up my mind. I definitely want to quit.

GOLDO

You'll have no legal rights.

LEO

I'll be free!

GOLDO

I think you've got moss in your ears: No, you will not be free! You'll be outlawed, hunted, hungry, desolate, sick, lonely and mad! Then you'll come back to me crying and on your bare knees and you'll humbly beg for your job back. Don't you think I haven't seen this before? Someone comes along and talks about love and freedom and there's always someone falling for it. This time it was you. Don't you understand why I want you to delete people like Sarah? They create so much harm and unhappiness wherever they go. For some unexplainable reason they are happy, but I'd say they're just extraordinarily naive. I really thought you'd be able to see through her. Please, Leo, I'm on your side. Don't you understand I only want to help you?

LEO

I don't trust you anymore.

GOLDO

I've been very good to you, but you don't seem to be grateful at all. It's very sad. I don't even know why I'm trying to save you? You'll only have yourself to blame!

*Goldo sulks and Leo takes his chance:*

LEO

Goodbye, Goldo.

*Leo quickly puts the "handkerchief" over the Statuette. Then he can't stop himself from prodding the Statuette with his finger, so it falls. Goldo is strongly provoked by this.*

GOLDO (X)

How dare you! You'd better watch out!

*Leo feels a gust of wind going through the room. He stays, sitting still.*



GOLDO (X)

You think you've won, don't you? It's really pathetic.  
You'll never be more than a ridiculous, little jerk. I  
actually believed in you and you've made me extremely  
disappointed. All that education that I've wasted on you...  
You'll pay me back!

*Goldo walks out through the door/curtain (UL). Leo senses everything becoming calm around him. He is alone and unguarded for the first time in years. He is not used to it and at first he doesn't know what to do. He has a bad conscience because of what he almost did to Sarah and gets an impulse to phone her. He hesitates a few times before he dials the number.*

LEO

Yes, hello... Is this Sarah Waters? Hm. Yes, hello...  
This is Leo Newman. I don't know what to say. I feel so  
ashamed... I understand if you don't want to talk to me,  
considering what nearly happened...

*(Sarah confirms Leo's assumption.)*

I'm shocked that it went so far. It must have been a  
dreadful experience. I hope you can forgive me, well,  
not right away, of course, but...

*(Sarah accepts Leo's apology, but doesn't want to talk anymore.)*

I understand. Of course... I was stupid to phone you like  
this... Well, I won't bother you anymore... Goodbye.

*Leo is scared. He walks nervously around the room, as if he is an animal trapped in a cage. At last he sits or lies down (in the middle of the room, CC) to calm himself. In the background there is peaceful music (e.g. "Après un Rêve" by Gabriel Fauré) and a woman sings a melody without words. It is slowly getting darker. When Leo now relaxes, a light starts to shine on him. He rises. (The music is still in the background.) He stands in the light and experiences being filled with strength, courage and joy.*

*The light slowly goes back to how it was earlier in the room. Leo slowly comes back "to life". He smiles. He feels happy with a sense of relief, as if a heavy burden has been removed. He expresses his joy in different ways: he laughs, he screams right out, dances a bit, makes some kind of "football-victory-gesture" ... Then he looks around the room and he thinks of all the years he has worked for the Hierarchy.*

LEO

How could I think this was important?...

*He ponders a bit more. Then he looks at the computer and walks up to it.*

LEO

I should be able to save a few more...

*He sits by the computer and deletes his "Goldo Files", one by one. (It means that he erases negative data about the people he previously had to first influence and then recruit.) He becomes more content with himself, as he is deleting the files.*

*Goldo comes in (UL) and stays waiting by the door/curtain watching Leo working by the computer.*

GOLDO (X)

You're disconnected. It doesn't matter what you do. You can't save anyone.

*Leo is still very satisfied with the results he thinks he has accomplished.*

GOLDO (X)

Time for some disciplinary exercises: rise!

*Leo jumps to his feet.*

GOLDO (X)

Jump on one leg!

