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Among many types of architectural objects, theatres have a distinct place. Or is it just our understanding – we might even say a preconception, which arises from contemplating about multifaceted spiritual and architectural programme of these edifices, their complex functional and technological structure, urban, social, and even ideological function. However, through in-depth research and evaluation of the contribution that theatre architecture has given to the very phenomenon of theatre on one side, and the place and the role of theatre structures in the history of architecture on the other side, we will come to very different conclusions.

The venues where scene events are to be performed in the modern era which almost coincides with the 20th Century, from Antoine to Stanislavski, Appia, Craig, Reinhardt, Copeau, Meyerhold or Brecht, till Brook, Schechner, Schumann, Grotowski, and Stein – is one of the basic themes of revising the construction of theatre. Nevertheless, the configuration of the stage and the auditorium, as the key point of theatre architecture, in almost all objects designed and built specifically for theatrical performances, is still based on one of three conventions – baroque, Elizabethan or functionalistic.1) Transformation of theatre architecture is without a doubt one of the core assumptions that this artistic phenomenon is based upon. During the development of theatre, several independent systems of conventions have emerged, which were different in type and levels of complexity, and which are used as a base for creating and reading the theatrical act. There is a particular topic of systems of conventions for reading of stage spaces and stage changes. Besides the two traditional (Baroque and Elizabethan) systems of conventions, in the twentieth century a functionalist system of conventions has been established, based in part on the various conventions of theatre of the Far East. Here, the stage itself, its structure, physical organisation and character, as well as artistic

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1) The conventions in theatre are without a doubt one of the core assumptions that this artistic phenomenon is based upon. During the development of theatre, several independent systems of conventions have emerged, which were different in type and levels of complexity, and which are used as a base for creating and reading the theatrical act. There is a particular topic of systems of conventions for reading of stage spaces and stage changes. Besides the two traditional (Baroque and Elizabethan) systems of conventions, in the twentieth century a functionalist system of conventions has been established, based in part on the various conventions of theatre of the Far East. Here, the stage itself, its structure, physical organisation and character, as well as artistic
tions of conventional spatial models in contemporary theatre architecture are primarily a result of development of technical and technological resources and systems, their impact on the size, character and structure of space – first and foremost the space of the stage, and the auditorium.

At the same time, architectural significance and the character of modern purpose-built theatre houses as a whole, have not had much influence on the ideas, concepts, character, or even the artistic methods of modern theatre. It is understood that, when I am deliberating on the subject of houses designed and built for the purpose of housing theatre performances, I am not discoursing on the subject of so-called environmental theatre, nor am I talking about reconstructions and reutilizations of various “secular” spaces (railway and fire stations, warehouses, fairs and factory halls, power plants, and even abandoned churches), or the phenomena of theatricalisation of the city, and the urbanisation of spectacles. All the while I do not question the impact (which is at present-day at some places even crucial) of these phenomena on the theatre, on architecture, and on the city itself.2)

In view of that, the significance of theatres in the history and development of modern and particularly contemporary architecture has been unrecognised and marginalised.3) The undisputable architectural value and technical means of theatre play (scene changes, lighting, sound, movement ...) become semantic treasure in itself, a special model of the theatre being based almost exclusively on the demand for perfect functioning of all of the above (one might say, even the formal) manifestations of theatrical events.

2) This topic has been specifically addressed at the cycle of international symposia entitled “The spectacle – City – Identity” organised by YUSTAT, since 1996 till the year 2000. The papers were published under the same title (YUSTAT, 1998) and in the book “Urban Spectacle” (YUSTAT and Clio, 2000).

3) In history books, encyclopaedias, and problem-oriented studies of contemporary architecture theatre facilities are barely mentioned. So Kenneth Frampton in his Modern architecture, among hundreds of examples (336 illustrated) mentions seven theatres, Alberto Lampugnani in his Encyclopaedia of 20th Century Architecture presents some 500 objects, including 12 theatres, Charles Jenks in the Modern Movements in Architecture analysis three, and in the Language of postmodern Architecture he analyses two examples; out of 441 illustrations in William J. Curtis’s Modern Architecture five are theatres, as well as in A Short History of Western Architecture by R. Furneaux Jordan (out of 432 illustrations). Ranko Radovic has included in his Contemporary Architecture examples of eight theatres out of 490 illustrated examples, of which at least three with an ironic attitude. This phenomenon does not belong only to contemporary architecture, which is confirmed in the referent History of Architecture by Sir Banister Fletcher in which among the thousands of (unnumbered) illustrations on 1621 page of text a total of 19 theatres can be seen.


cale, perhaps due to the fact that in the twentieth century in Serbia only four new theatre houses were built (National Theatre of Moravia region in Niš by Vsevolod Tatarinov, 1939; The National Theatre of Užice by Stanko Mandić, 1962; Atelier 212 in Belgrade by Bojan Stupica, 1964; and the Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad by Viktor Jackiewicz, 1981), this issue has for decades enticed special interest.

Project which has had, without a doubt, a most profound influence on thought, design and construction of contemporary architectural works designed for scene events, was the Totaltheater by Walter Gropius and Erwin Piscator from 1927, even if it was actually never built. This case, as do many others, proves once again that there is great significance and purpose in creating “paper architecture”\(^6\), which is often more inspiring and created with more thought than the houses that were actually built. However, we can find a more significant paradigmatic phenomenon in the fact that the central theme of this project is the variable configuration and the active role of stage-auditorium space, the technology serving the stage and the plays, but not all the other programme questions of architecture (utilitarian and functional technology of the facility, morphological structure of the house,\(^7\) architectural language, attitude toward the urban context...). It becomes clear at this point, and it will be confirmed many times in the future, that the modern theatre unravels the theme of relationship between drama and the space in which the drama will be performed, but it omits, it does not even notice, the issue of the house as a whole.

Iain Mackintosh, who is at present day probably the most influential theatre consultant, without whom theatres virtually cannot be built in the UK, speaks about all this most directly in his highly acclaimed book: “Architecture, Actor and Audience.” In his work Mackintosh explores the “contribution of theatre architecture to the theatre experience” stressing that the “theatre architecture is one of the most vital ingredients of the theatrical experience” and, simultaneously, “one of the least understood.” But Mackintosh decides not to deliberate on facades, entrances, foyers, halls and even the spaces behind the stage, since, as he says, there are so many textbooks for architects and technicians who want to learn “how to plan those vitally important but essentially secondary spaces.”\(^8\) Of course, the thesis of “serviced” and “serving”\(^9\) area is not new, but it is highly hazardous to introduce it in theatre, a place of synthesis and “equality at work”\(^10\), and thus further promote the already proverbially fragmented and almost autistic access to individual areas, domains and specialties. Theatre has never been, nor could it ever become a subject independent of architecture. Correspondingly, the stage space is not, and should not be a separate issue, the subject of “consultants”, but a crucial and equally worthy part of the complex, rich and consistent structure of the theatre house – as a whole. Rare, but significant examples of that are the works of Ledoux, Poelzig, Melnikov, Rossi or Stupica, and they clearly suggest that the synthesis of all aspects of theatre and architecture is not only possible but also necessary.

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6) “The era of *papir architecture*, as the constructivists themselves are writing, and not without certain nostalgia (вумажная архитектура)...” (Ranko Radović, in the preface of a book by Jakob Chernikov *The constructions of Architectural and Mechanical Forms*, Građevinska knjiga, Belgrade, 1989, pp. VIII)

7) Whilst talking about structure, I always have in mind the term “which simultaneously defines the entirety, parts of that entirety and the relations between those parts” (Umberto Eco, *Culture, Information, Communication*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1973, pp. 274).


9) Louis Kahn’s partitioning of space by the criteria of which are “serving” which are “being served” is mentioned on page 132\(^{nd}\) of Ranko Radovic’s book *Contemporary Architecture* (Faculty of Engineering – Stylos, Novi Sad, 1998). For more information on ideas of Louis Kahn see the records of his lectures, published in Richard Saul Wurman’s newsroom entitled “What Will Be Has Always Been” (University of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, 1986).

2 THEATRE AS A PROGRAMME
IN ARCHITECTURE

The architectural programme of a theatre as a complex spiritual product is one of the most inspiring subjects for the research of venues, and designing structures for the spectacles in general. The main consideration of programme deliberations is the term of theatre itself which “simultaneously denominates theatrical art, the place where the performances are held, and the social act of attending the performance”11), as well as the challenging impossibility of unambiguously defining contemporary theatre. The fact “that there is no theatre of our time, there are different theatres which due to circumstance exist at the same time and space”12) and the contradiction between the almost daily volatility of theatre as an art form and the permanence of theatre buildings, puts an architect in a position to independently and almost autonomously anticipate the content, character, logic, expression, and the means of theatre for which he is designing space. In that way the architect is called upon to answer questions which in our epoch, as in the preceding, he is not and could not be sufficiently apt for. The irony is that, on the other hand, architecture “is one of the human activities which has a supreme effect on the quality of life”13), and the architect, by nature of his calling, tends to make decisions that, strictly speaking, do not belong within the domain of his contemplation.14)

11) Dictionary of Literary Terms, Nolit, Belgrade, 1986, pp 589
14) This desire was expressed in almost every architectural project, and may be subject to separate studies in various typological units and series. Among the most impressive examples of the buildings and complexes for living in “special circumstances” – homes for children and the elderly, special hospitals and sanatoriums, barracks, prisons. Even further, controlled residential areas (ghettos), refugees, prison, penitentiary and concentration camps – which were, unfortunately, also the works of architects. In the context of our work, there is a particularly interesting example of the fortress Terezín (Terezín; Theresienstadt) in the Czech Republic, where the Nazi government in 1941 and 1942 deported of the entire population of a small town (see the Encyclopaedia Britannica, CD-Rom edition, 2001), in order to organize the life of the Jewish ghetto. This town has, in fact, been like a great theatrical performance, in which the German authorities toward Jews was portrayed the Red Cross delegation.

15) “The task of the theatre architecture is to find the most ideal combination of space, actors movement and speech, and the one area which
functions and spaces, which have their own independent lives in temporal and spatial sense, and which are inevitably joined and united in the architectural configuration of the theatre hall and stage. The issue of a possible encounter of worlds in front of and behind the scenes, beyond the space or time of the enactment of the play, is a special one, and not a novelty. The obsessive need of the audience to make physical contact with the actors (and probably the need for their demystification) is easy to recognise through the extraordinary popularity of theatre lounges and cafés next to the theatre, which can also be understood as a special form of stage.

These phenomena, as well as the altered concepts of financing theatre, are the bases of the tendency to include various commercial programs – cafes, restaurants, bookstores, galleries, libraries and information centres, educational units, tourist points – into the part of the building intended for audience, which then becomes active during the entire day, and the theatre a venue develops into a form of a cultural centre. With the development and popularisation of stage technologies, as well as the expansion of educational programs and institutions dealing with this field, and finally with the radical intensification of the influence of marketing and management in the arts – a complex of technical and administrative spaces behind the scenes also receives a public profile. Thus the theatre house in its entirety becomes a public facility and begins to develop its central function in the city. From this point of view, it is not only that the theatre has not lost its traditionally dominant urban position, on the contrary, that position is constantly evolving. Examples like the complex of the National Theatre in London, or Lincoln Centre in New York, bear witness to it.

3 THEATRE AS AN ART FORM

Theatre is “a complex art, which contains elements of all other arts, namely literature, music, painting, sculpting, architecture, and art of acting, which is not derived from any other art form, but is a specific feature of the theatre.” Under the term “theatre” understood in terms of enactment of plays, I infer every arranged stage event based on a dramatic peace, which can be considered as a whole in terms of content and meaning, and where artists and viewers tend to share catharsis through mutual communication, as a “call to man in its totality.”

Viewed etymologically, the term “theatre” is derived from the Greek verb “watch”, but refers to the phenomena addressed to the senses of seeing and hearing. Branko Gavela claimed that theatre is a form of artistic communication carried out by optical and acoustic means, which invites in viewers parallel psychophysical phenomena as a source of extraordinary emotional and cognitive experience. “We do not conceive the actor by listening and watching him. Listening and watching are only means of conveyance, we conceive the actor by employing in ourselves simultaneously with his actions all those organic elements, which in real life are the companions and regulators of these actions.”

Theatre, therefore, is not “a play for watching” (Schauspiel), nor is it “a play for hearing” (Hörspiel), but it is a joined play “omniplay” (Mitspiel), a complex phenomenon in which individual elements are lost, as evidenced by numerous occurrences.

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17) Catharsis (κάσαρσις) is the basic mean of emotional purification which is created in the viewer through “evoking empathy and fear” (Aristoteles, Art of Poetry).

18) Peter Brook, Empty Space, Lapis, Belgrade, 1995, pp. 146

19) Branko Gavela, Actor and Theatre, pp. 151.
intersections of meanings and the origin of words, such as the arena and the auditorium, for example.

The spectator, for whom an actor acts in a play, though an individual, is actually by definition a collective phenomenon, “plural phenomenon”, not “accidentally quantitative”, but “plural by principle”. An actor in a theatre play does not act for specific, individual viewers, but for the “collective viewer”. The viewer, whom the theatrical performance itself will form, will not experience watching of a particular actor, but a new view of himself. “It will happen through the actor, and this process within the viewer requires the spatial separation of viewer and actor, finding the space that will best facilitate the experience of a viewer.” In that way the theatre puts the viewer in a spiritually active position. That, ultimately, means realisation of itself through the introspective process of searching for the core values of existence. In this quite unique property of theatre, that the viewer in it always becomes a participant, lays the greatest value and importance of this artistic phenomenon.

If we look at the theatre for an anthropological point of view, then it can be defined as “the art of transformation into another being”, whilst the very concept of transformation becomes the issue of new definitions, referring not only to performers, but also to the spectators. Speaking of classic dramatic composition and the creation of dramatic tension, “prolonged strain which leads the viewer into a state of agitated anticipation of the end”, as well as its basic assumptions, even Aristotle considered the importance of the viewer, “his ability to watch and listen” and be influenced by the drama, “ultimately brought even to the ideal consequence – the transformation of the viewer.”

The language of theatre has been defined by Tadeusz Kowzan, in accordance to Lessing’s classification of arts to those that appear in space and those that occur in time (theatre being the one that incorporates both categories), as a system of thirteen different types of signs. Some elements of this language belong to communication in time (play, music...), others are parts of communication in space (setting, costume, lighting...), and the third set of elements are those that synthesise both fields, and are characteristic only of theatre, such as movement. Speaking of movement we are in fact considering an action that is intentional and consciously made (in theatre every movement, as a principle, is deliberate and conscious). Enactment of a play is a central concern of the theatre audience, the enacting is structured according to certain rules of composing a play with the aim of maintaining dramatic tension. Orientation toward action is explained by Demarsy as through the traditional existence of diachronic perception, where for the viewer everything that is happening on stage is a function of what is going to happen on stage.

Although the theatre was created by transforming religious rituals in the early communities, and “it bears in itself as a rudiment not only its sensationalism”, but also its “religious, ceremonial potency”, it is separated from the rituals and defined as a specific form of artistic, spiritual and social communication. For the distinction from the ritual and for establishing theatre, three basic elements are required: “speech or singing by the actors, regardless of the original choir singing in unison; element of conflict within the dialogue; and viewers emotionally involved in the action in which do not participate.” Theatre could, on that basis, be seen through a new triad: the system of resources that make the theatrical language of communication; artistic content created in response to the need to express through theatrical

means, which is the subject of this communication; and the reasons for the existence of theatre as a social phenomenon, that is the answer to society’s needs for the theatre. In other words, the theatre is defined by answers to the questions: how it operates, what constitutes it and why does it exist.

