

Brief History of Incinerators

Interactive, ecodrama seminar

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A list of characters

ACTORS

WOMAN

RICH MAN

GOD

ADAM

EVA

MAN

INQUISITOR

NEIGHBOUR

M 1

M 2

GIRL

MAYOR

ROBBIE

CARLSSON

BOSS

The performance is to be given by a cast comprising at least seven actors, two of whom are to be female. Greater number of cast is permissible.

Opening scene

An actor is standing on the edge of stage, smoking. He may be digging the floor with his shoe. Then, with his free hand, he checks his mobile phone and takes a selfie. In the background, photos emerge. We see a familiar photograph of a naked girl escaping the village My Lai burned down by the Americans using napalm. Another photo: Muammar al-Kaddafi is smiling at us; his face becomes torn in the image to give way to a text that reads: Humanitarian bombing. Meanwhile, Ecological Police is making their way through the auditorium, checking the spectators for plastics, cigarettes or other items that might pollute the environment. They may be helping themselves with a questionnaire about the spectators' attitude to nature. Image of an electric power plant and of activists tied to rails, perhaps those from Slovakia – the Upper Nitra Mines who were sentenced and later released under public pressure. Images of a burning monk, a seagull in the background all covered in oil from the tanker that crashed; we see a vigil held in memory of Jan Palach. A six-legged pig. Cracked soil – draught. Dead fly. A lot of dead flies.

The actor extinguishes his cigarette, looks at his watch, tidies himself up, puts on dramatic face – looking into the auditorium, and starts acting. Fellow cast enter the stage.

1. Welcome to our lecture on ecology that has been prepared for you by our ecodrama ensemble Green Drama.
2. We should like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Environment for having launched the call for applications within the sub-scheme Environmental Protection and Art.
3. Welcome to the performance *Brief History of Incinerators*.
4. Or of incineration?
5. This is a learning performance, though playful.
6. What matters is that, through the play, we will learn something together about environmental protection.
7. And you will become more environmentally conscious.

8. Some of our cast didn't make it to the performance today, because they have become so environmentally conscious that they don't use mobile phones and don't accept snail-mail.
9. We sent out smoke signs in attempt to notify them of today's performance.
10. The signs proved invisible. Due to smog.
11. A landfill is burning behind the city. (*A member of cast puts the siren into spin.*)
12. Just kidding. It's apartment blocks that's burning.
13. Yours.
14. And so, we had to discuss whether we were to perform for you at all today.
15. In fact, yesterday the ensemble nearly fell apart, as we had to dismiss one of the cast.
16. They purchased plastic bags.
17. (*All towards the spectator.*) You, too, have a say about the future of our planet!

Idyllic images of mountains, roaring streams, animals, happy children, primaeval forests, mountain tops – perfect advertisement for life on Earth, interlaced with sentiment and kitsch.

Let's embrace the trees!

Let's sit in the woods in a clearing and watch the time pass by!

We are miniscule molecules in this universe!

Our souls will merge with nature!

Love to nature has been sewn into our hearts. Let's rediscover it together!

Thank you, EU funds and the grant sub-scheme Environmental Protection and Art!

We want our blue planet back, we want a sustainable world!

World without pollution, clean and virgin!

Volcano erupts, spewing molten lava that turns into molten iron pouring from the furnace. The molten steel turns into an ordinary river full of dirt and plastics. Images of chimneys spewing smoke. The fire from the fighter jet engine turns into fire from a ballistic missile, an atomic mushroom. Meanwhile, the actors are preparing props.

18. Yes, we all know the Earth is polluted! So, what to do now? I don't use plastic straws. I recycle. I don't eat meat, not even organic.

19. Famine in Sudan. The world turns blind eye.
20. Ebola.
21. Palm oil that causes extinction of rain forests.
22. Dried out Domaša water dam.¹
23. Burning forests in Siberia!
24. Forests in Amazonia and in Africa are burning because of business!
25. My neighbour has three children and a drunkard for a husband. Each time before the pay day, she comes to borrow money from me to be able to feed their kids. No one deals with the case!
26. Yet we all keep fundraising for Africa; you too, and you, and you.
27. The photographer (*An image of an African girl in Sudan with the vulture sitting nearby, waiting in case she dies.*) Kevin Carter waited twenty minutes to make the shot.
28. The he pressed the shutter.
29. He published the image in *New York Times*. It went viral.
30. If I took a photo of my neighbour and published it in a local paper along with her story, some might throw rocks through her windows. Saying she's a bitch and her predicament is her fault.
31. *New York Times* added an article to explain to the upset reader that the girl's parents stood by, kept unloading food from an airplane, the child stood up without help and left. So, she wasn't dying.
32. Still so.
33. Really? Try not to eat for three days. I don't mean being on some silly diet.
34. The child left, though it was when the photographer shooed away the vulture. Perhaps he wasn't that cynical.
35. The photographer, not the vulture. The girl survived.
36. My neighbour's children will survive, too. Obviously.
37. The state will take care of them.
38. Or it won't.
39. The photographer, Carter, got depressed. People were accusing him of cynicism. Though he was only doing his job.

¹ Transl. note: Domaša [Domasha] is a water dam in Slovakia.

40. Had there been no photo, would the world have been aware of the famine?
Would you have helped?
41. In his farewell letter the photographer wrote: “I am really, really sorry. The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist. I am depressed ... without phone ... money for child support ... money for debts ... money!!! ... I am haunted by the vivid memories of killings and corpses ... of starving or wounded children, of trigger-happy madmen, of killer executioners ...”²
42. What would his life be like, had he not pressed the shutter back then, had he stayed with the little girl and helped her?
43. We do know what happened to the photographer.
44. We don't know what will happen to Earth.
45. Do you know the joke about the wealthy man meeting a beggar? She asks for food and he offers her a glass of water.
46. I always hand beggar a coin. What if he found himself in his predicament involuntarily? After all, it can happen to me, too. As an actor, I have a job right now. Though you know how things are ... Tomorrow I might be selling hot dogs. I should like to point out something right now: we don't do it for money.
47. We really care about nature.
48. Welcome to Green Drama! In the performance we will be using products and brands that sponsored the production and significantly aid ecological balance on Earth.
49. Only at the event today you can get ecological products with major discount!
50. All you need to do is to present your ticket for the draw!

² These lines are quoted from [Suffering-of-Others.docx - \"I'm really really sorry The pain of life overrides the joy to the point that joy does not exist depressed without phone | Course Hero](#); accessed 09 January 2021.

Scene 1

I am GOD, who is more?

1. In this scene I play God. I always thought I had already resolved the waste issue. You know, in my position I only give the mankind some basic ideas. You know, I can't be omnipresent and see everything. Even though a few billions of humans think so. (*Glances into his notes.*)
It was me to give you the idea that, if you have fire, you can keep warm. (*First Man appears on stage, clad in fur. God snaps His fingers, thunder roars, lightning flashes, First Man rejoices and begins to warm up. God snaps His fingers again, thunder, lightning, burning tree, smoke on stage can be generated by the others. First Man gets frightened.*)
You know the rest from school. (*Characters keep entering the stage, each throwing books on a pile. First, there is the sound of The Internationale; in the background, the symbols of Communism appear – hammer and sickle. They may turn into the first harvesters – their spinning ploughshares turn into swastika. Music changes, too, as does the light and characters. The sound of non-melodic Chinese cacophony, the characters are crouching. Carefully, as if not wishing to disturb anyone, they are throwing more and more books on the pile.*)
2. I usually have salmon and mashed potatoes in my favourite restaurant. As I chew, I contemplate whether the curious taste might be caused by micro-plastics that had penetrated the fish. It really makes me anxious.
3. I keep placing plastic bottles into the designated container and set an example. I stopped using plastic straws and cotton swabs. (*to the audience*) I hope you do the same!
4. **GOD** I've got to confess something. It was me to come up with the campaign about the plastic straws and swabs, as part of the PR of the leading producers of soft drinks. Do you know what it's all about? Plastic bottles represent over 75 % of plastic waste. Yet we cleverly redirected attention to the manufacturers of straws and swabs.
And so, ordinary folk stop using the straws. Or they buy their own, presumably ecological and degradable.
And now one deals with the plastic bottle manufacturers.
5. That's brilliant.

