

# Silent House

*A play with singing and a hint of dance.*

by Silvester Lavrik

translation by Janet Livingstone

## Characters:

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>MARTA</b>   | <b>50+, cultivated lady in black</b>            |
| <b>BÍBORKA</b> | <b>50+, cultivated lady in a flowered dress</b> |
| <b>ANDREJ</b>  | <b>50+, poet of the dandy-ish variety</b>       |

*In the attic/atelier apartment of a musician in urban rental housing from the 1930s. In the middle of the room is a table in the shape of a concert grand piano and chairs. A lamp. Shelves with music, books and record albums. A photograph of Filip Mamatej at the piano sits in a visible place (place of honor). In its lower right-hand corner there is a strip of black mourning cloth. In the corner there is a ceramic wood-stove.*

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*Enter BÍBORKA. Barefoot. On tiptoe. Holding her shoes in one hand. In the other hand she carries a plate with a porcelain cover with an onion motif.*

*BÍBORKA puts the plate in the middle of the table. She puts her shoes on. Approaches the record player. Leafs through the albums. Puts one on the player, puts down the needle. Music sounds in the atelier. A piece of passionate music.*

*...the music ends. BÍBORKA approaches the record player. She takes the LP off it. Puts it into its jacket. Puts is back with the others on the stand. For a moment she stands in the middle of the atelier and looks around. On her lips is a sad, peaceful smile.*

**BÍBORKA** - Farewell, Filip. Thank you. For the beautiful moments. There were those too. *Pause.* Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye...

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*Enter Marta. BÍBORKA is startled. She was not expecting her. Marta turns on the light. In the hallway a fuse blows loudly. The lights in the atelier suddenly go out.*

**BÍBORKA** - The fuse. *She starts for the hall. She flips the switch. The atelier is once again lit up. She returns to the room. She turns the light switch. The lights go off. We'll have the lights on plenty during the winter. Light, outlets. Everything on one fuse. Pause.* Hi. *Pause.* Andrej promised he would have a look at it. You know that Filip was never good with those things...I had the record player on.

*Marta is dressed in black. In her hands she is holding a stainless steel tray covered with a white damask cloth. A purse hangs on her forearm. Under her arm she has a flat pillow for a chair.*

**MARTA** - ... look at how my hair is standing straight up! If I don't lie down in the afternoon, I get a terrible headache. And then it does this, look!! Monstrous hair! I must have been lying funny on it or something. This isn't hair, it's some kind of punishment from God or something.

**BÍBORKA** - Hi, Marta.

**MARTA** - I didn't hear you on the stairs. You always moved like a ghost. Of course. So you've come, our little BÍBORKA! *Pause.* I didn't hear you on the stairs. You didn't even say hello.

**BÍBORKA** - ... Hi.

**MARTA** - ... Amen. Amen!

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - I didn't come here to argue with you. Hi.

**MARTA** - Praise be to Jesus Christ. A woman of your age should definitely know how to behave by now. In a Christian home.

*Cats can be heard mating in the background.*

**BÍBORKA** - Cats. In August they're always up to some mischief. They always were.

**MARTA** - And in February.

**BÍBORKA** - ... they mate.

**MARTA** - Cats!!

**BÍBORKA** - Up here in the attic there were always 300-500 of them.

**MARTA** - 300-500. You have a horrible vocabulary. Like, like a student! At your age it's not right. And in your position.

**BÍBORKA** - In what position?

**MARTA** - You are the mother of Filip's children.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - I didn't come here to argue.

**MARTA** - Yes you did. *She shows her the flat pillow. Until now she's been holding it under her arm.* For sitting on. *She puts it on the chair and sits down.* I only have one. I sewed it for myself. I have to sit on something warm. Find yourself something. You won't be a young chicken forever either, my dear!

**BÍBORKA** - *Sits down.* I'm not cold.

**MARTA** - Yes, in fact I see you're blooming. *She points to Biborka's colorful outfit...* you are blooming quite happily. Did you come by bus?

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - A friend. He gave me a ride. He lives up the street. So he picked me up.

**MARTA** - My head spins when I see how everything has gone up! Up and up! Where will it end? In the sky? They'll figure it out when it's too late? My eyes pop out of my head! Like this!!! I'm telling you!! And nobody, nothing, nowhere. Everyone is going to fall on their face. In the dust. Only our eyes will be visible, popping out of our heads. *She opens her eyes wide.* Like this. What's he like?

**BÍBORKA** - ... who???

**MARTA** - The neighbor. Your... The one who gave ... the young one?

**BÍBORKA** - He's a widower.

**MARTA** - Does he have any children?

**BÍBORKA** - Three.

**MARTA** - He's a good catholic Christian. A catholic right?

**BÍBORKA** - Where I live everybody's catholic.

**MARTA** - So how did you meet?

**BÍBORKA** - Parents were teachers. They were sent to the village to teach. In 1952...

**MARTA** - Is he...is he tall?

**BÍBORKA** - He's about this big...he's short.

**MARTA** - He can't be totally short if he has three kids. Are they small?

**BÍBORKA** - They're not big. They're grown up, but not big. He had a small wife too. Not too tall.

**MARTA** - Dwarves!

**BÍBORKA** - No! He's this big...*she puts her hand at mid-forehead.*

**MARTA** - Funny.

**BÍBORKA** - What's funny?

**MARTA** - When a man's shorter than a woman.

**BÍBORKA** - ... oh stop it! It would never occur to me to...

**MARTA** - So if it wouldn't occur to you, why are you talking about him so much?

**BÍBORKA** - I'm talking about him?

**MARTA** - Well, I'm not. Am I?

*Pause.*

*Marta looks through her purse. Takes out a letter. Puts it on the table. Báborka turns away.*

A widower you say...

**BÁBORKA** - Oh let it be!

**MARTA** - What kind of car does he have?

**BÁBORKA** - Leave me alone will you?

**MARTA** - New?

**BÁBORKA** - It's an older model.

**MARTA** - Nice?

**BÁBORKA** - Blue.

**MARTA** - Even the upholstery? I have a suit like that. Plum-colored, skirt's below the knee...It got a hole in it! The quality is crappy. Why is everything here upside-down?! They stick their noses into everything. Even Štúr! Even Dubček!! And who was Husák? I walk by his grave...you think I don't see it? A Lutheran in disguise!! They have their fingers in everything. *Pause.* Plum is a fine color. It's good for church and for socializing. I'm going to throw away my black rags too.

