

IVAN VELISAVLJEVIC

DROP IN, THE MAN SAYS
Or: Dream about Homeland

A rare folk phantasm

Translated into English by SVETOZAR POSTIC

IVAN VELISAVLJEVIC

Born in 1982 in Sabac, Serbia. Graduated comparative literature and theory of literature at the Faculty of Philology, Belgrade. Studied dramaturgy at the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Belgrade. An OSI scholar at Ithaca College New York and IC Los Angeles, USA (2006). Worked in the story department of a Hollywood production company Phoenix Pictures. Published short stories, film and literary criticism in a number of literary magazines, daily papers and periodicals... Wrote several radio plays broadcasted on Radio Belgrade 2 (National Broadcast). Books: *Kan* (poetry, 2001), *New Frames: Marginalized Values of Serbian Cinema* (edited, 2008). Directed and wrote a dozen of documentaries and shorts, shown on festivals worldwide. Awarded Raymond Queneau Award for best short stories.

IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

Young author Ivan Velisavljevic labels his drama *DROP IN, THE MAN SAID* or *Dream about Homeland* “A rare folk fantasm,” and in the concise dedication he thanks Saban Saulic, “the king of folk music for inspiration.” Following the golden rule of a just evaluation of an art work, Velisavljevic examines the phenomenon of folk music through songs of the best author in his genre, in our version of country music, aware that his choice will be challenged and disqualified as subculture. The piece Velisavljevic offers is a gifted, imaginative, carefully shaped testimony about the world we live in, of mathematically precise structure, with a series of citations some will recognise and others will miss. Using a traditional drama solution in which the plot starts with a return of the main hero to his homeland, the writer in the Prologue introduces an interesting version of an inverse Brechtian procedure, which he will persistently execute in the entire piece. Since the songs are situation-based and they do not achieve the effect of alienation because they are thematically connected to the action, the distancing is accomplished with a series of mono-

logues told by various characters. In contrast to the concise dialogue, very sparing, and the taciturn nature of all the characters, the monologues are loquacious, poetic, the image full of dream-like scenes is constructed with words, and the entire imaginative worlds are depicted. The monologues do not represent, however, the distancing from a character, but only from a situation.

The basic situation in the drama is determined by the place of action. That obscure place whose inhabitants are not effected by anything, marginalized, inhabited by people without desires and dreams, heroes without professions and with character-defining nicknames, subtle irony of the main hero, is described as a mythic homeland. In it everything is harmonious, there is no daily politics, and the terrible war that rumbled past them again is barely mentioned. Only a rare sentence, more precisely a word. And a great discussion dedicated to the effect folk music has on men in the drama. The author explains the phenomena in detail, he draws all the lines, revealing that the most important plane is carnality. For him, folk music is

close to characters that are carnal themselves. The downfall of the village is the downfall of the body. You have to be in motion in order to work the land. The heroes are mostly cripples. Their own bodies have betrayed them. And there is the connection imposing itself, it is the allusion to the worlds of Samuel Beckett, to his works ending in a downfall, a physical downfall of the body. The heroes of *Endgame*, blind and crippled Hamm and his mother, Nell, who eats rusk in her garbage can, Beckett's people who are primarily beings prone to disintegration, are close to Velisavljevic's heroes. The young author finds in folk music, in the romantic ballad, in suffering and pain, the image of a disrupted balance of fluids whose mix makes up the human body and upon which health is dependent. The song is imbued with the fluid of black bile, a combination of cold and dry, a heavy fluid that thickens blood – melancholy. The excess of one fluid is illness. The purification of excess – recovery. Medical catharsis. That's what music in this piece offers. Because, as Beckett says, fragility of the body throws a cruel and ironic light on all complications we call life. In constant fear not to burden the reader with excess information, Velisavljevic brings to perfection the transmittance of information that seems so natural, so logical that the writer's intervention is not felt for a moment. This procedure leaves an unnecessary dilemma in a few places. Is it enough to say that Snezana's future husband, Robert, comes from the village Jalovik (jalovo=barren) to understand he cannot have children? It is not. A more developed scene at the end of the drama, or an added scene, would clear up the dilemma. A possible homage to Brecht's *A Respectable Wedding*, in which all the strings would be unwoven through an ironical scene of a marriage celebration. Velisavljevic is very demanding toward the potential spectator.

This exceptional piece will be a real intellectual satisfaction for those who will be able to discover the multiple meaning of Ithaca, a town in the United States, with all the association to Odysseus and the theme of traveling and return; for the spectator who will spot the parts taken from Kafka, Rimbaud or Burroughs; the reader who will recognize the influence of Ginsburg, and that entire generation of American poets, in the verses of the author's main hero, Kol. Despite a recognizable local hue, Velisavljevic's play could easily be transferred to another environment and communicate with an American spectator, for example, except that Saban Saulic would be replaced by Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton or Christ Christopherson. In the middle of nowhere is a great common denominator. And the fragility of our bodies, of course.

One of the greatest qualities of this drama are brilliantly set characters. A group of peers exhausts the image of a generation. But the most interesting character is the character of the mother, Gordana. In the national drama there hasn't been a role written for a woman separated from the legal status of senior citizen by only five years, a role so exciting and convincing, in a long time. Everything functions perfectly, especially her language, a collection of newspaper citations, which represent her life, and whose comicality lies in Gordana's desire for every sentence she utters to have the ambition to be the final, irrefutable, eternal judgment. A thought for all times.

With the conviction that we have a drama that deserves more than one set reading, we would like to remind that it could be read as a peculiar defense of a world whose existence cannot be denied.

Vesna JEZERKIC

Translated into English by Svetozar POSTIC

The title of the piece comes from a song by Šaban Šaulić (a Serbian folk singer), and certain names and songs within the piece are theme variations of the hits he sang and/or composed (often in collaboration with Rade Vučković): “Drop In, the Man Says”, “Bar Night”, “That’s What Kole is Like”, “Two White Seagulls”, “It’s Snowing Again, Snežana” and “Extend the Hand of Reconciliation”. Of course, if possible, it would be good for the originals to be presented in the play, which are infinitely better than my modest attempts at re-singing them in a different way. I am grateful to the king of folk music for inspiration. With utmost respect and hope that I have not betrayed his grandeur,

Ivan Velisavljevic

CHARACTERS

Konstantin Kol Vitas, 25 years old, a returnee from Ithaca, New York, to his village Lojanice and the neighboring town of Vladimirci

Gordana Vitas, 60, Kol’s mother, works at a kiosque, suffers from back pains and wears some device along her spine

Snezana Vitas, 20, Kol’s sister, missing an arm

Andrija Vitas, 28, Kol’s brother, limps, has one shorter leg (a man can have something and still be crippled)

Robert Popovic, 22, Snežana's husband, contends he suffered from cerebral palsy as a child

Comfort, 24, burly guy, grumpy, has a big scar he skillfully hides on the back, diagonally from neck to pelvis

Seagull, 25, kind, educated, calm, but from Vladimirci

Little Saulis, 18, real crazy

Linchpin, 26, epileptic, dealer of “fergusons” around villages and in the town (“fergusons” are not only tractors)

Katarina, 23, waitress in the bar Excluziv, Kol’s ex-girlfriend, now everyone’s

Boys at the bar – not useful for anything except for the reality effect, because someone has to sit in a bar (and a person does not have a function there anyway)

PROLOGUE LIKE A RANDOM TRAVELER

I came late at night, my village is asleep
There's a wreath on the gate, a wedding is in sight
Like a random traveler I ran into a cowherd
He was sleeping in front of my gate.

