

So What Are We Doing Now?/I ara què farem? © Daniel J. Meyer, 2024
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So What Are We Doing Now?

By Daniel J. Meyer
Translated by William Gregory

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Characters

VICKY, 70-75, *an independent and highly regarded professional who has worked her whole life.*

LLUÍS, 70-75, *also a professional, but who has recently retired.*

WAITER, 35-40, *an attractive young man.*

Both VICKY and LLUÍS are very cheery, cynical, independent and open-minded.

ACT ONE

Scene 0

This scene may take place as the audience enters.

LLUÍS is seated on the living-room sofa. He reads peacefully; he has all the time in the world. He breathes in and... releases the air in one go. He is satisfied, contented, at ease.

Suddenly, he looks at the time. Relax: it's early yet. He exhales gently and continues reading, but... now he can't concentrate.

He stands, opens a drawer, takes out a small box, opens a small bag from inside the small box, and takes out a cannabis vaporizer. He goes to the window and takes a couple of drags.

He puts on some soft music: pleasant, easy-going jazz. He dances a couple of steps... or, rather, shifts about a bit.

He returns to the sofa and tries to read and maintain the relaxed atmosphere he is attempting to project, but can only pretend for a few moments; he is, in fact, very anxious.

He picks up his mobile and calls someone.

LLUÍS: Hi. How's it going? Just a few more hours to go, huh? [...] Yep. [...] No. [...] Yep. [...] No. [...] What? [...] What time are you getting here? [...] No, no, no, no, no! [...] Yes, yes, yes, everything's fine. But... no, not yet. [...] In a minute? [...] Not yet!! [...] Bye, bye-bye. *(Hangs up.)* Shit!

LLUÍS begins to run around like a headless chicken. He dashes to the kitchen; we hear items falling and crashing. A few seconds later he returns with a bottle of wine with no label and with a string tied around its neck. It is a 'special' bottle. He looks at it lovingly, eagerly, happily. He sighs. He realises he is wasting time and begins to speed up again; he takes out two wine glasses, wafts away the smoke from the vaporiser, sprays perfume – or whatever he has to hand – around the living room, arranges the sofa cushions, etc. He heads back into the kitchen to tidy it up. He returns with some cheeses. He goes back into the kitchen to do whatever it may be. Comes back out. Goes back in, and—

Scene 1

Keys are heard in the front door. LLUÍS returns in a panic but... hides it, sits on the sofa and crosses his legs. He breathes out heavily. Stretches out his legs.

VICKY enters through the front door with a laptop case and the bag she takes to work every day. LLUÍS looks at her and... is on the verge of tears. VICKY looks at him and... smiles. They both remain still, expectant.

LLUÍS leaps up. He presses play on the sound system. A trashy nightclub track from the 1990s plays, something like 'El Tiburón'¹, or similar.

¹ 'El Tiburón' ('The Shark') was the break-out single in 1993 for the New York-based Dominican-American group Proyecto Uno, who would go on to chart success in the Americas and beyond. The line translated here as 'Don't stop, keep it moving' is, in the original Spanish lyrics, 'No pares, sigue, sigue'. <https://open.spotify.com/track/2GcjfckZexh9wRRjg9KtQG>

LLUÍS sings and dances. VICKY laughs and remains at the door, watching him, both surprised and delighted. She leaves her things on an armchair or on a hanger by the door and admires him, applauding the show.

As he sings, LLUÍS dances towards her very sexily and very youthfully. He invites her to dance with him. VICKY resists slightly but, when the chorus hits, cannot resist any longer and begins to dance the routine with him. Clearly this is a habit of theirs and not their first time doing it. They dance together, fooling around and laughing a lot.

LLUÍS and VICKY: *(Singing.)* Don't stop, keep it moving. Don't stop, keep it moving.
Don't stop, keep it moving. Don't stop, keep it moving...

VICKY: *(Collapses, exhausted, onto the sofa.)* Right... I've stopped now. I can't take any more!

LLUÍS: Come on! A little bit more.

VICKY: No!

LLUÍS: *(Singing.)* Don't stop, keep it moving. Don't stop, keep it moving...

VICKY: No, no! I'm done. Last day of work in my life after fifty years without a break. So I am. Now. Stopping.