**BÁBORKA** - If I had known, I would've come by bus.

**MARTA** - On foot, my dear, on foot!

**BÁBORKA** - Twenty kilometers?! *She moves to take away the plate of meat.*

**MARTA** - Šaštín is 30! A little humility never hurt anybody. *She points to her porcelain tray.* It smells good. Your two, me and you. Will it be enough?

**BÁBORKA** - It was always enough. There were leftovers, so many times. Then I always wrapped them up for Andr... And the next day I had to throw them away!! *She puts the tray back down on the table.*

**MARTA** - You wrote that we would celebrate on Sunday. In the afternoon. I liked the idea. *She taps her finger on the letter.* And I wrote you back. That I liked it, it's a good idea.

**BÁBORKA** - ...

**MARTA** - Mine are even, yours odd. We agreed. It worked for a year. It's Saturday night. Even. My Saturday. Why did you come today?

**BÁBORKA** - I wanted to surprise you.

*Marta picks up the letter. She puts it in her purse.*

**MARTA** - I haven't eaten yet today. I'm fasting, you know? Today is St. Filip.

**BÁBORKA** - I know.

**MARTA** - I'm not doing it for myself. I don't need absolution.

**BÁBORKA** - It's already been a year, Marta. This...*She runs her hand over the sleeves of her coat...*I bought it yesterday.

**MARTA** - Nice. A little démodé, but nice. It's pulling down a bit, as if the collar were down on one side. Is it sewn crookedly?

**BÁBORKA** - ... it's sewn just fine!

**MARTA** - The main thing is that you feel good in it. Do you feel good in it?

**BÁBORKA** - I'm feeling ...festive.

**MARTA** - Yes... A proper widow should wear black for at least a year. *Pause.* You could have lasted longer. You loved Filip, didn't you?!

**BÁBORKA** - We said...I wrote to you and you wrote to me, we promised each other we would reminisce only about the good things.

**MARTA** - Filip would have had his birthday today, and his name day. *She begins to weep.* And the anniversary of his death. First, may he rest in peace, dear God...

**BÍBORKA** - ... I wanted to remember him more happily. Two years before his... Before Filip left us, my mother died. Then my father. You know that. I've been wearing black for three years.

*Marta looks at the handbag hanging on her arm.*

**MARTA** - This is how they're wearing them now.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - ... nice.

**MARTA** - Prayer book, handkerchief, keys, rosary beads. Everything in its place. Good purse. And nice. And good quality. Just right. What do you think? A change purse. For change. For beggars. Do you give to charity?

**BÍBORKA** - ... once in a while. Sometimes.

**MARTA** - You should! It counts! *She turns to Biborka.* So here we are, talking.

**BÍBORKA** - *Surprised.* ... shouldn't we set the table first? It's almost six.

**MARTA** - You wrote that you wanted to talk.

**BÍBORKA** - But we're zooming around too fast for my taste.

**MARTA** - Coming to commemorate the anniversary of a man's death in a flowered dress isn't too fast for you?

**BÍBORKA** - Marta, please.

**MARTA** - If you had really loved Filip...

**BÍBORKA** - WILL YOU STOP ALREADY! OK?

*Biborka brings plates. Marta puts her purse down hard on the table.*

**MARTA** - You still won't admit, even today, that I also have rights in this apartment?! Am I Filip's sister? Am I Filip's sister? Huh? Am I?

**BÍBORKA** - Yes. Filip was your brother.

**MARTA** - Maybe he WAS yours. But he'll always be my brother. ALWAYS. That's the difference between us. Do we know? Andrej said...

**BÍBORKA** - What?!

*Biborka tries to move the purse. It almost falls from her hands. Marta grabs it from her.*

**MARTA** - ... that Biborka is a Hungarian name. Is it Hungarian?

**BÍBORKA** - It's Hungarian. *She points to the purse.* I only wanted to move it.

**MARTA** - Don't you worry about that. I'll put it where it belongs. I'm upset. *She lifts the plate and looks at the underside.* What did I say? Chipped?! *She lifts the other plates.* Every one of them!!

**BÍBORKA** - Four people ate off these plates for twelve years. Including two active children.

**MARTA** - So what. Other children are not active? Only yours were?!

**BÍBORKA** - The only thing that ate off your dear Mama's plates was dust. Marta, please! Look how my hands are shaking.

**MARTA** - How could you know that?!

**BÍBORKA** - What? How could I know what?!

**MARTA** - You've never been to our place. About the dust in the china cabinet.

**BÍBORKA** - ... Filip told me. You ate out of pottery bowls. With an aluminum spoon. Pea porridge with roasted garlic sausage. From Monday to Saturday.

**MARTA** - ... with sautéed sausage.

**BÍBORKA** - Sorry! Sautéed sausage! On Fridays you had hard-boiled eggs instead of sausage.

**MARTA** - Are you belittling me because of my faith!?! Is that what you want?!

**BÍBORKA** - ... I want to set the table. *Biborka suddenly finds herself face to face with a portrait of Filip on the wall. Suddenly she laughs.*

**MARTA** - Stop! Stop laughing! Like an idiot. OK? Please, stop right this minute. I'm asking you!

**BÍBORKA** - ... do you know what I was thinking of? When Filip first tasted an olive! He spit it out as if it were burning hot.

**MARTA** - I don't see what's so funny about that.

**BÍBORKA** - The olive flew all the way across the room and hit the president. Everyone pretended it didn't happen. Only your mother applauded. Bravo, my son! Who is that woman, people whispered to each other. Who is that woman? You put my husband in prison, Mr. President. Did you know that? Only because he didn't renounce his faith. And you know what...? I admired her for that. It was my first concert after finishing school. Yours too, for that matter. We stood one behind the other in the choir. Do you remember?

**MARTA** - It was at the reception after Filip's first concert at the philharmonic.

**BÍBORKA** - And last.

**MARTA** - In '59 they pardoned Daddy. Seven years after his death.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip never set foot in the philharmonic again.

**MARTA** - Until the revolution.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip called it a coup.

**MARTA** - Filip never understood politics.

**BÍBORKA** - Oh but he did.

**MARTA** - And that concert at the philharmonic? And the second?! On the first anniversary of the revolution?!

**BÍBORKA** - To the coup.

**MARTA** - The building almost collapsed, they clapped so hard. That rat-faced guy who turned the pages for him...

**BÍBORKA** - What are you talking about?

**MARTA** - That guy built a career on that concert. At the Ministry! Filip? He barely came out for a bow.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip called it a coup.

