

THE BLACK SHEEP

(A Drama)

By Stanislav Štepka

Translation: Heather Trebatická

CHARACTERS:

Dr. Zoltán Lovásko headmaster

František Špánik deputy headmaster

Jana Slovak teacher

Milan, P. E. instructor

Pavel Fekete history teacher

Oľga art teacher

Darina Pioneer youth leader

Alojz Berec parent

Mr. Kollár school caretaker

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

PART 1

Situation One

It is Teachers' Day and the staff are preparing to celebrate it in a small village primary school. Pioneer youth leader Darina and art teacher Oľga are decorating the staff room. A slogan made from words cut out of magazine headlines is almost ready, on the front wall we can see a picture of a mother and child. It is a warm spring afternoon.

Darina: There should be a slogan on the front wall. So that everyone can see it's a slogan.

Oľga: That's rather conventional.

Darina: There must be a slogan. I've received instructions.

Oľga: Who from?

Darina: The headmaster. Do much, spend little and learn.

Oľga: Did he say that?

Darina: No. Our national revivalist, Štúr.

Oľga: Aha, but probably in a weak moment.

Darina: When I was on a course for Pioneer youth leaders recently they had a slogan there, too. „For the greater effectiveness of our work.“

Oľga: There are slogans everywhere.

Darina: But why?

Oľga: Didn't they tell you that?

Darina: So we know something should be done, I suppose.

Oľga: All right. We'll cut the letters out of something.

Darina: You're the artist.

Oľga: I only teach art, and that's a different matter. So those I teach how to draw a cockerel can one day paint real pictures for us and sell real statues. Those big, heavy ones.

Darina: Like Kamil?

Oľga: Ah, Kamil. I suspect he's beginning to be more interested in my body than my mind. But I've no objection.

Darina: It's harder to shape a mind. I can see that with those young Pioneers of mine. No matter how I try to shape them, they still smoke and spit like navvies.. You know, that mother and child of yours looks pretty good.

Oľga: I just knocked it off. It'll be taken down tomorrow anyway.

Darina: There'll be a tape recorder, too. The caretaker's bringing it.

Oľga: Oh, dear, that means the caretaker will be there as well.

Darina: They'll all be there, not our families, though. You know our

headmaster, Comrade Lovásko.

Ol'ga: I do, only too well. You'll have the honour, too.

Darina: (*looks uncertain*) He appears alright on the whole, doesn't he?

Ol'ga: Appears is the right word. He used to appear to me, until one day he revealed all. It was quite a shock.

Darina: He looks a decent chap.

Ol'ga: He not only looks it, what's worse, he actually is.

Milan: (*runs in in his tracksuit*) Ciao. Haven't you seen...?

Darina: What, Milan?

Milan: That, that... what d'you call it? That thingamabob.

Ol'ga: Cigarette lighter?

Milan: No, that... Well, what's it called, I can't for the life of me remember. Aha, stopwatch.

Darina: What do you need a stopwatch for today, on Teachers' Day?

Milan: I'm going to fetch the demijohn.

Ol'ga: And so you want to time yourself?

Milan: Well, something of the kind.

Ol'ga: We haven't a clue where your stopwatch could be. We haven't found any clues.

Milan: (*finds his stopwatch in his pocket*) Ah, here it is.

Darina: You see.

Milan: And I've been looking for it everywhere. Ciao! (*Exits.*)

Ol'ga: These P.E. teachers are lucky. Their brains are in their feet..

Darina: Has Kamil finished that statue yet? That - vague one?

Ol'ga: Let's only hope it won't cause any trouble. Nowadays everyone pokes their nose into everything.

Darina: What trouble could it cause? Something like a head on the top, then two stones as breasts, one stone like the rest of a woman - and that's all.

Ol'ga: Don't simplify. You must see it in context, young woman.

What if those two stones like breasts are, as someone said, meant to symbolise our divided world?

Darina: Then Kamil should add an inscription somewhere saying it's meant to be a woman fighting for an undivided world, etc., don't you think?

Ol'ga: You're young, Darinka, and that excuses you. Where are those magazines we were going to cut out?

Darina: Do you think someone could possibly say that, Ol'ga?

Ol'ga: They do all the time. Kamil is already used to such nonsense. He does something and suddenly they're all terribly wise, although they said nothing beforehand. Apparently last time one of the commission hit the ceiling. And guess who it was. You'll never guess - our charming director.

Milan: (*runs in out of breath*) Ciao!

Darina: You're back already?

Milan: I haven't gone yet.

Ol'ga: Have you got your stopwatch?

Milan: Yes, I've got that.

Ol'ga: Well?

Milan: I forgot the address.

Darina: The deputy knows it.

Ol'ga: Go and see him. He'll write it down on a bit of paper for you.

Milan: Good idea. Ciao. (*Runs out.*)

Darina: Who'd have thought it?

Ol'ga: You never know what you can expect of people.

Darina: We'll cut out those letters and that's it. There ought to be some sandwiches, but there won't be. Have to save.

Ol'ga: They should save on the speeches. Especially on the hot air. That's where you could save the most.

Darina: (*so seriously that it seems ridiculous*) Ol'ga, do you think

a youth leader can fall madly in love?

Ol'ga: Why not?

Darina: With a married man, that is.

Ol'ga: Kamil was married, too, so what?

Darina: But this one is still married.

Ol'ga: If you can't forgive him for it, write to him.

Darina: That would be silly as he's here. Actually, if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here either. It's what he wanted.

Ol'ga: He's... Well, I never. And I knew nothing about it.

Darina: No one knows.

Ol'ga: After all, he is a doctor.

Darina: That's the last thing that matters. With us it really is the last thing.

Ol'ga: Come on, Darinka, how many headmasters of primary schools are doctors?

Darina: But he's married. And everyone says, happily married.

Ol'ga: And what do you say?

Darina: I'm waiting. He said he'd tell me something today.

Ol'ga: What's that?

Darina: What I want to hear.

Ol'ga: That he loves you? That he'll marry you?

Darina: Oh, no. He says that as a matter of course. That's not enough for me any longer. I want to know more.

Ol'ga: What more is there to know?

Darina: Whether he thinks I've got prospects as a teacher. Whether I've got a gift for teaching. Whether I'm capable of generally bringing up and preparing the younger generation in a responsible way for the difficult business of living.

Whether I've been proving to him through my work with my group of young Pioneers that I have enough pedagogical talent to predestine me for teaching work in general.

Do you get what I mean?

Ol'ga: No.

Darina: Olinka, those are the questions which worry me and which keep me awake at night and force me to get out of bed and prepare for lessons, just for myself.

Ol'ga: You're not serious.

Darina: But I am, Olinka! Those are the questions that make me blush from time to time when I meet him, an experienced and all-round teacher. Only you can understand that, Olinka, only a woman can understand what goes on inside another woman when her heart is thumping with anxiety and pedagogical impatience. You must be able to understand me, Olinka.

Ol'ga: (*gives Darina a horrified look*) What about going for lunch? I think that's the best thing we can do at this point. It must be an empty stomach that makes you talk like that.

Situation Two

Caretaker: (*enters carrying a tape recorder*) Where be you wanting the tape recorder?

Ol'ga: In a comer somewhere.

Caretaker: 'ad a job t' mend it. See what I 'ad to do? Ne'er believe it, but I 'ad to take t'ole thing ter pieces. And in the end 'twas in the flex.

Darina: Have you got any hits?

Caretaker: Eighth formers recorded it, so should be modem.

Ol'ga: Goodness me, you've even had a shave?

Caretaker: Always shaved, haven' t'yer noticed?

Darina: Some of the eighth form are already shaving. The other day I saw one of them with a piece of plaster on his cheek.

I asked him what had happened to him and he said it was from shaving. So soon? I didn't know what to think.

Caretaker: If yud 'eard 'em talkin' in t' loo! You'd soon know what to think!

Darina: What do you say to our work?

Caretaker: I'd 'av to think 'bout it. I'z don't like givin' an opinion til I've 'ad a good think 'bout it.

Darina: Then think.

Caretaker: 'Tis tricky. What the 'eadmaster say?

Darina: He hasn't seen it yet.

Caretaker: I'll tell you when he's 'ad 'is say. At t'moment I've got other thin's to do.

Ol'ga: The decorations are up, the tape recorder's here too. We'll just pop out to the shop to get a yoghurt, what do you say?

Caretaker: That be enough for you?

Ol'ga: You can't beat yoghurt.. (Exits.)

Caretaker: Nuting wrong wi' it, if only it didn't 'av such a peculiar name.

Situation Three

Fekete: (enters) What's this?

Caretaker: Staff room, Mr. Fekete. De-cor-ated.

Fekete: You call this decorated?

Caretaker: I don't, but the young'uns do.

Fekete: Where's Comenius, for example?

Caretaker: 'pin the loft. Got a bit broken off 'is nose.

Fekete: A bit could be added. Just a question of wanting to.

Caretaker: That's just it. If anyun now'days wanted to. But otherwise 'tis nice here, what d'you say? In my 'pinion, they made a good job of it. They deserves a bit o' praise. I'll bring it up wi' the 'eadmaster.

Fekete: How come that I'm the first here?

Caretaker: Prob'ly 'cause you're the first to come.

Fekete: You could be right. And what about our headmaster, Comrade Lovásko?

Caretaker: 'E's writin' 'is speech in 'is office. 'ear that? 'E's writin'.

Fekete: I can't. I can't hear anything.

Caretaker: Then 'e's prob'ly thinkin' at t' moment.

Fekete: At one time there were no speeches, at least not as many as now, and there was enough of everything.

Caretaker: Pov'ty included. That's what t' history books says.

Fekete: And that's what I teach. But what I think is another matter.

Caretaker: And what do the chillen think?

Fekete: They don't think anything. To think - that would be a great luxury for this generation. This generation would be happiest if it could burp its way into the future. I don't like them, sometimes I really detest them.

Caretaker: Thrash 'em, sir, beat it out 'em, you know - like in the good ol' days!