6. **GOD** Meanwhile, I am deeply concerned. Within the next ten years, the volume of waste will triple! What will happen to the world? To us?
7. Do you know that ten wealthiest people own as much property as half of humanity?
8. Is it fair?
9. Is it ecological?
10. **GOD** I think I invented a unique method of solving all environmental issues faced by humanity.
11. He suggests reducing the number of humans on the planet!
12. **GOD** Not the rich, but ... (*He looks into the audience and waves his hand.*) You neither.
13. Try to think his idea through. For how much waste do the ten rich produce and how much the poor louse? We don't have to show any statistics and it is clear the main polluters are the poor.
14. **GOD** Therefore, something is to be done with poverty.
15. Less people, less waste. Obviously!
16. The poor often have no other option than to buy the cheapest, often not the eco-friendliest food. You, over there in the third row, how much do you earn? Well, not much to show off.
17. **GOD** I pray for them, I want to help everyone. Yet all I can offer is faith and good ideas.
18. He therefore suggests to further widen the gap between the poor and the rich.
19. **GOD** The poor need help. Though reasonably.
20. According to his theory, the poor should be poorer. Hence, they will be spending less and will produce fewer waste.
21. Abd leisure. People have a lot of free time. They should work more for less money.
22. He might trigger some major war, disseminate a bit of hatred. There will be fewer problems instantly.
23. In the end, people pray more during catastrophes and wars. That's what he likes.
24. **GOD** God is love!
25. During the wars people don't believe in him.
26. All the wars were solely for the sake of faith in you! Or do you think people waged wars to avoid overpopulation and imbalance in nature?

27. God grows insecure, he'd rather leave.
28. Now comes the first dramatic scene. Poor Woman and Rich Man!

Scene 2

Poor Woman and Rich Man

Poor Woman enters the stage. God watches her, then leaves. The woman is shaking in cold, holding a baby in her arms.

WOMAN Crap! Fuckin' cold! I can't feel my fingers. *(She places her ear against the baby wrap.)* Still breathing. I haven't eaten for three days. I have nothing to breast-feed her with. Though I will never dig through trash! *(She helplessly drops to her knees, prays. Then she keeps rubbing her hands, thighs. She is cold. Rich Man enters: he is God in disguise.)* Sir, I bet that warm fur coat is no faux fur, is it? Must've cost fortune. No chance to be cold in that. Any spare change?

RICH MAN Faux fur isn't eco-friendly, don't you know that? *(He is eyeing her.)* If you pray more, you'd feel less cold. Or if you pray more sincerely.

WOMAN Sir, I pray every day, but prayer ain't no fodder or heater.

RICH MAN How is God to trust you, since you disappointed Him and have sinned?

WOMAN Given my craft, things happen; kind of occupational hazard. Yet, the insurance company won't compensate me. Sir, help me, I haven't eaten for days. The child needs my milk. Yet I can only have milk when I have enough food myself, sir. Any spare change? *(She is rattling a tin with a little change.)*

RICH MAN You know, sometimes a prayer in itself isn't enough. It also takes humility. One has to realise that you're nobody without faith in God. I believe in God and, at the same time, I also believe in myself.

WOMAN I am full of humility, sir. I see you're rich, have a genuine fur coat, no imitation. Your hands are neatly kept. Your watch is posh.

Rich Man takes her tin and keeps eyeing it.

WOMAN The sun is setting and the frost that comes with the night falling gets harsher. I'll freeze to death, unless I get some food. I am not asking for much. Some

bread and milk would do. *(She reveals herself, but the sight isn't tempting – we see her torn rags and withered body.)* I'll give you all ...

RICH MAN Not even for free. *(looking at the tin)* Just hundred years ago people didn't know waste, for there was no waste in poor countries. Everything got used, as we put it: recycled. A tin was used as a container, for all sorts of things, from flower pot to nails or peas. *(In the background an image appears showing Jánošík with a hatchet, capering. Woman appears. She reaches for some peas into the tin and throws them under his feet. Jánošík is falling to the ground.)*³ Bones of beasts were used to make sculptures. *(An image of the Moravian Venus appears in the background.)* Any leftover material was used to make useful stuff. *(Large artillery cartridge turns into a vase or an ashtray – the one used by the member of cast in the opening scene.)* Even you turned waste into working tool. While you yourself are waste. *(He peeks into the woman's arms.)* In our times, all a child means is trouble and money. In the past, children were born because they were the cheapest labour, they worked the fields. And today? It is you to feed the kids, not them feeding you. In the past, kids looked after you in old age. Now they dump you into old-people's home. Had you had no child, you wouldn't be begging like this. That's why I have no kids and don't want any. I'd rather spend everything on myself. You don't need money. There's a church. You can warm up there.

WOMAN They threw me out of there, sir, saying I'm dirty. I guess God only desires people neat and clean, noble like yourself. And this child, sir? It wasn't born out of love, though I kinda like it. Perhaps one day, when I'm frail, my kid looks after me, unlike that one. *(points at the crucifix)*

RICH MAN You are too trusting. I only rely on myself.

WOMAN Sir, I'm hungry ...

RICH MAN I'll give you money. But first, have some water. *(He takes out the change from the tin and hands it to the woman. She takes the water and drinks greedily. When finished, she stretches her arm.)* Have some more. Kids are always after something – attention, money, waiting for us to die, only to waste it all ... *(Woman drinks some more, waiting for the money.)* Even this water. Do you think water should

³ Transl. note: Slovak historic figure, a folk character; some compare him to Robin Hood. Legend has it that his girlfriend betrayed him to the gendarmerie by throwing dry peas under his feet, he slipped fell and got arrested.

belong to everyone? No. People should pay for it. Else they don't appreciate it. And do you know why they don't appreciate it? Because it's free. That's why there's some much-polluted water.

WOMAN Sir, I drank the water, but the hunger didn't go away.

RICH MAN Water is not God's gift. It's a property that doesn't belong to anyone. And that's a mistake. You know how things are when everything belongs to everyone and nothing to no one? *(Woman doesn't know. She finished her water and is stretching her arm. Rich Man, again, hands her the tin with water.)*

WOMAN Sir, you promised to give me some money after I would have drunk the water.

RICH MAN One more sip. *(Woman takes a sip.)* You weren't hungry, but thirsty! *(He tears the baby wrap from her arms. It merely conceals a doll.)* How ungrateful! You liar! You'll get no money! *(He pockets the change that was in the tin.)*

Other cast come on stage. Rich Man knocks the ash from his cigarette into the ashtray made from artillery cartridge. The cast are stepping off the stage, entering the auditorium. They start distributing plastic bottles with water. On the screen, an instructions manual appears on how to download an application with spring water into the mobile phone.

ADVERT Our spring water comes directly from the bosom of our mountains. It is in eco-friendly biodegradable packaging that doesn't cause any damage.

BY PURCHASING ECO-PACKAGING YOU ARE PROTECTING THE NATURE!

BY PURCHASING ECO-WATER YOU ARE SUPPORTING ECO-DRAMA!

Scene 3

Eve, Adam and the third one

ADAM (*approaches Eve and tenderly embraces her from behind , caressing her belly*)

I'm so happy! What did the doctor say?

EVE What would he say. (*She pushes him away and passes him a bottle.*) Let go!

ADAM You'll see, we'll manage and this project should last during the Winter, too.

The boss told me that he'd extend my contract. There might be a permanent ensemble.

And we'll be touring the schools and explaining ecology through the arts. The Ministry might give us some funding as well. We'd have a permanent contract! Aren't you

excited? The bank would at last give us the mortgage.

EVE The scene is about to begin.

ADAM I'm happy, Eve, honey!

Scene 4

Waste and water

1. Just hundred years ago people didn't know the word "waste", because there was no waste in poor countries.
2. Everything got used, as we put it: recycled.
3. A tin was used as a container, for all sorts of things, from flower pot to nails or peas. (*In the background, an image appears showing Jánošík with a hatchet, capering. Woman appears. She reaches into the tin for some peas and throws them under his feet. Jánošík is falling.*)
4. Any leftover material was used to make useful stuff. Such as the urn. Even the ancient Slavs were cremating themselves.
5. Sometimes even after death.
6. In Middle Ages they burned witches. Alive. To keep the balance, they used to burn down cities. It's something like when you burn grass in Spring.
7. New grass will grow.
8. The same with people. When the Winter is over, one's got to clear up the Earth a little.
9. Thus, for the sake of sustainability of life, the population on Earth has to be reduced.