**MARTA** - When I say he didn't understand politics, he really didn't!

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - Filip's music is still here. All the songs.

**BÍBORKA** - Songs! Filip hated them.

**MARTA** - And his piano pieces? And the symphonies!? Genius, miracle, inimitable talent. Open the newspaper! You'll find it everywhere. Did I just dream it all?

**BÍBORKA** - My whole life I spent poring over notes. The minute I get something right, I get slapped in the face...

**MARTA** - Stop talking nonsense.

**BÍBORKA** - Those are Filip's words.

**MARTA** - Those were the times.

**BÍBORKA** - It's always some time or another.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - I'm going to set the table.

**MARTA** - You already did.

**BÍBORKA** - ... *She sets it again, adjusts things, moves things around.*  
**MARTA** - We lived modestly, but honestly. According to our faith.  
**BÍBORKA** - ... on pea porridge.  
**MARTA** - It's healthy. Mama lived to be 90.  
**BÍBORKA** - ... too bad your father died when he was barely 50.  
**MARTA** - There was a war.  
**BÍBORKA** - He died 10 years after the war!  
**MARTA** - Seven. Daddy was a sensitive man.  
**BÍBORKA** - That's why he elected to die.  
**MARTA** - ... that inappropriate humor of yours. That used to get on my nerves even at the conservatory. Sit down on that flowered ass of your! Sit down.

**BÍBORKA** - *Opens the wine.* These are not flowers. It's an Egyptian design.  
Flowering papyrus.

Bíborka pours the wine. They drink.

**MARTA** - You're my best friend.

**BÍBORKA** - *Choking on her wine.* We haven't spoken to each other for 30 years.

**MARTA** - Well I guess we didn't have anything to talk about!! *She puts the letter in her purse.*

*They drink the wine.*

**MARTA** - When I introduced you to Filip, you were a nobody. Nothing, just a pair of eyes.

**BÍBORKA** - I had the best ass in the class.

**MARTA** - It was those denim pants.

**BÍBORKA** - Denim. We called them jeans. Jeans. We wore jeans.

**MARTA** - Look at how it all ended up. Vulgarity everywhere, free thinking, mold. And it all started with those jeans. Mama was right.

**BÍBORKA** - Jeans! Jeans! *Bíborka jumps up, runs out and comes back after a moment wearing boxing gloves.*

**BÍBORKA** - When he was 50, I put them under the tree.

**MARTA** - Come on. Filip never exercised in his life.

**BÍBORKA** - The other boys at least had football cleats. If I had some too, maybe I could be a normal person. *She points to the gloves.* The first night he slept in them. They were a good gift. When he pissed me off, I'd punch him with them until I was completely exhausted.

**MARTA** *Pause.* - I had no idea he would fall in love with you.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip had a nice ass too. I wanted him to write songs for me. We made love twice. We were together for 27 years.

**MARTA** - Filip, Filip! You ruined your life for some ass. Were you at least faithful?

**BÍBORKA** - I was. For two months.

**MARTA** - Hmm, that's not long.

**BÍBORKA** - Times were tough.

**MARTA** - Listen, Bíborka ... Were there a lot of them?

**BÍBORKA** - ... one.

**MARTA** - You sold your soul for a one-night stand!

**BÍBORKA** - Who said it was only once?!

**MARTA** - I have a clear conscience. In the eyes of God and others. I brought up Magda properly. Without a father, but honorably. With the right faith. A child is a gift from

God. Magda is the light of my life. I suffered like a slave because of her. Take those gloves off.

**BÍBORKA** - I'll take them off when you tell me why you didn't talk to me for 30 years.

**MARTA** - You know why.

**BÍBORKA** - I want to hear it.

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - Because you're a Protestant.

**BÍBORKA** - Lutheran!! But one with a nice ass. And what are you? What are you?

**MARTA** - We're not talking about me now. You're the problem.

**BÍBORKA** - I'm the problem?!!

**MARTA** - You always were! Look at how your apartment looks! Just look at those chipped plates! You lived like a bunch of actors! God knows, it's a good thing you weren't married. Turn the light on, it's getting dark.

**BÍBORKA** - Shove your service for 12 up your ass.

*Bíborka takes off the boxing gloves. She slowly and very deliberately finishes setting the table.*

**MARTA** - Don't set a place for Magda. She has a concert in New York. Filip always told her she had a voice like an angel. Ha! And he told me she had 100 devils in her. Who does the girl take after? he asked me. Who could it possibly be? And now she has a concert in the most famous concert hall in the world. She's singing at 'Carnegie' Hall. That's in New York.

**BÍBORKA** - Carnegie.

**MARTA** - Carnegee.

**BÍBORKA** - That's right!

**MARTA** - She had an interview in the newspaper. Two pages.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip taught her well.

**MARTA** - Filip knew how to recognize talent. Just a child and so tough, he said. Remember?

**BÍBORKA** - Filip valued talented people.

**MARTA** - Yeah, and today she's in America. Why are you putting five plates on the table?

**BÍBORKA** - Two are for us, two for my children. Vladimir and Veronika.

**MARTA** - And the fifth? Magdushka's not coming, I told you.

**BÍBORKA** - ... today we are celebrating Filip's birthday.

**MARTA** *She looks around.* - Magdushka has a concert at Carnegie Hall.

**BÍBORKA** - Carnegie.

It sounds good. If Filip could only hear it. *To Filip's likeness on the wall.* Magdushka has a concert in New York.... *To herself.* She wanted to invite me, but somehow it didn't work out, she told me. We talked on the phone. Last week. I called her. Thirteen hundred crowns! For two minutes!! So. That's how it is. Good. The fifth is for Filip. Of course. Today would have been his birthday. I'll put those gloves away.

*Bíborka moves toward the record player. She puts a record on and puts the needle down on it. A song. Marta returns to the room. In her hand she is carrying a bottle of wine and two glasses. She stops in the doorway. They are excited, laugh, weep, give up.*

Please, I beg you, please<sup>1</sup>  
On life I've still got a lease  
In love just let me wallow  
I've tried  
It's hard to swallow  
I've tried  
That's the way it is....

I can make him suffer as I wish  
Let him suffer as I know how  
Yesterday he was so rude  
Let my beautiful tears  
Burn him  
And tomorrow  
I'll try myself.

