

After Dinner - Transcript

M: No more smoking in here, right?

L: Sure, you can. Everything is allowed.

M: OK

L: Wait ... I will just put the mic a bit closer... (giggle)

Okey.

Just gonna pop into the kitchen to get an ashtray.

M: Yup! Get some beer, too!

L: ... sure thing

Well, tell me, what did you have to eat, where did you go? I wanna know it all.

M: Look, rather not...

L: Why not? I would like to know what you had...

M: Listen, is that really what you wanna know?

L: ... well, wait ... (bang)

Let's do it again, shall we? I kinda messed it up with the fridge door.

M: (laughter)

L: OK

Stop!

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TITLE: After Dinner. Documentary reenactment.
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L: I will put the text right here.

M: ... ok, ok ... and the sheets of paper, they can be heard in the recording, right?

L: Well, not the sheets, but but

M: Fine, I will try.

L: And I would actually screw Slovak language here and drop it. It is more comfortable for you to say it in Czech, right?

M: You know what, you might be right ...

L: It's okey, I mean I know it is supposed to be a reenactment, and that is actually a faithful copy. Here, I think it might be better if we have our own licence, though.

M: Well, why not, it could be better, right. For me, as well as ...

L: ... okey... well then, action
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M: No more smoking here, right?

L: Sure you can. Everything is allowed. I will just go and get an ashtray. Or is there one there?

M: I don't see any around here.

L: Well, tell me, what did you have to eat, where did you go?

M: Look, I don't feel like talking about it.

L: Why not? It is something I wanna know.

M: Listen, and you really want to know that particular thing?

L: Well, I actually find it .. wait, here is the ashtray

I actually find it quite interesting. Or it is the situation that I find somehow ... how to put it...beautiful, beautiful is a silly word. Maybe more like precious. I would actually like to know what people talk about at such an occasion.

M: Well, you know ... what is beautiful about it is the fact that he is not the kind of person who does not want to at all deal with it any more, but to see any other kind of beauty in it.... most importantly, I started to have a feeling that he might want to get back together and that truly scared me.

L: And does he?

M: Look, I don't know, I didn't actually even ask.

L: Sure ... here is the ashtray, if you need one. You have a cigarette?

M: I will take one of yours, thanks.

Thank you

L: Fine, but start from the beginning. Where did you go, what did you do...?

M: Yo, I have a card here somewhere. Yup, here. Here is the card, this is where we went...

L: Let me see.

Yep, like ... a good place, I guess

M: Why?

L: The food there is superb, it's supposed to be quite pricy, though. I have only heard about the place, as I have never been there. I would quite like it if someone invited me to dine there.

M: Look, I really doubt that.

L: Well, sure, like...

And what then? What did you do? When we said our goodbyes, where did you two go? Or what did you do next?

M: Lumír, yo, are you making me some kind of a project of yours or what?

L: I am not making any project out of you. I feel it would be a waste not to record this, I don't know, it might never turn into something, nor will it ever be used. I just think it would be a pity, you know ...

M: Well, for me, though, those are things I don't actually want to keep... to cut the story short: I

came to Prague, I fucked up a date and I met a person I didn't want to ever see again. And that's all. As I told you yesterday, it's difficult for me to trust people these days.

L: I get that. On the other hand, from the very beginning, I keep telling you I am not looking for anything. Even before you told me about the HIV.

M: I see, and so why do you have a dating profile?

L: Well, I don't know, to meet people.... or I don't know....

M: Uh-huh, ok

L: OK

Let's have a break here

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M: Look, Lumír, and you ... I am not sure I got it all correctly. He like went on a date and fucked it up, like in what way? Or?

L: Weeeeeell, he kind of thought it was a date. Or it actually was some sort of a date ... aaaaaand

M: You mean the two of you

L: Yup, yup

M: I see

L: The thing is, he came to Prague to have a date with me, later however, the truth turned out to be that he was supposed to meet up with the guy who got him the HIV. Actually, like for the very first time since it happened. He invited him to have dinner.

He came to my place and ... like I was aware of the fact that he is HIV positive and... I kinda though I am a better person, that it wouldn't be an issue, but I actually found out that it is sort of a deal breaker for me and that actually, somehow, when we were together, having that date, the only thing I could think of was his HIV. I mean, even though you know from school all about how it is transmitted and how it is not and what all you can do to prevent it from happening, I was all the time, I mean all the time thinking only about that. Like if I can by any chance catch it...

M: Right...that kinda makes sense

L: ... so then I actually, actually little broke the date short. But... but... I don't know...I lied a little here.

M: Even that.

L: Actually, this was the first time when somebody told me directly like that, which is actually quite cool. Or this is how it should be done, I guess. However, I was not a good enough person to...

M: Well, wait, wait, wait, and now, when time has passed, do you think you would act differently?