*Leo jumps around the room on one leg.*

GOLDO (X)

Very good! And then I want you to crawl on the floor and bleat as loudly as you can!

*Leo crawls on the floor and bleats loudly like a sheep.*

GOLDO (X)

This is going very well. You've really liberated yourself. What more can we do?... Would you please vomit, just a little?

*Leo gets an acute pain in his stomach and is about to throw up. Suddenly he realizes it is Goldo who is influencing him and he slowly calms down until the "reflexes to vomit" has disappeared. He "listens" around him, wanting to find out where Goldo is.*

LEO

I know you. I can almost smell you.

*Leo walks around the room but faces the wrong way when he talks to Goldo.*

LEO

Come on! Where are you? I know you're here somewhere.

GOLDO (X)

Where? Where am I, Leo?

*Goldo blows air on Leo, who quickly turns towards that way, but Goldo moves in time:*

LEO

You think this is fun, don't you?

*Leo goes to the computer.*

LEO *enjoys the situation*

You can't stop me anymore.

*Leo sits down by the computer. He's going to spread his opinions about Goldo and the Hierarchy over "Goldonet". Goldo watches amused. At first Leo is very determined, but soon he realizes that he can't get out on "Goldonet". He tries to access his personal file, but can't do that either.*

LEO

What's wrong this time?

*He phones the administration of the Goldo Hierarchy.*

LEO

Yes, good day. This is Leo Newman. I can't access my personal file and I can't get out on the Goldonet either.

*(A secretary asks him to give his personal code and Goldo Status.)*

A63U144-5. I'm licensed and I work in recruitment.

*(The secretary informs Leo that there is no one of that name and there has never been anyone registered with that code. She wonders if she has comprehended the right code.)*

Yes, that's the code... Something must have gone wrong.  
I'm sorry to have bothered you. Excuse me.

*Leo puts the phone down. He realizes what it all means.*

GOLDO (X)

Are you surprised? Did you really think you'd have free access?

*Leo stays sitting by the computer. He "orientates" himself, i.e. tries to figure out what means of escape he has from the situation.*

GOLDO (X)

I'm sorry I had to erase you from my registers. Really sad, I must say. I also had to close your bank accounts and I haven't a clue where the money went. There must have been a computer error somewhere... And you'll be evicted tomorrow. Don't ask me why. Maybe the neighbours have complained about you? Normally I'd be able to help you in a mess like this, but at the moment I have so much to do, well, you know how it is sometimes.

*Leo phones his father, but no one answers.*

GOLDO (X)

Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you: it's virtually impossible to reach your father at the moment. His telephone seems to be cut off and I think he's decided to move in a great hurry. I'm sorry I don't know where to, otherwise I'd tell you, of course.

*Leo puts the phone down. He rises and walks towards a place where he thinks Goldo is.*

LEO

You don't scare me.

*Leo doesn't notice when Goldo "without making a sound" takes up the gun and sticks it into the back of Leo. He freezes with fear thinking he is going to die any second.*

GOLDO (X) *laughs*

Why would I?

*Goldo lets the gun fall to the floor. Leo turns around. He can't stop the panic taking charge of him. He thought he was going to die and it is the first time he has experienced a thing "coming to life". He doesn't dare to touch the gun. Goldo continues to "work" on his subconsciousness.*

GOLDO (X)

An accident can happen so easily... Have you checked if your insurance is valid? But I'm sure it is. You shouldn't worry about it... What could possibly happen?

*Leo knows he is not safe in the apartment, but he also knows there is no point in running away.*

GOLDO (X)

How are you, Leo? You look a bit pale. Are you cold?  
Isn't it time for a cup of hot Goldonade?

*Leo goes to get the cup by the computer screen. The screen (which can be turned away from the audience) is filled with the message: "WE CAN ALWAYS GET TO YOU". Leo quickly turns off the computer.*

GOLDO (X) *laughs*

Have you no sense of humour? That wasn't so bad.

LEO

"We can always get to you."

