

HOUSE OF NO GOD

(a drama of five acts)

by Dodo Gombar

Translated by Jan Morávek

...waiting for light we get nothing but darkness,
under the burning sun, yet wandering in twilight.
Like the blind we feel for the wall
and we grope like those with no eyes...

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CHARACTERS

Mother

Marek, the youngest son

Ondrej, the middle son

Richard, the oldest son

Alzbeta, Richard's wife

Stanka, their daughter

Misko, their son

Konas, the drunkard

Svehla, the engine driver

Godmother

Dark Man

Katka

Men in a pub

ACT ONE

(Mark walks in the kitchen. Mother is sitting at the table, with some sheets of paper in front of her. She is looking at them, sometimes writes a note on some of them. Marek goes to a fridge and takes out bacon and horseradish. He puts the food on the kitchen unit, where he gets a chopping board and takes out bread out of its case. He eats standing, with his food on the kitchen unit. All sons all over the world do it this way.)

Marek:
Do we have fresher bread?

(Mother does not reply.)

Marek:
Mom.

Mother:
You should have bought one. You've gone to a shop. To buy papers. This is terribly important. Bread, I mean, our daily bread...you know, what comes to my mind, when you say bread?

Marek:
You should have told me.

Mother:
I have. I have to. All the time.

Marek:
You do.

Mother:
Looks like I have not been telling you enough. Though I was convinced there has never been anybody else I was talking to that much. I've never put so much in anybody, but...

Marek: (jumps in)
Let's talk straight. I am in no mood for puzzles and double meanings. I have no energy for that. Am I supposed to figure out what you think when you say bread? Sure I know what you think. Am I about to listen to some blackmail talk for the rest of my life?

Mother:
If you think my life, you needn't worry that much...it will be soon over.

Marek:
Enough of that. It happened and there's no more about it... I shouldn't have come here.

Mother:
And where else would you go then?

Marek:
Don't worry, somebody would put me up.

(Silence.)

Mother:
You've been seeing a woman? Is that because of her?

Marek:
I haven't. Even if I had, I wouldn't have told you.

Mother:
I see. Why?

Marek:
Just so. I don't know. I can't really eat that bread. It's hard.

Mother:
Indeed, but we have fresh news instead, a fresh view of reality. That was more important.

Marek:
Come on, mom. I just want to eat my meal...News is not that important, that's a custom.

Mother:
A custom? It has become clear customs mean nothing. Neither do tradition. What use are roots for us...

Marek:
You misuse what I say and then you use it against me...If we speak this way, I'd better be going. Right now.

Mother:
Do as you please.

(Silence.)

Marek:
Mom, everybody knows that. Who did you tell?

Mother:
Nobody.

Marek:
I don't believe it.

Mother:
You don't have to.

(Silence. We can only hear Mark masticate. It's unexpectedly comical in such an onerous situation. Adding to that, Mark's blowing his nose. He's got a cold.)

Mother:
You want a tissue?

Marek:
How about some breast milk? In a fridge. Put aside. Frozen. For hard times.

Mother:
That was not funny.

Mark:
You're angry with me?

Mother:
It hurts me. It's hard to keep a normal face. You're my son...I've put so much hope that one day you will be a priest. It was the purpose of my life. Silent hope. I could cry my head off, I suffered like a mountain that father did not live to see that, though I don't know, honestly, I don't, if he really wished that too...but I haven't expected that.

Marek:
But it's natural that life brings about unexpected things. Whole life is unexpected.

Mother:
You're my youngest son. From the last...

Marek:
You think I don't suffer?! Correct. I am your son in the sea of sons and you're my mother in the sea of mothers.

(He throws the knife he was cutting the bacon with on the table, the knife hits the table with its tip, where he put the horseradish. He is about to leave.)

Mother:
(raises her voice)
Clean it up.

Marek:
I haven't finished yet. I'm going to the toilet.

(He leaves)

(Mother is left alone.)

(She is reading something from a paper. Aloud. She is shaking her head, as if she was discovering a secret.)

Mother:
Just easy
As easy as a snowflake
That falls down from the sky
No, I won't survive
This can't be done

I'll give you all that could be given
Wind blows the way the flag wants it to
She gives him bread for that
No, I won't survive
This can't be done
Stay with me my faith
I am just a warrior
tired by fight

(Sound of a toilet flush. Marek comes back.)

Mother:
Have you washed your hands?

Marek:
Mom, come on.

Mother:
Remember? When you were a little boy, you would wash your hands before the loo. You used to say it was not to mess your wily up.

Marek:
I do it even now from time to time.

(They're laughing)

Mother:
I'll read something to you. Agatka Brazdovicova wrote it. Peter's daughter, the one with a flower shop. Good boy. Weren't you classmates?

Marek:
No. He's older, he used to be Richard's classmate.

Mother:
I see. I knew that one of you were in the same class with him... Wait, and you're going to get married now? Going to have children?

Marek:
Don't ask me about such things.

Mother:
As you wish, sir... Katka was asking about you.

Marek:
Katka? What were you telling her?

Mother:
Nothing. I didn't know what to say to her...(she studies the paper again) She was on drugs.

Marek:
Katka was on drugs?

Mother:

Not her. This Agátka. Such a young girl. That must be a terrible blow for the parents.

Marek:

Don't tell me that. I'm not interested. This village talk of yours.

Mother:

I see, my lord is sensitive to our village talk...Listen.

(she wants to read)

Marek:

Please, later. How's Katka? Do you know?

Mother:

It's not easy for her. Go and ask her. She will really be glad to see you. She's bringing up her daughter alone. She's four now, I believe...Sweet girl. Nobody knows who the father is. They say he's a gentleman of fortune, or a climber, I don't know...You really don't want me to read you what Agatka wrote? It's beautiful.

Marek:

I can't concentrate now...And I don't know who this Agatka is, mom. A daughter of a hippie Peter, she was on drugs...A hippie child. What drugs was she on? Was she smoking marijuana? And you saw it? This is none of my business. Not yours either.

Mother:

It is. A bit. I want to help her. She likes me. And she trusts me. She wrote me a letter. You want to read it?

Marek:

I don't. Everybody likes you, mom. I've met Katka in the cemetery. She was there with that little daughter. We were not talking. We deliberately avoided conversation. I've met everybody, all I could. Our looks met out there, over that candle field, so many, like thousands of transected lines. Everybody was looking at me. Just everybody. As if I had killed somebody.

Mother:

Right. All the thousand souls in our village joined hands against you. Stop exaggerating.

Marek:

I learned that from you.

Mother:

I love watching the candles burning in the cemetery. I always did a lot. Since I was a little girl.

Marek:

I like that too, mom...You know it, after all. When I was standing over father's grave, my childhood flashed through my mind. Despite having decided not to intoxicate myself with past. All this carelessness pictured in my thoughts. This beautiful irresponsibility. This feeling of childhood recklessness. Where is it? Why do we lose it? Is it only because we could think back on it when it's gone? To stretch our hands to it. I remember going to the cemetery on the All Soul's Day with friends to make mushrooms. Do you know what a mushroom is... Made of candles... Bang, a blazing orgasm, a huge spit of fire...then run away fast. Grannies and aunties screaming... Mom, I

like you. Forgive me, please. If I could, I would put your pain on the tip of the knife and eat it just like the horseradish. So it burns my throat. Trust me, it hurts me too. But it had to be that way...a second wrong turn in my life. Maybe I have to use up all my wrong turns when I'm still young. I am scared, mom. Actually, I am fine. Everything is as it's supposed to be. Don't cry..fine, I won't talk about it. When we were making the mushrooms, you know...the lads never let me join them and Richard never lost a word for me. He was ashamed of me. So I was ashamed of him. Just because he was ashamed. It seemed cowardish to me. It was a mutual brotherly shame. He never said "let him go with us, just bugger it up, he won't tell anybody."

Mother:

But they let you join in. They did. That was nice of him, indeed.

Marek:

It was Ondro, who put word for me. Not Richard...

Mother:

Marek, you grew away from Ondrej. I can see it. You're wrong if you think I don't. Was that all because of Katka? But it was such a long time ago. Or was there anything else behind? When father was still alive...

Marek:

Please, stop saying "when father was still alive." I don't want to hear that any more. I've heard that from you millions of times...And you promised to all of us, you will never say that.

Mother:

I can't believe it will already have been second Christmas without him. I can still see him everywhere. He walks out of the bathroom, goes up the stairs from the cellar, walks across the courtyard, walks around the vineyard in his straw hat...

Marek:

I've lit a candle for him and told him all today. He understood. He put his hand on my shoulder and lowered his head...Ugh, I feel sick...But these mushrooms were really beautiful. Fire signs...The young can't do it like that nowadays. Actually, they do. With computers.

Mother:

Are you OK?

Marek:

Yes, I am. So, they accepted me one day. Thanks to Ondra. Adventure, adrenalin... I wouldn't be able to do that today. I'd be afraid. Yes, just plain afraid, mom. As kids we had no sense of self-preservation. Sometimes it seems to me I have gone through so much back then, that I can't even remember it all.

Mother:

Then you understand why I fear for you all so much. I can feel it's time to break bread now. This nice crunchy bread. Which you haven't bought. Good you haven't. There is no place for such bread in our house today. For this bread with butter you sprinkle with salt and put radishes on. Everything matters so much now. What becomes with us. What kind of family we actually are? I don't really know. I've always thought I do. Now we finally have to understand the father is not with us any more and our future is up to us. That things change as well as stories. I know the time of surprise is about to come and the only thing we can do with memories is to lit a candle and bow, but there's no way we can wave it like a sword. I have understood, thanks to you all. As late as now.

Marek:

This bacon is totally delicious, hard to imagine it used to be a cow or a pig. What is bacon made of, mom?

Mother:

You're trying to run away from the topic, you're afraid... You, such a remarkable speaker, a poet of here and now... I can feel you're afraid. We have always talked straight to each other. Like I've never done with any of your brothers. Are you afraid, Mark?? The way we're afraid of our confessor? Listen... Have you joined a seminary just because of me?

Marek:

That is an utter nonsense. And I am not running away from the topic. We aren't at school now. And I am not your pupil, who you teach catechism. I've never been even though you might have wished so.

Mother:

You're very wrong. Can I read you something? I told the children to write an essay, poem, whatever form they choose and the topic was "What's my faith?..."

Marek:

Later. I am sorry. You think fourteen year old kids can understand such stuff?

