

Axes in Flower

A Drama

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Characters:

Father unemployed (45)

Mother wages clerk (40)

Son secondary school student (18)

Daughter mentally handicapped (20)

Ivo stall holder (33)

A two-room prefabricated flat in a small town, in the course of a year in the present.

Scene 1 **NEW YEAR**

Mother: The President had a nice speech.

Father: He says the same thing every year.

Mother: But it was a different president last time. Would you pass me the cutlets?

Father: They'll go off.

Mother: They won't if I seal the bag. *(Puts the leftovers in a plastic bag and seals it.)*

Father: Do you think they write their own speeches? They could at least for New Year. I'd like some stuffing.

Mother: I've already sealed the bag. I miss Bohdalová. It's not worth watching without her.

Father: Why didn't you switch over?

Mother: Czech TV's all fuzzy. That satellite of yours. Everyone else has a good picture.

Father: We're not the only ones to have a fuzzy picture.

Mother: The people below us haven't. I heard them laughing. At Bohdalová.

Father: To hell with your Bohdalová!

Mother: There you go again. And it's only New Year's day.

Father: I'd like some stuffing.

Mother: Cut yourself a piece.

Father: *(Eating out of the plastic bag.)* It's not worth sealing it up again.

Mother: Where are the children?

Father: They were up watching until the early hours.

Mother: *(To their Son as he enters.)* What you dream about at New Year will come true.

Father: Isn't your sister going to get up?

Son: She's embroidering a tablecloth. No stuffing left?

Father: You should have been up. *(The Son finds a slip of paper on his plate.)*

Mother: I've cut you out a bit of wisdom. You've stopped reading altogether.

Father: When are you going to get a haircut? It's all over the place.

Son: *(Reading aloud.)* Parents deserve rebuke if they don't want to give their children the benefit of a strict upbringing. Petronius.

Mother: Ask her if the tablecloth's ready. *(The Son goes out.)*

Father: I'd like to say something at lunch. Something serious.

Mother: Like the president?

Daughter: *(Entering with the tablecloth.)* Happy...

Father: My pet!

Daughter: Happy...

Father: New...

Daughter: ...New... Year!

Father: Thank you, from us both. A beautiful tablecloth. Lovely yellow roses! Just want you to be happy.

Mother: Did you put your knickers on?

Father: You'll always be Daddy's darling.

Mother: *(To her Daughter.)* The tablecloth. *(She lays the table. To her husband.)* Go and get shaved. *(The men go out.)* I've cut something out for you. *(Reading to her Daughter.)* He attacked a disabled girl. In her own flat. He stole her gold necklace, radio and toaster. For heaven's sake don't open the door when you're alone! For heaven's sake! You mustn't!

Daughter: I mustn't.

Mother: Do you know how hard your Father and I had to save? *(The men enter.)*

Father: That moron has thrown away my razor blades!

Son: They test them on animals.

Father: I'll test my belt on your ass!

Son: Have you ever heard of the Hibiscus rhinoceros? It's extinct. Because you've covered the Earth with your filth!

Mother: Your Father puts his apple cores in a bin even when he's in the street.

Son: Thank goodness we haven't got a car.

Father: That's because we're too poor, not on principle.

Son: Did you know that even your sheep's cheese is radioactive?

Mother: Have I got a sheep farm?

Father: *(To his Son.)* And who electrocuted the fish?

Son: The lamp fell in!

Mother: He was little then.

Son: Now I can see the connections.

Father: You should be looking for those in your books! Your school-leaving exams are just round the corner.

Mother: At least at New Year let's not quarrel. *(To Father.)* Why don't you use an electric shaver?

Father: With electricity from the nuclear power station?

Son: You see?! He's provoking me!

Mother: Children! Father wants to tell us something. *(Hands out the dishes.)*

Father: My dears. Try and listen for a minute. I know we've been quarrelling, but please try. The past year hasn't been easy. I lost my job at school and I didn't know where to turn. But I have three ideas. Three good ideas. I'll find some work I can do at home, I'll give accordion lessons, I'll improve my Bulgarian... and I'll take up the stars again. Four ideas! Observing the stars – that's four.

Mother: I hope you'll learn from your Father's example. How he looks after us. *(Serves out the soup.)*

Son: *(Picking something out of his dish.)* There's ice here.

Mother: It was frozen.

Father: *(To Son.)* When you're eating, you can put what you like in your dish.

Son: Beef?

Father: Mummy's dumplings are delicious!

Mother: *(To Daughter.)* Don't pour it in your ear.

Son: *(Putting down his spoon.)* I'm not eating anything that's got a face. No cooked animals.

Mother: You did on Christmas Eve.

Son: I was thinking all Christmas. Millions of trees left to wither, millions of fish killed.

Father: But that your Father very nearly sold his telescope so you could have this bloody Christmas, you didn't think about that?!

Mother: Don't talk about Christmas like that!

Father: I pinch and scrape and all he does is think! What conclusion did you come to? A fur coat is pain?!

Son: It's impossible to talk to him.

Father: You'll sit where you are!

Mother: You didn't sell the telescope?

Father: Like this, one day I'll drop dead at lunch.

Mother: Where did we get the money from?

Father: I'll die and I won't be any longer.

Mother: I don't like you borrowing.

Father: I pawned the bowl.

Mother: Grandma's bowl? The one with the little horse?!

Father: It's only pawned.

Mother: Grandma brought it back from Budapest! It's antique porcelain!

Son: It was chipped.

Mother: You've all put me off my food.

Father: *(To Son.)* You've got no feelings.

Son: I didn't pawn the bowl.

Father: Out! (*The Son goes out.*)

Daughter: Bloody bowl!

Father: Go away, all of you! (*The Daughter leaves, the Father embraces his wife.*) Don't cry. I'll begin to work at home, there was an ad in the paper and they've taken me on. I'll be mixing some medicines, decent work, you'll see, and I'll find some pupils... the accordion is coming into fashion again... the pawn shop'll keep the bowl for a year. You prepared a beautiful Christmas... we even had figs... coconut biscuits... our pet sewed a beautiful cloth, didn't she? Next year I'll take you on holiday.

Mother: Holiday?

Father: To our place.

Mother: Slnchev Bryag – the sunny shore?

Father: I'm already learning Bulgarian.

Mother: Do you remember us eating melons?

Father: You had white sandals.

Mother: We ate them at one go!

Father: We gobbled them up.

Mother: I was all sticky from the juice.

Father: We had a wonderful time.

Mother: And we'll take a rickshaw. The way you thought the man would pull it, and he was only offering it! I'm glad you're interested in astronomy again.

Father: (*Pulls out a telescope on a stand.*) Isn't it beautiful? It would be a pity to sell it. German optics.

Mother: Have the stars come out?

Father: I'll find the moon for you. (*Mother looks through the telescope.*) We used to travel all over the place. I used to spend the whole of the school holidays with our Daughter when she was little. Now I've enough holiday to drive me mad. (*Mother turns the telescope downwards to focus on the courtyard.*)

Father: What are you looking at? Has the moon fallen?

