

Viliam Klimáček

HOLOCAUST

(the story Slovakia would rather forget)

inspired by the memories of Hilda Hrabovecká and others who came back from hell

Characters:

ESTER Rozenfeld	<i>high school student (about 17)</i>
ROSA Rozenfeld	<i>Ester's mother, widowed, proprietor of the Rose Café (35)</i>
LILI Weiss	<i>Ester's friend, daughter of the owner of the Urania movie theatre (19)</i>
JAKOB Weiss	<i>Lili's brother, attorney, later navigator of the Royal Air Force (33)</i>
Ambróz KRÁLIK	<i>poet, expropriator, minister's adviser (40)</i>
Anna KRÁLIKOVÁ	<i>his daughter from Argentina (45)</i>
Kristína MAJEROVÁ	<i>owner of a handicrafts workshop, single (40)</i>
HANA Kostolníková	<i>village orphan, maid in the Rose Café, later Králik's wife (24)</i>
Jano PUJDES	<i>projectionist in a movie theatre, expropriator and guardsman (45)</i>
RADIO	<i>one or more actors, broadcasting music, news, white noise</i>

I have used poetic license to create clones of hit songs of the wartime Slovak Republic and of the parallel history of our first big feature film. Authentic songs are used in the play too, as well as real quotations from the contemporary press, genuine expropriation applications, or a fragment from the theatre play "Golem" by Voskovec and Werich.

I would like to thank the Holocaust Documentation Centre in Bratislava for their cooperation.

The story takes place in a Slovak town, in the former Rose Café (the present-day bath showroom Lux), and the Urania movie theatre (later the Partisan cinema) between 1939 and 1949, with flash-forwards to 1991. The second part takes place in concentration camps: Auschwitz (Oswienczim), Mauthausen, and Ravensbrück. The present dissolves in the past like a drop of ink in a glass of water.

Act I: Expropriation

Scene One: SUITCASES (1991)

Králiková enters Showroom Lux carrying suitcases. Washbasins, bidets, shower baths, and tiles are displayed all over. The place is empty, the radio is playing.

RADIO: *(singing)* We've promised each other love... we've promised each other a brand new day... we've promised each other to hold on... we've promised each other the truth... *(keys jingling)*.

KRÁLIKOVÁ: Did all porters die?! Or hasn't one even been born yet? I don't get this country. Down our way, in Buenos Aires, ten guys would fight just to get the chance to carry my suitcases. *(listens to the radio)*

RADIO: Make a passage through the crowd... make a passage... *(keys jingling)*.

KRÁLIKOVÁ: It's 1991 and they're still reminiscing about the revolution. They ought to work. Trains are late, buses don't run and cab drivers rip off their customers. Is this how they imagined a free country? This is not freedom. Freedom means being good and not stealing. Czechoslovakia is an outrageous place. Nothing works here, the coffee is cold, the beer is tepid, soups are oversalted. Everything is somewhat inappropriate. Inadequate. Even this place here. They call it Lux now! Nothing's luxe around here. Slovaks have no sense of moderation. Lux! I came here from Argentina on a ship, I'm afraid to fly, I got on it as soon as it all calmed down in Europe. Thank God socialism is over. This used to be our café. And they've turned it into a showroom... *(reads the sign above the entrance)*... Showroom. This?! Dear Lord! Mom and dad spent the best years of their life here. The lawyer said that now I could get it all back. They all talk of restitutions. I just want what the communists stole from us. Lux... I mean! The Rose! Not a bath showroom, but a café. That's what it is, the Rose Café! It's always been the Rose and it might be the Rose again. I've already started arranging the formalities. I need Czechoslovak citizenship and permanent residence first, or else they won't accept my application. Sounds good on paper... *(reads)* Act on Extrajudicial Rehabilitation... the Federal Assembly of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, in an effort to alleviate the consequences of property-related and other injustice committed between 1948 and 1989, and in the knowledge

that these cases of injustice, and even less so those that preceded them, can never be fully remedied, however in an attempt to confirm its will to prevent the committing of such injustice in the future, has agreed on this act of law... *(exits)*

RADIO: *(the jingling of keys fades out)* You've been listening to our feature programme called "Why did we need November". Next, we present a discussion about the voucher privatization... *(the broadcast turns into air interference and the present changes into the past).*

Scene Two: FOOTBALL (1929)

The Rose Café. Jakob and Králik enter.

KRÁLIK: Doc, what're you drinking?

JAKOB: Sabbath starts soon, I'm not going to drink.

KRÁLIK: You've got two hours till Sabbath. What would you like? I'm greatly indebted to you.

JAKOB: I'd love to help out, but...

KRÁLIK: You'll make me upset.

ROSA: *(enters)* What can I get you, gentlemen?

KRÁLIK: Two spritzers, dear Rosa, one for doctor Weiss. *(Rosa exits)* Spritzer is actually half water, half wine. And wine is half grapes and half water. And grapes is half earth and half sun. It's like sunbathing prone on the ground.

JAKOB: *(laughs)* You should have been an attorney.

KRÁLIK: It was a good thing I didn't go to Mutňanský, he might be a good Catholic, but he's a miserable lawyer. It occurred to me that I should go to Weiss, he's Jewish – and Jews make great attorneys!

JAKOB: But I opened my office barely a week ago...

KRÁLIK: Oh but the buzz is on, the buzz, that's what matters, doc. Eugh! My own brother wanted to trick me out of our inheritance! Would you believe it?!

JAKOB: If there were no brothers like that, what would we live on?

KRÁLIK: *(laughs)* They tried to talk me out of it – said you only work for your own people.

JAKOB: I work for all people, because they all have problems. Catholics, Lutherans, even Jews. *(Rosa enters carrying the glasses)*

KRÁLIK: Now that's what I like! In this town, we're all friends, aren't we?

ROSA: *(to Jakob)* You haven't seen the girls, have you, Jakob?

JAKOB: They're at our place. Dad's showing them a Chaplin movie.

KRÁLIK: Ester can already go to the movies, Mrs Rosa?

ROSA: I don't know. She's only seven.

JAKOB: But she's with Lili. And they haven't seen Chaplin yet.

ROSA: Is that the one with the funny walk?

KRÁLIK: A famed comedian. Don't worry, Lili was ripping tickets at the door last time I went. She's a good girl, will keep an eye on little Ester. *(to Jakob)* How old is she?

JAKOB: Lili? Nine.

KRÁLIK: So to brothers and sisters and to doctor Weiss! And to Chaplin!

JAKOB: And to your mill! *(they drink a toast)*

KRÁLIK: My own brother, the blood of my blood, wanted to disown me! The grinding sound of the mill used to lull us to sleep and he wants to take it away from me! Oh well! Drink up, doc!

JAKOB: *(takes a sip)* If my father saw me now... just before Sabbath...

KRÁLIK: Look, I mean it's up to you, it's none of my business, but I know the time... it's only quarter past three and the sun is still high up. What's with the Sabbath now?

JAKOB: It's true that faith means something different to me than to my parents. I do take it seriously, but more loosely.

KRÁLIK: Another drink then?

JAKOB: You don't understand, Mr Králik.

KRÁLIK: When you say more loose, then it should mean more loose. You Jews are like the girl from this fairy tale – she doesn't travel either on foot, or on a donkey, she's neither naked, nor dressed.

JAKOB: Things aren't simple. You can look at everything from two sides.

KRÁLIK: That's so like you.

JAKOB: Our God is wise, he always looks from the right side.

KRÁLIK: Right for you, or for him?

JAKOB: Just the right one.

KRÁLIK: *(drinks a toast)* To the right God who knows when to look at his children. *(Pujdes enters carrying a radio)*

PUJDES: God bless!

KRÁLIK: Amen forever. Can we invite a Lutheran too?

JAKOB: Of course!

KRÁLIK: Dear Rosa... *(Rosa enters carrying three glasses)*

ROSA: I heard you, gentlemen. *(she hands the men glasses with wine)*

KRÁLIK: I know why I like to come here.

PUJDES: You're so kind, thank you. *(takes a glass from Rosa)* I got it for you.

ROSA: I've been looking forward to it since early morning, Mr Pujdes.

PUJDES: *(unpacks the radio)* Telefunken. A radio with two lamps. What are we drinking to?

KRÁLIK: We've drunk a toast to the doctor, now let's drink to... the radio!

ALL: To the radio!

PUJDES: With two lamps.

KRÁLIK: To both lamps!

ALL: To the lamps!

RADIO: *(starts transmitting)* ...this is incredible, incredible, the heart of every fan is now beating only for our guys... *(crackling)*

KRÁLIK: Damn, it's a football match! Fix it, fix it!

PUJDES: Patience... it's new... from the store... *(the radio crackles)*

KRÁLIK: A game of the century! Petržalka is playing the famous Newcastle United, in their best line-up!

JAKOB: *The* Newcastle? The English team? The famous Newcastle United?!

KRÁLIK: The entire office took the day off because of this, it's just me who's been fighting my own brother over inheritance, phew! *(to Pujdes)* Can you fix it?

PUJDES: Yeah, I'm doing my best, eh...

ROSA: Jakob, tell us something about Newcastle. *(to the others)* Now listen.

JAKOB: Newcastle... Northeast of England... situated on the bank of the river Tyne, 13 kilometres from the North Sea... the Cheviot Hills are to the northwest ...

PUJDES: How do you know that?

JAKOB: I like geography.

ROSA: He's got all the maps in the world right in his head.

JAKOB: Europe, barely. And a bit of Africa.

KRÁLÍK: What matters is that he's a competent lawyer! Here's to you, doctor!

PUJDES: *(fixing the radio with his screwdriver)* A-ha!

RADIO: *(transmitting)* ...it's unbelievable, it's like a fairy tale, but the four-time champion from the country which gave football to the world, just suffered a crushing defeat on Slovak pitch! This is a shock for all football fans in Europe!

KRÁLÍK: Holy mackerel!

JAKOB: We're winning? You don't say!

ROSA: We are? Great!

PUJDES: Jesuschrist, us, we, I mean!

ROSA: *(clapping her hands, excited)* The drinks are on the house, gentlemen, what a beautiful day!

RADIO: The stands are loud as a hurricane! Thousands throats are chanting the names of our brave boys! The ball is round and has found its way into the rival's goal seven times already!

JAKOB: My goodness! Seven?!

RADIO: The First Czechoslovak FC Bratislava leads against the world-famous Newcastle United 7:1!

KRÁLÍK: I must be dreaming! Seven-one!

JAKOB: We're winning!

PUJDES: Holy cow, 7:1!

ROSA: Slovakia is the best!

RADIO: And now our boys are passing the ball, Čulík to Poláček, Poláček to Čulík, the ball is in the air, oopsy-daisy, now that's super, Trägerf gets the ball on his right foot and kicks it, he passes and the ball is high above the pitch, and now Bulla gets it!... He passes to Šoral, Šoral shoots... and he scores! He scores!

ALL: Goal!

RADIO: He's done it! The ball is in the English goal! Oh proud Albion, the grass on the Petržalka pitch has defeated you! The score between the First Czechoslovak FC Bratislava and Newcastle United is now 8:1!

ALL: Eight-one!

RADIO: Pens are being dipped in inkwells and the history of European football is being written anew! The Tatra mountain eagles have just thrashed the British lion! Come on, lads, come on! May 26, 1929 will be forever recorded in the history of Czechoslovak football! And here's the line-up which will be carved in gold letters in

our chronicle books: Holly, Čulík, Zeumenn, Horký, Poláček, Trägerf, Šoral, Bulla, Příboj, Čambal, Uher! The stands are up now and all mouths are singing, like one man, Dalloš's hit song "Tempo, Bratislava, come on!" (*sings the actual contemporary hit song, the others sing along and gradually disperse*)

Scene Three: RADIO (1939)

The Rose Café, ten years later. The radio makes white noise.

ROSA: (*hitting the radio*) What's wrong with this junk? Ester! Ester! (*Ester enters*) Go get Pujdes to come and fix it. And take this coffee to number two.

ESTER: Mom, feudalism is over. It's 1939, haven't you noticed?

ROSA: Haven't *you* noticed that we have guests?

ESTER: I have to study.

ROSA: Clean your shoes.

ESTER: I hate this joint!

ROSA: It's a café! And a first-class one, sweetheart. And as for the shoes, let's see, you might become a lady one day.

ESTER: I don't want to be a lady! (*the noise of breaking glass, Hana enters wearing a folk costume*)

HANA: I am so sorry, Mrs Rozenfeld. (*kisses Rosa's hands*)

ROSA: Hana! Money doesn't grow on trees! Another glass?

HANA: I'm sorry, it won't happen again.

ESTER: I'll clean it up.

HANA: No, no, I'll do it.

ROSA: (*to Ester*) It's almost cold! (*picks up the coffee and leaves*)

HANA: Thank you, ma'am.

ESTER: I've told you a hundred times, don't call me ma'am. I'm no such thing. And go get Pujdes, please. It's the radio. (*the radio crackles in agreement*)

HANA: You're so good to me. It's so hard to get used to. (*Jakob enters*) Good day to you, Mr Weiss.

JAKOB: Hello. (*to Ester*) I've got to tell you this! (*Hana exits*) Can you imagine?! The antiquary in Vienna had it! It's marvellous!

ESTER: Jakob, what are you talking about?

JAKOB: I found the map that's been missing in my collection! (*shows an old map*)

ESTER: Is it genuine?

JAKOB: Are you crazy, if it were it'd cost more than three of your cafés together. It's a copy, but an impeccable one, isn't it? The famous Catalan map of the world from 1375, made for Charles V, the King of France.

ESTER: Is it more valuable than the one... with the egg?

JAKOB: The one with the egg?

ESTER: The Arabic one.

JAKOB: (*laughs*) You mean the one from Abu al Idrisi? In the 12th century they believed that the world is flat and it's only held in the universe thanks to water, like the white holds the yolk in an egg.

ESTER: That's what I just said. Egg.

JAKOB: (*studies the map with Ester*) What do you notice at first sight?

ESTER: The painted kings... and rivers, twisted like corkscrews...

JAKOB: Corkscrews?! It's one of the first maps which used the compass. On the maps of the ancient Roman Empire, all rivers flow upstream. Sometimes what should be on top is down below, and places on the bottom are at the top. Here it's correct. If you used the Catalan map you wouldn't get lost... (*looks at the map*)... well, maybe just a little. I'll lend it to you sometime. You'll be careful with it, won't you? Keeping an eye on it?

ESTER: Sure thing. A watchful eye.

JAKOB: Why was she crying?

ESTER: Who?

JAKOB: Your maid.

ESTER: Mom doesn't like her.

JAKOB: Did you know she was found in front of a church? Swaddled in blankets.

ESTER: She was?!

JAKOB: A minute later and she'd have frozen to death. The sexton's family took her in. They had six kids already, so they had room for a seventh.

ESTER: Is that why she's a Kostolníková?

JAKOB: When the sexton died, the kids were thrown out onto the street. I have to go to the office now. (*waves the map*) A watchful eye?

ESTER: A watchful eye! (*Jakob leaves*)

ROSA: (*enters*) The guy at number two is a travelling salesman from the Protectorate. The only Czech who came here.

ESTER: Did you know that Hana's an orphan? Can't you be nicer to her?

ROSA: How do you know?

ESTER: Jakob told me.

ROSA: It's always Jakob, isn't it?

ESTER: You do believe a lawyer, don't you?

ROSA: The Rabbi said that in Sheol, the Jewish hell, lawyers have a separate floor.

ESTER: Do you want Hana to go begging? Or should she sell her body in a twisted street?

ROSA: What are you saying?! You a high school student!

ESTER: I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

ROSA: You care about everyone else more than about your own mother. Thank God father didn't live to see this. (*exits*)

PUJDES: (*enters*) Your servant... Did missy cry?