Mother:

I think they can. You could?

Marek:

But I didn't have to write essays about it, as I wasn't attending catechism lessons.

Mother:

So father had no trouble. Yes. So he could live peacefully in scientific circles, secretly go to a church on Sundays a hundred kilometres away and hope that one day the regime breaks down. It couldn't have been done any different then, but we should have taken up a fight.

Marek:

You were fighting, but you couldn't do more...

Mother:

You can always do more... Perhaps, if you'd taken the catechism lessons, you wouldn't have abandoned what you have achieved with so much stamina and pain.

(Silence.)

Mother:

That bacon comes from godmother.

Marek:

How is she? Hope you haven't told her.

(Silence.)

Marek:

You have?

Mother:
I've told her. On phone.

Marek:
On phone. But it makes no difference. What did she say?

Mother:
She was unhappy. Even more, than she is in reality. She might not be doing well. Maybe she's coming tomorrow. Treat her good, because nobody does. But she has to be good to all. Do the cooking, cleaning, washing...

Marek:
Holly Moses, Mom, why did you tell her?

Mother:
I am not a Holly Moses.

Marek:
You are.

(Richard walks in. Richard is the oldest of the three sons. He's been working on the railway all his life. He is a conductor on Kutý-Trnava route. Richard has a speech impediment. Apart from this, he is a far too ordinary man, as if he had no characteristics at all. But reality could be different.)

Mother:
Richard. You're at home? Why aren't you at work? Aren't you having a twelve hour shift today? I am not a Holly Moses, am I?

Richard:
What?

Mother:
Moses.

Richard:
You're not. You're Mother Theresa. Somebody jumped down the train today.

Mother:
Who?

Richard:
I don't know. He hadn't write before he did it.

Mother:
That's terrible.

Richard:
People said he lived here. In Bohunice.

Mother:
Oh my God. Again...

Richard:

Second suicide in short time. Men said it's perhaps a new form of census. Good we live in the last street to go...

Mother:

You don't make fun of such things.

Richard:

Why? You make fun of everything. (To Marek) Have you already got used to it?

Marek:

To what?

Richard:

To freedom. To mother's nest.

Marek:

To freedom, perhaps. I didn't feel free before.

Richard:

You know what you're going to do?

Marek:

I don't. Maybe I will go somewhere abroad.

Richard:

Where?

Marek:

As far as I can. To Canada. Or do farm work in Scotland.

Richard:

Correct. As a priest you were supposed to wear a skirt, so you can wear it as a Scottish then.

Mother:

You're serious?

Marek:

Just considering.

Matka:

What would you do there?

Marek:

Whatever. First of all take a good long breath...

Richard:

Obviously trying to find himself, is that right? To calm down his thirty year old rent soul...

Marek:

I've just been telling mom how you guys refused me to join your bunch when you were going to cemetery to make mushrooms on the All Souls Day.

Richard:

Wild mushrooms. Yesterday little Miso came home with burned trousers and jacket. When I asked him what he was up to, he told me he was lighting a candle on grandfathers grave and his clothes caught fire.

Mother:

You shouldn't have beaten him up that much.

Marek:

The circle of history?

Richard:

Well. He could have burned. And I don't like when he lies. Do you know where Betka and children are?

Mother:

They've gone to godmother.

Richard:

She could have texted me at least!

Marek:

Do you want a mobile for your children? I don't use it. There was no need in the seminar.

Richard:

They both have one. They'd lost face in school, if they hadn't have them. Times have changed a bit, my brother. You really don't use a mobile? Such a modern man, like you...

Marek:

I use it very little. But I am going to get rid of it. What makes you think I am a modern man?

Richard:

I have no idea. You make the impression of a young modern man entering his best years. I have always thought you will come a long way, seriously. So, you will be neither a doctor or a priest. But you will be unavailable. Not a bad choice.

Marek:

Well, that's what I need...

Richard:

I am actually glad you're home. We should discuss some things.

Marek:

Such as?

Richard:

Later. It can wait.

Mother:

Anything going on?

Richard:

No. Is there anything going on?? (To Marek) Come upstairs to see us tonight. We'll have some wine. This year's wine, young and fine.

Marek:

Was there enough of it. I am sorry I couldn't give you a hand with the vendage.

Richard:

There was plenty of us. We were plenty, but not the grapes... There have never been that little in the last twenty years. Or we could dig up that brandy under the lime tree in the courtyard. The one we buried on my wedding day. We said we would dig it up on your wedding day.

Marek:

We'd better find another big occasion...

Mother:

Dig it up when I die.

Richard:

Good idea, mom. Let's go for a beer. When Beta comes back and wants me to see the children, tell her to call me.

Mother:

You really have to go to the pub? On the All Souls Day?

Richard:

I should have been at work now, so I can make use of the few extra hours.

Mother:

Can't you find a better use?

Richard:

What use?

Mother:

I don't know. Go and see them, perhaps.

Richard:

You mean I should go and see my wife's parents? Don't even joke about it, or I get mad for nothing.

(Silence for a while)

Mother:

You've been quite nervous lately, Richard. Liverish. I don't feel good about it.

Richard:

Middle age crisis. (To Marek) I am glad you're home. Honestly. I am a bit sorry you're not going to be a priest, but that's up to you...Who's visiting us?

Mother:

I don't know. Who's visiting us?

Richard:

I've seen some people wearing masks. At the gate. They might have been seeing Ondra in his workshop.

Mother:

I see. I don't know. Wearing masks? Why masks?

Richard:

Halloween. Dead rise out of their graves... (he leaves)

Mother:

What was that? (she shouts at him) And don't be long.

Richard:

(comes back) Mom, I will be as long as I want. I am forty years old. I have my own family, my own life. I have my own watch, and my own sense of my time. When I want to get drunk, I will, when I don't, I'll stay sober. Have one as well, Marek. At the Goodman's, right?

Marek:

I will see.

(Richard leaves.)

Mother:

Something is going on with them.

Marek:

Don't meddle with their affairs, mom. That really is their own life.

Mother:

I knew their marriage won't work. He should have married a catholic.

Marek:

I am sorry, but I am not listening to this. You live with them under a single roof, so you get to talk about it when it's hot. You have to set the rules. This is your house.

Mother:

Not all mine anymore.

Marek:

How come?

Mother:

I've had half of the house assigned to Richard. The rest will come to you and Ondrej after I die. We've agreed on that with your father when he was still alive..

Marek:

I don't really remember that, but if you say so, it must be true. Actually, I don't want to concern myself with such things. I don't even know how I would deal with that.

Mother:

But I think it's time to start solving it. We should put it in writing above all. I hope you will find an

agreement.

Marek:

Then let me know when you want to talk about it. I don't want to make trouble to anyone. We will call a family meeting... I haven't been thinking about things like that yet. I don't want to stay here for sure. It will be easy then...

Mother:

Let them buy you off then.

Marek:

If they want to do so, they will... You know what else came to my mind, when I was standing by father's grave? That it is just fantastic he never joined the party. And they tried hard so many times to get him there.

Mother:

We would have been so better off if he did.

Marek:

We wouldn't mom. Just the contrary. We were well off. We had a nice life. We really did.

Mother:

I know. I didn't mean it.

Marek:

Then say what you want. You want to please everybody, love everybody the same way, but it doesn't work. An ocean of love. Your religion is called ocean of love, as it is based on shoreless love. Feeling of love. Love. Love. On and on. It's just propositions and nonsense, these stories of mothers who are to decide, which child they love the most. Everybody loves you, kids in school, kids from the creche, you're a great person, you're the light.

(Silence.)

Marek:

Now, when all the editors and journalists entering their mid years ask their fathers - dad, what were you up to during the regime? It was in the papers today. A long article. It was called "Let's sweep off our own porch first." So I can quite responsibly and honestly sweep off all this dust and look my father straight in his eyes. I mean just on the picture. I didn't get the idea when he was still alive. Hope it's not too late.

Ondrej: (with irony, pointedly)

Man, you speak like the classics. If you decide not to preach, you fail to fill the world with your mission. You shouldn't have given up.

(Ondrej is the middle of the three brothers. Nobody's noticed Ondrej's arrival. Leaning to a door frame, he just starts speaking. His voice is unusual, silent and foggy. It is different from those of Mark and Richard's. He has long hair and wears a beard. He lives in a joinery workshop, where he makes objects not only made of wood. He's been taking a distant course on sculpture in the capital for years. Nobody knows how he earns his living. Rumors have it, he has odd jobs here and there...)

Mother:
Are you going to eat, Ondrej?

Ondrej:
No, thanks. Just picking some glasses... This is a precious moment, a little Christmas so to say. Lovely we've gathered here like that.

Marek:
Would you just quit that irony?! Seriously, I am not interested.

Ondrej:
I might, or I might not. I will see.

Mother:
Is anybody with you out there?

Ondrej:
Friends arrived.

Mother:
What friends?

Ondrej:
Just friends.

Mother:
What sort of friends?

Ondrej:
It doesn't matter mom, just make sure not to join us. They came to celebrate Halloween.

Mother:
What's that?

Ondrej:
The All Souls Day different way. Not that romantic. Without this catholic sorrow of yours.

Mark:
You're no different.

Ondrej:
I am completely different. If you want, come and have a drink. I mean, not if you want. You can come even if you don't. They will all be glad to see you. Your former friends are there as well. I can't get over Marko will never be this dignified priest in frock, who would baptized their children and give last rite to their fathers.

Marek:
Fuck it!

Mother:
Come on. And who's there?

Ondrej:
You don't know them, mom. They're from school and so on...

Mother:
You won't even go and see your father's grave?

Ondrej:
I will. Evening. Or tomorrow.

Mother:
When in the evening. It's the evening already.

Ondrej:
Late in the evening. At night. In the midst of darkness.

(Ondrej picks the glasses and quickly leaves. It's clear he's been trying to avoid conversation with his mother in every possible way.)

Mother:
Wish you two reconcile. Until then my soul will have no peace. I pray for you.

Marek:
I simply respond, mom. He's not able to forgive and forget.

Mother:
It can't be true! You used to be like twins. I have a picture of you stuck to my mirror, you're both there playing with that famous band of yours. Those were really hard times, but we made that, didn't we? You're holding a guitar in your hands...

Marek:
Ondrej is behind drums. I know, mom. That's enough. Please...

Mother:
Fine. So, tell me, please. What are you going to do now?