Mother: They've already begun building. That enormous house. Look.

Father: So what?

Mother: Just look how some people live. Marble, like for a church.

Father: What's the marble for?

Mother: The bathroom. The bastards.

Father: But it's cold.

Mother: Underfloor heating.

Father: From underneath?

Mother: Under the marble.

Father: Under the marble? *(Goes to look through the telescope. They take turns to look down into the courtyard.)* Lucky bastards.

Scene 2 WOMEN'S DAY (8th March.)

Father: *(He and the Daughter are shaking little bottles in both hands.)* Gently. The herbs macerate better that way. Hold it with your whole palm. The little bottle will warm up to body temperature. Then the solution draws out the most valuable substances.

Daughter: Macerate.

Father: This is actually the first time you've earned any money. What does it feel like?

Daughter: Macerate.

Father: Machines can't do this, my pet. Only the human hand. The herb feels our warmth and yields up its juice. It will be a precious medicine. I had to give them a five thousand crown deposit before they'd even let me have the bottles.

Son: *(Enters and peers in the saucepans.)* Soya again?

Father: You should be philosophical even when looking in your plate. Once you've started.

Son: I'm going out.

Father: Haven't you got to learn anything?

Son: We're just revising.

Father: Good. (*Gives his bottles to him and the Son: shakes them.*)

Son: This is work for morons.

Father: There are worse jobs.

Mother: (*Enters with the shopping.*) No one here cleans the loo after themselves.

Father: (*To Son.*) You see?

Mother: I'm not going to be your slave.

Son: But I'm shaking.

Mother: I'd like to be unemployed, too!

Father: I've only just sat down.

Mother: I haven't sat down since the morning. I've been running around from one discount store to the next.

Father: (*Referring to their Son.*) He doesn't like soya. What can I say? Nothing but vegetable stew the whole week!

Mother: You could eat in the school canteen. The deputy head offered you the chance.

Father: Am I to blow on my soup in front of them!

Mother: If you're too proud, eat vegetable soup.

Father: I'm going to return the newspaper.

Mother: Did you iron it out? (*Father runs the iron over the newspaper.*) They'll catch you one day. You'll disgrace the family. (*Father goes out.*)

Daughter: (*Still shaking the bottles.*) Why... does Daddy iron?

Mother: To make the paper look nice.

Son: So the neighbours won't know he pulled it out of their letterbox.

Mother: Don't be cheeky.

Daughter: Can I... book?

Mother: When I die, you'll inherit it. The best recipes are the ones Grandma left me. If you listen carefully, I'll teach you them. *(Pulls out a large cookery book.)*

Daughter: *(Turning over the pages.)* My... book.

Mother: You must give a man a hot meal once a day. Without a hot meal, you can't keep him.

Son: Mummy.

Mother: But you needn't think about men yet.

Son: Mummy, I'm in trouble. We sprayed some fur coats.

Mother: I'll kill you!

Son: *(Indignantly.)* Made from rabbits.

Daughter: *(Pointing to the cookery book.)* Meat.

Son: Do you know how they suffered?!

Mother: I don't care a damn about the rabbits! Even if you have to get a job loading dynamite, you'll pay for it yourself! D'you know what I'd give for a fur coat like that? And then some lout comes along and sprays it with paint! *(Chasing her Son.)* Put those bottles down!

Son: You wanted me to tell you everything!

Mother: I've never had a fur coat, only that horrible artificial stuff! And your Father acts as if he gave me a mink! *(The doorbell rings.)* Let's hope it's the police! *(Opens the door, Ivo enters.)*

Ivo: Good afternoon.

Mother: It wasn't him.

Ivo: Sorry?

Mother: Our Son: is a good boy. Kamil led him astray.

Son: He bought the sprays.

Ivo: They call me Ivo, Ma'am. Or – the last visionary in private enterprise. That's what the stall holders say. The Tuck Shop – that's the name of my buffet.

Son: It was near the Tuck Shop.

Mother: What is it you want, Mr...

Ivo: Ivo, if you please. Just Ivo. *(To the Daughter.)* Good afternoon.

Daughter: *(Kissing Ivo.)* Ivo.

Mother: *(To her Daughter.)* Go into the bedroom!

Father: *(Entering.)* What idiot left the lift door open?

Ivo: Good evening.

Father: Are you from social security?

Ivo: Do you give accordion lessons?

Father: Of course.

Mother: *(To Daughter.)* Make some coffee.

Son: I guess I'm not needed here now.

Father: Who's going to do the shaking?

Mother: *(To Son.)* Don't let me see you with Kamil again. *(The Son leaves, the Mother shakes his little bottles.)*

Father: The accordion is popular again, isn't it?

Ivo: I don't really know.

Father: Have you got an instrument?

Ivo: My Father left me one. He died a year ago.

Father: An accordion can laugh and cry.

Ivo: I just want to play normally.

Father: I teach the Chelyabinsk school.

Ivo: Do you think I'll get the knack of it in half a year?

Father: That depends on you. *(Ivo hands Father some money.)* That's too much for the first lesson.

Ivo: That's for the whole year.

Father: Don't you want to know some tricks for the bass?

Ivo: Just the basics.

Father: Mr. ...

Ivo: Ivo.

Father: Ivo, your basics will be pretty scanty for this sum.

Ivo: *(Getting up.)* I don't know...

Father: *(Detaining him.)* But I like your elan. We'll get you playing with one hand at least!

Ivo: *(Giving Father more money.)* I want to play with both.

Mother: *(Bringing it in.)* Coffee. *(To Daughter.)* Sugar. *(Ivo sweetens his coffee.)*

Daughter: Su... su.

Ivo: The young lady doesn't play?

Mother: Not yet. *(Cuts open a plastic bag with the remains of a sponge cake.)* Sponge cake? Or a coconut biscuit?

Ivo: I'm allergic to coconut.

Daughter: *(Opening her mouth.)* Yum! *(Her Mother puts a coconut biscuit in it.)*

Mother: Go into the other room.

Daughter: Yum.

Mother: Into the other room, I told you. *(The Daughter is fascinated by Ivo.)*

Father: Have you ever played anything?

Ivo: I listen to the radio a lot.

Daughter: Yum!

Mother: Come on, now. *(Leads the Daughter away.)*

Ivo: A sweet little girl. Unspoiled.

Father: She hasn't yet had time.

Ivo: Actually, I don't know if it was my Father. We'd like somehow to talk through the accordion.

Mother: The girls will come running if you play to them.

Ivo: (*Getting up.*) Mum's alone at the stall. The stink of fried oil doesn't do her any good.

Mother: He caught me with his accordion, too.

Ivo: Tomorrow, then. Goodbye. To your Daughter, too. (*Leaves.*)

Mother: He sat me down on it!