The man said: Who are you? And where're you
headed
He didn't recognize a village boy in the dark
I said that after many years I returned
To my native land,
To my village,
Home.

I lived there, across the ocean.
Stormy life I had, luck followed me.
I was once a bohemian from the bars!
But the man said he did not remember.

I didn't say a thing. I was quiet.
I did not let the grief come over me.
To come back home was not easy.
I came. Here I am.
What should I do now?

*An old, one-storey house of the Vitas family by the
road. Inscription: VILLAGE OF LOYANICE.*

KOL: "I came back, went through the gate looking
around. This is my father's old yard. Puddles in the
middle. Old, unusable tools, jumbled up, obstruct-
ing the way to the attic staircase. A cat crouching on
the fence. A torn scarf, once tied on a stick for a
game, fluttering in the wind. I have arrived. Who will
be waiting for me? Who is waiting behind the

kitchen door? Smoke is coming out of the chimney,
coffee is prepared for dinner. Do you feel you are in
your homeland, you are at home? I don't know. I am
very unsure. This is the house of my father, but every
part stands here, cold, by the other, as if they are
all occupied with their own affairs, which I have in
part forgotten, and in part had never known. Of what
use can I be to them, what do I mean to them, even
as a son to my father, the old farmer? I don't even
dare to knock on the kitchen door, I am only stand-
ing afar and listening, so they wouldn't be able to
catch me listening. And why am I eavesdropping
from afar, I cannot hear anything, only the slow tick-
ing of the clock, or it might only seem I can hear it
from the childhood. What is happening in the
kitchen is the secret of those sitting there, a secret
they are hiding from me. The longer one hesitates,
the more he becomes alien. What would happen if
someone opened the door now and asked me some-
thing? Wouldn't I then also be someone who wants
to hide his secret?"

*In front of the house, next to the gate, Trisha the Goat
is standing and watching the cows. Konstantin Kol
Vitas approaches the yard fence, takes out a key and
unlocks the gate.*

TRISHA: Hey you, where you going?

KOL: The old key is working.

TRISHA: I can see it's working, but I am asking why
are you entering someone else's yard?

KOL: And whose house is this, uncle Trisha?

Laughing

TRISHA: Who are you?

KOL: Who am I?

Kol takes off his cap.

TRISHA: I have no idea, sunny. How come you know
me?

KOL: How wouldn't I? Uncle Trisha the Goat. I've

known you as long as I've known the village. You watch cows all day long.

TRISHA: You are a goat yourself. Punks gave me that name once, and now even kids are making fun of me.

KOL: I didn't mean to offend you. You sold skins long ago, they say, so they gave you that name.

TRISHA: Come on, now. What house are you from?

KOL: This one.

TRISHA: From Vitas'?

KOL: That's right.

TRISHA: So help me if I know who you are.

Pause.

TRISHA: Want some tobacco?

KOL: Don't smoke, thanks.

TRISHA: That's OK. Do you know what a cigarette is? A little grass in a piece of paper. Fire on one side and a fool on the other.

KOL: It smells nice here in the village.

Trisha is lighting the cigarette.

TRISHA: Village like any other. Smells like swine and cattle.

KOL: It smells like homeland. Native soil: pristine, pure and virginal. Unspoiled by civilization. Our soul, eastern, honest, hospitable. Smells like the ancient connection with nature. There are no cars here, no smog, the stench of streets, temporary houses with horizontal boards. There is no western alienation, loneliness, no capitalism, cruel division of labor, there is nothing like in the West.

TRISHA: Aren't you a little... (*Shows insanity with his hand*). I watch cows all day and take care of them. There is nothing pure here, boy. When you enter the barn, it's all shade and dung. Dung and shade. What soul, what nonsense? And that there is no work – you've got that right. No one does anything.

KOL: I know. That's what ran away from. But I am joking a little.

TRISHA: And you found me, of all the villagers?

KOL: Trisha. I haven't found anyone. Because there is no one. The village is asleep. It's midnight.

Pause.

TRISHA: You're right. There is no one, so help me.

KOL: Your cows have kicked the bucket.

TRISHA: What did you say?

KOL: I said: your cows have died. They are dead.

TRISHA: You fool.

Silence.

KOL: I come up to the gate, same as now, and cows are grazing next to the electric pole, but it's twilight, and there is no one to watch over them. My sister, Snezana, passes by and does not see me. I want to yell, but I can't. I set out towards her, but one cow walks out of the herd, comes up to the low electric wires, and tries to reach them with her mouth. Snezana is looking towards me, but it seems she does not see me and she is not expecting help. I want to shoo away the cow, because she would be burned, and in my head I already see the electric wires touching one another, sparks flying, the cow setting the house on fire, burning and mooing, and the entire village is ablaze. And then the cow starts chewing the cable, the two poles are pulled closer together, but nothing happens. There is no fire, no sparks, the cow is not burning. She is calmly eating the wire.

TRISHA: You are either crazy, or you came back from America. (*Pause.*) Huh? Aren't you Konstantin, Vito-mil's grandson, who went to America?

KOL: I am.

TRISHA: Congratulations for coming back.

Pause.

KOL: Is the town bar still open?

TRISHA: In Vladimirci nothing else works but the bar.

KOL: "The car was passing through narrow streets; it was a pretty big movement for that town; it seemed

everyone must have been satisfied that evening.”

TRISHA: You said it well. When a car passes by in the evening, the people of Vladimirci think there is an invasion.

Kol sets out toward the town. A dog barks at him.

TRISHA: The dogs have forgotten you.

KOL: Better for them. They won't die of joy.

I

BAR NIGHT: The gang has gathered, started talking

A bright sign on the stage: Caffe Excluziv Vladimirci. Everything is written incorrectly, except for the name of the town. People know how to spell the name of the town they live in. Good for them.

LITTLE SAULIS: Buddy, I am really crazy. That's how I call you when we know each other: buddy. And when we don't, then: neighbor. That's how they say in Sabac. And I am from Sabac. In fact I am not, but I might as well be. Sabac, that's a city twenty kilometers from this hole. It's not a real city, I mean, it's not New York, it's got fifty thousand inhabitants, although everyone says there is one hundred thousand. Inferiority complex. Still, compared to this hole, it is something. There is only the main street here, and all the other streets are on the left-hand side. It's not surprising they call this town Vladimirci (*vladati=reign, mir=peace*). It's really, you understand, peaceful: nothing happens, there is nothing, no one does anything. They only listen to Saban, neighbor. And I am real crazy, I can't stand it when it's so calm: then I get high on nails, I go to village night clubs, I run after peasant girls, I get into fights with some agricultural workers. A little, I've got to. I came to Sabac when it was war and that shit, in '95. I was a kid, and my folks moved there. Then we moved again when we built a

house here. That's where I met the gang: Seagull, Comfort and Kol. Funny names, neighbor, huh? It's from the songs by Saban Saulic. We are Saban fanatics. He is the king of folk music, if you didn't know. He sold ten million albums, at least. During the former Yugoslavia. Hey, ten million. Every other house from Vardar (*river in Macedonia*) to Triglav (*a mountain peak in Slovenia*) had a Saban's record. I didn't listen to him much before, I mainly played football with Comfort and Seagull, till they got me into folk music. Then I got drunk once and instead of Saban Saulic I said Saulis. They've been calling me Little Saulis ever since. They are teasing me. But they are my buddies, so they can. Otherwise no one can, buddy. Because I am real crazy, understand? And between us, Kole was the greatest stud: he had all Saban records. We were never too close, Kole and me. Although he once saved me when I almost died – he took me to the hospital, gave me some water and salt. I owe him one. But he listened to those Saban songs somehow strangely, as if they were funny to him. And he listened to them all the time. And he was reading something, but what he was reading, I have no idea. I am not into that. I only want to cause trouble: that's really baro. You don't know what “baro” means, neighbor? It's like cool, awesome. In Sabac they say that expression comes from the Gypsies. I have no idea. One can say I am not from Sabac. And I am not a Gypsy. I am real crazy.