Marek:
Mom, I have no idea. Can we just stop talking about that? Let's give up big words and all these perpetual doubts. Let's just simply enjoy the fact that we exist.

Mother:
Who are these people who came to visit Ondrej?

Marek:
I don't know. Go and have a look.

Mother:
I promised I won't go there.

Marek: (with a smile)
You can tell him you couldn't resist. I think he expects that in a way.

Mother:

What do you mean by that?

Mother:

Exactly what I said and you heard.

Mother:

It really was in papers?

Marek:

What?

Mother:

Well, what you were talking about before. About the kids, who ask their parents..

Marek:

Yes. It is a major topic of our time. Checking one's own ancestors' background. Convicting them of mistakes and bad doing. Young hawks finding pleasure in screening.

Mother:

What else was there in papers?

Marek:

Some election forecasts.

Mother:

I see.

Marek:

Are you going to vote?

Mother:

I don't feel like it, but yes, I am. On Sunday our priest told us in church, that none of the two major political parties count with the God.

Marek:

You need to hear that from the priest?

Mother:

Isn't it sad. We're a land without God.

Mark:

That's simply it. Both sad and glad.

Mother:

And you still count with him?

Mark:

That's a useless question though, but I do. You might be surprised, but I do more than ever before.

(Marek leaves with nothing else to say. Mother stays alone. She starts reading another essay. She stops reading after a while and puts the papers aside. She takes a bible out of the drawer and lays

her hand on it. She closes her eyes. For a short time she falls in the world of contemplation and peaceful prayer. She opens the rough looking book and looks on a page. Darkness...)

ACT TWO.

(Richard and Konas are sitting at a table at the Gazda's. Richard is wearing a railwayman coat. Jozef Gazda, the owner of the pub, is standing against the bar and watches a TV. His favorite series are on. There's a man sitting alone at a table in the corner. We can call him a Dark Man. All the four of them are having a beer. Void sadness fills the pub.)

Richard:

This hundred ton monster starts behaving different once it runs over a man.

Konas:

What do you mean different?

Richard:

I don't know. What sort of question is that, Konas? Simply when Svehla hit the break, too late, of course, I knew things were wrong. You can only feel it, not that you know it. Then, after this moving mass of metal scarp these few kilos of human flesh and bones, deep inside the train you just feel it.

Konas:

Weird world.

Richard:

And twenty one grams is running away on a rail. Balancing...and disappears at the nearest road crossing.

Konas:

Twenty one grams?

Richard:

That's the human soul's weight they say.

Konas:

Who weighed it?

Richard:

For the fuck sake, Konas! Stop giving me such idiotic questions... How am I supposed to know who weighed it. Some sort of scales, maybe...I was playing with toy trains all my childhood, you could not step on the floor in my room, vacuum cleaning was out of question, but it never came to my mind to put a toy soldier under this toy train, or anything that would resemble a living creature. Weird world, weird time. You get people stealing tracks, you get people jumping under the train...

Konas:
Have they found out who it was?

Richard:
I think they have by now. What's the time? They've gone through the identification, as well as all the other stuff. They might have found out already...I've left. I have no guts for that. Not interested anyway. It was simply a man.

Konas:
Who know why he did it? what would make you kill yourself?

Richard:
I would not kill myself.

Konas:
What if the Satan came and told you to do so?

Richard:
I would spit on him then.

Konas:
I wuld kill myself at times.

Gazda:
What sort of talk is that, men? Take a look at this young actress. See her bust? And that ass. That's a woman. They say she's from Modra.

Konas:
Studenkova?

Gazda:
Not her...that's the only name you know. This is another generation, a new one.
Emerging...Studenkova belongs to the receding one.

Richard:
They're called upcoming, not emerging.

Gazda:
Upcoming, then. They smell nice and they're used to depilation since adolescence...

Richard: (laughing) You want to say that before all actresses were hairy and they smelled? All my favorite stars...

Konas:
They were better for sure. These are all beautiful the same way. Just like everything is nowadays.
Everything same nowadays.

Richard:
Can't you switch it off?

(Gazda switches off the TV.)

Konas:

If you were to kill yourself, what would be the reason, Gazda?

Gazda:

If I wanted to do so, I'd never jump under a train.

Konas:

How would you do it then?

Gazda:

Maybe I would eat something.

Konas:

What would you eat?

Gazda:

What you think? A sausage!!

Richard: (To Konas)

Why you get busy with such garbage?

Konas:

I don't know. And death is no garbage. Not to think of the voluntary one. I can't get it's been a second one in such a short time. What if we got cursed. What if it's a God's punishment. When did you last confess?

Richard:

I can't remember at all. But I go to church on Sundays. I mean, not every Sunday, but I try.

Konas:

I haven't confessed for twenty two years. I've counted that recently. They won't see me there anyway. Can't even remember all that sins now. Have no idea what I'd say to the priest. Maybe I'd asked if it's hard to hear people confess. Or else I'd say how come it's actually him who can kind of purify us, if that's a sort of a mechanism and if it's difficult. Or I'd just say how are you, or ask him him if he's not sad or feeling lonely. Or if he's not tired...as I feel lonely and sad. And I am tired. But I have nothing against neither confessing or the priests...

(Doors open. Marek comes in.)

Gazda:

See? Talk of the devil and he appears. In person. Konas has just started started talking about a topic you might know something about.

Marek: (making a bit of fun)

May the Lord bless you, my children. What's up?

Konas:

Just some silly talk. Nothing really. Hello, young boy. You look handsome.

Gazda:

Welcome, Marek. Glad to see you. Honestly. I won't pretend it's new to me, it's common news, the guys here have spoken of nothing else for a week, you know, we've never had a priest here, you

would make a history...but now everybody's going to talk about this guy who jumped under the train, so you're kind of lucky. We could speak of a tragedy if it was you who'd jumped under the train. What are you having?

Marek:

Thank you for this long and honest welcome. A sort of little communion in my home pub. Fernet, please. (he looks around the room, he spots a man in the corner and their looks meet) Time goes to a halt here, uncle Jozko...Give me a double one, so you don't have to come twice. (To Konas)
Good Evening, Mr. Konas.

Konas:

(giving him his hand)

Hi. Forget that Mr. Konas. And fuck the rumours. You belong to us and you always will. I remember you as a baby in a pram. You were a bad child...was he, Riso?

Richard:

I don't know, you're the one who knows all. (they're laughing)

Marek:

Could I join in?

Richard:

Of course...Has Betka come back with the kids yet?

Marek:

Not when I was there. Why are there so few people here?

Gazda:

They're all at graves. It'll be full here soon, don't worry.

Marek:

I am not worried and I like it that way actually. There's something about an empty pub.

Konas:

But Jozo doesn't like it for sure.

Gazda:

Both pub and church need people. Or else it's all useless. With no sense.

Konas:

Wise talk.

(Dark Man stands up and walks around the bar, towards the toilet. He stops when passing Gazda.)

Dark Man:

Is there a toilet paper?

Gazda:

Of course.

Dark Man:

Soap too?

Gazda:

Of course. This is a respectable place.

Dark Man:

There was neither paper nor soap... (Suddenly to Marek) You are the salt of this land, but when this salt loses its taste, what do you salt it with then? It's of no use, only to be thrown away and people step on it. (he leaves to the toilet)

Konas:

What was that? Bible, I guess?

Gazda:

He's a strange man.

Marek:

Who's that?

Gazda:

He's only been here for a few weeks. He's called Jano. He's alone. They say he's a masseur. Or a doctor, or whatever.

Konas:

He even does foot massages. Yuck. Disgusting.

Gazda:

A holistic doctor or whatever they say. He inherited a house after this old Mraz widow, he was the only relative or something and he wants to run a surgery there. It's all strange. And I don't like it. But I don't care.

Richard:

He's got perverse eyes. I don't like him. What was he telling you?

Marek:

The Gospel. Well, you're right, he's got strange eyes.

(Richard's mobile beeps. Richard reads a message.)

Richard:

The family's back. I'll have one more and go.

Marek:

Are you having a fernet with me?

Richard:

I am.

(Meanwhile a few people come in the pub. The pub is slowly getting full. Everybody says hello, some people shake hands with Marek. Svehla, the train driver, enters.)

Svehla:

Men, that was a fucking proper horror. A bath blood. A massacre. My nerves!

(He spots Richard) Where have you gone to, candy ass?

Richard:

I have no stomach for that. Makes me no god, that's all.

Svehla:

I see. You backed down last time as well. You're a quitter? Panic. My nerves. Good I hadn't drunk before. They of course did the alcohol check, to me and Stach as well. (To Gazda) Give me a shot of gin. I got to hurry to the cemetery first. My wife will pick me up here. (only now he notices Marek) Hello there! Looks our little priest came to give us a blessing?

Richard:

Quit that.

Svehla:

Hi Marek. (giving him his hand) You could have been my son in law, you see? And me a grandfather. A multiple one. I mean, I am a grandfather, but somehow incomplete...You've decided to marry our Lord instead...and you've turned tail and took off just before the wedding...

Marek:

(jumps in, not interested in listening to his wise talk)
How's Kate?

Svehla:

I don't know. She doesn't live with us. She lives in a block of flats. She's got a four year old daughter and a thirty years of mortgage. I am sure you know that. And she has no man. I am not sure you know that. She works in a library. She likes that I guess. She doesn't talk much. She's shut away. I expected to be pissed when I meet you, but I can't be angry with you. Was a tough path you chose. But you can't expect priests to come out of this place. Just look around you. Everything changed. Cars get robbed on the regular. Youth do drugs. They say some dealers or what come here from the city. Last week somebody beat up young Jakub, they almost killed him. That guy from the capital who runs a printing house here was blackmailed by some vagabonds. They've got arrested by now... Nobody trusts anybody now. People are afraid... Riped off. You know what the third world war will be about?

Marek:

I have no idea.

Svehla:

Just everybody against everybody.

Gazda:

It won't be that bad.

Svehla.

Sure it won't be for you. The more people get depressed, the more they drink.

Dark Man: (comes back from the toilet, to Svehla)

Good evening. Have they found out who it was?

Svehla:

Hello. Not yet. They can't put the body together. Maybe they have no good template.

Dark Man: (laugh menacingly)

They will manage in the end. It took them a while to put this young forestman, but they did. Assemblers do always better than disassemblers... At least it should be that way. With that guy, they also couldn't believe it was really him for a long time. Such a quiet boy...I liked him. Such a pity. (he smiles) How's Katarina?