I want to love you as I will  
I know how to love you as I wish  
I've waited for tame love  
You're in a hurry  
More than enough  
I want to love you  
Slowly

Please, I beg you, please  
On life I've still got a lease  
In love just let me wallow  
I've tried  
It's hard to swallow  
I've tried  
Each of us remained  
...alone.

*The music ends, the record keeps turning for a moment. Báborka puts it away.*

**MARTA** - I haven't heard that in 100 years.

**BÁBORKA** - I haven't listened to Filip's songs since he died.

**MARTA** - Filip had a God-given talent. God-given.

**BÁBORKA** - ... he dedicated that song to me, when...

**MARTA** - When what?

**BÁBORKA** - ...

**MARTA** - ... come on, don't feel so sorry for yourself. When! When! When  
Mama and I forbade him to marry you. Of course. It happened. He ran away with you  
anyway. Here to the attic! He wouldn't listen. When!! When!! Put it on again. I feel like  
weeping. I really need to. Put it on again.

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<sup>1</sup> Although an English translation of this song is presented here in the text, the original play includes a recording of the song sung in Slovak. No recording of this English version exists. It is up to the discretion of the director to decide what is appropriate in his or her own staging of the play.

**BÍBORKA** - ... we used to meet in the empty atelier in the attic. There was an old couch here. Filip had everything he needed in the attic. A piano.

**MARTA** - He needed to see the sky. Mama didn't like it. But she paid for the crane. They got the piano in here through the window. She cried all evening, she took my son, she took my son, she kept saying. The music! The music. I thought she was talking about you.

**BÍBORKA** - ... we would sit on the windowsill, drink wine and smoke. Biborka, Filip... and Andrej. Andrej would be talking about something, he always talked a lot. The poet! Literature is my only lover. And what about the others? Filip would ask him. The others, they are just grist for the mill... I really gave it to Andrej then. Bashed him in the mouth. Blood ran down his chin. Filip just laughed. I don't remember anything. Only their song. Filip's music and Andrej's poetry. As if there were some kind of .....

**MARTA** - Yeah. This house was always blessed.

**BÍBORKA** - ... magnetism, I wanted to say.

**MARTA** - Too bad Daddy didn't live to see it. Filip would have had a father and Daddy would have had a moment of happiness on this earth... Surrounded by women. Poor Filip.

**BÍBORKA** - If you and your Mama hadn't forbidden me to come into the house, the whole thing would have been over quickly. Filip didn't want to get married at all.

**MARTA** - I know. Neither did Andrej.

**BÍBORKA** - ... what?!

**MARTA** - *Pause.* What kind of name is that? Biborka!! Does it mean something? You know, because every Christian name has its saint, no offence, but it's a really strange name. It's not Christian is it?

**BÍBORKA** - Purple. Biborka means purple. If I have some tortured patron saint, I don't want to know anything about it.

**MARTA** - Would any reasonable woman have allowed her children to be brought up in such an environment?! In an attic?! Like a bunch of pigeons! With mating cats instead of neighbors!! And in the middle of them the two of you! Artists! The composer and the singer!!

**BÍBORKA** - And a poet!

**MARTA** - With no wedding!! No sacraments. Mama looked forward to grandchildren. You know, we grew up with certain values. What's so bad about that anyway, taking a child by the hand and going to church? Can you do that when you live in the attic? Can you?! You tell me yourself! Can you!?

**BÍBORKA** - You can!

**MARTA** - Ever since you came into this house, it stinks of onions everywhere!

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - What did you mean about Andrej?

**MARTA** - What?

**BÍBORKA** - That he didn't want to get married either.

**MARTA** - Pour me a glass. You can pour one for yourself too.

*Biborka pours both of them a glass. She pours herself more. Marta adds some to her own glass. Then she has more.*

**BÍBORKA** - Whenever I would wake up at night, he was almost always at the piano.

**MARTA** - I know that Filip didn't like to kiss.

**BÍBORKA** - He told you what we did together....

**MARTA** - Come on! Even as a child he couldn't stand it. You were at a concert, with the band, that you started. Meteor. The next day you came and said he didn't even kiss me and everyone said that it was great and he didn't even kiss me...

**BÍBORKA** - ... Meteor!! God, those were the days!! In those days everything was "groovy", "neat", "cool". Or "totally screwed up". Nothing in between.

**MARTA** - Did you and Andrej kiss too?

**BÍBORKA** - Why do you ask?

**MARTA** - You were always together.

**MARTA** - Did you and Andrej kiss?

**BÍBORKA** - No!! I was in love with Filip. Wait... Andrej wrote me a poem. Wait, I'll remember it! ... I want you...I want you barefoot in the grass/ you'll be haunting me/you'll be my lady in white/icy in the dawn/I have goose bumps/from the thought of your teeth... Totally dumb. We were drunk. We used to drink apple wine then, do you remember?

**MARTA** - Did you and Andrej kiss?

**BÍBORKA** - I couldn't resist.

**MARTA** - What time is it?

**BÍBORKA** - ... almost six-thirty.

**MARTA** - I'll turn the light on, it's getting dark. Put on some music.

*Marta turns on a lamp and sits back down in her place. Biborka moves to the record player. She cannot decide which album to choose...*

**MARTA** - ... Put something sad on. We can cry a little, before your kids get here.

**BÍBORKA** - As you like.

*iii*

*Biborka puts on a record. The moment she turns on the record player, the fuse in the hallway blows again. Darkness.*

**MARTA** - Hey!! What are you doing?!

**BÍBORKA** - ... the fuses. *She goes out into the hallway.*

**MARTA** - *Yelling. Into the dark and the silence.* - Biborka?! Are you there? Be careful, there's wood piled up there!! I already said it should be taken away, but there's no one to do it. No one to do it!! Nothing gets done unless I do it myself!! Oh God. *Pause.* Are you a pigeon?! Are you a pigeon?! Was Filip a pigeon in your opinion!? Pigeons live on the roof!

*Pause.*

Biborka, I'm actually happy that we finally talked. You know, it was getting to me. I can't live like that. Being angry at somebody. It's as if I've been to confession. You're a Protestant, you can't know what I mean. When you leave the church after confession, your soul is so light. You fly! You Protestants don't have that, what with your communal confessions and all...Biborka, those onions of yours stink like crazy.