ESTER: It's none of your business.

PUJDES: I'm supposed to check the radio. Jano Pujdes does it all! (*taps on the radio*)

RADIO: (*broken, tango fragments are heard*) ...Little Annie... your eyes... I want to kiss your lips...

PUJDES (*fixing something in the radio with a screwdriver*) I wonder where it hurts.

ESTER: Don't know. What are you playing tonight?

PUJDES: Gastspiel im Paradies. Do you unplug it for the night?

ESTER: We do. Is it French?

PUJDES: German. When did it break?

ESTER: Yesterday. Who's in it?

PUJDES: Hilda Krahl and Albert Matterstock.

ESTER: Is it any good?

PUJDES: The notary said that all movies should be like that. I mean like for the nation! Dedicated! (*tuning the radio*)

RADIO: *(still broken – singing is heard)* ...listen to the gasps of my hot desire...
sweetheart....

ESTER: Is it a love story?

PUJDES: It's all about love, missy, all about love.

RADIO: *(still broken – singing is heard)* ...your red lips... look over here...

ESTER: About love, really?

PUJDES: Love to the German Reich. And now leave me alone, could you? *(trying to fix the radio, Ester leaves, Hana enters, sweeping the floor)* Your servant, little Hana.

RADIO: *(still broken – singing is heard)* ...tiny hand... my little one...

HANA: Don't you want to sweep the floor instead of me?

PUJDES: And who'll fix the German here? Telefunken. Never breaks, even if it's ten years old, you know, Hana? Only here it does. *(quietly)* In a Jewish home.

KRÁLIK: *(enters)* God bless.

PUJDES: Amen. *(Hana wants to leave)*

KRÁLIK: Where are you off to, my little rose?

HANA: I'm not yours.

KRÁLIK: I'd like a spritzer. Please.

HANA: I'll tell Mrs Rosa. *(exits)*

KRÁLIK: What's wrong with her? Do I bite? Do I bark?

RADIO: *(broken, fragments of singing)* ...my heart is filled with desire... a fire...

PUJDES: She likes you.

KRÁLIK: You think?

PUJDES: I see.

KRÁLIK: Mr Pujdes, it seems you know everything.

PUJDES: I can fix a radio, a grinder, even a typewriter. And I show movies, as you know, in Urania, the movie theatre.

KRÁLIK: You think she might be interested in me?

PUJDES: Hana? You have to ask her.

RADIO: *(still broken – singing is heard)* ...oh doo dah... the little leg goes a-skip....

PUJDES: So much for our football. We lost the stadium after Petržalka was annexed by the Great German Reich.

KRÁLIK: Don't worry, a new one is being built in Bratislava. Much bigger, it will seat fifteen thousand souls! (*Rosa enters carrying a spritzer*)

ROSA: Welcome, Mr Králik. Yours is a distinguished visit. You haven't been here for some time since you became the minister's adviser.

KRÁLIK: So much to do when a new country is born! Before we were managed by the Czechs, now we can govern ourselves. You got a new waitress?

ROSA: A maid.

KRÁLIK: Next time I want to see her serve the guests. Or I'll go to the Pipe.

ROSA: They never change the tablecloths there.

KRÁLIK: I'm joking, my dear. But it's a waste to keep a pretty girl in the kitchen. Oh by the way, did you send the loan? For economic revival of Slovakia? They asked me at the office.

ROSA: I still owe the bank.

KRÁLIK: The Schick's gave, the Stern's too, even Immerblum...

ROSA: They have a factory...

KRÁLIK: Just making sure. We don't forget those who support the Christian thing.

ROSA: I'll think about it. (*exits*)

KRÁLIK: Don't work so much, Mr Pujdes. (*shouts after Rosa*) Another one!

PUJDES: I mean I can do this even with a glass of wine... (*sits at the table and keeps fixing the radio*)

RADIO: (*crackles, except for fragments of transmission*) ...God help our sportsmen to succeed. Coming up, the football match between SK Bratislava and AC Považská Bystrica...

PUJDES: When will I find time to watch a good footie game...

KRÁLIK: One ought to, but not always of course. You plough and sow on the cultural field after all. You work in a movie theatre! Do you read at all, Mr Pujdes?

PUJDES: Oh I do, innit? Every day. Both *The Slovak* and *The Guardsman*.

KRÁLIK: I meant books.

PUJDES: Got a calendar. Saint Adalbert's pilgrim.

HANA: (*brings a spritzer to Pujdes*) Here you are.

KRÁLIK: Mrs Rosa is learning fast. Thank you. (*Hana exits*)

PUJDES: Big-eyed girl, innit.

KRÁLIK: You've got three kids, right?

PUJDES: Oh well, I got five.

KRÁLIK: But you just had only three.

PUJDES: It gets dark in winter, innit? Fuel is pricey so off you go to bed.

KRÁLIK: You're a very humorous person... Why do you keep avoiding me?
We're from the same village after all.

PUJDES: Listen, I don't know how to talk to a gentleman like you, a guy who's educated, who writes books, you know.

KRÁLIK: But I don't bite. Don't have a tail or hooves. You can shoot from the hip.
But not about football. What's on at the movies?

PUJDES: Gasparone, the cheerful highwayman. Marika Rökk is in it, the one, you know. Next on is Gibraltar! A spy flick! Thrilling entertainment!

KRÁLIK: And Slovak movies?

PUJDES: Philosophers' history.

KRÁLIK: OK, Jirásek. But that's Czech opium, we need a Slovak Jirásek. We need to use our language to write about how we're faring today.

PUJDES: You should write it.

KRÁLIK: I do, I write like mad, all the while I work in the office, make decisions, accept international guests, represent the country. Do you know what Duce said the other day?

PUJDES: The whatshisname... Mussolini?

KRÁLIK: La cinematografia é un'arma delle piú forti! When will Slovaks have their own movie do you think Mr Pujdes?

PUJDES: You mean like fully Slovak? With our actors?

KRÁLIK: Do you realize that as we speak, out of nothing, like Aphrodite from sea foam, our film industry is being born?

PUJDES: Fair enough. If we have the new state, I guess some movie will be, like made, innit?

KRÁLIK: I shouldn't give this away, but... it's here!

PUJDES: What's here?

KRÁLIK: Until today we were a nation without a movie. A nation without celluloid. Until today! But those days are over! This morning the government agreed to spend an extra amount on the making of our first art film!

PUJDES: What's it gonna be about, if you please?

KRÁLIK: Svätopluk. The King of old Slovaks. There will be everything that moves the heart – love, betrayal and fighting.

PUJDES: To love!

KRÁLIK: On guard! *(they drink)*

RADIO: *(crackles, then we hear bells)* The bells just struck noon.

ESTER: *(enters with Rosa)* Mom, can I go see Lili?

ROSA: To their place or to the movies?

ESTER: What's the difference?

ROSA: You're spending all your time at the movies. Mr Pujdes, is it suitable for such a young girl?

PUJDES: They just... three times uhm...

KRÁLIK: It's a three-kiss movie, my lady. Let the daughter learn a little, will you?

ROSA: If you had kids, you'd say different.

KRÁLIK: *(shouts brandishing the glass)* Two more! To Svätopluk!

MAJEROVÁ: *(enters with a parcel)* Here it is, Mrs Rozenfeld. See, soft as a cobweb. And as strong too! Hold on! *(presents her tablecloths and shows a little rose embroidered on each one)*

ROSA: A rose.

MAJEROVÁ: Like you. For all to know whose these are.

ROSA: Come, Ms Majerová, let's settle our accounts now. *(leaves with Majerová, Ester follows, Hana enters with wine)*

KRÁLIK: We thank you oh mighty Aphrodite.

HANA: Don't make fun of me Mr Králik.

KRÁLIK: Next to you I feel like I've climbed Mount Olympus. I feel like a god. You're more beautiful than Hilda Krahl.

HANA: But I'm no actress.

KRÁLIK: You could be. *(the radio crackles and starts transmitting)*

PUJDES: Done!

RADIO: *(transmitting)* Dear listeners, we would like to present to you the work of an important poet of our homeland, counsellor of the minister of enlightenment and propaganda, Mr Ambróz Králik.

PUJDES: *(to Králik)* Well that's you, innit? *(listens together with Hana, while Králik sips his wine)*

RADIO: Enjoy an excerpt from his poem *Lumps of Soil*. *(sound of a folk pipe)*

(recitation) Slovakia is a grove
Which God's gardener
Always keeps in tow

Scene Four: HOME (1991)

Králiková enters and starts reading from a book.

KRÁLIKOVÁ: Mary is the cleanest rose
Virgin born to our Lord
Shamrock and its four toes
My country is the one I love

RADIO: Credit debit hand in glove
Love my fatherland

KRÁLIKOVÁ: Toiling Slovaks proudly stand
And our flag a double cross
A seal of our faith fatherly

RADIO: It is a double sword because
It makes a weapon against slavery
Now finally we have our state

KRÁLIKOVÁ: The world now knows us so just you wait
An orchard full of roses and we

RADIO: Like working bees will collect your pollen
And give you honey, lots, none fallen

KRÁLIKOVÁ: You're a blessed lovely holy grove
I love you you're my treasure trove

(finished reading) From dad's first book. Ambróz Králik – *Angels over Mount Kriváň*. *(smells the book)* Smells like him still. Musk. Men smelled like that back then, at least the better men. He died in Argentina. His heart broke of sorrow because his café was nationalized. They steal a café from the national poet in the name of the very same nation? Decent people don't do such things. Whenever someone wants to do something dirty they always hide behind the nation. It's now time to right the wrongs and return what was stolen. There's a law for it! I've already

applied for Czechoslovak citizenship and permanent residence, and I'm going to apply for the café too! I, Anna Králiková, want to get the Rose back and won't give up until it's mine again! And the first thing I'll do is throw away the washbasins. Shame mom and dad didn't live to see it...

Scene Five: PIGEONS (1939)

The hotel attic. Night. A flashlight. The awakened pigeons, tenants in the attic, are quietly cooing.

RADIO: An airplane directed by a transmitter is zooming through the night. It is being followed by an invisible ray. Mysterious electrons are showing the pilots a safe way to their target. World-famous radio transmitters, tubes and bulbs are brought to life by the electron – a tiny particle, perhaps the smallest of all – whose power is changing the life of mankind. The radio – that's electrons in the service of men!

ROSA: Ester, come here quick! Hana locked herself up in the attic. *(they knock on the door, Hana is behind it)* Hanka! Hanka, open the door! Hana! Are you there?

ESTER: It's me! Hana, open it.

HANA: I won't.

ROSA: Did something happen? Do you need help?

HANA: Go away!

ROSA: Apparently she locks herself every night.

ESTER: I know.

ROSA: Why didn't you tell me?

ESTER: She's scared on her own... It's weird.

ROSA: Hanka, we have guests.

HANA: You're lying. No one comes at night.

ROSA: They're refugees. Jews from Prešov. Their store was burned. We have to help them. Make their beds in the café.

HANA: You just want to lure me out.

ESTER: Hana, please. Did I ever want anything bad to happen to you?

HANA: Not you, but Jews did.

ESTER: What are you talking about?

HANA: I won't say anything!

ESTER: Mom will now go and only I'll stay, OK?

HANA: OK.

ESTER: Mom, please. *(Rosa leaves the attic)* Open now.

HANA: *(speaking through the closed door)* I'm scared you'll... do something to me. Jews capture little children, kill them and put their bodies in matzah. Even young girls are good enough. You commit those... ritual murders.

ESTER: Where did you hear that?

HANA: People say it.

ESTER: Idiots!

HANA: The priest too.

ESTER: And you believe it?

HANA: When I was ten, our neighbour's boy got lost... they saw a beggar, with the payot and all, one of your kind... but he disappeared... and the boy was never found.

ESTER: Hana, such stories are made up by bad people, I don't know why, but they're lying. It's not true! We never killed anyone and blood... it's absurd! *(starts laughing, but her laughter turns into crying)* I've always helped you... *(the door slowly opens and Hana walks out)*

HANA: It's not true, is it? *(Ester hugs her)*

ESTER: You're so silly. *(the sound of breaking glass is heard from downstairs, Rosa runs in, scared)*

ROSA: They're smashing our windows!

ESTER: I'm calling the police.

ROSA: *(holds her)* It's the Guardsmen... I just wanted... when someone walks down our street... there should be a place to sit down... because it's pretty here... such a peaceful street...

GUARDSMEN SINGING *(Králík and Pujdes)*: We'll protect our language and our bread, in Slovakia we'll speak Slovak! *(sound of breaking glass; Ester turns the radio on in order to drown out the singing)*

RADIO: *(broadcasting commercials)* When you're blue, take a Darmol!

Marmalades and jams by Stollwerck are delicious, smooth, exquisite!

GUARDSMEN SINGING: Slovak brothers, come with us, come to Bratislava, fight for our language, take your shepherd's axes too!

RADIO: Bonsa – flawless blades from the Solingen factory. Blendax – a toothpaste which is good, healthy, cheap!

GUARDSMEN SINGING: Come with us, descendants of the Tatras, those who burn for truth, come with us now!

RADIO: Had no cold, nor flu since I started to drink Marty brandy medicinal! Khasana rouge can't be washed off by water. Khasana – can't be kissed off!

GUARDSMEN SINGING: Cut and hew till you see some blood, it won't be the first time. Until Slovaks rule their land, cut and hew till you see some blood. It won't be the first time. Until Slovaks rule their land.

Scene six: **MOVIE THEATRE** (1939)

ESTER: Wanna go to see the movie?

LILI: I've seen it three times already.

ESTER: But Voskovec and Werich are so good.

LILI: What about *Heave-Ho!*? The one about how they were building a house? One of them smeared mortar on a brick like butter on a slice of bread and carried it on the scaffolding like a waiter... don't know which one, I keep mistaking them.

ESTER: Werich is the thin one and Voskovec the fat one... or the other way around?

LILI: Voskovec is the handsome one! He's Laurel and Werich is Hardy.

ESTER: When they were hanging out of the window, right? *(the girls laugh)*

Who'll play Svätopluk in the new movie do you think?

LILI: Could be Emil Jannings. He's amazing.

ESTER: He already played Bismarck, it doesn't make sense.

LILI: What about Hans Albers? Or Theo Lingen?

ESTER: Svätopluk should be played by a Slovak actor.

LILI: František Křištof Veselý? Or Bagar?

ESTER: He's too young.

LILI: But so handsome! And he can play an older man too. They'll disguise him. Beard, moustache. *(Jakob enters and when he sees them he wants to leave. But it is too late.)*

ESTER: Hi, Jakob.

JAKOB: Are you following me?

LILI: Yeah right.

ESTER: Can you lend us your map? The one that was for the French king...

JAKOB: I have no time for silly things.

ESTER: You off to the office?

JAKOB: *Numerus clausus.*

ESTER: What?

JAKOB: New law. From now on, only 4% of Jews can work as attorneys. The rest were kicked out of the bar association. Me too. I'm not going anywhere.

ESTER: But you've been the best in town! You've had the most work of all!

JAKOB: That's why.

ESTER: *Numerus clausus?*

JAKOB: Everywhere they're getting rid of Jewish doctors, engineers, editors. Pub owners' licenses are revoked, vets are no longer allowed to treat cattle. Even cows may not be touched by Jewish hands! Finally all who couldn't succeed can flourish now. I'm not going to wait and pray like my father. I'm not going to leave it like this. You haven't see me, all right?!

ESTER: A watchful eye.