Fekete: We're not even allowed to hit them. And, I'm telling you, few of them got the better of me. A belt, stick, ruler, the compasses, whatever came to hand. Like this, and here!

Caretaker: And it didn't help, hm?

Fekete: It doesn't help immediately, but the truth wins in the end. Especially if it's physically stronger..

Situation Four

Berec: (enters, energetically) Good afternoon, I'm looking for a teacher by the name of Fekete.

Fekete: I'm a teacher by the name of Fekete. Calm down, please.

Berec: I'm someone by the name of Alojz Berec.

Fekete: Berec, Berec... Ah, yes, Berec!

Berec: That sixth former, Lojzo Berec, is my son. Does that ring a bell, Fekete?

Fekete: Small, freckled, poor marks..

Berec: I'm telling you quite frankly, sir, that if you weren't an elderly

person, even decorated at one time, I'd knock your block off!

Fekete: (*to the caretaker*) Go and see whether all's in order in front of the school.

Caretaker: What should be in order?

Fekete: The acacias, benches and the like.

Caretaker: I don't even 'av to look, 'sall in order there.

Fekete: Something might have changed meanwhile.

Caretaker: 'Sbin the same for years, why should anythin' change jus' today? (*Goes out.*)

Fekete: You're a plumber, Mr. Berec?

Berec: Someone has to do that work.

Fekete: Of course, we have every respect for plumbers.

Berec: And plumbers respect teachers. So long as they don't beat the children.

Fekete: You know...

Berec: I don't know! My son is this little and you're this big.

Fekete: Someone in the class let out an unpleasant sound.

Berec: It needn't have been my son.

Caretaker: (*comes back*) Nuttin there, jus' as I thought. Everythin's jus where't should be.

Fekete: I told them that if the person responsible didn't report to me, I would pick a hostage.

Caretaker: Who's to report where?

Fekete: We're having a conversation, Mr. Kollár.

Caretaker: 'Sall right, I jus' need ter know who and where.

Berec: A hostage, then...

Fekete: It's always been that way. And for as long as anyone can remember, it's never been the hostage's fault.

Caretaker: I still dun get what's all about.

Fekete: No need for you to, Mr. Kollár. It's enough if Mr. Berec here understands.

Berec: I don't think I do, Mr. Fekete.

Caretaker: There's prob'ly summin up, isn't there?

Berec: It must be reported to the headmaster.

Caretaker: You haven't got an appointment.

Fekete: Mr. Berec, today is Teachers' Day. I don't know if this is really in tune with the occasion. Anyway, I don't beat them all at one go, just one by one, I'm getting on and will soon be retired. Although I can still saw wood for myself and carry a barrel of fuel oil. I really don't know whether this is the right time.

Berec: *You needn't worry about that, it will be the right time.*

For you, too. (Goes off to the headmaster's office.)

Caretaker: What now? We won't be knowing anythin' first hand. That makes me kind o' nervous. That Berec shouldn't 've done that to me.

Fekete: Nor to me.

Situation Five

Jana: (*enters with Milan*) I'm telling you, Milan, I don't like it.

Milan: What?

Jana: Even today you've been keeping them at it since the morning.

They're only children. And some of them are girls.

How can a girl run one thousand five hundred metres wearing a five kilo vest?

Milan: So what?

Jana: It seems a bit harsh to me, Milan.

Milan: What does?

Jana: Everything! The way you do things. A P.E. instructor should be a human being like any other, even if he is only a P. E. instructor.

Fekete: I don't like to butt in, but when is it meant to begin?

Milan: What?

Fekete: The celebrations. I've been hanging around for some time and nothing's happened. Only some parent by the name of Berec's turned up. Imagine, he wanted to know why I laid a hand on Berec junior!

Caretaker: A tall feller lookin' pretty mad.

Jana: Don't you know who Alojz Berec is?

Fekete: I don't care who he is, his son's doesn't know how to behave.

Caretaker: Small, freckled and vicious?

Fekete: Anyway, I do know who he is. Actually, he's a plumber.

Jana: He is now. But do you know what he was before that? He was the deputy chairman of the District National Committee.

Fekete: That means...

Jana: That he's an elite plumber.

Caretaker: Everyone knows that.

Fekete: He was a plumber before he was the deputy chairman of the DNC?

Jana: You can be sure it wasn't the other way round. He would hardly have studied to be a plumber while he was deputy chairman.

Milan: That's that little one?

Jana: The big one.

Milan: He's that little.

Fekete: The little one's little and the big one's big!

Milan: Aha.

Fekete: Wait a moment. He's the one who moved into one of those police flats?

Caretaker: Thirteenth June last year.

Jana: That's the one.

Milan: Aha.

Fekete: To look at him, you'd never think he'd held such a high position. And if so, only as regards his height. I'd no idea he was from the district committee.

Milan: While we're on the subject, Jana, what do you think I should do? I mean, seriously.

Jana: Nothing. Just be a bit, a little bit more gentle. After all, not every boy wants to be a soldier. You men are terrible.

You'd think you had no hearts sometimes. I don't know if you get what I mean.

Milan: Well... no.

Jana: It's not just strength that makes a man a man, but intelligence and good looks as well. The power of words, of knowledge, that continual restlessness of the mind. Do you understand?

Milan: No.

Caretaker: Me neither.

Fekete: Is our head still writing his speech?

Jana: Maybe it's going to be funny, he probably wants to make us laugh.

Fekete: There's a war film on T.V. tonight. I shall be sitting at home, noting down all the mistakes made by the film makers.

It's terrible how superficially things are done nowadays, even battle scenes.

Caretaker: There used to be good war films. Yer came 'ome and 'ol night 'twas nuttin but ratata, ratata-boom-boom.

Fekete: That's true and it's also possible that that plumber from the DNC is singing whole litanies about me. If I'd known, I would have picked a different hostage. But you're always wise after the event.

Jana: I hardly like to ask you, Milan, but when did you last read any fiction?

Milan: What?

Jana: Books... what books have you read?

Milan: Oh that! At the moment I'm reading that thing... about... well, you know.

Jana: Aha.

Fekete: Punctuality! Punctuality was always the prerogative of kings.

Jana: But as you see, Mr. Fekete, not of headmasters.

Caretaker: I'd say 'tis the speech, not punctuality that's important here.

Fekete: It's theoretically possible that that Berec could go back to being a district deputy chairman. He can now claim to be from the ranks of the workers again. And if they happen to be short of someone... And it's always happening here - in one place they're one short and somewhere else there's one too many.

Jana: Don't worry, he can't do you any harm. By the time he's back on the district committee, you'll be well into your retirement.

Situation Six

Ol'ga: (*enters with Darina*) It was small, good and just enough.

Darina: Comrade Lovásko hasn't arrived yet?

Caretaker: He's got a li'l problem to solve.

Fekete: If we don't get a move on, I won't see that war film today.

Darina: Hi, Milan, how goes?

Milan: It's here. Ten litres.

Darina: Some time we ought to stretch our bones in that gym of yours.

Milan: We'll stretch them.

Jana: The mind in the body needs a bit of exercise, too. It's shrinking. All Milan reads is „that thing“ and I suspect that's not enough.

Ol'ga: The fact that someone reads doesn't necessarily mean their head's not full of sawdust.

Jana: D'you mind!

Fekete: In any case that Berec could get me into hot water. Shouldn't I go and explain I didn't mean it like that?

Darina: Berec? What Berec?

Caretaker: Twenty-eight years old, height six foot four, married, son Alojz, 'leven year-'ole.

Jana: Came to complain, the father of that little sixth-former. Our colleague here whacked him with the compasses in the old tradition.

Fekete: With my fist, Jana, the compasses were broken.

Ol'ga: Ladies and gentlemen, what do you say to the painting done with my own hand?

Milan: It's good.

Fekete: Firstly you should tell us what your work's all about, so we can tell others what you really meant.

Ol'ga: (*points, explains*) This blurred, indefinite and generally dubious blotch is supposed to be a school mistress.

Fekete: It really is hard to say whether it's a master or a mistress. If we had the eighth-formers here, they'd no doubt add the relevant female symbols to the picture.

Milan: *That's a good one!*

Ol'ga: Let's say it's a woman teacher. She's hugging a child. Of course, it's also possible that the child is hugging her. We won't solve that now. The important thing is that they are hugging each other.

Caretaker: The festive occasion is 'bout to begin. I'll turn on the tape recorder. The head's comin', we're goin' to 'ug each other.

Ol'ga: But you haven't got a tape in it.

Caretaker: Where can I 'av put it?