The largest number of theoretical and philosophical assumptions about the purpose and function of theatrical art, from Aristotle to present day, is based on the understanding that theatre is oriented toward social elite. In these theories popular theatre, as opposed to art theatre, is seen as a form of mass entertainment. “Art is by nature aristocratic, and naturally selective in its effect on the audience. For even in its collective manifestations, like theatre and cinema, its effect is bound up with the intimate emotions of each person that comes to contact with the work”.28) “Maybe it is not too paradoxical to say that in the intellectual activities which are driven by most democratic intentions (teaching, moralizing) reside more aristocratic elements (by means of emphasis, though often unconsciously, on spiritual difference between the creator and particular recipients), than there are in the most aristocratic, mystical ceremony.”29)

Correspondingly, the history of modern drama and modern theatre, or rather the complex and diverse structure of movements, schools, groups and authors in the theatre of the twentieth century, is the history of looking for the answer to the question of a social function and position of the theatre. “Is there, is modern drama possible: what does that question mean? Generally speaking: do the external circumstances offered by modern life allow the emergence of theatre and what might theatre be like? The question is: Are there such phenomena of social life, arising from modern life, which are suitable for expression in dramatic form, or which possibly directly require dramatic form as their perfect mode of expression?”30)

Today “the word theatre has many meanings which are not distinct enough. In most of the world, the theatre has no exact place within the society, no clear purpose, it only exists in fragments: one theatre chases money, another chases glory, another chases emotion, another chases politics, another chases fun.”31) Tarkovsky wrote that it is not the role of art, not even the theatre, to teach, spread ideas, develop thinking, or to serve as an example. “It is obvious that art cannot teach anyone anything, since in four thousand years humanity has learnt nothing at all... Art only has the capacity, through shock and catharsis, to make the human soul receptive to good.”32) And the theatre, based on interpersonal communications in real space and real time, provoking our experiences on the borderline between reality and illusion, and constantly questioning those boundaries, can possibly discover the “otherness of the real world”33), that is to “change the nature of the individual, in order to change the essence of the world.”34) Drama, for which the “mythical rebuttal of the discomfort of death”35) is a hypothesis, uses “a symbolic image of the tragic death which can evoke the meaning of life.”36) In a world without God, says Derrida, “only death can be a total theatre, a death that is by the logic of life the only real theatre.”37)

33) Branko Pleša, at the international sipsium Stage design at the end of the 20th Century which was held within the Sterijino pozorje festival in 1998. (information about the sipsium can be found in the text by Jovan Ljustanovic Virtual actor and the essence of theatre in the magazine Scene, no. 4–5, 1998, pp 74).
II SPACE IN THE THEATRE – DETERMINATION, CONSEQUENCE AND ASSUMPTION

“Space concerns everyone connected with the theatre, from the architects who first design the building to the actors who play in it and the stage designers and directors who labour in it. Also (even if they are quite unaware of it) the audience, who we hope, will fill it.”

Sir John Gielgud

Interaction of literature, visual and performing arts as well as media, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, has substantially transformed the technical and artistic resources the theatre uses. At the same time, formal, technological and spatially-functional differences between certain types of public scene events have been greatly reduced. The term “spectacle” was extended to sports, political, promotional and other events thus making stadiums, sports halls, museums, galleries and even the public spaces of the city, from point of view of technical engineering, but also from the point of view of the programme, the “houses for spectacle” alongside the theatres, concert halls and cinemas. All these buildings and constructions are designed and equipped as typical venues for performing events. The typology of public events and the corresponding architectural structures and spaces is the subject of many studies at present day – from social and cultural, to theatrical and urban, but also one of the important aspects of planning and construction of houses and cities. This subject, however, which we would easily believe to be exclusively contemporary, was addressed in 15th century by Leon Battista Alberti in his “Ten Books on Architecture” (De Re Aedificatoria), devoting to it the seventh chapter of Book VIII (“Of the adorning Theatres and other Places for public Shows, and of their Usefulness.”) Parallel existence and mutual interaction of different public events and facilities, therefore, are the traditional and enduring issues.

However, at this point I wish scrutinise the drama theatre in the narrow sense of the term, as a construction and as an institution.

Quite specifically, this means that in respect to content, character, artistic and production resources, the concept of theatre for me is a collective of all the activities involved in preparing, implementing and performing public performing events based on drama as a primary art form. In relation to the programme, nature and structure of physical space, under the term theatre I infer a complete architectural project, thought through, designed and built for the preparation and performance of dramatic plays.

Today, when we speak of space in the theatre, which still is a special phenomenon and a specific realm of human life, “the last public place where idealism is still an


39) Under the term “technology” in this context i do not think of the “application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes” (The New Oxford Dictionary of English, CD-Rom, 2001), but of a “system of practical approaches, the entirety of resources that people employ to provide the objects of material culture”. (Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, str. 2348).

The theme of different views on the relationship between technology and the space was thoroughly deliberated on the Yugoslav symposium titled Architecture and Technology, which the Chair for the development of architecture and arts has organized at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade in 1991. (see the Journal of history and theory of architecture and town De re Aedificatoria, No. 2, 1991)

40) Alberti writes of those “whose job it is to give good example to others” through public events for which the key subject is “peace and leisure” (and they are dealing with poets, actors and musicians) as well as those related to war (wrestling, pugilism, shooting, jumping, running and “everything that fits the practical exercises of wa force”). These events require different buildings, because they have different names – for poets, comedians, dramatists “and alike” – the theatre; for “noble youths” who are running coaches – circuses; and lastly, to fight with wild animals – amphitheatres. (The Ten Books of Architecture, Dover, New York, 1986, pp. 175–6)
open issue”\(^{41}\), the centre of our attention points to the articulation of space of theatre play – stage and auditorium. This spatial organisation is the result of institutionalisation of theatre arts, and it can progress and change based on the transformation of ideas about theatre, artistic and scenic resources, and also stage techniques and technology. However, we must always keep in mind the fact that the stage-auditorium space is only one of the elements in a complex physical structural system of the theatre. Theatre house, as a spatial result of this system, is not just a “tool for the spectacle”\(^{42}\), but also responds to many diverse needs defined by dozens of functionally-technological lines (not just utilitarian), which, in turn, define theatre as an art form, as a production institution, as a social phenomenon, and as a programme in architecture. In broadest terms, any consideration of theatre space has to be placed in the context of another trinity relationship – the theatre as an artistic being, the architectural body of the theatre and the overall urban structure.

On the other hand, based on many definitions of theatre it is quite clear that the physical space within which any theatrical performance is to be enacted is the presumption of existence of theatre and scene arts. History of theatre, as well as theoretical and practical research on the subject of theatre of our time, in which the play has become “the only true subject of theatrology research”\(^{43}\), presents us with the task of articulating the place of theatre performance – stage, and the place from which it is viewed from – the auditorium, as one of the basic defining features of physicality and spirituality of theatre in general. The questions of architectural structure of theatre houses have to be introduced in the whole discourse. Theatre event in the narrow sense of the term, everything that happens in the theatre in the area that we call the space of performance, and everything that happens during the time, metaphorically speaking, between raising and lowering the stage curtains at the end of the performance, is without a doubt the key issue of the theatre and of theatre architecture. But the theatre reduced only to the matter of performance might actually be, at least in relation to its physical aspects, “the most futile of all our efforts” and “the very image of what awaits all crafts, sooner or later, in the course of time.”\(^{44}\)

The theatre performance has never been, nor can it be at present day, the only true subject of reflection on the theatre and its “contrast, intangible nature.”\(^{45}\) Theatre performance, as well as all the other scene events, falls into the category of works of art that create “an artificial world, but aware of its artificiality and unswerving in its artificial nature, and so, therefore, also truthful.”\(^{46}\) The performance is not a material product, so it is not possible to preserve it. Artefacts used to furnish the stage, although material objects, reveal their entire worth exclusively on the stage, during the time of the performance. Thus, even in ideal conditions in the gallery it is not possible to completely represent the elements, and especially not the entirety of a theatrical set design, for example, no matter how technologically complex and well supported the gallery exhibition might be\(^{47}\). The means by which

42) Brunelleschi (*una macchina per lo spettacolo*), according to Ranko Radović, *Contemporary Architecture*, pp. 124.
47) Years of experience in the presentation and evaluation of performing arts in the past six “editions” of the Biennial of Stage Design, a major national events in the domain of set design, costume design, theatre architecture, applied performing arts, crafts and promoting events, clearly proved that the relevant attitude towards these works can be formed only through direct personal experience of theatrical performance and its overall structure. The experience of all previous selectors of the Biennale confirms that documents have value only as a supplement, and not as a substitute for direct insight into the theatre production.
the performance can be documented (photographs, audio and video recordings, models, documentation following the making of set design, books of directors and writers actions, newspaper reviews and expert appraisals ...) belong to separate domains and media, they have a purpose, language and rules, they exist to support the theatre performance and its evaluation, but generally they are not adequate representatives neither of the means, nor of the language or the laws of theatre. In addition, the documentation does not include the conditionality and the conventions that govern the process of creating a theatre performance by definition and form the basis of perception, experience and readings of theatrical works. “You see it, and it is no more: the dramatic text itself will never tell a completely identical story, and the set design and props are not enough to set up a scene. Since the theatre does not have a physical bequest, the theatre house remains its only creative legacy”48).

However, the most important legacies of the theatre are the ideas about the theatre, “what is the counter-point in music – nothing by itself, but the sine qua non for all.”49) The idea of theatre is conveyed through houses, books, research documents, history and theory, but it is also conveyed through “theatre people”. This concept, can be and must be understood the two ways: as a guideline for a highly heterogeneous and inarticulate “global tribe”, and at the same time, as the common name for members of a particular theatre – the theatre as a troupe, or theatre as a movement, but mostly the theatre as an institution of what we often call “the theatre house”. In this phrase the term “house” has a direct and a metaphorical meaning. And that is one of the most complex aspects of existence and interpretation of theatre at all times, in all the traditional lines of development and in all meridians. Thus, the causal system of relationships between the theatre house, theatre people and theatre as an idea (or the idea of theatre) is the central theme of my understanding of the definitions, values and purpose of theatre.


FROM THE CRISIS OF THEATER TO CRISIS THEATRE, TOWARDS THE THEATRE OF NEW DRAMATURGY

Translated by > Vera Krmpot

T he theatre “Marija Zanjkoveska” in Lvov performed in June 2009 the play “Crisis” written and directed by Orest Ogorodnik, which seemed to anticipate the later Ukraine’s political crisis. This is just one example of how theater, sometimes, announced what would soon happen in the streets, in everyday life. The most common effects are coming from the opposite direction – from the political, social environment. Theater pieces have been written about wars, about the events that changed not only geographical, national borders, but also our destiny. But this time, I will not engage in this type of theater... I will deal with the crises that come from within, from the theater, and they are powered by a mechanism in which all factors are equally important – firstly the art factors: writers, actors, directors, set designers, costume designers, authors of music, lights, etc. and then all the others: engineering, administration, marketing, management... The crises that periodically affect the theater can be identified through crises in which actors suffer, i.e. those things that constitute dramatic art suffer, playwrights, theater directors, and then all the other authors. This can be recognized as a crisis of an individual in the collective, a complex crisis, no doubt, which affects theater and everything around it.

The first crisis, as noted by Macedonian dramaturge Trajče Kacarov, provides an ideal opportunity for cast to replace their profession with a job. Most actors perceive theatre as their workplace, which means that instead of passion there dominates loyalty to social situations, because that is what guarantees a salary every month.

The second crisis has promoted mediocrity as performing artists. There appear authors with no value who faithfully serve the system, but not the aesthetics and ethics.

The third crisis is the most dangerous for theater and for art in general. There is no system of values. A collective is favored rather than an individual. It prevents an individual from building a career. All means are used.
Mostly the means offered by the party in power. Party interests stand before the interests of the individual, although group has no creative potential.

Nevertheless, science claims that in situations of crisis it is the individual that makes the most important opportunity for a positive outcome.

It is director of theatre that is responsible if the theatre is in flames, not a fireman, in the same way that a sinking ship can be saved only by a brave captain, not the ship owner.

Natural disasters are not isolated from society. Neither are they isolated from theatre. Does the audience feel the crisis of theater? The audience feels the actor’s entity and does not isolate it from the social entity. It feels the loss of a real actor. Instead of enjoying his presence, the audience discovers his new discipline – cheating. Confirmation is evident in the empty theater halls.

How does theater articulate the above mentioned moments of crisis? Attempts are made to create “rescue models.” We reach for the light genres, try to seduce the audience, and have fun. But these are only temporary solutions. “The worst thing is,” observes Kacarov, “the spillover of the crisis of theater into society. Thus, there is lack of cultural dialogue, good character, honesty and empathy as the result of the crisis in theater.”

When writing about the shift of theatrical epochs, a Russian theatrologist Galina Alisejčik, points out that the main problem of contemporary theater is that theatre is trying to resolve its crises at the beginning of the 21st century by using the models that were formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is the model that was effective in meeting the challenges of the post-October Revolution, which was created by the ideologues of the Soviet state: centralized management of cultural policy, the idea of internationalism, the abolition of the religious motives in works of art, propaganda of the achievements of the Soviet way of life, formation of the image of an ideal member of Soviet society. The Soviet model of theater, apparently, did not have the required plasticity, it resisted change, was hard and implacable just like the system from which it stemmed.

Changes in the theater business do not always follow the changes in society, they are obviously late, that is why it is necessary to improve the existing model of theater, to preserve its positive aspects and develop them further. It is because this model is definitely outdated and it needs to be dismantled.

Let us recall, at the very beginning, in ancient Greece, theater was the brainchild of a writer. The author of text was often also the author of the play and the only actor. This situation lasted for a long time, although the number of actors with the development of the drama increased; the author dominates the theater until the early Renaissance. Then comes the era of the theater actor. After this, theatre was dominated by the plays of décor and pyrotechnic tricks, when ships sailed to the scene, strange animals appeared, living and mechanical, angels flew over the stage. The actors were part of the landscape. It was no longer the theater of words. Then happened the theatre of directors. And it has lasted for more than a century.

There are constantly asked questions of who can and who should lead the theater and who represents it in the best way: a playwright, actor, director or a theater critic? Representatives of various professions in the management of theaters contributed to theater life making it livelier, more varied.

We constantly speak of a new dramaturgy. In recent decades we also speak of post-dramaturgy. This is the title of a paper by well-known French theatrologist Patric Pavis, who distinguishes between classical and new dramaturgy. Into classical dramaturgy he includes the one that happened at the time of Brecht, and lasted for the next fifty years. Brechtian dramaturgy is a sophisticated method of reading and interpreting of the play, based on humanism. It implied the involvement of different disciplines, history, sociology, psychoanalysis, philology, semiotics and others. This dramaturgy puts di-
rector into the forefront. Dominant director is also present today in the theatre, but more and more we speak of the saturation or even crisis in the theatre because of such a directing practice. There were several attempts to re-establish ties with such dramaturgy by staging Brecht’s plays (SNT, Novi Sad; NT “Toša Jovanović”, Zrenjanin, as well as other theaters in Serbia).

According to Pavis, there are several types of new dramaturgy. First, there is the so-called devised theater which is not only a collective creativity, but the theater of cooperation. In it dramaturge does not hold his usual position, because dramaturgical functions are open to everyone. It is on the opposite side of the theater based on a dramatic text. Here dramaturge invents text on the stage, along with others. Each new material is being read, adopted or rejected on the stage. Dramaturgy is an open process here. There is a kind of dramatic interaction between the project participants and the audience on the other side. Even though there are many examples in practice, both in the world and in our country, this kind of dramaturgy has not yet been thought through and described theoretically.

The second type is called educational dramaturgy, which includes reading of plays and placing them into the theaters for children, teens and amateurs.