JAKOB: Just think about what next, girls. And not a single word about me. A watchful eye! (*exits*)

LILI: My brother has changed so much. He goes places, I don't know where, has secrets. Hasn't looked at his maps for a month now. He, who used a magnifying glass every night to study any shred of paper he could find with some territory drawn on it. I worry about him. (*Ester touches her head behind the ears*) What's wrong?

ESTER: I switched off, sorry.

LILI: How... switched off?

ESTER: I don't care about the whole world.

LILI: If only I could do that.

ESTER: There's this bump behind your ear... (*Lili feels behind the ear*) Got it? When you press it, you're switched off.

LILI: Like this?

ESTER: Right. Press it! (*Pujdes enters carrying a plaque wrapped up in paper*)

PUJDES: (*Lili*) Missy... You hear me? Hey!

LILI: I'm switched off.

ESTER: Me too.

PUJDES: Get switched on again, quick, got a lot to do. Hello! *(turns on the radio)*
Can you hear now?!

RADIO: *(plays a military march imitating the sound of a brass band)*

PUJDES: I just came from the headquarters of the Guard, your father sent me.

LILI: My father?

PUJDES: Mr Weiss knows what to do. They announced a collection for the state treasure of gold and your father was one of the first to give! It was him who shoved me away from there. *(unwraps the plaque)* This has to be nailed to the wall for all to see. *(starts installing a sign that reads JEWISH BUSINESS.)*

LILI: Ester, switch me off . I can't do that myself. *(Ester presses the bumps behind her and Lili's ears, the radio goes silent while the girls smile and leave.)*

Scene Seven: ARYANS (1940)

Hana is ironing tablecloths under the sign JEWISH BUSINESS. The radio has just finished playing a march.

RADIO: In today's programme, dear little friends, we're going to talk about the division of Hlinka's Youth units. Boys are divided from youngest to oldest into Wolves, Eagles and Lads, girls are Fairies, Tattras and Lassies. A Tribe of HY consists of 26 members commanded by a leader. Four tribes make up a Company and all companies in an area constitute a Group of Hlinka's Youth. Girls aged 6 to 11 are Fairies. Their slogan is – do everything as best as you can! A fairy is cheerful, religious, clean, polite, obedient and as diligent as an ant. Girls aged 11 to 16 are Tattras. Their slogan is – farther and higher! A Tatra is holy, a faithful Slovak, truthful, fastidious, dutiful, selfless, thrifty and clean in thoughts and actions. Members of HY aged 16 to 20 are Lassies. Their slogan is – serve and protect! Love God and the nation! Protect the honour of Slovak girls! Be unselfish, faithful, kindly! Be strong in life's thunderstorms! Be prepared to set up a Slovak home!

ROSA: *(enters)* Hana, stop it. You're not allowed to do the ironing.

HANA: Should I go to the kitchen?

ROSA: You can't work here anymore.

HANA: *(kneels down and starts kissing Rosa's hands)* I have nowhere to go, my lady, don't be mad if I break something sometimes, you don't even have to pay me, I will work only for the apartment and food, I'll do everything you tell me, just please don't fire me!

ROSA: Hana, get up. Come on. I cannot employ you any longer.

HANA: What did I do?

ROSA: It's not your fault. They passed a law.

HANA: Law?

ROSA: I can't employ Aryans.

HANA: Who?

ROSA: Non-Jews. The better race. No Aryan men, no Aryan women.

HANA: But I'm from Sološnica.

ROSA: You're Aryan according to the law.

HANA: Why are they doing this to me?!

ROSA: To us, Hana. They're doing it to us. Let me see. *(Takes the iron from her and starts ironing herself)* Now listen to me. I can help you and you can help me. There are two options. The first is that you'll leave. I didn't come up with this, but you can't be my employee any longer. You could live here in the meantime, but I can't know what might come over some people... whether Aryans can live in Jewish homes,, I've no idea what's going to happen.

HANA: I'll ask the priest to put in a word in for me.

ROSA: *(ironing)* Don't go anywhere. There's another way. You're already 24, is that right?

HANA: Last month. You sent Ester to give me cherry chocolates...

ROSA: *(she did no such thing)* Yes, of course, right... now listen. You're old enough to be the temporary manager of my café.

HANA: I don't understand.

ROSA: *(whispering)* They all do it like this. Immerblum manages his sawmill with a Slovak, even the Weiss family want to give half of the movie theatre to Pujdes...

HANA: How do you mean... half?

ROSA: Everyone seeks someone they can trust. And I trust you, Hanka. You've got the experience, you've been here two years, you know all about the business...

HANA: I can't write money! Into that book! Don't ask me to do that!

ROSA: I'll do everything just like now. We just need to agree on this and you'll have to write the application. You'll own fifty-one per cent of my property.

HANA: What am I going to do with it?

ROSA: I'll keep the rest. Or nothing. And you too. What do you think?

RADIO: A Fairy knows the national flag. She knows the biography of Andrej Hlinka. She can dance a folk dance. She knows the clock. Can sign her name. Knows her way around the land outside her village. Can imitate the sounds of domesticated animals. Can save at least ten crowns in the bank. Can start a fire in the oven. Knows how to crochet. Keeps clean hands, teeth, ears. Knows why to breathe through the nose. Knows how to march. Can clean a well. Can jump over a gutter. Behaves well in contact with the poor and to accidental passerbys.

HANA: I don't want to take nobody's things...

ROSA: You won't. I'm giving it to you. You'll get paid every month, say a thousand crowns... and you'll work just like you've done until now. You'll do your stuff and I'll do mine... only on paper will one half be yours. This is the only way you can stay and work here. Understand?

HANA: Miss Ester has always been very good to me, I was afraid of you... don't be mad that I speak so directly... now I see that you have a good heart too... *(kisses her hands, Rosa pulls away)*

ROSA: Don't do this again! You'll bring misfortune over us both!

HANA: Yes... my lady.

ROSA: Mrs Rozenfeld. And you're Miss Kostolníková. Let's save what we can. We'll write an application saying that you're a good Christian, morally eligible and unspoiled, a devoted Slovak.

HANA: I have to get meat and flour. It's ration day.

ROSA: *(calls)* Ester! Ester! *(the daughter enters)* Take the book and get meat and flour, please. I'm in a business negotiation with Hana now. *(Ester exits)*

ROSA: *(to Hana)* Come on. Oh and you should dress differently.

HANA: *(points at her folk costume)* This is what people wear down our way.

ROSA: But now you're to take care of a business. You're a temporary caretaker. Take this off. You can choose one of these. *(opens a wardrobe full of clothes)*

HANA: Yours?

ROSA: Mine.

HANA: Beautiful! Oh I don't know. So gorgeous. May I? Really? Which one?

ROSA: Any one you want.

HANA: I don't know. This one? Or this?

ROSA: One dress.

HANA: *(takes a dress out of the wardrobe)* If you don't mind...

ROSA: My pleasure, Miss Kostolníková. Let's go to the office now. *(they exit)*

RADIO: Each meeting of Hlinka's Youth will be concluded by a prayer recited by the Fairy: Oh Father of Nations, thou hast heard the sorrowful sigh of our whining discontent, the lightning of golden liberty has sparkled, where the river Nitra murmurs, along with Váh and Hron. You commanded the thunder, your word made manacles drop off ankles with a bang. Svätopluk's race has now risen, and shall be ready to live its novel life. Amen.

Scene Eight: EXPROPRIATION (1940)

Café – Jakob, Lili, Ester.

RADIO: Today's programme: 7:00 the time. 7:05 news. 7:15 the morning half-hour featuring Slovak hit songs. 7:45 German broadcast. 8:00 news for Hlinka's Guard. 8:05 the youth programme. 8:25 famous composers' marches. 9:00 newflash of the Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. 9:05 mass. 9:45 agricultural news. 10:00 for our women. 10:30 we call our sportsmen. 11:05 what to cook tonight. 11:15 about lung tuberculosis. 11:30 greetings to the front. The morning broadcast will be concluded with the ringing of bells. Morning news. Killing pigs and calves is allowed. The consumption of meat and lard in Slovakia is growing. The government will support the construction of exemplary dung heaps in order to improve our villages. Three hundred acres of Jewish land will be allotted to farmers.

JAKOB: Aren't you lucky, girls? You'll remember September 1940 for a long time.

LILI: What do you mean?

JAKOB: The longest holiday in a lifetime, isn't it?

LILI: How can you make jokes about this?!

JAKOB: It's the only thing I can do.

ESTER: I can't go to school any longer.

LILI: They even refused to enrol me. The medical school doesn't want me.

JAKOB: *Numerus clausus* has become *numerus nullus*. Jews were expelled from all schools. How long do you want to watch this? Do something!

LILI: Like what? They didn't even let me in the auditorium! The other students would no longer say hello.

ESTER: Don't say hello in return.

JAKOB: You'll stop greeting people?! That's so bold! Maybe you could start an illegal movement which will put ink stains into their notebooks!

LILI: Why are you so surly, Jakob?!

RADIO: It is now prohibited in all pub businesses to produce bread, cakes and cookies. Our soldiers are doing well on the side of the brotherly German army during the attack on Poland. The army post does not deliver parcels to the front, letters only. The new academic year was opened by Vojtech Tuka, first Rector of the Slovak University. Students were reminded of his January inauguration lecture titled *Albanian Blood Vengeance*. And now the morning half-hour of Slovak hit songs. (*tangos and jazzed-up csardases are played*)

JAKOB: I can't sit and watch us wasting the time! This is terrible! I hate this powerlessness!

ESTER: We haven't given up yet. Some are learning at home. I will too.

LILI: In the meantime, Ester and I do theatre at least. Just the two of us, at the table.

JAKOB: Young people like you will be retrained at the Jewish centre. They say you'll be sent to work in Germany, in factories and fields.

ESTER: We're not afraid of work, right, Lili?

JAKOB: I'm sorry I yelled. Actually, I came to say goodbye. I imagined this would be all different. I'm going to escape tonight. I want to go to England. I found a smuggler who'll guide me through the Hungarian border. I'll enlist in the army if all goes well. Listen to London, they broadcast messages every day. A watchful eye, all right? That'll be my coded message. When you hear anything about a watchful eye, it means I'm OK. (*to Lili*) Don't go home for a while. He wants to be alone. It's horrid to see your own father cry. (*hands Ester the binoculars*) For you, to remember me. So

that you don't forget about Jakob. *(kisses Lili)* The maps are yours, sis. All of them. Sell them if it comes to the worst. You'll need the money. A watchful eye!

ESTER: Watchful eye! *(Jakob leaves, Lili cries)* Don't cry.

LILI: I'm never going to see him again.

ESTER: Don't think about it.

LILI: Let's do the theatre now... please.

ESTER: *(reads from a paperback edition of the play Golem by Voskovec and Werich)* Let me examine this well! Your turn now...

LILI: I bend over and you throw my hat into the well. *(they both put women's hats on their heads)* Come on, throw it! *(Ester throws the hat, Lili reads)* Very well done, mister!

ESTER: *(reads)* So much chatter about a hat, mister!

LILI: *(reads and throws down the hat to Ester)* To curb the chatter! *(Ester wants to pick up the hat)* Leave it! We pretend it fell into the well.

ESTER: It's mom's. *(reads)* Mister, what was that?

LILI: *(reads)* A hat!

ESTER: *(reads)* But it was my hat!

LILI: *(reads)* And that one was mine!

ESTER: *(reads)* But mine was better than yours!

LILI: *(reads)* What did you say?

ESTER: *(reads)* That your hat is for the birds!

LILI: *(reads)* I'm throwing down my glove!

ESTER: *(reads)* Go on, then!

LILI: I don't have one.

ESTER: Hold on! *(leaves and comes back with a pair of gloves, gives one to Lili)* Go on, then! *(Lili hits her in the face with the glove and Ester bursts out laughing)*

LILI: Don't laugh.

ESTER: *(serious now, reads from the paperback)* This is silly, sir, it hurts.

LILI: *(reads)* Then draw your sword! *(Hana and Pujdes enter; Hana is wearing Rosa's dress)*

PUJDES: Missy, you're growing prettier by the day.

HANA: I read accounting books all the time, understand none of it. I think I might lose my sight. Will you help? *(they hang President Tiso's portrait on the wall)* You expropriated the movie theatre Mr Pujdes, how do you manage it all?

PUJDES: You know, Miss Caretaker, it can be done. The old Weiss is the projectionist, his young one rips the tickets, and I drink wine, innit.

HANA: It's too much for me. My head never hurt so much.

PUJDES: Have a shot of caraway liqueur and you'll be running about like a gazelle. Or coffee. I'm sure these people hid some before the war, some good stuff, from Argentina perhaps.

HANA: Ester, could you?

ESTER: *(comes)* Yes?

HANA: Don't throw the hat on the floor.

ESTER: It's our hat I can do whatever I want with it.

HANA: It's mine.

ESTER: It's mom's!

HANA: She gave it to me. Will you make me some coffee? The good sort, if you please.

ESTER: As you wish, Miss Caretaker. *(exits)*

PUJDES: Some say you and the old one have conspired...

HANA: Me?

PUJDES: That's right, you... and that it's all a show and the café is really still Jewish.

HANA: *(scared)* That's nonsense.

PUJDES: Do you know, Miss Hana, that the Rose can be taken away from you? The Party gives, the Party takes away. These days you can only expropriate if you are friends with the Guard and Hlinka's Party. One God, one nation, one party! But so many empty pockets, innit. Brothers-in-law, cousins, brothers. They just take, thieving bastards. And the rest of us, honest citizens... *(spits)*

HANA: You have the movie theatre.

PUJDES: I'd need Grún's general store, Meitner's jewellery store, or the whatchamacallit... Waldman's quarry. *(sotto voce)* Králik knew what to do. He got Pascher's mills, and his estate.

ESTER: *(enters with the coffee)* Here you are, Miss Kostolníková. *(returns to Lili)* Let's go or I'm going to cry.

LILI: Don't... it will only make them happy. *(reads from the play "Golem")* Draw your sword! *(they take snooker cues and use them as swords)*

ESTER: *(reads trying to draw her "sword")* I can't! The little bastard!

LILI: (reads) Let me see! (helps Ester draw it but it is stuck)

ESTER: (reads) I hope it's not rusty because of all the blood... I had this duel with a fat gentleman and he had diabetes... (they both look at Tiso's portrait and start laughing) It might be the molasses that's so sticky.

RADIO: - We're broadcasting an interview with the manager of the retail cooperative HY, the wholesale supplier of all uniform parts for Hlinka's Youth. Good day.

- A wonderful day to all listeners of the Slovak radio.
- Is it true that our first feature film Svätopluk, which is already in production, will partly be your work as well?
- The HY cooperative was asked to tailor a thousand cloaks for the duke's warriors.
- It's easy to sew uniforms, but cloaks?
- It is an honour for HY to be able to give a hand when a big work is being done. Svätopluk's army was, after all, the stone of our ancient statehood, and we've had a lot of experience with the making of uniforms. We will dress our movie lads beautifully, tastefully and well.
- Yes, I'm sure your cloaks will be the highpoint of the new film!

PUJDES: (to Hana) Today Mr President wrote a beauty piece in the Guardsman, about Saint Joseph! Listen. (reads from *The Guardsman*) Saint Joseph is the guardsman of Christ, of the Holy Family, because he does the same service to Christ and the Holy Family as Hlinka's Guard does to the Slovak nation! (Rosa enters with Majerová)

ROSA: (to Hana) Please, enter in the book that we've just received nine curtains from Ms Majerová.

HANA: Couldn't you do it?

ROSA: Your signature has to be there anyway. See me in the office when you're done, Miss Kostolníková. (to Ester who is still fencing with Lily next to the table) Could you keep it down girls?

ESTER: (to Rosa) You gave her the hat?!

ROSA: Ester, cut it out please!

ESTER: Your misalliances disgust me!