Svehla:

Fine, I guess.

Dark Man:

She's a very smart young lady. I can't really believe she's alone. Say hello to her. And you, Richard, please, say hello to Ondrej.

Marek:

You think our Ondrej?

Dark Man:

Yes, your brother Ondrej. I mean your biological brother. He makes beautiful things. Beautiful objects. This wooden Calvary of him is just a unique piece. If he was in a big city, he would be somewhere else...

Marek:

But he's aiming there. He's already on his way.

Dark Man:

Indeed. We're all on our way. You and me. I only wish him the best. Your brother deserves his success. I mean this ordinary, ephemeral, earth-born, secular success... (he gives a bad look) Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" He said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven".

Marek:

I have no idea, what you are after, nor who you are. But, to be honest, this secrecy of yours is in no way pleasant to me. It makes me suspicious and it gets on my nerves. If there's anything you want to tell me, then do so, no need to examine my knowledge of the Word. If you happen to know Ondrej, then you may perhaps be aware of the facts about me, so, lets play fair, please.

Dark Man:

What makes you feel that uneasy? Truth?

Marek:

Don't judge a tree by a single leaf... (he goes to his table)

(Strange silence takes place for a while. Dark Man obviously doesn't belong to this place, and it seems Marek is no longer at home here either)

Marek:

Wait guys, what young forestman were you talking about?

Konas:

The one jumping under the train two weeks ago. Train cut him to thousand pieces...about Rob.

Svehla:
Well...it was young Markovic. Robo. You didn't know?

Marek:
Robo Markovic?

Richard:
I though mum has told you already.

Marek:
She hasn't. You can't be serious! Give me another fernet.

Gazda:
Double?

Marek:
Regular.

(Gazda pours him one, Marek downs it quickly, pays and runs away.)

Konas:
He really had no idea? Then he can't have known the priest refused to bury him and he surely heard nothing about his vicarage set on fire because of that.

Gazda:
Why didn't you tell him?

Richard:
We simply forgot. Mind your own business. Firemen saved the vicarage, Rob was buried the usual way in the end. You guys chatter like a bunch of old women!

Gazda:
I can't believe you forgot. Could it be that your great Holly Mother would actually forget to tell such news?

Richard:
You want me to slap you? Don't provoke me. Yid tightarse. We have simply forgotten. It didn't get across to us. When Marek left the seminary, nobody was interested in anything else. I don't know why we didn't tell him. (he raises his voice) I am off, no need wasting time with you. Quit drinking. There's nothing much left of your brains. Degenerates. Bill, please.

(he pays and leaves)

Konas:
What's this degenerates? Cosmonauts, perhaps?

Gazda:
Enough.

Svehla:
What is he playing at? He hasn't seen young Markovic for ten years. They have barely met since Marek left for the city. He ignored Rob completely. No matter they spent their childhood together.

Big friends. Little Indians. Our daughter Kata was with their tribe. They had a band. Big Punkers, or whatever they were called.

Gazda:
Silent Scream.

Svehla:
What?

Gazda:
That band was called Silent Scream. I remember that quite clear. Somebody sprayed that on my pub... That was supposed to be, so to say, symbolical. But it came to an end, when this marihuana was found with them. Remember that? This raid like in the movies. The lads started blaming each other. They were lucky the old Markovic was a policeman. They would have ended up in big trouble if it hadn't been for him. These wise college boys. Our future brainpower. You can see, what have they become today.

Svehla:
You think Marek knows that Rob has been in a madhouse? That he almost drunk himself to death? At the age of twenty... He doesn't know a shit. He gave up completely his childhood friends. Kate told us at home, he never came to a single class reunion. He ignored all the messages, everything. Our doctor, our priest. Hats down everybody. Thanks God, such a person is not treating our health. Neither internally or externally.

Dark Man:
I agree with you, Mr Svehla. Many are called but few chosen. What can I get you?

Svehla:
I drink gin. For half a century.

Man:
Jozo, switch on the TV. There'll be news on.

Konas:
What exactly you need news for?

Man:
So I know what's going on. There will be elections soon, so I know who I can vote...

Konas:
Who? We vote for Slovaks.

Gazda:
Yesterday I was watching those Slovaks of yours calling for God. There was one faithful Slovakian saying that only God can help now. I thought I'd piss myself laughing.

Svehla:
Those Slovaks of yours? What do you mean by that? How can you make such thing come out of your mouth? You're what? Stop buggin me! Turn up the volume, Jano is speaking. We need a proper leader. It always used to be that way. You can't just change history.

Dark Man:

So, to the change.

Svehla:

What change? I don't want to drink to luck! I am glad when things get stable. And when phenomenons stay in order.

Konas:

Konas, what are you blabbering about? How many drinks have you had?

Konas:

Much less than you, for sure. And unlike you, I don't drive a train drunk.

Svehla:

I have a right to drink. Somebody jumped down my train again today. You never understand, if you don't live it yourself.

Konas:

I'm going to have a piss.

Dark Man: (keeps holding a shot of gin over his head)

I completely understand you, Mr Svehla. It's not easy to be so close to death. So, to stability. And to order.

(Gazda turns up the volume of the TV. There are news on. Interesting news, as always. And inspiring. They can be on through the whole interval.)

ACT THREE

(There are Ondrej and Marek in the workshop. There are glasses all over the place, lot of fresh mess after a party that has just finished. Traces of the past event blend with natural habitat of an artist-sculptor-bohemian, also an occasional painter. Together they create an unusual and disorganized whole, or should we say, way too organized. Ondrej is sitting in the middle of a room, smoking a cigarette without filter, gesturing with a bottle of wine in his hand. There are various smells in the air. Ondrej is not drunk, he is just submerged in his own world which is hard to understand. But it was always that way, so everybody got more or less used ot it. Marek is walking around, looking at individual pieces of art. There's a lot of them...)

Ondrej:

I don't believe it's beautiful as you claim. I don't actually know what you want to say by that. Not even what you mean by that.

Marek:

Nothing, just that it is beautiful.

Ondrej:

You know what Umberto Eco says about beauty? I don't remember that exactly, but it has just come to my mind...He says that we use the word beautiful, or lovely, appealing, attractive, to call something we, let's say, like. In that sense beautiful means the same as good. The thing is that the beautiful and the good used to be very close over various periods in history. But if you want to evaluate the good according to everyday experience, and you have always liked to evaluate, then we need to say people tend to identify the good as something we not only like but also want to keep for ourselves. There is an endless number of things we regard as good - reciprocated love an example, you know what I am talking about, or property obtained fairly, you know that as well, or a well-made artifact - a piece of that beauty...in all these cases it is that good thing we wish to have and keep. It is the good which triggers our desires, my dear brother. I mean, the beauty. We will never understand what beauty means, unless we get rid of this desire to own things. You have always insisted that everything must belong to you, that you do own it.

Marek:

I just said it's beautiful. That this "well-made artifact" as you say, the crucified Jesus between the two crucified criminals, is simply beautiful. That you made it beautifully. You sculptured it. It has a strong atmosphere and it radiates energy. I like it. It doesn't mean I want to own it. That's all. I had nothing else on my mind, and I don't understand your answer.

Ondrej:

Pitty. I wanted to give it to you. I have no connection to that. Once the object is finished, I have no more feelings toward it.

Marek:

I don't believe that.

Ondrej:

You don't have to. This absence of relationship once the painting is finished is particularly obvious with biblical images, and I must admit they still inspire me as paintings, metaphors or parables or gestures.

Marek:

Will we ever talk normally?

Ondrej:

I am talking normally with you. I just don't like you. I don't trust you. I think you're a hypocrite and coward. But I talk normally with you. Even bit more normally than with others.

Marek:

I don't think I need to listen to this. Have a fine day.

Ondrej:

You don't have to. Bye... So what? Are you taking the Jesus placed among criminals from me?

Marek:

No.

Ondrej:

I see. You actually take without asking.

Marek: (shouting)

You never stop reminding me of that, will you! Every time, with every single opportunity, whenever

there is even a second of time to attack!

Ondrej:

You don't even know how to raise your voice. This gayish voice of yours. But you're so good with choosing the right words. Yes. I will always remind you. I will keep reminding you till the end of your life that you have taken my wife away from me then dropped her as if she was nothing. Because of the divine call. As you so wonderously put it back then. Fucking wonderful. Jesus Christ. I felt like throwing up. By the way, Katarina was here as well. She's left a while ago with the others. You know what mask she was wearing?

Marek:

What mask??

Ondrej:

No mask. She came as she was. Just with her face, no make-up, loose hair, a mother of a four year old daughter, who has not seen her father yet. Just telling you, sentimentally. The others wore terrifying faces, like in horror movies. We had some drinks, some joints, it was quite fun, I hope you don't mind I grow these magic plants, you make this great joint ointment of, in the garden by the dungheap. Richard doesn't mind, he won't tell mum and I expect the same helpfulness from my younger brother too. So, the atmosphere was completely Lynch-ish...We were playing games. Magic theatre. Katka wore her real face. She said that mask was enough and that she would like to remove it at last. That she had been wearing it for too long. She was asking if you were coming. You've come too late. As usually. After all fight is over. To check the number of victims. Everybody was asking about you. All you youth and past wanted to meet you. They didn't just come to see me, they came to see you as well. I'm not that rare for them. And you avoided them again. Because you're a coward. You're afraid of reproach.

Marek:

Have you finished? I've wanted to go to Gazda's pub. I simply wanted to go out.

Ondrej:

No, you didn't. You didn't want to come here as you knew there would be a lot of people you owe something. An explanation at least. A word of reasoning. A hand shake. People who know what a loser you are. That's why you first went for a beer you can have anytime. You came now just for the sake of it. I would really like to have this calculator of your built in my head.

Marek:

Have you finished? I feel like saying something vulgar now, but it is not my style.

(Marek stands in front of him.)

Ondrej:

You want to slap me? Feel free.

Marek:

Stand up.

(Ondrej stands up. Marek slaps him. It is funny. He has never slapped anybody, and one can tell so. Ondrej staggers a bit. He's of a smaller, but solid posture. He slaps Marek. His hands are strong. They're used to working with a chisel and hammer. Marek falls on the floor. There's blood coming out of his mouth and snot out of his nose.

Marek:
Happy now?

Ondrej:
Yes. (he sits on his stool again)

Marek:
I loved Katarina.

Ondrej:
Me too. I wanted to marry her. I wanted us to become a family.