*A blunt blow. The sound of a body falling on the tiled floor. For a moment there is absolute silence. Only somewhere in the background in the attic one can here cats mating.*

*iv*

*Biborka puts some music on. She lights a candle under Filip's photograph.*

**BÍBORKA** - So. Now you can fly to your judgment day.

*Pause.*

The last three years Filip and I were together, we didn't talk to each other at all. Good morning, good night, put on your scarf, don't forget to turn the lights off. On New Year's we wished each other Happy New Year and that was it. I asked him to talk to me. He didn't even answer. He sat at the piano and played and pretended that I was just air. So I left and went home to my mother.

*Pause.*

Hi, Marta. Now you're a martyr too. You would like that. Marta. Stubborn old Marta. My best friend. Twenty-seven years I sneaked up and down the stairs. Life on tiptoe. Hm, a good title for the memoir of some Russian ballerina. Except that I'm not a ballerina. I'm just a has-been member of the choir. I used to take my shoes off before I even got in the door. Picked them up in my hand and went up on tiptoe.

*v*

*Marta sits up quietly. Biborka doesn't notice. Marta stands up, takes the flat pillow from her chair and approaches Biborka from behind. She puts the pillow over her face. Biborka struggles. At first wildly, then more and more weakly. Then she stops moving. Marta waits for a moment and then takes the pillow off her face. She puts it down on the empty chair. She feels around on her face. She approaches the record player and turns it off. She turns on the light and moves toward Biborka. She straddles her a bit and smacks Biborka hard on the mouth.*

**BÍBORKA** - ... why are you hitting me?!

**MARTA** - ... May God be with you, amen.

**BÍBORKA** - ... hi!

**MARTA** - ... Amen forever!!

**BÍBORKA** - HI!!

**MARTA** - AMEN FOREVER!!

**BÍBORKA** - COME ON KILL ME ALREADY!!

**MARTA** - *She sits down. On her chair with the flat pillow.* You could have killed me.

**BÍBORKA** - It occurred to me that I would kill you that way when the fuse first blew.

**MARTA** - When was that?

**BÍBORKA** - When we bought the record player.

**MARTA** - But you've had the record player right from the beginning.

**BÍBORKA** - Exactly.

**MARTA** - What would you have said to the children if they found you here with a dead body?

**BÍBORKA** - I've never so much as hit anyone. Everyone knows that.

**MARTA** - But a dead body is not a diary! You can't hide it under the record player!

**BÍBORKA** - ... blown fuses. Marta must have tripped and fallen, hit her head or something. The telephone was disconnected, by the time I got help it was too late.

**MARTA** - So you wanted to kill me.

**BÍBORKA** - And you me.

**MARTA** - You were the only woman in his life!! And you betrayed him with whoever was around!

**BÍBORKA** - For shame!!! I didn't betray him with anybody...But why am I defending myself to you!!

**MARTA** - And Andrej!?!

**BÍBORKA** - What about Andrej?

**MARTA** - Andrej!

**BÍBORKA** - Are you sick?! You're sick!! It must have gotten shaken up in that prayer book brain of yours when I hit you!!

**MARTA** - I'm not sick!! You're the abnormal one!! You were unwell right from the beginning, you know?

**BÍBORKA** - Stop or I'll let you have it again!!

**MARTA** - OK bring it on!! Just try!!

**BÍBORKA** - Tell me, Marta, the truth, when did your mother begin to lose it?

**MARTA** - What do you mean, lose it?

**BÍBORKA** - Lose it. Go off her rocker. Totally bananas.

**MARTA** - ... don't you talk that way about our mother. Mama was a saint.

**BÍBORKA** - Yeah, a saint. She ruined her husband's life, her son's life, her daughter's life and BÍborka's life. All that on her way back from church. Between two "Our fathers". It wasn't your father who was the intolerant wacko! Your devout mama made a martyr out of him. She guarded that nest of hers like a jealous hen. And God? Oh yeah, he's my gopher (go-for). But, please, what could the Pope in Rome possibly know about God? We understand him the best – he's our Father in heaven. That is, my Father in heaven, so don't you talk to me about him!

**MARTA** - If...

**BÍBORKA** - You think my mother didn't teach me to pray? You think our Lutheran God is a garden dwarf on the lawn, or an ice cream bar or something?!

**MARTA** - If...

**BÍBORKA** - Save yourself however you can. That's how your mother was.

**MARTA** - If Filip were alive, he would slap you!

**BÍBORKA** - Filip wouldn't say anything. Your father kept quiet too. Yes, I understand why. If you have to end badly, at least do it with dignity.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - ...I can't do this anymore. *She wants to sit down.*

**MARTA** - I'm still going. That's my seat!! I warmed it up. I have to sit on something warm. My kidneys.

*Bíborka starts to clear off the table. She takes away three plates and leaves three.*

**MARTA** - Have you gone completely mad!?

**BÍBORKA** - Vladimir and Veronika aren't coming.

**MARTA** - They're not? Filip's children aren't coming?

**BÍBORKA** - They sent flowers. For the grave. Veronika did. But Vladimir signed the card too.

**MARTA** - Bíborka, you didn't call them?

**BÍBORKA** - They didn't like their father.

**MARTA** - Or their mother either!

**BÍBORKA** - ... their mother either.

**MARTA** - Oh come on! Don't feel so sorry for yourself.

**BÍBORKA** - Veronika told me. I begged her to come.

**MARTA** - So you did invite them?

**BÍBORKA** - I invited them. *Crying.*

*Bíborka picks up one of the albums.*

**BÍBORKA** - I used to love this one.

**MARTA** - Wait! *She walks to the light switch and turns off the lights.* OK, now you can put it on.

*A serious piano piece. Filip's. After a while Marta jumps up. She changes the album. She puts on a duet of Papageno and Papagena from the Magic Flute...Both women sing along with the record. After a while the album begins to skip. They turn off the record player and turn on the light.*

**BÍBORKA** - ...Mozart! Do you remember? We had those thin tunics! You could see into our stomachs!

**MARTA** - Filip loved this building.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip loved music and silence. Do you remember the funeral?

**MARTA** - Filip's?

**BÍBORKA** - Who else's!? John Lennon's?! They played Bartok and Filip's music.

**MARTA** - The best musicians from the Bratislava symphony...

**BÍBORKA** - You know how they'll bury you?!

**MARTA** - No.

**BÍBORKA** - They won't. They won't. There won't be anyone to do it. Your daughter will be on the other side of the world and there won't be anyone to pray for you. There won't even be anyone to cross themselves in your honor, you... you...