ROSA: How dare you talk to me like this?!

ESTER: (bows ceremoniously) Excuse-moi, fair duchess, if I shook your magnificence! (keeps fencing with Lily)

ROSA: (to Majerová) This is driving me mad.

MAJEROVÁ: She'll grow out of it.

PUJDES: She should be spanked on her bare behind! The youth today is totally untamed! (*reads from the Guardsman*) I hereby declare that I'm not paying any debts on behalf of my son – student Vlastimil Bartoň – nor do I take any responsibility for him. Margita Macková, neé Čimová. (*puts down the paper*) Poor mother! If my kids did this to me, I'd chase them out like pigs!

MAJEROVÁ: How many do you have, Mr Pujdes?

PUJDES: Six.

MAJEROVÁ: Not five?

PUJDES: I think I know how many children I have! I'd have seven if it hadn't been for Kornfeld.

MAJEROVÁ: Doctor Kornfeld?

PUJDES: He killed my little son!

MAJEROVÁ: But he's so dutiful.

PUJDES: Spanish flu supposedly. He just drank some ice cold water while the doctor was running around other patients. I guess they paid better. Ow...

MAJEROVÁ: He examined me for free the other day... What about the other kids?

PUJDES: Three are big boys, two go to school, and the youngest one is a girl, my little sun. Annie.

MAJEROVÁ: Born into hard times.

PUJDES: We'll pull through.

MAJEROVÁ: Don't you want a nice blanket for her? With lace?

PUJDES: She'll get the one her brothers used. (*reading the Guardsman*) Can you imagine! They cut down a thousand fir trees! Are using them to build old Slavonic log houses for the new film! Some place in Liptov!

MAJEROVÁ (*secretly to Rosa*) Bring everything valuable, Mrs Rozenfeld. Will be safe in my place. They say that personal things, jewellery, clothes, everything... will be taken from Jews.

ROSA: (*looks at Hana*) She knows what I have anyway. She counted it all.

What if she turns me in? But thank you for the offer.

MAJEROVÁ: May God protect you and your daughter.

ROSA: I'll show you out, come. (*leaves, the girls play an excerpt from "Golem"*)

LILI: (*reads*) Defend yourself, dirty knave!

ESTER: (reads) My clamour is directed at you, scoundrel!

LILI: (reads) Spotty face!

ESTER: (reads) Let the Germans see how brave we are!

HANA: (snapping at Ester) That's enough, Miss Rozenfeld!

ESTER: But it's in the book! (shows the cover) The Liberated Theatre of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich presents a romantic revue in eleven scenes – *Golem!* Popel says here... (reads) Let the Germans see...

PUJDES: This is cute, listen! (reads out loud from the Guardsman) Our dear heroes! We, the little Wolves, think of you on every occasion. We'd like to grow wings so we could fly over to the front to you. There, in the thunder of the cannons and the barking of the guns we would express our admiration of you. We send our regards with our wolfish greeting Hooowww! Hooowww! On guard! The Wolves and their leaders from the HY station in Párnica. (Ester and Lili are fencing and sing along)

ESTER and LILI: (singing) Our coats of arms are chafed from fighting,
The sound of cannon fire we find inviting,
We two cause trouble,
We like it double,
We're rare birds oh so exciting.
Because we are flawless men
Hale and hearty at it again...

KRÁLIK: (enters) Can you get me Rosa Rozenfeld?

ESTER: Mom! (Rosa enters)

KRÁLIK: I'm here in an official matter. Today the Central Business Office delivered the edict to me.

ROSA: Edict? What edict?

KRÁLIK: As of this day your business is expropriated and I've become its sole owner.

ROSA: But I've got a caretaker...

HANA: Yes, I've been appointed...

KRÁLIK: A temporary caretaker. Temporary, understand? The Office reconsidered it and since it supports suitable and capable Slovaks, I have become the new proprietor in an effort to eliminate the Jewish force from our economic life. (young Králiková from 1991 enters looking for a spot to place a bronze plaque)

ROSA: We'll appeal.

KRÁLIK: Shut up, Rozenfeld.

HANA: *I'll write it! I will go.*

KRÁLIK: You can do that, Kostolníková, but it won't be necessary. I'd like to keep you here as a business partner... if you agree, that is. Sit down, everybody. (*Ester, Lili, Hana, Rosa sit down*)

PUJDES: I guess I'm gonna go now.

KRÁLIK: (*pulls down the sign saying JEWISH BUSINESS*) Take this to your movie theatre. (*Pujdes takes the sign and leaves*) Don't be afraid of me. I'm a poet, I'm interested in books, in literature, not in business. I manage a huge office, boost our culture, provide for our movie industry. Svätopluk keeps me busy day and night. I'm not interested in a coffee shop! I'm an intellectual. I accepted it only because I like coming here. Didn't want others to plunder it. But I won't hurt you. You can stay here with your daughter, Rozenfeld. As economically important Jews. The Office allowed it. (*Králiková keeps looking for a suitable place for the bronze plaque*) Did you know that the street where my café is now standing was named Adolf Hitler street? You did. According to a new regulation, no Jew may live in a place called after our allies or national personalities. You have to move out. Miss Kostolníková will take your place.

ROSA: Where are we supposed to go?

KRÁLIK: We'll think of something. And stop shaking, Rozenfeld, I don't bark or bite. I'm protecting you now, is that clear?

Scene Nine: BRONZE (1991)

Králiková holding the bronze plaque.

KRÁLIKOVÁ: My father wrote poetry in this café. He always said – a mushroom belongs in the forest, and a Bohemian in a café. In all pictures I have of him, he's wearing a carnation in his buttonhole. He never forgot to wear it. Brought flowers to mother, but otherwise was very strict. He demanded a lot from others, but most of all from himself. Artists are different from us. They can afford much more than common people because they search for new paths. (*studies the bronze plaque*) This will hang in the café. First inside and later on the street. (*reads the*

plaque) Ambróz Králik lived and worked here, Slovak poet who was driven away from his homeland, but never ceased loving it dearly... Fellow countrymen in Argentina raised funds to pay for this. So that he'll never be forgotten. He mustn't be forgotten. People forget, but bronze doesn't. If I knew the chemical formula of bronze, I'd know the formula for memory. My lawyer says that the café, since it was taken from us, has had as many as three owners and so it will be difficult to claim it, and that the communists once stole fields from his parents too and nothing can be done about it because land is the most difficult to reclaim and no one knows how to deal with it. Why does my lawyer tell me about his problems? What's the use of such a lawyer? He ought to take Valium like I do. There wouldn't be any problems if people had the decency to remember what was whose and who owned what. Property should remain untouched, should it not? If I were the president, I'd order everyone to learn the formula of bronze. So that they can't make excuses about how they have no memory. *(exits)*

Scene Ten: ATTIC (1941)

Ester and her mother have moved to the attic, into Hana's former spare room. The rest of their property is there – radio, table lamp, pictures, suitcases, turntable, statuettes... There is a draft and it is cold. Ester is tuning the radio, listening to it with Lili.

RADIO: *(plays American swing for a while then starts transmitting)* London calling. Broadcasting messages home. Mary went dancing. Fish tore up all of the nets. Aunt Julie will arrive with the midnight steamboat. Karel and Tonda are all right. The windstorm will start late Tuesday morning. Zvoník moved the appointment to Monday. Eda has requested apples and plums. The engineer will be in the third train car next to the sleeper. The fields can expect rain at four in the morning...

ROSA: Have you heard from your brother, Lili?

LILI: Not in a year. I keep listening to the radio...

ROSA: You'll hear from him, don't worry.

LILI: Did you get used to the attic?

ESTER: The basement of Hitler street is off the bounds for Jews, so this is as good as it gets. Birds don't mind... still nothing? (*Lili is listening to the radio, Ester is on the roof looking through the binoculars*) Blum's bakery is closed, yellow stars in the windows... an auction at Kornfeld's... a big crowd there, guardsmen are pushing them away...

ROSA: You should get some wood or we'll catch a cold here.

ESTER: When it's dark I'll get some from the woodshed.

ROSA: Hana locks it.

ESTER: And what's the small window for? Your daughter had an A in PE...

RADIO: Cousin Jarmila will go to the spa. Send bricks for four houses. Dad from Kopřivnice received everything all right. Aunt Ana has to find a shade immediately...

ESTER: (*watching with the binoculars*) Farmers are leaving in their wagons... one of them's carrying Kornfeld's cabinet... the other one's got the beds...

ROSA: Stop it.

ESTER: They looted the doctor's consulting room... Two women in a folk dress are fighting over a chair... guardsmen are now trying to restore order... oh goodness me... they just broke the backrest.

ROSA: Poor Kornfeld.

ESTER: (*through the binoculars*) On Hlinka's square they're putting up ordinances... there's Pujdes with his wife... pushing a pram...

ROSA: If you don't stop I'll take the binoculars.

ESTER: It's mine.

ROSA: It's Jakob's in the first place. So cold here.

LILI: We live in one room on the periphery, three families together. A good hour from here. At least you're in your own place, Mrs Rozenfeld.

ROSA: We should have changed our name.

ESTER: You must be joking! They'd find out that the register was faked and lock you up right away. I'm proud of being who I am.

ROSA: Was just a thought.

RADIO: Lída will be singing at six on Wednesday. The watchful eye has arrived...

LILI: Did you hear that?! The watchful eye!

ESTER: Oh my goodness! Yay!

ROSA: Be quiet! Someone will come!

LILI: The watchful eye has arrived. Jakob is alive! I'm off to tell father! See you! *(Lili runs away. Pujdes enters the café downstairs. Králik is reading official documents.)*

PUJDES: God bless!

KRÁLIK: On guard!

PUJDES: *(carries a table for testing visual acuity)* There was an auction at Kornfeld's...

KRÁLIK: What will you use that for?

PUJDES: Kids can learn without a primer... was the best thing I got.

KRÁLIK: The doctor is a fly in your ointment, isn't he? I heard that the other day he killed your son... terrible... well they'll be gone soon.

PUJDES: I was meaning to ask you, well if you could... *(pulls out a book)* Something nice...

KRÁLIK: My poetry? You liked it?

PUJDES: My wife more like... I don't get half of it... the simple man I am... if you could dedicate it to Marka Pujdesová, please...

KRÁLIK: This is the latest collection. The Jagged Peaks. Get it?

PUJDES: Beg pardon?

KRÁLIK: Mountains... jagged.

PUJDES: Jagged? Like edges... on swords?

KRÁLIK: Other edges can be jagged too. You know what edges?

PUJDES: Edges?

KRÁLIK: Peaks of the Tatra mountains, dear neighbour. War is raging and besides jagged swords there are also the jagged peaks of our mountains to consider. *(signs the book and hands it over to Pujdes)* I like you, Pujdes, because we're from the same village. A Slovak loves his home village like nothing else in the world. But it's too confining. So he runs off to Bratislava. And once there he makes it to an important post – which I did, in all modesty – and brings along the customs of his birthplace. This is why there are no real cities in Slovakia, just large villages. And it's our strong point! Simplicity and cleanliness, that's it. Drop by sometime, we'll reminisce about the land around our village. *(starts working, Pujdes is not leaving)* Anything else, my fellow countryman?

PUJDES: You know, I'd like to read your books... others too... grow and get educated... but it ain't possible...

KRÁLIK: What's not possible?

PUJDES: The movie theatre is not a good business... earns enough to buy food... but not books...

KRÁLIK: What are you trying to say?

PUJDES: Wouldn't there be a little store for a loyal compatriot?

KRÁLIK: But you're a Lutheran.

PUJDES: I'll turn all over if I have to, get christened as a Catholic even.

KRÁLIK: All right, all right, I know you're an apt Slovak. Why don't you go to the Business Office?

PUJDES: I will, sure I will, but you're a famous poet, innit, a political figure, on good terms with ministers... I mean couldn't you drop my name to the right people... that Jano Pujdes deserves to be enlightened too.

KRÁLIK: You know how many people write to Morávek at the office every day? The things they want! The government would like to give away, but there's nothing left. Expropriation is over.

PUJDES: Mannerová, dry goods, just round the corner...

KRÁLIK: Three are already fighting over it, Mr Pujdes. No respect, all they want is to get hold of some property. It's only owing to our luminaries that we're doing fine and can think about further improvement. (*stares at Tiso's portrait*) And all around just decay and agony, Europe is bleeding, Poland's gone, the Balkans have fallen apart, Stalin is trembling. The German army and our Fast Division are cutting a piece off Russia every day. They deserve it. Were not far-sighted enough. What do we care? We ought to enjoy our peace while it lasts. Thank God Almighty that wise men made a good last-minute decision. We could have been no more. If we'd hesitated, today we'd be where the Czechs found themselves. Without a country, torn to pieces. And all the while we're doing so well that every German official who comes here is shocked how much food can still be bought on our markets, while the German Reich, spilling blood for us on the battlefields of Europe, can only dream about fresh meat, cream and eggs! The Reich experts are competing to go on an official trip to Slovakia. Do you know what Germans dubbed us? Salamia.

PUJDES: Salamia?

KRÁLIK: And Bratislava is not Pressburg, but Fressburg – a city where you can pig yourself. A half-wit might be offended, but common sense tells us to laugh about it! In wartime it's such a lovely simile! Fressburg, the capital of Salamia! In the roaring

north wind, what more can we wish for? This is heaven on earth, Pujdes, a true paradise for Slovaks. We should enjoy it and not see only profit when we should show gratitude!

PUJDES: Well I'm so glad, a lot, innit, I even lit a candle...

KRÁLIK: There's stability, salami and prosperity. Only few made it happen, only few worked hard for it, while the rest were just waiting for larks to fall ready roasted into their mouths! And they're still waiting! Expropriation is finished, but people want more! Listen to this. *(reads original applications)* As a shop assistant I'm fully qualified, and the fashion house I want to expropriate will be an exemplary Christian business under my management. I would also like to note that I am Slovak and an orphan of war... *(reads another application)* ...I'm a guardsman and I see it with my eyes that Catholics are being oppressed and I, being a guardsman, want to help the poor Catholic people, so could we get one Jewish room for rent... *(another application)* I hereby request one battery-powered radio transmitter which would enable me to listen to Holy Mass as well as many of your respectable orders and regulations... *(another application)* ...Mommy writes that she is starving 'cause 880 crowns is not enough to survive these days. Wouldn't you starve to feed the one who gave you life? I heard that things are being taken away from Jews and surely dresses and linen and coats are among them, so please, if some of what one rich Jewess doesn't need could go to a poor brave clerk... *(puts the letters away)* Ask yourself first, Pujdes – what did I do for the community? Did I sacrifice anything? Am I not expecting just benefits? Think about it. *(Pujdes exists, Hana enters)*

HANA: Here are the accounts. I don't understand any of it. *(wants to leave)*

KRÁLIK: Why do you keep avoiding me?

HANA: I'm busy.

KRÁLIK: The old one will do it. No reason she should lounge about in the attic.

HANA: I want to be useful. Not someone's liability.

KRÁLIK: I can't imagine it here without you. *(tries to hug her, Hana frees herself)*
But if I disgust you...

HANA: No... it's all just so... fast for me...

KRÁLIK: I wrote a poem for you... *(hands her a sheet)*

HANA: *(reads)* Some demon grabbed my tiny feet...

KRÁLIK: Shhh! It's a poem for the eyes only.

HANA: *(reads)* I never got anything like this before...

KRÁLIK: Well I've never written anything like this... so wild and passionate... You deserve not just poems, but a better life, Hanka, after all you've been through. I can give it you. If you want it.

HANA: I need more time, Mr Králik.