Marek:
That is not my fault.

Ondrej:
And whose fault it is then? Has it ever come to your mind that you make your happiness depend on someone else's unhappiness? I am talking bullshit. You just force me to use big words, mate. You simply get it out of me...out of your brother's unhappiness, who used to wipe your ass? Right.

Marek:
You can't take it like this.

Ondrej:
I can't, you say? So, why did you drop her???

Marek:
I have no set of arguments ready for you now. No arguments I am supposed to defend myself with. You'd turn against me whatever I say anyway. I left her, because I decided to become a priest. It was stronger. That's a pure ordinary true in one sentence. I don't assume you could understand it.

Ondrej:
A doctor. A priest. What have you decided to become now?? A nuclear physicist? Or a conductor of the state philharmonic orchestra? Is it just that easy? To decide. Take a look around when you make your decisions. And when are you going to earn your living? You still get money from mom?? Where does she get it? From her pension, or what? From what they give her at school for teaching kids about paradise?

Marek:
I can't believe it's actually you telling me this. Do you take a look around yourself?

Ondrej:
You want me to slap you again? I've never taken a single penny from our parents. I earn my living myself. You know this very well. You know that very well. I climb roofs, hang about cemeteries, fix three hundred years old trees with bandages...I earn my living with my own hands! I don't look at anybody, and I don't need anybody to look at me. Unlike you. You wanted to stand at a pulpit, most importantly well-combed and shaved! Fucking Bohunice. Fucking home. But this workshop is everything for me. I would even die for this isle.

Marek:
And mom??

Ondrej:

What about mom? Mom is mom. We're not at confession here. I haven't come here to get your sanctuari. (he falls on the floor)

Marek:

Ondrej, are you OK?

Ondrej:

Get out!!

Marek:

Fine, see you... I am glad we've talked. Though I haven't planned blood in my mouth. We haven't talked like that for ages. We haven't talked at all since the father died.

Ondrej:

(even more upset)

Father has nothing to do with that!! Get out at once!!

Marek:

I don't want to look after you, but I think you're not entirely OK. I am telling this to you as your brother.

Ondrej:

I am not talking about your father.

I don't want to.

(Marek is slowly leaving the workshop. But before he does so, he washes his face in the washbasin. He is looking at the mirror. At the same time, behind his back, Ondrej is removing a dirty canvas from an object, which is not a sculpture, but quite preserved, glittering percussion set. He sits behind the set, holds the drumsticks and starts drumming silently. Gradually, he puts in more passion, so his playing gets noisier. Marek has no idea what to do. He is looking at a guitar hanging on the wall, but doesn't know if he should really join Ondrej. Suddenly, he gets a feeling that Ondrej is saying "What are you waiting for?", but he is not so sure. He removes the guitar and starts playing. He is singing. It's a beautiful, unexpected and redeeming moment nobody dares to own.)

Marek: (he is singing and is joined by Ondrej in some verses, it is a strange and stylish genre which suits them)

Big things happen

in mirrors

reflective areas

tell stories

enlarged and bloated

there are no needles close

there is no house near

nor a cold breath

of a cheating lady

there are no words from a template

at hand

and the reality doesn't mix with dreams

one has to find the right way alone

what there is now
wasn't there before
what was there before
will not be there after
what we do not want
it must happen and come
there is no defence against it
there's no way but believe
one has no choice but to believe
one has to go
though there is nowhere to go
the only thing which is there to reach
is our own well
with poisoned water
misery
did not stay in grave
and following a brief illness
the bones are gone as well
we don't feel like
loosing
we would like to raise glasses
it's all just about a possibility
which is made a use of
hard to get used to
such a life
we would like to look around
from a sunlit place
to check out there
for does nearby
does who paint stains of out of focus pictures
with their hooves
and if we spot any
we would like to aim
our silently spitting weapons at them
so this magic beauty
cannot defend itself
so let her relish
her mutilated face
reflected in perfumed shop indows
we believe, so you too believe
and quit adoring yourselves
if I ever come back home
I turn a radio on
and tune
a peaceful radio station
fall asleep on my table
with my thoughts
and there I wait for
Adi Dasler
wrap myself in his scarf
just like a white caterpillar
buries itself into a dream

which was too short
have a ride on his bike
among constellations of stars
tell him to take me to this lost one of mine
which I owe a memory of recollection
let him tie me
to passion without cries
to my own thin vein
to a rhythm of space desire
it turns my sight the opposite direction
sprinkle me with gentle dust
it should have been always that way
I know
I wasn't here
I got stuck half the way here
I was breaking the fate in town
against bricks of houses
that cannot stay at one place
let's go and sleep
so any other loss causes no pain
tied to the edge of a gate
behind which just an ecstasy
and sacrifices without the priest
within the desire for owning human beauty
finally the rope loop has fallen
off the neck of time

Ondrej: (finishes playing, puts down drumsticks)
Fine, everything is the way it should be. We thought back nice. You surprised me.

Mother: (clapping shyly)
Hope you didn't wake the children up...

Ondrej:
Mom, we are in a soundproof bunker...

Mother:
I've never understood what you are singing and it hasn't got any different now. I don't know why, but I can say, that I have finally felt something in this music of yours. It's the first time I have actually been listening to what you are singing about. But I didn't understand. You know, I've never really liked that. What were you called?

Marek:
Silent Outcry

Ondrej:
Silent Cry.

Marek:
Cry, actually. Don't know why I said outcry.

Ondrej:
Freud would know.

Mother:
Who??

Ondrej:
Our common friend...He had to watch his father being humiliated when he was a child and that's where they say it all began. There he started to be aware. (to Marek) Where has it all started with you, my brother??

Marek:
Who's that man, who has moved here?? This alternative medician, or what? I've met him at Gazda's pub.

Ondrej:
That's Janko from Martin. He used to be a builder. Amazing person. A prophet.

Marek:
I don't know. I don't like him that much.

Mother:
So do I. (she is picking up glasses, tidying up)

Ondrej:
Leave it, mom. I'll do it myself.

Mother:
When??

Ondrej:
Tomorrow. Or, maybe today.

Mother: (to Marek)
Richard asks you to come and see him upstairs. Betka would also like to see you.

Marek:
Have they come back already??

Mother:
They've been home for quite a while. The children are asleep already. They're waiting for you. Go and say hello to them.

Ondrej:
They're waiting for me too??

Mother:
Of course. Why are you asking?

Mother:
Come with me.

Ondrej:

I am going out. I was joking. I can be with them anytime. Whenever I want to. Listen to what's new in the shop. Noone else knows more about life in our village than shop assistants.

Mother:

Where are you going now??

Ondrej:

I am going for a walk. And I will light a candle for father.

Mother:

Now?? But it is eleven already...

Ondrej:

Well. The cemetery is best at midnight. You don't know that...It's spooky out there at that time. Weird things take place. You have a good chance to get raped by a female vampire!

Mother:

I don't like you talking like that. How many people were here?

Ondrej:

A lot, mom. Maybe as many as there were apostles. If we were complete we would play Judas. You know this game?

Mother: (she understands, but doesn't react, just staggers.)

And who was there?

Ondrej:

Everybody who supposed to be here.

Mother:

You're so nice to talk with.

Marek: (to mother)

Why haven't you told me Robo Markovic killed himself??

Mother:

I would have told you...It was exactly the time when you were leaving for the seminary...you know...I didn't want to...

Marek:

You should have told me.

Mother:

I thought I shouldn't, as we haven't been in touch for so long..,

Marek:

We were writing to each other, mom. I knew everything about him. We met in Bratislava from time to time.

Mother:

But people said...

Marek:
People say no true...

Ondrej:
What are you talking about?? When were you last in contact??

Marek:
You want to check my mobile?? You think your brave immediateness and so called sincerity is a law, or what do you actually think?? This free-thought world of yours eats up every single hint, and makes a thesis out of every single indication.. It's time you finally emerge out of this dark world of mistakes of yours. When did you last laugh, Ondra?? I mean, sincerely, with all your heart. Don't trust false prophets, don't believe in speculation, that is all devilish. All this suspecting of yours, loads of suspecting...constant look for mistakes, waiting for a tiny hint, so you could start judging. Don't judge people, judge their words, actions, deeds, gestures. You've never asked me about anything, you've never been interested how I really am, how I feel. Why I act the way I do. What was it actually about with Katarina...You never wanted to talk with me about it, just like brothers do. I've never loved anybody as much as I did you, my older brother. Our band was my space. Indeed, the very space you've always loved. Sometimes you let me have a look with your telescope. That was what I found fascinating about you. Your clear commonness and courage. I was learning from you. You have none of these left. You have no spark anymore. I can only see your empty, stoned eyes. Why I don't want to meet anybody from the past? Has it ever occurred to you, that it can all be a bit different than what they say at Gazda's pub? Say hello to father. I think he would finally be happy about us?

Mother:
I am happy with him.

Mother:
So, good night. I am going upstairs to see Richard for a while. You go to bed. (he kisses mother on her cheeks, she wants to hug him, but he gently releases himself...he leaves.)

(Mother with Ondrej stand for a while, Ondrej starts to dress himself.)

Mother:
You should reconcile with each other.

Ondrej:
I am not going to talk about that now with you.

Mother:
And when are you?

Ondrej:
Never.

Mother:
You are really going out now?

Ondrej:
I am. Really.

Mother:

Be careful than.

Ondrej:

Why? Should I be worried of people asleep or the sky full of cold autumn stars? I will just pick one and watch the whisper of candles reflect in the star. I will choose Achernar, Toliman or Rigel...you know them, do you? I will percieve smoke rising peacefully out of chimneys. What do I have to be careful about, mom? In the quiet safety of the night... You know how I feel now?

Mother:

No.

Ondrej:

One of our songs was called Black Dwarf. You might not remember it. This is what they call the last stage of a star, when the celestial body radiate no more energy. The Black Dwarf consists of cold degenerated electron or neutron gasses. I don't want to make you worried with that, but this is how I feel now.

Mother:

You still watch the sky through this big telescope, Ondrej?

Ondrej:

Sometimes. From time to time I return to my childhood dreams of becoming a big astronomer. They were my greatest Christmas when baby Jesus brought me the big telescope. Even though I had already know for a while that baby Jesus is mommy mixed with daddy.

Mother:

You seem sad to me. Is anything bothering you?

Ondrej:

No, mom. Everything's OK fine. That's what Richard's children say. And it means all right.