Little Saulis is getting seated at the table. The light comes on. The bar is really exclusive: four tables, a bar and a toilet door. An atmosphere fit for three men. Comfort, Seagull and Saulis are drinking and singing. Waitress Katarina is sleeping at the bar. Kol enters.

KOL: What's up, sabans?

Silence.

SEAGULL: Look there!

Everyone gets up.

COMFORT: Hey man, where have you been?

SEAGULL: We drank up your martini too. Three years ago.

LITTLE SAULIS: What's up buddy, Bajro fucks you.

KOL: Hi, kid. What kind of swearwords are those?

LITTLE SAULIS: New tricks, old place.

They kiss each other three times on the cheek. Sit down.

COMFORT: What's up in America? You haven't kept in touch.

KOL: I wrote to Seagull.

COMFORT: Now, to Seagull.

KOL: Since he's the only one with the internet.

LITTLE SAULIS: I've got one too.

SEAGULL: But you only watch porns.

LITTLE SAULIS: What else can I use it for? Wireless porns. Awesome.

SEAGULL: When will the bride arrive?

KOL: I don't believe she will.

COMFORT: Why? You don't want to show her the beauty of your homeland?

KOL: No. I mean, she couldn't come.

Pause.

COMFORT: Did you come for Snezana's wedding?

MALIS SAULIS: Nope. He came to cut the grass in Lojanice. Did you see how I changed the name on the sign? Kafanac and I were running recently by your village, we were somewhat nervous, and I saw the sign Lojanice, bought a marker and changed the j into a y.

KOL: I saw it. It sounds international now.

LITTLE SAULIS: Well, aren't we part of Europe or what?

SEAGULL: So when is Snezana getting married?

Pause.

KOL: In three days.

COMFORT: Three days of insanity.

KOL: Excuse me?

SEAGULL: Katarina!

The waitress is not moving.

LITTLE SAULIS: Katarina!!!

The kid is loud.

KATARINA: You've got arms, take it yourself.

LITTLE SAULIS: Can't do it. Your ex-boyfriend came, we need an atmosphere.

Katarina walks over to Kol.

KATARINA: Konstantin.

KOL: Sounds long. They call me Kol there.

KATARINA: You've changed.

KOL: I became a different man. A different name. You?

KATARINA: You can see. I've got a great job, good company. I have blossomed.

LITTLE SAULIS: What's wrong with the company?

KATARINA: You better shut up.

LITTLE SAULIS: She always ignores me. Because I come onto her openly. What can I do when I am sincere? You know me. You two had a thing going on, I respect that, but that was a long time ago.

KATARINA: Who remembers it.

LITTLE SAULIS: You see. You, Kol, wouldn't have anything against if I did with Katarina... Something funny. *Katarina doesn't pay attention to him.*

KATARINA: I heard you got married.

KOL: I did.

KATARINA: Are you going to give American names to the kids?

KOL: Of course.

SEAGULL: How romantic! OK, enough. Give us, Kate, four beers and sixteen tequilas.

COMFORT: We will sing a song to you.

LITTLE SAULIS: I will take off my clothes.

Katarina shows him the finger. They still sing to her.

Bring us, Katarina,
Red wine in a pitcher
And a bottle of honey-brandy
On the table we want
Don't hold it against us
The old gang is drinking late.

Bring us, Kate, sister,
I am kissing your white hands
Where would the gang sit now
Where would the gang drink now
If it weren't for this inn
If it weren't for you, fairy?

Our Kate, bring us
We know it's late but
We sat talking long
We haven't seen each other,
Pour one more round to us
I am kissing your sleepy eyes.

Don't close tonight, honey,
Wait for the day to come
Sit with us and sing
Let the gang be happy!

KOL: I decided to stop writing forever in a bus, while we were passing the library on the corner of Green and Cayuga Street. I was trying to make out my reflection in the window; there was a dim light on the students going back to campus, and the reflection of faces looked like shadows in Plato's cave. Someone pulled a string by the handle, red letters lighted above the driver, and a short whistle for a moment interrupted the blues song on the radio, the song whose lyrics I couldn't make out anyway. The body I saw in the window wasn't mine, but a body of a skinny man

with small eyes, closely shaven, with hands in his lap, a man I wouldn't notice on the street while trying not to brush against him. While I was getting ready for that move, imagining how I am resolutely walking towards myself, my temporary rival, on the traffic light across from the one-story building of the Salvation Army, the voice of the driver resounded in the empty bus: "Friend, I am not driving any farther. The last one turns off the light." I came out, followed by his laughter, and stopped in the shadow of the library. As if hiding from the street light, I pulled out a cigarette from the pocket of my cotton shirt and lighted it with a thin American carton match. "Welcome to Ithaca," it said underneath the clock at the beginning of the pedestrian zone. In spite of the friendly greeting, I did not feel like home.

Four beers and sixteen tequilas.

COMFORT: What do you demonstrate to them?

KOL: Wine. They are crazy about it. There is an area in Ithaca with only wineries. And then the middle class comes to sample it. Chardonnay, Rosé, Pinot, Gamay, Sauvignon, shit... They sit like that, I tell them some bullshit about the taste of wine, about a great bouquet and the finishing on the top of the palate, I distribute cookies and tell them it is mandatory to shuffle the wine in their mouths before they drink it, because that's the only way to taste the cookies. They listen to everything, and then pay a dollar per sip.

COMFORT: How much does the whole session cost?

KOL: Ten dollars.

LITTLE SAULIS: Ten dollars? For that money I get completely wasted.

SEAGULL: From bad wine. This is first class.

LITTLE SAULIS: I don't drink to enjoy it. Alcohol is not a cake. I drink to get wasted.

Pause.

COMFORT: Can you hunt there?

SEAGULL: He starts with hunting again. There is no hunting nor fishing there, all the animals are protected.

LITTLE SAULIS: Even Serbs?

KOL: All the animals walk freely. The greatest danger is for a deer to hit you on the street.

COMFORT: You are fucking with us?

KOL: And I am vegetarian.

Comfort is flabbergasted.

COMFORT: You are joking?

KOL: Not joking.

SEAGULL: Come on, Comfort, why are you staring like you sat on a nail. The man doesn't eat meat, and that's it.