10. **GOD** There are a few proven methods. We've already been through the first demographic method. It's based on economic principle: the poorer the people, the less waste they produce.
11. That's pretty clear. What's next?
12. Water. I've got a solution to the water. You know, if water were expensive, even rain water, if people had to pay for it, everything would be sorted out. You can go for dozens of days without food. Though you can only make it for three to four days without water. All it takes is to close the taps or apply to them this invention. *(An image appears of a water tap operated with a credit card.)*
13. Water doesn't belong to all.
14. People don't appreciate it, because it seems abundant.
15. When there's shortage and it will be expensive, people will at last start to think. One would even have to pay to look at water. I think it was the head of Nestlé who said that water shouldn't be for free.
16. To pay for water?
Water and air don't belong to all. It's just a Marxist invention.
17. I don't know why all people should have water and air for free!
18. Let me welcome the representative of our water company.
19. Thank you. I'm glad to see you in such numbers. Our water company is now offering you a deal. If you sign a long-term contract tonight, you'll receive an oxygen device as a bonus.
20. After signing the contract, you are invited to taste our homemade organic products. You are welcome to purchase them.
21. In our tiny company organic shop.
22. It's back there, by the dressing rooms. We also accept food vouchers.

Scene 5

Eve and Adam

Woman is sitting at the table, looking absentmindedly in front of her. Man is pacing around her nervously. A carafe with water and a glass with water are on the table.

ADAM Don't be frightened. I understand it's your decision, but I guess I should have a say in it as well.

EVE I'm shaking, I'm grown feeble. I can't even breathe anymore.

ADAM I understand. I do. I, too, have mixed feelings given what you told me.

We are destroying our own world. Excess consumption! We keep throwing food away, contaminating the oceans, stuffing ourselves with chemicals, because food is no longer food but industrial product. (*mockingly*) Would you like your beef steak cultivated in Petri dish? Or would you rather have something made of a diseased Polish cow? Alright, it is all business. Food, air, water. What to do now?

Shall I stop breathing because of that? (*He starts practicing breathing exercises.*)

You're frightened, that's all. You read some silly story – who knows whether the author is at all a scientist. Can someone aged thirty be a scientist? And now you take his ramblings and draw far-reaching conclusions. Do you know what will happen in ten, twenty years? I don't even know what tomorrow brings. Actually, I do. But you know what I mean. You yourself used to laugh off such futuristic forecasts. I understand, I do. You have an opinion. Yet it doesn't mean you're right. Anyway, what is truth in our world today? (*He takes the glass and keeps looking at the water.*) You don't believe it yourself. It's so absurd. (*sharply*) What's gotten in you? All of a sudden! You act like those esoteric cunts who race about the woods, embracing the trees.

EVE Because it gives me energy!

ADAM Why don't you try our new organic energy bars. They'll give you energy even if you don't want it. They're highly nutritious and economical. We've got them packaged by ten in a box. Imagine, some people want to have them delivered without having even tasted them first. Internet business is picking up nicely.

EVE (*to the audience*) I feel like a grain of sand. When alone, I'm powerless. Yet when more and more women join me, they might at last come to realise that we are serious. After all, it's us, women, who always stirred the mankind. He will never understand that but he will at least leave me in peace. Awful, how some men are unable to understand female mind.

ADAM I'm worried about you. I'm concerned about both of us. We've been putting it off for years. When we finally went for it, you read some dull piece about the future of the planet, and suddenly don't want our child! Do you realise the absurdity? Fucking article! (*He pulls out a drinking straw from the table – perhaps it was in the*

glass – and throws it into the bin. Each bin on stage is identified – glass, plastics, organic waste, mixed refuse.) See how ecological I am?! No more drinking straws in this household, and no more cotton swabs. Feeling better?

EVE *(smiling)* I should have the bar. *(tastes it)*

It's great. And totally natural flavour! When I look at it through the price and quality ratio, it's definitely a winner!

ADAM You got it! After all, it's also my child.

EVE Please, don't buy the drinking straws or the cotton swabs anymore. *(points at the regular bar)* Those were really great. *(It is obvious that the scene with the bars was of commercial nature.)*

ADAM Have you got nothing else to deal with at that ladies' club of yours? The future of the planet is shattering! And you keep dealing with cotton swabs instead of us choosing a pram and the name for our baby.

EVE *(lifts her head)* I can't give birth to a child into the planet that is overpopulated. We've destroyed over seventy percent of the planet. It's not me to say so, but specialist studies. Every new-born child adds to the ecological burden! Don't you get it?! *(Eve suddenly calms down and assumes a neutral, even ignorant attitude. She has some more water and bites into the bar. Man takes it as a positive sign.)*

ADAM But we are alive! We go to work, make love, we've got this splendid flat with mortgage we'll be paying off for the rest of our lives. We're joined together in faith that we'd be happy together! We've got a dog! You can say just as well that its farts, the farts of all dogs in this world might bring the destruction to the planet! You've come up with an excuse! What kind of catastrophe can be caused by giving birth to children?! Isn't childbirth the ultimate existential meaning to a woman?

EVE *(shakes her head)* I don't want that child. I don't want a child, for I'd destroy the planet.

ADAM Our child! *(paces nervously around his wife)* It's not mine! Right? So it's ... now I got it! *(starts shaking her)* You're sleeping with someone at work! Who is it?! And now, you're ashamed, you're afraid I'd find out when I see some big-lipped immigrant crawling from your womb! Tell me!

EVE You loser. Yet, I do understand you: it's hard to comprehend why I opted for an abortion. I love you. I'm happy with you and cannot imagine another man by my side. I'm not angry at all at you for yelling at me. Actually, I'm kind of glad, because I consider your jealousy an expression of your love. You know that I'm not sleeping with

anyone and I wouldn't even be capable of it. Yet, until this planet is clean again, we women won't be giving births!

ADAM (*starts crying*) Why are you doing this to me?!! Why? I want that child! I've chosen the name! A boy will be Adam. If it's a girl, she'll be named after you!

(*Woman shakes her head. Man's mobile phone rings. He lets it ring for a while, as if wandering whether to take the call.*) Peter?! Hi! How? Okay, fine. Nothing.

We're just sitting with Eve sorting out something. No, no, you're not disturbing. Is it Tuesday already? (*He looks at his wife and speaks firmly.*) I know we play every Tuesday, I haven't forgotten. Listen, I'll call you later. Alright ... I know, even death is no excuse. Sure, I'm not sick! (*listens*) Hey, pal, I might spoil your evening, but I'll come, we beat you up so you'll go home crawling! Within the past three weeks we won all the matches! (*listening*) A pump with a valve? (*to Eve*) Where did you put the pump? The pump for the ball that I brought home last time. (*Eve points somewhere forward; they both know where the pump is.*) I'll bring it, sure thing. See ya! (*Adam hangs up.*) It was Vlado. Fuck, I totally forgot it's Tuesday, our football match.

EVE I see you're nervous. Just go, don't worry about me. Go and play some. I guess it's clear to you by now that I've made up my mind already. It's no longer about you. Or about us. It's about humanity. We will be together forever. I love you. I trust you'll understand me. Perhaps the football brings some oxygen to your brain and you calm down. We can talk more after the football. Though I warn you: I've made up my mind. Do take the bar – it will quickly give you energy after the exercise.

ADAM So, we'll talk some more. I'm trying to understand it, but it somehow doesn't work. Must be a fault with the receiver. (*Pause. Adam picks up a newspaper from the table. We presume it contains the article the wife spoke about. Another pause; he retreats behind the scene and returns holding the pump.*) Will you really let me go? You know, it would be hard for me to explain to the chaps that ...

EVE I will. Have some beer as well. But better take a cab, for you know ... You take two, three pints and may end up in an accident.

ADAM You're right. Nowadays the police are bitches. Wouldn't even take a bribe.

EVE Don't forget your towel.

ADAM Still, I don't get it how could you make such a decision on the basis of a single article. Is there something I should know, and I don't? Hm? (*Woman shakes her head.*) It's weird, really. Alright then, I'm off. But we'll speak later. I haven't closed the matter yet! (*leaving*) If you go to bed, take some organic sleeping pill.

EVE The bar will make me fitter and I'll enjoy the spring water more! (*Three characters enter the stage. They are advertisement boards promoting organic bars. They characters cross the stage. Adam is leaving.*)

God arrives, passes a bottle to Eve, too. She refuses it.

EVE I don't want any. Yuck, it's made of plastic.

GOD You've got to be more convincing. (*points to the auditorium*) Those will believe you when you tell them, that the bottle is biodegradable. Do you know how many new packages of our eco-water we sold today? Almost three pallets.

EVE I've got to tell you something.

GOD Make it quick, I still have some contracts to sort out! (*Eve approaches him and Whispers something in his ear.*) Nonsense! You're testing me! Aren't you? No. No. I don't believe you. If you think you can blackmail me with that ... no!