Mother:

And you could pray. When you're there.

Ondrej:

Don't start. I will not pray, mom. I don't want to. I really don't. I am sorry, but I am just honest with you. I don't want to be mean. I don't believe in your God. I always bitterly remember myself wearing altar boy suit, against my will, my teeth clenched, this long white gown with a black neckcloth to tie in the back with a single click and this four-corner bell in my little hands...I ring it like mad, it looks like my hand is going to fall off. Gloria Gloria Gloria, in excelsis Deo. I was almost crying with pain. Then the processions around the village. A ceremonial one, because Jesus Christ raised himself from the dead. Lads would die laughing. They were throwing stones at me, hitting my face, just like those nails...You can't expect such a little child to know that this biscuit is a body of Jesus. I believe one can be able to remember it, but this little child brain will never get it. At least I never did. You never asked me how I really felt in front of the altar...

Mother:

It hurts me when you talk like this... Hope you find your way back to Him again. You still have plenty of time. I don't know where I made my mistake.

Ondrej:

You made no mistake, mom. This is my free will. But let's not talk about it. Please, we'd better not

to. I don't want to harm you with my sincerity. I have simply lost my fate in God. Forever. Or, to put it somehow better, I've never believed in God because of my own decision. I am the only of your sons who avoids not just the houses of God, religion, church, relics...but also the God itself. I am not a believer. That's all. Simple. I believe in myself and my will. I believe in you. I believed in my father. In the good. I believe in spontaneity. In sincerity. In energy. I believe in fire and stories of the stars. I believe in nature. In circulation of time. I believe in the ends because of the beginnings. Though I have hard time to believe in this case. I believe in truth, which I still don't know much about. But not in God. This is not your fault. It's my attitude to life, my opinion of this world which I have formed after thirty three years of my life. I have always felt an outsider in our religious family because of that, but I got used to it. I don't feel like becoming the first one according to the Word, I just want to become a master of my own life story. Just me. Nobody else. One day I want to give back everything what you have put in me. Give it back only to you, to my mother. My mother is the holly person. I don't want to give anything back to God. I want to have right to tell you, that I can never believe in a Creator who creates man, they say in his own image, then let this man get to know him, makes a contact only to disappear after that. I never want to believe in such a God. I want to tell you this, and believe you will still like me. I apologize for my outburst...I am going now.

Mother: (with tears in her eyes)
What shall I make for lunch tomorrow?

Ondrej:
Whatever you want. I don't care.

Mother:
I am glad we have all met after such a long time. The godmother is coming tomorrow as well.

Ondrej:
Is she coming to see Marek? Will she give him his pocket money? Switch off the lights when you leave, please.

Mother:
Don't be cruel.

(Ondrej leaves. He doesn't live with negative emotions, but there is some feel of emptiness in it. For a while, mother is standing alone in the workshop. She is looking at all the biblical images. They talk a special language full of paradoxes in the weak semi-dark midnight light. She still hears his words. She tries to play the life story of Ondrej, her middle son, in her head. She tries to understand him. She tries to understand his life peripeteias and his pain. She can't, and it has always been in vain.

(Mother switches off the light.)

ACT FOUR

(Marek is sitting at a coffee table in a living room, in Richard and Alzbeta's flat, which is situated upstairs in a two-generation house. Alzbeta is sitting opposite, wearing a night gown with a bathing suit put over it. She is about 37, with bleached hair, her nose going a bit astray. She has a strangely active expression in her face. Richard is leaning against the door. He is about to leave.)

Richard:

So, good night, bro. I am really done for now. We will talk tomorrow. But think it over.

Marek:

I will. Good night.

Richard:

We will have to make an agreement. There is three of us, that is not an ideal number for an agreement. Ondra might not care, he wants to keep his workshop and a part of the garden, he wanted the wine yard, but we can't give it to him. You told mom, you have no claims, but we need to put it in writing. You understand, I have invested a lot of money in the house, and I looked after the parents the most, and I still do in fact...If we were to share the usual way, then you have right to get a third. But you understand it is not entirely just. So, we need to put it in writing. But it is up to you and you say what you want...

Marek:

Don't worry, Richard, we'll make a deal for sure.

Richard:

It's necessary to put it in writing.

Marek:

We will.

Richard:

When?

Marek:

Whenever you want.

Richard:

Tomorrow?

Marek:

Fine.

Richard:

Good night.

Marek:

Good night.

(Richard leaves, it's silence.)

Marek:

I'd better be going as well. I don't want to disturb you.

Alzbeta:

You're not disturbing us.

Marek:

I had some business with Ondra, so I was late. I am sorry for making you wait.

Alzbeta:

Pour me some more. I don't feel like going to bed. Have a sandwich. I made them for you. You haven't been here for ages.

Marek:

Well, it really must have been quite some time (he fills the glasses with wine) But it's nice and cozy here. I can feel this warm family atmosphere coming from your flat.

Alzbeta:

What on earth have you been drinking in that pub? Richard had been drunk already when he came back from there.

Marek:

We drank very little.

Alzbeta:

Might be the nerves then. That man really got him. They still can't figure out who that man is.

Marek:

Maybe they have already.

Alzbeta:

No, they haven't. I was calling Bozena a while ago. She said, nobody has found out yet.

Marek:

Which Bozena?

Alzbeta:

Stalmaske. Her husband is a policeman at the district department.

Marek:

I see. She should have fresh information then.

(Silence.)

Alzbeta:

How about mom? Has she accepted that already?

Marek:

What do you mean?

Alzbeta:

You know. That you have left....

Marek:

I hope she has. Maybe she doesn't want to make me feel miserable with her own sadness.

Alzbeta:

I think, she will never get in terms with that.

Marek:
You think so? Is that what she's told you?

Alzbeta:
She has never said that directly, but I could feel it. You must have felt that yourself. To be honest, I think she and your father liked you the best. You have always been their favorite.

Marek:
Gossip.

Alzbeta:
It's not. What do you want to do now?

Marek:
I don't know. I will stay home for some time, then I decide where to go. Which side.

(silence, they're drinking)

Alzbeta:
I often meet Katerina. She comes to our shop. But she doesn't buy much stuff, she might not have much money. She has to feed herself and her daughter with a single salary. She can't be getting much from aliments...

Marek:
Mhmmmm.

Alzbeta:
You don't meet? You don't keep in touch?

Marek:
This is a finished story. Trust me.

Alzbeta:
I can't believe it. Such a big love.

Marek:
It happens with big love. The other love was stronger.

Alzbeta:
I think she suffers. She has to do everything alone. What a beauty she is. This masseur has been after her now. He is called Janko.

Marek:
I understood. He is such a strange man.

Alzbeta:
But he has golden hands. I mean, girls were saying that. I must confess I will go and see him too. To relax my body. They say he massages feet too. I would like to try that.

Marek:
This will perhaps be quite intimate...I don't know, I don't really like him.

Alzbeta:

He is a true lady killer. You can really tell...Every time he comes to our shop he stares at my cleavage.

Marek:

Make sure you resist then.

Alzbeta:

He's been in our house too. To see Ondrej. Strange man, nobody knows where he came from. He came out of blue. (Marek is silent, he doesn't want to talk about this man. Alzbeta can feel it, which is quite an extraordinary achievement in her case)

Perhaps, I should not have say this, but it is my opinion, Marek. I think it would be pitty if you became a priest.

Marek:

What do you mean by that?

Alzbeta:

I mean what I say. Such a good looking guy can't be a priest. Parish women would tempt you all the time, you'd have to resist, maybe you'd failed to resist in the end.

Marek:

I don't think that would be a problem.

Alzbeta:

You were really able to imagine celibacy???

Marek:

Yes, I was. I can say it was my own decision. I could imagine celibacy as reality.

Alzbeta:

Have another drink. Pour some for me as well. You know what was the other rumour? You know, when you left Katarina and left for the seminary.

Marek:

I know there was a lot of talking...

Alzbeta:

People were saying you could be a gay...So nasty...

(Silence.)

Alzbeta:

You mind if we switch off the light?

(Marek shakes his head. Alzbeta switches off the light, there is just a candle burning on the table, and a glow of a star coming in through a roof window. Perhaps Achernar, from Eridanus.)

Alzbeta:

I will tell you something. But you won't tell anybody. We haven't had any intimate life with Richard for several years. So I understand you. But to be correct, I don't.

Marek:
Why are you together, then??

Alzbeta:
Because of children, because of parents...

Marek:
Because you have vowed to God.

Alzbeta:
Well, you have also vowed to our Lord, I guess. And also to that guy...what is this doctor's oath called?

Marek:
You mean Hippocrates?

Alzbeta:
Right, that's the one. It's all oaths in this world.

Marek:
You're right. People shouldn't vow... Medicine was a mistake, theology wasn't...

Alzbeta:
But you must be smart, if you got to all these places without problems...

Marek:
Luck.

Alzbeta:
I don't know what are children become...Misko wants to be a lawyer and Stanka an actress. Besides, I have no idea who would feed them if they went to university.

Marek:
When there is will, you can do everything. You know about this saying that where there is will there is a way...

Alzbeta:
Sometimes I have a feeling that I am losing my will, my dear Marek. Maybe it is a pity you are not becoming the priest. There's something calming about you.

Marek:
And why are you actually telling all this about Richard and you??

(Silence. Suddenly. It's embarrassing.)

Alzbeta:
I don't know...I have always liked looking at you, imagine things... (she draws near) Because... (she takes his hand and starts running it under her bathing suit)

Marek: (he catches her hand, draws away from her) I am sorry.

Alzbeta:

I knew exactly. I am sorry. It was just a weak moment. An instinct. I knew exactly what you were going to do. Perhaps, I have gone mad. I am not normal. An old cow. Your brother's wife. And I am drunk a bit.

Marek:

Yes...Just behind the wall there's your husband sleeping, my brother, and two walls away your two children...Well, how could I tell...but...but I like your body Alzbeta. I watched you several times through a keyhole while you were having a shower. That was the time you had moved to our house. I even...no...I can't tell you this.

Alzbeta:

What is it? Tell me...

Marek:

I won't tell you. It's impossible. It's too much.

Alzbeta:

Don't say anything then. Don't...

Marek:

We are drunk.

Alzbeta:

Yes. We are drunk...Drunk people.