There follows dramaturgy of the actor which was introduced by Eugenio Barba. The actor prepares his own text, art material that he will present on the stage. This dramaturgy is based on individual improvisations that director includes and tolerates, suggesting new ones.

Postnarrative dramaturgy is based on the theory of neo-narratology. Although controversial, this theory is strong and claims that theater now is in the postnarrative stage of dramaturgy.

But this is not the only working dramaturgy. Visual dramaturgy is a term that was proposed by Knut Arntzen to describe the type of performance without text. It could be the “Theatre of images” by Robert Wilson, dance theater, musical theater, and any and every other “performance art” and “performative action”. Visual dramaturgy shifts the focus from the text to the image. There is, of course, its own composition, the emphasis is on the visual that has its own legitimacy, symbolism, which it shares with the audience. A visual dramaturge works like painting artist: he works in space and time that is before us. This does not mean that there is no text template. On the contrary. It very often exists, it is even necessary, as a kind of libretto, but the attitude towards it is different from the classic attitude. It’s not about the illustration of the text, its interpretation or explanation. This is a sort of sense of the text, its visual presentation.

Dance dramaturgy indicates the difference between theater and dance dramaturgy. The former deals with the dramatic action and scene, and the latter is based on the non-verbal occurrence and dance. Dance dramaturge seeks to dramatize a moment in which to connect a dancer, his game and what at the moment is seen or experienced by an observer. This is a very difficult task of trying to follow the bodies in space and their confrontation with author’s ideas.

The seventh type is dramaturgy of the spectator: a post-dramaturgical dramaturgy. A lot has been written about it, at least abroad. With us less. But this did not prevent us from talking about it as something that is ubiquitous in our theaters, at least in the last ten years. It was featured in a time of great crisis of dramaturgy. And now we are already speaking about the crisis of post-dramaturgy. Post-dramaturgy rejects any semiotic and intercultural explanation, even the objective and critical view of the world. It exists as a dramaturgy of the last chance, a method which has preserved some of the old principles of dramaturgy, but adapted them to the modern situations of artistic interpretations. It is mentioned as interpretation by the means of wonder. It is based on the theory of interpretation, which allows to establish a link between the planned and realized, between theory and practice, between what is wanted and what is actually achieved.
Performative dramaturgy is dependent on the player, actor, director and audience. An artist among artists, playwright is no longer a depressed man because the whole world becomes dramaturgical phenomenon.

English dramaturge John Elsom, when writing about the transformations in our time that followed under the influence of new technology, talks about the fear of words. Words are, according to him, inadequate, they interfere with practical solutions, but they are still, “our last protection against attempts to digitize the complete human experience.”

Finnish teatrolog Max Rinanen, in his essay “Learning from the dramaturge – notes on today’s function of dramaturgy,” writes about the changes of the status and meaning of dramaturge at the time of postmodernism, when the identity of the dramaturge becomes enigmatic. Such a situation has within the terms of mainstream theater culminated in the crisis in which the dramaturge is schizophrenically treated not only as a critic, editor and curator, but also as a copywriter and writer at the same time, and sometimes just as a person whose job is to make the text more easily digestible (Ana Tasić).

We could still write about dramaturgy as the creation of repertoire, about dramaturgy as the formation of the profile of theater and dramaturgy in the context of contemporary dramatic writing in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska. Also, we could write on the function of dramaturgy in the process of developing a traditional drama, in terms of Serbian theater, and art academies in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska. The possibilities are great, but unexplored. These analyses should be entered as soon as possible. The results may be surprising. We can expect encouragement, but also disappointment because dramaturgy with us has as yet been neither systematized nor organized as a scientific discipline, but as an art, which means it is treated very freely, even arbitrarily, according to the needs, or even possibilities.

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The idea that Sterijino pozorje starts a competition for modern national play was part of the idea of transforming the festival in 2006. Since then, nine dramas by nine different writers have been awarded. When reading and comparing these texts, it is unlikely that you might find a common thread. They are heterogeneous both thematically and stylistically. Thematically, these dramas include various problems and phenomena of Serbian society: contemporary family stories and the drama of the human body (Body), the problem of same sex relationships in Serbia (How good to see you again), alienation of labor in neoliberal capitalism (Ronald, please understand me...), deprivation of the right to work of citizens (Workers' chronicle), the problem of ethos and archetypal conflicts (The Illustrated encyclopedia of extinction), fascination of a small man with power (Going to Krasni), the struggle for truth regarding war crimes (Recycled crime), an independent scholar and artist in the resistance to the repressive system (Impure forces), the meaning of a moment in the life of an individual (Maybe we are Mickey Mouse). Interest of writers ranges from research forms of contemporary drama through the drama of the absurd, thriller, parody, research of Brechtian dramaturgy approach, redefinition of the Aristotelian-Hegelian dramaturgy, post-dramatic theater... When we look at the award-winning authors, there are among them winners of the Sterija Award, multiple winners of various awards for drama and literature in general, as well as artists who have just entered in the competition in the Serbian theater. By reading these drama texts, you can see that the Serbian dramaturgy develops intensively in many different directions and individual styles.
2007.
Maja Pelević
MAYBE WE ARE MICKEY MOUSE

In the text the writer describes a series of meetings with the slot for photographing as the center - now an almost forgotten relic from the era before digital images. At the time when the first photo was made, she democratized the right to portrait as self-being (I), backed by the stories with a higher meaning. Popularization of photography leads to the slot for photographing that trivializes or rather, causes ‘decline in value’ of a portrait, which now has a primarily practical value. At the time of digital photography the idea of a photo as the representation of I that has a consequent story of a higher meaning is being turned off. The rest are scattered individuals caught in various moments and pulled out of a story that has any sense...

Maja Pelević captures the situations as they come when we see a photograph that was created at the time, designed or spontaneously. Contemporary photographs are the fingerprint of time and it is exactly on these moments, not on the continuity of the story that our modern consciousness stands. We remember images, faces and details. Only later, in an attempt to find a higher purpose, (maybe) a story can be created.... By refusing to recognize the dominance of the higher sense upon the experience of life, modern European drama is destroying story. On this track this drama by Maja Pelević was created. Its essence is not in action and characters, but in the pace and rhythm of the shifts of replicas. The whole piece is made of what Jean-Pierre Sarazak calls “de-dramatization”. Maybe we are Mickey Mouse consists of a series of micro-conflicts in quick succession, without a solid reciprocal links, creating a sense of infra-dramatic, deeply subjective view of the crumbled world. Sentences follow each other in quick succession through forms of stage directions and replicas negating the sense of division at which stage directions describe the action and place, and replicas record what the characters say.

In this piece every sentence could / should be spoken, because only all of them together give the full effect of the text. The power of this text lies in intermissions (as opposed to the continuity of bourgeois drama), repetitions and variations (as opposed to linear and chronological bourgeois drama). However, this drama, although it destroys bourgeois drama, speaks about the new Serbian urban and civil society. Its “heroes” are a man in his late thirties with a funny hairdo that strives to keep his life in order, a girl with a blue hat and a guy with a backpack on his back who may have fallen in love, two girlfriends – one with green hair, one with beer... Images follow one another, so the viewer, since he knows what happened before and after the shooting, can listen to the text inserts describing what should be seen in the photograph, and to reflect upon the question as to how many images reflect what happened immediately before and during shooting, and to consider whether it is a photo, actually a true print of reality, and what is reality today, here, in Belgrade, in Serbia, in Europe... He can also hear the statistics on photographs of machines and rules of usage. But, do the facts and figures tell us anything about the world, about us, scattered and caught between the thousands and thousands of photos?

The premiere of the drama Maybe we are Mickey Maus was in 2009 on the “Rasa Plaović” stage of the National Theatre in Belgrade. The director was Matjaž Pograjc. Sterijino pozorje was a co-producer.

2008.
Filip Vujošević
RONALD, PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME...

For his drama Ronald, please understand me...Filip Vujošević was rewarded in 2008. That year marked the start of global crisis of neoliberal capitalism that lasts until today. This drama announces the ideas that through the development of the crisis of capitalism once
again become current, as Marx wrote a hundred or more years ago – the alienation of worker from his work and the fruits of labor. The heroes in Vujošević’s drama work in a restaurant from the chain of fast food “McDonald” restaurants. However, the characters (and we who follow them) do not have the feeling that they actually make food, or that people eat that food. They treat food as anonymous product to be delivered at the right time, in the right way, otherwise there will be sanctions. In the event that a worker fulfills all the requirements, he receives the badge employee of the month and a right to promotion. Constant play between punishment and reward leads to alienation of the worker from himself. This is what at the beginning of the play the hero called Piece says, preparing to become worker of the month. He realizes that the best way is to focus on the success, to stop thinking, to disconnect the brain and even stop paying attention to the billboards while driving to work, i.e. to become a kind of man-machine.

Alienation from labor and products of work creates alienation in interpersonal relationships too. People are no longer friends and colleagues, they are made into things. This is particularly evident towards the so-called socially vulnerable groups – people who in any way need the necessary understanding and support. Alienation from work is ordinary toiling, and alienated worker is in danger of going crazy as Charlie Chaplin in Modern Times. Still, even the flimsiest and tiny little love and emotion sometimes manages to break through the walls of neoliberal capitalism as a blade of grass in the concrete. Piece, a former employee of the month who was looking for love, finds it; Olga, who is known as mentally disabled, finds a soul mate; daughter finds a man who could be her father...

Still, Filip Vujošević avoids that his drama becomes a sugary melodrama. Emotional “outbursts” are just moments and actors quickly go on their ways. The thing that has fundamentally changed is the unmasking of illusions that in a larger package of French fries there are more potatoes than in the mid-size package. This banal detail from the life of fast food restaurants becomes a crack in the polished world of neoliberal capitalism. It becomes a leak that proves that in this world packaging is more important than the product, and form is more important than content. Filip Vujošević spotted this crack and presented it through a metaphor. The crack is still expanding.

Drama Ronald, please understand me had a premiere on the “Rasa Plaović” stage of the National Theatre in Belgrade. The play was directed by Ana Tomović. The premiere was in 2009.

Branislava Ilić

BODY

Branislava Ilić has written an exciting, shocking and modern play regarding the problem of the body in contemporary society. What remains of the body when the mystification of “forbidden fruit” is substracted, when it stops being the source of enjoyment and satisfaction? What is left of our identity when you deprive it of its body? Modern drama does not treat the body as a source of eroticism and lust, but as a matter prone to decay, whose decomposition decomposes our identity too. This drama by Branislava Ilić stands along this line. The drama speaks about a son and his wife who take care of the old, demented father. The relationship between the son and the incapacitated father is very exciting and upsetting. The son, even though an adult, finds it hard to accept the fact of his father’s dementia and requires him to behave and talk like an adult and healthy man, while allowing himself infantile outbursts. Although he has to take care of his father, he wants to stay his parents’ child until the very end. Who is child here, who is father, and is it necessary for our parents to pass away so that we can understand that we have to grow up? And, generally speaking, how to handle the knowledge that our parents have bodies too and that they collapse just like ours?
Lela, a wife and daughter-in-law, is a good nurse of her father-in-law. At the same time, inside her there goes a serious and difficult conversation with her own father. The body is the subject of the conflict. The body that bears scars as a testimony to the unpleasant misunderstandings and neglect of the daughter by the father. The body of a woman who has still not resolved the infantile conflict with her father, and is already facing the consequences of her own age. Do we always remain children of our parents, regardless of our age? The relationship of elderly parents and children, but in this respect jammed children, is one of the great themes of contemporary Serbian society. Who depends on whom, who is to be blamed and for what?

The third level is the physical relationship of husband and wife, Lela and Vojkan. Under the burden of caring for the father and unresolved conflicts between adult child—parent, the marriage between two people crashes when it comes to the physical aspect. In caring for the father the spouses lost their own physical contact. They lost sense of their own bodies and the sense for a human, as well as a lover’s attitude towards the partner. Body is nothing but a source of pain and various inconveniences. To what extent love between a man and a woman depends on their physical contact, and to what extent is it spiritual, intellectual? Can partnership exist without one of these two aspects? Great kids do not have children of their own so the death of the father and son's inability to accept that ends the marriage. Lela leaves her husband and his deceased father in order to find her own father, and finally resolve things between them. Can anything rational and final be concluded when it comes to body, or body, our own and someone else’s, should be accepted as such and we should lie next to the beloved being? The body remains as the last and final metaphysical retreat. Truly horrible, true and sobering.

The play Body premiered at the ‘Puls’ theatre in March 2013. It was directed by Stevan Bodroza.

2009.

Petar Mihajlović

WORKERS’ CHRONICLE

Workers’ Chronicle in itself has something of a documentary drama. It speaks about contemporary social situation on which the media report every time—a long-term strike of the workers of the factory that collapsed in an attempt of ownership transformation. The writer speaks with compassion, understanding and irony of this daily-accurate social event. He notes an important paradox: the people in these social conflicts have no identity, although each player has a specific, personal drama. Workers differ only by ordinal numbers and years of service, and the “main worker”, i.e. the worker without a number is a contemporary everyman. “Other persons”, according to the writer’s proposal can be played by the same actors who play those seven workers. This is because the common thread of all persons is that they do not understand the situation in which they find themselves. They differ in the way that they do not understand and the “modes” depend on the social position of a given conflict. In the same manner that the characters have no identity, they also have no names, but their occupations differ. The play is close to being a farce and that saves the Workers’ Chronicle from being a melodrama that like a shadow flies over the sad life stories of the characters.

The special value of this play is found in the dialogues and monologues that have a touch of documentary and at the same time indicate that the writer knows the jargon and voice patterns of the social milieu of which he writes. The end of the play is reminiscent of the end of De Sika’s film Miracle in Milan: there the homeless take off into the sky, and here the workers realize the dream of reviving the production. Still, the writer is not satisfied with that, but takes another turn and bring the Worker back into the “reality” as the gravedigger of his own social class. This is a humorous point of this play that the whole case is referred back to us viewers, who
are not only the viewers of the play *Workers' Chronicle* but viewers of everyday social drama. Viewers who no longer distinguish people and their drama, cannot tell the difference between those that strike from those who are hungry and those who in protest perform self-mutilation or even suicide. Because we are no longer able to distinguish between people and their dramas, we do not understand them, but because we do not understand them, we also fail to understand our situation. By laughing at the characters of the *Workers' Chronicle*, we are, in fact, laughing at us and that is laughter that hurts.

*Workers' Chronicle* premiered at the National Theatre in Banja Luka in 2010, directed by Ana Đorđević. Sterijino pozorje was a co-producer.

2010.

**Saša Večanski**

**RECYCLED CRIME**

For his drama *Recycled crime* Saša Večanski was awarded in 2010. Drama deals with the problem that has been embarrassingly actual even since the time of the wars of the nineties, and that is covered up war crimes together with the associated unsolved political killings. The main hero of the play Dimitrije – doctor pathologist, wakes up after a long coma. He wishes to return to normal life, but the ghosts of the past haunt him. A “former” state security agent is stalking him; he was involved in the murders investigated by the pathologist and is responsible for a car accident in which the main character almost died. Step by step, scene by scene, Dimitrije recognizes that the solution is not in hiding and forgetting, but in dealing with crimes and criminals. In the style of a good thriller Saša Večanski gradually builds tension: the hoop tightens around the main character, anonymous offenders threaten his family, the family of the main character is in danger, in the critical moment he gets help from an old friend from work... This is a drama that successfully incorporates elements of a dramaturgy thriller. The characters are psychologically convincing and consistent, the writer of the story carefully places clues that intrigue the reader and lead to an outcome, the tension is gradually improving to the height of an unexpected but logical outcome. However, Saša Večanski does not allow the mechanism of the genre to mislead him and become an end in itself, but he delicately uses the genre in order to get to the main question: To what extent is an individual responsible for the operation of the mechanisms of anonymous society, and can an individual change anything? The answer is affirmative, but without illusions about the omnipotence of a courageous individual.