EVE I've been to the doctor.

GOD You're forcing me to think that not only you are a meagre actress, but also a poor liar! (*He is leaving.*)

Scene 6

Guttenberg

Images of books being burned. Burning piles of books. Bad, inappropriate books. Every totalitarian régime is burning them. The cast are walking in front of the spectators, showing them an old engraving – a portrait of Guttenberg.

Welcome to the programme of the Ministry of Environment and the call for applications within the sub-scheme Environmental Protection and Art.

Yes, it's Guttenberg. His invention of letterpress enabled the Bible to spread virtually worldwide! Yet, the book that proved more successful in the Middle Ages was *Malleus maleficarum* – *The Hammer of Witches*. It popularised building stakes to burn witches across the world. In our region, the tradition of burning witches ended, regrettably, in 1741, when the last witch was burned in the free royal town of Krupina. Let's have a look at a well-made scene.

Scene 7
A bag of corn

Eve might play the witch, Adam might play the man. Wolf howls in the distance; nocturnal sounds, woods. Man and woman are carrying linen bags on their shoulders. Suddenly, the woman drops her bag, stretches, jibs and crosses herself.

WOMAN (*whispering*) Ah! There! God!

MAN What is it? Has someone spotted us?

WOMAN There! (*crosses herself*) Something flashed there. As if human shadow passed over there!

MAN Where?

WOMAN Over there, over our neighbour's roof. (*crosses herself, kneels and starts praying*)

MAN It just seemed such to you. The moon is bright, it blinded you. God has seen us, taking from the others. We shouldn't have! What will happen to us now!

WOMAN Shut up. (*whispering*) I didn't see properly in the dark, but it might have been our neighbour. I find her quite strange lately. Her looks didn't promise anything good.

MAN Neighbour? I don't believe it ... after all, she is an honest woman.

WOMAN Devil has many faces. (*carefully looking at her husband*) It was her!

MAN It was probably an illusion! You're distressed, the pollen from the grass is burning your eyes.

WOMAN (*looking around*) But what if she saw us looking at her?!

MAN (*looks at the bag*) Let's throw it away. (*They are standing over the bag, thinking. Man opens it and retrieves a corn ear. He throws it away and wants to do the same with the next one. Wife takes it from him, pushes it back into the bag and ties it.*) I didn't see a thing.

WOMAN You not seeing her doesn't mean that it couldn't have been her. Just realise, the way our neighbour is. In the morning, when I am off to the mass, she greets me nicely, asks me how I am. As soon as I turn away, she is killing me with her looks. It was her. We've got to report it. Otherwise she'll put a spell on us. Or will report us to the authorities ... (*looks at the bag*)

MAN It might have been a flash from the moon that is so bright today ... or perhaps just a reflection of the river.

WOMAN Our chickens stopped laying eggs. (*shows the number on her fingers*) And yesterday, only as little as this. (*shows less*) She put a spell on them. She is a witch! And you're so nice to her! Why do you go to help her?!

MAN She's got it hard, living alone, with the husband dead.

WOMAN She was left alone and still lives! That's the point! She is looking after her six children all by herself. We've only got three kids and how tough it is on us! And her?! Always smiling, singing. Devil got hold of her. She is godless. She should be praying and begging God for mercy. Yet she defies and laughs at him. Have you seen that hair of hers? As black as coal. She would burn everyone with her eyes. Wherever she walks, the grass turns brown like after fire. (*looks at her husband exploringly*)

MAN Always smiling. What's wrong with that? Others in her place would be all tears.

WOMAN She put a spell on you?!

MAN No!

WOMAN Whenever she sings, you stop, smile and look towards her house. But God sees you! He sees your diabolic thoughts through which she put the spell on you! Now you will yourself go and tell them that you saw her at night flying above the roofs, with fire bursting from her eyes and mouth! And that she put a spell on our chickens!

MAN (*points at the bag*) How are we to explain that we were out in the night stealing corn?

WOMAN (*points at the bag*) A few ears of corn are of no interest to anyone.

MAN What will happen to her children? The innocents. They will be left alone. Who will look after them?

WOMAN God will look after the kids and we will look after the livestock. (*jibs*) There will be the cow, goat and chicken left behind. They are God's creatures, too. You should think of them as well.

MAN Let's wait and see. First, we've got to hide this. (*He throws the bag over the shoulder. Woman is supporting it. They are leaving. Wolf howls in the distance.*)

WOMAN Alright. Never mind, we shall wait. (*She seizes up her husband and spits to the side. Wolf howls in the distance, dog barks, nocturnal sounds.*)

The neighbour enters the stage. It's Eve from the previous scenes. All alone, she is standing by the crucifix.

NEIGHBOUR In the evening, when the darkness falls, I step out to our fields and reminisce. I think of my husband. Fine man. I don't know why God summoned him so suddenly. *(Holds her belly and looks in the direction where the couple left with the bag.)* I saw them. Stupid me. Instead of telling them off, I hid. I was afraid they would see me. It's better this way. No one knows anything. They stole the corn, such gluttony. Though I can do with what's left. *(She says a prayer and ties herself to the cross.)*

A cross and a stake of wood beneath are now on stage. Eve is tied to the cross. Inquisitor enters. He can be played by the actor who played God. The man and woman from previous scene stand in front of him. They kneel. Inquisitor is holding a crucifix.

INQUISITOR Speak up!!!

WOMAN At night, odd sounds were coming from her house, moans, strangest sounds! Over her roof I saw, *(looks at her husband)* we saw a witch flitter! Her eyes fluttered and flames lashed from her mouth!

INQUISITOR Do you recognise her? *(points at Eve)*

WOMAN That's her!

INQUISITOR *(approaches Woman)* Take an oath in God's name that you are pure!

NEIGHBOUR I swear! *(We see she is pregnant – she has a protruding belly.)* Yes, I was out that night, in the fields where my husband, while still alive, had sewn corn seeds in the furrows, our bodies joined together so he would also sow some harvest in my bosom. I went to the fields to pray for my baby to be born fit and not fall prey to Black Death! It's a sign of divine love that the poor man didn't live to see it. God knows I loved him faithfully all my life.

INQUISITOR Don't blaspheme! You, overcome by evil spirits, don't you take God's name into your foul mouth! Do you want children to live? Forsake them and say: I am possessed by the devil! *(He starts waving the book and crucifix. As he approaches her, flame bursts from the cross. Everyone on stage jibs in fear.)* Only Satan can grow out of a woman who associates with the devil!

NEIGHBOUR *(pause)* It's a child from a man I loved! It grew out of his seed.

INQUISITOR You have sinned. At nights you lied with the demons. Because of you

cows lost their milk, wells are poisoned, hens cased bearing eggs. And now, you even deny that! (*looks at her belly*)

NEIGHBOUR Over there, in heavens – that’s where my husband is! It was with him I conceived the child! Out of love!

INQUISITOR (*approaches the man*) Did you see her at night flying over the roof? Speak up!

MAN Oh, sir, I am not sure about what I have and have not seen. It was dark. Actually, the moon was covered by the cloud!

INQUISITOR Have you associated with her?!

MAN (*hesitantly*) No ...

INQUISITOR This woman confessed to having laid with the evil spirits and you are covering up for her!

MAN I have never seen a more pious woman. She is devoted to her family. She is hardworking. She goes to church, she prays incessantly.

INQUISITOR Do you want to hang with her? Don’t blasphemy! (*whispering*) Why are you protecting her? I have already made a decision about her; don’t you get it?

WOMAN It was her! In the evening, major storm blew over the roofs, hellish smoke billowed through the chimney to the house. In fear, we stepped out of the house with my husband, with the Bible and crucifix in hand so they would protect us from evil. That’s when I spotted her. (*Her husband is trying to say something, but she silences him with a gesture.*)

MAN My eyes, even my heart are unwilling to believe that!

NEIGHBOUR No! I am merely a loving mother who bears, beneath her heart, a child conceived out of love!

INQUISITOR (*hands the man a torch*) Here, the fire. Go and light the stake. If she manages to stand in the flames and the fire doesn’t burn her, she is pure.

WOMAN It’s she-devil!

NEIGHBOUR (*to Heaven, then to the Inquisitor*) This is what I get in return for all the love I have given you? (*He steps on the wooden stake. Everyone is praying, only she is standing motionless, looking ahead.*)

INQUISITOR (*to Man and Woman*) Pray to God. If you burn, I shall scatter your ashes all around! And you two, in return for your faithful services, do take whatever you deem appropriate from her livestock.