Father: Stop that. He's still at the lift.

Mother: The bellows almost burst!

Father: Get a grip on yourself!

Mother: I haven't even got a fur coat out of it!

Father: Why do you spoil it for me? I've got my first pupil!

Mother: Even stray dogs have fur coats, I'm the only one that goes around looking poverty-stricken. And she's got a stole. Have you ever seen her stole? A kilometre long! They must have killed all the animals in two forests so she could have a silver fox stole.

Father: Who?

Mother: Do you know how she greeted me today? Huh - Good. Do you hear? Good!

Father: But who?!

Mother: Good! I'm not worth a whole sentence to her, just – good! She didn't even open that lipsticked mouth of hers. Good, without morning. Just good.

Father: For God's sake, who are you talking about?!

Mother: Look at her stole! (*Pushes Father towards the telescope, they look down into the courtyard.*)

Father: That silly house again?

Mother: Two years ago she used to borrow coffee from others in Accounts.

Father: Aha! A former colleague.

Mother: Where did she get the money to build that? Where did she get it from?

Father: A real hacienda.

Mother: Shortening her sentences all of a sudden! Good! Good and full stop! That's her over there!

Father: But you used to be friends.

Mother: She'd be nothing without him. And without his parents. They made their fortune from paprika. What paid for that marble? Paprika! That house stands on paprika.

Father: He's very spry. (*Looking through the telescope.*) ...they've got Italian tiles... and a bidet...

Mother: He never played the accordion!

Father: Do you know who he used to drink with? Guess who?! I'd never drink with the likes of them.

Mother: Sit down and stretch your bellows!

Father: What's got into you?

Daughter: (*Comes out of the next room, shaking the bottles.*) Kiss!

Mother: (*To Daughter.*) Get back in there!

Father: You'll be eaten up with envy. Forget them. (*Takes the bottles from his wife and shakes them while looking through the telescope.*) They're installing air-conditioning.

Mother: Pigs.

Father: I don't drink with just anyone. Oh, no. At least I have a choice when it comes to that.

Daughter: Kiss. Kiss!

Scene 3 EASTER

Father: (*Shaking the bottles.*) Can you see any Easter visitors coming?

Mother: (*Looking down into the courtyard through the telescope, while shaking the bottles.*) I certainly hope not!

Father: The last time they came to whip and water you was in eighty-eight.

Mother: Wait...

Father: Good thing I didn't sell that telescope.

Mother: I can see her! She's got a big belly!

Father: So have I.

Mother: She's pregnant!

Father: At her age?!

Mother: Do you mind? She's only three and a half months younger.

Father: You such good friends and you don't greet each other?

Mother: Hi. And – Good. Haven't you noticed anything? Hi. Good. I – Hi. She – Good.
We greet each other. But it's – Hi. And - Good. Really!

Father: I don't understand.

Mother: Hi – I say. Good – she says. Get it?

Father: Does she answer? Yes, she does.

Mother: Wash your ears out!

Father: *(The Daughter comes out of the room in her pyjamas.)* How did you sleep, pet?

Mother: Get dressed. It's Easter. *(The Daughter is looking for something.)*

Father: She hasn't cut out her crime column.

Mother: There are no papers today.

Father: *(To Daughter.)* You see? Everyone's been good to each other. The papers are empty.

Mother: Put a clean T-shirt on.

Father: Tom and Jerry. To please the poor girl.

Mother: You don't worry about pleasing me! *(Hands her Daughter some bottles and she shakes them.)*

Father: Don't start in front of her. *(To Daughter.)* Put on your mouse shirt. *(The Daughter goes out.)*

Son: Blessed be the Lord.

Mother: For ever, Amen.

Son: I'm going to early morning.

Father: Early morning?

Son: Mass. With Vierka.

Mother: He's going out with Vierka.

Father: To church?

Son: Then we'll go for a walk.

Father: Don't let any woman addle your brain!

Son: I'll be back before lunch. God be with you.

Mother: With you, too.

Father: Heavens! *(The Son: leaves.)* So that's it.

Mother: At least he's not hanging around with Kamil.

Father: He's exchanged a paint spray for a rosary?

Mother: That Vierka's a decent girl. Her Mother works at the post office.

Father: But did you hear that? Before not so much as – boo. And now – God be with you.

Mother: He's blooming, that boy.

Father: That's what I call a difference. Boo. And God be with you. *(The door bell rings, he goes to open the door.)*

Ivo: Good afternoon, Sir. And Ma'am.

Father: There's no lesson today.

Ivo: *(pulls out his plaited willow cane.)* I haven't got my accordion with me.

Mother: I put the curtains in the bath to soak! *(hurries out.)*

Ivo: I don't dip women in the bath, Ma'am.¹

Father: You can leave the curtains!

¹ Reference to the Slovak Easter Monday custom of „watering“ women and girls. In some villages it can involve throwing buckets of water over them or even ducking them in a stream, in the towns it may be dipping a girl in the bath (hence the Mother's concern that the curtains are in the bath.), but usually it is no more than a symbolic sprinkle with water or perfume.

Mother: Just a sec. (*Looking round the door.*) We're changing.

Ivo: Is your young miss at home?

Father: (*pouring him a drink.*) So – to accordion players! (*drinks it quickly and shivers.*)

Ivo: I'd like to buy your garden.

Father: Garden? It's only a little strip next to the railway line.

Ivo: Fresh tomatoes for the stall, you see.

Father: But the soil's excellent there. I used to have strawberries, too. The boys always picked them.

Ivo: They scrawl things all over my stall, too.

Father: Asked to be excused from my lesson and swiped the lot.

Ivo: They keep changing the name of the firm with a paint spray.

Father: The Tuck Shop?

Ivo: Children can be awful.

Father: What did they write?

Ivo: Don't ask.

Father: Little brutes.

Ivo: Changed the T to F. (*pulling out some money.*) Take this as from a friend.

Father: It's yours. Tools and all.

Ivo: You can keep those.

Father: (*pours another round.*) To your garden, Ivo!

Ivo: To your girls!

Mother: (*appears, dressed up.*) Where's that water? Come on, don't be shy! (*The Daughter comes in, a bulge under her dress clearly indicates that she is pregnant, the Father stops shaking the little bottles.*)

Ivo: *Šiby – ryby...* (².)

² The first words of a traditional Slovak incantation accompanying the Easter Monday custom of symbolically caning women and girls with plaited willow twigs - pronounce: sheeby, reeby.

Mother: Harder! That doesn't hurt!

Ivo: It shouldn't hurt.

Mother: It's only real if it hurts!

Father: That... tummy...

Mother: Not on Mummy's tummy, of course. Only on her legs!

Ivo: Legs are allowed?

Mother: They must be! *Šiby – ryby*, that's it!

Father: Ivo has bought our garden.

Mother: You'll stay for lunch. We've got sirloin steak and dumplings.

Father: She saved them, sealed up. You must taste them.