COMFORT: But it seems like yesterday when we went after pheasants down to Satibara. We carried double-barrels, bullets, funny hats with feathers... And he became a herbivore.

KOL: I would get ugly fat. Americans are like Serbs. They eat a lot of meat.

COMFORT: Just say when you are hungry, so we can take you grazing to the lawn outside.

Linchpin enters the bar. Distorted face, a Beatles haircut, six earrings.

LITTLE SAULIS: What's up, Linchpin. Why do you have that earring in your ear?

Saulis means: earring in your ear. It's a joke. They greet each other. Once they called everyone who didn't listen to folk music an epileptic. Linchpin is a double epileptic. He doesn't listen to folk music, and he has epilepsy. He turns to Katarina:

LINCHPIN: Can I get a coffee at this hour?

KATARINA: If you're going to prepare it yourself.

LINCHPIN: Only if I pay to myself then.

KATARINA: I will pay you not to bother me with making coffee at 3 A.M.

Linchpin approaches the bar.

LINCHPIN: Gentlemen.

He nods his head to them. Everyone is quiet. A strange encounter. Kol's gang continues the conversation while Linchpin is making himself some coffee.

LITTLE SAULIS: Coffee at 3 A.M. Linchpin, brother, do you sleep at all? And when?

LINCHPIN: I don't sleep. Ever. I am a demon.

LITTLE SAULIS: I know that. Fucking demon.

COMFORT: We put the entire Saban on mp3. Seagull found some guy, an old man in Sabac who only records jazz from rare records. He fixed the sound in a studio. You should hear "You didn't come when I called you." You don't have to go further than the prologue.

LITTLE SAULIS: Buddy, the accordion is talking.

SEAGULL: Those epic ones are real masterpieces when we play them all cleaned up. "Come to grow old together", "Two white seagulls", "Nice days of my childhood".

COMFORT: "Two white seagulls" are important. You played it a million times.

SEAGULL: Fuck you. That's my song. I found a live version. Eight minutes. When he starts singing, deep, you hear the sound of the sea, and the fluttering of wings, and the storm, you feel the emotion, you feel...

KOL: All the tragedy of love between seagulls.

SEAGULL: I swear.

White seagull stood with her mate

Dark night overcame the sea.

He couldn't fly, he stayed on the rock,

With a broken wind after the storm.

She left him, she couldn't be

Next to him, wait for the dawn.

So she flew away, without a word.

And the seagull complained to the sea:

When you see her, sea, tell her I love her
Not to worry, to fly happily.
To forget me. The fate of love
Offers life to someone.
To others only oblivion and death.

The white seagull threw himself from the rock.
He chose his last flight.
In love, he saw at the last moment
Waves. Sea.
The big blue, big blue, big blue.

The bright sun came out, dispelled the storm.
Life goes on, the new dawn is shining.
But the truth remained: to love is the same.
Humans are seagulls.
Seagulls are humans.

Linchpin made the coffee. He is sitting by himself at the table. Little Saulis walks over to Linchpin and talks to him softly. Comfort is looking in their direction. It's hard to see, but Comfort is not happy about the conversation at the next table.

SEAGULL: Saban is somehow a symbol of our youth.
Our homeland. First, he came from here, from Sabac.
COMFORT: My old man asserts that he saw him at Dumaca singing for a bottle of beer.
KOL: Believe it's true.

SEAGULL: Second, he holds the essence of folk music. Folk music is not amusing because people do not amuse themselves with it. They are aggressive towards others or towards themselves. Toma Zdravkovic is self-destruction. Pain, suffering, she left me, I am wandering because of her, I will get drunk, I have sunk to the very bottom... And Saban is the essence. It's not the small, intimate suffering like with Toma. It is an epic suffering. World pain. Everything goes to hell

when you are listening to Saban. Passion meets nirvana. Joy mixes with pain. Makes you want to break everything.

KOL: You forgot the third. Popularity. Appearance.
SEAGULL: Sure. Like in that movie when the host wants to bring Saban to a wedding and says: "He doesn't have to sing. Let the people just look at him." That's how great he is. The entire Balkans fits into three verses of Saban Saucic.

COMFORT: Seagull, you are bullshitting like a widowed beaver. Stop it.

Linchpin gets up.

LINCHPIN: You are Kole Vitas? Andrija's brother from America?

KOL: I am.

SEAGULL: Keep your cool.

LINCHPIN: Your brother owes me money.

KOL: What do I have with that?

LINCHPIN: I am just saying. You came from America. Over there, everyone is rich.

KOL: Is that right?

LINCHPIN: That's what they say on TV. Gentlemen. Good night.

He walks out. Little Saulis returns to the table.

KOL: Who is this guy?

COMFORT: I wanted to tell you earlier about him.

Pause.

KOL: What?

LITTLE SAULIS: Comfort has been giving me a hard time for getting high on nails. Linchpin is my dealer. Adapted to the environment, you know. They don't have those urban names, Mitsubishi, flyer, urban god, but names of agricultural machines. Harvester, mower, Ferguson... And now look, when you take Ferguson – say goodbye to the brain. All the kids have gone crazy. He's been dealing it to the entire Vladimirci. I took two harvesters the other day – from

a wedding to a farewell party, buddy, I walked over the whole county. Wherever someone was getting married, divorced, was leaving for the military or opening a bar – I dropped in.

SEAGULL: Linchpin is an epileptic. A double epileptic. He listens to rock and has epilepsy. He moved to Lojanice.

COMFORT: I didn't want to mention him to you because of drugs.

KOL: I didn't think that.

COMFORT: But because of Snezana.

KOL: Say it.

Pause.

COMFORT: Well, look... Snezana had a thing with this... the epileptic. I tried to tell her she shouldn't do it. It didn't help.

KOL: Before Robert, or during Robert?

COMFORT: A little before. Just before.

KOL: Make it short.

COMFORT: Snezana dumped the epileptic. Starts dating Robert, gets pregnant, they start living together at Robert's in Jalovik. Linchpin came one night to their house. He said the child was his and he threatened Robert to move out.

KOL: Where were you all?

LITTLE SAULIS: Brother, I wanted to solve this thing with Linchpin right away. With a bat.

SEAGULL: You are his business partner. Brother.

LITTLE SAULIS: Because of drugs? What's that got to do with it? I would resolve that quickly with him. But you all said – no.

COMFORT: We didn't want to start trouble. We thought the lunatic would give up.

KOL: But he didn't give up.

SEAGULL: He didn't. Robert and Snezana moved to your house. They didn't tell anyone, they waited for the thing to settle down. But he found out. The other

day he was yelling in front of the house that he will burn them all.

KOL: And Robert?

LITTLE SAULIS: Kole, he is your brother-in-law. But he is a scoundrel.

KOL: And Andrija?

Everybody is quiet.

KOL: OK, yes. Andrija. Still the same.

SEAGULL: The same. You heard. Who knows how much he owes this maniac. Last night he almost lost the tractor gambling.

COMFORT: He recently brought a prostitute from Srem and said he would marry her.

KOL: And why are you telling me all this? I've been here three days. What do I have to do with them?

COMFORT: I don't know. I just wanted to tell you what was happening in your absence.

KOL: Why don't they report him to the police?

SEAGULL: If the cops wanted to, they would arrest him for a little tractor.