**MARTA** - Come on, come on, keep going.

**BÍBORKA** - Catholic!

**MARTA** - OK. Is that all?

**BÍBORKA** - Yes. No! If it hadn't been for Filip, they wouldn't even have accepted you into the choir!

**MARTA** - Are you saying that with my voice, I don't belong in the opera choir of our national theatre?

**BÍBORKA** - Where did you stand the whole time, until we retired? Where? On the right, in the back, practically behind the curtain. And what did the choirmaster always say? Miss Mamatejová, softer please, softer!

**MARTA** - I have an expressive voice!

**BÍBORKA** - You have a horribly affected voice.

**MARTA** - Oh yeah? Well we'll see about that!! I have an affected voice. And what about you? What have you got? You stood next to me your whole life!! Thirty years, until we retired, my dear!! Filip arranged it for you!! What have you got then?!

**BÍBORKA** - What have I got!? This is not about me. My children will always be there to bury me. Whenever. And they'll do it gladly! I'll call them and they'll come! I got an invitation to the concert at Carnegie Hall.

**MARTA** - How could you dare to make that up?!

**BÍBORKA** - I did! And I talked to your Magdushka. Yesterday, for example.

**MARTA** - You made her talk to you?!

**BÍBORKA** - She called me.

**MARTA** - That's not possible!! Magdushka hates to talk on the phone.

**BÍBORKA** - Yeah, I guess I'm making it up. I guess I called myself in the middle of the night to say that I'm totally in love and I need to tell someone because I'm so happy I'm going to explode and the only one I can tell is myself, Aunt Bíborka, since uncle Filip is dead and my beloved is a Muslim or Jew or some other exotic freak and my mother would be so mad, she'd probably have a cow if I threw this in her pious face. It must have happened like that because I cried on the phone and now I don't even know whether it was out of happiness or sadness that I'm alone and so far away or everything at once. And he's a pianist and has the most beautiful eyes in the world and his name is Akram.

**MARTA** - Akram.

**BÍBORKA** - Akram.

**MARTA** - ... I bet he's circumcised!! Did you ask her whether he's...

**BÍBORKA** - For sure he is! I think he also has horns on his head. And he crosses himself with his left hoof. From bottom to top!

**MARTA** - ... why didn't she tell me?!

**BÍBORKA** - Why do you think!

**MARTA** - Magdushka, tell me why? Why did you do this to me? I'm her mother. I have a right to know these things.

**BÍBORKA** - You have the right. But Magdushka has the right to be afraid.

**MARTA** - I've never said a cross word to her...

**BÍBORKA** - From what I remember, she wasn't even allowed to wear pants until she finished the academy.

**MARTA** - That has nothing to do with it.

**BÍBORKA** - And what does it have to do with? Do you know why I wrote to you? I didn't feel like making a fuss. Exactly like this. Yes, we weren't married. Except that we lived together for twenty-seven years! I'm the mother of his two children! If I hadn't read the newspaper, I wouldn't even have known that he died!

**MARTA** - ... Akram! Akram! It sounds like someone crunching cookies.

*Pause. Marta pulls out a hidden bottle. Bíborka takes away the empty one.*

**BÍBORKA** - You were never attracted to Andrej?

**MARTA** - Why are you bringing Andrej into this? We grew up together. Why are you bringing him up?

**BÍBORKA** - Marta takes after her mama perfectly. She also lives in the middle ages, said Filip to Andrej. We didn't notice anything about you. Even I was surprised when Magdushka was born. What did your dear mother have to say about it?

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - That's my business. It's no one else's business. She beat me. Horribly. But it's my business.

**BÍBORKA** - Right you are. You have the right to mess up your own life. But why did you have to mess up Filip's life too? And Magdushka's? And mine?

**MARTA** - I have my principles.  
**BÍBORKA** - Marta. Stubborn old Marta. Do you know that I'm actually grateful to you?!

**MARTA** - Too bad you didn't realize it earlier. *She grabs her head.* What did you hit me with?...

**BÍBORKA** - A log. Filip liked the smell of wood.  
**MARTA** - Oh stop waving Filip in my face! You leeches off him his whole life And then three years ago, suddenly, whoosh! You took off like a bird. What, are you pining for your mama? I took care of Filip, no one else.  
**BÍBORKA** - I know.  
**MARTA** - Until he died.  
**BÍBORKA** - I know.  
**MARTA** - He went to sleep and didn't wake up in the morning.  
**BÍBORKA** - Stop it.  
**MARTA** - A vein burst in his brain.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - My father died. I couldn't leave her without...alone. After a year she died too. She lived quietly and died quietly. Even the sorrow after she left us was quiet. All she said was that she was going to follow daddy. And then it felt strange to just pack up and come back. And then suddenly Filip died too. *Pause.* The mourning period is over, it's time to bury the anger too.

*Bíborka begins to clear the table. She takes away two plates and two sets of silverware.*

**MARTA** - What are you doing?  
**BÍBORKA** - *Laughing.* Our whole lives in the back row of the choir - that would be enough to discourage stronger souls. I should have become a shop assistant.  
**MARTA** - You see. And we both finished school with honors. For what!? I didn't even get a thank-you letter when I retired.  
**BÍBORKA** - Neither did I, if it makes you feel any better.  
**MARTA** - They threw Filip out while he was still at school and look at all that he left behind!! *She points to the music, record albums, photos, diplomas.*  
**BÍBORKA** - Yeah. God is great. Both yours and mine. But he isn't just.  
**MARTA** - Don't be blasphemous, Biborka. It was a mistake not to invite the children. A mistake.  
**BÍBORKA** - They have no understanding of their father's music. Or of Filip himself.  
**MARTA** - Filip's music. Everyone likes it. Even small children. Only his own children don't like it. Whose to thank for that?  
**BÍBORKA** - I knew Magdalena wouldn't come. Her concert is all over the newspapers. And I hate her for it every minute. Then I'm ashamed. It was my dream, after all. Filip promised it to me... I didn't invite our children at all. I don't want them here today. Not today. Vladimir had his name changed. To Kubašský. After the town where my parents lived. Vladimir Kubašský.  
**MARTA** - Vladimir changed his name. Veronika will get married. Magdushka will end up somewhere in a harem. And the Mamatejs will be no more.

**BÍBORKA** - I'm thankful to you for taking care of Filip. When I went home to my mother.

**MARTA** - When you left him.

**BÍBORKA** - I didn't leave him.

**MARTA** - You left him.

**BÍBORKA** - I didn't leave him.

**MARTA** - You left him.

**BÍBORKA** - OK, I left him. I'm happy I could come here every other Saturday after Filip's death. I used to clean a little and cry a little. It was a good arrangement. I at least put things a little bit right in my life. Buy I didn't leave Filip. Don't say that. It really hurts me. I didn't leave Filip.