Ivo: I don't know.

Father: He bought it without the tools.

Mother: Go and fetch them, before Ivo changes his mind.

Ivo: I don't need any hoes.

Mother: Go on! At least you'll get a walk.

Father: What's that tummy meant to mean...?

Mother: Off you go!

Ivo: Should I go with you?

Mother: It'd be a crime to turn your nose up at sirloin! *(Takes the sealed plastic bag and hands it to her Daughter.)* Heat it up. *(The Daughter goes out.)*

Father: Who's going to do the shaking?

Ivo: If you don't mind. *(Takes the bottles from Father.)*

Father: I'll give you a lesson free of charge for that.

Mother: Bring the watering can as well. *(Exit Father.)*

Ivo: *(Shaking the bottles.)* I'm going to enlarge the firm. Two, three tables on the pavement. So people can eat in a civilised manner.

Mother: We gobble it down standing up, hm?

Ivo: I'll have tablecloths, too. A cooker hood. Mum can't breathe with the steam and smells. Asthma, you know.

Mother: We had asthma in the family.

Ivo: An awful illness.

Mother: Really awful.

Ivo: Probably trays with a logo on them.

Mother: *(Takes the bottles from him, puts hers down, too.)* Can't you see she can't even sign her name? She's pregnant. We don't even know whose it is. She holds everyone's hand. Do you know how much water she uses up? She locks herself in the bathroom and sings. I bang on the door and the taps keep running. For an hour sometimes.

Ivo: You don't understand me.

Mother: I understand you only too well. You stand in that stall of yours, eyeing the women and stuffing hot sausages into rolls. My Daughter is a poor girl, but I won't allow that. Not that!

Ivo: You don't do me justice... I know she's ill... but it's a gift.

Mother: Gift... She'll lie down wherever you tell her to.

Ivo: At one time they thought they were holy.

Mother: Don't try that on me.

Daughter: *(Enters.)* Beef!

Mother: Go into the kitchen until I call you. *(The Daughter goes out.)*

Ivo: I only came to say hello to her.

Mother: *(Begins to unbutton her blouse.)* When was the last time you held a real woman? *(Puts his hands on her.)* Is that pleasant?

Ivo: *(Removes his hands.)* Why are you doing this?

Mother: You have to hold them there for a while. *(Puts his hands on her again.)*

Ivo: You're... a beautiful woman.

Mother: Try pressing. Just a little.

Ivo: Your husband... will come.

Mother: You're having a lesson for free.

Ivo: You're so... different. We could...

Mother: What?

Ivo: We could... go out.

Mother: Go out where?

Ivo: To my place. When I close my stall.

Mother: Next to the mustard and chips? *(Shoves him away.)* You little brat . You don't understand anything! Here you are for the stupid garden! *(Throws the money at him.)*

Ivo: I didn't mean to offend you.

Mother: Leave me alone! I'm going to have a bath! I'm going to scrub myself hard, you little brat!

Ivo: Goodbye.

Mother: Go, or I'll begin shouting!

Ivo: You're already shouting. And there's no reason: to. *(Picks up the money and puts it on the table.)* It's yours.

Mother: Get out! *(Ivo leaves.)* God. Good God!

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Scene 4 MAY DAY

Father: *(On the phone.)* No, we're not shaking! *(Hangs up.)* Idiot.

Mother: *(Looking into the courtyard through the telescope.)* Don't take any notice of them.

Father: I can't even step out of the door. As soon as people see me, they begin shaking.

Mother: Rise above them.

Father: Our fellow men are all bastards. (*The telephone rings, Father lifts the receiver.*) Hello?
I'll shake you, cretin. (*Hangs up.*)

Mother: Have they caught them?

Father: They're in Bolivia by now. With my money.

Mother: You weren't the only one to be taken in.

Father: It's awful having taught the whole street. They're all laughing behind my back
for shaking bottles.

Mother: You did it for your family, dear.

Father: Dried nettles and distilled water. (*The telephone rings.*)

Mother: (*Telephoning.*) What can I do for you? (*To Father.*) Accordion.

Father: (*Telephoning.*) I teach... To shake? You jerk! (*Hangs up.*)

Mother: Come and look.

Father: (*Looking through the telescope.*) They've got a machine to make waves in their
swimming pool. They're wallowing like pigs.

Father: I've never seen a pig in the sea.

Mother: Then take a look.

Father: (*Looking into the telescope.*) He's put on weight. But she's slim.

Mother: She could be a grandmother by now. A child at her age.

Father: Don't you ever talk about anything else in Accounts?

Mother: In Accounts we work. (*Looking into the telescope.*) She's hiding. Look how
close she's keeping to the wall while she's pushing that pram.

Father: Forget her. (*Looking through the telescope.*) This is the first time I've been at home on
May Day.

Mother: There's a fun fair at the stadium.

Father: (*Looking through the telescope.*) The children are coming home. Did you give her that
tummy?! We've already talked about that.

Mother: She enjoys it.

Father: You mustn't do that to her! She doesn't deserve it!

Mother: *(Into the telescope.)* That man's waiting there again.

Father: Ivo? Has he got his accordion?

Mother: I don't want him up here.

Father: It's my flat, too.

Mother: *(The door bell rings.)* He's not coming in!

Father: You should have thought of that before you gave her that tummy! *(He opens the door, his Son and Daughter enter.)* Ivo! Come in! Yes, come in!

Son: God bless.

Ivo: *(Entering.)* Good afternoon.

Daughter: I've got my knickers on!

Mother: *(To Daughter.)* Off to your room!

Son: I brought her home safe and sound. Everyone see that?

Father: Once a year you can make a sacrifice for your sister.

Son: Viera's waiting for me.

Mother: Have a good time.

Father: Make sure you're home by eleven!

Mother: Have you got a key?

Son: Mummy, next time Viera and I want to go alone. *(Indicating sister.)* Without her.
(Leaves, the Daughter goes into the bedroom.)

Mother: Who'll take her out for some fresh air?

Ivo: I... I'd take her.

Mother: For chips?

Father: How's the garden?

Ivo: I'd like to get engaged to your Daughter.

Father: She's certified, not responsible.

Ivo: To take care of her... let her have that feeling.

Father: Take care?

Ivo: As a friend.

Mother: He wants to buy her. Don't you see?

Ivo: The rings... *(Takes them out of a little box.)*

Mother: *(Throwing the rings out of the window.)* We don't want them!

Ivo: She doesn't deserve that. *(He leaves.)*

Mother: And you won't have her! Never! *(The Daughter enters.)* Did you go to the stall yesterday? Did you?!

Daughter: Hodok.

Mother: My colleagues saw her.

Father: Did you have a hot dog?

Mother: How did you get mustard all over your skirt?

Daughter: Hodok.

Mother: You'll get yourself into real trouble one day.