*He stands for a moment to collect himself. Then he takes the cup and goes out through the door/curtain (UR) into the kitchen and puts the kettle on. Goldo seems to be amused. Leo comes back into the room. He can't think of any way to get out of the situation he is in. (Even if he hears that the water starts boiling he doesn't go out to the kitchen.) During this time Goldo talks to Leo's subconsciousness.*

GOLDO (X)

Is this harder than you expected? It would be a pleasure to see you rot away... Call me a bad loser if you like. It doesn't matter. Bad losers are the only ones who win. And you have placed your bet on the wrong horse. You think you've chosen your own freedom, but it doesn't exist. You don't even know who you are. So how could you be free? You're like a little child who still needs his parents and you're not capable of being responsible for your actions.

*Leo starts to vaguely perceive what Goldo is saying.*

GOLDO (x)

Regret it while you can. I'm still here for you. I can give you the support you need. I can help you make your dreams come true. I love you, Leo. Reach out to me and ask for my forgiveness. Do it, Leo. Then everything will be all right. We'll forget what's happened. We'll leave it behind us.

*Leo has slowly softened and starts to sob.*

GOLDO (x)

Don't be scared. Do it. You won't regret it.

*Leo's sobbing turns into crying:*

LEO

Please forgive me!

GOLDO (x) "*consoles*"

Don't worry. I'm not angry with you. Everyone can make mistakes and you almost chose the wrong side. But now we can start afresh. Maybe I'll treat you better in the future. I'm a bit blunt sometimes. I'm sorry, Leo.

*Leo calms down and seems to be fine.*

GOLDO (x)

You've learnt your lesson. In a couple of years you'll look back on this day and laugh at yourself. But now just take it easy and rest. Don't forget to listen to the meditation channel tonight, so you'll get a good night's sleep.

*Leo seems to gradually reach a state of being "unconscious", but he hears more and more of what Goldo is saying.*

GOLDO (x)

Tomorrow everything will be back to normal. I'll cancel the eviction and you'll get your job back. Maybe you think I've been too severe, and that might be true, but just like a parent I have to set limits. You don't know what's best for you. See for yourself what happens when you try to make your own decisions. You'll have to completely commit your life to me in the future. I might let you go through the Elite education. You'll have to train your discipline. It's not good enough. The problem is you think you have to understand everything. You don't have to understand anything. The Hierarchy has all the answers. You've got a goal to work for and receive rewards along the way. What more can you wish for? Life can be complicated and I'm simplifying it for you. You're not ready for the chaos implied in taking responsibility. You think I've got all the power and of course that's true, but you wouldn't be able to handle it. You'd either be shit scared of taking actions or be reckless and arrogant. To be able to make wise decisions you'd need my perspective.

*Leo can now hear Goldo.*

GOLDO

You'd better take the rest of the day off. You need time to think through what's happened. This can never be repeated, you know that. I guess I'm partly to blame. I thought your training was adequate. Now I have to reconsider your further education...

LEO

I hear you. I can hear you talking.

*Goldo is surprised and slightly worried and tries to figure out how it is possible. Leo is not supposed to hear anything, unless Goldo approves of it. Leo can't see Goldo, but still senses where Goldo is. For the first time he turns the right way when he talks to Goldo:*

LEO

I can actually hear you!

*Goldo steps to the side but Leo can follow Goldo's moves:*

LEO

I wonder what you look like. I hope you're ugly. It would serve you right... Why have you stopped talking? Are you frightened? Have you lost your advantage now?

GOLDO

I haven't lost anything. I'm letting you hear me.

LEO

Are you sure?

GOLDO

It's a proof that I trust you. From now on I'll be more open towards you.

LEO

That wouldn't be a day too soon.

GOLDO

I'll let you be a part of the Elite.

LEO

How nice. How much would you pay me?

GOLDO

Anything you'd ask for.

LEO

Anything...