L: Errrrr, he was actually the very first person with such diagnoses I had met and ever since I have met more people... a strange question whether I am bet... I believe I am! I do!

Shall we move on?

M: Sure, we can.

L: Ok

M: Do you mind if I from time to time ask questions when something comes to my mind?

L: Quite the opposite, questions are welcomed.

M: The thing is ... I find it rather interesting

L: Fine, so let's move on

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L: And so you like don't wanna tell me, or what?

M: Okey but what is it that you wanna hear?

L: ... well...I don't know, we said our goodbyes in the Jindřišská Street ... and then you did ... ?

M: ... I went to the station. He texted me he was going to be a bit late. And so I walked there back and forth, smoked one cigarette after another and I was thinking what topics we could discuss.

And I couldn't figure anything out...

Or I don't know, what could work as an icebreaker after someone had given you this, for the rest of your life... this baby that you will carry around with you till death do you apart.

And then he finally arrived... and we did that nervy stuff around. Like how is school, what about the new... blah blah blah... And it was all quite strange, until the moment we ate. Then it was OK.

L: And what did you have?

M: Listen, everything. Every single thing! They kept bringing different pieces of pizza, different kinds of pasta... and of course we had beer along with the food... at the end, we were even given some kind of sweet pizza with the Nutella spread and fruit. Yet, he wanted to continue and have a piece of pie and coffee with me, so I had to tell him I couldn't. Or I would have given birth to the baby right there.

(laughter)

... I don't know ... then we took a stroll and talked.

L: And he kicked it off?

M: Uh?

L: If he kicked off the ... the topic?

M: ... well, sure. A little bit already on the way to the restaurant. It was full of people, so we embarrassingly tiptoed around it.. But then, we discussed everything.how his family takes it, how his friends deal with it, to whom he told it and to whom I did.... and actually, we talked about relationships, how we solve that ... how many relationships got screwed up since then.

L: What do you mean screwed up?

M: (switches into Slovak) Well, when I learnt about it, I was in a relationship.

L: Uh-huh.

L: And it didn't work out because of that. Or rather, it was not because of that, it was the characters... when you match the disease with a bad character, it's not a good match...not at all.

L: How did it actually happen? He wrote you or...?

M: (switches back into Czech) Well, when me and my ex broke up, it was my birthday, about a month ago, and Mr. Beep starter texting me then that he was having twinges of guilt and that he would at least like to meet up and talk. That he would come to see me but was too busy at work. However, if I travelled to see him, he would pay for my dinner (laughter).

... and obviously because of food ... (gesture with hands, laughter)

... it might have also been because he wanted to know whether I was upset or I totally hated him... which I actually never could, hate.

L: Okey, and what did he actually write?

M: Look, that is something I don't really remember as it was a lengthy message.

... a bit poetic, too... you know, the kind where he says he doesn't have a solution or a cure for me, however, together we could make the battle a bit easier for each other.

L: What do you mean make the batter easier?

M: Well, by sharing tips and tricks. How to manage it, what treatment...

L: I actually mean the very first message... did he like say you should go and get tested?

M: ... I actually just got an... look, we only kept in touch a little. Do you really want to know everything? Lumír, this is strictly between you and me... ok?

L: Right, right

Stop!

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M: Yuck! Now, that we are talking about it, I completely... It's terrible.

L: Uh-huh.

M: Ok. Wow, it's long.

L: It is long, right ... ummm, it's good, though. I like it. Ehh, it's just that "vocal frying" that you do. That "eeeeeh".

M: Right, sorry ... it's just that two days ago, I got that hoarse from shouting.

L: It's just fine. Only when you do it too much, it then feels a little...

M: Fake.

L: Yup! So just try to be careful about it.

M: Will try.

L: Shall we move on?

Here, you should be playing with a lighter. So just that

But, okey, let's do it.

Well...action!

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M: well, he gave me another present together with all that. A present that can be cured... I thought that would be it ...

L: Wait, and what do you mean by that?

M: Gonorrhoea. What I thought was a bladder infection from the time I had spent four nights sleeping in a tent at a festival and walked in a T-shirt at night....

... and that is also funny, everyone though I would be just like all the other cases. That I wouldn't know where it happened, and with whom. But dude, I knew exactly, I knew the exact date, the exact time and the exact person.

Jeez ...

M: And I, instead of travelling all thought the summer, I was alone, locked in a hospital, getting shots to my butt. Only a few friends knew about it. Anyway, they didn't have much time to come and see me, so I spent the entire summer moving from one hospital to another. It sounds like I pity myself a lot, on the other hand, I got a really luxury room. There was a TV in the room, I was there all by myself and it was brand new.

And then, I went there just for check-ups.

And before the last check-up, it's when HIV is checked too, as there is a three-month period before the disease can be detected in your blood or in the body ...