Father: The flex. *(Mother hands him a piece of flex and he uses it to strike the Daughter's palm.)* This hurts me more than it does you. It's not anger that's punishing you, but love. My hand beats you, but my heart is crying. Now go into the pantry. *(The Daughter goes out.)*

Father: Why do you give her a tummy? Why do you disgrace us like this?

Mother: You have to crouch first, if you want to spring.

Father: I can't crouch any lower.

Mother: They always used to invite you to join them for a few beers on May Day.

Father: Ever since they threw me out, my friends haven't any time. They're always hurrying off somewhere.

Mother: *(Places candles on the table, lays the table for a special meal, then cuts open sealed plastic bags of rolls, sausages, eggs, cakes.)* We just couldn't wait for the children to grow up. All of a sudden it's here.

Father: She'll never grow up.

Mother: Why couldn't we enjoy life sometime? Cheers. *(They drink a toast of wine.)*

Father: To Slnchev Bryag.

Mother: I was already afraid you'd put the idea out of your head.

Father: I almost had. It disappeared into my feet.

Mother: You stopped learning Bulgarian. *(Scratches his heel.)* To this heel?

Father: It's coming back. It's reached my knee...

Mother: I've got an idea.

Father: I always have to have a good laugh, when I remember how they stole everything from those Germans' tent and didn't even touch ours.

Mother: *(Scratching his heel.)* Has it got to your stomach yet?

Father: That DDR just kept shouting about his camera – meine Praktica, meine Praktica! I was laughing so much, the tent almost collapsed.

Mother: Do you remember what happened next?

Father: The tent collapsed.

Mother: Before that.

Father: The militia?

Mother: You had it off with me right and proper.

Father: Stop that. *(Puts on his socks.)*

Mother: I had a pain in my side for two days. I'd been lying on the stove.

Father: Slnchev Bryag is what I promised. You'll go there one day!

Mother: She must look as if she is pregnant. As many people as possible must see her with that tummy.

Father: *(Slicing meat from the plastic bag.)* I'll buy you a whole load of melons.

Mother: No one will be surprised we have a baby.

Father: What baby?

Mother: People will hear it crying. We mustn't hide it. It will be crying so near that nothing will occur to anyone.

Father: What do you want to do?

Mother: It's us or them. We've nothing to lose. (*Looks down into the courtyard through the telescope.*) They've got everything. A house. A garden. A swimming pool... A baby.

Father: You're out of your mind.

Mother: I know exactly when she goes into the garden with it. I'll take it from her. I'll ruin her.

Father: Shut up!

Mother: I'll let her wait.

Father: You're a horrible, wicked woman!

Mother: I'll give the baby back! But she'll pay for it!

Father: You want to kidnap the baby?!

Mother: We'll go away – a long, long way. Have you never wanted a house with a garden? A house like theirs? Every day I'm scared who I'll meet in the lift. Those malicious mugs! I want to get out of this block. Look at those windows! Thousands of flats all around! Just look! All good folks, huh?! But you try giving them no wages for half a year. The ground'll give way beneath their feet and they'll fall. Have you any idea what a crash that'll be? We must leave while there's still time.

Father: Have you any idea what you're saying? Have you any idea?

Mother: Help me and we'll save ourselves. Darling. But... don't stand there. It'll be all right again. But just don't stand there like that in front of me!

Scene 5 INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY (1st June.)

Daughter: *(Enters and picks up the telephone.)* I'm not afraid.... any more! *(Replaces the receiver, then a while later speaks into it again.)* I'm not afraid... of you! *(Replaces it, then again into the receiver.)* You're outside the window... you can't get in here... the window is white... you scratch a hole... in the paint... and through it your eye... When I lie for a long time... I pretend... I'm asleep... and your eye... keeps watching... I'm afraid... to move... I breathe as little... as I can... so the eye won't be angry... I'm not afraid of you any more! *(Bangs down the receiver as Father enters.)*

Father: Have you got a temperature?

Daughter: I'm not afraid.

Father: We're here with you.

Mother: *(Enters.)* Have you got the paper? *(Turns the pages frantically, reads something, then crumples it.)*

Father: I'd already ironed it.

Mother: They've stopped paying out. I put some money in a fund. *(Hands Father the crumpled paper.)*

Father: How much?

Mother: From both our savings books. The agent's upped and gone.

Father: You didn't even ask me!

Mother: Everyone in Accounts put money in it. It was terribly advantageous!

Father: I'll carve up your colleagues in Accounts!

Mother: They've no right to deceive people like that.

Father: You can forget Grandma's bowl. It's already been bought.

Mother: Who? Don't tell me the pawn shop doesn't know.

Father: What does it matter?

Mother: Tell me. Or I'll go and ask for myself. *(Unbuttons her blouse.)*

Father: Don't be a fool.

Mother: Maybe there's something they'll want from me, unlike you!

Father: When are you going to stop?

Mother: I'm no different. It's the world that's changed. Darling, tell me that name.

Father: It's over there.

Mother: *(Goes over to the telescope.)* Where? *(Looks down into the courtyard, at her colleague's house.)*

Father: She probably doesn't like you either.

Mother: Are you coming with me?

Father: *(Buttoning up her blouse.)* I don't know.

Mother: The pram's in the garden.

Father: Let's talk a bit more about it. Please.

Mother: Come on.

Father: But we'll talk, all right?

Mother: Of course.

Father: We can't do it.

Mother: Imagine it's only on the TV.

Father: A solution can always be found.

Mother: Change the channel, it disappears.

Father: You're not listening to me.

Mother: And you don't want to see! *(They go out, the Daughter lifts the receiver and speaks into it.)*

Daughter: You were... very bad... but I'm not afraid of you any more. You can look at me... because I'm not afraid. *(Hangs up.)*

Son: *(Enters mildly drunk.)* My sweet sister. Are you a woman? Be one. But don't go out into the street. You could kill someone. It happens. An ordinary woman, you just are, that's how it is. And then he isn't any more. Some man or other doesn't exist. That's what a woman like that does. Get it? She simply stops seeing someone – and he doesn't exist. He did before and all of a sudden he doesn't. A woman can do such things. Can you see me? *(The Daughter nods.)* Then you're off your rocker. Sorry. It doesn't apply if you can see me. It does for Viera. But Viera can't see me. Do you know I don't exist? *(Throws his jacket down on the table.)* You

don't exist either. Are you cross? You're not like a woman. You are for me, but I don't count. I'm your brother. We can see each other, but a fat lot of use that is to us. Who has Viera got? A new boyfriend. He's from Macedonia. He's got a Macedonian head, Macedonian legs. Do you know why he exists and I don't? He's worse off than I am. He arouses Viera's... sympathy more than I do. Back home he rode on a donkey. There's plenty of reasons to feel sorry for him. I've never even ploughed. Goran used to. Goran. Goran. His name means he's from the hills, Goran. She's fallen in love with poverty. Because she's a good soul. Viera is the best, because she's sympathetic. If we lost everything in a fire, would she take me back? *(Offers his sister a tube of some medicine.)* No one will see you. Don't you want them? *(He tips the tablets into his mouth and swallows them with some water.)* No one will ever see you again. *(He leaves, the telephone keeps ringing, the Daughter finally lifts it and telephones.)*

Daughter: I'm not afraid of you. *(She hangs up, it rings for a long time, then she lifts the receiver.)* Ivo...? *(Hangs up, lifts the receiver again and says.)* I'm not afraid of you. *(Hangs up, the telephone rings for a long time.)*

Mother: *(Rushes in.)* Shut the door!