Darina: You're the one who should know.
Caretaker: We'll all shout „cheers“, what you say?
Jana: That's hardly appropriate. It would look as if it's his special day. It should be ours, don't you think?
Milan: Yeah.
Caretaker: But we should sing summin'. I know what. „Trenčín's clocks strike sadly“, what d'ye say to that?
Jana: Do we have to?
Ol'ga: Of course we don't have to. He can be glad he's got us.
Caretaker: Even so, I'd like to sing summin'. To please him.
Jana: You sing.
Milan: Yeah.
Caretaker: By misself? Won't that look stoopid?
Jana: If you're so keen on singing.
Fekete: Is Berec still there?
Caretaker: Jus' the head and deputy. Berec's prob'ly left by now.
Fekete: What nonsense can he have been telling the head? Left me in suspense.
Caretaker: Don't worry, Fekete, I'll find out.
Ol'ga: What about the wine. It was promised, but not brought.
Milan: It's already here.
Ol'ga: Who'll bring what's already brought?
Milan: I will.
Darina: Come on, Milan, I'll help you. *(Goes out with Milan.)*
Fekete: *Beginning late as usual. By the time they bring it and by the time it's drunk..*
Jana: Don't worry, it'll be drunk quick enough. If I know the deputy, there won't be that much of it and it won't be so good as to keep us here for long.
Ol'ga: I'd forgotten. We're going to drink wine produced in the cellar of our animal breeder and handyman rolled into one, that is, Comrade František Špánik? Lord help us!
Caretaker: Actually, it 'ardly ever makes me ill.
Fekete: And it is, mind you, only fifteen crowns a litre. You can't get wine for that nowadays. You can be glad the deputy let us have it so cheap.
Ol'ga: The deputy can be glad we bought it off him.
Caretaker: I think I'll go and look for a tape, to cheer things up here. *(Exits.)*
Jana: What ass put that slogan up there?
Ol'ga: The head chose it. Don't you like it?
Jana: There should be some appropriate verses there – and not junk like that.
Fekete: You could have chosen something yourself.
Jana: I'm here to teach, not to choose verses to put on the wall.
Fekete: We all teach and do something extra as well.
Jana: Such as what in your case, Mr. Fekete?
Fekete: I've already done my share. If you want to know, I've been a fireman, egg buyer, choirmaster, Sokol group secretary. Whatever came up.
Jana: You've done everything. Everything. And when did you teach?
Fekete: We had to find the time. And we did. Without us there wouldn't be all there is today, which there wasn't at one time in the past.
Jana: Well, we thank you very much for it!
Ol'ga: *(appears in the door)* The wine's on its way, but the head and deputy aren't yet.
Fekete: *I don't know what you're implying. If I'm meant to take it as a hint..*
Jana: Take it as a compliment, Mr. Fekete. It'll make it easier for you to leave your job at the school..

Situation Seven

Milan and Darina enter and put the demijohn of wine on the table. They are followed by a dignified but smiling headmaster with his deputy. The staff clap, the headmaster, Dr. Lovásko, sits down in the centre. The deputy head, František Špáňik, gets up to speak.

Špáňik: Dear colleagues, dear comrades. The year has passed like lightning and we meet here once again to remind ourselves of the birthday of our greatest teacher, John Amos Comenius. His name is bound up with the teaching profession, pedagogy, education, and it is no wonder that on this day all progressive people, but in particular those in our country, in our dear homeland, reflect with respect and gratitude on our work, which is more than work, it is our vocation. From year to year our school, too, performs a great deal of work for the benefit of society, and that is also a fact which carries obligations and fills us with pride. Therefore allow me to congratulate you, both on my own behalf and as the chairman of our Trade Union committee, on the occasion of your special day and also to convey warm greetings from the department of education, who were planning to visit us, but who were probably prevented from doing so by unforeseen circumstances. Therefore allow me – also at least symbolically in the name of our comrades on the district committee – to express our gratitude for your excellent work for the next generation. And before I hand over to the headmaster of the school, Comrade Doctor Lovásko, I have one practical comment to make. If we run out of wine, don't worry, we can pass the *hat round - there's more to be had. But now I shall call on our headmaster, Comrade Lovásko, to speak.*

Lovásko: We all know who Seneca was and we all know that he was a wise and venerable man. I have chosen one thought from his immortal letters, with which I should like to evoke the festive atmosphere of this day, this hour, this moment. „We live only a small part of our lives. All the rest is not life; it is only time.“ As you see, dear colleagues and comrades, I have not quoted anything which directly concerns the school, or education in the widest sense of the word. Nevertheless this provoking thought came to me just today, when so much is being said about us teachers in all official, and no doubt also unofficial, circles. Yes, friends, we only live a small part of our lives. And therefore in the process of education we try to do everything we can to make life life and not just time we have to live through. After all, who should do more to fulfil this mission than a teacher, that designer of the human spirit and gardener who tends the first flowers of knowledge. So let us drink, dear colleagues, to our by no means easy, responsible and socially exceptionally important work, the mother of real progress. Dear colleagues, we are not here for words, but for deeds. And your deeds, the results of your work, speak louder than all words. To your health!

Darina: We haven't had time to fill the glasses yet. It won't take a minute. Come on, Milan, help me.

Lovásko: Just symbolically for the moment, friends, but all the more sincerely – to your health and further success in your pedagogical work. *(The headmaster goes round to each of his colleagues in turn, plus the school caretaker and drinks a toast with them with empty glasses. While doing so he conducts himself in an exceptionally important, dignified manner, as if all the glasses were filled to the brim. The deputy is left no alternative but to get up from the table and go and*

clink glasses with his colleagues. Milan is having difficulty opening the demijohn, so the caretaker takes advantage of the situation and puts on a lively song.)

Lovásko: *(now talking without notes)* You see, friends, even here chance has played with us. We are drinking from empty glasses and we're happy anyway. That's how it should be. Please, let's sit down, the official bit's over. To tell you the truth, friends, what I hate most is official speeches. I hope you didn't take my performance that way.

Fekete: Oh no. Quite on the contrary. Comrade Lovásko, I'm awfully glad you quoted my great teacher, Seneca. A great humanist and an even greater man. Beside him one feels very little. That little.

Lovásko: About as little as Lojzko Berec.

Špánik: What are our young colleagues doing with that wine?

Darina: I'd like to say something, too, but I haven't got it so nicely prepared.

Oľga: Then spit it out quickly. Turn it down, please Mr. Kollár. *(The caretaker turns the tape recorder down, Milan pours wine from the demijohn into the glasses for all of the staff and the caretaker, the deputy is jotting down some notes at the head table.)*

Darina: On behalf of myself and the whole of our Pioneer youth group, I should like to wish you teachers everything that it is the custom to wish you on this day. And at the same time I wish to thank the heads of the school for everything they have done for these young ones. I personally should like to thank you, Comrade Headmaster, for your practical help, patience and understanding. And all that - cheers! Mr. Kollár - a flourish!

Caretaker: Good Lor' what d' we need a flourish for now?

Oľga: Music - a fanfare.

Jana: Turn up the music, Mr. Kollár. Turn it up.

Caretaker: You only 'as to say so, don' you?

Oľga: *Will there be any dancing?*

Jana: Of course there will. There's enough men, women and wine here.

Milan: That's good.

Fekete: I don't know if you noticed, Comrade Lovásko, but our young colleagues made the decorations on their own initiative.

Oľga: Someone had to.

Fekete: But you, Olinka, have got real artistic taste. I stick to dates, kings, executions, war and peace.

Oľga: The slogan is Darinka's contribution.

Jana: I think it's particularly apt. The more you think about it, the more you find in it.

Lovásko: We chose it together. With the help of Štúr.

Jana: That's a joke.

Fekete: You're a walking encyclopaedia, Comrade Lovásko. Tell us where you get it all from.

Lovásko: You know, some things I remember, some I underline and on occasion I copy something out. From time to time I go back to certain thoughts. But you'd be surprised how some of them contradict each other.

Fekete: I shouldn't like to prophesy misfortune, Comrade Lovásko, but they'll take you away from us to work for the district authorities. If not to the capital, Bratislava. It's bound to happen.

Lovásko: Now, now, colleague, let's not try to get ahead of events. Life can be lived pleasantly anywhere, it's just up to you. And if you find a team of people who all pull together, then you can get the same satisfaction in a tiny village as in the

district offices or even in Bratislava, or anywhere.

Špánik: What do you say to the wine? That's wine, don't you think? Just look at it against the light, aha, as clear as crystal.

Jana: All your own work, Comrade Špánik?

Špánik: My wife helps me, too. It's hard work, I can tell you. But *when in the end we see satisfied and smiling faces, both of us think it's well worth the effort.*

Lovásko: Looking around at you, colleagues, I can tell you quite frankly that I'm glad I've settled down in this school. Take my deputy here, Comrade Špánik – my real right hand.

Who in our village knows all about rabbits, wine, geese and coypu? And how many people in the village have become enthusiastic animal breeders?

Špánik: There are thirty-seven of us!

Lovásko: You see. Thirty-seven people rear animals more for themselves, but also, as they say, for our common table. And what about Janka, our Slovak teacher here? This region, known for its harsh accent, is literally softening to the beauty of her spoken word. I know our young people get quite tongue-tied – no matter, it's all in a good cause, it's in the interests of us all.

Jana: It depends on the conditions, Comrade Lovásko, and the conditions for work here are excellent and I'm not saying that just because I've been drinking.

Špánik: This really is wine, isn't it!

Lovásko: Why be so modest? And what about our Olinka? She could illustrate magazines, design posters, sell her own pictures, but she's here and she's teaching children to draw carrots and above all to look at the world, to discover its beauty and to capture these unique moments in a drawing, so that we can all notice and enjoy it.

Oľga: Anyone would do the same.

Lovásko: Not anyone, Olinka. I know all those anyones: they've combined art with business and are now rolling in money.

Or this P. E. instructor of ours. Three first places in district sports contests, two student records, the best prepared Spartakiad performance. I know Milan doesn't boast much about it, but his work speaks for him. To your health, colleague.

Milan: We try. Cheers.

Lovásko: Our new youth leader is particularly promising. Young, ambitious, an excellent organiser, with her initiative she sets an example to us all.. We've been needing someone like her for years.

Darina: And I've been looking for someone like you. Like you all. A school like this, a team like this. It's just a pity I can't say it so nicely as our headmaster.

Lovásko: You'll learn, you just need time – that's on your side, more for you than for us. You're the youngest here, so you have your career before you. Cheers, Darinka.

Caretaker: I'n't it too loud? I can tum't right down.

Lovásko: There, you see, hardworking as an ant, our caretaker. Always equable, willing, self-sacrificing. How fond he is of life. And so are we. *(He gives Fekete a reproachful, reproving look and continues in the same jovial vein.)* And I could go on in the same way about every sphere of our work together. Friends, to your health.

Špánik: What wine! It runs over the tongue like honey. Real medicine, wouldn't you say?

Caretaker: Bef' I forgets, this 'ere peculiar letter came. Jus' says: Primary School, then our village, t' post code and nutin' more. Even I can write better.

Špánik: Give it to me, I'll put it in with the post. Rather light – neither

money, nor dynamite.

Caretaker: Now you get on wi' the dancin'. Girls, the disco is 'bout to begin. Let the music play!