I value you. GOLDO

Do you? LEO

I need you. GOLDO

And if I don't need you? LEO

We need each other. GOLDO

Maybe... LEO

You'll never be able to free yourself. GOLDO

How come I can hear you? I'm not supposed to be able to hear you now, am I? LEO

I said I'm allowing you to. I can influence your subconsciousness at any time and you haven't got a chance to defend yourself. GOLDO

So, do it! Now! LEO

I'll do it in my own time. GOLDO

Admit that you can't do it anymore. LEO

I'll do it when you least suspect it. GOLDO

Do it now! I challenge you. I bet you can't. LEO

Maybe you can hear me now, but it's only temporary... GOLDO



LEO

We're through with each other. You've lost your power over me.

*There is silence for a few moments. Goldo has, without any major problems, ruled the world for the last twenty thousand years and it is only in recent time that more and more people have started to put up a resistance. Goldo is scared of losing his power and feels lonely, angry and misunderstood. Since Goldo has apologized for some of the violent and unnecessary actions against Leo and other people, Goldo now thinks that Leo is resentful, mean and ungrateful, while Leo feels good and sure about himself:*

LEO

I never thought I'd make it. This is great... I'd like you to leave me now.

GOLDO

Such insolence! Are you trying to throw me out! You're the one who's going to be thrown out. You're not allowed to live here anymore.

LEO

I know that. I'll leave this apartment as soon as possible, but I still want to be alone now.

*Goldo now loses control completely:*

GOLDO

You just think about yourself, don't you! Have you ever thought about me!

*Goldo's outburst is a surprise to Leo.*

GOLDO

Have you thought about how lonely I can be. No one likes me!!!

*Goldo starts sobbing. Leo doesn't know if he should laugh or cry.*

GOLDO

I try to make friends all the time, but no one wants to be with me.

LEO

Please, Goldo, take it easy now. You have a whole world to rule.

GOLDO

World this and world that... It's beginning to bore me.

LEO

So stop ruling.

GOLDO

No! Cause then I'd have nothing to do at all. Can't we be friends?

LEO

You're mad! After all you've done to me.

GOLDO

Can't you forgive me...

LEO

It's not that easy.

GOLDO

You're insensitive and mean!

*Leo (gives up temporarily and) doesn't even try to answer.*

GOLDO

You don't care that I'm alone! I've never had any real friends. It's lonely in the universe. I've just wanted to play a bit. You don't have to take everything so seriously.

LEO

Not take things so seriously! You have threatened my life almost every day!

GOLDO

Threatened, yes, but you're still alive.

LEO

I know many who've been killed in your name.

GOLDO

But someone has to die so that I can have some fun. So what? It's crowded with people everywhere. I can't possibly keep count of everyone.

LEO

People are scared of dying.

GOLDO

I know, but why? I'm not afraid. I know I can't die.

LEO

It's like disappearing, I think.

GOLDO

How, disappearing? How could you disappear?

LEO

What happens to the people who die then?

GOLDO

Well, I'm not really sure. They must be somewhere...

LEO

Where?

GOLDO

In some mist or something. What does it matter?

LEO

I want to know what happens when I die.

GOLDO

And you ask me, who can't die.

LEO

I thought you knew. Isn't that something you should know if you call yourself omnipotent.

GOLDO

Don't be smart. Are you going to be my friend or what?

LEO

No. Can you please go now?

GOLDO

You'd probably be the most boring friend anyone could ever have.

LEO

Maybe. Bye, bye.

GOLDO

I'll get other friends, just wait!

LEO

Sure. Goodbye!

GOLDO

You think I'll be alone now, don't you? Oh, no, 'cause I'm going to throw a big party and you'll not be invited!

LEO

I'm heartbroken.

GOLDO

And so you should be... I'm leaving now, and don't try to call me back.

LEO

I won't.

GOLDO

Goodbye, Leo. It's been tedious to make your acquaintance!

LEO

Goodbye.

*Goldo leaves (UL) with elegance, holding his head high. Leo is still and relaxes for a while. He knows he should pack and leave, but he has nowhere to go. He goes out (UR) into the kitchen, puts the kettle on again and comes back into the room. He thinks back on the last five years he has lived and worked in the apartment (- firstly of the stress and fear of punishments, but also of how important he thought he was when he was working in his profession).*

*The door bell rings. Leo thinks he is going to be thrown out, so he runs (UR) into the apartment to quickly pack a bag with necessities. The door bell rings one more time. Leo rushes into the room (UR) with the bag and out (UL) to the hall and opens the door. He is surprised to see Sarah.*

LEO

Hi?... Please, come in.