KOL: Nice. Now I know everything. There's no place like home.

Pause.

LITTLE SAULIS: Cheers!

They clink glasses. Dark. Eight beers and thirty-two tequilas later, Seagull is sleeping on the table, Comfort and Kol are trying to leave the bar.

LITTLE SAULIS: You go. I'll stay a little with Katarina. *Little Saulis goes behind the bar with Katarina. She gets down on her knees.*

Dark again. Only mixed voices inside Kol's messed-up conscience.

KOL: "Sister,

I am writing to you from the deserted America, from a city that looks like movie scenes in which the wind is blowing papers on the sidewalk, next to wooden, one-storey houses. The place where I am staying is in

the hills, not far from the Cornell University campus, next to a forest from which raccoons and deer come out. Uncle and aunt are retired. They became real Americans: quiet, slow and tired. This morning I did some exercise in front of the American flag, crazy like a Serb, while the sun was coming out from behind the lake with the Indian name Cayuga.”

COMFORT: Hey, you've got the key?

KOL: Here. The old key is working.

COMFORT: Lie down and sleep.

KOL: The cow is chewing.

COMFORT: Excuse me?

KOL: The wire.

LITTLE SAULIS: I will stay with Katarina.

LINCHPIN: Gentlemen. I will burn you.

KOL: Welcome. Welcome. Welcome.

Dark. Really.

II

EXCEPT FOR THE OLD HOUSE, I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ANYONE

Vitas' house. Kitchen. A new TV. An old cupboard. Various newspapers on the table.

GORDANA: I am Gordana, Andrija's mother. I also gave birth to a daughter, Snezana. She is missing an arm. Left. My son Konstantin sells wine in New York. Not exactly in New York City. In New York state. He sells wine. Like his grandfather.

My husband died of diabetes. He always wanted his son to be a man of antiquity. That's what he used to say. I know what antiquity means. I read a lot of newspapers, magazines and tabloids. That's not the same, you know. Newspapers are one thing, magazines another. Tabloids are third.

I read because I've been working in a kiosk for years.

I am Gordana, a kiosk worker. Hello, how may I help you. There was only one kiosk in Vladimirci for a long time. A metal, gray hut not far from the market. I worked in it. Everybody bought papers at the same place. Now there are more kiosks. And not all are made out of metal. It's not hot in each one, like I was for twenty years. People buy at various places. They have a choice. That's what they fought for. And I didn't even get a badge for my sufferings. Not even a subscription for "Bazaar", "Nada" or "Practical Woman". "Cosmopolitan". "Vogue". Nothing.

My son, Andrija, was always there to help his sister Snezana. He never brought women to the house. He was left with the estate. Andrija sells corn, tomatoes and plums. Like his father. Andrija is not very educated. He doesn't read. He gambles a bit, but everyone has a vice. What does he need books for? He never leaves the estate anyway.

This year we will marry off Snezana.

It's autumn, it's time. Indian summer. How come, both summer and winter?

She is missing an arm. But she will get married. There you go.

Kol is drinking coffee. Gordana is washing dishes. Snezana is sitting with Kol. She is missing an arm. Left.

SNEZANA: You've changed, huh?

Pause.

SNEZANA: He gained a little weight.

GORDANA: He hasn't changed a bit.

SNEZANA: What do you mean?

GORDANA: I mean what you hear. If you're missing an arm, you've got ears: instead of coming home to see his family right away, he hob-nobs all night with his idiots...

SNEZANA: It was late, he didn't want to wake us up, right?

KOL: That's right.
GORDANA: He woke me up anyway.
KOL: I am forgiving myself.
GORDANA: What does that mean?
KOL: It means: forgive me, I didn't do it on purpose.
GORDANA: Of course you didn't do it on purpose. Imagine if you did. I would have called the police.
SNEZANA: Mum wouldn't call the police. She just says it like that.
KOL: Yes, I think one can clearly hear it from her words.
GORDANA: Too bad you didn't bring your wife. What's her name?
KOL: Vera.
GORDANA: Catholic?
KOL: No.
SNEZANA: What difference does it make?
GORDANA: We ran away so they wouldn't make Uniates out of us, and he marries a Catholic.
Pause.
KOL: Maybe she is Presbyterian? Maybe black? Maybe German?
GORDANA: You sold Vera (Faith) for a dinner. Ha, ha, ha. She is not American?
SNEZANA: It's not funny.
KOL: Yes. She is American. From Ukraine.
GORDANA: How come she is American then?
KOL: Everyone in America is from somewhere.
GORDANA: It's clear where from.
SNEZANA: Mum has a theory about four nations in the world.
KOL: Read it in the papers?
GORDANA: You've got something against reading newspapers?
KOL: No, why? Newspapers are responsible for you education. Newspapers are a great thing.
GORDANA: They are. In spite of your mocking. In the

paper I read parts of a story. Then I came to a conclusion. There are only Germans, Turks, Japanese and Serbs. If she is Ukranian, then she is Serbian. I am glad you married a Serb.
KOL: Aha. The English are, I am guessing, German.
GORDANA: Correct. All those blond and pale Westerners. These dark Southerners are mainly Turks. Japanese are all the ones with slanted eyes. Russians are Serbs. Etcetera.
KOL: And Italians?
GORDANA: Latins are old frauds. That's what my mother used to say.
Pause.
SNEZANA: I would like to meet Vera.
GORDANA: You marry off your sister, send her packing, you bring us a German, and you come back for good. The house would blossom. We would dump corn and grow grapes.
SNEZANA: Mum.
GORDANA: I am forgiving myself.
Pause.
GORDANA: We would turn all the fields into vineyards, and then our Konstantin would become a gentleman, an artist, like his grandfather always wanted to. He would make a residence for painters, like the one in Jalovik. He would follow in his grandfather's footsteps, bring over foreigners, Germans, Japanese, Turks. He would sell Dalmatian wine to all the drunkards of Vladimirci. Groups of clients would always be drunk. He would have feasts, like ancient Greeks. At the end they would all fuck each other. Man wouldn't choose a woman, nor woman a man. Everybody with everybody. He would do this to us.
SNEZANA: Mum!
Pause.
KOL: She is right. I would surely do that. This place should be fucked up.

GORDANA: You are wiping your ass with the hand that fed you. Shame on you.

KOL: I regret that.

GORDANA: You should. What's the name of the town you live in?

KOL: Ithaca.

GORDANA: Ithaca! Do you hear him! He went to Ithaca. Like I don't know he is lying. Ithaca in America. Ithaca is in Greece.

KOL: There are many towns with names from the antiquity. Syracuse, Utica, Rome... There is even a Troy. Troy, New York.

GORDANA: No shit.

Pause.

GORDANA: You haven't gone anywhere, you little cunt.

Pause.

SNEZANA: How are uncle Acim and aunt Bosiljka?

KOL: They don't have children. I left soon. It was unbearable.

GORDANA: Acim is dead. He died in the glass factory. Bosiljka sent us a letter. There was the most notable place of Corning, the town they lived in, on the envelope. A glass museum.

KOL: Last year.

GORDANA: How come you know?

Pause. Gordana sits at the table.

GORDANA: And so you came after three years to marry off your sister.

KOL: Yes. I came to marry off my sister. As they say: Good luck.

Pause.

GORDANA: Let me ask you something, Snezana.