MAN What will happen to her poor children?

INQUISITOR God will look after them.

MAN (*He approaches the stake and wants to set it alight, but he is unable to light the torch.*) It won't burn.

NEIGHBOUR I want to confess everything! Yes, I did lay with the devil, but I was unaware of it! He was clad in a splendid robe, his mouth full of devotion. He seduced me with sweet talk, showered me with gift, promising loyalty for life! (*Man hands a lighter to the Inquisitor.*)

INQUISITOR Try this one. I put some birch wood underneath, it even burns wet, so the coal will catch the fire better. (*At last, Man manages to light the wood, the fire ignites violently, Inquisitor jumps aside, crossing himself. Neighbour is screaming in the flame.*) Buy two tons of our ecological brown coal, and get a fire lighter as a bonus. Our Upper Nitra coal burns even in rainy or damp conditions. With our fire you create the true warmth of your home. Your Upper Nitra Brown Coal Mines! Healthy smoke in every home.

Scene 8

Money

Adam, who played Man in the previous scene, arrives with Inquisitor, who played God as well as Rich Man, is now preoccupied with his mobile phone – he seems to be playing a game.

ADAM I didn't get it all. I checked my account, rang my bank. Some payments are missing!

GOD Yes. They are.

ADAM When are you going to pay me? I'm not going to act for free!

GOD That is the question – to act. (*paraphrasing the Hamlet scene in front of the cast*) Would you deliver your part exactly as I have written it. Play with it on your tongue. If you merely rattle it out, as many actors do, I will be sorry for not having asked the community drummer to rattle out my verse.

ADAM (*picking up, knows his lines*) I recall someone once saying that there is no spice in verse that would give the content some zing.

GOD Stop waving your hands like a windmill. Use each tool sparingly. For it is in the flood, storm or – if I may say so – a whirlwind of passion that you have to master and maintain sobriety. Only then you shall achieve ease of expression. My heart bleeds when I listen to some dummy in a wig crashing passion into pieces, tearing it to rags, only to schmooze with the spectators!

ADAM I can guarantee that, your highness! (*pause*) When will you pay me the rest of the fee?

GOD And don't let those who play buffoons say more than the script contains. For there are also those who burst in laughter out of blue, just to make the light audience laugh – even if, in the given moment, there is a serious point in the play. That is unpardonable. It testifies to the deplorable ambition on the part of those who resort to it. Money? You earn more than you deserve. Here, your new contract. You are welcome not to sign it. Only then you will no longer play with this ensemble. And I will of course cover the outstanding balance. (*Adam takes the contract and is reading through it.*)

ADAM Am I to play for such pittance? I saw how much you get from the sponsors!

GOD Was it you to fundraise, or was it me? Your part is coming up. Better get on with it, unless you want to be fined. (*He leaves the contract with Adam.*) We'll go through it some more after the show.

Scene 9

A doll

Two men in prison garb. M2 is Adam, both are members of Sonderkommando.

M 1 How neatly they play together. Let's go.

M 2 Wait a moment.

M 1 The commander is looking! (*God is standing nearby.*)

M 2 Looking at the girls.

M 1 Waiting to see what we'll do. We should start. Everything's ready.

M 2 I don't think he minds. He even smiled right now. Perhaps he remembered his daughters. A few days ago we found a tiny reindeer in the woods, must have been new-born.

M 1 Deer, it's deer.

M 2 Our lot wanted to eat it first. Though, you now, it was a problem to sneak it to the camp. So we took it to the commander. And he goes: “Woow, I’ll take it to my daughters.” So we went along. Did you know he has two small daughters? They were so excited! We had to find some goaty milk, for the cow milk would harm it.

M 1 It’s goat milk, not goaty milk. Oh mine, how much I crave milk! Let’s get going: he’ll get furious if we don’t intervene!

M 2 He looks calm now ... seems fascinated: young daughters. Perhaps he’s thinking what they might be doing right now. Might be wondering how they would feel had it been them to be here now... and their father, I mean him, how would he feel. You know what I mean. It’s amazing to have a child. The best thing that can happen to anyone!

M 1 He motioned us to wait until they stop playing. A thousand people just got off the train, everyone is waiting what will happen. It has to be calm here, they mustn’t sense tension. You know, calm is the point. Let’em play a bit more.

M 2 You’re mad! We’ve got to act! It’s his favourite game. H waits, then he strips us of the garb and sends off to the shower with them! (*wants to move forward, but M1 stops him*) They think they are uberpeople.

M 1 It’s Übermensch. You can’t even say that.

M 2 What if they really are?

M 1 In principle, we all are equal. We all have red blood. Everyone has two arms and two legs.

M 2 Two eyes. I know. Especially here and now: we all are equal. We all stand here on the same soil, breathe the same air and mouse over those kids.

M 1 Muse. As in to muse. My children were able to play all day long. (*jibs*) We’ve got to get rid of this transport quickly. Two more are due this afternoon. People from the train got moving! The commander is pissed!

M 2 He ordered us to wait.

M 1 Nope, he gave a clear instruction to ...

M 2 Girls, c’mon, girls, take the shovel and dolls; we’ll show you something. Not here and now. There’s plenty of sand inside as well. Mummy is waiting for you over there. Let’s go. Take it all nicely ... that doll there, too. Here you go. Don’t you want to go? So I’ll take it for you! Didn’t you hear?

M 1 Off you go! Stop screaming!

M 2 Hold her tight. Careful about the doll! (*They are leaving. Silence. They return shortly. M1 is holding a doll, looking at it and then shows it to the audience.*)

ADVERT Our eco-friendly dolls made of husk are a treat to every child. We only use ecological material to make them. We supply the dolls in all sizes, from the smallest, (*shows a doll left behind from the preceding scene*) all the way to the size of human. On request, we are happy to install in each doll your child's interactive friend. Your child will thus spend less time on the computer.

They bring on stage human-size doll. It's Eve, dressed like a school girl. She has braided pigtails and a skirt.

Scene 10

A doll – an essay

One of the cast switches her on, using remote control. Girl-doll bows.

GIRL Many of you will probably wonder what cremation is and what a crematorium looks like. You will surely be interested in how the corpses are burned here in the crematorium and what the equipment is like. Our crematorium is the most recent facility in the country. As for incineration, corpses are placed in the coffin. Those are the corpses of people who died of infection or were infested. Why the crematorium, each of you asks. Meat in the grave decomposes slowly. It takes as many as ten years to decompose completely, with only a skeleton left. Yet, when cremated, meat burns within minutes. The largest component of the crematorium is a furnace heated to eight hundred degrees centigrade. A single furnace requires six to eight litres of diesel for heating. The temperature in the furnace mustn't exceed one thousand two hundred degrees. To control the temperature, a total of ten nozzles are used to blow cold air into the furnace. The body is first placed on a heavy iron cart that is inserted into the furnace through a rear door. As we know, body is made up of seventy-five percent of water. When the body gets very hot, the water starts to boil, what makes the corpse move. Once the corpse is half-burned, caretaker uses a four-meter-long coil to push it into the middle section of the furnace.

An additional corpse is placed on top of it, hence they burn two at once. If the bones are burnt through, the caretaker pushes them onto the lower grate with a baking tray placed beneath. When the incineration is completed, the remains are dumped into the tray and are left to cool. The incineration takes twenty-five to forty minutes. (*pause*) Interestingly, cremating a woman only takes half the time of that required for man.

GOD For the sake of equality I must point out that there were times when women were being burned more often than men. Though that was long ago.

GIRL In a round-the-clock operation, the daily capacity is only one hundred corpses. Ashes are placed into paper urns measuring twenty-two by eighteen by fifteen centimetres. The urns are placed into an urn grove by the former brewery. Another time I will tell about how the ashes are being used, and more. Elli, an eight-grader in a primary school wrote this essay in 1943 in Theresienstadt. (*Girl-doll bows and leaves in a machine-like manner.*)

Scene 11

A quiz

GOD Ladies and gentlemen, kindly remember that you can enter your tickets in a draw. There is plenty of organic goods back by the dressing rooms. You can get them at a major discount! We have a quiz for you. I would like to ask my assistant to bring the lottery drum. (*Eve arrives, pushing a transparent container with tickets for the draw.*) What a suspense! Who's going to be the lucky winner? And, here we go! Eco Drama, row eighteen, seat number one! I'd like to ask the lucky winner to join us here on stage! Come-on, don't you worry, we won't burn you on stake! (*Spectator arrives: we know it's Adam with a mask of a spectator.*) Would tell us your name and where you come from.