KRÁLIK: I'll give you everything, time... and love. *(gives her a velvet-covered box, Hana opens it and takes out a golden necklace)* Accept this as a gift from someone who has the best intentions with you. *(hangs the necklace around Hana's neck and turns on the radio)*

RADIO: *(singing a Slovak tango)* Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: *(hands a screenplay to Hana)* This is the screenplay for *Svätopluk*. I know the idea of becoming an actress turns you off, but still – could you read a short passage with me?

HANA: I'm going to stammer...

KRÁLIK: Don't worry, they all stammer the first time. Do you think actors like Borodáč never experience a slip of the tongue? Actors are people too and – this is a secret – there's an actor in everyone... fine, I respect it, you don't want to act. But please spare some of your time and read with me. I just finished it and need to hear it from a live mouth to know if it's any good. Will you help me?

HANA: You won't laugh at me?

KRÁLIK: I won't, duchess. *(finds the page in the screenplay and shows Hana the lines)* You're the duchess, I'm Svätopluk. *(reads)* Some gloomy dusk, look.

HANA: *(reads)* Why are you frowning, my king?

KRÁLIK: *(reads)* I fear for my homeland, I'm afraid of the barbarians from the East who want to take it away from me. I am going to fight for life with them, swords will clang in no time, but that's not what I fear.

HANA: *(reads)* A duke ought to be an example of valiance.

KRÁLIK: *(reads)* The only thing I fear is that I shall perish in the woeful battle... and will never know your love. To fall for one's fatherland is a joy, but to fall unloved is like having my eyes poked out by a raven.

HANA: *(reads)* Don't say that, duke, it's not true!

KRÁLIK: *(reads)* Even a man on the top, a man like me, a man with a position can blush when a woman enters his heart. You.

HANA: *(reads)* You are so magnificent that I never assumed that I could...

KRÁLIK: *(reads)* You, duchess, govern my heart and thus the entire kingdom.

HANA: (*reads*) I shall give you my hot lips, duke, and then my young body, so that my love will join your bronze shield. Kiss me! (*Hana puts the script aside, Králik embraces her*)

KRÁLIK: Hana, there's so much I'd like to tell you. You, Slovakia, the whole world. Things have started moving, now they're fast like an express train and I'm in its compartment and see the future, our future, rush by behind the window! Travel with me! We can do so much together! Because with you, with you it will all be much easier, I can feel it.

RADIO: (*signing in the spirit of the Slovak tango*) Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: The iron wheels of art are screeching and our film is rolling into the finish! Hana, we're shooting the first kilometres of through and through Slovak celluloid, filling it with images wholly new and bold! If you could see how the actors flourish! The proud twinkle of their brow when the duke beholds his land! And thousands of his lads draw their swords and their cloaks curl like a wave across a wheat field! Cinema operators came all the way from Berlin, the Germans lent us cameras and lighting cars, but the essential component – the people and artists – are ours! Slovak blood will boil on the silver screen, our veins will throb, our hearts moved by love, betrayal and battle. There is no love without betrayal, I know, but I want to promise you by all that I deem sacred... (*pulls out a roll of film*) ... by the first roll of *Svätopluk* that I'll never betray you, that I'm ready to fight for you like I've fought for the gentility of this country.

RADIO: (*signing in the spirit of the Slovak tango*) Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: It's hard to elevate one's countrymen, it's tough, but one shouldn't give up. I always remember Tajovský who I sat next to in the National Theatre during the premiere of his *Death of Durko Langsfeld* – and besides journalists, there were no more than six people in the audience. Jozef Gregor smiled bitterly, leaned over and whispered to me – next time I'm going to buy a sewing machine and instead of writing I'll make panties for ballet dancers. I felt hard done-by.

RADIO: (*signing in the spirit of the Slovak tango*) Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: And today? Slovaks may go to the theatre more often, but movies are always packed and sold out! And so I thought – this century belongs to the film and if

people want shows let's satisfy this need with a movie, an art movie! Give the people valuable moving pictures! German pedagogues claim that one should know how to read, write and take photographs. After the March coup, when we became independent, many didn't wish us well, underestimated us in cultural matters too. But Slovaks are thirsty for their own film! The only joy a Slovak could have so far was work, and we can now give him other pleasures, we can give him film! A cinematic projector should be in every village! And if it doesn't work right away, the fast vehicles of our film division will finish the job!

RADIO: *(signing in the spirit of the Slovak tango)* Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: You may say, Hanka, that our roads are windy and the forsaken villages will never see the rays of the projector! They will! One day, the sky will be criss-crossed by cultural airships which will find their way to the remotest corners of our magnificent country! The cultural airship will raise the spirit of the people on parallel fronts – in the morning, it will broadcast Holy Mass! While the President will be celebrating Holy Mass in Bánovce, a technological miracle will transmit his voice everywhere, to stir up our spirit! After the sermon, there will be time for entertainment and learning too! The smoke of a chemical cloud released like steam from the cultural airship will make a projection screen in the sky and the awestruck crowd will watch the newsreel – not only to be informed about world news, but also to see educational and instructive films teaching the nation everything it needs to know.

RADIO: *(signing in the spirit of the Slovak tango)* Stability, salami and prosperity...

KRÁLIK: And the piece de resistance of the cloud theatre will be *Svätopluk* in colour! Yes it will be a colour movie, our epic film, celebrating the third anniversary of our new country! *Svätopluk* through the optics of national socialism! With music by the best composers, played by the foremost actors of the National Theatre, and decorated by the paintings of the most important artists of the country! The screenplay, supervised by me, was written by the most renowned men of letters of all generations. I fulfilled my desire to have one literary master in Slovakia write one character each. The crowd scenes can include nearly all inhabitants of Slovak villages and the most exemplary guardsmen will be cast in the roles of *Svätopluk's* party! If the great Hlinka were still alive, oh dear if he just were alive, the director would give him the most honourable role – that of the Pope of Rome. Before

Svätopluk asks his sons to break the rods, he has a dream. A vision, more like – he sees the great personalities of the future shaking hands and weaving a mighty trunk out of the rods, a trunk which the winds might bend, but never break! We'll be shooting on the peak of Zobor and in this dream Štúr, Hlinka and old Škultéty will shake hands. This all, my dearest Hana, is my brainchild and though I might make the impression of immodesty, I've now ridden myself of diffidence because I'm not praising myself, but the Slovak skill which has risen to the heights of the Tatra mountains, while I, undeservingly, in this sinful body, now revere your snow-white shins! *(dances with Hana, the radio plays Slovak tango-jazz)*

RADIO: *(signing)* Some demon grabbed my tiny feet
 I'm mad for it I feel the heat
 I start to dance right in the morning
 It's jazz my head moves to the beat

 The sounds of violin mouth-harp and clarinet
 I jig like crazy know no etiquette

 Some demon grabbed my tiny feet
 With a cute girl we dance so sweet

(They dance offstage, the operetta-like atmosphere vanishes. Rosa is wrapped up in a duvet in the cold attic.)

ESTER: *(feels her forehead)* You're burning.

ROSA: There's nothing wrong with me.

ESTER: Majerová will bring some medicine.

ROSA: Don't bother her... I believe I can see flames... outside...

ESTER: *(looks with the binoculars)* You're just imagining it. Rest now.

ROSA: Your shoes are dirty.

ESTER: Mom, please...

ROSA: It doesn't become a young lady... shoes are the mirror of a person... they should shine... *(sits on the bed)* I didn't teach you anything. *(Ester gives her the shoes, Rosa starts cleaning them with the edge of her shirt)*

ESTER: *(takes her shoes)* Give it here. *(cleans the shoes herself)* Happy now?

ROSA: I still see flames...

ESTER: You're delirious because of the fever.

MAJEROVÁ: *(enters)* Here, drink. *(gives her pills in a folded paper, Rosa swallows them and drinks)* And put this on. Salicyl cream. Should go on the joints.

ROSA: There was no need, Ms Majerová...

MAJEROVÁ: I can't leave you without any help, can I? *(smearing Rosa with the cream)*

ROSA: *(looking through the skylight)* I can see flames...

MAJEROVÁ: But that's where... *(Ester gestures to her to be quiet.)* Rest now. *(they massage Rosa for a while until she dozes off)* You shouldn't go out Miss Ester...

they're like rabid...

ESTER: What is burning?

MAJEROVÁ: Your synagogue... they threw everything out, the cylinders are now in the mud...

ESTER: The Torah scrolls.

MAJEROVÁ: Smashed the windows and then set it on fire. They're drinking hard liquor and dancing. I'll bring you a chicken broth in the morning. *(exits)*

Scene Eleven: NAVIGATOR (1941)

Jakob, wearing a Royal Air Force uniform, is shining his boots.

JAKOB: Dear father, dear Lili, dear Ester, all of you back home in Slovakia. If I could write a letter which wouldn't endanger your lives, I'd write that my gruelling journey took me to England. I was admitted to the Royal Air Force. There are lots of Czech and Slovaks here. We actually set up a Czechoslovak flight squadron. I'm taking a two-year training to become a navigator. So I guess my fondness for maps was useful after all. You'd be surprised to see me, who always loved German and Latin, to be learning English, which never interested me, but now it is the language of what seems the last part of the world which might stand up against Hitler. Russia is bleeding and is likely fall in no time, France is on its knees and England just about defended itself. I'm glad I'm here with pilots who saved the British Isles from a German invasion and of whom Churchill said that never in the field of human conflict was so much owed to so few. Since I started the navigation training, I've had three commanders. The new one is always younger than his predecessor. Almost all of the

experienced pilots are dead; they fell in the Battle of Britain. Young boys come to take their places, only to be replaced by even younger ones. These are terrible times for the world. Young men have to die, young men who haven't even had the time to find a girlfriend. And life back home is just so inhuman. You were displaced and robbed of the property you spent long years acquiring. If I could write a letter to you, I'd write what I find to be the most horrid, namely, that some Jakob, former lawyer who loves the German and Latin culture, has to pilot a plane which will one day kill Germans only because they have been killing everyone else in Europe for several years now, killing people who stand in their way. The worst thing about this war is that nobody will remain without blemish. Should Jews keep quiet forever and let themselves be killed? Or should they take up arms and turn into machines just like those who are killing them? We're no longer people, we're machines. Are we even better than themselves? Dear Lili, dear father, dear Ester, there are no winners. Everybody is a victim.

Scene Twelve: NEWSREEL (1941)

Pujdes is sticking an ordinance onto the wall of the movie theatre. Lili – wearing a yellow stripe on her sleeve – wants to enter the theatre, but Pujdes does not let her in.

PUJDES: Where are you going?

LILI: To the movie theatre. The newsreel will mention *Svätopluk*.

PUJDES: You're not allowed. Didn't you read the regulation? *(points at the poster)* For chrissake, am I supposed to read it for you?!

ESTER: *(runs in, also wearing a yellow band)* Would you believe it, Irma wasn't allowed in the swimming pool...

LILI: *(leaving)* Come on.

ESTER: Not even the newsreel?

LILI: *(pulls her aside)* Come on! Dad went to the lake last night. For the last time. In the morning, he had to turn in his fishing gear. *(they stop at the wall and read the ordinance)*

ESTER: *(reads)* It is prohibited for Jews and Jewesses to marry non-Jews and non-Jewesses. The conscious breach of this prohibition is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years.

LILI: *(reads)* Jews do not possess any voting rights and cannot be elected to the Assembly of the Slovak Republic.

ESTER: *(reads)* Jews may not perform medical, apothecary and veterinary practice.

LILI: *(reads)* The Ministry of Interior and subjected offices may prohibit Jews from staying in specified villages or city parts, squares, parks, as well as spas, pubs, cafés, exhibitions, and so on.

ESTER: *(reads)* Jews may not be granted a radio license. Jews cannot possess or bear arms... cannot be issued a fishing license... Jews may not drive Slovak motor vehicles... bank deposits can be withdrawn only up to the amount of 500 crowns...

KRÁLIK: *(in the café with Hana)* Go take care of it sweetheart, will you?

HANA: I'm embarrassed.

KRÁLIK: I don't mind going there with you, but if you tell her on your own, without my help, it will be your victory. Just yours. You'll break the spell. She's been humiliating you for years and now you're calling the shots, don't you forget that.
(kisses her) My queen. I'll be waiting for you.

(Hana leaves, Králik pours another drink. In the attic, the Radio plays a song by F. K. Veselý. Hana enters, Rosa rises from bed)

RADIO: *(singing)* A little village in the valley, tiny houses, I haven't seen you for so long...

HANA: Are you feeling better, Rozenfeld? I guess you are if you're listening.

ROSA: There's nothing wrong with me.

HANA: I'm here on an official errand. Did you hear about Act No. 198/1941?

ROSA: The Jewish code.

HANA: That's what they call it too. Sit down or you'll pass out. I don't need your bric-a-brac, but it's the law. Section 78. You're not allowed to keep paintings or sculptures. Nor busts of national personalities.

ROSA: Don't have any. *(Hana studies a statuette)* A water sprite. The young one bought it for me in Luhačovice.

HANA: Keep the sprite. Got a camera?

ROSA: No.

RADIO: *(singing)* Regards to my little house, my beloved mommy, from so far away...

HANA: *(takes the binoculars)* But this I have to. The radio too. *(Hana turns off the radio)* Not allowed to listen to national songs. It offends the Aryan culture. If it were up to me, I'd let you have it, but everything in the attic can be heard and I don't want trouble. And clean up, or you'll have rats here. *(grabs the binoculars and exits with the Radio. Puts the things in front of Králik who is still in the café, drinking. Ester runs in the attic.)*

ESTER: Where are my binoculars?! Where? They were Jakob's! You hear me?! Why did you give them Jakob's binoculars?! Mom! Why did you do that?! *(Rosa lies in the bed sheets, coughing, lifeless)*

Scene Thirteen: THE LAW (1991)

Králiková enters.

KRÁLIKOVÁ: I almost hit the roof! My blood pressure just leaped up! I was given Czechoslovak citizenship, have permanent residence, and what's the use?! Lawyer calls me that the restitution is problematic because there were other owners even before us. What other owners, I ask?! Some Jews he says and I say, doctor are you insinuating we stole the café?! I mean my parents? And he says that my parents expropriated it. Mom told me that they got everything in accordance with the law and that during the war they were helping the Jews and that they protected them! What a heap of crap! You help someone out and they'll accuse you! So I ask the lawyer if the law was breached back then, if mom and dad behaved in any way differently than the rest of the people, and he says no, they behaved just like everybody else, the law was respected and thousands of Slovaks were allowed to expropriate Jewish property in accordance with contemporary legislation, but that from today's perspective it qualifies as theft, unfortunately! And I say to him – you're exaggerating, doctor! Making a mountain out of a molehill! It was I who was robbed! I'm the one who was harmed by the communists when they nationalized private property! What do I care what was before them? I hadn't even been born! How far back do you want to go? The prehistoric period?! *(exits)*

Scene Fourteen: POETRY (1941)

In the café. The drunk Králik is apologizing to Hana. In front of them, the pile of things they took from Rosa. Including the Radio.

KRÁLIK: I'm sorry I made you go to her, please forgive me, my little rose, but it was for your benefit... I don't always know how to deal with people, I'm either too good or too harsh... I want to be helpful too much and they don't get it. Do you understand? You did it yourself and are now free... I shouldn't have become a state officer, do you think it's easy for me, to wiggle like a fish in big politics? It's a sacrifice I laid on the altar of state matters! You know how much effort that costs me?! I'm a poet... I can press words like grapes, turn them into wine...

HANA: *(caresses him)* I love your poems.