*Bíborka rises and goes to the pile of albums. She takes one and tries to break it... without success. She throws it on the table. Marta carefully puts it back in its place.*

**BÍBORKA** - I didn't take Filip away from you. Not me. Anyone would have done anything to get away from you. When you and your mother went to church, we used to do it downstairs on the ground floor. Filip would put my hands on the china cabinet and.... I'll give you an onion pattern, I'll give you an onion pattern, Filip used to repeat to the rhythm! The dishes used to rattle inside. Not lovemaking, just ordinary screwing !! And on the stairs, while you were presenting the neighbors with those saintly smiles of yours. That's where we liked to do it best.

**MARTA** - You vulgar little minx ...

**BÍBORKA** - Ha! I am a minx!! What about that underwear of yours? You were always terribly fancy, weren't you. Saint Marta! But those underpants your mother threw on my head when I was outside below the window? You lost these in front of our door, she yelled after me! Those weren't mine! I had a tight little ass like a minx and those underpants...made for an extra-large cow! And you know it!!

**MARTA** - Well look how you've gotten going! Other times you barely say hello and suddenly...there she goes!

**BÍBORKA** - "Good day" is a greeting that has been sufficient always and everywhere. I taught it to my children too.

**MARTA** - To your children who've told you to go to hell.

**BÍBORKA** - .....

**MARTA** - I apologize.

**BÍBORKA** - I don't accept.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - Twenty-seven years I lived with Filip, but I loved someone else. I resisted him my whole life. He tried to win me over, but I kept putting him off. Filip was the one who was here. I invited that other man here today. That extra plate is for him. Not for Filip. I'm finished with Filip. You are right. I left Filip. I abandon Filip.

**MARTA** - *To Filip's photograph.* See, I told you. *To Biborka.* Did you find it?

**BÍBORKA** - Yes. I found it.

**MARTA** - ...The diary.

**BÍBORKA** - The diary?

**MARTA** - The diary.

**BÍBORKA** - What diary?

**MARTA** - Filip's diary.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip's diary?

**MARTA** - Filip's diary.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip kept a diary?  
**MARTA** - I guess so, since it's his.  
**BÍBORKA** - Filip kept a diary?  
**MARTA** - Filip kept a diary. Only once in a while. But he did.  
**BÍBORKA** - No! It took him longer to write the names of his pieces than the whole composition process.  
**MARTA** - But he did keep a diary.

*Marta rises, approaches the record player, lifts it and from underneath pulls a small notebook in a red cloth.*

**BÍBORKA** - That's my notebook with recipes from my mother.  
**MARTA** - Recipes! Ha!! *Reading.* I can't stand it. That phrase best describes what I feel toward BÍBORKA. I'm sorry, but I cannot stand her. I cannot stand her humility, her kindness, her empathy, her mediocrity. I love the children. But I'm afraid of them. And they're afraid of me. Everybody keeps telling them that I'm a genius, but all they see is a tired guy at the piano. And they hate the piano.

**BÍBORKA** - Stop.  
**MARTA** - Magdalena has talent. As opposed to her mother. And BÍBORKA. I don't understand how I ever could have thought those two could sing. BÍBORKA moos like a cow, and Marta... Christmas 1992.

**BÍBORKA** *Takes the diary from Marta's hands. She leafs through it.* - BÍBORKA moos like a cow, and Marta yowls like a cat in heat. And there you have it.  
*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - Nothing here belongs to me, I don't want anything. I just want to leave. I want to start a new life.

**MARTA** Marta is happy. She always wanted this. To have Filip all to herself. She took care of him since he was a kid. *Pause.* Good. I agree. Go live somewhere else.

**BÍBORKA** - I will go.

**MARTA** - Far away.

**BÍBORKA** - I'm moving out.

**MARTA** - Will you get married?

**BÍBORKA** - I will. Finally.

**MARTA** - You won't leave a forwarding address.

**BÍBORKA** - I will become a new person. My name will be...

**MARTA** - No, don't say it!! I don't want to know!!!

**BÍBORKA** - Buberová.

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - You will be Andrej Buber's wife?

**BÍBORKA** - Andrej Buber's wife.

**MARTA** - Why did you tell me?

**BÍBORKA** - So you would know.

**MARTA** - Andrej is the father of my daughter.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - How could he promise me...

**MARTA** - Why wouldn't he? If he could promise to marry me, why couldn't he promise you?!

**BÍBORKA** - He promised to marry you?  
**MARTA** - Twenty-five years ago. The first time. And since then every time he wanted to sleep with me.  
**BÍBORKA** - And you didn't want to sleep with him?  
**MARTA** - I loved him.  
**BÍBORKA** - Me too.  
**MARTA** - Well. There you have it.

*An ironic echo of the piano can be heard.*

**BÍBORKA** *Leafing through another page of the diary.* – Listen to this. All women love Andrej. They're afraid of me. They don't understand me. They only like the silliest things I say when I'm drunk. They don't listen to real music. So what do we have to talk about? *She keeps leafing.* Or this...I only know how to hate. My mother and her Boss taught me that. But I like Andrej. So why should I be surprised at Biborka, Marta and other women?

**MARTA** - You knew about Filip's diary.

**BÍBORKA** - I told him that we live like dead souls. Filip showed me the diary. When I read it, I decided to leave. Why didn't you marry Andrej?

**MARTA** - *Laughing.* The book, the premiere, then an identity crisis...Something always came up. The last time he promised to marry me was this morning. When he left me.

**BÍBORKA** - Filip showed it to me. I told him that we live like dead souls. When I asked him why.

**MARTA** - That "when" of yours. More humility!

**BÍBORKA** - Why didn't you marry Andrej?

**MARTA** - Something always came up. A book, a premiere, that an identity crisis...The last time he promised that he would marry me was this morning. When he was leaving my place.

**BÍBORKA** - He was with you yesterday?

**MARTA** - He came to watch the news and then stayed. As usual.

**BÍBORKA** - That's why he couldn't come over in the evening.

**MARTA** - You've screwed me over again. You. And Andrej Buber...

**BÍBORKA** - And you and Andrej Buber?

**MARTA** - Filip must have known.

**BÍBORKA** - When Filip and I lived together, it was easy. When I missed Andrej, I would roast a piece of pork and by the time the meat was ready, he was here. It was just a hop from the second floor. Up here. To the atelier!