ADAM My name is Adam. I am from over there.

GOD Adam, tell us a little about yourself. What do you do? Where do you live? Are you single?

ADAM I'm a teacher. With my girlfriend we are expecting a baby!

GOD Great! Do you know the gender yet?

ADAM We don't ... but it doesn't matter. As long as the baby is fit. My mother, when she was expecting me, had a very protruding belly. It was to mean that the baby was to be a boy.

GOD As long as it's yours. And what do you believe in?

ADAM Well, in love. And especially in ecology. So that we can live here, on this blue planet, as long as possible.

GOD I would like to ask my assistant to bring our quiz for the day. (*Eve brings a piece of plank, Adam is exploring it.*) Well, it's not the plank that makes the Slovak award for best stage productions, though we might land that one day.⁴ Now, the question to the audience as well as to Adam. What material, would you say this stage is made of? To help you out a little, here's a sample.

ADAM (*after some hesitation*) Wood?

GOD Great. But what kind of wood?

FROM THE AUDITORIUM Beech! Oak! Cherry!

GOD No, no, no. Though you're close. One more attempt, please!

ADAM It's a wooden plank, so it is likely to be made of wood. I did say that.

GOD Well spotted, Adam. Would you be able to guess where the planks come from?

ADAM From the wood?

GOD Indeed, that, too ... Try to be more specific.

ADAM From coffins! From funeral parlour!

ACTOR Great! Brill! (*The cast bring a new coffin on stage.*) A token from our funeral directors Marianum that sponsored the construction of our stage. Marianum operates eco-friendly burials. The company is proud to hold the ISO 2002 certificate. Adam, congratulations on the lovely prize. The coffin is yours! (*Adam is leaving.*)

ADVERT (*mourning music, solemn voice*) During the final farewells to your dearly departed, please think of the dignified, but environmentally-friendly method of parting with this world. Our cremation equipment will provide you with a dignified and sensitive approach to parting with your loved ones. Feel free to use our services. Everyone will experience it. Your turn will come, too!

⁴ Transl. note: the name of the award in Slovak is DOSKY, which also means planks.

Scene 12
God and Eve

GOD Have you made up your mind at last?

EVE Nope.

GOD You could have it done and over with. Your time's running out.

EVE Mine? Our time. (*pause*) He wants me to keep it. He is looking forward to the baby. Yet I can't lie to him. I won't manage. What if it's yours!?

GOD Perhaps it's not mine but his. In which case you might keep it. Logically. It can't be mine and his at the same time. It is only with dogs that the nature came up with a brilliant solution ... Do you know a bitch can be bearing puppies from a number of different dogs at the same time?

EVE I simply feel it's yours.

GOD You've been to a fortune-teller, right? (*Eve nods.*) How can you believe a fortune-teller, if you don't believe in this act of ours we put on here? Obviously, this bottle won't degrade in a few years, but you've got to believe it's eco-friendly. And act accordingly.

EVE I don't know what to do. I know you don't love me.

GOD I do, of course. But you know how difficult things are at home. Look, the numbers won't let go. Instead of two happy couples, there will be four unhappy people in the world. (*glances at her belly*) Actually, five. (*annoyed*) It's not our fault that passion got ignited between us. You should've taken contraception.

EVE (*in disagreement*) I'll keep it.

GOD Cut the blackmail. You both are third-rank actors. Had it not been for me, you'd be selling fries at MacDonald's. Who secured the funding? Me. Who pays you four hundred per show? So, keep it. I couldn't care less whether it takes after me. Be sure you're finished with me. My theatre is no job centre.

Scene 13
In the house of the mayor

Bed; two feet sticking out. The character gets up. He is a sleepy, nearly naked man. He pours himself a glass of water and drinks greedily. He looks into the glass, perhaps he

finds the flavour strange, but he doesn't care. He approaches the window, peeking through the curtain to see what's going on outside. He might open the window. We hear shouts of a rally, loud megaphone airing ambiguous revolutionary appeals.

MAYOR Adam! Adam!!! (*Adam enters: he is a bodyguard equipped with a machine gun.*) What the fuck is going on outside?

ADAM Mayor, it's THE rally.

MAYOR THE rally? Fuck, fuck, fuck. Who is it here to give consent to hold rallies?

ADAM You, sir.

MAYOR Fucking hell, have I given a consent to this rally? (*Adam is silent.*

Enters Carlsson in a suit. He is tidying up his shirt and trousers – clearly, he slept in the adjacent room.)

CARLSSON I'm flat out. (*He retrieves a packet from his jacket, takes out a pill, swallows it with a sip of water, waits briefly for it to take effect.*)

MAYOR (*to Adam*) Go, check out what's going on. Just make sure not to shoot someone by chance. Because all you do is random mistakes. I don't need no stir and TV crews here. (*to Carlsson*) It was quite something yesterday! Where did you get it?

CARLSSON I thought it was the stuff from you. As if I went in my body ... I pinch myself and feel nothing. I hope I'm still alive.

MAYOR Last night you were quite clearly alive. Girls, I thought you'd left already?! (*He approaches them, counts out paper notes, the girls willingly accept the money.*)

Don't spend them on dolls!

EVE Honey, you've paid already, remember?

MAYOR Really? When! How? Haha.

CARLSSON Don't ask when but how much. You gave them a thousand each. (*Mayor wants to take the money back; the situation amuses everyone.*) From your secret fund that's officially called the Social Support Scheme. (*The socially marginalised working-class ladies crawl out of bed, wrap themselves in sheets, get dressed and leave.*)

MAYOR Phew. (*laughs*) Plenty of experience, no memories.

ADAM (*arrives*) It's the protesters. Thousands of people have flooded the surrounding street, sir. Mainly students and people from the suburbia.

CARLSSON It's called ghetto. (*to Mayor*) You said everything's sorted.

MAYOR Do you see a problem? I don't.

CARLSSON How did get through the fence? Fuck, why did we give you the money for the concrete walls, if anyone gets in just like that?!

MAYOR *(to Adam)* Ring the police chief to send over some patrols. If the people don't leave peacefully, tell him to democratically use water cannons and armed vehicles. Anyway, it's hot outside, it will freshen them up. *(Adam leaves; a shy young man enters.)* Who are you?! I don't remember you.

CARLSSON That's my Robbie, protégé from the boys' boarding school. You will join us for coffee, won't you? *(strokes Robbie)*

MAYOR I hope you're at least fifteen. Fuck, what a night! Oh my head!

ROBBIE I'm seventeen. Thank you for the offer, but I've got to get to school.

MAYOR When Adam comes, he'll let you out through the rear entrance. So that you don't miss your school. That would be awful, wouldn't it? *(Carlsson and Robbie exchange a smile.)*

CARLSSON We do like rear entrance.

ROBBIE Really, I must get going. I don't want any problems at school. *(He approaches the window and watches the events on the street.)*

MAYOR Don't worry. The school is co-funded by the city. There'll be no unexcused absence. And if there were any, it will be director to get the spanking. Listen, do you know what I'm curious about? Do you, guys, do it just the way we the straight lot do? *(Carlsson and Robbie exchange smiles.)*

CARLSSON You're welcome to try it with us.

MAYOR No! No! I'm just curious about how things are done. You know, technique and stuff.

ROBBIE I better be going. Though I wanted to tell you something.

CARLSSON Don't use the front entrance. It's not safe out there. The protesters are increasingly hostile.

ROBBIE I'll be alright – got some friends there from the ghetto. They know I'm here.

CARLSSON See, he, too says "ghetto".

MAYOR Do you sympathise with them? Listen, *(to Carlsson)* is he to be trusted?

CARLSSON Robbie, the Mayor here is asking whether you are to be trusted.

ROBBIE I wouldn't trust them.

MAYOR What an entertainer! Off you go to school, else I put a complaint into your school book. Whey! *(pause)* Fuck, I'm feeling weird. *(starts vomiting)*

CARLSSON Did you have the shrimp?

MAYOR I hate the underwater spiders! Fuck, fuck, fuck! My stomach! What are you staring at! Get me some pill! Or call an ambulance!! My vision's getting blurred.

ROBBIE Last month, in our neighbourhood – or, as you put it, in the ghetto – a girl was born. She only had three fingers on her hand. She looked weird, like some kind of animal. Our neighbour gave birth to boys. Though neither had any eyes. Just hollow holes they had. All bees died out and the trees we planted in our allotment stopped bearing fruit. Am I to go on about what all you've caused? The city landfill got contaminated by the poisons from the nearby plant that you two own! You take out the poison there, thus gradually sentencing us to death! Women are becoming infertile!