KRÁLIK: Thank you, oh muse... I mean no one any harm... not even Rozenfeld... if I just could sit under a tree and write... create things, make verse... raise those who are not in the know... but I can't... the times are such, there's nowhere to hide... oh all right, I'll help the state, cultivate it, after all it helped me too, I've got mills and estate, well it helped others too, all the faithful ones from our descent, hundreds of people toil like mules, but only a few dozen can think, and it is precisely this bunch of the best of the best who are competent to lead this country... so few intellectuals among politicians... only self-seeking hyenas, but we mustn't yield to them, we've got to unite, we the artists of the new Slovakia... so far we're sticking it out, sowing the cultural field, look... at least Milo is editor-in-chief... and Jožo got Matica, that's a lucrative position... and Fraňo only got the used books shop... what's that about? Just not up to scratch. We're too modest... others take things and we just stand by... I'm not talking about myself, I have what I need and most of all I've got you now... forget about property, but it makes you feel bitter... that you don't respect Slovakia enough, your own poets. We're your conscience, God damn it, your guilty conscience!

HANA: Don't blaspheme, or I'll leave.

KRÁLIK: Stay! Please, stay... I'm nothing without you... you are a true rose, not this dirty joint... I'm suffocating here, no chance for creative flight... if it weren't for my movie, I'll shoot myself in the head, shut up, not just the movie, you too are my light...

my greatest actress, Adina Mandlová can't measure up to you... you've got natural modesty and charm and the thing about your not wanting to be in front of the camera, though you'd have as many roles as you could wish for, well I'd arrange that. But this modesty of a Slovak girl which you possess that's the greatest treasure you can have...

HANA: Rozenfeld's totally abandoned herself.

KRÁLIK: Do we have to talk about the witch? Isn't it enough that I have to look at her trash?! (*sweeps Rosa's stuff off the table*) Did you show her? Showed her who's the boss?! You broke the spell. I... I'm ashamed to admit this, but I... I am afraid of her! In my own home, I, Ambróz Králik, am afraid to look a woman in the eyes?! Who is she? An altar candle?! She's nothing, nothing!

HANA: Sit down, or you'll hurt yourself.

KRÁLIK: *Svätopluk* premieres in ten days... I won't let them spoil my pleasure of the new work... the two have to leave, fast... either they go, or I will... Take this down... (*dictates and Hana writes*) I declare that in my café I do not need the following Jews: Rosa Rozenfeld, born 1900 and Ester Rozenfeld, born 1925. If these Jews are detained and transported, neither the business nor the Slovak Republic will suffer any economic harm because I have found a replacement in an Aryan citizen, Hana Kostolníková, born 1916, who is soon to become my lawful wife... (*Hana stops writing, Králik kisses her*) ... if she agrees. My rose... will you become Hana Králiková? Will you save me from hell? (*kneels down and Hana puts her hand on the top of his head*)

Scene Fifteen: ROUGE (1942)

The hotel attic.

ROSA: (*running in*) Hide quick! Guardsmen are taking all girls. They're taking them to the fire station and from there to the train! (*Ester hides in the attic. Pujdes enters wearing a Hlinka's Guard uniform*)

PUJDES: Where's your daughter, Rozenfeld?

ROSA: Are you a member of the Guard, Mr Pujdes?

PUJDES: Answer me!

ROSA: She went out with her friends.

PUJDES: Now suddenly no one's home, what a job... the decree is clear, everyone has to stay in. And where are they? Not in!

ROSA: Please... Mr Pujdes... can't she stay?

PUJDES: No way! I'll take you instead! *(pulls Rosa away, beats her. Rosa screams, Ester comes out of her hiding place)*

ESTER: Leave her alone!

PUJDES: A-ha, the birdie just peeped out! Come along with me.

ROSA: My little girl... *(embraces her daughter)*

PUJDES: Not to worry, Rozenfeld, they won't eat her there...

ESTER: Don't worry, mom, I'll manage.

PUJDES: Will be building houses, for others, folk will live there and there'll be peace, finally. Come on now! *(Ester and Pujdes exit, enter Králik and Hana)*

ROSA: *(kneels)* Do something, Mr Králik, I beg you please!

HANA: Go to the attic now, woman! *(Rosa leaves)*

KRÁLIK: I have something for you. *(hands a small box to Hana)*

HANA: *(reads from the cover)* Ro... u... ge...

KRÁLIK: The real thing, from Paris.

HANA: What for?

KRÁLIK: Today's premiere. You're beautiful. But now you're going to be absolutely gorgeous. *(starts applying the lipstick to her lips, Hana finishes the job and looks into the mirror)*

HANA: There's blood on my lips! *(laughs and kisses Králik. They leave. Lili is trying to sneak up to the attic.)*

LILI: *(quietly calling)* Ester? Ester! Mrs Rosa? Ester?

ROSA: *(crying)* They took her... they took my little girl, hide somewhere, or else you'll be next, you... you've got fever!

LILI: They let me go...

ROSA: You're all spotty, ill-fated girl... it looks like typhus...

ETA: Don't worry... I'm not going to infect you... Mr Lövy smuggled in a serum against typhus... gave me a double injection and now it looks as if I was infected... but it's nothing... he managed to give injections to about twenty of us... and we weren't taken for the transport... they even called a professor from Bratislava who

confirmed it was typhoid fever... I got four weeks' adjournment... can't go to the movies...

ROSA: You can't stay here, I've no idea what's going to happen next... do you know Majerová, the woman with the handicrafts workshop?

LILI: Majerová, the woman who sows?

ROSA: Kristína, yes. When things calm down, we'll go to her... you've got four weeks, you say...?

LILI: Four... I had no time to say goodbye to Ester... *(Ester appears, led by Pujdes)*

ESTER: Mr Pujdes... why are you doing this?

PUJDES: Quiet! *(they are walking)* I've got seven kids, you know? I wasn't born into a family where all was ready for me, like you did. Got to pick up doctor Kornfeld too, take care of something... Was supposed to get Miss Lili, but I talked my way out of it... what a filthy job! Keep walking, make it quick! You'll have to board a train! Phew!

(Ester and Pujdes are walking. They are headed towards the transport. Králik enters wearing a tuxedo and Hana in a dinner dress. The speaker in the Radio is talking into an archaic microphone.)

RADIO: Dear listeners, welcome to our live coverage from the ceremonial premiere of the first Slovak epic feature film. This cultural event of the year takes place in hard times when our Fast Division, on the side of the Wehrmacht, is fighting in the Russian steppes against the demon of Bolshevism. But although guns are being drawn all over the world, the muses in Slovakia are far from quiet. Today's premiere of *Svätopluk* is the best proof. This unforgettable cinematographic work is the result of the fabulous cooperation within our entire cultural community and the generous funding from the highest state offices. We are speaking to you from the big hall of the National Theatre where a cinema projector was installed along with a silver screen the size of which our country has never seen before. It is truly breathtaking. The theatre is well prepared for this evening's ceremony with magnificent decorations – including freshly cut flowers, and Slovak and German flags hanging on every wall. Diplomats from the allied countries have already found their seats, headed by the German military attaché. In the boxes, we see ladies of the diplomatic entourage, wearing dresses made exclusively for this occasion. Fashion houses found their inspiration in the world of film and used Old Slavonic patterns. The hairdressers were

no different. It is because of them that our ladies now prefer free-flowing hair, iron-curved and adorned with bronze tiaras – spitting images of those used in the movie. The auditorium has been mostly filled by Hlinka's Youth in uniforms. Yes, this movie is primarily sending a message to them, the future generation which will be responsible for the development and prospects of the Slovak Republic. And just now, in joyful twitter, we see Tatrás and Lassies, HY girls, wearing twilled tawny blouses and ice-blue scarves, dark blue pleated skirts and black shoes. They had barely time to sit down when a gasp ran through the audience, like a gust of wind in a cornfield. Dear listeners, you can surely hear the monumental fanfares in your radios as our government are finding their seats in the honorary box. But the ministers and their company are not sitting down yet, they're still waiting... yes... and the man is coming, the man for whom all our hearts are beating – Mr President has entered in a simple cassock and now beckons to the excited crowd. The packed National Theatre thunders like one man – On guard! On guard!

(triumphant movie score starts playing and the opening credits of the epic movie Svätopluk are being projected onto the entire area of the stage. The music is loud and exultant. But the credits do not come to an end, the sound is broken off and the film starts to burn.)

Interval

Act II: Holocaust

Flat pebbles stick out of the ground. They look like gravestones. Perhaps they even are.

ESTER

It was the first day of spring

March 21, 1942

When we were assembled in the fire station

And then herded into freight cars

Everyone was on the streets

Watching as I was being led through my home town

What if my shoes are dirty?

But I went on

And they all watched and said nothing

They said nothing

I was on the first transport from Slovakia

The first Judentransport

Jewish girls and young women

I was seventeen

The government paid for the transport of each of us five hundred marks

The Germans were surprised themselves at how fast they wanted to get rid of us

And at the price too

Croats paid thirty marks for every Jew

Slovaks five hundred

Finally I knew how much my country thought I was worth

There were sixty of us in one freight car

One bucket with water and one bucket if we had a call of nature

Fifteen-year-old Edit a beautiful little girl was there with us

Guardsmen dragged her out of the car at every stop

And raped her

She did not survive the journey

We were scared and humiliated but hung on with our last strength

They told us we were going to Germany to work

And we weren't afraid of work
When they opened the freight cars a headlight blinded us
Soldiers were standing outside with barking dogs
Los los weiter los
At the ramp we had to leave all our personal belongings
And the women in prisoners' uniforms pounced on them immediately
There were German prostitutes who were being re-educated by having to work
At once they stole everything from us and later had us entirely under control
Right there before the soldiers we had to take all our clothes off
They found it funny and it made no sense to cover ourselves
They cut our hair and shaved us and then we all
Had to dip into a huge tub filled with Lysol
I hadn't known bigger humiliation and this was just the start
Surprised we watched the bald-headed spectres walking towards us
Until we realized that those were the first ones from our transport
They dressed us in torn uniforms taken from Russian captives
Gave us clogs and those were my first hours
In a place called Auschwitz
A few days later they tattooed a number on my arm
I was no longer Ester Rozenfeld, I was number 1890
We had to line up twice a day
At five in the morning in any weather while it was raining or freezing cold
It took a few hours there were thousands of us and the numbers often didn't add up
The dead ones had to line up too we carried them outside and put them next to us
We pulled down old village houses cleaned the bricks flattened the soil
Expanding the camp for new transports
We got a piece of bread to eat some mouldy cheese and thin soup
No everyone got something if you weren't quick enough we were harrowed by thirst
Threw ourselves into puddles and drank the water from the ground
Got typhus as a result the clogs grazed our feet
But we went to work in fever malaria phlegmons on our feet
Because if you asked to be admitted to the hospital barracks
You surely wrote your own death sentence
You had to endure

Every day trucks would leave loaded with our friends who lost their strength
Or who were arbitrarily pointed at by the wardens
They were driven to gas chambers
After work we had to jump over a ditch
Frozen and exhausted
Those who jumped lived those who fell were loaded onto a truck
Thousands of Jews were eliminated before us here
Just in order to have a free camp for us
Thousands died only to make space for us
How can one live knowing this?
I often thought of mom and our fights which I now found petty
I also thought about my last weeks with her
The weeks we understood each other like never before
The thoughts of the café they stole from us, of my mom in the attic
They kept me sane
I had no idea that family transports were about to start back home
Hypocritically called “keeping families together”; I didn’t know I’d see mom very soon

RADIO

How to behave during an air raid?
The first condition of protection is to dim the lights
Next, make supplies of water for drinking and extinguishing fires
Best put the water in your bathtub
Always keep your papers and money at hand
The air raid is announced with the wailing sound of the sirens
Open the windows and put out any fire
Close the gas pipes, electricity and find a flashlight
A first-aid kit, a blanket, and quickly
But not in panic, go to the closest shelter

LILI

Kristína Majerová hid me without a single word
Rosa didn’t even have to plead with her
I hid in the cellar during the day and at night I went to her upstairs

She covered the windows and we dined together
Poor war food, cabbage and potatoes
She had this little store with handicrafts and a workshop next to it
Two women I never saw were threading beads there
They were sewing on a machine crocheting and one was carving salt cellars from
linden wood
They didn't know I was in the house it was better not to know
No one could be trusted because for hiding Jews
You could end up in a concentration camp
I wanted to deserve the food so
I started threading beads in candlelight
I didn't have to but I wanted to
You can't sit for hours in the dark wrapped in sheep wool blankets
I caught a cold and was afraid the cough would give me away
Went to stay upstairs in the bedroom
Managed it there until spring behind covered windows quiet as a mouse during the
day
In summer I could go back to the cellar it was safer there
Guardsmen did searches sometimes but never there
After three months Majerová had a wooden wall made
And behind the barrels with sauerkraut and a carboy of wine she definitely hid me
I was in a space that was two meters wide and seven meters long
The first six months I spoke no word to her
Poor soul she must have thought I hated her
But I kept thinking about Jakob and what he was doing somewhere in the world
I thought of mom and dad
Who didn't manage to escape like me
They could no longer vaccinate them because they quickly found out about the
bogus typhus
And Lövy was put on a special transport straight to Auschwitz
He was labelled "Return undesired"
One day I found this book called *How to Dance Well and With Ease*
I didn't expect to find it in the home of a woman who silently prayed all the time
She told me she got the book before she found God and that I could take it

So now I dance in the cellar with myself
I look like I'm mad but the opposite is true
Dance is an eraser I use to delete my brain to remain clean
I'm learning the foxtrot
The dance of a running fox placing one paw in front of the other
A 2/4 beat, right foot up front and to the right
Left foot to the side and then turn right
Right foot up close to the left
Left foot goes back and its tip to the right
Right foot to the side and the left foot up close
I'm a fox that cannot run away

JAKOB

Every night I get in
A four-engine Halifax bomber with the realization
That during the seven-hour flight they will try to kill me
Thousands of people will try to kill me while I'll be flying over their cities
Their home towns
Home of those whose fathers and brothers
Killed my family friends and loved ones
Only because they were descendants of David
And I'm airborne in order to
Destroy their factories even though I know
That I will most likely also kill dozens of innocent people down there
People who might not even be guilty of anything, unlike me up there
Hunched over a map in the freezing air
Seeping through holes made by shrapnels
We're flying over Dover Calais Arras Reims
Just before Nancy we turn north
Over Palatinate Forest we head towards Ludwigshafen
An industrial town on the Rhine
The river which flowed the wrong way round on my old maps
I'd rather fly the wrong way round like the river
I'd rather get out of here

Like some confused cartographer of ancient Rome
But the squadron of 150 British bombers
Holds me tight in its embrace it's night now
Shining bullets fly up from the ground to greet us
Colourful beads they're yellow red orange
They strike through the aluminium of the fuselage
I'm 14,000 feet above ground
And as Ludwigshafen burns down below I'm thinking
About how I'm only a few kilometres away from Heidelberg
Where I spent a semester at the university
Around me timed flak grenades are exploding one of our engines is on fire
But we're still not losing height
There's a fire in the cabin I'm trying to stamp it out with my boot
In the end I pour coffee over it from my thermos
It stopped there's just smoke now
I have no fear that I will die
I don't feel anything in fact just this dreadful emptiness between the temporal bones
My head is the size of the globe
Inside which there are two boulders
The Heidelberg boulder and the Ludwigshafen boulder
I pull off the leather mask and microphone
Something warm is dripping into my eyes
The upper shooter hands me a first-aid kit
His breath is steaming as he speaks
Dude that was close luckily it's just a scratch
The Germans call us Bombenterror
Our Halifax will return today
Old Stirlings are flying with us too
They're slower and the Messerschmitts attack them first
There's only one thing I fear during these raids at night
I, Jakob Weis, sergeant navigator of the Royal Air Force
I fear most of all
That one day I'll be given the operational map of our target
On which I will have to throw five-hundred-pound bombs