(Alzbeta moves closer to her brother-in-law. This time she does everything with more grace and sensuality, but she is more confident, in a clearly decisive manner...Despite of all that the following situation appears comical. It involves sadness and a portion of pain. Alzbeta takes Marek's hand in hers and slides it under her bathing suit. She runs it over her big breasts. Marek does not resist but he does not collaborate either. He is not passive though and becomes a kind of involved observer. Alzbeta hugs Marek's shoulder with her hand. She moves it over his neck to his chest. She starts stroking him, moves her hand lower and reaches his crotch. She presses hard down there. Marek clenches his teeth and narrows his eyes. He leans his head back in upcoming delight. These two adults are sitting next to each other and run their hands over their bodies. They don't even look at each other. They get more and more aroused. Alzbeta is unbuttoning her nightgown, exposing her breast, Marek is touching them. Alzbeta briskly grabs his head and make him dive among them. Marek is touching her nipples with his tongue. He breaths noisily. Aroused, Alzbeta lets out a muffled cry of delight. She starts unbuttoning Marek's trousers...Somebody switches on the light in the room. Confused, they separate, Alzbeta is hastily doing up her nightgown and bathing suit. Marek stands up chaotically, buttoning up his trousers, adjusting his shirt, running his hand through his hair. He starts walking around the room, looking around in thousands of directions. Standing in the door is Stanka, an eight year old girl. Alzbeta's daughter.)

Alzbeta: (half voice, confused)

Oh my God, Stanuska, why aren't you sleeping?? We have been talking with uncle Marek. Have we woken you up??

Stanka: (calmly, with her child sleepy voice)

Mom. There's fire on the courtyard.

Alzbeta:

What??

Stanka.

Fire. There's fire in the courtyard.

(Alzbeta runs to another room, where she can see the courtyard. We can hear her cry "My God" "Richard, there's fire...the workshop is on fire." Lights go up...Mother runs up in the room. She's crying. Richard walks in, rubbing his eyes. He murmurs something, something that sounds like "fuck". Richard is pulling on his trousers...The whole following dialogue is submerged in chaos and upcoming hysteria. Meanwhile, Marek has sat down, his head in his hands...)

Richard: (shouting at Betka)
Call the firemen.

Mother:
Where is Ondrej??

Richard:
How am I supposed to know??

Mother:
He is not in his room...

Alzbeta:
He sometimes sleeps in the workshop...Oh, God!!

Mother:
But only when it's warm outside. He wouldn't really be sleeping there now...Would he?? You're listening to me?! Riša, he wouldn't be sleeping there, right!!

Richard:
I don't know, mom. (To Marek) Why you just sit here, for fuck's sake??

(Both brothers run out, Alzbeta runs behind them)

Alzbeta:
Don't go there!! What if the fire jumps to our house?!

Stanka:
Fire has no legs, mom.

Alzbeta: (comes back, shouts at the daughter)
Get to your bed. Where's Misko??

Stanka:
He is sleeping. And what have I done??

Alzbeta:
Let's go...(she pulls her back to her room.)

Mother: (she crosses herself looking at the cross hanging over the door)
Lord protect us.

(Mother leaves.)

ACT Five

(In the kitchen the Act One took place...Few days over. It's Friday. Few minutes after twelve. Almost whole family is sitting around the table - Mother, Richard, Marek, Alzbeta, Stanka, Misko...even the Godmother came - the Mother's sister. Perhaps, she has decided to stay. They're all having a thick soup. A soup which is a second course as well. Low autumn sun falls on the table.)

Mother: (interrupts long silence)
Was he really smiling??

Marek:
He was.

Richard:
We finish our meal and go and see him.

Mother:
What did the doctor say?? Wasn't he talking to him??

Marek:
He said he's out of the worse, mom. That we will live. That's all he can say for now and we have to grateful. For life.
I don't want to start telling you about the percentage of burned body, or grades of some scale. I don't want to worry you with the exact diagnose. He said he would live.

Alzbeta:
But for how long?? You don't think this is difficult?? We will have scars until he dies.

Marek:
He has no cancer. He is not dying...All vital functions are restored.

Godmother:
My God, why has he done it?

Mother:
It doesn't matter now, Magda.

Godmother:
There will be rumours.

Alzbeta:
There are already.

Godmother:
He used to be such a nice boy. An altar boy.

Mother:
He still is a nice boy.

Godmother:

But he loved that wood of his. He must have been drunk. Otherwise I can't imagine that you love something so much, so many years and one day you pour it over with petrol and set it on fire. Is it confirmed, he hasn't managed to escape, or perhaps...

Mother:
Magda, please, enough.

Alzbeta:
They say he went from the cemetery to see Katarina in her flat, that's what I've heard in hte shop. They say he found this Janko at hers, or what...I don't know...I don't feel like talking about it.

Richard:
So be quiet!!

Alzbeta:
So, he went to the pub straight on, they say, Gazda had already been closing up, but Ondrej chatted him up so he gives him a drink. This Janko rushed in and they had a serious argument. They were shouting at each other, Ondra was supposedly threatening to kill him...They were about to fight, but Gazda allegedly pulled them away from each other...That's what people say, but I am not sure what the true is.

Misko:
Guys in school say, Ondra was possessed.

Alzbeta:
Who says??

Richard:
Doesn't matter who, for God's sake! You want what, their ID?? Don't listen to such bullshit, Michal. It's nonsense you can't even understand properly. (To Marek) Have you finished?? Come, we should put it in order, before you leave. You're taking the 17.22 one?

Marek:
Yes.

Mother:
I thought we're going to the hospital straight on.

Richard:
When are we finished with cleaning it up? It's all mess out there. Sodom and Gomorrah. It won't take more than two hours now.

Mother:
I can't even have a look in there.

Richard:
You don't have to, mom.

Marek:
Go. I will finish it myself. When you come back, you finish the details. Misko will help you, right?

Misko:

There are no statues left. Everything has burned down.

Richard:

There is one left. Imagine. It's intact. Way of the Cross image. The crucified Christ.

Marek:

You're serious?

Richard:

Yes. Does it suppose to mean anything?? Why such a face??

Marek:

Nothing. I was just surprised.

Richard.

So, let's go and change quickly. We're leaving soon. (Richard and children leave, Alzbeta cleans up the table.)

Godmother:

I'll help you.

Alzbeta:

That's OK, Godmother. You're not going with us??

Godmother:

There are too many of us. We won't fit in the car.

Alzbeta:

Children will sit on our knees. Come as well, Ondrej will be glad.

Godmother:

It's so nice being with you all, my dear....Even though it's sad now, but it still feels comfortable. Warm. In my place, we only shout, cry, swear, sin... (she leaves)

Mother: (to Marek)

You want to think it over??

Marek:

I have just done so...

Mother:

I would need you here now.

Marek:

I don't know yet, mom. I'll stay for a while in Bratislava. I have to be alone. I will see if I carry on, or come back.

Mother:

Where would you go??

Marek:

Somewhere. Somewhere you can't come back on road...Mom, you know where Ondrej's chain necklet with the cross is?? Supposedly he has given it back to you affectedly once.

Mother:
I keep it. Why??

Marek:
Could you bring it to me??

(Mother leaves, it is clear Alzbeta has been waiting for this moment. She comes to Marek.)

Alzbeta:
I am sorry.

Marek:
I am sorry.

Alzbeta:
I didn't want to...

Marek:
Please, let's forget it.

Alzbeta:
Take care. And drop a word about you to mom sometimes. She's worrying about you. She has always been, now she will be worried even more.

Marek:
OK. Bye.

Alzbeta:
I have always had a feeling this is some sort of cursed house. I have never felt good here. I have only pretended.

Marek:
It might sound surprising for you, but this is the best house in this world. A strong one.

Alzbeta:
Full of love you can add.

Marek:
Love especially.

Alzbeta:
Why has Ondra done it, then??

Marek:
We are not here to judge...and this house has absolutely nothing to do with that. There are many ways to recognition. Be nice to each other with Richard. He is who he is, but he is a strong guy. As strong as a rock. You might not live an adventurous life with him, but you're safe with him. The children as well. You think it's not enough?? It's quite a miracle nowadays.

(The give each other a shy kiss on cheeks, Alzbeta leaves. Mother comes back, watching Alzbeta leaving...a golden chain necklet wrapped around her finger.)

Mother:
Has anything happened??

Marek:
No.

Mother:
I was afraid it has gone lost somewhere...

Marek:
Will you put it on my neck??

Mother: (putting the necklet around his neck)
Where is yours??

Marek: (hesitating)
Well, it's here. On my neck...(she smiles, not sure if mother understands, but she doesn't want to explain anything) Mom, what was that topic??

Mother:
What topic you think?? The composition children wrote in my class. What is my fate...

Marek:
This is such a terrible topic, so terrible that it is actually good. Maybe I will write some little essay for you. Do you mind?? You can mark it then..

(Richard and children come in. First comes the Godmother wearing a funny hat, the last one is Betka...)

Richard:
Let's go then. Take care and keep in touch.

Marek:
Come on, let's not make it a big farewell. I am not leaving for Siberia. I will get in touch.

(Quick goodbye with everyone. Marek looks like wishing it to be over as soon as possible...)

Richard:
Leave that workshop as it is. We'll make it. I've had a look and it looks not as bad as it could be.

Marek:
Fine. Thank you. I have never really helped you with housework, I have always been either buried in books or within my worlds, so I guess I won't make it any better now...

Stanka:
When are coming again, uncle??

Marek:
When the harvest is ripe. I'll come and help with picking.

Stanka:
What harvest, mom??

Alzbeta:
Let's go.

Stanka:
What harvest??

Misko:
Grapes, what else? You can't understand or what??

Alzbeta:
Come on. Let's go...

(Again, there is a spontaneous and a bit long farewell, somehow it is all getting stuck. Nobody know what exactly to do in such a situation. Marek is nervous.)

Richard:
We should finally solve these things, you know...

Marek:
Clear. We will finish it. Say hello to Ondrej. Tell him I am grateful for this morning...

(Mother hugs Marek. She starts crying. It's a deep and unexpected cry of a big women. Alzbeta is pulling the kids away, they are leaving...Richard and Godmother are leaving as well...)

Mother: (crying on Marek's chest)
I love you all the same. I am proud of such children. And grateful, our Lord has blessed me with such sons. You were born the Whitsuntide day, you must never forget this, even you if you find your life hard in any way... (she puts the cross on his forehead, Marek feebly attempts to stop his tears...)