LLUÍS: Oh! Stopping *that*, yes. *(Singing.)* Yes, stop, don't keep working. Yes, stop, don't keep working.

VICKY gestures to LLUÍS to sit down with her on the sofa. LLUÍS stops the music and sits beside her. They smile at each other.

LLUÍS: It's our song! We have to dance the whole thing!

VICKY: Not today.

LLUÍS: We said we'd always dance it all the way through.

VICKY: Today's different, Lluís. A new phase!

LLUÍS: What are you? Sad? Scared? Nervous?

VICKY does not reply.

LLUÍS: What are you thinking about?

VICKY: Nothing.

LLUÍS: Which is exactly what you'll be doing from now on... Nothing!

VICKY: Do you do nothing?

LLUÍS: Yes... Well, no. I do whatever I want. Whenever I want. Why ever I want. However I want.

VICKY: So... you do a lot.

LLUÍS: Depends on the day.

VICKY: Oh...

LLUÍS: What? Out with it!

VICKY: Nothing, nothing.

Silence. They hug. LLUÍS breathes deeply.

VICKY: *(Somewhat ironically but also sincerely.)* What are you? Sad? Scared? Nervous?

LLUÍS does not reply.

VICKY: What are you thinking about?

LLUÍS: Everything. All at once—

VICKY: *(At the same time.)* That's just what you used to think about, when—

LLUÍS: *(At the same time.)* I'm thinking about the future. About the past, about now—

VICKY: You shouldn't think so much. *(Looks at the table and changes the subject.)* I see you brought out *the* wine!

LLUÍS: And cheeses!

VICKY: Goodness!

LLUÍS: We have to celebrate, don't we?

VICKY: Of course we do.

LLUÍS: So?

Pause.

VICKY: It's quite something. Today, when I left work, and closed the door for the final time on an entire life of building a career, I thought to myself... 'Today's the day. Today I will tell Lluís to open *the* wine.' But now... Are you sure enough, that this is the happiest and fullest moment of our lives together, to open it? Won't there be a better one in the future?

LLUÍS: *(Hesitating.)* No... Well... Yes... Well...

VICKY: It's a... big decision. It's *the* wine.

LLUÍS: All these years waiting for *the* ideal moment... Maybe *the* happiest and fullest moment of our lives hasn't come yet, but today was *the* day. Or rather *the* night, but of course 'night' doesn't have quite the same ring as 'day'. Although I don't know whether—

VICKY: Get on with it!

LLUÍS: Oh, Madam is in a hurry.

VICKY: Stop dithering; it's ridiculous. Make up your mind before the moment passes—

LLUÍS: You're right. Let's drink the wine.

LLUÍS takes the corkscrew with comic flair, attempting to put on a show and create a great moment. VICKY begins to lose patience.

LLUÍS: And for later... Drum roll *(makes a drum roll)*, I've got a surprise for you!

VICKY: Wait!

LLUÍS: What?

VICKY: If you've got a surprise for later, you'd better... You'd better not!

LLUÍS: What do you mean?

VICKY: We can save it for some better time.

LLUÍS: What better time?

VICKY: Maybe this isn't *the* big moment. And no other wine will be as good as this one and... You've got a surprise for later, right?

LLUÍS: We'll buy a better wine than this one.

VICKY: There isn't one.

LLUÍS: But—

VICKY: Let's see what else there is in the kitchen.

LLUÍS: But—

VICKY: *(Shouting.)* Drop it!

Tense silence.

LLUÍS: *(At the same time.)* I bought more. I thought—

VICKY: *(At the same time.)* Let's leave it for a more—

LLUÍS: —you'd say exactly this. Every time we're about to open it, you back out at the last minute. I don't understand it. You make such a big fuss about such ridiculous things... and we always end up doing what you want, when you want to do it. *(Casts the corkscrew aside angrily.)*

VICKY: If the day ever comes when you don't have a surprise for later, or you can't speak, or I shit myself and we don't know what to say, or I tried to hide it or you try to hide it in front of all the other people who can smell my shit in public, that day you can take your chance, open the wine and pour it wine in my ear or up by backside, OK? But until then, we have to decide together what, when and how. And we're bound to find better moments together.

Silence.

LLUÍS: Hey. Stop worrying. Being retired isn't so bad. There's plenty of things you can do, you know.