Father: *(Entering.)* Let's go back!

Mother: It's all the same now.

Father: We'll explain everything to them!

Mother: Stay where you are! Get your breath back. No one saw us. We simply weren't there.

Father: *(To the Daughter.)* Pet... *(The telephone keeps ringing.)* Don't answer it!

Mother: We must answer it!

Father: No!

Mother: We're at home! We've been here all the time, don't you see?! *(Speaks into the receiver.)* Hello? Hello! *(Hangs up.)* No one.

Daughter: I'm not afraid.

Mother: *(Finding her Son's jacket, runs into the bedroom.)* Dad! *(They carry their Son, almost unconscious, out of the bedroom.)*

Son: Viera...

Mother: An ambulance!

Father: (*Smacking his Son's face.*) Why the hell, you idiot?! Don't sleep! You mustn't fall asleep!

Son: Viera's... left me.

Mother: Because of that hussy? My poor Son:...

Father: Idiot. Don't sleep!

Mother: My little pet...

Father: Cretin!

Son: God doesn't love me now, does he?

Father: He doesn't even know where you live.

Son: Vierka...

Father: Twit! (*Carries his Son out.*)

Mother: (*Goes into the hall with them and comes back with a baby wrapped up in a little quilt, she talks to it.*) And we'll be friends, hm? Good friends.

Interval

Scene 6 Our Lady of Sorrows (15th September.)

Mother: (*Disinfecting a wound on her Son's forehead.*) They could have gouged your eye out.

Son: They didn't have time.

Mother: Big talk.

Son: We gave that dirty swine a good kicking, but he had a pal.

Mother: Spare me the details.

Son: We stripped them naked. They escaped by bus.

Mother: You'll be the death of me.

Son: Do you know how the driver stared? Two Vietnamese with nothing on at the bus stop!

Mother: They won't give you a place at University.

Son: They didn't take Kamil either.

Mother: What use'd university be to him?

Son: I'll stick it out for a year in a factory.

Mother: Have you had any supper?

Son: I'm not hungry.

Mother: (*Stretching a sealed bag.*) Not even stuffing?

Father: (*Enters, turning over the pages of a newspaper.*) There's nothing in the paper.

Mother: No one knows anything in Accounts, either.

Father: Even Accounts has nothing to say!

Mother: They don't even know she had a child.

Father: You can't hide that.

Mother: They say she lost it in the sixth month.

Son: You mean – in June?

Father: Eat up and shut up!

Son: In the shit, eh?

Mother: D'you mind?!

Son: I'd like to talk about my pocket-money.

Father: But you're earning.

Son: (*To Father.*) Stuffing? Or shall I leave it for my little brother?

Mother: We're doing this for you, too.

Son: I need new shoes and a jacket.

Father: I don't steal!

Son: My mates keep asking who my sister had it with.

Mother: She's a single Mother, she doesn't know herself. Think of something!

Son: They say it was that jerk from the stall.

Father: Ivo's glad if he finds the strength to play a concertina.

Son: The guys want to have a look at him.

Mother: Don't you dare do anything to him!

Son: We don't like queers.

Father: They talk a load of bullshit.

Son: In compARIsOn: with this family, we're complete amateurs.

Father: We'll take the child back.

Mother: You bet.

Father: It was a mistake! But you just keep beating up Yugos and Vietnamese and you'll go to jail first. Take a swipe at me, my granddad was Bulgarian.

Mother: Dad!

Son: *(To Father.)* When you were little, did you ever plough?

Father: He's off his rocker.

Mother: Daddy didn't mean it like that.

Father: You can... you know what. *(Is about to leave, but his wife holds him back.)*

Mother: Shut up! You keep throwing insults at each other! We can't go on like this. Hold on a while. Things'll get better. Then we'll leave.

Son: Brilliant idea. *(Goes out.)*

Mother: Where are you going?

Son: *(From the hall.)* My business!

Mother: Here we are worrying ourselves sick and she just doesn't care! *(Dials a number and phones.)* We've got your Son: here, do you hear? He's well and you don't want him. You swine. *(Hangs up.)*

Father: You should call from a phone box!

Mother: The police don't know anything. Do you get it? They haven't reported it. No child has been kidnapped, because no child exists! (*Brings in the child wrapped up in its quilt.*)

Father: But it's here! In my kitchen, damn it!

Mother: What use is all that money to her if she has a sick child?! It'll never grow up to be anything! They just kept it hidden by the wall. She was ashamed to go out with it, because it's got Down's.

Father: (*Looking down through the telescope.*) Why are they keeping quiet? Why don't they do something?!

Mother: Nothing can move people like them.

Father: But she was always terrible sensitive.

Mother: I wanted to hurt her and in fact I've helped her.

Father: She's not like that.

Mother: She'd be branded for life. And now she's free.

Father: Damn it, they'll pay me that kid's weight in gold!

Mother: Calm down. I'll come up with something.

Father: You've got time. Until it goes to school...

Mother: You can teach it. You... maths – music.

Father: Is that what you say, you who've got no more than eight years elementary? I studied at the Institute, do you hear? The Institute!

Mother: I don't give a shit for your Institute!

Father: But you got your claws into me, didn't you?

Mother: Who got their claws into who? You got yours into me!

Father: You did first! Together with her! You both wanted me and I was stupid enough to chose you! I could have had a house with a pool.

Mother: You'd never have had anything! Everything came from his side, not hers!

Father: Twenty years down the drain! Now you'd be looking down that telescope at us.

Mother: And you'd have had that cripple with her! (*Lifts up the baby.*)

Father: And haven't I got one? *(Bursts into tears.)* I can't lose out again.

Mother: Darling. *(They embrace and kiss.)* Hold me tight.

Father: Sorry.

Mother: Let's do it on the carpet, like we used to. *(As they drop to the floor, their Daughter, dressed in her coat and carrying a suitcase, tries to slip past them unnoticed.)*

Father: What's that?!

Mother: *(Stops the Daughter.)* Where are you going? Open that case! *(The Daughter opens the case and they take out embroidered cloths.)* Where were you taking them? It's dark outside. Where were you going with that case?!

Father: *(To the Daughter.)* We'll go to bye-byes, shall we?

Mother: *(Pulling the cookery book out of the case.)* What use is this book to you? Who's been putting silly ideas in your head?

Father: She doesn't know what she's doing.