MAYOR You seem to be in no danger of giving birth anyway. Where's the pill? My stomach!

CARLSSON (*approaches Robbie and embraces him, but he pulls away*) Help me! I'm in agony!

ROBBIE When you sniff my skin, you'll know I'm saturated in phenols and all the crap you dump at our end! Life has become extinct in our rivers! The wells stink as if they were poisoned!

CARLSSON (*pulls out his wallet and counts out some notes, passes the money to Robbie, though he refuses to accept it*) Get out!

MAYOR Listen, Che Guevara! The landfill was built in line with the EEI environmental impact directives. (*He pulls out a straw from his glass and breaks it in half.*) Though none of you deals with what to do with all that waste. Is it me or you to generate that waste? (*He then pulls out another straw, draws a line on his desk and inhales white powder with the straw.*) See, we scrupulously dispose of all our waste. Had you read my electoral programme, you'd know that I based in on a green city. This city needs more green zones and hundred percent waste separation. Do you separate? Rubbish! I bet you don't throw your banana peel into organic but communal waste. And that louse outside? They throw everything out of the windows. I saw their houses. Revolting.

ROBBIE They can't afford waste removal. You raised the waste collection fee.

MAYOR Typical excuse. You have money for booze and fags, but not for waste. Tell me, who sent you? (*He starts searching him, but eventually drops in pain into the armchair.*) Are you recording this? Filming? (*Robbie doesn't object.*)

CARLSSON Robbie, the way things are is that reality is one thing, and the other one is electoral programme. There is no poison in the landfill. There are lots of

certificates, measurements and tests related to the landfill. All that program. All that is just a fabrication by those who lost the elections. It's called political struggle. Didn't they teach you that at school?!

ROBBIE Toxic substances have been detected in the groundwater in such concentration that they cause cancer. The number of oncological patients in the ghetto by the landfill has risen threefold over the recent years.

CARLSSON Who asks you to drink polluted water? You could've connected to the city water supply.

ROBBIE Yes, all it takes for us is to sign the contract with the Municipal Water Company that you two own. Only that those outside can't afford paying for the expensive drinking water! They can't afford it, so they drink water from the poisoned public wells and bathe in the poisoned rainwater! They drink the water that makes their gut deformed; they give birth to damaged children; we use it to water our vegetables that is as toxic and the water beneath.

CARLSSON That would do. Off you go, else I'll make sure they kick you out of school.

MAYOR You don't need to arrange anything! You won't get to school anymore! Adam! Adam, where the fuck are you?! You don't understand a thing, boy. You're one of those who believe that indignation is the mother of gain. Look at those outside. Elections are due in a year's time. We live in democracy. It is democracy that decides and not who shout louder on the street. The deed didn't befall.

ROBBIE Do you feel the malaise here? It's not because of the wild night yesterday, or with the amounts of booze and drugs. You spent the night drinking and eating copiously, stuffing yourselves with toxins that you take out to the landfill. The poison, in its concentrated form, gradually penetrates your body and starts to decompose it. You drank from our wells, the water which your body isn't used to. It will take several hours for your muscles to begin to atrophy, and your gym-sculpted bodies will start to weaken. You will be tired and ever weaker! Your lungs will work ever more slowly and feebly, until you stop breathing! *(pours powder on the table and blows it around)* You've got it inside you. The process is slow and irreversible. *(takes a glass and toasts to them)* Cheers! Here's to this city! And to nature!

Enters Adam.

MAYOR Make it look like a random victim from among the protesters. I don't want any witnesses. You've got to handle it by yourself, is that clear? Let the police discover the body of this innocent boy that fell prey to the brutal violence of the protesters! I want television crew and media there! I want them to turn the protesters into individuals that despise poofs. It always does the trick. And make sure they mention he was from the ghetto. He was a fine student, but the louse lured him astray.

Adam is leaving, dragging Robbie along; Robbie doesn't fight back.

ROBBIE You'll die anyway!

MAYOR *(to Carlsson)* You take care of the media.

CARLSSON I'm your man: I've got my people there. They'll write anything for a couple hundred bucks.

MAYOR My stomach's still hurting!

CARLSSON I find it hard to breathe ... *(He opens the window; sound of the crowd, shouts. Shots. Mayor touches his forehead; he has to sit down.)*

MAYOR I can't walk. *(Carlsson, too, has to sit down.)* Ring the hospital ... and call extraordinary city council to pass a decision that we'll offer two-months connection to the water supply for free. That might calm them down. We better be quick though. *(Adam arrives.)* Have you shot him? C'mon! Speak up! *(Adam pulls the trigger and points at the Mayor. Shot is fired.)*

ADVERT Our Municipal Water Company has been a long -term and reliable partner for all households and businesses. We bring spring water from the mountain where it had waited in the depth of 1,422 metres for thousands of years for us to deliver it directly to you. Today, you have a unique opportunity to enter into a contract with our company for the supply of safe drinking water. The first two months are free. Plus, we will provide a designated social scheme and an opportunity to study in the city boarding school for the families with five or more children.

MAYOR May I request Mr Carlsson, the representative of our water company, to tell us more about why the city decided to support our educational – environmental programme. *(Carlsson enters the stage, tucking his shirt into the trousers.)*

CARLSSON Good evening, friends! The Aqua Pura Water Company has been supporting education for years. We realise that education is the future of our city and our country!

MAYOR What have you in store for us tonight? You promised a surprise.

CARLSSON Yes, education is the pillar of our future. We are opening boys' boarding school for lads from socially disadvantaged groups. Tonight I would like to draw one of the visitors whose son will be able to study at our school!

MAYOR (*applauds*) Excellent! That deserves applause! (*Other members of cast are applauding, the auditorium joins in. Eve is pushing the transparent container containing tickets. Carlsson draws.*)

CARLSSON I should like to ask the lucky lad ... it's a ticket ... raw fourteen, seat twenty-two! (*Fanfare. Robbie enters the stage and accepts an envelope with the scholarship.*) Congratulations to the winner!

Scene 14

Adam and Eve II

ADAM Honey, I'm so excited! Your belly actually seems to be bigger! Really.

EVE Nonsense. How about the contract? Did you sign?

ADAM I asked for more money. I won't work for pittance.

EVE Good point.

ADAM He may be a friend, but he's a tough businessman.

EVE Adam...

ADAM What?

EVE Just that ... I don't want us to play here together anymore.

ADAM Are you nuts? Now when it's getting off the ground? I can handle the contract. (*pause*) Hold on. What did you mean? For the two of us acting together, or the two of us no longer acting with them?

EVE (*starts crying*) I don't know what I meant!

ADAM It's the hormones. My Mum told me that when she was expecting me, she cried anytime. Out of blue. She looked at a flower, or a bus and broke in tears. Don't worry, you'll be okay. And if I don't happen to sign the contract, I'll find something else to be able to feed us and the baby!

EVE Let me tell you something.

ADAM Honey, no need to! I can tell you're happy! (*He embraces her. God peeks in and signals to them to get on stage.*)

Scene 15

Torch

Torch can be played by Robbie. He can keep walking around the stage all the time in illustration and perform what the cast are saying.

1. It was an ordinary day of January. Ordinary – you know what I mean. The cold crept under one's skin. Grey sky.
2. The desolation of a Winter day.
3. We don't know precisely what he did that day. So let's try to reconstruct the events. We know for certain that he arrived at the dorm from home at about 8AM. It was probably also that morning when he had written four identical letters.
4. We know he left the dorm at about 11:00. Sometime between 11:00 and 12:30 he bought stamps and posted the letters. It was probably on the Lesser Town Square in Prague that he also bought a postcard with a stamp and sent it to his friend. It remains a mystery why he crossed the river towards the Old Town.
5. He sent him just a brief note.
6. No other words.
7. He addressed one of the letters to the Czechoslovak Writers' Union.
8. You know, authors and playwrights played a major public role at the time.
9. Unlike today.
10. What-the-hell must have been going through his mind?
11. Given the population size, such form of protest is most often used among the Kurds and Buddhists. The first to protest so shockingly, was Thich Quang Duc to oppose the South Vietnam régime back in June 1963.
12. Really? I had no idea.
13. British sociologist Michael Biggs refers to it as radical political protest. It is quite unconventional in our part of the world.