LLUÍS approaches VICKY to give her a caress. She tries to hide the fact that she's upset, and breathes deeply.

LLUÍS: You're like a teenager with these mood swings. I've always liked them more mature, but now you're going back to being a slip of a thing. How old are you?

VICKY: *(Laughs.)* Idiot! OK then! Since you've brought up the subject of doing things, I've been thinking the last few days and I've made a list of the useless things we've always dreamed of doing—

LLUÍS: You've dreamed of doing.

VICKY: —and never have. And we're going to do them!

LLUÍS: *(Under his breath.)* Or you are.

VICKY: *We* are!

LLUÍS: *(Under his breath.)* Always whatever you want. *(To VICKY.)* What things have we not done? *(Stands and acts out what he is saying, clowning around.)* Going out hunting in the Nordic forests as we watch the aurora borealis with the Association of Racialised Innuits for World Peace? Painting a surrealist painting in a submarine filled with macaques? Or were you thinking about something more esoteric: starting a sect so we can be abducted reciting a 1970s-or-potentially-1990s-Enya-style-psychedelic-Buddhist-electrobeat mantra?

Pause.

VICKY: Have you got it out of your system now? Yes? The theme park: a whole day going up and down in the rollercoasters non-stop until we scream ourselves hoarse.

Short pause.

LLUÍS: My suggestions are clearly more sensible.

VICKY: They're ridiculous.

LLUÍS: They're realistic at our—

VICKY: Boring!

LLUÍS: Vicky, I think we'd throw up.

VICKY: So what?

LLUÍS: Plus, I'm scared of heights.

VICKY: So what?

LLUÍS: Well... I am.

VICKY: Yes, and? Perhaps this is the moment to get over your fear.

LLUÍS: And it's not as though we're all that/ young—

VICKY: —old. We're in fantastic shape! Just a second ago you were telling me I was a mere slip of a thing and dancing 'El Tiburón' just the way we did thirty years ago.

LLUÍS: That's because I dance just as badly as I did thirty years ago.

VICKY: You're right there. But you dance the dance exactly the same.

LLUÍS: That's because I already danced like a geriatric having an epileptic fit back then.

VICKY: I would say, 'Time hasn't changed you a bit'—

LLUÍS: Thank you.

VICKY: —but that phrase would automatically make me an old lady living in the past. (*Laughs, mocking herself.*)

LLUÍS: That's not true.

VICKY: Yes, it is.

LLUÍS: It's completely untrue.

VICKY: Maybe slightly untrue.

LLUÍS: Now you've lost me: slightly untrue that time hasn't changed me a bit, or slightly untrue that you're an old lady?

VICKY: Your mum's an old lady! Idiot.

LLUÍS: But I love you just the same.

VICKY: This is what I meant about your decline. It's slightly untrue, or maybe quite untrue, or... a completely and utterly untrue... that you're just the same as ever!

LLUÍS: I beg your pardon?

VICKY: (*Approaches LLUÍS seductively.*) Well. You've got a few grey hairs here (*touches his hair*), your legs these days are more like a hairless baby's than a werewolf's (*strokes his legs*) with dry skin, you're less regular (*touches his crotch*) and less... stallion-like (*squeezes his balls*)...

LLUÍS: Hey!

VICKY: You whinge a bit more—

LLUÍS: What do you expect me to—

VICKY: —but you do fart a bit less in the night.

LLUÍS: You, on the other hand, fart more.

VICKY: *(Laughing.)* You bastard! Mind you, at least your breath's improved.

LLUÍS: *(Laughing.)* Excuse me?

VICKY: You had a terrible bout of halitosis about... eighteen years ago.

LLUÍS: Why didn't you tell me?

VICKY: I didn't want you to leave me.

LLUÍS says nothing.

VICKY: But you did anyway.

Silence.

LLUÍS: But... we got back together again.

VICKY: After two years of you completely ignoring me.

LLUÍS: Is it recriminations now?

VICKY: I would never.

LLUÍS: You left me more times.

VICKY: Maybe I did. And who knows what our future holds? *(Pause.)* Back to the subject of your breath: it really has improved an awful lot, you know. Not that coping with the... rancid stench of it back then was all that difficult.