Mother: Who were you going to? I'm not moving from this spot until you tell me. Were you going to the stall? Did you want to sleep there? Is it still open and is he waiting for you? Is he?!

Father: She wouldn't do that.

Mother: Get undressed. Your coat! That as well. Take everything off!

Father: Put your pyjamas on, pet.

Mother: Everything! *(The Daughter takes everything off until she is naked.)* And now into the pantry with you! Until you apologise! *(Locks her Daughter in the pantry and takes the key.)*

Father: Give her her underclothes.

Mother: Its warm in there.

Father: She can't be like that.

Mother: At least she won't run away. *(Telephoning.)* Why don't you want him? He's already fonder of me than he is of you. Don't you miss your own Son: the least little bit? He's already looking around him. An ambulance went by under the window and he turned in the direction of the sound. Or was it a fire engine? You just don't care. *(Hangs up.)*

Father: I'm sleeping in the kitchen.

Mother: Won't you come and join me?

Father: I'll use a sleeping bag.

Mother: Into bed, darling.

Father: I'm sleeping here.

Mother: You'll pay for that. *(Goes out.)*

Father: *(Sits in front of the pantry and talks to his Daughter.)* Don't pretend you're asleep. I've got an eye that can see through the door. Now you've stopped breathing. I can see that. The eye sees everything! You can keep it up for a little while longer. A little longer... Now! You had to take a breath. Or now? You're doing well if you held on. You held on for longer than last time.

Daughter: *(From behind the door.)* I'm not afraid... of you!

Father: I want you not to be afraid. Put your hand on the door.

Daughter: I have. *(Father puts his hand on the pantry door.)*

Father: Try to find my hand.

Daughter: How?

Father: You must sense it.

Daughter: Got it.

Father: Good. Now I'm going to move it and you must try to find it. *(He puts his hand elsewhere on the door.)*

Daughter: Got it.

Father: Now?

Daughter: Got it.

Father: And now?

Daughter: Got it.

Father: *(Doesn't put his hand there.)* Now?

Daughter: You're not there.

Father: Very good. And now? (*Puts his hand on the door.*)

Daughter: Got it.

Father: Now?

Daughter: Got it.

Scene 7 All Souls' Day

Father: (*Having breakfast with his Son.*) What d'you mean, you don't remember anything? We threw all that money away on that holiday and you don't remember anything? Not even the gallery?

Son: No.

Father: (*Shouting at Mother.*) He doesn't remember the picture gallery! We lived over the main entrance. We had an enormous balcony. Don't you even remember that?

Son: No.

Father: We used to go there for our holidays! You can't even get inside nowadays. Not even the dining-room with frescoes?

Son: No.

Father: (*Shouting at the Mother.*) He doesn't remember the frescoes! Nor the cinema? It stank, because they were gluing linoleum on the floor. We used to call that cinema The Fart.

Son: No.

Father: (*Shouting at the Mother.*) He doesn't remember The Fart cinema! The pedal boats? Your sister fell into the lake.

Son: Can I finish eating?!

Father: We have no experiences in common.

Son: Inflammation of the middle ear.

Father: (*To Mother.*) He remembers his ear! And visiting that valley where they hanged the folk hero Janošík? There was a gallows there. For a film. We all had our photos taken under it. And that shepherd's axe is from there. An old

man used to make them and the patterns on them were not burnt out with a soldering iron, but with a tool heated in the fire. That's very rare. Each of you got one.

Son: This one's mine?

Father: She lost hers.

Son: *(Getting up from the table.)* Bye, then.

Father: Aren't you coming to the cemetery with us? You used to like All Souls' Day. You always used to light a candle for the partisans.

Son: Later. Ciao. *(Goes out.)*

Father: The candles are in the pantry.

Mother: *(Enters.)* You don't talk to each other for a year and all of a sudden you don't let him eat in peace.

Father: I thought we were going to the cemetery together.

Mother: He hasn't been for the past three years.

Father: We're losing him.

Mother: Don't you want those rolls? I'll put them in a bag. *(Seals the breakfast leftovers in a plastic bag.)* Prepare the milk for the baby.

Father: *(Going over to the baby and feeding it from a bottle.)* What if we just – returned him?

Mother: They don't want him.

Father: Don't play God.

Mother: They'll pay me first!

Father: To hell with the money! We can't do anything more vile than what we've already done! *(Knocks on the pantry door.)* Do you want cocoa or tea, pet?

Mother: You've never done anything for your family.

Father: *(Opens the pantry door.)* Come and join us. Come on. You needn't be in the pantry all the time. We're not angry with you any more.

Daughter: It's ... nice in here.

Father: *(To Daughter.)* Come and join us.

Daughter: *(Cuddling the baby.)* My baby.

Mother: Being with you is enough to drive anyone mad. *(The doorbell rings, the Daughter shuts herself in the pantry.)*

Father: Hide the baby.

Mother: But it's hers.

Father: For heavens' sake take it into the bedroom!

Mother: You've always been a coward. You never paid in a restaurant. It always took you so long to find your wallet, that everyone felt embarrassed and paid for us. That's why we have no friends. *(Goes to open the door, comes back with Ivo.)*

Ivo: Good morning.

Father: *(To Daughter.)* Don't lock yourself in!

Ivo: You needn't be shy of me. *(Knocks on the pantry door.)* Good morning!

Daughter: *(From behind the door.)* Hand!

Father: She wants to give you her hand. *(Ivo places his palm on the door.)* It's there!

Mother: You are a silly lot.

Daughter: *(From behind the door.)* Got it.

Ivo: *(Keeping his hand on the door.)* I've got some pine decorations left over. Wondered if you'd like them. For the graves.

Father: We don't usually have them.

Mother: Yes, we do.

Father: Since when?

Mother: You just light the candles and disappear. Then I decorate the grave with pine twigs.

Ivo: They're fresh.

Father: Do you practice? The accordion's hard work.

Ivo: I've been neglecting it a bit.

Father: Your fingers'll get stiff.

Mother: *(To Father.)* Go and get dressed.

Ivo: I don't mind pyjamas.

Mother: *(To Father.)* Hasn't this family disgraced itself enough?!

Father: You can take it away. *(Ivo lowers his hand.)* Give me him. *(Takes the baby and goes out.)*

Mother: *(To Ivo.)* What are you doing here?

Ivo: I miss you.

Mother: Forget it. It was just once.

Ivo: Does he suspect anything?

Mother: He wouldn't even understand that he was dead.

Ivo: Come to my place.

Mother: I can't. No. I don't want to.

Ivo: Or I'll do it on your tablecloth...

Mother: I'll scream.

Ivo: If you don't come to my place today, I'll tell him everything.

Mother: You wouldn't do that.

Ivo: I need you terribly. Don't take advantage of it.

Mother: It's you who's taking advantage!

Ivo: I've bought some wine. You liked it that time at the stall.

Mother: I must stay at home now.

Ivo: You've always got some excuse.