14. His French colleague Monestier argues that a protest thus understood can be seen both as rational and logical. For the aim of a protest is to stir a wave of public outrage, expose the adversary to public outrage and force him to adopt appropriate measures.
15. It ought to be said that such form of protest also prompts adverse public reaction which is largely related to faith-based or cultural interpretation of suicide.
16. Don't you think that the later imitations of this protest are, in fact, rather rooted in mental or other personal issues?
17. I think he was a naïve lad and was fooled by the anti-Communist intelligence. The Americans, you see?
18. That's how those in power interpret it.
19. Whose is the power, theirs is the truth.
20. Usually.
21. Well ... until they lose it.
22. The truth?
23. No. The power.
24. Imagine everyone acting like this! It would be quite a mayhem! And I am no coward ... You know what I mean? It's undignified.
25. Many condemned him.
26. No wonder. Young man and gets into such nonsense. Nothing would change anyway.
27. Though it's an important moral dilemma:
28. Does a man have the right to decide freely about his life and, at his discretion, sacrifice it for the others to thus free them from their resigned attitude on public matters and make them evidently act according to his political intentions?
29. He doesn't have such right. Of course not.
30. **EVE** He does! I have the right to decide about life!
31. If he were my son, I'd smack him. It's all about upbringing. The youth today!
32. I admire them. We all walk around with head bowed, waiting for the sun to come out. You know what I mean? But what if it doesn't come out? What if the darkness reigns forever?
33. I heard the Gringos recruited him. They were also to extinguish him. That was the deal. Yet they intentionally didn't smother him only to profit from it politically!

34. Nonsense. The Gringos did smother him.
35. Like that girl in My Lai?
36. Women speak faster than men.
37. It's a fact that he had purchased two plastic containers. At the Opletal Street he had them filled with petrol. Carrying the containers and a briefcase containing one of the letters, he headed towards the ramp at the National Museum.
38. The upper end of Wenceslas Square.
39. At the time a number of tram tracks crossed it.
40. I worked as a switchman; I was on my morning shift. I was sitting in a wooden watchtower and, depending on the tram line, I operated the rail switches. First, I didn't notice the boy at all.
41. He hung his coat over the banister by the fountain.
42. It was really cold.
43. Then he sniffed some kind of flask and poured the petrol over himself.
44. He was aflame.
45. He jumped over the banister and ran towards Saint Wenceslas.
46. One could smell the petrol for days there. I once accidentally spilled a little petrol in my garden and was accused of having polluted ten thousand litres of ground water! It gave me chills! What a damage! You know how scarce drinking water is?
47. He was nearly crashed by a tram.
48. Can you imagine he wouldn't manage to burn himself because he'd get run over by a tram?
49. We wouldn't even know of him. And they say: a hero!
50. Petrol is increasingly expensive. It's a major air pollutant. People should be riding bikes more. Not everybody can afford a car anyway.
51. He dropped to the road by the Grocery Palace.
52. I saw a lad in flames running towards my watchtower. I grabbed a coat, ran out and started smothering him.
53. I, too, took off my coat and began to smother him!
54. **EVE** I couldn't watch it! I was screaming in horror! Help him! Help him! Had I been his mother, I'd lose my mind! I imagine his mother ... what it is like to lose a child ...

55. Let me tell you: He thought people would awaken and the Russians would get packing.
56. One day the Russians will go, but others will come. We're always merely a doll in the hands of superpowers. He should've burned the Castle!
57. Fortunately, we extinguished the flames promptly and the ambulance arrived in minutes. I happened to be passing by.
58. The ambulance of the Ministry of Interior.
59. He was still conscious. His eyes were bright and fascinating, as if he sensed no pain. As if he were proud of himself.
60. He told me that he had written everything that mattered in the letter in his briefcase.
61. Can you imagine our soldiers during the war, approaching an enemy, splashing themselves with petrol and setting themselves ablaze? Who'd be then left to fight? It is just a pretend-bravery!
62. He was still alive when they brought him to the hospital. He kept insisting to the nurses that he was no suicidal, but he had set himself on fire in protest.
63. In protest against the Warsaw Pact troops invasion.
64. Like the Buddhists or the Kurds.
65. Yeah, we heard that already.
66. How many Communists would set themselves on fire had the Americans arrived?
67. Stop provoking, else I'll call the police! His father was an honest Communist. A worker.
68. I had to get back to work, though people started gathering on the square. The police arrived and began to disperse the crowd. The trams couldn't run, and I couldn't operate the switches. It pissed me off.
69. Eyes of many showed determination, they approved of the act, they wouldn't give in! They won't allow the occupation!
70. I know the investigator launched criminal proceedings on the grounds of suicide. Is there any law against it?
71. Hasn't he and his family been punished enough already?
72. Perhaps they wanted to prosecute him for the protest.
73. Someone wrote on a sheet from notebook: "Student Ján Palach, aged twenty, immolated himself here."

74. So, I better went on cleaning the rail switches. When some dirt gets in between and it freezes, we've got a problem. I took home one of the plastic containers: it might come handy in the garden.
75. **GOD** I am not too convinced about this method of population control. It's non-ecological and politicised.
76. You didn't quite get it! It wasn't about ecology at all! Plenty was at stake! Freedom.
77. **RICH MAN** Efficiency is the foundation of serious environmental approach. To destroy as much waste and as effectively as possible. (*pulls out a plastic bottle and waves it*)
78. Away with petrol!
79. (*Bicycle appears on stage.*) Let's get environmentally conscious at last and replace motor vehicles with bicycles.

ADVERT The new electric bikes have a reach of over hundred kilometres. Moreover, we managed to reduce their weight to fifteen kilogrammes.

ACTOR I would like to present you our latest product. Our petroleum company decided to diversify its production. We launched a production of electric bicycles. Shall we try a quiz question? What wood is the bike made of? And no, it's not made of coffins.

ADVERT ON PETROL Tiny flame, massive energy. Tamed passion. The heart of every engine needs liquid love. We also produce electricity using our fuel!

Scene 16

Adam and the third one

ADAM (*arrives and throws the contract on the floor*) I quit. On spot.

GOD We didn't even get to talk about the contract ...

ADAM I decided we would no longer play with you. It is Eve especially who won't be playing. Hence, I won't either. Family reasons.

GOD There are thousands like you. (*Adam is standing.*) How about I kept the original fee? Hm? Though for you only. I already have a replacement for Eve.

ADAM Really? You'd give me the original fee? And would pay the outstanding balance, too?

GOD Sure. (*picks up the contract and hands it to Adam*) Money comes first, always.

ADAM Though you'll also be paying me for rehearsing new plays. Half the fee.

BOSS Deal. Here's my hand. (*They shake hands. Adam is leaving.*)

Scene 17

Ash is a fertiliser

BOSS Ladies and gentlemen, originally, we were to also perform a scene that would present the operation of an ecological incinerator. Yet, due to personnel issues we had to amend and abridge the scene. (*He retrieves a bag containing grey ash.*) To stick to the contract, we shall present you the abridged version.

1. This is ash.
2. The ash from your pet.
3. A doggy or kitty.
4. Or fish.
5. Piglets.
6. Hamster.
7. Parakeet.
8. Our incinerator for dead animals launched a new scheme.
9. We will hand you your pet pulverised. Its ashes will be enriched with minerals.
10. You are free to use the ashes enriched with minerals as fertiliser in your garden!
It contains potassium and sodium so needed by your plants!
11. Hence, your pet will remain with you, dare I say, forever.
12. Ashes facilitate for growth of cucumbers, tomatoes, peas, and all greenery!
13. It is biologically safe! Ashes from your pet for your garden. Now available in one kilogramme packaging!

ALL You were able to watch this performance because of the kind support by the Ministry of Environment, sub-scheme Environmental Protection and Art.

The cast take a curtain call. They can introduce each other – this is the author and screen writer, stage director, set designer, costumes designer, music. Only Eve is missing. Adam arrives. In the background an advert appears featuring nutritional bars, water, water company, bicycles, fertiliser. Curtain down. One of the cast is peeking through the hole in the curtain.

1. Organic bars are quite good. What are they made of?
2. They're organic. So what can they be made of?
3. Petroleum, of course.
4. The water company is reporting upsurge in orders. If they make it above the plan, we'll get the bonus they promised.
5. I ordered garden fertiliser for my Mum. She was so happy. Ever since Bobby died, she's been soulless.
6. **GOD** The Upper Nitra Mines extended our contract.
7. How can you smoke electronic cigarettes?
8. The sponsor might as well loan us some of the wooden bicycles. They're quite neat.
9. Would you rather a coffin? (*laughter*)

The End