*Leo comes first into the room (with the bag which he places on the floor) and Sarah follows. She is angry but in control.*

SARAH

I've been evicted on the spot. Is that your decision?

LEO

No, it's not. I wish I could help you, but...

SARAH

Why did I think you would?...

*Sarah goes towards the door (UL).*

LEO

Wait a minute! What are you going to do?

SARAH

As if I had a choice? I'll move out this afternoon.

LEO

Where will you go?

SARAH

I'm not telling.

LEO

I've been evicted too.

SARAH

Evicted? Why?... Did you refuse to obey an order?

LEO

Something like that... I've quit.

*At first Sarah doesn't really believe this:*

SARAH

I've heard it's impossible to quit once you're a part of the Hierarchy.

LEO

Well, I've done it anyway. So I'll have to leave right away. I actually thought the guards were at the door to throw me out of here. I was quite relieved to see you there instead... I'm sorry to hear that you've been evicted too.

SARAH

I must have given the wrong answers to your questions...

*A short pause. Leo feels guilty on account of what happened earlier.*

LEO

How are you, anyway?

SARAH

I'll make it.

LEO

I can't explain it. I've never done anything like that before.

SARAH

My best friend once threatened me with a knife. I had to climb out the window. She had talked to a member who'd said that I was poisoning her with dangerous lies.

LEO

Do you want something to drink? I was just going to make some Goldonade.

SARAH

Is that what you drink?

LEO

Yes, I think it tastes quite good.

SARAH

And the name doesn't tell you anything? Don't you know it contains drugs which makes you receptive to Goldo's influence?

LEO

How do you know?

SARAH

Maybe you have something else?

LEO

Coffee, tea, chocolate...

SARAH

Tea, please

LEO

Coming up.

*Leo goes out (UR) into the kitchen and makes tea. Sarah looks around and walks about the room, but doesn't touch anything.*

SARAH *to Leo out in the kitchen*

Is it going to be hard leaving the apartment?

LEO

No. Well, yes, a little.

*Sarah looks out through a window (which can be towards the audience).*

SARAH

It's a nice view...

LEO

I guess so.

SARAH

...for the privileged. Do you know who's going to move in?

LEO

I don't know. I suppose it'll be Hubert...

SARAH

Hubert...

*Leo comes in (UR) and carries a tray with two cups of tea, pieces of sugar and a plate with cookies.*

LEO

He's been my closest colleague. He's probably next in line for promotion... We could sit in the kitchen, but I thought we might sit on the carpet... unless you mind, of course?

SARAH

I don't mind.

*Leo puts down the tray on the carpet (CC). He gets two pillows (UC) and gives one to Sarah. They sit down and begin to drink tea and eat cookies.*

SARAH

Where will you go?

LEO *teases a bit*

I'm not telling.

SARAH

How're you going to make it?

LEO

I don't know... My identity has been erased from all registers. The secretary at the Administration said that I've never even existed... My bank accounts have been emptied and I can't reach my father. Despite all this I don't regret it. It'll be a tough time, but I had to quit. I couldn't take it any longer. Goldo's absolutely mad!

*A discreet clearing of someone's throat can be heard outside the apartment.*

LEO

Did you hear that?

SARAH

What?... Oh, you mean Goldo's listening? There's nothing to worry about... I'm happy for your sake. You're strong. You're going to need that strength. So where did you say you were going?

LEO *smiles*

I don't know. To tell the truth I don't have a clue.

SARAH

We can leave together if you want.

LEO

Are you finally going to reveal your destination?

SARAH

My grandmother has a cottage which is quite secluded. It's a bit primitive, but she's almost self-supporting. You can come there with me and if you don't want to stay you can just move on...

LEO

I'd like to come. I can't say I have any other plans right now.