SNEZANA: Ask.

GORDANA: Do you have both legs?

SNEZANA: Excuse me?

GORDANA: I am asking, do you have both legs?

SNEZANA: I do.

GORDANA: Now I am asking you, Konstantin. Kol, do you have both legs?

SNEZANA: Kol, you know I don't hold it against you for getting married. Since dad's death, mother Gordana has only been thinking in war terms: treason, occupation, withdrawal.

GORDANA (*In English*): Do you have both legs? Yes. (*Back to Serbian*) And now we are moving to arms.

SNEZANA: Better not.

Pause.

GORDANA: If you had stayed, maybe you would have looked after your sister. Maybe she would know whose child she will have?

KOL: Maybe she knows it now too.

GORDANA: What did you say?

Someone is yelling outside.

GORDANA: Andrija needs something.

She leaves.

SNEZANA: Have you been writing in America?

KOL: I haven't. I quit writing.

Pause. Snezana and Kol sit motionless.

KOL: I wrote some poems. About dreams.

my sister is killing chicken next to a dead calf

I call her to go the road

I put a brick on the Mercedes' gas pedal.

my sister and I watch the car move to the left side

and run straight into a white Yugo with a woman at the wheel

but who is driving the Mercedes

I am at the front seat

in the crash I am left without the right ringer and pinky

my tendon is tightening

in the house across from the accident people are gathering

they want to know who was driving our car

I say it was me

I still don't know what to do without fingers from where blood is coming out
Andrija walks in. He is elegantly dressed, but one can still see he is a farmer. He is wearing a hat, an expensive one.

ANDRIJA: A whore remains a whore. I know them well. And I wanted to make a lady out of this one. To have her walk in a tight skirt across downtown Vladimirci on a market day, so bums would drool. And they can't pay for her.

I saved thirteen thousand euros. Almost. I would like more than anything to get rid of the village, and the forest in Satibara, and the cow Sioux at Mostina, to send everything to hell. But I can't. I've got to take care of the estate. I am cursing the day when it was given to me. I am Andrija. My brother crossed the ocean. Now he is back, he doesn't even know why. If someone asked me, he should've stayed where he was and he would have never showed up.

Pause. Andrija does not notice Kol. On purpose.

SNEZANA: Andrija, your brother said hi.

ANDRIJA: Did he send it?

SNEZANA: Did he send what?

ANDRIJA: Who said hi?

SNEZANA: Kole, your brother. He said hi.

ANDRIJA: Did he send it?

SNEZANA: What?

ANDRIJA (*Rubbing the tips of his thumb and index finger*): A little check?

SNEZANA: I don't know what you are talking about.

ANDRIJA: I don't have a brother.

Pause.

KOL: You owe Linchpin some money.

ANDRIJA: Go and pay him.

SNEZANA: How come you know Linchpin?

KOL: I met him last night. He was in the welcome committee.

Robert walks in.

ROBERT: He threatened he would set us on fire.

KOL: You mean literally, or just like that, symbolically?

ROBERT: Well... It seemed to me... Literally.

KOL: Hi Robert. Haven't seen one another in a long time.

ROBERT: Yes... Hi.

ANDRIJA: When you were friends he was a kid and he didn't live in my house.

ROBERT: I can leave too.

SNEZANA: You are not going anywhere.

KOL: And what are we going to do now?

ANDRIJA: Are you going to solve our problems, by any chance?

KOL: Certainly no. I am asking what your plans are.

ANDRIJA: Listen, brother in a foreign land. You are a worldly guy. Don't meddle into town business.

Gordana comes in.

GORDANA: He will defend us. Humanely. To solve the conflict peacefully. He is our diaspora.

SNEZANA: There is no conflict.

ROBERT: There is. Concerning you.

Robert and Snezana stand next to one another.

ROBERT: Kole, do you know us at all? How should we introduce ourselves to you? Here, I will tell you the truth. We are all telling the truth here. People think we lie a lot. But we don't. I will tell you why I married Snezana. I married your sister because as a child I was paralyzed for two years. I suffered from cerebral. SNEZANA: He took me because my handicap excites him sexually.

ROBERT: In fact, that's not true. I was never paralyzed. Compassion just fires me up.

SNEZANA: She likes that I am missing an arm.

ROBERT: The wrinkled place where her shoulder should be arouses me.

ANDRIJA: It's better that you left. Otherwise you would marry your own sister.

GORDANA: That's called incest. It says in the papers.
ROBERT (*Play on words*): Blood from Rhodes. Delivered in the house.

SNEZANA: I will beget him a limbless child.

KOL: Underneath the Cultural Center in Vladimirci I found a hole in the ground. I entered and noticed I am on the stairs. To the left and to the right there were dark corridors. I went through the left corridor that leads to the garbage dump in front of the building. Suddenly I felt sick and I fell to the ground. My mother came up to me and cut my belly, and then continued to cut me along the whole corpse. She grabbed my skin and opened it, as a lid on the body. I saw my insides. There was a problem in it. My brother held me while my sister was cutting my right leg. I am in a wheelchair again. We are sitting in the kitchen, talking.

The end of November. Winter is coming.
Yellow leaves are white on the ground,
Because white snowflakes are falling down
Like on the day we met.

The snowflake melts like a tear.
But the sorrow has remained like a glacier.
The love has disappeared, oh, Snezana,
It will stay underneath the snow forever.

Oh, Snezana, it's snowing again.
We gave ourselves to others.
We are getting goose bumps from the cold.
Like when we met.

Semi-dark on the stage. Shadows of agricultural machinery: tractor, cultivator, ploughs. Big baler. Harvester. Kol drunk staggering between them. He trips and falls, he knocks down the harvester: the heavy, metal machine falls on his leg. Corn spills all over Kol. Kol yells.

ROBERT: That's how Kol broke his hip.

ANDRIJA: He walked drunk where he hasn't been. He didn't know the arrangement. I told him not to roam by the harvester.

GORDANA: It's OK. Let him see what it's like.

III

BAR NIGHT 2: DON'T CLOSE TODAY

The same set in bar Excluziv. Except all the tables are taken now. There is live music too. Seagull, Comfort and Little Saulis, pushing Kol in a wheelchair, walk in. The friends are under the influence of brandy and with world pain of Saban Saulic in their hearts.

LITTLE SAULIS: ... and we stop, you understand, and we see a Mercedes, sitting there on the beach. Comfort walks over, looks through the back window, and says: This guy is fucking. Hey, this is not right, buddy. You are fucking and we are driving around like some fuckups. We all walk out of the car and we start rocking the Mercedes. I look inside, I see a neighbor, he is shitting in his pants from fear, three lunatics are rocking his car, and underneath him – are you sitting?

KOL: I'll get up if you want me to.

LITTLE SAULIS: Excuse me, I did it on purpose.
They are laughing.

LITTLE SAULIS: Underneath him, whom do I see: Katarina, buddy, her skirt on her belly, with legs apart like pliers. I've been blackmailing her a little ever since.

KOL: What kind of a friend are you, buddy? Huh? You tell me silently sad stories. She still had a passionate relationship with me.

They are laughing.

COMFORT: Hey, there is no room here.

SEAGULL: Let's go then.

COMFORT: No need.

LITTLE SAULIS: We'll make some room now.