**MARTA** - And Filip?

**BÍBORKA** - He was always somewhere in some hole. At some underground, illegal concert.

**MARTA** - Hmm, Andrej used to come over for poppy seed strudel. Yesterday he only drank sour milk.

**BÍBORKA** - Yes. We drank champagne. A lot of it. We were planning our honeymoon. Andrej insisted that he bid a dignified farewell to his childhood home. Filip could leave the house. So many times I asked him to.

**MARTA** - Filip loved this house. Because it's quiet here. They want to knock it down. They said it has a weak foundation. *She sits up in shock.* - ... you invited Andrej to today's party?!

**BÍBORKA** - Andrej always came to Filip's birthday parties.

**MARTA** - Won't it bother him that I'm here too?!

**BÍBORKA** - You were only supposed to come tomorrow!...I told him that we would be alone. Just he and I.

**MARTA** - You really are a murderer.  
**BÍBORKA** - Are you crazy? I'm not that stupid. I only wanted to knock you around a bit. Sorry.

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - I'm happy that Andrej's coming.  
**BÍBORKA** - Oh my God! What do you intend to do?!  
**MARTA** - We'll sit him down right here. And let him sweat.  
**BÍBORKA** - When he sees both of us here, he'll turn on his heel.  
**MARTA** - *Pointing to the door.* The fuses. Andrej will ring the bell. The fuse will blow. *Pause.* You can bop him over the head a bit.  
**BÍBORKA** - No!...I can't hit him.  
**MARTA** - Oh but you will.  
**BÍBORKA** - Not me!!  
**MARTA** - Oh yes you will. You'll go behind the door and hit him over the head.  
**BÍBORKA** - I'm telling you, I can't.  
**MARTA** - Bíborka has put her foot down. Think about it, OK?  
**BÍBORKA** - I'm not going to think about it!!  
**MARTA** - Try. For once.  
**BÍBORKA** - You're making fun of me.  
**MARTA** - ...no more than Andrej.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - Even so, I won't do it.  
**MARTA** - What time is he supposed to come?  
**BÍBORKA** - At 7:00.  
**MARTA** - God help us, it's almost 7:00! Go out in the hall!!

*vii*

*Bíborka is in the hallway. From below, through an open door, we can faintly hear the sound of the TV news. For a moment nothing happens. Then the door of the apartment quietly opens. Bíborka is standing in the doorway.*

**BÍBORKA** - He's not coming.  
**MARTA** - ... you didn't call him?  
**BÍBORKA** - I did.  
**MARTA** - And?!  
**BÍBORKA** - The TV news. It already started.  
**MARTA** - ... prick.

*Pause.*

**BÍBORKA** - Limp prick. *She sets the log down on the table.*  
**MARTA** - Limp? Not a chance. Look. *She shows her throat. It's full of bruises and bite marks.* He did this to me yesterday. And I liked it. I have them all over.  
**BÍBORKA** - Prick.

*Pause. Both of them start to laugh quietly.*

**MARTA** - Sometimes this building is really strange.

**BÍBORKA** - Sad.  
**MARTA** - Wish they'd demolish it already.  
**BÍBORKA** - ... where will you go?  
**MARTA** - I don't know. Somewhere. Bíborka...  
**BÍBORKA** - ... no!! Don't even think about it! Not into my house, not after mama's death!!  
**MARTA** - ... what do you do when you're sad? When you are devastated to the bone?  
**BÍBORKA** - I weep.  
**MARTA** - Yeah. It used to help me too. Will you forgive me?  
**BÍBORKA** - For what?  
**MARTA** - I love Andrej Buber.  
**BÍBORKA** - So you should have married him.  
**MARTA** - How could I!? Buber! A Jew! After all that?!  
**BÍBORKA** - After all what?!  
**MARTA** - I just told you all about it!!  
**BÍBORKA** - But you talk so much!

*Pause.*

**MARTA** - I'm hungry. What did you bring?  
**BÍBORKA** - Stuffed pork shoulder.  
**MARTA** - Pork isn't good for you.  
**BÍBORKA** - Andrej likes pork.  
**MARTA** - So do I. When Andrej and I used to eat it, I used to admire you so much. You used to wrap it so beautifully for him, with such care, you garnished it, decorated it...I liked those little hearts the best, the ones you made out of the tomatoes....These are the ones. These.

*Bíborka puts a large piece of pork garnished with vegetables on the table. They laugh.*

**BÍBORKA** - What I liked about your strudel is that there were always as many cherries in it as poppy seed filling.  
**MARTA** - Yeah, Andrej likes it that way...  
**BÍBORKA** - Andrej always used to throw away the sour cherries.  
**MARTA** - Like I said, he's a prick.  
**BÍBORKA** - Marta, we shouldn't talk that way.  
**MARTA** - What way?  
**BÍBORKA** - Like this. So crudely.  
**MARTA** - But no one can hear us.  
**BÍBORKA** - And...  
**MARTA** - God? He's heard worse things. Over thirty years, it has a way of accumulating.  
**BÍBORKA** - Twenty-seven.  
**MARTA** - Oh please! You can't leave it alone! Nasty Lutheran.  
**BÍBORKA** - Marta!!  
**MARTA** - I won't give you any!!  
**BÍBORKA** - God is watching you.  
**MARTA** - More like YOU.  
**BÍBORKA** - He's watching you more...  
**MARTA** - ... because he can't stand the sight of your Lutheran face!

**viii**

*Marta takes the third plate and puts it in the kitchen. Now the table is set for two people. Actually for two women. Marta sits down in her place.*

**MARTA** -Time for dinner. *She raises her hand to cross herself.*

*Someone knocks at the door.*

**BÍBORKA** - *Confused.* It's open...

**ANDREJ** - *Speaking from the doorway.* Bíborka, I can smell the meat in the whole building! I hope Marta can't smell it... *He enters. In his robe. He sees Marta. He's shocked. He points behind him.* ... the TV news. It's hot. Everywhere... I'm going to finish watching. *He leaves.*

**BÍBORKA** - Hangs her head. We just don't seem to have any luck with men, do we?

ix.

*Marta rises in silence. Smothers Bíborka with the pillow.*

**MARTA** - *Finishes crossing herself.* May God be with you. *She takes the log from the table. She leaves, leaving the door open.*

*The End.*