And here lies the main strength, modernity, and if you want beauty of this play—in the lack of illusion that an individual can change the course of history, but also in the awareness that a responsible person is obliged to contribute to the general well-being. In his thematic and ideological basis of the play Saša Večanski places the issue of whether there is a higher order, morality, god... Is the existence of God, and the related moral order, necessary for an individual to make order in his soul? Does this order in the soul come from God or from our need for emotional warmth, and the need to love your neighbor as yourself and readiness, as well as the courage to contribute to shedding light on the truth for his own and other people’s peace? This theme runs discreetly through the actions and speech of the so-called minor characters – Dara– Dimitrije’s mother, an old woman – anonymous mother of a never buried victim, and Alex, a former sniper soldier... In opposition to them there stand characters who put personal comfort ahead of the right to life and a worthy death of others. The life path of the main character demonstrates that the choice between these two options is something that people in this area have long faced and that will happen until the private benefit does not flinch from the truth and justice that give rise to good of the whole society. The answer to the question of how long it will last depends on the question what kind of a role each one of us chooses.
2011.

**Vojislav Savić**

**GOING TO KRASNI**

Drama *Going to Krasni* is a comedy similar to theater of the absurd. The starting situation is realistic – one urban family sold their apartment and moved to the country in search of a cleaner, healthier and more normal life. They opened a motel. Business is bad, but the parents still hope it would be better. Unrest to the souls of the refugees from the city hell is brought by a telephone announcement of the arrival of a group of guests led by a man who identifies himself as a minister. Parents start hoping that a distinguished guest might help them improve their business. They start extensive preparations for the reception and little by little, step by step, the author leads us to the conclusion that one cannot escape from himself. Namely, the so-called big city evil is placed right inside the heroes of this drama, and it is the fact that they are poltroons, that they have a sense of inferiority, the belief that someone else at a higher social position, can with a magic wand solve their problems. Absurd develops gradually in this play.

First, as the messenger of the authorities appears Kiki from the security. He examines “whether the place is safe”. The game of safety inspection works in such a way that an ordinary man feels insecure and obedient when faced with the lower levels of authority. Kiki supposedly protects the life of the Minister, because there are many people who want to kill him. He throws empty phrases and piles of nonsense that parents carefully listen to. Daughter, because of whom the parents apparently fled the city, is the only one that recognizes foolish behavior of the unusual guest, but the parents silence her – it is the authority, no less. The Minister appears with his wife and with Vojislav (writer’s namesake, former writer and poet, and now a horseman)... The group is bizarre. Minister walks around talking nonsense, and the wife rudely interrupts him. The absurdity lies in the fact that the vocabulary, standard political and social phrases are used in extremely inappropriate situations. The Minister holds meaningless political speeches and toasts, and parents, owners of the motel, in the hope that he might help them, applaud and let this crazy situation develop. Lydia reveals that she used to work as an escort, and the minister accepts this with enthusiasm and praises modern youth as a promising future for the country. We gradually realize that the chatter by the minister and his entourage aims to investigate the tolerance of the host and also to play out all the possible variants of subordinate-superior relationship. The minister calls Lydia to go with him into the room. The parents, who had hitherto listened reverently, humbly pray not to do that because that is exactly why they had moved their only daughter, to save her from prostitution. The minister rudely rejects them, and Lydia readily follows him into the room. The bodyguard also follows. The minister and the bodyguard rape and mistreat Lydia while the minister’s wife peeps through a keyhole, and Vojislav speaks nonsense that he was once a poet, and now he is a horseman. No one has the strength to oppose violence and absurdity. After they have had their fun, the representatives of the authority leave without paying the bill. The family remains to silently clear up the mess. The phone rings again. It is the head of state personally. How to resist authority?

The pre-premiere of *Going to Krasni* was at the National Theatre “Sterija” in Vršac, directed by Žanko Tomić. The premiere was held in 2013. The co-producer of the play was Sterijino pozorje.

2012.

The contest was not announced on the basis of decision of the Board that it should be held biannually. The following year the decision was changed, and the contest is announced annually.
Drama *Impure forces* belong to the apart-type of plays in which the author of the poetic-realist way in the form of conversational drama brings different views on the situation of the independent intellectual and artist, Mikhail Bulgakov, in the repressive (Stalinist) regime. On the other hand, Vićanović through this piece examines the dramatic form and destiny of Russian writers. *Impure forces* are the writer’s comment on the novel *The Master and Margarita*, written in a style that alludes to Bulgakov drama. Vićanović places Bulgakov in a position similar to the position of the main character of the novel *The Master and Margarita* in order to examine to what extent the author’s own destiny was inspiration for his work. There are several common points but they are hidden and concern the very image of the world and the problem of impure forces. In difficult times, hungry, dangerous and troubled times, the man is a wolf to man. From readiness to impose huge damage on someone else because of our own benefit, however small, come most (perhaps all) of the troubles of this world. Through this piece there goes a whole defile: an intelligence agent disguised as a waiter, an inspector of the secret service, an official who deals with censorship, an artist on a mission... All of them together and each of them separately are trying to make Bulgakov give up his way of writing and accept the pact with the system. There are various methods of breaking a person: from storming into an apartment and taking the files, stalking, meddling into private lives, starvation, and then helping to survive, placing on the repertoire, praise the talent, then taking the play from the repertoire and above all and foremost, interviews, threats, persuasion, persuasion...

And what about the writer? Why doesn’t he agree, and thus save himself and his wife from existential anguish, and the system from the awkward position? This is something that doesn’t even occur to our dramatic hero Mikhail Bulgakov, and that is the main challenge that this play, in the apart form, directs towards our times. We can easily agree with the claim that we live in a time in which, for the sake of personal comfort or fear of its loss, we easily accept many things. Thanks to a number of cameras in public spaces, social networks and mobile phones, today virtually anyone can be monitored. Today it is not necessary to be a rebel and an artist of Mikhail Bulgakov’s stature to be exposed to public view and mockery. Further, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the fate of Mikhail Bulgakov is possible today? Can any writer in any more or less free country, in the times of FB statutes and tweets, keep on frustrating the representatives of the system so that they concurrently carefully read his work and persecute him? What is the severity and duration of the written and spoken word today? Drama *Impure forces* makes a careful reader uncomfortable – the times and the world of which it speaks is far behind us, but the situation of the main character is uncomfortably close.

Drama *Impure Forces* by Ljubisa Vićanović was performed at the National Theatre in Užice directed by Bogdan Janković. The premiere was in 2016. Sterijino pozorje was a co-producer.

This is a piece in which the elements of Brechtian dramaturgy intersect with the characteristics of fairy tales in order to talk about love which, like a revolutionary storm, crashes all obstacles and prejudices in front of it. An important segment of this drama are the stage directions and songs. In the stage directions Olga Dimitrijević explicitly gives her attitude and teaches the au-
dience how the situations from the play can be resolved in real life. Through the songs she creates a real link between emotions of the heroine's generation and contemporary emotion. The author has a negative attitude towards the banal extortion of which the contemporary society is full; in opposition, the author offers the spirit of communion and optimism which, in her opinion, adorned the time when the heroines of this play built their world. This regret for the times past, for Yugoslavia, for socialism, here is not passive, sniffling and nostalgic, but tries to take on the enthusiasm and optimism peculiar to that generation, which lacks in our listless, suspicious and cynical time.

In the era of the triumph of cynicism, acting from altruism and faith in the possibility of improving man are brought under suspicion, and therefore Brechtian dramaturgy, which ultimately occurs in the administration of this conviction, is veiled with the elements of fairy tale: the heroine is weak at the beginning and strong at the end of a fairy tale; the bad guys are quite wicked and corrupt; the heroine meets allies along the road and wins them over with her own goodness; miraculous powers appear at a crucial time and help the heroine to overcome obstacles; evildoers are eventually defeated, a heroine and her assistants live happily ever after to the end of life. The reason why this fairy tale is so modern and why it makes such a strong impression upon the reader lies precisely in the reasons why this time is characterized by cynicism – this fairy tale, just like any other fairy tale, talks about a problem that in real life is hard to be resolved, about great frustration of individuals, about fates that are very common in real life is, but do not end up as a fairy tale.

*It's so good to see you again* is a fairy tale about the fate of pensioners who have acquired their pension at the time of socialism, and whose value was devoured by the dragon of transition. Sad is the fate of our oldest citizens in the world that understands nothing but profit, loans, income-expenses... They have been left on the side like some relics of an ancient, forgotten and neglected epoch, and the young, crazed with the race to survive, talk to them only if the elderly can help them either with money or with free household work. This is their fairy tale where there is life and love even after the death of a loved one, in which the younger, richer and more insolent cannot take them out of their flat... The pensioners take a decisive turn, beat the greedy idiots and live a life full of love, all the way. Indeed, the reader's heart trembles at the thought of how it is in the real life, and how it could be as shown in this play.

*At last but not least* this is a piece that can be assigned to the domain of *queer* aesthetics, at the crossroads between the radical and Marxist feminism. For this aspect of the text it is important how it will be portrayed in a co-production of Atelier 212 and Sterijino pozorje for the season 2016/17. This play will have to talk about the problems of same-sex relationships in Serbia, having in mind that it addresses the diverse range of people. From the play *How good to see you again* we understand that love knows no gender, but knows of dignity, respect and honor.

2015.

**Božidar Knežević**

*THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EXTINCTION*

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of extinction* is an extremely witty perverted comedy. In a classic comedy, the young fall in love, the old (and the old order) prevent love, but young people with the support of various assistants (servants, friends and reasonable family members) win, get married and change the order. In the comedy by Božidar Knežević the old order wins – the Koljibbas successfully prevent love and return the prodigal successor to their ranks. By the main story and tendency towards black comedy and absurdity, this drama by
Božidar Knežević is on the trail of the first comedy by Dušan Kovačević *The Marathon Family*. Both plays speak of a fixed ethos that can be patriarchal or matriarchal (which is the same thing, because a patriarchal man is brought up and shaped by his mom). Part of compulsory folklore are “eternal and sworn” enemies, rich, hateful tradition and mystification of one’s own origin. However, the Koljibabas went a step further than the Topalović. They belong to the ethos that has gone through the lens of popular culture of the 21st century. Through the aesthetics of this drama it is obvious that Božidar Knežević is perfectly versed in contemporary multimedia art, that he is good in comics, film, TV dramaturgy, performance, and that he also knows the problems of the national ethos and various aspects of its transformation (and deviations) that occurred under the pressure of modernism. In the contemporary society ethos is in constant and simultaneous extinction / persistence. Long-standing, old (almost ancient) generation of carriers of koljibaba-like tradition is very tough and selfishly obsessed with keeping life (we say selfish because no sacrifice is too great to meet their own lifeinertia). Young people are there only to maintain and extend life as imagined by the older generations and created for themselves and the future generation. The tradition represented by the Koljibabas is incredibly fantastic and bizarre. They came to this planet (of course!) from a distant star escaping from archenemy, winged lizards. These first Koljibabas are also called astrobabas or archbabas. They brought with them kolji-mushrooms – pets and food at the same time. In the style of SF parody, the Koljibabas explain how they inhabited this world, and how they made new species – algo-mushrooms, pear-mushroom, kolji-fish... Naturally, some kind of a mistake (mutation?) created the Drugobabas, too, that greatly resemble the Koljibabas and are with them in frequent interaction that is war. The Koljibabas have their homeland – this is where the play resembles *Radovan III* and the idea of returning to their homeland (Koljigora) where everything will be resolved. The return to their homeland (which is actually not their homeland because the Koljibabas came from the stars) is related to the need for a final showdown with any and all opponents – until the eldest Koljibaba at the end becomes the youngest and the only one and flies into the sky or disappears in the apocalypse, whatever. The absurd drama of the Koljibabas suggests mechanisms by which the modern world creates and uses the myth of the nation, clan, in order to cover up the obvious, which is that behind ethnic exclusion there is always banal self-centeredness.
Tanja Šljivar

We Are the Ones Our Parents Warned Us About

A play for two characters
Bosnian playwright Tanja Šljivar, Serbian actor Željko Maksimović, and American writer and theater scholar Cory Tamber first met in 2012 in Belgrade, Serbia to work together on a series of original performances created for underutilized public spaces in the city. As our sense of artistic and personal connection to one another grew beyond that original project, we became interested in two things: the idea of literary translation as a communal act, as a collective formative practice; and the excellence of Serbo-Croatian-language theater compared with the relative lack of excellent translations of dramatic texts from the language into English. The latter problem, we knew, was partially an issue of fluency (so few English speakers learn Serbian), but it also had to do with the difficulty of translating the complexity of the cultural and historical reality of the Balkans into an English-speaking context without weighting it down with endless footnotes and explanations. We began to consider collaborative translation as a method of using our interest to address the lack we had perceived. Šljivar’s work is a particular challenge because her characters often speak idiomatic regional Bosnian that would at times be difficult even for a native speaker to untangle. Her Sterija Award-winning We Are the Ones Our Parents Warned Us About is a two-person play in which the accidental meeting of a middle-aged woman and a teenage boy in a public restroom one summer evening leads them into a role-play through which they try, and ultimately fail, to narrate their whole lives to one another. Milan and Mara, the characters in the play, face the same gap that the three of us come up against in our collaborations: the one of orienting and re-orienting within one another’s languages and contexts. From slanted Bosnian folk-songs to intricate references to Serbian TV shows and bloody regional conflict, the script is dense with elusive, allusive meaning.
Tanja Šljivar

We Are the Ones Our Parents Warned Us About

A play for two characters

Translated from the Serbo-Croatian by Cory Tamler and Željko Maksimović

Characters:

MILAN
a couple of hours more and he’ll be 17, came here tonight to celebrate his birthday

MARA
45, came here tonight to fix her make-up and to rest

Everything takes place in Bosnia, in a public toilet
... and I walked in back with crazy Neal: he was telling me about the inscriptions carved on shithouse walls in the east and in the west. “They’re entirely different, in the East they make cracks and corny jokes of all kinds; in the West they just write their names, Red O’Hara, Bluffton Montana, came by here, date, the reason being the enormous loneliness that differs just a shade and cunthair as you move across the Mississippi.”

*On the Road*, Jack Kerouac, 1957

*And so the years, the young years walk by in this damn country.*

A Ukrainian forced laborer in Germany, writing on the wall of a Gestapo prison in Cologne, 1944

*Free market and marketing, get out of the University.*

Graffiti in the women’s toilet at the University library in Giessen, 2013
Although it’s public, the restroom is white and sterile. Because it’s public, it’s covered in graffiti. People are really into describing the kind of dick they like on the walls of the restroom. People are into describing what it would be like to shove a wooden plank up the ass of whatever ethnic minority they hate on the restroom walls. I’m into writing messages telling happy people to go fuck themselves on the toilet wall. Milan and Mara are in the restroom for an entire night in June. It doesn’t stink—some woman cleans it regularly and then initials the chart that tracks the hourly schedule. It might be one of those toilets you find at rest stops along highways or in big train stations, the kind that don’t even exist in Bosnia, where you put in a coin to go through the turnstile and receive a coupon for fifty cents off a coffee or a pastry. But most likely, it’s an underground toilet. It could also be a telephone booth at a post office, mottled with ballpoint pen markings, or a park where people have carved words into the bark of the trees or the wall of a squash court particolored with graffiti, or a classroom with a blackboard covered in chalk scrawls. But it’s probably a public toilet. It’s a bit dull. A bit sad as well. Milan is celebrating his 17th birthday and Mara is attractive in that way that nobody would guess she’s over 40, although she’s 45. She’s mourning old loves; Milan still doesn’t have a new one. Regularly, Milan takes a drink from a handle of whiskey he got from his dad as a birthday present. Mara and Milan are meeting each other for the first time tonight, and they understand each other well.