(Everybody leaves. Marek stays alone. Music. Shift scene. Men for the pub come to the stage, they wear identical uniforms, they look like a deratization squad. They remove everything from the stage, everything that has been a part of the previous interior. They remove black curtains, uncovering the scene of fire, a torso of Ondrej's workshop, of his world, of his work. Remains of past. Statues, paintings, wood carvings...everything in form of burnt, drought cries. Ash and dust still fresh. A black dwarf appears in the corner. There's something uneasy in the air. The shift scene is organized with an absolute logic of moves and coordination. It resembles a special perfection of choreography, a biomechanical theatre image contrasts with Marek's emotion. Marek is not moving, just shaking his head. It all seems to take ages for him. Silence. Gloom. Light from torches fight grey fog. Marek is walking around walls. On one of the walls, there is a metal board, a kind we see at railway station waiting rooms. It says "Bohunice." Marek has never noticed this table in the workshop. He only remembers Richard how he was angry about somebody who had stolen such a table from the station. He finds it funny. He smiles. He looks at the only intact piece of Ondrej's work. The one Richard has mentioned. Right. The twelfth image from the Way of the Cross taking place on the hill of Golgotha. It's a beautiful and solid wood engraving, about a meter high and a bit more wider. There is a big cross in the middle, with a dead Jesus on it. There is a smaller cross on each side, with crucified criminals.)

(Marek holds the piece in his hands, looking at it from different angles. It is completely intact, the fire hasn't even touched it. He puts it on the ground, opens a suitcase already packed for the journey, produces a newspaper and starts wrapping this heavy wooden stuff in them...)

Marek:

(internal monologue, in a stylish voice)

So, get down off that cross, come on. You will certainly make it, if you have made so many miracles for the others. You need to help yourself now. You hero. Show me what a cool hand you are... You're a king, aren't you... (in a different voice) Remember me, when you enter the kingdom of heaven. (in a different voice) You will be there with me as soon as this evening (in his voice) Dear mom. You worry these children of yours with complicated thoughts. Not just Agatka, Terezka or Martinka. I wanted so so much...I thought that before I leave I would write an essay talking about "What is my fate" and leave it on your table. I wanted to do it for you. I will write nothing. As I don't know. How many times over a short time I have realized that the biggest things are in fact the simplest too. I respect you for this. That you are not afraid of simplicity. Clear formulations. Simple truths. I have always thought my fate is the same as my roots. But now, when standing on their embers, full of doubts, yes, and again and again full of doubts...It comes to me, mom, that my fate is the way my bravery is. Sometimes it is big, sometimes shy and inconspicuous. But the important thing is, that it is there. And I know it is. Relentless. And it will always be. I know this as well. I am afraid to say that, but I am sure about it. As sure as the power of sea. And I am in doubt. That's absurd. It may be a paradox, but this is it. I wanted to write to you about my meeting with Ondrej today. Well, more than a meeting, it was a perception we shared. Contemplation in silence. If the redemption is supposed to be proceeded with forgiveness, then I experienced a miracle today. Not a big and a grand one, just a completely ordinary and little one. A modest one. I was telling Ondrej about your mushrooms on the cemetery, I thanked him for getting me in the bunch with other boys, I was telling him about our neighbour's cherries, about the magic plants by the dung heap, about kind lies, you have never found out about, though, maybe you have, for sure. I told him a lot. Every time I waited for his answer. He was just smiling with his eyes. Maybe his smile was just my wish. I hope and believe everything will be back in at least a relative order. I said nothing about Katarina. We need time, we need distance. I wanted you to know about this meeting, you see, I am afraid of each word, that could be big. Yes, I am afraid because of my own littleness. I am afraid of being sentimental...I haven't anything to you. I haven't done what I should have for so many times. It seemed to me God has left our house for a while, you know?? Perhaps, he has been to the loo. And now he's washing his hands. He is honest and consistent with it. God's hands are large, that's why he is washing them so long. I have started to realize it after the father had died. There wasn't anybody anymore to hold this sand castle in one piece. Nobody to tame our egos with natural and quiet force. It's all up to us now. Not up to you. You don't have to do anything, mom. Just be. Just be where you are, stay there. Keep fighting for us with your quiet wishes and prayers. I know you will not stop. Now we can see, if we deserve him to come back. Not you, but us, if we deserve it. If we deserve you. I wanted to write to you that this is my fate...That you are actually this fate. Full of shy worries about what will happen to us. The doctor said, that if everything goes well, Ondro will walk. Fight for the natural. We only realize what we have when we are about to lose it. That is what you have told me once. I always keep it on my mind. We only realize the power of love when we know what we are able to sacrifice for it. You have sacrificed all your life for us, mom. We will get what we deserve, mom. We have been grown up for a long time. I haven't written anything to you. I have wrapped Ondrej's wood carving to newspapers and put it under my arm, put a backpack on my back, took a suitcase in my hand.

(During the monologue, a Dark Man comes to an empty stage. Katarina slowly comes from another side.)

Marek:

The first November Friday, ten minutes after five in the afternoon I was standing at our railway station. I usually took a bus, because you need to walk some distance to the railway station and I never felt like that. That day it was the same. But I walked anyway. Rain was falling on my head...I don't carry an umbrella. I was trying not to think about anything. It was easier than I thought. I was standing in a waiting room. There were just few people there. They all recognised me, I haven't recognised anybody. Some of them nodded at me. As if anybody shot me. Katka came in. I wasn't surprised. Without daughter. We said hello to each other. I asked where the little girl is. I could not remember her name. Shame. She said that Terezka is at her parents.

Katarina:

Terezka is at our parents. I've heard you've met with father.

Marek:

I told her we had met. Where are you traveling to?

Katarina:

Nowhere. I am waiting. For an acquaintance.

Marek:

He's arriving with the train I am going to take?

Katarina:

Yes. Kutý, Bohunice, Trnava. You travel further I guess.

Marek:

Yes. I will continue to Bratislava. We wanted to talk, but it was not possible. We were standing in the waiting room. It was raining outside. Clear raindrops were running down the windows. They smelled nice from a distance. She asked me how I was. Fine. I said. What else was I supposed to say? I asked her how she was.

Katarina:

I don't know.

Marek:

Finally the train appeared in the distance. We've heard it. As it blew its horn. As it cried. As it howled. As it squawked. That waiting was becoming to be burning and itchy. This is not man for you. He is a bad man. Come back to Ondrej. I let this out quite unexpectedly.

Katarina:

Excuse me?? To Ondrej??

Marek:

Yes. Come back to him now. When he is not strong. And he will never be again.

Katarina:

You have no right...

Marek:

I don't. I am sorry...I have seen his eyes from the distance...These weren't Janek's, the builder from Martin, eyes.

Dark Man:

What an unexpected welcome. Just like in a black and white movie.

Marek:

I did not get it. I did not want to understand him. I did not want to wait to see which part of the Word he was going to attack with. His eyes pierced the parcel I was holding under my arm.

Dark Man:

You want me to help you with it to the train?? For the journey?

Marek:

No.

Dark Man:

I don't mean it symbolically. Just the way I say it. No passion. It must really be heavy. I don't mean it symbolically either.

Marek:

Suddenly, it came to my mind, I would give it to him, that I have to give it to him, that I hand him the parcel. Force it into his hands, just like a knife in the back. Three crosses. Here you are. Carry them. Bastard. You deserve nothing else. You will always watch the one on the left and see yourself hanging there and hear yourself say...if you are such a cool hand you need to help yourself...you will hear yourself laughing at his face and force him to make a miracle...Instead I can hear myself saying "Leave Katka alone. For good." He, Dark Man, tells me he is glad we have met at the right time.

Dark Man:

The timing could not have been better. Logic of life? How's Ondrej?? I hope everything will be all right. I like him.

Marek:

I want to shout something, I want to hit, kick, I want to explode. This eternal "I want" of mine. I am serious, sir. Hands off Katka. And our family too. I am winging like a wheezing wind. I am not capable of an offensive, I am not capable of an expressive act, I have never been. You do not belong to Katka's life. I can hear Katka's desperate voice, full of misunderstanding.

Katka:

Have you gone mad???

Marek:

The Dark Man comes to me quite close. I can feel his breath on my face. It is a bad breath. I can feel fish. If I were a poet, I would say the time at the railway clock has stopped.

Dark Man:

I have seen a beast walking out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads. There were ten diadems on the horns and blasphemous names on the heads. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, with legs of a bear and its mouth was a lion mouth. The dragon gave it its strength, its throne and a big power. One of the heads was fatally wounded, but this fatally wounded head healed. The whole country admired the beast and bowed to it...

Marek:

The sound of the railway whistle interrupts his words. I remember my oldest brother Richard standing in shorts and a white undershirt, stained with tomato sauce, we'd had for lunch, standing by the well and blowing the same whistle. I am three years old doing shh shh shh shh.... shh...shh...shh...shh...shh. I can hear somebody shouting at the station. Marek, you're going or not?! The train dispatcher is calling my name. I don't know him. I shout I am going. I am shouting, yes, I am shouting. Me, a man without emotions. It came to my mind today in the hospital, when I was looking at Ondrej, a totally paralyzed organic matter, tied with white neoprene into unconsciousness...it came to me, that the principal difference between us has always been that Ondrej is full of emotions, pain and restlessness, which springs out like high tones of a trumpet, while me...while I have always been afraid of such expression of feelings and mood. What if I have never believed them?? What if I have got afraid of my own lack of fate. And of the fear of adultery...Could emotion catch fire and burn down?? Only this would be Ondrej's end. I am back in reality. The minute hand on the clock jumps forward so noisily, that I give a start. I can hear little Stanka crying, mom, fire has no legs, the minute hand has no legs either but it still jumps like an elephant. I can still feel the breath of the beast on my face. We have been standing still for a long time, it seems to me I have been standing there for years staring into eyes I have never seen before...And I am glad I had the opportunity to see them. A saliva suddenly shoots out of my mouth. Straight on his face. Katarina is shouting something...She is running to me, but I run out of the waiting room, run across the platform, straight to the train, waving my bags, the train gains speed slowly, I am jumping on...I make this physically challenging maneuver even with weak body with unexpected grace...I can't hear Katarina shouting but I can hear my own words as I am shouting at her, Katka I will write to you. Come back to Ondrej. Please... I want to shout I will pray for them, but this won't come out of my mouth anymore..Maybe because I get afraid of this idea. And maybe because I don't want Katka to know.

(Darkness.)

The End

Dedicated to father, in silent memory.