LLUÍS: I don't understand why you didn't tell me at the time. You're usually so direct, so no-nonsense, so... rude, so... vulgar, so... cynical, so—

VICKY: Because deep down, it was still your breath.

LLUÍS: *(Gives her a peck, leaving VICKY hanging in this sexual-dialectical – and perhaps also physical – game, and heads for the kitchen.)* I'm going to fetch a different wine, seeing as you're being so corny and—

VICKY: *(Watching him go.)* It's a shame your arse... has sagged a bit!

LLUÍS: (*From the kitchen.*) You're confusing me with your last lover. Mine's always been this way.

VICKY: It really has drooped an awful lot. An awful, awful lot!

LLUÍS: (*Shouting.*) So have your tits!

VICKY feels her breasts.

LLUÍS: (*Comes out from the kitchen with a different wine.*) But I do love them. And I really don't care—

VICKY kisses LLUÍS, takes his hand and places it on her breasts.

LLUÍS: Not yet. This isn't *the* moment. (*Begins to open the bottle.*)

VICKY: Lluís.

LLUÍS: What?

VICKY: With all this time on your hands... what do you do?

LLUÍS: Whatever I want. I told you.

VICKY: But... what exactly?

LLUÍS: I read, I listen to music, I cook, I go out for walks—

VICKY: You're describing my grandmother's life.

LLUÍS: And things like... my things.

VICKY: (*Takes out a piece of paper from her pocket and reads.*) My wish list of things I want to do. I want to: take drugs and dance naked on a rooftop; blow a pile of cash at a casino; eat lunch at four p.m. every day; eat dinner at one a.m. – at the earliest – and drink vermouth, always vermouth. Buy useless things—

LLUÍS: You already did that buying all this incoherent décor.

VICKY: All of this décor serves a rigorous purpose!

LLUÍS: And you've never danced naked because you've always been too embarrassed ever to show your bosoms, even on an empty nudist beach.

VICKY: Well, not any more! (*Undoes her top and prepares to press her chest into LLUÍS's face.*)

LLUÍS: Oh, the irony. Stop! Not yet! This isn't *the* moment.

VICKY: (*Reading.*) OK, I'll carry on then: skydive; try oysters – I know the very thought makes me feel nauseous, but I have to get over it sometime – learn the names of all the birds according to the season, and which vegetables are in season – because I'm sick of restaurants ripping me off by telling me something's 'in season' – even though I have no intention of cooking and have absolutely no interest

in it, although I am interested in mealtimes because I think they affect the way we live. I also want to know which fish and shellfish are in season when, and in fact, now I think about it, we could go swimming with those tuna fish—

LLUÍS: Stop, stop, stop.

VICKY: What? If you don't want to, I'll have to do it for us both.

LLUÍS: I do want to, but... are we going to do everything together? All day? Every day?

VICKY: And you're raising this now? You?

LLUÍS: Just because we've got time to enjoy each other's company doesn't mean—

VICKY: No, I'm not having this, not now. I'm the one who can't cope with spending too much time with the same person. Not you.

LLUÍS: Calm down.

VICKY: *(Shouting.)* I am calm!

LLUÍS: *(Shouting.)* You don't seem it!

VICKY: *(Shouting.)* Well stop annoying me!

LLUÍS: *(Shouting.)* I'll be at your ankles like a loyal puppy. Is that what you want?

Silence.

VICKY: There's no need for that, Lluís. But what do you expect when everything I suggest you've either 'already done' or 'aren't interested in'? So, what do we do now? Or... what do I do? And you: what do you do, what will you do? *(Silence.)* Promise me there'll be new things. I don't want to spend my time bored, stuck at home waiting for death to come.

LLUÍS: Vicky, we've been together for thirty-five years and I promise you that, with you, there are always 'new things'. And relax, this is your first hour of retirement.

VICKY: Thirty-five years, not counting all the splitting up and getting back together again.

LLUÍS: The main thing is we always did get back together.

VICKY: But we could always leave.

LLUÍS: 'We never know what the future holds', dixit Vicky. *(Pause.)* But, come on! What do you want to do now?

VICKY: Right now? Thank you for always being by my side.

LLUÍS: That is new! *(Gives VICKY a kiss.)*

LLUÍS: 'Forever', like we always said.