**Scene One**

*Dear son, my green apple*¹)

**MARA:** I’m kneeling at my son’s grave and I’m wailing. He can’t hear me anymore.

**MILAN:** I’m lying in my grave. My mother is kneeling above the grave and she’s wailing. I can’t hear her anymore.

**MARA:** I buried my son in Jošavka, or at Crni vrh, or in Brezičani, Lađevci or Šnjegotina. One of those small villages. Anyway, definitely near Čelinac. That’s where I taught him everything.

**MILAN:** I was buried here around Čelinac, in Brezičani or Šnjegotina. My mother was born here, she bought a burial plot here, for herself, but when I died first, she didn’t know what to do, it was so sudden. So to avoid taking out loans for a plot in Banjaluka, she tossed me into the plot she already had.

**MARA:** I prepared my famous veal and potato stew, except I didn’t chop the potatoes, I just threw them into the pressure cooker whole, and everyone at the funeral ate them like that, a whole potato in a spoon, all it took was a little extra chewing and no one choked.

**MILAN:** She didn’t dare call the priest. I didn’t die of natural causes.

**MARA:** He’s gone but nobody took him from me, what could I do but throw whole potatoes into the cooker, wear a tight black skirt, and head off to bury him in my own plot.

**MILAN:** Baba Đuja, she once came into my room while I was changing clothes and didn’t have any underwear on, so she went out, but first she had to cross herself, very slowly, while she looked at me, and only then closed the door and went out, and she kissed my mom with her slobbering mouth.

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1) A saying from folk songs and poems in the Balkans.
MARA: And Vuk, and Dragica, and Krstan and six Sladojevićs, and Rosa and Persa, and Andelka slobbered all over me with tears, and with snot, and with saliva and with the gum of sleep in their eyes and their dry skin flaked off their cheeks onto mine. The rest of the people just hugged me. And everyone was sorry, really sorry.

MILAN: No one at my funeral looked good except for my mom.

MARA: When I was little, I was convinced that I could jump from the third floor and not get hurt. I thought that because of a dream I had once: I’m jumping from the balcony and landing on my feet, my white sandals are in the green grass, and my ankles don’t even twist. Now that I’m big, I’m convinced that I’ll die if Baba Đuja kisses me once more at your funeral. I thought that because of the small chunks of potato and veal from my stew in the corners of her mouth. She’s chewing the whole potatoes, I am going to the toilet and with a felt pen I’m writing Dear son, my green apple.

MILAN: I’m lying in my grave and I can’t hear my mother wailing.

MARA: I’m kneeling at my son’s grave and I’m wailing. He can’t hear me anymore.

Mara is reading off the toilet’s wall a song of lamentation\(^2\) she once wrote.

MARA: Dear son,
My green apple,
Oh alas my dear unwed gallant
Whom your mother never had enough time to marry off
Nor to fry up a ton of bacon for you
Nor to wash sacks full of your socks

Nor to take out vats of your vomit
And now you have rushed away, my darling son
Dearest groom, the son of a dear mother
You did not choose yourself a bride
Young girls will never be wed
Nor will they stew sauerkraut for you
Nor will they scrub your shit down the toilet
Nor will they bind scarves over your bruises

You do not worry, my dearest heart
That you grieve your mother so very deeply
How is it that you shall not take pity
On your mother who is begging you

Not to lie about when you’re coming home
And to go off and study
And if you will not caress and pet her
At least not to beat her, your dear lonesome mother

If you were alive, I would make you scrambled eggs now.

MILAN: If I were alive, I would sit next to you now.
I’m going to kill myself, Mom.
(MARA is silent.)
Mom, I’m going to kill myself.
(MARA is silent.)

You were sitting on the blue couch, you’d just had it reupholstered with some cheap fabric, it was rough but somehow it felt nice when I would lie naked on it to jerk off when you and Dad would go visit someone, and you were smoking. I walked past you carrying a big black garbage bag filled with sneakers, you didn’t even look at me, I went into the bathroom, lied out all of the sneakers in the bathtub and let the cold water flow over them. You kept ashing your cigarette on the floor, you didn’t give a fuck about cleaning

\(^2\) The song was written in a decasyllabic meter except for the first two lines and it is based on numerous old Balkan folk songs, as well as the tradition of having a professional mourner at funerals.
it up, and you were listening to Billie's "I'll Be Seeing You" off a player that won't play pirated DVDs, you screwed yourself over cause you were the first one in the neighborhood to buy a DVD player, and although the ones the neighbors bought later were the cheap kind, they can buy a DVD on the street that has 5 unlicensed movies on it and their pieces of shit will play them all while you can't play anything but this Billie CD, thoughtlessly, but you're bumbled, you would like to watch something and it's kinda hard to find anything that isn't pirated in town. I like to walk through mud on purpose, but I don't like cleaning my sneakers with that pink cloth you gave me, so soon the bathtub was full of muddy water. You took the white remote control plastered with Scotch tape and switched to Exkluziv on RTL, you can't get enough of the pretty hostess rattling off juicy details from the lives of B-list celebrities. I lay down naked on my sneakers and the muddy water reached my nipples. You changed the channel, leaving the pretty hostess behind; now, instead of rejoicing in her elegant eyebrows, you're watching the news and rejoicing in hearing about all of the accidents that have happened without touching you. A soft cotton Adidas sneaker was wedged up my ass, a Puma underneath my back, under my neck a Reebok, I rubbed a Nike between my legs, a Kappa was floating over my belly-button and a Champion near my mouth (I bit it early on, when it really started to hurt) and a Fila bobbed up beneath my ear. You started to wonder then why I was keeping the water on for so long, so you screamed "Why are you keeping the water on so long?" I didn't answer, I took that blue razor you use to shave your armpits but almost never your legs because you don't feel like it, and I cut myself with it a little bit. My beautiful, my warm red blood was gushing out of me and you were sitting on cheap upholstery smoking. Sneakers below me, sneakers on my head, sneakers under my arm, sneakers on my pupils, sneakers in my teeth, sneakers in my capillaries, I was covered in sneakers, and patterns, and pretty lines, yellow and purple and red with air cushion soles and with cleats, made of rubber and made of plastic and made of cotton and made of polyester and made of my blood. Instead of going to get some vodka, you came to the bathroom to get me. The bathtub was filled to the brim with me and with sneakers. It was beautiful to you, you wanted to call that sensationalistic TV show you're always watching, you were staring at it amazed, then you started to scream.

MARA is screaming.

MARA: Ever since you were 10 I haven’t been able to look at you naked, that’s why I screamed.

MILAN: You bought me high-top sneakers, soft around the ankles with white shoelaces that turned grey after three days.

MARA: I also bought you those air cushion sneakers and a bright red line on the side.

MILAN: And soccer cleats.

MARA: And tight black sweatpants.

MILAN: And white socks to tuck the sweatpants into.

MARA: And a windbreaker, black.

MILAN: And a sweatshirt, blue, cotton.

MARA: And bright green with a Nike symbol.

MILAN: And one with a purple zipper, made out of something like silk. We always went shopping in sports stores on Gospodska Street and in Zenit and in Boska when you would get a paycheck, but once when you were drunk, you took me to the market. You kept asking the women if the sneakers they were selling

3) The original says: "You wanted to call Exploziv." Exkluziv and Exploziv are popular sensationalistic TV shows; while Exkluziv shows intriguing details from the lives of mediocre celebrities, Exploziv deals with real-life tragedies.
were fakes or the real thing, you were just fucking around, they looked blankly at you and one told you “What do you mean real thing, the real thing costs a hundred marks”. Remember when I was a baby and you were dead drunk with a bottle of vodka in one hand and a bottle of milk that you never even heated in the other, how you would stick the bottle in my mouth and the vodka in your mouth and sing me to sleep? (Milan is singing) Boil some coffee for me, son, just as if it’s for yourself, dear son. Aaand I will come around midnight to sit beside you. And then you would always sit on the floor and rock the crib, and I would always fall asleep. At the age of six, I learned how to make coffee just the way you liked it—let it boil once, no sugar, and then I would give the coffee to you after your seventh shot of vodka, and then we would start together: Boil some coffee for me, son and then we would sleep together in your big bed.

MARA: But coffee was always waiting for you, too, and a freshly-made bed. No matter how wasted I would get, I would always make your bed. You wouldn’t come home for ten days. From a football match. You wouldn’t come for sixteen days. From the store. You wouldn’t come for four months. From the war. You wouldn’t come for three years. From the suburban flat you moved to in Budžak. But coffee and bed were waiting for you.

MARA AND MILAN (singing together)

Make the bed for me, mother/son
Just as if it’s for yourself, dear mother/son.
Aaand I will come around midnight
To lie beside you.

MARA: Just come back to your mother, at midnight, it’s fine, at six in the morning, it’s fine, in thirteen years, it’s fine, just come back to your mother.

MILA**: If I were alive, tonight I wouldn’t go play Counterstrike in one of those gaming dens, or to a casino, or the gym, or a coffee shop, or to a club, or a bar, or a bistro, or a commissary, or a café, or to a disco, I would stay to sleep with you in the big bed.

MARA AND MILAN

(singing together, hugging and rocking each other gently, then stronger):

Don’t come, mother/son
No need
Cause I’m caressing another mother/son now
Aaand I have said
That I found a better mother/son than you

MARA: When you were alive, I had a zillion problems, now I just have one: visiting your grave.

MILA**: My mom would never say something like that, but fine.

MARA: If I had ever had a son with Vojo, he would kill himself and I would say just that. Or he would die because of Vojo, Vojo was lethal. When Vojo loved me, I was always ill. The first time we met, I got cancer of the esophagus, and then when we fucked for the first time, it metastasized to the lungs. I’m yelling at him “Vojo, I’ve got toxic shock syndrome!” He won’t even respond. In the end, I got jaundice and I would vomit constantly when he cuddled me, but he was never around, anyway. I had a fever for the first three months of our relationship, then he left me after six, married Milena later, he only gave her slight nausea, she drank beetroot every morning, so it was easier for her to bear him, I could never do that, it’s bitter.

5) Refers to places gamers would visit in the late ’90s and early 2000s, largely because not everyone owned a computer at the time. They would usually play violent games (first-person shooters and RPGs) as an escape from a war-torn reality. Extremely popular, some of them still exist today around the former Yugoslavia.

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4) Paraphrased lyrics from the Bosnian folk song “Kafu mi draga ispeci”.
MILAN: When we were coming home from a Nike shop with a sleeveless T-shirt for the gym and sneakers, white, for hanging around, I wanted to tell you “Mom, I’m going to kill myself,” but it was too hot, so I just drank Red Bull from a plastic bottle, the kind that can fit into a holder on a bike. I also wanted to say something to Gram once, that she lied to me and that we didn’t let some woman ride with us when we were supposed to, but it was so hot and sweat was pouring down Grandma’s neck and her wrinkled cleavage and I started saying something, but Gram said “Please, don’t talk now” so I didn’t say anything. I was in a horse-drawn cart, riding with Grandma from Kobatovci to Mahovljane. Uncle Ostoja was sitting in the front, he had the reins and he was the only one the brown horse would obey, because they both had a dark complexion. Grandma and I were sitting on a wooden bench behind him, I was skinny, Grandma was fat, she was sitting on a blanket, she took it all for herself and riding on the wood hurt my bony butt and a woman blocked our way. Ostoja pulled the reins, the brown horse stopped and Grandma and I jerked forward, Gram told him “For fuck’s sake, Ostoja, you’re not driving potatoes!” Auntie was also there, curled up by Grandma’s fat ankles and fat wool socks, she didn’t say anything. The woman looked at the horse’s eyes, then at Ostoja’s eyes, then at Grandma’s eyes, then at my eyes, Auntie’s eyes weren’t visible because of Grandma’s ankles. Then she said she’s from Prijedor and she wants us to give her a ride. Ostoja didn’t want to, so he drove past her. Grandma later told me this story, she said it happened to her and my aunt and Ostoja and that I wasn’t there. Then that I dreamt it. Then Aunt Slavka said she also dreamt it. Then there was television coverage on it. There was also a film. But I still think that I was driving with Gram and Uncle Ostoja and Aunt Slavka on a horse-drawn cart. And that there was a woman blocking our way in front of the brown horse, brown as uncle’s skin, who said she was from Prijedor. “I used to make ceramic tiles there at the factory, blue ones with white flowers, and pink with a white stripe down the middle, and yellow with an ochre pattern, and later I took a dump in a barrel at the factory, so they slapped me, knocked out my tooth, and they also could see my left tit and squashed it with their hands, and the beans were small and mushy, and they turned off the lights at nine, and they could see my ribs and one of my ribs broke, I don’t even remember how and another one of my teeth got smashed, that one I broke myself when there was nothing left to chew.” The woman reeked, and she had huge eyes, one green and the other grey, and you could see her bones, and Grandma told Ostoja to keep going, but not like he’s carting potatoes, like he’s carting humans, and he started up the cart, but he couldn’t go around her easily. And then I forgot it all, because it was stupid. And because I was little. And Gram also didn’t talk about it. But once she and Slavka said after lunch, “Remember when we were going to Mahovljane and a woman with huge eyes appeared,” and I said “Is that the woman that had one green eye and one grey?” and Grandma and Slavka looked at each other and said “Yes, how do you know that, you weren’t there with us?” But I knew that Gram put a cotton handkerchief over my face, because it was hot, so she wanted to cool me down and keep me from looking. And then I forgot. But later, they said on TV, “In that place where they used to manufacture tiles, they wouldn’t let people eat and they would turn off all of the lights and make them shit in barrels.” And then my aunt also dreamed about the woman. So she told Grandma, “I had a dream about her, the one with one grey eye and one green eye.” And then we really never talked about it again. Otoja didn’t even care, he was just concentrated on carting us like humans, not potatoes, he never dreamt about her.
Scene Two
June 21, two drops of blood

MILAN: I’m definitely going to have a daughter. Grandma would never even think of travelling by horse-drawn cart with a granddaughter from Kobatovci to Mahovljane. Grandma was a girl, she knows that any girl would get hot in the cart and that her little belly and tits would shake.

MARA: I’m eleven years old. And my knickers are bloody for the first time, and my groin is bloody, and my skirt is bloody, and my thighs are bloody. And my knees are bloody, but I skinned them on the cobblestones four days ago, so it’s not the same, cause they’re also yellow and green and scabby.

MILAN: I am thirty-five. I’m wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a singlet underneath and I’m sweating.

MARA: I’m standing facing a short man with a moustache. He’s wearing a white short-sleeved shirt and a singlet is showing underneath and he’s sweating. My blood would suit his shirt, cause it’s his blood.

MILAN: The girl has scabby knees and a green skirt with a ribbon on the back.

MARA: I’m wearing a green linen skirt with a ribbon on the back and I say to the man that my mom told me, when she asked her two days ago, because I really didn’t care before, that he’s my dad.

MILAN: There’s a girl with a green skirt and a ribbon on the back, she’s bleeding and I’m sweating, says she asked her mom and that she told her I’m her dad.

MARA: Daddy. Daddy, I’m bleeding, right now, and I didn’t fall, I swear, I did skin my knees, but four days ago, on the cobblestones, but I was watching where I was going. Mom drew me a map to get to your store, I go out of my house, then turn right, then the second street to the left and I stopped at the crossing, I didn’t fall, Daddy, and there’s blood running down my leg and sticking.

MILAN: What am I supposed to do with it now? Here’s some satin, use that.