Situation Eight

The caretaker turns on the tape recorder, the teachers sip the homemade wine, then they pull out from somewhere some little biscuits and cheese straws and the P.E. instructor bows to Jana.

Milan: May I have this dance, Janka?

Jana: Thank you. So P. E. instructors know how to dance?

Milan: Does that surprise you?

Jana: You know what I was wondering the other day, Milan?

Why is it called light athletics?

Milan: That's easy, isn't it?

Jana: Well, it may sound easy, but it isn't for me. And now at last you can explain it.

Milan: Light athletics are the easy ones.

Jana: For me all sports are hard. I watch them on the telly sometimes. But otherwise they're no fun.

Milan: Sport's beautiful.

Jana: I shouldn't like to have a sportsman for a husband.

Milan: Why not?

Jana: What use is a husband like that? Just gradually wears himself out..

Milan: What kind of husband would you like, Jana?

Jana: I really don't know. Probably a... a... probably none. Men don't suit me. Don't worry, women don't either.

Milan: Then who does?

Jana: No one. I even get on my own nerves nowadays.

Milan: Couldn't someone help?

Jana: Someone would have to try.

Milan: But he mustn't be a sportsman..

Jana: Have you noticed, we're the only ones dancing? They'll begin to talk about us.

Milan: That doesn't worry me.

Jana: Well, you - you're strong. I may look as if I could move the world, but I can't even move a cupboard.

Milan: I'll help you.

Jana: A poster slipped down behind it.

Milan: Who's on it?

Jana: Gilbert Bécaud.

Milan: Aha.

Jana: You don't know who he is, do you?

Milan: No.

Jana: But you know others I don't.

Milan: Perhaps.

Jana: I suppose you've never won a speech competition, have you, Milan?

Milan: No. But I have shot-putting.

Jana: You'll have to get me interested in sport somehow, Milan. But I don't know how myself.

Milan: Have you got a track suit?

Jana: Jeans.

Milan: We'll buy a track suit and trainers.

Jana: I've got trainers.

Milan: We won't buy trainers. Why should we buy them if you've got them already, that makes sense.

Jana: Fine. And what next?

Milan: I'll run after you and you after me.

Jana: And then?

Milan: And then the same again - you'll run and I'll run after you. That's it.

Situation Nine

The teachers are happily drinking, clinking glasses, the Caretaker changes the tape in the recorder, Špánik and Darina get up to dance. Milan and Jana sit down at a table and dream of a sporting future. Špánik is a bad dancer and so keeps looking for an excuse to avoid it.

Špánik: I can't remember the last time I danced. There's never time, Darinka, something always comes up. There's always some urgent problem to be solved.

Darina: It seems to me as if schools have become offices and offices have become like paper mills. They keep producing paper.

I'll have to make a speech about that sometime. Critical, to the point and directed at those responsible!

Špánik: The school doesn't take up too much of my time, that's the *least of my troubles. But there are more serious problems.*

Darina: Something at home?

Špánik: At home, Darinka, at home.

Darina: No doubt it'll pass.

Špánik: It's more serious than I thought, Darinka. And for the moment I can't see any way out of the situation.

Darina: I saw your wife leaving the hairdresser's yesterday and she looked all right to me.

Špánik: She's always all right, Darinka. You just have to give her your pay and you're left in peace for the rest of the month.

I'm talking about a problem that I can't manage myself and which is beyond my powers to solve. I don't know whether it will interest you.

Darina: Of course it will. Human beings should show an interest in others, that's one of the basic things that makes us different.

Špánik: In that case, let's sit down for a while. I don't really want to burden you with this, no doubt you have your own worries..

By the way, that young man of yours, you know, the one with the beard... it suits him, I've heard he's a footballer... even got an offer from the town of Hlohovec, that's something. Footballers have plenty of money nowadays... but money, of course, isn't everything. No doubt you're a bit fond of each other as well.

Darina: We're very fond of each other. He speaks his mind, he likes fair play, he's chairman of a Socialist Youth group, he only drinks grape juice.

Špánik: You see, even such people can be found... But no doubt you know very well that with money it's like this, at the sight of money people roll their eyes, they only see the money, but it's not just money, there's something else as well.

Darina: You've put your finger on it, comrade, there's something else as well, something more direct and profound, *something more lasting, which doesn't spoil the character and which steadies the mind, something which distinguishes people from animals and approaches the ideal.*

Špánik: Well, that could be the case, too.

Darina: But you began with your problem.

Špánik: My problem, Darinka, is really yours, too, or at least it could be... It's true that honey, coypu and wine bring me in quite a nice income, but they involve a lot of work, you have spend time on it every day.

Darina: That's a fact. As they say, no gain without pain.

Lovásko: *(goes over to the deputy)* Ferko, I think you're keeping our Darinka to yourself. Darinka doesn't belong just to the deputy, but to the whole team, especially as Darinka can rely on that team.

Špánik: Ah, Zolko, I didn't know you're the whole team... Allow me to make contact with the youngest generation as well.

Lovásko: I was only joking. I was passing, so I thought I'd get in a little

joke.

Darina: Our deputy head is initiating me into his problems.

Lovásko: Comrade Špánik is a well-known initiator. But I'm just joking.

Špánik: An amusing person. I always have a good laugh. But seriously, now. People are terribly envious of money, you know.

But the fact that you have to pay more in taxes, they don't envy that, no one sees that. And now the rabbits.

They put up the price of rabbit fur, so I began breeding rabbits.

You just throw them something green and you don't have to bother about them. And then, Darinka, there's nothing that gives me greater pleasure than when I can scratch them on their tummies. Have you ever tried it?

Darina: I certainly haven't. I don't stroke anything with claws.

Špánik: How well they know me, the little devils! As soon as I go into the yard the female rabbits lie down on their backs and wait to see which one I scratch. And then I crouch there for

as long as an hour and they don't move a muscle. And my wife calls from the kitchen, come in, the lottery's on the telly, but I just quietly scratch them and they ruminate and I suspect they even purr. You must try it, Darinka.

Once you've tried it, you'll want to do it all your life.

Darina: Then I'd rather not try it.

Špánik: And here's my big problem, Darinka. I've got female rabbits, but I haven't got a male. There's not a male in the

whole village. Last week the Eighth A and the Seventh

B looked all over the village for a male. They began in

Peace Street and finished in Cooperative Street. Not

a male anywhere. What are we going to do now? I'm desperate.

Can't think of anything else. The wife gives me

bread and sausage to take to school and, believe it or not,

I take it home untouched. No appetite.

Darina: Something must be done about it. We'll have to stir people's consciences and those who breed animals at home in

particular. The deputy head must be a cheerful..

Špánik: We've filled the quota of pupils for the mines, we've decreased the percentage of pupils attending religious education;

we've achieved some success with sports and with

Slovak. But no solution has yet been found to my problem.

There's no male.

Darina: What if the schoolchildren from other villages helped?

They might find one there.

Špánik: I'm informed of the situation. There's only one in Dvorec,

but it's old, clumsy, mangy and incapable. What can a pensioner

like him do? But that's my problem, Darinka.

Darina: It seems to me it's beginning to be a problem for the school as a whole.

Špánik: I don't like bringing my problems from home to school, it shouldn't be done, but sometimes it can't be avoided.

Darina: Put an ad in the paper.

Špánik: Do you know how much that costs? Wait a moment, Darin-

ka, I'll show you something. (The deputy head pops out and returns after a while with a stuffed duck from the biology room.)

Darina: That's yours?

Špánik: It was mine, but now it's the school's. It's a beauty, isn't it?

I can look at it for hours, and I stroke it when no

one's looking.. It's hard work, but when you see something

like that, you immediately think: It's good to be in the

world, how beautiful and generous is our homeland.

Darina: You said that nicely, comrade. It was a profound thought, it had strong undertones.

Špánik: You see. I sometimes read, too. But there's not much time.

(He looks dreamy for a moment, then he takes the duck back, returns, bows to Darina and they dance together.)

I'm reading a book about genetics at the moment. It's interesting to see how characteristics are passed down from generation to generation. From rabbit to rabbit. Goodness, how little we know about ourselves and about the world. We don't know anything, hardly anything. That applies to rabbits, too. Goodness, how strangely things are arranged in this world. But humans are daring and inquisitive, they find out everything sooner or later. When I scratch my angora rabbits, I also say to myself, heavens, the things that are hidden in your genes, if only you knew. Pity you must end up in the stew...

Darina: The music's stopped. Thank you for the dance and thank you for allowing me to peep for a while into the mysterious mind of an agreeable deputy.

Špánik: I'm not a good dancer. My wife only dances around the pots and pans and I around the hen houses..

Situation Ten

The deputy head accompanies Darina back to the table, they pour themselves a glass of wine and probably praise the winemaker. The caretaker plays another piece of music, which, like the previous one, is in tune with the following dialogue. Lovásko and Oľga pretend they are going to dance, but after a while they slip out of the staff room unnoticed, in order to find a quiet place for themselves.

Lovásko: How pleasant it is in here. And can you guess why?

Oľga: Because I'm here?

Lovásko: Because no one is smoking here. Smokers are the worst plague. Sometimes I feel sorry for them, wretched slaves of their addiction. How can anyone voluntarily do themselves harm?

Oľga: It's a bad habit. I guess nothing can be done about it.

Lovásko: Yes, it can, Olinka. If it was up to me, you'd see.

Oľga: What would I see?

Lovásko: You wouldn't see any smokers. Cigarettes simply wouldn't be produced, just as cannabis and marihuana aren't. No cigarettes, no smoking, Simple, hm?

Oľga: There'd be something else.

Lovásko: That wouldn't concern me. There'd be no cigarettes, that'd be the main thing. I caught an eighth former smoking in the toilet the other day. I shut the door and he had to smoke another five cigarettes while I stood there. You should have seen the toilet! But I'm pretty certain he won't smoke again very soon.

Oľga: Would it be a terrible shock for you if your daughter, I mean Andrea, began smoking when she left school? If, that is, she hasn't already.