And that target will be far more southeast
Than where we fly these days
That it will be in Slovakia

KRÁLIK

Soft as a cobweb was the gown from Paris
Which I gave her
An expensive perfume straight from Champs Elysées
And another lipstick because she desired one
She who only knew cold water and Schicht's soap with the deer on it
Right before my eyes she transformed like a caterpillar into a butterfly
And every single second of our shared moments
I besprinkled her cheeks with kisses like vital rain
Thanking God for her being there
For wanting me for loving me
She was the greatest love of my life and she made me forget
That war was raging around us that death was rearing its ugly head
A head covered with warts

HANA

He lay on me sweating profusely and braying
He wanted a baby so much but nothing was happening
He turned me over like a lumberjack would turn a log he chopped me up
And I grew back together again
I wasn't used to this and he tried so hard he did
But I hated his perfume and was disgusted by his habits
And in the lingerie I felt like a whore from a side-street
But I did it because he was helping me
I didn't love his body but his soul
How could such a person have so much beauty in him
Beauty he sometimes put on paper too
When he dipped his pen in ink perhaps then for an instant
Only for an instant, but I liked him
He never found out because a woman should be dutiful faithful and reverent

And so I carried him like an iron ball and chain until death

RADIO

Today we'll be talking about incendiary bombs
Dropped by Anglo-American air terrorists
Two types are used most frequently
The so-called stick bomb
And phosphorus incendiary bomb
A stick bomb weighs 1.7 kilograms and has an explosive charge
Which explodes several minutes after it hits the ground
Its aim is to intimidate the fire brigade
It is not a good idea to run to it immediately
With a pail of water or a bag of sand
But it is also wrong not to do anything
Let us behave like a prudent soldier would
Find a safe hiding place
A post or a chimney
And from behind it find out what is going on in the first place
Only then can we start extinguishing the fire

MAJEROVÁ

I married a sewing machine
My husband's name is Singer because one disappointment is enough
To lock yourself up inside and find peace in prayer and work
I started going around the villages buying embroidery and lace
It was becoming fashionable and town ladies
Liked to decorate their modern suits with it
It was so proud so very Slovak
Then women from the remote hamlets heard of it and offered their services
I was buying and selling and they were not hungry anymore
Lili was like a daughter to me a daughter I never had
I cooked for her cared for her hid her
I looked forward to every evening when I could dine with her
First she was silent for a long long time but her speech returned in spring

I never mentioned the other transports I didn't want to upset her
And when she asked me about the families which stayed
I just shrugged and played the dumb because I didn't want to lie
About how almost everyone was driven away but I lied anyway
God forgive me for this lie and don't put me in my grave
Unclean and unworthy because I want to see your Kingdom come
Amen

JAKOB

When they started looking for a navigator who knew Czechoslovakia well
I applied
I knew the entire map of my old homeland by heart
And I impressed the officers with my knowledge
I was transferred from the bombers and assigned to a special unit
I have to admit I was relieved I didn't carry explosives over our targets
But I flew agents of the secret service
We didn't know who they were and couldn't talk to them
We just dropped them off at a set night hour
Over the Protectorate
One day they put me on the fastest British airplane
And off we flew to take pictures of Prague in bright daylight
Mosquito was so fast that it didn't have to be armed
There were just cameras on board
Because before German fighter planes noticed us and before they could
Fly up to our height we were long gone
I was moved to tears when I was the river Vltava from high up
Flowing through the city where I studied law
Another time we flew over Slovakia
I imagined our movie theatre down there
But I couldn't see it from the height
Only our cameras might have caught a glimpse of it
But their pictures were not for my eyes
They were immediately taken to be developed by intelligence officers
And so at least while I was looking at the clouds

Cut in pieces by the wings of our Mosquito I saw faces in them
My father's my sister's I saw Rosa and Ester too
All of them turned into clouds
Featherlight and flying into eternity

ROSA

I sold the wedding ring I once concealed
Sold my hair to the hairdresser
And used the last money I had to buy smoked meat on the black market
I hard-boiled ten eggs and packed everything in the smallest suitcase
We were not allowed to bring anything only food
Food for my girl building houses somewhere far away for us her parents
We all cry with one eye and laugh with the other
We're going to see our sons and daughters and we'll be together again
However hard the work in the fields and forests will be
We'll stay together and this is why I Rosa Rozenfeld am going tomorrow
To board a train with one eye crying and the other
Well you know

ESTER

When they came for mom they were wiser
And sent guardsmen from far-off villages who knew no one here
We couldn't expect any compassion
They were harshly beating old men and women
Kicking children and loading them into the freight cars like cattle
Meanwhile our lives in Auschwitz depended on the German prisoners
Who were marked with coloured triangles
Black for prostitutes
Purple for Jehova's witnesses who disapproved of war
Pink for lesbians red for communists and black-and-yellow
For those who had sexual intercourse with a Jew
They were all enemies of national socialism
And Heinrich Himmler the inventor of concentration camps himself
Appointed prisoners with the black triangle to be head wardens because their cruelty

Was beyond anything the cruellest SS men were capable of
These deranged creatures tortured us with pleasure
But the worst thing was that even some Jewesses when they became heads of a
section
Or were given small camp posts
Immediately changed their character
And become wicked towards the others
In times of peace these women would live peacefully would never hurt anyone
But this put them to the test and they discovered the most evil features in themselves
I felt sorry for them
I can't keep quiet about them so that the truth about what I experienced remains
whole
Once I missed the roll call and went to visit a sick friend
In the hospital section
Halt I heard behind me there was the Lagerälteste
The camp's senior warden a Jewess from down our way
And an SS soldier at her side
Why aren't you at the line-up?
And she slapped me across the face and I fell to the ground
I ran to the line-up and she came up to me to apologize afterwards
If she hadn't slapped me she said the SS woman would have beaten me much worse
That woman was an exception her slap might have
Just saved my life just like she saved the lives of others
Whom she drove out to work even though they were feverish she kicked them and
yelled at them
Drove them to work so they weren't gassed like the other sick ones who stayed in
bed
Those who can judge let them judge
Those who know the truth let them speak it
I don't
In each transport Doctor Mengele sought out pregnant women and twins
Took them to Section 10 where he did experiments on them
Always in a clean well-ironed uniform
His thumb stuck between the buttons of his jacket

Whistling an aria from La Traviata
An angel of death pointing his finger here and there
To the left towards life
To the right towards death
If he wasn't sure that the woman was pregnant he pressed her breasts
And then marked them with red chalk
We secretly did abortions for the pregnant ones
Because expecting a baby in Auschwitz meant certain death
You could have kept it and take it to the gas chamber
Or survive the secret abortion and live who knows for how long but live
No one knew when Mengele's glove would point at her
Or when one would give a warden a shifty look or not jump over a ditch
Or when one would have red hands because of the cold during check-up
Or feet swollen or not walking straight in quintuple file
And that in a second one would find herself standing on the deck of the truck heading
to the gas chamber
And the rest of the women those who survive won't have time to draw breath
Because tomorrow it will be their turn
We Jews have Sheol and Christians have Hell
I know what it is now
Hell is a line of old naked women
Walking behind barbed wire to be selected
That's how I saw my mother a month later
Behind the electric fence she was naked in the cold wind
I lost all hope that day
They punched her ticket to hell but a miracle happened
They sent her to the good side and since then I only tried
To get her to me

RADIO

A phosphorus incendiary bomb breaks through several stories of a house
All the while squirting flammable material
First bright flame blazes up and there's smoke
Giving the impression that all is lost

But that is a great mistake
Because several minutes after the impact all that's left around
On the walls the furniture the carpets
Is just sticky and harmlessly burning little flames
Which can be put out easily with water or sand
We start extinguishing the curtains cushions and upholstered furniture
The small fires on the floor and flat furniture are put out last

ESTER

I joined the illegal movement in the camp
They found me themselves
Women from all corners of Europe communists and democrats
I knew nothing about politics but I was young and unafraid
I could get medicine from the infirmary
They needed me and I needed them and thanks to them I survived
They first moved me to what they called Canada a place
Where the prisoner's things were sorted and then I spent some time in the bath of
camp B
Then at the food counter I was able to help many
There were thousands of us in the camp
And more and more died every day so it was easy to cook the documents
A woman who was alive became dead on paper and started anew
Not knowing of course how long this could go on and so I
Managed to get mother to me after a week
My friend the hospital custodian hid her
In the infirmary she kept her back during every line-up
So that the Lagerarzt wouldn't see she was weak and could barely stand
The custodian was brave like no one else she wrote down the numbers of those who
were sent to death by Mengele
And then exchanged them with those who just died so that the living ones could stay
But the Angel of Death was unpredictable because one day he kept the papers of
those who were to go to the gas chamber
And another day he kept the list of those who survived and no one could guess how
he would decide

He made the worst selections when he was in a good mood
He gave candy to his favourite twins on whom he did experiments
Sometimes he was nice to kids he tried to cause them as little pain as possible
And other times in a fit of rage he sent dozens of them to the gas chamber
Most of them were Roma
And mom behind the back of this madman
Survived day after day and was getting stronger
Didn't talk or recognize me emaciated like a puppet
I supported her that evening during line-up
It was cold and it started to rain heavily
The roll call went on a the new women from Belgium and France
Who just got there the day before they couldn't hold it and burst out crying
It was then I and my friends started to sing quietly
And the Belgians stopped and hummed along with us
Even the orderlies listened with interest
And didn't punish us for the singing
(sings) Because we are flawless men
Hale and hearty at it again
Got the head of David the body of Goliath
Because we are flawless men
Because we are flawless men

JAKOB

We were flying low under the clouds
When our Mossie took a direct hit
The pilot was dead on the spot and I managed to eject with a parachute
This was somewhere near Pilsen
We were taking pictures of factories
Focke-Wulfs were waiting up in the sky
We had to nosedive to escape
A German sentry caught me before
I could disentangle myself from the parachute ropes
If I had been an Englishman I would have been sent to a prisoner camp
But because I was a citizen of the Slovak Republic

A faithful ally of the Great German Reich
And therefore a traitor, they could have shot me right away
But first they interrogated me and beat me
Yelled at me you're a terrorist a Jew
Terrorist
You kill innocent women and children
What did it matter that we were just taking pictures
And then they sent me to the Mauthausen concentration camp
In Austria just outside of Linz
In my head I saw the places
Through which they transported me all beaten up
My inner compass was precise
Passau Aschach Linz
Towns lined along the Danube
And finally Mauthausen
I hadn't been so close to home
In this world for years

LILI

I damaged my eyesight in the cellar
But I got a better sense of hearing because my life depended on it
Ms Majerová and I agreed on signals
Three thumps – I have to be quiet
One thump – the alarm is over
My life is numbers now
One three one three one three
I try to make up dance steps to these numbers
One three two One three two (*dances*)
A prisoner's waltz they're playing my numbers
I rarely hear one
Mostly I hear just three three three
When drunk Pujdes comes I'm afraid of him
But Majerová pours him another one
Three knocks and I freeze

The longest three knocks ever and one thump not to follow for long
I stop breathing just like back then
When German soldiers raided our place with a dog
I barely made it behind the fake wall
I was saved by a barrel of sauerkraut and carboy of wine
The dog was so confused it didn't smell me
I don't know how it was possible but they didn't find me
After eternity I heard a thump
But I didn't budge an inch for another hour
I rather stopped going upstairs altogether I'm afraid to dine with Majerová
Pujdes suspects something and I can hear his singing in the cellar
I'm losing colour every day I've turned totally pale
Like a fish in a cave never to see daylight again

PUJDES

(singing drunk)

There's a green tree on King's Hill
There's a green tree on King's Hill
Its top is leaning to
Its top is leaning to... *(stops singing)*
I know there are Jews here
No one fools Jan Pujdes
Jews are here and I know it
Jews

MAJEROVÁ

I begged him not to shout like that
And he told me to pour him more
I asked him
What about your kids
You seem to have too many of them Mr Pujdes
Hard to count them all
I knew he hid the little Kornfeld boy in his home
And he yelled shut up!

Or I'll turn you in for what you're hiding in the cellar
So I say do you go to church at least
Because they read the letter of the Catholic bishops
Who don't agree with how our fellow citizens are being treated
That their lives are in danger and there are rumours
Not just that the Germans got a severe thrashing in Stalingrad
But also that our Jews were not sent to new villages at all
But they're being murdered and none of them is coming back
A few of them have escaped they keep saying but no one wants to believe that

RADIO

A young listener from Pukanec wrote us a letter
Dear gentlemen could you give me advice
On how to protect bees in these times
Against a gas attack from the sky
Our bee communities are economically so important
I might be young but I so much want to contribute
To a better life in Slovakia
Dear Jozef your problem is very interesting
We'll consult it with experts and you
And your little bees will get an answer soon

ROSA

I never saw my daughter again
They took the food I had for her at the ramp and what happened after
Was death postponed for a while
And I wished that death would not wait
That it would come right away
That I would be lucky for the first time

ESTER

Mom died in my arms she didn't recognize me
The custodian in the hospital barrack did what she could
But the gloved finger pointed at her

The camp doctor said she has to be inoculated
And the orderly stuck a long needle full of phenol into her heart
They killed the sick with a phenol injection women and children no difference
And those who could get onto the truck were driven to the gas chamber
There through holes in the ceiling little crystals of Cyclone B rained on them
The air transformed it into cyanide gas
Cyclone B was invented long before the war by a Jew
Fritz Haber laureate of the Nobel Prize
It was an insecticide meant to protect wheat
Cyclone B was a Jewish patent but killing people with it
Was a German invention
Haber died in the thirties and didn't live to see
How many members of his family were killed by his invention
And they played music as a backdrop to the killing Auschwitz had its own orchestra
Put together from the imprisoned musicians
They played when we went to work in the morning
And when we were coming back in the evening worn out and carrying our dead
Never in the history of mankind was music misused more wickedly
But it wasn't the music's fault
Sometimes on Sundays they allowed a concert mostly when
The ingenious violinist Alma Rosé came from Vienna
Until they killed her too she helped us forget for a few minutes playing her music
The Sonderkommando was a special task force
It burnt the dead in furnaces and when the furnaces were not enough
They burnt them outside in holes
It was a closely guarded unit of Jewish prisoners
What they saw was something nobody should see because
The world wasn't to know what was going on in the camps
And still there were witnesses there were even photographs
Testimonies carried across to the world which started to wake up
Slowly very slowly because the Sonderkommandos were fast
From time to time we had to dig our own graves
And then a new Sonderkommando would come
Germans wanted to cover their tracks there were rumours that Russians were close

The Germans were maddened we expected them to kill us all
So as to leave no witnesses
And the horrid smoke kept billowing from Auschwitz
We were a huge factory where they didn't bend iron but people
The gloomiest years of the twentieth century a death factory
And still I didn't jump at the electrical fence like many other women
I refused to commit suicide
I had to survive and tell everyone what I saw
And I have to say it out loud because he is not watching
He's been silent all along
He's turned away from us
Why didn't God open at least one eye
When his children were burning?

JAKOB

I worked in a quarry
I even survived the stairs of Mauthausen
On which we carried granite slabs one man after another
When someone fell he pulled the others with him
And sentenced them to death
We mined granite to be used to rebuild German cities
Cities they wanted to construct again after the war and make them new and more
beautiful
As planned by Albert Speer
I don't know if they did
Because one day after we blew up the rocks
I was buried under a granite heap
And I was laid to rest underneath it
For a moment I had a tombstone
Like a pharaoh
I the son of the owner of a movie theatre
Once the best lawyer in town
And a decent navigator
Jakob Weiss

Got the final coordinate on the map of life
And my chest was cut by the invisible cross
Of a parallel and a meridian

LILI

*(dances some steps in one place, faster and faster, until she drops to the ground,
exhausted and crying)*

PUJDES

(talking to Lili through the wall)

Missy are you there?