... I ... I popped into the library to surf the web, since I wanted to borrow a book. And I checked my Facebook page where I had a message from Petr waiting, saying he had gone to get tested and that he was diagnosed.

And at that very moment, I started to freak out. I engaged those few people who knew about my hospital stay, including my ex, I mean my ex now. Which was probably a mistake, as we were together just for a shore while ... and we didn't really do any...

Well, and given the fact that we didn't do anything crazy in bed and that it was just like ... momentary, it's the clap to blame. By giving me that one thing, the other one got into my body much easier. And that's when it all started. All the seeing doctors.

L: Well, and how does it go? I mean seeing doctors...

M: Ummm, that was all rather wild, as I wanted to be treated in Ostrava, given the fact that I was there all summer. Then, the doctor found out that I was insured in Slovakia and put all (in Slovak) the blood aside. Yo, I was going nuts.

I tried to solve the situation by getting insurance..., I had to run loads of errands and it took a month and a half.

The whole situation made me feel desperate, as I tried to find out everything about the treatment

and I knew it was important and all that time I was just waiting to get the drugs... to be under like supervision. And it was unbearable, no-one was willing to treat me.

So I went to solve it in Bratislava, even though I don't know the town at all... I just packed my stuff and went searching, well ... and in the end, it was fine but ... it was way too much

L: Uh-huh, it sounds like that.

M: Meanwhile, in Prague, I attended Dům světla (The Lighthouse). My ex actually handled it all. And then, I actually realised that he is a man of extremes who goes from one extreme to another. The first extreme was that he wanted to do impossible for me and he managed everything instead of me. I found it quite sweet, on the other hand, I kept thinking why he was doing that, he knew me back then only for a short time. And the other extreme was the fact that he constantly transferred his fears over to me. That he got literally upset when I was trying to make fun of the whole thing. And that he blamed me for not taking things seriously enough....

And then, we like ... before Christmas, we broke up

L: And you remember the exact date, right?

M: Well, yes that's something you just remember...

just give me a second, I need to get something to drink.

L: OK, let's stop.

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M: Listen, Lumča (diminutive of Lumír), and when you were solving it with him, then. How is the treatment done exactly? He, like, describes it in quite detail, however, I can't make it out from what he says.

L: I think, at that moment when we were making this interview, he hadn't done any therapy yet. He desperately wanted it, though. And it works like this. There is a combination of drugs. Let's now imagine there are for example twenty drugs and you get just one of them, one of the drugs that the doctor chooses for you. And you have to take it every day, at a particular hour, at an exact time. As if when you miss even on just one pill or you take it an hour later, it means you are not under protection of antiviral drugs. That means that the virus may attack and after a while, the drug might stop working. And as there are only twenty of them, it is super important for you to watch the time. Or that is my understanding of it, that otherwise you are taken hostage by it.

M: Wow

L: So, thanks to the treatment, the disease turned from deadly to chronic. That means, even when having an ordinary intercourse, which in my opinion also includes sex, you should not transmit it to anybody else. Buuuuuuut ...

M: Like you are not infectious then.

L: You are not infectious but it is still a good idea to use protection. ... Actually, the people, and this is something the guy we have been talking about here the entire time said too. He said it was the people around who made him stressed the most. It is not that much the disease itself, it's the people around him who drive him nuts. That actually, the worst thing about the disease is the terrible stigma attached to you.

M: Uh-huh, sure.

L: There is a book I like, by Susan Sontag, she is an American philosopher and theorist of art and so on. And she wrote an essay called *Illness as Metaphor*. She wrote the book in a period when nobody knew what the disease was like. In the 80s, people died of it and no-one knew how one could catch it and what the disease means.

Even back then, she wrote how important it is to understand illnesses as a natural phenomenon which one does not deserve based on their acts. It simply comes and it is important to treat diseases, to discover cures. It is important to carry out research, to erase metaphors, not to associate it only with whores, junkies and queer, but ... like, do you get what I mean?

M: Yup, like I get it.

Dude, I don't even know what to say to it. Well, it's interesting, though.

L: Right, let's move on

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L: Well and what about your folks?

M: My father knows. My mom is a bit unstable, so we successfully hide it from her ... and my dad ... he learnt about it from my dentist, which is also a fun story

I needed a check up and before any procedure or so, you are obliged to report it ... well, and the dentist is a very close friend of my father's and so I simply asked her to keep it for herself and that I count on the physician-patient privilege, that such a thing, she can't you know what ... share with anybody.

She asked me several times, whether she should not tell him, that she might make my confession and everything easier, so I told her that I wanted to tell him myself and that I needed more time to first actually process it myself. And in the end, she confessed that she had actually told him ...

L: Wait ... nooo

M: Yup, that she had told him. She knew she put her job, all her career at risk and that I could sue her for everything she got as it is the most important thing a doctor is bound by, but ...