Lovásko: That can't happen, Olinka. I know what I've brought up at home and how I've brought her up, so I'm not worried.

Oľga: I envy you your certainty.

Lovásko: Everyone must have some things they're certain about, Olinka. And mine are my principles.

Oľga: They mightn't suit your daughter, Dr. Lovásko.

Lovásko: But they do. Her principles are my principles, too.

Oľga: *I'm afraid I can't always agree with you.*

Lovásko: *(Attempts to unbutton her blouse, with varying success)*

You're not my daughter, you needn't agree.

Oľga: I shouldn't like to be your daughter.

Lovásko: In that case, I shouldn't like to be your father.

Oľga: That's fine then.

Lovásko: But on the other hand, I like your youthful defiance.

Oľga: As for me, I don't like your principles and manners.
Lovásko: They may not be particularly effective, but they do lead to success.

Oľga: And what is success for you? That your daughter hasn't started smoking yet?

Lovásko: You said „yet“, Olinka. I must correct you there. She will never in her life!

Oľga: You're someone who wants very much for life to serve you nicely according to your instructions and recipe... according to your private timetable. But I suspect that things are a bit different. The roads are for the public and the rail tracks belong to the state.

Lovásko: According to how you organise things in your life.

Oľga: Life can't be organised, it'd take too long. Life is either lived, or it isn't. Oof! That was a mouthful!

Lovásko: *(Leaves off his feeble attempts and once more reverts to the role of headmaster and doctor.)* Where did you read that, Olinka?

Oľga: In the magazine „Life“, Doctor.

Lovásko: You needn't be so quick to be offended. A wise man never takes offence.

Oľga: I'm probably not that wise... You know, when I first came to this school, I wanted terribly to be the kind of teacher you see in children's readers or in serials... But now I want to be bad, spiteful, antagonistic. Antagonistic people look at life more soberly.

Lovásko: We can have a drink together, can't we? Let me invite you.

Oľga: *And after that I'll have a cigarette.*

Lovásko: You, Olinka, you smoke? I didn't know that, that rather changes the situation, I really...

Oľga: I've never smoked. But who wouldn't get a taste for it when they're with you, Doctor.

Situation Eleven

The headmaster and Oľga rejoin the others, the tape has finished, the headmaster sits down at the table next to Oľga; their glasses are filled; the mood in the staff room is reaching its climax. It may already be midnight.

Caretaker: Comrade Lovásko, you sat down on that letter I brought.

Lovásko: It's all creased. Who put it on my chair?

Špánik: I probably did, Zolko, when I went to dance with Darina here.

Caretaker: I mus' change the tape and clean the 'ed, it seems to be dirty agin.

Jana: Let's have a short break. What about going for a quick run?

Milan: That's a good idea!

Jana: I suddenly feel I'd just like to run. Who's going with us?

Darina: If you don't go too fast, I'll come as well.

Milan: Just jogging.

Fekete: That's not for me any more. I just sit and watch the busy world around me and quietly guard my chicken cemetery.

Lovásko: We should have a word together about that Comrade Berec. I'm afraid I don't like it. But I don't know whether today is a suitable time. I guess we'd better put it off until tomorrow.

Fekete: Today'll do, let's get it over and done with.

Jana: Well, come on, you lot.

Špánik: I'll just have time to feed the rabbits and coypu. Sometimes it doesn't occur to my wife to do it. Wait for me, you young 'uns, I'll run with you.

Darina: Come on, maybe you'll find some news waiting for you at home, that a male has been found at last.

Špánik: In that case my wife would come running here, Darinka.

I know her. I really don't know what 's happening to those males..

(They all leave, apart from the headmaster, Fekete and the caretaker.)

Caretaker: The head is abs'lutely filthy, look 'ere.

Fekete: You see, you should know, I had no idea that little Berec had that big Berec for a father..

Lovásko: Let's leave it for another time, colleague..

Fekete: Then, with your permission, could I leave, too?

Lovásko: What for?

Fekete: Just to pop out for a minute. You know, an elderly person finds it harder to hold it than a young one. Excuse me, I'll be back in a sec. *(Exits.)*

Caretaker: And then it's not how it should be.. 'ardly serprisin' when the head's dirty.

Lovásko: *(Opens the letter and the contents clearly come as a shock to him. He reads it several times over.)* When did this letter arrive?

Caretaker: At t'usual time when the letters come. Only this'un was addressed to the Primary School as a 'ole, post code 'n all.

Lovásko: It's not a usual letter. And it's not addressed to the whole school. Read it.

Caretaker: But I didn't write it, I 'aven't got big letters like that.

Lovásko: Someone must have written it and they wrote it for a purpose.

Caretaker: *(reads)* Beware of Headmaster Lovásko! He's a big hypocrite and an even bigger womaniser. A first-hand observer.

Lovásko: You needn't clean that head any more, Mr. Kollár. From now on I shall be the one to clean heads. Bring a type writer here and then we'll just wait until they all return.

(The Caretaker presses the button of the tape recorder anyway and it emits painfully distorted melodies, which are to be heard throughout the interval.)

PART 2

Situation Twelve

The headmaster is sitting at the table as if in an interrogation room, the teachers are glancing inquiringly at each other, because they don't yet know what is going on. A writing desk has appeared in the staff room, at which the Caretaker sits looking important. They all realise that something exceptional has happened.

Lovásko: Colleagues, comrades, I regret that such a pleasant and important day as our Teachers' Day has suddenly changed into something unexpected and, I should say here and now, dishonourable. A little while ago I opened this letter, which was addressed to the school, to our school as a whole, and in the letter there was something particularly rude, malicious and alarming.

Caretaker: That our headmaster is a hypocrite and womaniser.

Lovásko: There was no need to quote, Mr. Kollár, but, very well, it's out now. At least we needn't beat about the bush.

Špánik: On my own behalf, and on behalf of our Trade Union committee, I protest most energetically against the libellous content of the letter and against whoever wrote it. Oh, and by the way, who wrote it?

Lovásko: *(Shows the staff the letter, whose text is cut out of newspapers and magazines.)* Anonymous, ladies and gentlemen, written by Mr. Anonymous himself.

Fekete: And just today, on such a special day. What a good thing nobody came from the district committee. They might even have thought it was true.

Jana: *The person who wrote it can't have been normal. A normal, respectable person puts his signature under what he*

writes.

Lovásko: It's not entirely without a signature. There is a certain - indirect signature: A first-hand observer.

Jana: It's terrible what people we have among us nowadays!

Makes you want to dig a hole deep in the ground to hide from them.

Milan: And what else is written there?

Lovásko: In a nutshell, what our caretaker hinted at.

Caretaker: That our head, Comrade Lovásko, is a hypocrite and womaniser.

Špánik: As far as the Trade Union is concerned, I suggest we immediately set up a committee to investigate the matter. It looks as if we'll be kept busy here for a while yet. It's a matter of honour for all of us, don't you think?

Oľga: I really don't know whether there's any need to deal with it. We know it's not true and so we ought to rise above it, don't you think?

Darina: On behalf of the youngest ones, the whole of our youth group, as well as on my own behalf, I protest most energetically, directly, responsibly... something of the kind.

But now, Mr. Kollár, you can simply put on another tape and we can go on as before.

Fekete: We can't go on as before! It's an insult to a person's honour.

This time it's happened to our comrade, Doctor Lovásko, next time it may happen to any one of us. The anonymous writer never sleeps, but is always eavesdropping.

Oľga: But you have to expect that if you live among people, that is, that you are not living only among decent people.

Špánik: As far as the Trade Union is concerned, we are definitely on the side of the headmaster. After all, there's some resolution on that subject, I can't tell you the number and year at the moment, but it does exist.

Lovásko: Thank you for your moral support and your efforts to find a positive and constructive solution. Above all, it's necessary to bring the matter to a close. Here between these four walls. Not everything that happens in a family is pleasant. Every family has its black sheep. It's just a question of finding it in the pen and driving it out from among us. And we shall find it today, because that black sheep is among us, it's here, watching us, smiling, laughing at us, it is observing me, but you, too, at first-hand, with its little black mind and sleazy anonymous hand.

Caretaker: 'Ol o' you'll now go t' yer rooms and you'll come 'ere one by one when yer called. I've bin trusted wi' the job 'v seein' the 'vestigation goes as it should. That means only those that bin prop'ly called will come 'ere. But you c'n take the demijohn and glasses wi' you, we won't be 'vestigating that.

Špánik: I'd be interested to know what dunderhead gave you that job.

Lovásko: *(Looks severely at the deputy head.)*

Špánik: But I'm not really that interested..

(The teachers leave, Milan takes the demijohn and the women the glasses.)

Situation Thirteen

Lovásko: Listen here, Mr. Kollár, you must know about everything that goes on in this school of ours?

Caretaker: I do. And what I don't, my folk tells me.

Lovásko: And who are your folk?

Caretaker: Look 'ere, sir, we all 'av a secrit of some kind.

Lovásko: You'll probably have to tell me, Mr. Kollár.

Caretaker: I 'av t' 'av eyes in the back of me 'hed.

Lovásko: Even where don't you need to?

Caretaker: Ev'rywhere, you need to ev'rywhere. And what I see, I remember. And what I can't remember, I write down. I've got ev'rythin' written down. Take a look 'ere, this is my *notebook*. *F'r example 'ere, 3rd January. Slovak teacher, Jana, said: What's the matter with our trade? Some people ought to be locked up. Or here, 10th January. Can't read that out. I's the one who said it... Or here, 13th January, 10.30 a.m. Teacher Ol'ga said: in this country everyone tries to find an allegory in everything... I didn' know what t'was, but now I does. It's a wonder no one has yet criticised the weather forecaster for saying low pressure is approaching from the west.*

Lovásko: What do you do with it, Mr. Kollár?

Caretaker: I 'valuate it - and what's necessary. You know, Comrade 'eadmaster, everyone should 'av some useful 'obby, shouldn't they?