VICKY: But no wedding—

LLUÍS: In sickness and health, for richer, for poorer...

VICKY: (*Laughing.*) Shut up! If you at least gave me a ring...

LLUÍS: No wedding, but forever and with lots of passion and— (*Approaches VICKY seductively.*)

VICKY: Hey! Not now! No, this isn't *the* moment. Get that wine poured and let's have a toast. You're... too late.

LLUÍS: (*Pours the wine. Raises his glass.*) Because it was, is, and will always be, forever...

VICKY: Forever and ever.

LLUÍS: Forever and ever and ever.

VICKY: Forever and ever! It loses meaning after three times.

LLUÍS: That's something you made up.

VICKY: Yes, and?

LLUÍS: Forever, then.

VICKY and LLUÍS toast.

LLUÍS: I've made a reservation; same restaurant as ever—

VICKY: As ever and ever. (*Laughs.*) Sorry!

LLUÍS: We've got a reservation at the usual restaurant but I sense right now you'd find that rather boring. So, what do you want to do?

VICKY: The theme park!

LLUÍS: Now?

VICKY: No! Not now! I just wanted to be clear so you don't forget. We will go, won't we?

LLUÍS: Yes, tomorrow!

VICKY: And I want a dog.

LLUÍS: What about the hairs on the sofa?

VICKY: I'm not working any more; I can change clothes twenty times a day. Tomorrow!

LLUÍS: Adopt a dog, tomorrow?

VICKY: Sure. Why wait?

LLUÍS: As soon as we wake up! Wow! How wonderful, you finally want a dog! Thank you!

VICKY: And vermouth... Tomorrow!

LLUÍS: What time exactly? There's only so many hours in the day.

VICKY: Before we go for the dog.

LLUÍS: In the morning?

VICKY: Why not?

LLUÍS: I'll have to drive.

VICKY: Boring!

LLUÍS: No!

VICKY: Come on!

LLUÍS: No!

VICKY: No?

LLUÍS: I don't know...

VICKY: Come on!

LLUÍS: OK, yes!

VICKY: No!

LLUÍS: What do you mean, 'no'?

VICKY: No...! First the theme park, then the dog. But first thing, before anything else, we go for vermouth. Now I think about it, the dog won't really take to us if the first place we take it for walkies is on a roller-coaster. I'm not sure it'll be too keen on the smell of alcohol, either, but it best get used to that straight away. I think it's better to switch it to the evening: let's have bloody Marys instead of vermouth, at about seven. Then: theme park, dog, home with the dog, and bloody Marys instead of antacids and to cure the dizziness from the roller-coasters. What do you think?

LLUÍS: Whatever you like, my darling; tomorrow we'll do whatever you like. But back to the present: what do we do *now*? (*Approaches VICKY seductively.*)

VICKY: (*Not noticing.*) I don't know; finish the bottle and—

LLUÍS: The reservation was for ten minutes ago, so...

VICKY takes a joint from her pocket.

LLUÍS: A joint, now?

VICKY: We have to celebrate all of this, and with lots of laughter. And it'll give us an appetite. I plan to eat until I burst; 'til my bosoms rise all the way up and point to the sky. We've got time, haven't we? We can arrive late and they'll give us another table. We've been going there forever.

LLUÍS: Where did you get that from?

VICKY: The intern. Goodbye present.

LLUÍS: I haven't smoked since the seventies.

VICKY: Don't lie. You already stank of marihuana when you were first dating that other woman, the one with the breath like booze-soaked charcuterie.

LLUÍS: Lies.

VICKY: And you do today, a bit. You haven't been seeing her, have you?

LLUÍS: No!

VICKY: No judgement. Come on, let's go! We can smoke it on the way.

LLUÍS: *(Singing.)* Don't stop, keep it moving!

VICKY: Please don't sing.

LLUÍS: Yes, Queen Victoria, at your command. Any other requests?

VICKY: Love me.

They toast again. They laugh. And they down the last of the wine.

VICKY: Let's go!

LLUÍS: With you, unto the ends of the Earth.

They stand and head over to the door, dancing and kissing.

LLUÍS: Don't stop, keep it moving. Don't stop, keep it moving.
Don't stop, keep it moving. Don't stop, keep it moving.

They sing, or music plays.