SARAH

She's the only one supporting me.

LEO

What about your family?

SARAH

They think I waste my life. Dad works at a Goldo School recruiting youngsters to the Hierarchy. Mom is a cleaner at the home of an Elite member. She's so proud of her job. And my sister works at the Goldo Bank.

LEO

I read your file before the interrogation. It said nothing about your grandmother.

SARAH

She was a nurse and saved a young boy from killing himself. According to the Elite she shouldn't have done that, since he was said to have abused Goldo. She defended herself and got quite a few people on her side in a protest against the Hierarchy and its inhumane treatment of the boy. In the end she lost her job and was erased from all registers.



LEO

Why doesn't that surprise me...

SARAH

Grandpa took out a divorce... he must've been scared of becoming an outcast, too. So she moved out in the country and that's where she's lived ever since. She's done extremely well. She says you have to "ground" yourself and that the place to do it is in nature. Most of us grow up in cities and there's hardly any nature left. That's why so many are confused and lost. We show no respect for our planet and don't even think that we have to. We've got used to taking what we want without asking for it. The Earth is like a giant mother who feeds us and without her we wouldn't even be here.

LEO

I've always thought of the Earth as a huge lump without life. At least that's what I learnt in school.

SARAH

The Earth lives and we have to learn how to communicate with her. I think it's quite absurd that people think they're the only ones living and that the sun, the stars and the planets have no life...

LEO

I've thought about what you said: "Essentially, you're free". At first I didn't understand what you meant, but I think I understand now... I got divorced five years ago and after that I've worked and lived here. Goldo has seen to it that I've always had something to do with no time to think or feel anything. Since my mother died last month I've dreamt about her several times. As if she's been trying to tell me something. We didn't talk much when she lived, so it feels a bit strange to think that she might be seeking contact with me now. Anyway, the dreams have made me stop and listen to myself. You say that we need to ground ourselves and I must have been doing something like that these last days, because I feel so incredibly good now. I feel free!

*Leo stands up, stretches (his back) and starts to dance an improvised dance. Music is heard in the background, e.g. music from South America (with flutes and drums). Leo asks Sarah for a dance:*

LEO

May I?

*They laugh and dance, if not beautifully at least rhythmically. Goldo is now curious and goes to watch them (UL) from the door. The music and the dancing stop.*

GOLDO

Why are you having so much fun? Can I join you?

*Leo and Sarah look at each other and they stop themselves from laughing with difficulty.*

LEO

Please, Goldo, just think about it: you've seen to it that we've been evicted and we're forced to live outside your Hierarchy and now you want to join us!!...

*A short pause while Goldo gets the point.*

GOLDO

I guess I can't. I didn't think about that...

*Goldo feels a bit sad and leaves (UL). Sarah and Leo can finally laugh at what just happened.*

LEO

Maybe we should leave?...

SARAH

I have to pack.

LEO

So do I.

*Leo picks up the bag.*

LEO

I packed this one before you came, but there wasn't time to do it properly...

*He opens it and looks at what he has packed.*

LEO

It's weird, really: I'm going to leave my whole life behind... I don't know what to take with me?

SARAH

Don't take anything unnecessary. It'll only weigh you down. Take some personal things with you... things that mean something to you.

LEO

I've hardly got any personal things. My whole life has revolved around the Hierarchy.

*Leo looks around the room.*

LEO

I'll be in here finishing my packing.

*Leo takes the bag with him out (UR) to the bedroom while Sarah stays for a while in the room:*

SARAH

What are you going to do with the gun?

LEO

I don't want to touch it. The guards will take care of it.

*Sarah knows they can't stay for very much longer. She walks up to the door (UR), from where she can see Leo:*

SARAH

I'm leaving. Are you coming down when you're ready?

LEO

Yeah...

*Sarah leaves (UL). Leo stays for a while in the bedroom finishing his packing. Beautiful, soothing music can be heard in the background. Leo comes (UR) into the room with the bag. He takes his time and looks around one last time. Then he switches off the light and leaves (UL).*

**the end**