Lovásko: No doubt. By the way, is there any reference to me in your notebook?

Caretaker: Both direct an' indirect. First the direct. 12th Febr'y. Youth leader Darina comes out of the big teacher's room all red in t' face and in answer to my question 'bout the bangin' goin' on in there, says, I quote: The head and I have just been exchanging experience. Well, I dunno wha' you was eshchangin', but one thing's certain, that during that eshchange, she didn' find time to do up some buttons.

Lovásko: You're talking about a certain reference which, as I'm sure you'd agree, we can, but we don't have to accept. But, very well. You have a notebook, you have a hobby which, as it seems, is socially necessary. There is an interesting signature on this anonymous letter. Just as you said a while ago: A first-hand observer.

Caretaker: You don' do me justice, Comrade Lovásko. I'm no Cheap Jo. I never sink so low as not to sign my name. When I report summin', I's willin' to stand by it. And, then, I'd have written the 'ole address and posted it in town, that's 'ow 'tis done. And in the text I'd certainly 'av expanded on that *word hypocrite, and on womaniser, too. This was from a real amateur.*

Lovásko: You've ...this.. for a long time?

Caretaker: I've seen seven 'eadmasters come and go, you're the eighth. Doesn't that tell you somethin'?

Lovásko: They all had similar faults?

Caretaker: We've all got our weak sides.

Lovásko: You have to have an inborn inclination for it, don't you think?

Caretaker: Work's work. The main thing is you should enjoy it.

Lovásko: Who could have written it, do you think? Drawing on your long years of experience..

Caretaker: That's difficult, I wasn't in on this from the beginning.

Lovásko: You could help me with it. Or I you.

Caretaker: Pref'rably I you, I've more experience with this.

Lovásko: We could begin with old Fekete, don't you think?

Caretaker: Fekete? On Women's Day, when he was in the loos wi' the P.E. instructor, he says: (*Reads from his notebook.*) Next June I'm goin' to retire and then the whole school system can kiss my ass.

Lovásko: Interesting information, Mr. Kollár.

Caretaker: 'Specially from the point of view of the content.

Lovásko: Let's hope we don't have to pension him off earlier than he expects.

Caretaker: It's you who said that - not me. (*Goes to fetch Fekete.*)

Situation Fourteen

Fekete: (*enters with the Caretaker*) I hope you don't think I'd be capable of... I just teach my lessons and go home.

Lovásko: And what do you do in the evenings, colleague? We know nothing about your evenings. You don't, by any chance, write letters to someone?

Fekete: I don't write anything, Comrade Lovásko. I'm suspicious of anyone who does. They're usually stealing other people's thoughts. *I just sit and wait. When there's a war film on the telly, I open a bottle of beer and take out my writing pad and pencil. I'm planning something like that this evening, too.*

Lovásko: So you're going to take out your pad again today, and you're going to write again.

Fekete: You see, if they make any mistakes in the film, I jot them down. And there are plenty of them. The wrong uniforms, inappropriate arms and aeroplanes ...

Lovásko: What do you do with your notes, colleague?

Fekete: I sent them to the television or film company. They shouldn't imagine they're such experts and that we're so stupid! They rarely reply, though. But even so, I write to them regularly.

Lovásko: So you write regularly. And didn't you mistake the address last time? Didn't you write to the school instead of the film company?

Fekete: But first I'd have had to know what I've learned only now from our caretaker, that is, that..

Caretaker: That the 'ead is a hypocrite and womaniser.

Fekete: I would never dream of writing that. Even if it were true.

Lovásko: But it isn't written, Fekete, it is cut out, you see. It's an old trick, in case you didn't know, at least as old as you. The anonymous writer has taken a couple of magazines and cut these deplorable letters out of it.

Fekete: Do you mind? Cut out letters? I couldn't possibly do such a thing. My hands shake. And then I'm short-sighted and half deaf.

Lovásko: A deaf person could cut them out.

Fekete: That's true. That is - it could be true now I come to think about it. But I don't stick my nose into anything. Here at school you can have it off from morning to night, if you don't mind me saying so. I shall cross my fingers for you, or for any other such enterprising person. I mean - in the *hope no one finds out what they shouldn't. And if I happened, heaven forbid, to catch you at it, I'd say with humour: good luck, or something of the kind. I already have that tricky stage of life behind me, although, I admit, relatively unsuccessfully.*

Lovásko: But you've still got enough energy to thrash Berec's son with a ruler. Those are the old practices of the old school, colleague.

Fekete: You have new methods, I know, but if you'll allow me to say so, they don't seem very effective. When I watch the police reports, I have the impression we just don't exist. That, however, is what I think at home. Here at school, of course, I don't agree with that opinion.

Lovásko: You set up the co-operatives, you were a member of the national committee, for years you lead an atheist club, but just to be on the safe side, you also appear in church, for example on Christmas Eve.

Fekete: With so many deserts, you have to have some weaknesses. You can see that in your own case.

Lovásko: Listen, Fekete, you want to be good on earth and in heaven as well. That just isn't possible. They mightn't like it either

up there or here on earth.

Fekete: To tell the truth, I wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of those on earth. After all, I've always tried to get along with them. If you'll allow me, I'll settle it with those in heaven somehow or other. By the way, a little voice tells me..

Lovásko: They're probably listening to you in heaven.

Fekete: Very witty. What I wanted to say was, what if it was Berec who sent that letter to the school? He knows how to write, he used to work for the district national committee. Then, if you'll allow me to say so, they gave him the boot and now he is looking for all kinds of dishonest ways of getting back in again. That Berec is particularly suspicious!

Lovásko: *It can't be him. How would he know I'm a... No, it wasn't him.*

Fekete: Now, now, Comrade Lovásko. We know better. He lives in the block of police flats, and then, he's trying to improve his profile..

Lovásko: You can go, Fekete. We won't need you any longer.

Fekete: Maybe you will, comrade. Your father, if I'm not mistaken, is just my age and he is also going to retire.

Lovásko: What has my father got to do with it?

Fekete: An indirect connection, if you'd like to know. Your father comes from Central Slovakia, doesn't he?

Lovásko: From Brezno.

Fekete: *(jots this down in a small notebook)* That's all right, that's perfectly all right, that's all I wanted to know. Send him to see me some time. The sooner the better. Look here, dear colleague, it's better to retire with a certain paper than without it.

Lovásko: But he didn't take part in the war. He was at home in bed then, a tree in the forest crushed his shoulder blades half a year before the war broke out.

Fekete: Look here, there were a lot of people who weren't - but were. Some of them weren't even there in spirit, but on paper they were there in body, too. Now it's not a question of who was or was not there, now it's just a question of - tying up the matter.

Lovásko: You... tie it up?

Fekete: I myself. I've got the rubber stamp, too. However, if I left the school, I would have to hand it over to someone younger.

Lovásko: Younger?

Fekete: You know how it is, comrade, people get older, but the rubber stamp remains.

Lovásko: Thank you, colleague, I'll come and see you some time. I might bring my father.

Fekete: *Please let me know beforehand, we'd vacuum clean and the like.* Is there anything I should sign?

Lovásko: No need, colleague.

Caretaker: Not until the record's complete. Fekete, call in the next person and for the moment stay in yer room 'til the 'ole business is over.

(Fekete goes out.)

Situation Fifteen

Caretaker: *(turns on the tape recorder)* In my 'pinion we could 'av t' music on, what d'you think, comrade? Sometimes they 'av music at wakes 'n all. It'll be easier for me to put down some thoughts.

Lovásko: As you like. At least the passers-by will think we are happily celebrating.

Jana: *(Enters looking fed up, maybe partly because, in spite of the*

wine, the mood among the staff has taken a downward turn.) You can't think that I... You know my principles.

Lovásko: I don't think anything, just keep calm, it won't hurt. From what I know of you, colleague, you are active in the literary field. I've sometimes noticed your articles in the local paper and not long ago in a magazine for children.

Jana: Surely that's allowed, isn't it?

Lovásko: Of course it is. But before we send articles to the editor, we should go and see our superior and inform him about the text. That is not only ethical, it is the correct procedure.

Jana: It seems unethical to me.

Lovásko: We're not going to tell each other now what is and what is not ethical, we've passed exams in that. Look here, Jana. You have something against me, you're not going to tell me you haven't?

Jana: Me? I've never had anything against you.

Lovásko: Other people come to see me, to have a cup of coffee and a word with me... you don't. I know you consider it a *trivial matter, but life is made up of trivial matters. As if you found me disagreeable.*

Jana: I can have my own opinion.

Lovásko: You can, of course. But people keep such opinions bottled up inside them, until one day they pick up a pen and write them down for all to see.

Caretaker: (*types*) That the headmaster is a hypocrite and womaniser.

Lovásko: You've already written that, Mr. Kollár, we can move on.

Jana: My writing is my affair.

Lovásko: So long as your writing doesn't concern us all, in this case, myself, to be exact.

Caretaker: (*reads aloud as he types*) And womaniser!

Lovásko: Let's consider it from another angle. Some things seem rather strange to me. This, for example. Why aren't you married yet, Janka?

Jana: I should have thought that was my business.

Lovásko: No doubt. But you tell me - is it normal if a young woman, an interesting young woman of your age, isn't yet a wife, isn't yet fulfilling the demanding role of a mother in our society?

I'm sorry, but it seems to me that it's neither ethical, nor really moral. As if despicable, unhealthy egoism was suffocating your most noble emotions: to live for society, to be useful, to devote yourself to the common good, to things which concern us all. Do you understand me?

Jana: I suspect I am beginning to understand... only too well, Comrade Lovásko.

Lovásko: You needn't act immediately, without considered intentions, but when you do make up your mind, then go for it!

Jana: I don't want it to be as I see it all around me... cheap and quick.

Lovásko: But, dear colleague, our times move fast, and you must react promptly to the needs of the day. And correctly, of course. I know that doesn't suit everyone.