He walks to a table in the middle of the bar. Two unknown guys sitting there.

LITTLE SAULIS: Guys!

They give him a dull stare.

LITTLE SAULIS: Hi guys. You want something to drink?

GUY 2: Sure.

LITTLE SAULIS: Then drink this up and leave.

GUY 1: I would rather have a beer.

LITTLE: You are kidding. What kind?

GUY 1: Lav (Lion) or Jelen (Deer)

LITTLE SAULIS: So Lion or Deer?

GUY 2: Whatever is easier for you to hunt down.

They are laughing. Saulis with them.

LITTLE SAULIS: This was a good one. Now I, like, turned out stupid.

SEAGULL: Let's go, kid. Don't get into trouble.

Kol comes up to the table in his wheelchair.

KOL: It's easier to hunt down an ass like you.

Comfort stands behind one of the guys. A song ends.

KOL: Play Saban. My song. And don't you dare stop it.

Kole likes to drink

But Kole can't pay

He gets drunk and can't

Even get back home

Kole is always happy

That's why women like him

He sings, dances and kisses

Kole is a really stud.

But only one woman

Sings and drinks with him

That's his faithful girl

Vera is her name

Kole is a man with soul

Kole has a kind heart

As large as the sky

His soul is like a sea.

But they say Kole is no good.

For he gambles and drinks a lot.

Give him wine and brandy

Kole is the way he is.

As soon as the song starts, Little Saulis hits the first guy with his fist. Meanwhile Comfort puts his large palms on the other guy's shoulders and thus nails him to the chair. Seagull keeps an eye on the others in the bar. The music is not allowed to stop. Little Saulis brakes a bottle and pushes the guy's face to the broken glass. Then Kol, sitting in the wheelchair the whole time, stands on his face. The guy starts yelling, Kol and Saulis let him go, he gets up and leaves the bar, followed by his friend.

KOL: I can tell you I've been born again since I've been with you all. The air is clean, fruit is sprinkled, the old gang is riding again... My ex is a whore. Superb atmosphere.

Katarina is bringing a broom and a shovel. She cleans the broken glass and the blood.

KATARINA: When I had just started selling my body, I realized a lot of the guys came just for mere fondling. They were afraid of physical contact. They needed that. The rest were sucking and masturbations. During the first three months, I only had two sexual relationships.

Funny thing – the majority of the men who come to me are married. I know them, they know me. The town is small. We still act professional. I asked one who taught me once: "Are you really an educator?" He says: "Educators have to fuck too."

I was thinking. The perfect time for a girl to become a whore is between the ages of eighteen and twenty five. The only problem is that when you become really good in your work – you realize you are too old for it.

A few asked me to mistreat them. I can tell you it's not easy at all. When I have to be subservient, that's easy. But when I have to reign, to be dominant, then I start thinking how to please them. If you want to be dominant, then you really have to use violence without thinking, you have to do whatever comes to your mind.

Pause.

LITTLE SAULIS: Were you able to come with her?

SEAGULL: Come on, Saulis...

KOL: Why are you asking?

LITTLE SAULIS: I can't.

Katarina stops cleaning.

COMFORT: How come?

LITTLE SAULIS: There. Ask her.

KATARINA: I try hard.

KOL: So what's the problem?

KATARINA: The kid uses drugs too much.

LITTLE SAULIS: Yes, but even drugs lose its effect after three hours.

KOL: I can't complain about Katarina. True, she was younger then. I don't know what it would be like now. After so much experience.

Pause.

KOL: Let me read you a poem I wrote.

LITTLE SAULIS: Go ahead.

SEAGULL: Is it in Saban's style?

KOL: No. This one is just like that. Here is how it goes:
I read an article in the paper
confessions of a cripple
it says people without legs
sometimes feel an itch in the limb they don't have

the same with the ones without arms
they didn't say anything
about the people without a penis
do they experience a nonexistent erection
do they feel an emptiness rising
do they in the nights of sexual desire
come the emptiness
on the face of the world
Everybody is clapping.

LITTLE SAULIS: Speaking about coming... Something made me think about the waitress. Katarina, do you want to try it now?

KATARINA: I like to do it in front of people, but tonight I am not in the mood.

Katarina finishes cleaning and takes the trash to dump it behind the counter.

KOL: I think that would be a sight to see.

Robert stumbles into the bar.

ROBERT: They beat up Andrija.

KOL: Whom?

ROBERT: Andrija, your brother.

KOL: Did he send it?

ROBERT: What did he send?

KOL: I don't have a brother.

Robert looks confusedly at Kol. The sober Seagull takes over control.

SEAGULL: Who beat him up?

ROBERT: Linchpin.

COMFORT: Are you sure?

ROBERT: Am I sure? He brought him to the kitchen, threw him on the floor all blue and bloody...

KOL: In two colors? Colorful.

Robert is still confused.

SEAGULL: To your kitchen?

ROBERT: Where else? He brought him half-conscious, and he asked for money. He says, I know he's got a stack. He bragged about it in the bar. Find it. We did-

n't know about any money. Then he took a gun, and took Snezana away. Until we return the money, he said, Snezana will stay with him.

COMFORT: Kol?

LITTLE SAULIS: You say something smart.

KOL: I was just wondering... Does someone know where that Linchpin guy lives? He kidnapped my sister, so I thought we could drop in at his place for coffee.

LITTLE SAULIS: I know approximately where it is.

COMFORT: Approximately show us. We can just drop in at my place to pick the tools.

IV MAN AT MY GATE

Before dawn and the new day
I gladly set out hunting
in the woods, at the old place
the old gang is waiting

How are you, my gang
good luck to you all
let everyone come home
with a full bag

A little farther from the hunters
dogs can be heard
they are also looking forward
to a good hunt

The gang made chairs from branches
The hunters sat around, fishermen too
They are eating, drinking brandy
Placing delicacies on the stump

KOL: "My apartment in New York, if one can call it that, is open on two sides, it looks more like a corridor or a roofed street. I am packing, leaving for Saint Louis or anywhere West. There is something about to happen here, like a plague, a catastrophe hovering in the air like a mist. Clothes and a dressing bag are packed into a small suitcase. I put the three guns to the side, to the shelf behind the curtain. I concluded it would be dangerous to travel with arms in the luggage."

Pitch dark. One-storey house. A dim light inside. Comfort, Seagull, Saulis and Kol in front of the gate.

SEAGULL: I still think this could be peacefully resolved.

COMFORT: Now is the moment for you to defend that thesis.

Comfort places the shortened double-barrel shotgun in the back of the wheelchair, behind Kol's back. Little Saulis approaches the gate and shakes the knob. The gate is locked.

LITTLE SAULIS: No problem. The gate is locked.

Saulis slowly climbs the gate and jumps over it.

LITTLE SAULIS: Give me the key.

Comfort hands him the shotgun. Saulis hits the lock with the rifle butt. The gate opens.

COMFORT: No problem. The gate is unlocked.

LITTLE SAULIS (*While Comfort, Seagull and Kol are coming in*): Welcome, welcome, welcome...

Four aces approach the house. At first they knock on the door a little, then on the windows, yell something, dance around the house in a male macho dance. Since night and fog have fallen on the village, the sight looks ominous. Finally, Linchpin comes out of the house.