MARA: He gave me some red satin from the shelf in the tailor’s shop, didn’t even know how to explain how to use it.

MILAN: And a red card I would give to a player if he kicked another player in the balls.

MARA: And a red roll of film, undeveloped, with photos he exhibited at the town gallery and in a group exhibition in Vienna.

MILAN: And a ball of red cotton I would give to a patient whose teeth I’m fixing, after I tell him to spit.

MARA: A red folder to hold wills authorizations statements proclamations and permissions.
**MILAN:** Take the red curtain from a window of the bus that I drive from Bakinci to Kobatovci each day every forty-five minutes.

**MARA:** And a red rag he uses to wipe down the bar and the thin rims of glasses.

**MILAN:** This red glove I wear when I’m changing oil in the motorcycle is also good.

**MARA:** And a piece of red chalk he uses to write formulas, containing pentane and octane and aldehydes, on the blackboard.

_He also passed me a red bowl that I could drip into._

**MILAN:** Have a tomato juice.

**MARA:** I’ll wear red lipstick to turn attention away from it.

**MILAN:** Just don’t wear red clothes, especially on Fridays. They’ll say you’re a hooker.

**MARA:** And you’re a fag.

**MILAN:** Use a party membership card to stop it up. It’s nothing, it’s nothing, I tell you. Don’t talk about it.

**MARA:** I’m not talking about it. Cause it’s nothing.

**MILAN:** Put it against your thigh.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** On your knee.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** On your belly.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** Wherever it’s leaking.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** So that it’s not showing.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** In your pants.

**MARA:** In my panties.

**MILAN:** I don’t want to know where it is, just as long as it’s not showing.

**MARA:** You spread it open, and you look into a mirror. In my panties, I tell you. Dad, will you take me to the hospital? There’s something wrong with this.

**MILAN:** I don’t know where you’re bleeding from, you’re not bleeding, there’s nowhere to bleed from, stop it, here, it’s stopped bleeding, you can’t see it under the little green skirt.

**MARA:** When my tits started growing last year, at the age of ten, Mom thought I had cancer or a blood clot at least, so she took me to the doctor who told her “Ma’am, it’s just tits,” and this winter I went sledding and when I came home, my panties were bloody, less than now, but enough to make me lose my mind, I was already eleven, Mom said “Did you fall off the sled?” I said I didn’t, Mom said “What do you mean you didn’t, you did, you fell onto a branch, on an iron fencepost, on a yellow fence.”

**MILAN:** While we were dating, your mom was always ill. After our first date she got cancer of the esophagus, and then after I spent the night at her place for the first time, it metastasized to the lungs. She called me once, said she had toxic shock syndrome, at first I didn’t want to pick up. Then she called so often that my old man said he would bust my jaw if I didn’t pick up, so I went to see her. She’d put in a tampon for the first time in her life and was out of her mind, she’d only used cotton wool before that because it was natural and odorless and because it was good enough, well it never actually leaks that much, and because it was white. I pulled out her tampon; she said I saved her life. We thought it was impossible that we would end up with a little girl, there was so much blood on the bed. However, eventually she ended up with both jaundice and you, and she would always vomit when I caressed her, but I was never there anyway. Now my wife drinks beetroot juice every morning, so she can put up with me much better than your mom, your mom could never do that, it’s bitter.
MARA: I can see clearly that my mother is insane.

MILAN: I can drive you to the hospital, but I can’t talk to the doctor, I don’t know what’s wrong with you anyway.

MARA: Milanka and Branka already have their periods, Ljubica doesn’t but when she feels like avoiding gym classes, she lies and puts some tomato in her panties, sometimes she doesn’t even do that, she’ll just say “Sir, I have my period today.” She’s excused from gym classes more often than she participates, so sometimes she gets her period three times a month, but the teacher doesn’t notice because he drinks too much and he likes sparing girls from participating in class so that their hands don’t get scratched up by the rusty climbing bar or a rough basketball or a nicked bocce ball. When the three of them are sitting out of the gym class, it’s great for the rest of us, because our teacher isn’t watching us then and can’t see how clumsy we are at volleyball, okay not all of us are, just me and a girl called Bozana. The teacher then watches Ljubica’s hands, the ones he spared from gym class, and Milanka’s neck and Branka’s back, he doesn’t see the way I’m trying to serve and failing. And Milanka told me that she and Pedja never kiss when she is excused from gym class and she’s glad because she actually doesn’t like it when he’s sticking his big tongue in her mouth, so during these days she’s really excused, from everything, completely. Now I will also be able to say “Sir, I have my period today,” and I won’t get busted for not knowing how to serve and I will sit in my teacher’s lap and he will look at the back of my head and breathe into it and he will tell me that I am pretty, and he won’t see Bozana who also doesn’t know how to serve and Bozana will be grateful. And I am also glad that, since none of the boys in the class thinks I am pretty, at least the gym teacher will think so.

I am sitting in my dad’s living room. This is the first time I’ve seen him in eight years. He has another version of Mom, and another version of me. And I found this other me on Facebook, then I looked up where she lives on Google Maps, then I rang the bell and Dad opened the door. I am eleven and in half an hour, I will get my first period.

MILAN: I am sitting in my living room. There’s a girl who says that I am her dad. She’s wearing a white collared shirt under a blue sweater. She’s fat and I tell her so. You’re fat.

MARA: Mom feeds me well.

MILAN: My daughter isn’t fat.

MARA: I am your daughter.

MILAN: There she is in the photo. She also has a blue sweater and a white shirt; so yes, the two of you do resemble one another, sort of.

MARA: When I was six, Mom told me you were an engine driver. I went to the park because there are no trains there. Okay, except that one in front of the museum, but on this train it says A locomotive used during the National Liberation Struggle for the needs of the National Liberation Movement in Bosanska Krupa, Gornji Podgradci, but I wasn’t afraid I would run into you, because Mom never told me you liberated any nation. This park also has a cannon and a tank and for my last birthday, ten of us climbed up on the cannon and we took photos. When I was eight, she told me you were a tailor, so I went to a swimming pool and I was diving with my eyes open, okay so it was a children’s pool and okay I was touching the bottom covered with yellow square tiles, but I only had my trunks, I had nothing that you might have sewn. Then last year she told me you were a bum and a maniac, so I didn’t go out on the street for a month. I wanted to use my hula hoop, but I could do it in my room as well.

MILAN: I’m an accountant.
MARA: Shit, now I don't know where not to go. Where do accountants work?

MILAN: In offices. I am also learning magic tricks in my spare time.

MARA: Ah fuck, I love the circus, I can't avoid that too much. Once, there under the big top, I rode an elephant, I've got a photo of it, and I was afraid you would see me and make me get off; see, I was right, the last thing I need is somebody at school telling me “I saw your old man, he's pulling a rabbit out of a hat or a pigeon from a hanky” or some dumb thing like that, but okay nobody at my school knows you anyway, but regardless, can you please refrain from performing in the circus, the Italian one that performs in Banjaluka every summer? I always dress appropriately for the circus: neon green and pink pants I got on the discount rack along with half the neighborhood.

MILAN: There's pudding in the fridge, go find it yourself.

MARA: He gave me the raspberry pudding my other mom made for the other me and there was still some left when my stomach started to hurt and I told him I needed to go to the toilet. I could not sit on the toilet seat because mom told me never to sit on other people's toilets, and Dad was definitely other people, so I pulled down my panties and squatted above the seat and saw the bottles of shampoo beside the bathtub: one said anti-dandruff, the other one said it was for damaged hair, that bottle was bigger, and there was also a pink shampoo bottle with a princess on it, so gross; and that’s when I saw the blood on my panties. Dad is devouring the remains of the raspberry pudding in the living room, and here's me in the bathroom, writing on the tiles with my bloody finger: June twenty-first, two drops of blood. June twenty-second: there were sixteen. June twenty-third: so many drops of blood that I thought it was all over and in a few hours I would be dead.

MILAN: The anti-dandruff shampoo is mine.

MARA: And this happened every month and Mom gave me a card to put Xs on for days when there's blood, but told me never to show it to anyone. Seventeen years later, also in June, the drops won't come, even those first two. I will tell that to Branko, he will pretend that he hasn't heard it. We will have Ivana, then Marko. Marko will be prettier, it was clear from the moment the nurses first showed him to me, wrapped into a cotton diaper. Branko's mother also said it instantly, as well as all the women from the neighborhood.

MILAN: The girl with a white collared shirt underneath a blue sweater has just peed in the toilet and now she is standing in my living room again and saying something about blood.

MARA: My panties are bloody.

MILAN: You fell on the tiles.

MARA: I can walk, I didn’t fall. I can walk on cold surfaces, and I can walk barefoot, and on small platforms, you taught me how to walk.

MILAN: Then you're not bleeding.

MARA: Dad, take me to the hospital.

MILAN: I have to go shopping. I can drop you off but your mom has to pick you up.

MARA: Mom and me are standing by the fridge and eating. White bread topped with fresh creamy kajmak made with real cream, and with prosciutto and ajvar. I can taste the roasted red peppers in the ajvar, and the garlic. We each have our own plate and I’m also eating a little jam on the side, Mom says it’s disgusting to mix it like that. Then she cuts a huge slice of the cake that was frozen and waiting for the Xs
in the calendar. We eat the entire cake together, because it’s a chocolate cake, and it also has cherries as decoration. Mom says you and me are the same, we bleed on the same days, we only need one card, you mark all of the Xs down and tell me when the fourteenth day from the first X comes, that’s when I cannot see Zoka. You always eat at the table. Your other wife and the other me don’t have their periods on the same days, they are not the same like me and my mom. Mom says she can’t wait until she gets to mark the Xs down only every sixth month, or never, can’t wait for her tits to get smaller so she can hang out with Zoka more often, but maybe she won’t even be up for it by then. Mom also says that in her day, she only used cotton wool. Mom says that every time something starts or ends you are allowed to be crazy, so now I am allowed, cause it just started; and she will also be allowed, in about twenty years, when the blood stops, when her cycle ends, to be crazy once more. I only have one more thing to ask you—Mom is stupid so she can’t answer me—is Goran Bregović living in Sarajevo?

**Scene Three**

**Just say it, General or A leafy mountain, on it a brother and a sister**

**MILAN:** At the club, I am watching my sister dancing. She’s wearing a short black dress with fringe on the hem. She’s alone on a small dance floor, only three steps separate me from her. I yell at her to get down from there, she can’t hear me.

**MARA:** At the disco, I went up the three steps to the dance floor so I could dance there, I don’t want to dance with the pole ‘cause then everyone would look. I practice at home, barefoot in front of the mirror, so I’m surprised by how nice it is at the disco in my high heels and with green and red and purple lights flaring all over me and tomorrow no one will say that I’m crazy the way Dad says when I’m dancing in front of the mirror, because this is a disco, it’s normal to do it here.

**MILAN:** I am wearing a tight black t-shirt and a lot of hair gel, my hair smells stronger than the sweet machine-made smoke that’s wrapping around my sister’s nylon tights.

**MARA:** I am dancing my mind off, I am dancing, I don’t give a fuck, dancing, my dress is so tight, there’s no tomorrow, there’s no nothing. *Last night from the ashes, I stole some fire. I’m still sleeping.* 6) I see my brother through the smoke, he’s saying something to me.

**MILAN:** She sees me, comes down off the stage towards me, of course some jerks are looking at her, one in a white t-shirt with print that’s supposed to look like red spray-paint, the other in a white t-shirt with a

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6) Ceca is the stage name of Svetlana Ražnatović. She is a Serbian turbo-folk singer popular throughout the Balkans whose career began in the 80s. A widow of a war criminal and a criminal herself, she is nevertheless adored by many and is also known as the Serbian mother. In one translator’s opinion, she is also a queen of trash. These are lyrics from one of her songs: “Ja još spavam u tvojoj majici.”
decal of some Chinese letters on it which has started peeling off over his left pec, the third one in a white t-shirt with a decal of a cobweb and the fourth one in a regular white t-shirt, tight and sleeveless. Fuck them all.

MARA: Four guys in white t-shirts are watching me, luckily I’m wearing this V-neck dress that shows off both of my tits, but not too much, and there comes my bro wanting to tell me something, his hair smells nice, I can smell it in spite of the thick smoke of all the Marlboros and the stink of sour wine and sweet cola and vodka and the yellow light and silver disco ball which is broken so it doesn’t revolve and the triangular mirrors and gray smoke. The term “disco” was no longer used in the English-speaking world after 1980, they moved on to nightclub or dance club or just club, but we kept calling them discos, us and the Germans and the French and the Latin Americans. My brother puts grease in his hair and you can smell it from miles away.

MILAN: I put grease in my hair. Light grease.

MARA: Guys are jealous of him, they think he’s my boyfriend. From the snake print clutch I borrowed from Mom, the one she only carries at weddings, I take a pack of Partners, with filters, and three of the four guys in white t-shirts come to me with lighters, a red plastic one, a fake Zippo, and a blue plastic one with Lovely written on it which doesn’t even work, my brothers yanks the cigarette from my mouth asks them if there’s a problem, ‘cause if there isn’t a problem he’ll make one, they’re like bro, take it easy, your sis is fine, so what. Then he tells me he’s going to kill himself.

MILAN: I ask them if there’s a problem, because if there’s not I’m gonna make one, one of them says something like Mara is fine, I swing my hand to hit him, I don’t even care where, when a song Krajina is our destiny starts playing, Krajina is our prayer, Krajina is our destiny, forever in our hearts7) and me and the four shitheads start jumping on each other, we are in the middle of a mosh pit. I move Mara out of the way, but first I tell her I’m going to kill myself. Not a second later, another song starts: Have you ever loved me as I loved you, have you ever loved me as I loved you, have you ever loved me.8) I think, I’m gonna tell her now, she needs to know, we wallowed in the mud together in the countryside when we watched pigs eating watermelon rinds and we wanted to eat them too, and every time I see her in the meadow behind the house I know exactly what she’ll do, she’ll scratch her nose and the inner side of her elbow, and I think why not tell her.

MARA: The band that sings this song is Medeni mjesec and their name means Honeymoon and they disbanded, it’s not known precisely when, some members went abroad, others went to rehab at monasteries, and some are still making music. Let’s ask these guys to take a photo of us.

MILAN: Sis, I am going to kill myself, in a bathtub, I’ll pile all the sneakers Ma bought me underneath me, an Adidas in the ass, a Puma underneath my back, under my neck a Reebok, a Nike between my legs, a Kappa on my belly-button, below my mouth a Champion to bite into when it starts hurting in the beginning, a Fila beneath my ear. I’ll let the water flow over them and over me, Ma’ll scream “Why are you keeping the water on so long?” I won’t answer; I’ll cut myself with her blue razor. Ma will be smoking on the new cheap upholstery in the living room, then instead of going to get some vodka, she’ll come to the bathroom to get me and she’ll scream. Either that or I’ll go to war.

7) A nationalist song by the band Medeni mjesec (Honeymoon) about Krajina, a self-proclaimed Serbian parastate (formally, from 1991–95) in Croatia during the Croatian War of Independence.

MARA: Fuck you're drunk, let me take a picture of you. Like that time when you lit your first cigarette, it looked great on you, so I kept the photo in a drawer, I was afraid to take it out because mom would see that you'd started smoking.

MILAN: Or when she made me a cherry cake for my ninth birthday, but I wanted a chocolate one, so my smile was sour and my teeth came out looking really white because the chandelier light reflected off of them.

MARA: Or at the swimming pool when you were missing your two front teeth, you were only six.