Jana: *It doesn't suit me at all. And then, I make a point of washing and hanging out my own linen myself.*

Lovásko: And we look at it. That can't be avoided when one is passing by and when we live so close. And we do live close, but what do we know about you?

Jana: As much as you do about anyone else. I teach, for which I'm paid a salary. I write a little, for which I'm occasionally paid a fee. I read a little, I sometimes go to the theatre.

Lovásko: But you aren't happy, Jana.

Jana: How can you know?

Lovásko: I can see that just by looking at you. You need something...

Mr. Kollár, don't you think it's suspiciously noisy in the school? Go and find out what's going on, please.
Caretaker: By golly, that is a noise! Good thin' I'm around. (*Goes out.*)
Lovásko: Yes, Janka, you need something!
Jana: A man.
Lovásko: You could say that. Support. Authority. A personality. A human being.
Jana: A man. Preferably you, you mean?
Lovásko: You're a strange woman, Jana. Are you a woman at all?
Jana: I am, sir, I am! All over. Here, and here, and here – a woman all over. And it's in working order, don't worry, I've already tried it out. But I don't try it day in day out just for the sake of it, as other people do, to make sure it really works.
Lovásko: I don't think you quite understand me, Jana.
Jana: But there are other things in the world that work excellently, that are not connected with our glands, thank goodness, things you yourself only learn about from television serials and which are not slobbery and snotty and which have colour, smell and taste..
Lovásko: You're becoming eloquent, Jana, but unfortunately this isn't a prose reciting competition, we're having a serious discussion between a woman..
Jana: *And a man! I know... actually, I don't know.*
Caretaker: (*comes in*) Nothin'. Just the staff warmin' up a bit. They're waiting, drinking and singing.
Lovásko: You don't know, Janka, you don't know anything. It's we who know everything.
Jana: Then you're happy people.
Lovásko: Happy people... they're usually the stupid or neurotic ones. I don't really want to be a happy person.
Jana: And what in fact do you want to be?
Lovásko: I don't want to be anything any longer, Janka. I already am.
Caretaker: (*reads what he is typing*) A hypocrite and womaniser.
Lovásko: Goodbye, for the moment.
(*Exit Jana.*)

Situation Sixteen

Milan: (*Enters with a smile on his face and a glass of wine in his hand.*)
Lovásko: Take a seat here, Milan. Well, how's it going?
Milan: So so.
Lovásko: I've heard it's warming up.
Milan: A bit.
Lovásko: Are they drinking?
Milan: A bit.
Lovásko: Sometimes you have to relax, don't you?
Milan: You do.
Lovásko: You know what I've been thinking about, Milan? Aren't you sorry you've not got further up the ladder than you have after all these years?
Milan: Further?
Lovásko: For example, to become a headmaster or a school inspector..
Milan: Not really.
Lovásko: Look. You're a successful man, single, sun-tanned, you've got a sports car, you travel abroad every summer... Of course, I'm not asking you now where you get the money from.
Milan: I save.
Lovásko: All right, we know what your salary is, we know how much rent you pay, we know how much it costs to keep a sports car. But that's not the point now. I'm wondering about your aims in life, Milan. Where do you hope to get to from

this school?

Milan: Nowhere.

Lovásko: I've overestimated you somewhat, Milan. I thought you wanted a bit more from life.

Milan: I do.

Darina: (*comes running in*) That's enough, come and have a drink with us, today's such a special day, after all. This is not the district committee, it's our school. Come and have a look. The deputy is showing us how he strokes his angora rabbits on the tummy and what a retired male rabbit looks like. Come on!

Caretaker: I don't drink when I'm on duty!

Lovásko: We'll soon join the deputy.

Darina: I'd never have thought our deputy could be so witty,. He should have been an actor, not a deputy head. We almost burst our sides with laughing when he imitated that male rabbit. (*Goes out laughing.*)

Lovásko: You're not particularly interested in women, are you, Milan?

Milan: No, I'm not.

Lovásko: Don't be angry with me, but one can't help wondering whether there's not a man involved.

Milan: There is.

Lovásko: And you tell me just like that, as if we were little boys, as if we didn't know what that means?

Milan: Well, what about it?

Lovásko: Take it easy, Milan, forget it. It's quite all right.. for the moment. *Until some other Berec comes rushing in with a complaint that the teacher has been harassing his boy during a gym lesson!*

Milan: What are you talking about?

Lovásko: You know very well, Milan, what we've been talking about. Someone has been working off his lack of words on paper.

Milan: You're not serious.

Lovásko: Deadly serious.

Milan: I can't get rid of him.

Lovásko: You must get rid of him, Milan. We'll help you. The staff together will help you.

Milan: All his things are in my bedsit. For two months already.

Lovásko: You must find sufficient inner strength - and we'll all back you up, we'll all come and help as one man.

Milan: Am I to throw him out onto the street?

Caretaker: Before he realises what's goin' on - 'e'll be out!

Lovásko: You shouldn't have any qualms of conscience, you're a teacher, you're in the public eye. Milan, you simply must!

Milan: (*tearfully*) That's just it. If he weren't my brother, he would have been thrown out long ago.

Lovásko: Oh, so that's it. Your brother, you say. That changes the situation somewhat. But not so much that we can be satisfied.

Milan: Jana's beginning to be dissatisfied with it, too.

Lovásko: Jana, you say. So Jana. Well, I never. Thank you, you can leave. Is there anything you wanted to add?

Milan: No, there isn't. (*Drinks his glass of wine and goes out.*)

Situation Seventeen

The Caretaker switches on the tape recorder, which emits strange melodies: slow at times, too fast at others, the headmaster gazes at the cut-out slogan on the wall. Outside the members of staff can be heard singing in chorus. The Caretaker attempts to write something faster on the typewriter, but without much success. The headmaster chews on some hard cheese straws.

Caretaker: *Neither of us seems to be makin' much progress, comrade. We're getting' out of practice, don' yer think?*

Lovásko: We seem to be losing sight of the first-hand observer.

Caretaker: Nothing can get lost here. Not so long as I'm 'ere.

Lovásko: Go and fetch the art mistress, Ol'ga, please, and leave us alone for a minute. I'm beginning to have a suspicion.

Caretaker: Me, too. (*Exits.*)

Ol'ga: (*Comes in looking cheerful and composed.*) Did you call me?

Lovásko: Come in, sit down here, Olinka. This day of ours has taken a bit of an awkward turn, but never mind, there's still time before morning comes.

Ol'ga: Actually, I'm just beginning to enjoy it. Alcohol has a strange influence. Jana, for instance, is walking on her hands. And in a skirt. And the deputy is demonstrating how coypu sneeze.

Lovásko: Pity I can't be with you. No doubt I'd be joining in the fun. Listen, Olinka, you have a friend, his name's Kamil and from what I've heard, he's an exceptionally quarrelsome type.

Ol'ga: I know nothing about him being the quarrelsome type. But he has plenty of other vices, that's certainly true.

Lovásko: We know that already. Well, and this Kamil is a sculptor, he made something like a woman that stands in front of the district House of Culture, which didn't earn him much sympathy from the district authorities. Maybe deservedly, maybe undeservedly, we've no intention of looking into that now. One thing's certain, though, and that's that I personally was on the committee when he was explaining in his own special way his own special artistic approach.

Ol'ga: He never mention that, and he enjoys practical jokes.

Lovásko: In short, colleague. It seems your friend, Kamil, doesn't like me. To tell you the truth, I don't like him either, but that's not what's important at the moment. *What's important at the moment is this stupid anonymous letter, and* there is a possibility that your Kamil might have had a reason to send it. Let's say, to compromise me, although I don't know why. Let's take it as a possibility. For the moment.

Ol'ga: Almost like in a detective story. But only if all that was true. I don't believe Kamil would bother. I'm sorry, I'm sure he wouldn't think you're worth it. He's got a lot of work and even more explaining to do. Why something doesn't look like a woman, if it's meant to be a woman, and the like.

Lovásko: If I'm not mistaken that's just the question I put him!

Ol'ga: You see how small the world is. By the way, Comrade Lovásko, you're a mathematician. What were you doing on an arts committee?

Lovásko: I was appointed.

Ol'ga: That must have been a mistake, don't you think?

Lovásko: I regarded it as an honour.

Ol'ga: But the members of that committee are not there for the honour, they're there to work and make decisions. Sometimes about millions, sometimes a person's fate and so on.

Lovásko: We know that.

Ol'ga: We probably don't, comrade, because if we did, we couldn't just sit there as if it was an honour. Shame would drive us out.

Lovásko: How do you like working at our school? Forgive me for changing the subject.

Ol'ga: Fine, I'm not complaining.

Lovásko: Have you got materials? Paints? Panels? Modelling clay? Sketching paper? If I'm not mistaken, you've got everything you need. You're better off in that regard than any other school in the district. And where can that be arranged?

You don't need three guesses. On that silly committee, where I sit and twiddle my thumbs.

Ol'ga: We're talking about something else.

Lovásko: We're talking about the same thing, dear colleague. Just looking at it from a different angle.

Ol'ga: It's true we've got what we need. We have, but elsewhere they haven't. And you know why? Because they haven't got someone willing to sit on the committee.

Lovásko: I don't get anything out of being on it.

Ol'ga: Well, so long as you're dealing with people like Kamil, I'm sure you don't.

Lovásko: You see us, I mean our generation, only through money, don't you?

Ol'ga: Not at all. Through all that money you can't be seen at all.

Lovásko: As I'm sure you'll agree, *Ol'ga*, one of us is beginning to be superfluous here. Can you guess which?

Ol'ga: That's an easy riddle.

Lovásko: I've got a more difficult one.

Caretaker: (*entering*) The things that's goin' on there. I luffed two times and three times I wrote s'thin' down.

Lovásko: It's stuck together with letters cut out of a paper, it's offensive and we're looking for who wrote it. Who is it?

Caretaker: I don't even 'av to read that any mo': A hypocrite and womaniser.