Mother: It's over. Get it? It's over.

Ivo: I'll tell him everything. Right now!

Father: *(Entering in his suit.)* We can go to the cemetery.

Mother: *(To Father.)* He knows about the baby! He wants to blackmail us!

Ivo: What?

Mother: He's going to give us away! That's what he comes here for!

Father: *(To Ivo.)* You little shit. *(Flings himself at Ivo, who defends himself only feebly.)*
That's who I've been teaching? An accordion's like a woman, but then you'd have to know something about women! Jerks like you should be shot! Don't those hot dogs give you any strength, you lousy bastard?!

Mother: *(To Ivo.)* You've had it. *(She pulls a plastic bag over Ivo's head, the Father grips his arms and the Mother the plastic bag. After a while Ivo's limp body falls on the floor and doesn't move.)*

Father: He let himself... Why did he let himself?

Mother: How should I know? He's sick, didn't you know?

Father: I don't gossip in Accounts.

Mother: Please don't let's quarrel.

Father: Who's quarrelling? I'm not.

Mother: For heavens' sake!

Father: You're quarrelling. I'm not. Why should I quarrel?

Mother: Darling...

Father: For Christ's sake! She must have the last word!

Mother: Well, can't I say anything?!

Father: You certainly shouldn't!

Mother: Can't you be quiet for once? You... long-suffering concertina player!

Father: I didn't want to kill him.

Mother: Let's pull ourselves together.

Father: How did he come to know all that?

Mother: You must go to the garden. Pull yourself together. You must go to the garden!
The ground in the shed is soft. No one will see you in there.

Father: What if we sealed him up?

Mother: Calm down.

Father: You know, in a plastic bag.

Mother: You'll dig a hole in the ground. You can do it before it gets dark.

Father: I didn't mean to do it!

Mother: Come back at eleven. We'll take him there. *(Takes Ivo's keys from his pocket.)*
In his own car.

Father: That won't come off.

Mother: Let me think.

Father: It isn't true, is it?

Mother: Ugh, I can smell mustard.

Father: I'm just imagining it, aren't I?

Mother: Try switching over.

Scene 8 Christmas Eve

Mother: *(Sitting round the table on Christmas Eve.)* All those who enjoyed it raise their hands. *(Mother the only one to do so.)* Christ himself couldn't please you.

Father: It was fine.

Daughter: There were... bones.

Mother: You can get carp without bones nowadays, but they're sick fish. A fish must have bones.

Father: I spat enough of them out.

Mother: Cook for yourselves next year. We've got savoury scones as well. *(Cuts open a plastic bag.)*

Father: *(Sniffs the bag.)* How long have they been frozen?

Daughter: Will there be presents?

Mother: Have you seen any angels? None have flown past.

Father: He's never done this to us before.

Mother: Not to be all together at Christmas. *(A loud explosion is heard outside.)*

Father: That's some firework.

Mother: I rang Kamil's. He's not at home either. Aren't we going to look for him?

Father: I used to mix weed-killer with sugar. It made a big bang, too.

Daughter: With sugar?

Mother: You've got something to teach her. *(Outside the windows the sound of police sirens and fire engines.)*

Father: *(Looking through the telescope.)* Goodness. There's a car on fire.

Mother: It's those sparklers.

Father: You bet. Last month there were two car bombs. *(To Daughter.)* Look through the window. You'll see little angels!

Daughter: Yum. *(He puts a scone in her mouth.)*

Father: Their wings brushed against the window pane just now.

Daughter: I... saw.

Mother: I'm not waiting any longer.

Father: Presents!

Mother: *(Taps a glass with her knife, making it ring.)* The angels say we can.

Father: *(Untying his present.)* What can it be? Socks! Thank you, Father Christmas.

Mother: There are razor blades there, too. *(To Daughter.)* And this is for you.

Daughter: *(Unwrapping a pair of slippers.)* Mine?

Mother: And who is this for?

Father: *(Reads on the parcel.)* Daddy again? Who'll open it for me? *(The Daughter tears the paper.)* Aftershave! *(Sniffs it.)*

Mother: Did Father Christmas get it right?

Father: As always. *(Picks up the last parcel.)* For Mummy.

Mother: *(Unwraps a framed postcard.)* Lovely frame. An antique.

Father: For the baby boy... *(Pulls out a cradle made from a banana box.)* Just made in a hurry.

Daughter: *(Places the child in the cardboard cradle.)* Mine.

Mother: We forgot the wafers. *(Opens a plastic bag, gives everyone a wafer and pours a little honey on them.)* So we'll be as good as honey to each other all year.

Father: She's already messed herself up. *(To Daughter.)* You've got honey on you.

Mother: *(Looking at the framed postcard.)* Is that Bulgaria?

Father: Turkey.

Mother: One sea's like another.

Father: Do you think there are melons there at this time of year?

Mother: In December? *(The wail of an ambulance is heard outside..)*

Father: *(Looking through the telescope.)* Terrible. A car exploding on Christmas Eve. *(His Daughter approaches, she's holding a decorated shepherd's axe – tourist kitsch with a chrome blade.)*

Mother: *(To Daughter.)* Careful. It's your brother's.

Father: Don't be like that.

Mother: You know what she's like with things.

Daughter: *(Looking at the handle of the axe.)* A little flower.

Father: That's for decoration, see?

Daughter: It's flowered. *(She sniffs the handle of the axe.)*

Father: *(Sniffs it, too. To Mother.)* What ideas she comes up with... that an axe can flower.

Mother: Let's have some wine.

Father: Do you want to give her some?

Mother: Just a drop. *(Goes out to fetch the wine, the telephone rings.)*

Father: *(Telephoning.)* Hello... Yes... what's he done this time? When the car exploded... Dead... Did he have anything to do with it, please? Or was he just passing? Yes... I'll come. *(Hangs up.)*

Mother: *(Bringing in the wine and glasses, pouring out.)* Who called?

Father: From my old work.

Mother: You see. They haven't forgotten you. *(Pouring the wine.)* Where did you have this hidden? *(Pours out and they clink their glasses.)* Cheers. *(To Daughter.)* Don't choke on it.

Father: I should go and join them.

Mother: *(Turning on the television.)* Bohdalová. *(To her husband where he's standing.)* Don't move!

Father: What?

Mother: Stay where you are! It's not fuzzy now! When you stand there, the picture's fantastic.

Father: *(Stands motionless.)* You're not serious.

Mother: For a while at least, darling. *(Raising her glass in a toast.)* To aerals.

Father: I have to go.

Mother: They haven't missed you all year and now all of a sudden.

Father: Pour me a drink at least.

Mother: Cheers. We'll drink the lot.

Father: I really will be like... an aerial.

Mother: We've never had such a good picture.

(The Mother watches television, behind her the Father stands holding a glass of wine. The Father is weeping, music can be heard from the TV and from the street the sound of police sirens grows louder and louder.)

The end