I know you're there and can hear me don't be mad

I don't want no bad things to happen to you

But I'm a real bully when I get drunk

But I don't want nothing bad for you or anyone else

Won't tell you're there but stay put and quiet

'Cause the Germans are mad now partisans just captured Bystrica

They're all like rabid but you don't say no word and hang on

Jano Pujdes will keep an eye out for you

HANA

When my husband started burning the papers I knew it was over

We packed our suitcases and put them in the car

Bed sheets clothes but mostly food

We were evacuated to some place in the country

Because the front was going to pass through our town

We could hear this quiet rumbling from afar

I could have left him then no better chance would come

But I stayed because I belonged to him

In this café and in this life

Because I was his wife

ESTER

In January 1945 we had to leave Auschwitz

The Germans closed it down
We took the train and then walked it was bitter cold
It was a march of death in the thin clothes and frostbitten feet
Spent the night in a barn I took my shoes off
And they in the morning the shoes were frozen solid
It could have cost me my life so I asked the other women
To pee on my shoes until they thawed
So that I could put them on
And so we got to Ravensbrück
It was a women-only camp and the women from the resistance movement
Put a red triangle on my uniform to mark me as a communist
I survived thanks to my clever girlfriends
Because that camp was not intended for Jews
Jews were got rid of immediately
And communists had to wait for their turn
And so we waited
For them to shoot us all or burn us alive in the barracks
We heard the excited voices of the guards
Fritz komm her schneller wir müssen nach Westen
They were running away west dropping their guns dressed as villagers
They didn't want to be captured by the Russians
They were in such a hurry they had no time to kill us
And in the morning I saw a Russian tank pass by the camp
I saw soldiers enter and then leave in awe
Those boys weathered by all the years of war
But they couldn't handle this
They didn't expect thousands of skeletons that had been women once
And now they're stretching their arms towards them
It was May 1, 1945 and I was free
Free only on the outside because inside I felt the tangle
Of high-voltage barbed wire

RÁDIO

Dear listeners

Words fail us

We're transmitting the sound of bells

We're transmitting the sound of bells

ESTER

None of us hurried to go back home

As if we knew what we'd find there

That no one from our families was alive

And so we stayed a month longer in the repatriation centre in Neusterlitz

In June 1945 I arrived in my home town

I could barely walk my feet hurt so much

Recently frostbitten the wounds took some time to heal

But my soul was still sick and confused

I didn't recognize my own town

I was scared of the people

There was so much light and air around

Too much air much more than

I was used to

KRÁLIK

I knew she'd come back

I wanted to kick her out but I couldn't do it

We made her bed in the hall because she was full of lice

And our place was clean the front passed at a distance the café stayed intact

Except some furniture that got stolen

HANA

People in town were saying the Jews are back

More of them came than went away

No one wanted to give anything back to them

It's ours now we got the property legally

We're not going to let them rip us off like before

Those times are over, are they not?

I won't give it away because if it hadn't been for us the café would've fallen apart

We kept it going and improved it built a casino
Plastered the walls
Nothing is yours here nothing at all just the bricks
There take your bricks I yelled at her
I've slaved away here cared for the house while you've been God knows where

ESTER

I don't want anything just the binoculars
Will you give me Jakob's binoculars?
(Hana passes her the binoculars)
I didn't know where to go
Scared of the ringing telephone
I couldn't use a knife and fork to eat
I was out of this world

MAJEROVÁ

I saw her standing in front of the Rose
She was trembling
My God Ester is that you?
I started to cry and took her hand
Come I'll show you somebody

LILI

(wearing dark sunglasses)
I should only very slowly get used to the light
It's very strong in summer the doctor said
My eyes will never fully recover but I am going to see
Not clearly but I will and her stride I'd recognize anyway
When the door opened I knew who was there
(Ester and Lili embrace)

MAJEROVÁ

I set the table with a beautiful tablecloth just like the one I embroidered for her mother
The soup was on the stove as if I knew they were coming

But they just stood there couldn't stop
I went out of the kitchen and went back in again
They still stood there
I had to warm the soup up twice
(*Ester and Lili are still embracing*)

KRÁLIKOVÁ: It was such a long time ago. Why open old wounds? Those who are guilty are dead now. Let bygones be bygones. You're not going to solve anything now! You're just making yourselves upset! What do I have to do with it? Or Slovaks now? Nothing. I love my parents. They gave me the best they could. Everyone did the same during the war. Does everyone have to suffer now? Nobody cares anyway. Who wants to face moral dilemmas today when they all have to deal with their own problems? If everyone who now lives off the stolen property abandons that property then I will leave too and I'll say... a mistake was made. I'm sorry. I'm really going to say that. But nobody will give up their property. They've become used to it. Nobody will say – we're sorry. I too will never spit on the memory of my parents. (*she takes out a marble tablet*) And this I'm going to take with me to Argentina. I sure will find a decent wall where it'll fit.

LILI

I got the movie theatre back
Pujdes transferred it back to me without a word
I put away the seats and set up a kosher cook shop there
Gradually some people came back from the camps
I cooked for them with Ester we had some supplies
From the American military the Russians gave us food too
Everyone was so poor everywhere people were almost starving
And one day someone broke into the cook shop and looted it
They were poor and we were those who had more than them for once
Again we were Jews whose fault it all was

PUJDES

(*sweeping*)

I wasn't jailed as a collaborator

I was quite lucky actually
My punishment is that I have to work
But the commander of Hlinka's Guards still lives in a stolen apartment
And turns out many guardsmen are now heroes
'Cause they secretly brought food to the partisans and matched their testimonies
Swine will always live good lives
(Lili comes and sweeps with him)
Missy don't how many times have I told you
Let it be you are innocent
They should kneel down before you and ask for forgiveness

LILI

You shouldn't be here Mr Pujdes
You mustn't be here
Because you saved Kornfeld's kid

PUJDES

You know Miss Lili it was out of fury
When my little one died because of the doctor
So I took his son
When the transport started
They could shout as much as they wanted
But I took their child anyways
But I didn't beat him, you know
No more than the others
He ate with my children I took him in the family
That was no Christian love
It was heathen revenge

LILI

You saved his life
He survived the war thanks to you
Now the Red Cross is taking care of him
They say they found his uncle somewhere

He'll take him
You're a good man

PUJDES
Don't be a big mouth

LILI
You saved a Jewish child

PUJDES
I don't know how it was
Let me be
So much work to do
(sweeps)

ESTER
I found a husband
So many of those who returned from the camps were alone
Couldn't live with anybody
I was lucky
I finished high school real quick
And started to study physics at university
I joined the Communist party
It didn't let me down then not then
Because I didn't forget who was the first to pass the gate of Ravensbrück and said
You are free

LILI
I donated the movie theatre to the town
And Urania was renamed to The Partisan
I saw Ester less and less she went to study in Prague
I didn't want to finish Medical School
What for?
I lived at Ms Majerová's place and kept thinking

About my family which was no more
Only the least useful member of it remained
I was known at the pharmacy as the former medicine student
They sold me phenobarbital without a prescription
Kept smiling at me asking
So when will you graduate and become a doctor?
I will I replied I will
But I finally need to get some sleep
(she pours all pills from the paper bags into her mouth)

RADIO

(sings an authentic song in enthusiastic spirit)

HANA

When they took our café I was furious
What do you mean nationalization it's robbery
What nation come on
I yelled it's ours we're the nation
We built it here
And he just sat and was silent
Gave up before he tried to do anything
Coward I told him only this once
Coward
And he turned around and went for a smoke
Such dirty tricks the communists are playing
You should have joined them Ambróz
You always knew where to stand and now you're quiet
What kind of communists are these
They're all hebes

MAJEROVÁ

The hunt for property began
But why did they hunt me
I only had a small handicrafts workshop

I didn't know they needed a warning example
They chose goldsmith Bingo for the entire town
But God called him to himself before they could arrest him
And so they came for me
I go to church every day and gave a lot of money
For its renewal
But who can I give to now that poor Lili is dead?
I have only God now and he's decided
To put me to the test and so I went to prison
Being an exploiter of the workers
But my tablecloth and laces were not enough to accuse me
So they set up an exhibition in the Rose café
Of all I was allegedly hiding
None of it was mine neither the velvet nor the English fabrics
Nor the silver wire nor the smuggled perfumes
But they accused me nonetheless
And I forgave them beforehand
Because they didn't know what they were doing

KRÁLÍK

I wanted to join the Communist party
After all so many of the expropriators
Suddenly became devout communists
Why couldn't I become an enthusiastic architect of socialism?
But they got scared of me
I stuck out too much
And the horrid movie I have on my conscience so shameful
I tried to write new things
A poem about the new two-year plan
About the melting of iron even a sonnet about concrete
But they laughed me down
They needed a scapegoat
At least one for them all
And after the trial with Majerová

It was our turn – us the former Catholic poets
They had enough on me

HANA

We escaped to Germany into the American zone
I got pregnant in the refugee camp
And little Annie was born
A longed-for baby we couldn't have back home
Perhaps it was because
We got rid of the goddamn café
However it was
Somewhere in me a secret door was opened
And my life changed

KRÁLIK

I never wrote another poem
Cut myself off art like that scoundrel
Rimbaud who went dumb in his youth
And worked as an arms salesman
My silence is a punishment I administered on myself
I didn't allow any books to be published in exile
Until my daughter collected all my poems
And self-published them
In Buenos Aires
Long after my death

ESTER

I was quiet for a long time when I found out about Lili's suicide
I was quiet when they imprisoned Majerová
Who had always helped the poor
But I couldn't keep quiet when I saw my own party
Sending its best communists to the gallows
I who had died so many times
I had nothing to fear

And so they expelled me and sent me to work in a village
To the cows as a milkmaid
My husband worked in a factory
I worked during the day he worked night shifts
And we still stayed together and when the country thawed
They let us leave
We're living in Israel in a kibbutz we grow fruits
I brought nothing over from my homeland
Just these binoculars

(She places a little stone on one of the gravestones. At the next one, Králiková lights a candle and picks up her suitcases. Rosa enters, licks a handkerchief and wipes the tips of Ester's shoes. Hana enters, fixes her daughter's hair. The mothers look at their children with satisfaction and leave.

MAJEROVÁ

Here lies case No. 827/1951
They were not allowed to put my name on the gravestone
I thank the Almighty
For not choosing to live with a man
And for sparing me all the beating during my life
And besides just before I died
During an interrogation they knocked me to the ground
And my aorta burst
They stated that the cause of death was heart failure
I an old spinster was very lucky in life
To have found a daughter who brought me joy
Unfortunately she committed a capital sin
She took her life and since then I haven't smiled at anyone
Message?
Well they should listen to God and believe him
And stick to him
Doesn't have to be in public
It's enough to do so inside and quietly
But strongly

HANA

Here lies Hana Kostolníková

We went to Buenos Aires with our daughter to a one-room apartment

I did the laundry for the rich ones I ironed and cleaned up

Unable to get rid of the thought

Which suddenly occurred to me like when lightning illuminates the sky

That what we did to Rozenfeld was a crime and

That I assisted in a robbery and murder

But I never told my daughter

A child should respect her parents and I

Because of a momentary weakness whether it's called honesty or conscience

Didn't want to lose my daughter

I wanted her to prosper to be beautiful

To have long hair because hair is

A woman's strongest weapon

Only with hair can a woman conquer a man and make him always do

What she wants

ROSA

Here lies Rosa Rozenfeld

Who couldn't defend her own café

And never told her daughter how much she loved her

Lies? She doesn't lie but fly in the air

Rosa is smoke and ashes

Flying over the world wondering how it has changed

Since her times

And still it's the same in something

Full of hatred and full of love

Like when she still walked on Earth

The times are now tense again there's too many impoverished people

Too many intransigent ones

And ever more hatred between nations

The times are favourable to strong men again

Whose god is cruelty
And with whose help they want to order the world
Oh God how thoroughly they'll clean it up
Whatever the cost

KRÁLIK

Here lies Ambróz Králik
I snuffed it in Argentina like some dog
When I tried to turn a swamp into fertile land
I lived for you people of the future
During the war almost all of us were poor
There was no middle class in Slovakia
Only Jews were doctors businessmen financiers
Small factory owners landowners bank managers
Not a single Slovak among them
Just Czechs and Jews
We owned next to nothing in our own country
And that's why we had to get rid of them there was war
The time favoured quick solutions and so we
Helped the Slovak nation rise to its feet
Suddenly we had a middle class and suddenly there were
Only our lawyers our businessmen our landowners
You don't understand this today
Today's engineers doctors officers artists
You have it easy now because we
Fixed the pothole for you
We the founding fathers of our first state you keep denouncing
Laid the foundation on which you could
Build a beautiful new house
Full of educated and proud Slovaks
These are our foundations don't forget that
And it doesn't matter whether what's underneath is bare soil
Or old bones
If you don't like it feel free to judge me

But that's the only thing you can do
Because I died in a swamp swarming with mosquitoes
And nothing has remained of me
Only you
Partly also you

JAKOB

Here lies Jakob Weiss
A boy who loved maps
And had many human flaws
But died for a single one
Because he was born a Jew
His death liberated him from the borders of Europe
In which he was imprisoned by electric fences
The likes of which were never part of any map in the history of mankind
And within which a boy's illusions fell apart
Illusions about the progress and culture which cultivate men
Shortly before his death he met fellow prisoners who still believed
That it is better to love than to hate
He'd consider it to be an empty phrase
But these worn down and starving men were different
A man lies under the rocks of Mauthausen which were perhaps used
To pave the sidewalks in Berlin even before
They were broken by Russian cannons
A man who knows that all were victims
All who played the game with the regime
All who played with the regime
All who played
All
All of Slovakia
His brothers were literal victims
And those who expropriated marched with the Guard or were just silent on the
sidewalk
They became victims too

Even though unlike the first they survived
And so his only feeling
As long as his body buried under granite can have any feelings
His feeling is that he feels sorry for all
Really sorry for all of them

LILI

Here lies Lili Weiss
Who so much wanted to live when everyone was dying
And when death finally stopped coming
Lili suddenly couldn't live and called for death again
Ashamed to be breathing while the others were not returning
This Lili Weiss wants to tell you something
Noah gave hundreds of laws to his children and we Jews
Ought to respect them
I'll tell you seven of these laws
Believe in one God
Don't blaspheme
Don't kill
Don't steal
Don't commit sexual immoralities
Don't commit violence on animals
Create a government and courts which will control
That these laws are respected
Kristína Majerová abided by these laws
Even though she didn't know about them
That's why she's the righteous one among nations
She wasn't alone because hundreds of Slovaks helped as well
Hiding us during the war risking their lives respecting the laws
By keeping us alive
Even though they and their children could have died for it
This can't be taken for granted and so
I say what I say at least like this from my grave
Lili Weiss says thank you

ESTER

Drawing lines

When they speak of drawing lines under it all

I always remember Jakob

And that he never saw a map like this

A map with the shape of Slovakia but there's nothing there and still

You see all kinds of invisible lines

The whole of Slovakia

Is covered in invisible thick lines

Everyone today speaks of having to draw lines

Under the past

Everyone would rather forget about it all

They keep wanting to forget about things but they never want to speak

When will be the right time for it?

When will the time come to look back? Never

Let it be don't open graves

Don't open old wounds

But I don't want to take revenge on anyone

I just want to talk about it

I'm not angry anymore

Feel no hatred towards anybody

Really

For killing everyone

I loved

And thousands of others I had no time

To start loving

I truly don't feel any hatred

I just don't forget

I don't forget

Ester starts cleaning her shoes.

The End

May–June 2012