Ol'ga: I think I'd better call someone else... (Exit.)

Situation Eighteen

Darina: (enters in an exceptionally good mood) You didn't call me. Tell me you've called me and I'll pretend to arrive.

Caretaker: I guess I's going to 'av a look at that Špánik. I'll watch a bit and jot down a bit. (*Exit.*)

Lovásko: I called you - actually, didn't call you - oh, I don't know. I don't really want to know who wrote it and who sent it,

Darina. I want... Well, is it the footballer, or me?

Darina: The footballer, Zolko, of course.

Lovásko: I'm glad of that.

Darina: So am I.

Lovásko: No one knew about it and suddenly everyone knows about it.

Darina: I told you to be careful. Even Comenius paid for it with his nose.

Lovásko: I was careful. But you were so attractive. That time..

Darina: Listen, Zolino, you're beginning to talk in the past tense.

Lovásko: That time has already passed... Listen, *Darina*, who cut the letters out of a magazine for that slogan on the wall?

*Darina: Leave me to doze here for a while and think and then I'll tell you that it was me or *Ol'ga*.*

Lovásko: Interesting. Look here. The letters in this letter are cut out in the same way.

Darina: That doesn't mean anything to me, and you don't mean anything to me any more, either.

Lovásko: It may not mean anything, but it may signify a great deal. I've had enough of her nice, moralising talk, as if she were writing the editorials for a woman's magazine. I knew I'd been rearing a snake. An ugly day is over and it'll be fine again tomorrow, *Darinka*. When do your footballers start their course of training?

Darina: Next Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday. But Monday, I expect. Monday's a nice day, what do you say?

Lovásko: So, you'll come and visit our *Andrea* again.

*Darina: But *Andrea*'s going skiing.*

Lovásko: That's just why you're going to come to visit her... And you must come to visit her, *Darinka*, so I can visit you, to climb

over your hills and vales..

Darina: I know that a youth leader shouldn't ask this of you, but your youth leader asks you to stroke her tummy, like Špánik strokes his angora rabbits.

Lovásko: Yes, it was Ol'ga. From the outset I thought she was suspicious, if not disagreeable as well. But this time the black sheep won't escape us. „The pen is closing and the wolf is sharpening its teeth...!“ *Darinka, that is, comrade, go and fetch our model note-taker, our good old caretaker, Comrade Kollár, who has survived seven headmasters.*

(Darina strolls out lazily and the headmaster switches the tape over to another track.)

Caretaker: *(enters)* 'here I be ready to write or whatever.

Lovásko: And to take notes, if necessary.

Caretaker: Unfortunately, my pen is running out.

Lovásko: We won't be writing anything more, because the culprit is about to fall into his own trap.

Caretaker: I had a certain theory misself, but I'm not sure whether I haven't made a mistake somewhere.

Lovásko: I hope you don't mind, I've put the tape recorder on.

Caretaker: Let it play. The heads have been wiped clean.

Lovásko: Pop over to my flat, please, here's the key. I know that Andrea went to bed ages ago, but look in anyway, to see if she's sound asleep. If the light's on, turn it off. If it isn't on, put the light on in the hall and bring me the magazines you find there. My wife put them there ready for recycling.

Caretaker: Wait a minute, that's a lot, I mus' write it down.

Lovásko: You should be able to remember that.

Caretaker: Memory is only memory. But what's written's written.

(Exit.)

Situation Nineteen

Špánik: *(Looks round the door. He is in a particularly good mood.)*

Sorry, Zolko, just wanted to say that if you need me for anything, I'm here. I'm imitating poultry for them.

Lovásko: As you're here, Ferko, come in.

Špánik: Well, how's it going? Has the black sheep you're looking for baaed yet?

Lovásko: There are more black sheep here than I thought.

Špánik: But one of them must be blacker than the others, don't you think?

Lovásko: *By the way, Ferko, aren't you fonder of your rabbits than of your pupils?*

Špánik: Come off it, Zolo, where did you get that idea from? I never ask you such silly questions. Although I could, of course.

Lovásko: Ask away, please do, there's only the two of us here.

Špánik: There's no point, Zolo, really.

Lovásko: I'd like things to be clear between us. If there's a problem, let's get it over and done with.

Špánik: Everyone can see it, you know they must see it. That is, that the youth leader... I've nothing against it, after all anyone else in your position would have done the same, but I would at least have turned out the light in the teacher's room. And you go at it with the light on and even knock a bit off Comenius' nose.

Lovásko: So now we know who wrote that letter.

Špánik: Don't be silly. I could have told you that the very next day.

Lovásko: But you didn't.

Špánik: Nothing so terrible happened. The girl's young, she needs some practice. But people shouldn't send rude letters, that's certain.

Lovásko: When it comes to that, Ferko, I've never told anyone... you or anyone else, that our deputy still hasn't got a university

degree, that the examiners must have turned two blind eyes to let him pass his school leaving exams. For the past seven years I've been covering it up as well as I can, but our Ferko adds to the number of animal breeders instead of adding to his qualifications and his main concern is to find a proper male rabbit to take home.

Špánik: There's not much point without a male, Zolko. There'd be no new generation in the hutches and you know how your wife and Andrejka adore young rabbits.

Lovásko: They won't from now on!

Špánik: They will, Zolko, they will. Because you, in a manner of speaking, are the family type. You know that when things *are fine at home, you can happily go out to work in the field*. Forgive me for saying so, I have to confess there's a bit of male envy in it. Nowadays, I can only bend and stretch when looking after my rabbits, while you, for example in the teacher's rooms, can still go at it at full steam.

Lovásko: Who could have sent it then, who?

Špánik: Forget it. Look here, outwardly we've all condemned it, and if necessary, we'll condemn it a second time. People like it when something is condemned. Especially when it doesn't concern them directly. Come on, I'll pour you a glass of my wine. Look, it's crystal clear. You can't buy wine like that in a shop.

Lovásko: It's as if something was going on behind our backs. I guess we've succumbed to the illusion that all is in order, while in fact it isn't.

Špánik: I bought that big freezer in the hard-currency shop. From now on my wife will be kept busy putting plucked poultry into plastic bags. And I'll write those little labels for them: headmaster, head of department, chairman... According to the list you give me.

Lovásko: *(Takes a good swig from Špánik's bottle.)* What can I do when I love her so much, Fero? I'm really a monster, I suppose. Why do I love her so?

Špánik: We haven't had such a well-equipped and generally capable youth leader for ages.

Lovásko: You misunderstood me, Fero. I'm talking about the wife, about my wife. *(Drinks.)*

Špánik: Oh, I see. But then a wife is a good thing. It's at home, it looks at you, it cooks... it's good to have. It's like this, a man goes out into the world to survey the land, so that later he can repeat what they've always said: east, west, at home with the wife is best.

Lovásko: Forgive me those stupid remarks, Ferko. It's like this, sometimes even a doctor needs a doctor.

Špánik: *Don't worry, in the winter I'll do those wretched exams. If it's really necessary. And then the next winter, when there's less work with the rabbits, I'll do that doctor's degree as well... (Exit.)*

Situation Twenty

The caretaker enters the staff room with a strange, gloating grin on his face. He gazes at the headmaster in a self-confident manner. He has several issues of the Girls Magazine under his arm.

Lovásko: Well, is Andrea at home asleep?

Caretaker: No, she in't.

Lovásko: She isn't at home?

Caretaker: No, she in't. But this 'ere was in 'er room. We needs the word hypocrite. And here's a headline: Hypochondriac tendencies among the young..

Lovásko: And womaniser?

Caretaker: And I found womaniser, too. AWOMAN IS the heart of

the family.

Lovásko: That's...? Where's it from, whose is it?

Caretaker: *(Closes the magazine and let's the headmaster read the postal address.)*

Lovásko: *(reads)* Andrea Lovásková...

Situation Twenty-one

Headmaster Lovásko hesitates for a few seconds and then quickly slips the incriminating magazine under his coat and begins to play something ceremonious on the piano. The disgruntled teaching staff enter, led by the jovial deputy.

Špánik: Dear colleagues, after a short intermezzo, as they call it, we are all here once more, fresh, as if nothing had happened, because, to tell the truth, even though something has happened, nothing really has. Well, and so together we can *happily bring this, our beautiful special day, to a climax.*

Your glasses, this time actually full, are on the table, the demijohn is not empty either and one more is prepared, the music is playing and therefore there is nothing to prevent us from forgetting unpleasant events and drinking to the happy ones that await us in the rest of this very eventful school year. But now once more I call on our comrade and headmaster, Doctor Lovásko, to speak.

Lovásko: I'll only say a few words and then we'll have nothing but music, singing and a generally good mood. Without our even noticing it a new day has crept in, one more beautiful than the one before. A day in which we shall be able to live up even better to the slogan on the wall over there, the author of which is no other than our great hero Ľudovít Štúr. As you know, a certain problem came up, which it was necessary to solve and you are curious to know who and why and for what reason. But, friends, why investigate? And so today we shall not catch a murderer, we shall not discover the guilty one, we shall not point to the black sheep among us. I'll tell you this outright, friends, what makes a man great is his ability to forgive, his magnanimity, his moral ethos.. Music, please!

(For a moment the headmaster poses with a gesture of blessing and forgiveness, only too reminiscent of the scene of the Last Supper. After his last sentence the Caretaker picks up the tape recorder and without a word he alone leaves the staff room, on which darkness silently descends.)

Translator's note:

In the Slovak original the dialect spoken by the Caretaker is a genuine rural dialect. The spelling in the translation, however, is not intended to indicate any particular English dialect. Any rural dialect would be suitable.

The names mentioned in the play should be pronounced approximately as follows (those not given here can be pronounced as they are written):

Zoltán Lovásko – Zoltahn Lovashko

František Špánik – Frantishek Shpahník

Jana – Yana

Pavel Fekete – Pavel Feketay

Alojz Berec – Alojz Berets

Lojzo Berec – Loyzo Berets

Andrejka – Andreyka