KOL: There is no Kol (car) without a Linchpin. I came to see you, Linchpin.

LINCHPIN: Good night, Kol. Younger.

KOL: You weren't expecting my gang, huh? My band.
LINCHPIN: I thought you would come a little earlier. I was already getting tired. And I thought you would come by yourself, ready for a duel. You are an American. Indian, Apache – Broken Hip.

KOL: Is it that late? Wow, really, it's already night. I have to go to bed. I will beat you up now, and I am going to sleep.

LINCHPIN: I heard you became handicapped.

KOL: It happened. Culture shock on the arrival. Process of adaptation.

LINCHPIN: You are someone who doesn't like to stand out.

KOL: You put that nicely. But tell me where my sister is, so we can punch you and go home.

LINCHPIN: She is inside. More or less voluntarily. And we'll talk about the punching.

Snezana appears naked in the window.

KOL: Aha, that's the way it is. OK, now you're done.

LINCHPIN: I probably have the right to a last wish. To light one up, smoke a cigarette like a man.

KOL: You can suck ours, so we can light you up.

LINCHPIN: My time hasn't come yet, Kol Younger. I am an epileptic. I will die when I harvest the pumpkins.

LITTLE SAULIS: Enough of bullshitting. We came to educationally polish you off, so you wouldn't come to the Vitas' house and threaten honest people.

CIVJA: Honest like his sister. Up to her ass.

Kol sets out towards Linchpin. After him Comfort, Seagull and Saulis. One would think they would beat him up badly. But Linchpin pulls out a revolver he was hiding under his shirt.

LINCHPIN: Peace, brothers.

They stop six feet away from him.

LINCHPIN: OK, what were you thinking? That I am some kind of spinster, cretin, sitting and waiting for

you to enter my house drunk, armed and crippled like that? For this little cunt who sells fergusons to kids to beat me?

LITTLE SAULIS: What did you say? Neighbor... I am real crazy. Don't brag if you're not a hag. And what are you planning with that lighter?

Little Saulis takes a step towards Linchpin.

LINCHPIN: I'll shoot.

He cocks the gun. Pause.

LITTLE SAULIS: Shoot, you fuck.

Saulis stands right in front of the revolver. Linchpin starts panicking. He doesn't know what to do. Comfort takes out the shotgun from the wheelchair.

COMFORT: You see this?

LINCHPIN: I see.

SEAGULL: People. Someone will die. Don't fuck around.

KOL: Linchpin, a second of your insanity, and you and the kid will go to the eternal hunting grounds.

Tense.

KOL: And I will have to bear you on my conscience, fuck you all, cripples.

Little Saulis opens his mouth in front of the revolver barrel, and starts yelling!

Linchpin gets an epileptic attack. He drops the gun, falls, and starts shaking on the ground.

COMFORT: Oh, fucking a.

LITTLE SAULIS: What are we going to do now?

Everybody is looking at Kol.

KOL: What do you mean what? Put something between his teeth so he doesn't bite out his tongue.

COMFORT: The shotgun?

KOL: No, you idiot. I am serious.

Seagull is the first to come and help the sick man in trouble. He puts a lighter between his teeth. When the shaking calms down, the boys take Linchpin off the stage.

V

OFFER THE HAND OF RECONCILIATION

Everybody is on the stage, like for a graduation party. Linchpin is in hospital pajamas lying in bed, around him Comfort, Seagull and Little Saulis with oranges, Snezana without an arm, the limping Andrija, Gordana who is carrying a machine for easing the pain in the back... Kol is in front of them all, sitting in a wheelchair.

KOL: When people are ready to help each other, everything ends well.

Your next of kin, home, fatherland, often seem like a nightmare. Nothing is farther from truth.

Homeland is what makes a person what he is. Where you grew up, where your fathers built houses, those forests, rivers, meadows and – most importantly – people, are an inseparable part of our beings. As Goethe says: “Lucky is the person who gladly remembers his ancestors. Who joyfully tells about their works and their greatness, happy in his soul, knows that he is the last piece of this beautiful chain.”

This song is also the last piece in a beautiful chain you saw. Our point and our message.

There is no happy land without native land.

Sing with us.

Everybody’s singing:

Young, crazy, we get into fights

Now we know, don’t fall into rage.

Extend your arm to shake hands

So we can start life one more time.

THE END

Note

In this drama the following texts or parts of the texts were used, edited and changed: *Return* by Franz

Kafka, *Evangelical Prose* by Arthur Rimbaud. “San Francisco Prostitution” (magazine RE/Search #1), “Ogorceni Riki” of the Earth band Zagorelo, and *Book of Dreams* by William Burroughs.

Texts of the original songs by Saban Saulic:

DROP IN, THE MAN SAYS

Where are the musicians playing this morning
Who is getting married in my homeland
As a traveler I stopped at the gate
Beside the old house I didn’t recognize anything

Drop in, says the man at my gate
Today there’s a feast in this yard
A mother is marrying off her son and daughter
We’ll drink one for their health

Under dense brows wrinkles have gathered
One stormy life like a restless sea
He entered the world on this very place
Where I came too late to correct the wrong

BAR NIGHT

Bring, Kate, one more drink
One more round, we’ve drank enough.
The gang is together, talking
We haven’t seen been together in very long.

Bring, Kate, and then don’t
I know it’s late, forgive us, sister,
The gang is together, talking
Bring, I am kissing your white hands.

Bring, Kate, you at least are ours
There’s a carriage waiting for you, tired

I have never met a greater friend
A better woman than you, sister

You come also, white fairy
Do not close tonight
With us, honey
Open the bottles tonight.

TWO WHITE SEAGULLS

Two white seagulls in a dark night
Flew over the stormy sea
The wind threw them onto a rock
And he stayed there with a broken wing

She left him there
To wait for his last dawn
He only found a little strength
To complain to the beloved sea

Ref.

Tell her, sea, I still love her
I don't blame her for my bad fate
Ah, is love separated like that
I am dying and she is living

He couldn't wait for the dawn
He couldn't wait for the sun
He threw himself from the high cliff
Into the beloved, blue sea

And this life goes on
A new dawn is shining above the sea
The only truth remains
Birds love like humans do

IT IS SNOWING AGAIN, SNEZANA

The autumn with yellow leaves is leaving
I am watching a small hill through the window
How sad you are, my youth
While the first snow is falling

A cold and long winter is approaching
A little snowflake reminds me of a tear
It will not live long, just like our love
Maybe you didn't know that, Snezana

I haven't seen you in a long time
One December for the last time
Forgive me I was so sad,
That night I was angry with you

It is snowing again, Snezana
And many a day is between us
It is snowing again, Snezana
Like on the day we met

THAT'S WHAT KOLE'S LIKE

Kole's drinking
Kole's drinking
Wine and brandy
Wine and brandy

When the time has come
To pay for the wine
Kole has no money
Kole has no money

When Kole is kissing
He doesn't see a thing
He is not ashamed
God will forgive him

When the time has come
To go home now
Women won't let him
Women won't let him

Kole is loved
Everyone is saying
His heart is like a sea
His heart is like a sea

When the time has come
For Kole to get married
The trumpet sounded
Vera is his beloved

EXTEND THE HAND OF RECONCILIATION

We are not that young anymore
We know now what life is
Extend the hand of reconciliation
So we can start one more time.