She told me just like that, in the surgery when I was sitting in the dental chair. At that same moment, my dad came to pick me up and drive me home

So... so we had a small talk in the car, my father learnt convulsively about me being gay and having

this.... he took it really well, better than I would expect.

L: And what did he say? How did he take it?

M: Well, he asked what it actually means for me in my life. So I explained to him how treatment is done. Of course I didn't share all the details with him, didn't want to scare him. And he asked me whether I have someone, whether I won't be alone to deal with it.

Well... it was those quick standard questions that come to your mind when you hear HIV.

And then he somehow digested it and is fine now. Sometimes, he asks me when we are alone if I'm doing okay and if I have solved it the way I planned... and I always tell him I have, that I went to see a doctor in Bratislava and so on. And with my mother, I pretend I go to Bratislava to visit the library

L: Umm... I will have another cigarette.

M: Well, if I could steal another one of yours.

L: Sure thing.

And Mr. Beep, has he written anything else to you?

M: Yep, but nothing really shocking. I truly believe he expected me to like yell at him or to be super distant, you know me though, that's not my thing.

L: And why do you think he expected you to yell?

M: Well, it sounded like that. You know, before, there were all the time those loooong apologetic texts...

I am probably more upset with myself than with him...

L: How so?

M: Well, I was present to it too. We were there together, I should have been more careful... well

L: ... I don't know, I'm just thinking, you know, how I would. Whether I would be upset with myself or with him or with whom actually.

M: Well, to be upset with him would be substitutive. It's not like I'm saying he is innocent... we both share the same amount of guilt... Just imagine him, how double-edged it is for him. If he is at least equally upset with himself as I am with myself, plus the fact that he made someone else involved ...

I don't know

... In my opinion, he is now going to live with the feeling of guilt, but that is something I can't really help him with.

Or he now expects me to throw plates, to feel relief and to feel that I am going mad about it or for him to be also able to feel aggrieved... I don't know. In my opinion, he has no right to feel like that right now.

L: And do you think you are the only one?

M: ... well ...

L: ... have you two talked about it?

M: We have talked about it ... and he didn't really have anyone before he ... I don't know what to call it, before he got it. And he actually got in touch with the guys he had been with before me and the one with whom he actually did something, that guy had it.

... a he like actually gave it to him and then found out, but felt so ashamed that he didn't say anything, and that's how it got to me...

L: ... uhm

M: Dumb, isn't it?

In the end, what really makes me angry about the whole thing actually is the fact that none of them did it on purpose, right.

So in the end, one can only hate oneself...

You wanted to hear some drama, didn't you?

L: No, this is interesting. It is interesting.

M: Look, it's already 7:11pm

L: And what time is your train?

M: I forgot ... wait

at 7:30pm

Can we manage it?

L: wait, if it is 7:11pm, we gotta run right now ...

M: And the computer?

L: No biggie, it will switch off by itself later. Get your stuff.

M: Okey, done

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L: Hi, Michal. I am coming to Ostrava on Monday and I can stay for the rest of the week. I took time off at work, as well as at school, so we could continue with the recording, as we discussed. I would like to finish it, I think the material is quite strong.

The thing is, I'm under a bit of time pressure. I would like to finish the recording so that we could adapt it into a movie script. The camera man and the sound master keep asking me for a date, so far I have managed to calm them down.

I know it is not your concern. I just wanted to come clear about the situation and about why I have been pushing you so much lately.

M: Are you fucking kidding me? I have a feeling that your time-related comments and your forced

attempts to buttonhole me in Ostrava are in complete opposite to what you said at the beginning. You are a documentary vulture, you really are. You feed on the unhappiness of others, built your fame on it. The more you push, the less I feel like doing it. Bye.

L: Lately, I could feel that and I would like to dispel your fears. You must know I am not after any of your tragic life story, we have talked about that number of times, that we are after a completely different topic.

I just want to finish this because I think it is important that such a movie is made. A movie about forgiveness and everything we have collected so far.

What has changed since the last time? Has anything happened?

M: I agreed to it in the beginning because I thought it was a good idea. Since then, certain things have happened which you have nothing to do with. However, I want to close this chapter once and for all.

L: And what has happened?

M: Simply put, I think I have transmitted it to someone, or I don't know.

Já: Wait, what do you mean?

M: I don't know, we didn't really do anything, however, but my ex has just texted me that he had got a fever and I don't know, it's not sure, he is waiting for the test results... anyway, I wish to close this chapter of my life. I don't enjoy digging through it. Sorry, but I don't feel like doing it. You are lucky, though. The whole city of Prague is full of HIV positive people, just go and find someone.

L: ... And what am I supposed to do with the material now?

M: I don't know, look you are the director here. Keep me out of it, though.

THE END