MILAN: When I go to war I’ll send you one, me in a rumpled uniform, a mixture of green and coffee brown, with a white shirt underneath, the one I wore for phys ed that mom washed once a week, I thought you could also wash it sometimes, I am sitting at a table and smoking. You’ll keep that one in a frame on a plywood table in your bedroom and everyone will think it was taken there because the table in the photo is exactly the same as the one in your bedroom that the photo in its frame is sitting on and then you won’t feel like explaining, you’ll just say yes, this is where it was taken.

MARA: Or when you brought Jelena over and I took a photo of her not wanting to eat the peas Ma made and you’re sitting beside her, drunk as a lord and, like, Ma and Jelena don’t get it, but me and you do. I captured her blonde highlights, all right, then her ma put it in a frame, placed it on a doily and on top of the TV and told everyone it’s Jelena, her sister-in-law took it.

MILAN: Five kalimotxos in 30mL plastic cups, I got wasted and went to the toilet to piss, one of those ones you have to squat over, of course, the disco was so white trash, then I threw up, my sister held my head.

MARA: We drank five more kalimotxos each. Ugly in the mouth, ugly going down the throat, ugly in the stomach, but pretty in the head. He paid for everything, because Mom always gives him more money than me. I scrounged around to be able to get the last round, my teeth were already red by then when I looked in the triangular mirror, not white, and I asked a kid with a cap to give me 3 billion so me and my brother could drink a kalimotxo, I said I don’t drink usually, but I really feel like it now, I thought he’ll just look at my tits and give me the money, but he says “Get the fuck out of here slut,” but then the waiter bought me the last round. Sweet cola and sour wine in 30mL plastic cups and then I gave him only one piece of advice.

MILA: Five kalimotxos in 30mL plastic cups, I got wasted and went to the toilet to piss, one of those ones you have to squat over, of course, the disco was so white trash, then I threw up, my sister held my head.

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MILA: Five kalimotxos in 30mL plastic cups, I got wasted and went to the toilet to piss, one of those ones you have to squat over, of course, the disco was so white trash, then I threw up, my sister held my head.

MARA: Stick two fingers inside, the index and the middle finger, I tell him, but he can’t.

MILA: I can’t stick my fingers down my throat, but I remember Mom’s tiny, mushy peas, so I puke up her beans.

MARA: It sprays my heels a bit too, but at the disco in the dark, you can’t see it.

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9) The Slava is the family’s annual ceremony and veneration of their patron saint, a social event in which the family is together at the house of the patriarch. The Slava also brings friends to the house, regardless if they have the same Slava. The family saint is inherited from the patriarch. The tradition is an important ethnic marker of Serb identity. Serbs usually regard the Slava as their most significant and most solemn feast day. The tradition is also very well preserved among the Serb on all 5 continents. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slava)
MILAN: My sister’s washing me, she’s drenching a handkerchief at the sink and wiping my neck, I am writing on the toilet wall with a key. *Just say it, General.*

MARA: I’m drenching the handkerchief and wiping his neck, then my high heels, cleaning his vomit.  
_Milan is reading a rhyme he once wrote on the toilet wall._

_MILAN:*

*Just say it, General*  
_And we’ll fly like bullets.*  
_Fly in the air, kid? Better go to school.*

Somebody added that later, I saw it next weekend when I came back to throw up again.  
I wrote to the General that if he only says it, we’ll fly like bullets, but who “we” were precisely I didn’t know, but me and those four jerks in white t-shirts who were hitting on my sister, that’s who I had on my mind.

MARA: I find it funny, so on the next tile I write Dragana Mirkovic¹⁰ with a felt pen and I draw a heart.

MILAN: Somebody left me an answer that said I should go to school.

MARA: I only gave him one piece of advice, and it was: Milan, before you go to war, abstain for six days from eating fat and drinking beer and on the seventh day, go and receive communion. Fast for six days, but it will be counted as twelve because you are from a family of heathens, because our old man is not a believer, because he says “Godfuckingdamnit” when he’s watching a soccer game although he’s happy, and when he’s watching the news, he says “Godfuckingdamnit” and he’s afraid, and on the seventh day take white bread and red wine from the priest’s wrinkled hand.

MILAN: She says something about Pa watching TV and about white bread, I heave, my stomach twitches, but it doesn’t even come up my throat, it just goes back down.

MARA: Don’t touch yourself for six days and don’t touch Jelena and on the seventh day the priest will say he’s giving you the body and blood of Christ. The blood isn’t salty. The body isn’t firm. The body is doughy and it has a crust and the blood is bitter and sweet, the blood is made out of late harvest grapes.

MILAN: She says doughy and she says body and out of me comes this cheese-like yellow liquid.

MARA: And if you lock yourself in the bathroom and I am knocking because I want to put on my waterproof mascara and I know what you’re doing inside but I pretend that I don’t, ‘cause I can do that in bed and you can’t because dad won’t wash your sheets and mom’s drunk, you can also do that, it doesn’t matter. And if you sweat a lot on the day of the communion and you don’t manage to take a shower, you can also do that, it doesn’t matter. And if you feel like pissing, hell, even if you feel like doing the number two, go to the plastic toilet beside the church, then do the communion, you can also do that, it doesn’t matter.

MILAN: I throw up from the smell of my sweat. I feel the smell of Ma’s beans coming once again from the hole in the ground and I throw up a runny green liquid. I don’t feel better.

MARA: And even if you feel sick like today, just throw up, then take communion, then throw up again, it doesn’t matter because the sacramental curtain of the Eucharist can be lifted by anyone who knows what the body tastes like and what blood tastes like. I would join you, but in seven days I will have my period and I would bleed out all of the newly received blood of the Savior, and you really can’t do that, it matters. And just so you know, so you aren’t taken by surprise, it actually tastes like white bread and red

¹⁰) Dragana Mirkovic is a folk star, but not the controversial type; she’s more of a countryside girl who became famous for her voice, married a millionaire and ended up with shitloads of money, but (in spite of it all) still acting morally superior in a trashy way.
wine, not like the real body and blood you’ve tasted with me when you were six that time and later with Jelena all the time, but you should pretend in front of the priest that it tastes like body and that it tastes like blood, mine and Jelena’s.

**MILAN:** She says to remember Jelena’s body. I remember Gram in the countryside climbing the ladder to the roof of the summer kitchen wearing a long skirt without underwear and Mara and me looking under Grandma’s skirt. Grandma isn’t wearing stockings, Grandma isn’t wearing hosiery, Grandma hasn’t stuffed cotton wool between her legs, Grandma isn’t using a sanitary pad, Grandma doesn’t know what a tampon is, Grandma hasn’t rolled rags to absorb the blood, Grandma isn’t even wearing knickers. Grandma’s blood is pouring down her thighs and she’s climbing to the roof of the summer kitchen to take something down. I stop throwing up. Grandma never took communion.

At Kruna, in one of those private seating areas, my sister is dancing with three of her girlfriends, I am coming alone to tell her an amazing piece of news.

**MARA:** Jovana’s pulled all of her hair up in a bun, Ivana has slicked hers back and has a high ponytail on top, Andela’s wearing her hair parted on the right, mine is parted on the left.

**MILAN:** *One life, one dream, to be rich and young. And I love you and I love you, love me while I’m fighting and burning, while I’m afraid.*11) I call out “What’s up?” to a bro while I’m walking towards my sis.

**MARA:** Both Jovana and Andela have the hots for my brother, but okay, now they’re pretending they don’t see him, they’re dancing. Ivana touches my collarbone, then my cheekbone and there he is with us.

**MILAN:** Some crazy bitch with a shaggy haircut comes by and says she’ll show me her tits if I find an earring she lost.

**MARA:** A mix of twelve of Ceca’s songs, all live recordings, she says “Put your hands up,” and we all put our hands up for fun like we’re at the concert. A lot of girls pass by him, but he’s coming towards us. *I only know I gave the flower of my youth to him.*12)

**MILAN:** I press one in a puffy white dress against the wall just for the sake of doing it, I can see her a little better under the lasers, fuck she’s got a stretch mark on her left tit, GTFO. I go up to my sister and say: Sis, I’m getting married.

**MARA:** Mom’s gonna go nuts. She’s gonna stuff her snake print clutch with ten airplane bottles of vodka, she’s gonna bust it apart, I won’t be able to wear it anymore, or lend it to Andela when she’s going to a parking lot in Paprikovalac for a make-out session.

**MILAN:** Either that or I’ll pile up all the sneakers Ma bought me in the bathtub and I’ll lie down on top of them and let the water and my beautiful blood flow. An Adidas in the ass, a Puma underneath my back, under my neck a Reebok, a Nike between my legs, a Kappa on my belly-button, below my mouth a Champion to bite it when it starts hurting in the beginning, a Fila beneath my ear. Ma’s smoking on the upholstery, watching TV, instead of going to get some vodka, she comes to get me and starts to scream.

**MARA:** Oh fuck getting married, let me take a picture of you. I also have one in my phone of you eating a gyro.

**MILAN:** The one where I’m with Pero at the stadium is cool too. He’s wearing a Red Star scarf and I’m wearing a Partizan scarf and we came to a Borac game just to be assholes.13)

**MARA:** I’ve got an 8GB memory card, I can fit 700 more.

**MILAN:** And the one after going to the gym, like I’m sweaty.


12) Lyrics from a Ceca song.

13) Red Star and Partizan are two major Serbian soccer clubs; Borac is a team from Banjaluka.
MARA: And the one with you smoking a cigar.

MILAN: And here in this seating area with Marko and Sone and Rope, but that one’s idiotic because we’re all wearing button-down shirts. But okay, there’s also one where I’m wearing a t-shirt—like, Homer Simpson drinking beer.

MARA: Under the blossoming tree, in a white dress, I will always wait for you like our grandmother waited for our grandfather and the sacrament of marriage will be revealed to you and Jelena and her blonde highlights and to sheets crusty with cum that the old man doesn’t want to wash out and Ma doesn’t even know about because of all the vodka. I will be the one who dances the most at the wedding, I will request the most songs, I will break the most glasses, I will adorn the most guests with flowers and ornaments, I will give you the most money in a white envelope, I will bake you the biggest cake and I’ll bring it out at midnight, I will buy the most photos from the photographer, I will catch the bouquet, but you won’t be able to look at me, little brother, when the priest lays a wreath upon your heads, yours and Jelena’s, which will go along well with her highlights, when he begins the betrothal service you won’t be able to look at me although I will be dressed completely decently, in a short dress (but my little brother’s getting married), in high heels (but my brother’s getting married), no cleavage because of the uncle who I know, when we shake hands, would like to put mine on his cock, but can’t do it because of the old man, and you know what these wreaths mean, you have violated the sacrament of marriage with Jelena, because you are the only one who knows the ways I scratch my eyelid or my elbow when you look at me in the field behind the house, because the newlyweds wear wreaths as a sign of victory, to show they haven’t been defeated by passion before marriage and that this is what grants them entry to their shared bed: that is, as the victors over carnal pleasures, if someone, caught in lust, has surrendered to fornication, why would they, as the defeated party, need the wreath of victory upon their head, that’s what the priest will ask, and you’ll know that it’s not supposed to be, and you’ll know that Mom was pouring vodka down her throat while she was listening to you in the other room, you’ll know that Dad was changing the sheets, you’ll know we all heard when you two broke the shelf you were clinging to and you’ll know what it was that the two of us promised and touched and said and swore and cut and bled and sang and told and dreamt and vowed and felt and knew and thought and haven’t said and engraved and weeded and dug out and then buried again under the blossoms when I was eight and you were six.

MILAN: She’s glad that I’m getting married, but she’s nagging me about a shelf Jelena and I broke once when I was banging her while everyone was home and heard it, but I don’t even need to wear the wreath, fuck the wreath, don’t you have more important things to worry about?14)

MARA: Let’s take a photo. Joca is taking our picture with an iPhone, but we’re in front of the mirror, so she’s also in the photo. We’re posing in front of the mirror and the song I sold my soul to the devil when I tasted the old wine, such a babe is in grief, can’t you see what you’re doing to me, you bastard15) is playing. We hear a click, Milan sticks out his tongue, for fuck’s sake, can’t you ever look normal in a picture.

MILAN: Jelena is always the craziest one in pictures, she wears sunglasses to other people’s weddings. She will be a pretty mother, if ours had looked like that we would be fine now.

MARA: At your wedding, we’ll take one to put in a frame, you and Jelena in the middle, our folks behind you—

14) Literally, “better think of your health.”
15) Ana Nikolić: “Džukelo”
Mom’s snake print clutch swollen with her little vodka bottles, but you can’t see it because of Jelena’s puffy wedding dress with the feathers, so it looks like we’re all normal. I stand next to you, you’re holding both me and Jelena around the waist. I’m wearing a short dress that doesn’t show any cleavage and high heels, and we’re all smiling.

**MILAN:** Jovana takes a photo of us in front of the mirror in Kruna with her iPhone, I’m thinking I should fool around, so I stick my tongue out.

**MARA:** After we take that picture, you and Jelena will stay to take pictures with the entire wedding party, Mom will go to the kitchen, supposedly to make sure that they bring out the heated sarma but actually to down shots of vodka, the old man will go back to his table so that when the heated sarma comes out he’s ready to pack his mouth full of stuffed cabbage leaves, and I will go to the toilet. You and Jelena take pictures with Vuk, and Dragica, and Krstan and the six Sladojevićs, and Rosa and Persa, and Andelka. There’ll also be a photo of the two of you in the middle with Baba Đuja kissing you on the cheek, slobbering all over you, and the feathers from Jelena’s dress are around her as well. The photographer clicks the camera, Baba Đuja slobbers over your left cheek with her mouth and I’m in the toilet, writing on the tiles with a waterproof eyeliner pencil. A *leafy mountain, on it a brother and a sister.*

*Mara is reading a lament she once wanted to write there off the toilet wall. [16]*)

**MARA:**

A *leafy mountain*

On it a brother and a sister

In mud the pigs wallowed

The brother promised the sister

---

16) The song is a mash-up of folkloric poetry, popular songs, and wedding songs.

I wasn’t planning to write the last line, but I added it because the band played the song at that moment, the old man requested it after the sarma, like, for his two children and for him and his sister who wasn’t even at the wedding.

I will write that with the waterproof eyeliner pencil, then I might even erase some lines with a wet wipe, Baba Đuja and Rosa and Persa and Andelka don’t need to read everything when they come to pee, and then I’ll say to myself: beauty, fashion and music know no limits. And I’ll feel better. And I’ll come out, and once again I’ll dance the most and I’ll adorn the most guests with flowers and ornaments and I’ll bring out the biggest cake at midnight.

**MILAN:** She says she will make me the biggest cake, I say li’l bro has some candy now, let’s all snort a line off Jovana’s iPhone.
MARA: When we took another picture, someone started banging on the toilet door, I told them to fuck off, we each snorted a line, and went back to our seating area. He didn’t talk about the wedding any more.

MILAN: It’s either that or I’ll kill myself.

MARA: I wanted to take another picture for Facebook, I held my phone up above our heads, pressed my cheek against his, he closed his eyes because of the bright light, I opened my eyelids as wide as I could, I always look good like that and we laughed. We take three, four, five, six more pictures and he’s kissing me and I’m kissing him.

Mara and Milan are kissing on the mouth.

MILAN: I won’t even tell Mom. That I’m getting married. I want her to be surprised when she gets an invitation.

MARA: I won’t tell Mom either.

Mara and Milan are still kissing on the mouth.

MARA: This is your biggest secret. You’re doing this in memory of you.

Mara and Milan are still kissing on the mouth.

MARA: I have a test in Latin tomorrow, but never mind. The only thing I know is that Ma always says the first sentence in her Latin book was Yugoslavia est patria mea. In mine it’s Puella est pulchra. The girl is pretty. And the pupil is hard-working. The fuck I am.

Mara and Milan are still kissing on the mouth.

Scene Four
Young man, no compensation

Mara and Milan are still kissing on the mouth.

MILAN: In the public toilet, I’m kissing a woman thirty years my senior. She’s looking at my shoulders and at the white mottled tiles and I’m scratching words into them with a bottle opener. Young man, no compensation.

MARA: In the public toilet there’s a kid with a bottle of whiskey in his hand, scribbling something on the tiles. I’m looking at his shoulders.

Milan is reading an ad he just posted there off the toilet wall.

MILAN: Young man, no compensation, will fuck your brains out, free-spirited, discreetly, has big cock, frantically, well-built, dedicatedly, black hair, the best, green eyes. And no younger than 54, please.

I’m sitting in an ugly flat belonging to a woman who read my ad in the public toilet. She wants to give me 55 marks for sex, on an armchair which smells like my grandma just before she died, when she wasn’t able to clean herself anymore, so Ma bathed her once a week, but mostly only her back and armpits, before Happy People17) on Sunday evenings, because that was the only thing we all watched together, and my sister would always cry if Grandma smelled too bad.

MARA: I’m sitting on an armchair with my legs crossed, opposite the kid whose ad I had read in the public toilet. I’ll give him fifty-five marks for sex, me on top, kissing included, touching my boobs and clitoris included, if he can find it. I bought the armchairs on

17) Yugoslav TV series that aired from 1993 to 1996. Created by the Radiotelevision Belgrade (RTB), it is the first Serbian TV show ever produced after the breakup of Yugoslavia.
sale, two for one, on the third floor of the Kastel.\textsuperscript{18)} I paid at the cash register and when they put them in two large plastic bags, they weighed more than I thought, and when I turned to ask my child to help me with them, I figured out that she was gone. “Where are you Ivana,” I was calling her with the shop assistant who was wearing glasses he’d mended with duct tape. I found her among the carpets which were hanging one next to another from a mobile metal contraption. She was thirteen and her cheeks were red from what the shop assistant claimed was wool but was actually polypropene. I was a bit embarrassed, not because Ivana was among the carpets, but because I gave birth to her, but I just handed her the armchair in a bag to carry. Right in front of Kastel, we hitched a ride in a yellow Yugo, the color of piss, the man smelled just the way these armchairs smell now, he had a small green pine tree hanging from his rearview mirror which smelled even worse than him, so Ivana threw up. While I was cleaning her mouth with a tissue, I asked her what she was doing back there among the carpets. She said she didn’t know.

**MILAN:** Between the armchairs there are three tables. The first fits into the second, and they both fit into the third. My ma also had these three nesting coffee tables, but she never took out the smaller two; she didn’t want them to get dusty for nothing. Below the dark glass tabletop, there’s a postcard from Makarska on rocky ground with a church, and a photo of a man and a woman on the beach, sitting on a rough cotton towel with *101 Dalmatians* print. She’s in a red bikini with white letters that look like the letters in alphabet soup across the top, but it’s illegible, it says something like *beach fun*, and he’s wearing a white singlet and bright blue trunks, my old man had the same ones.

**MARA:** Branko and me, on our first summer holiday together. We played Parcheesi all day long, and all night long, me on top, kissing included, touching my boobs and clitoris included, if he can find it.

**MILAN:** On a lacquered commode by the tables, there’s a color TV with a green screen and a sponge over the speakers, and a beautiful big red on/off button.

**MARA:** And an orange-white empty vase on it, Ivana always said like a giraffe. And a doily which Branko’s mom crocheted, underneath the vase, I cut all the other ones with scissors and threw them into the toilet, that time he didn’t show up at home for four nights. Then I flushed.

**MILAN:** A row of thin red books, then a row of thin blue books. My mom bought the green and the brown ones with her first paycheck.

**MARA:** And an oilcloth that crumbs stick to, with green and navy blue and pink stars.

**MILAN:** I turn off the lamp which matches the vase—both of them orange and white like a giraffe—and I say to the woman that I’ve been craving licking pussy and eating tomatoes these days, like, unbelievably.

**MARA:** I haven’t seen an erect cock in three years, and I’m not seeing one now, either, because the kid turned off the fucking lamp. I turn on the lamp that matches the vase, orange and white like a giraffe. His cock is on his stomach, it’s both dark and light, both big and small, both veiny and smooth, both hairless and hairy, both circumcised and uncircumcised, but it’s young.

**MILAN:** I charge extra for blowjobs, I tell you I feel like eating tomatoes and licking pussy, so I’ll do that free of charge now.

*Mara is touching Milan’s hair.*

**MARA:** When you were born, I found a brown bug and a nest of little white nits in Ivana’s hair, she didn’t even scratch, she was too lazy for that. In Relaks in the neighborhood they cut her hair with metal scis-

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\textsuperscript{18)} Small Socialist shopping center named after one of the most important buildings in Banjaluka, a historic castle dating from the Roman era.
sors all the way to the scalp while all the old ladies of Banjaluka pretended not to watch from under their hood dryers, and then she was, but she already had been, uglier than Marko.

Milan is touching Mara's eyes.

MILAN: When I first saw that my mom had tiny black eyes, which always scared me, and which turned into slits after a liter and a half of vodka, you were twenty-eight and you hated cooking that entire year, and also shopping and going to have coffee and to the movies and to Gospodska Street, and talking to your mom on the phone, and to your godfather Željko as well, and watching television, and filling out forms, and driving in the car, and combing your hair, but you loved lying in bed and covering your head. Branko would buy 200 grams of cheese with holes, a blood sausage, pickles, a can of sardines and a loaf of soft white bread, and you both got fat.

Mara is touching Milan’s mouth.

MARA: When Marko first called me mom, yours had her head in the toilet for three hours. You bought toilet paper, lavender-scented, to wipe her mouth, but she vomited even more from the scent; in the end you left the bathroom and laid on the bed she made while she was sober.

Milan is touching Mara's nose.

MILAN: Marko hit you here once, when you wouldn’t give him half a mark to play Counterstrike.

Mara is touching Milan's teeth.

MARA: Ivana got two of her molars fixed, and then I bought her a Kinder Surprise for not crying at the dentist, and it rotted her first premolar.

Mara is touching Milan's eyebrows.

When Ivana plucked her eyebrows for the first time, she was so red around the eyes that she skipped her first two classes and came back crying from the last, and then she drew them back on with a pencil.

Mara is touching Milan's upper arms.

MARA: When Marko had been going to the gym for six months, he cut his hair and then he was, but he already had been, prettier than Ivana. When Marko had been going to the gym for nine months, he brought home a girl named Jelena, she had blonde highlights in her brown hair, I spoke a bit about that to her, I told her I used Revlon, and she nodded, then they went to his room, and she was loud, and he was silent, I thought of her blonde head, I couldn’t even smoke. When she

\footnote{19) Turkish name of a suburban neighborhood in Banjaluka. Later, the name was changed to Lazarevo, referencing a medieval Serbian ruler.}
left, Marko repaired the shelf they broke while they were in there together. When Marko had been going to the gym for a year I had no idea what his arms had been like a year before, I wanted to touch the vein on the right one, to remember, but I remembered the blonde head in his bed, so I didn’t.

*Milan is touching Mara’s mouth.*

Zoka was my first kiss, we were sitting in a park where the stone fountain was, where the metal fountain is now, and I was talking about the countries and cities guessing-game I played at home with my brother, I thought of Lithuania, my brother couldn’t guess it at all.

**MILAN:** A woman with a dry mouth and big ears was my first kiss, she told me she had been sitting in the other room when her son broke a shelf while having sex with his girlfriend and she couldn’t even smoke.

*Milan is touching Mara’s breasts.*

**MARA:** Zoka was also the first to touch my tits, I was sitting on a plywood table and again I thought of a country, I told him “Zoka, it’s a country of roses,” he put his hand under my t-shirt and didn’t guess it was Bulgaria.

**MILAN:** The first nipples I touched were on tits that had started growing at the same time as my mom’s had. They were sagging and smelled different than I thought they would, and they had brown freckles all around the nipples and on the nipples, but they were tits. I told her my mom’s tits started shrinking when she started getting wasted on vodka. She said hers started growing when she bought a push-up bra at the second stand on the left at the market on her daughter’s recommendation.

**MARA:** When I asked Ivana how come she had such big breasts all of a sudden, I’d given birth to her, she couldn’t possibly have exceeded me, she told me about the second stand on the left at the market, she said they sold bras that make your tits grow, and I bought a black and a white bra there.

*Mara is putting her hand into Milan’s pants.*

When I first saw a cock, it was shown to me by a boy with a big nose behind a building, everyone said he ripped clouds when he put his head back, and other girls always said it wasn’t just his nose that was big, it was something else as well, and then they’d giggle, and I didn’t get what the other thing was, so I asked him, and then he showed it to me through the fly of his blue shorts and it was so ugly that I dreamt about two pink worms wallowing in white mucus and I couldn’t wait to wake up in the morning and go to school.

*Milan is putting his hand into Mara’s pants.*

**MILAN:** When I first saw a cunt, I was celebrating my seventeenth birthday in the public toilet. I was reading the graffiti on the toilet wall with a woman thirty years my senior, it said *A leafy mountain on it a brother and a sister,* and it said *June 21 two drops of blood,* and I told her about Ma and the vodka, because it had happened even if I hadn’t told her, and she told me about her son and the razor, because that had happened even if she hadn’t told me, and I wanted to do the same with a blue razor and I told her that, and she told me she loved dancing at the disco and then we fucked, I did her because I had never done it before, and she did me because she hadn’t done it for three years.

*Milan and Mara are having intercourse on a closed toilet seat. Milan is sitting on the seat, Mara is sitting on Milan. It’s pretty and white.*

I had my first fuck on my seventeenth birthday, it was a bad year, I was dead drunk on cheap whiskey, that was the first and the last time I drank it, Dad gave it to me as a present. And I told her her hymen was silky and I told her I didn’t want her first time to
be painful and it was about the two hundred eighty-third time for her and the only thing I could think of to say was why didn’t you wait for me to be your third, at least. It was in a public toilet and I never felt like going there again.

MARÁ: I always thought my first fuck would be with Zoka, but it was actually with Voja, why, I have no idea. All I have left from Zoka is a photo he once sent in a yellow envelope from the war. It’s him in a rumpled uniform, a mixture of green and coffee brown, with a white t-shirt underneath, the one he wore for phys ed that his mom washed once a week, and I thought I could also wash it sometimes, he’s sitting at a table. The plywood of the table is cheap and bright, the table in my room is made of the same stuff, one time a small piece of it rammed into my thigh while Zoka and I were naked on the table, there was blood as if he were inside me, but actually he only touched my tits. And everyone who comes over asks, did he take the photo here, I say yes, there’s no point in explaining. And Voja always made me sick, after our first date I got cancer of the esophagus, and then when we fucked for the first time it metastasized in my lungs. I called him, “Voja I have toxic shock syndrome,” he wouldn’t pick up. I also had Rajko, Rajko promised me love, had a wife before me and promised her the same. I was crazy, he couldn’t handle it. Rajko once sang to me in the park, and I really thought, okay it might be this way, and then he went to his third wife, if he did the same thing with her I really don’t know anymore. And here I am with Branko now, how, I also really don’t know anymore.

MILAN: Last year for my birthday Miša and I bought six cans of beer and a bag of salty roasted peanuts. It was neither cold nor sunny outside, neither windy nor rainy, the sky wasn’t cloudy, but it wasn’t bright either, there was no moon or stars, the sun was neither up nor down, it was my sixteenth birthday and I had no idea what to do with myself. Miša might have not known it was my birthday but he certainly didn’t know what to do with himself. We walked from school along a beautiful street, upon which the leaves had fallen and on the left there was a house, we knew we would enter it. We never met the people who lived in the house, we never even saw them, although we passed by every day on the way from school, we didn’t know if there was a family, or a single woman, or a single man, or a couple, or a single person. We were sitting in the living room. There was a painting of horses on the wall and another one of poppies. We heard a mother putting her child to sleep upstairs. We didn’t turn on the TV. We didn’t open the cans. We didn’t open the bag of peanuts. When the child stopped crying, I started chewing on the peanuts.

MARÁ: I was going with Branko for dinner at our best man’s and we hadn’t been on the road for five minutes before I told him to stop, that I needed to take a breather and fix my make-up. I peed in the toilet, dabbed at myself with paper, flushed, I hadn’t even washed my hands yet and there was some kid with a bottle of whiskey there. In my bedroom, as a girl, I had a poster with a couple in the front seat of a convertible and they’re driving somewhere, I have no idea where, nor do I care, but it would be nice if you came for me like that once, I wouldn’t care where you got the convertible, we would just go and sleep in the car and in the hostels along the road, and it would all be like an American film, but the hostels would be cleaner than my room and the seats of the convertible would be more comfortable than the armchairs in my living room, and the receptionists in the hostels would be nicer than Branko and Ivana and Marko, and I wouldn’t need to cook, we would eat rice at a Chinese place or sandwiches. And we would do what we’re doing tonight, every day, several times a day.

MILAN: When I had chicken pox, your capillaries broke, one over here under your left breast and the other there, in the middle of your belly, and that’s where
I scratched the most and I have a scar under my left breast and one over here in the middle of my belly.

**MARA:** The kid and I had a couple of the same scars on our bodies, I don’t know if it was that my capillaries had broken or he’d made them just now with his nail and tooth. When I got back to the car, Branko asked me what took me so long, I said, I was fixing my make-up and I peed and took a breather. He said you could’ve taken your breather here.

**MILAN:** Her husband is asking her what took her so long, I am gulping whiskey.

**MARA:** Took a breather and fixed my make-up.

**MILAN:** She says she fixed her make-up and took a breather. I am gulping whiskey.

*Milan and Mara are still sitting in a sterile, white, public toilet. The tiles in the toilet are still mottled. Everything is still a bit sad, but a bit pretty as well.*

THE END
Božidar Knežević

THE ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EXTINCTION
Engaged in literature and media. Author of the dramas: Porn (Serbian National Theatre in Novi Sad, Bitef Theatre in Belgrade, Man called Che (Youth Theatre in Novi Sad), The day we met and the adaptation of Luigi Pirandeli’s drama Six characters searching for an author (SNT, Yugoslav Drama Theatre in Belgrade, National Theatre in Belgrade). Used to work as dramaturg in the project The Autobiography (SNT).

Wrote the scenario for mini TV series Double Goody & Doctor Delta. Participated as co-author in the realization of the animated SF film Crazy, and there was a comic book made based on his scenario Porn (edition 2uplodnocomics).

He is the co-writer of the multimedia festivals “Play porno” and “Big Serbian Mother” in the Bitef Theatre in Belgrade, author of the scenario for the performance at the opening of the fortieth Bitef If you see Cezar – kill him! and he is also both writer and director of the multimedia performances Differences in eight sketches – La linea, The word, The consequences, Scrambled Alice, Happy slave’s design (festival EXIT, MTV) and the writer of the opening ceremony of the festival EXIT 2013.

He is the writer and director of the animated film Alea iacta est (The dice were cast).

Received more than 70 literary awards (awards at the competition Radio and television Vojvodina for the radio drama Burn down the Hollywood, numerous awards for short stories and poetry, etc.).

Art director of the multimedia artistic company ‘Double bottom’ and the production house “Insomnia film”. Lives in Novi Sad.
If we want to tell the truth, and we do, ALL Koljibabas are ONE Koljibaba:

1. The Koljibabas do not exist individually – every single koljibaba person exists only as a part of one common multiple all-koljibaba personality (see under: koljibabas identity SCH)

2. The main characteristic of the koljibaba organism is that it has several bodies with one crazy head (see under: koljibaba mythical monsters)
THE KOLJIBABAS AND OTHER SIMILAR PHENOMENA

1. THE KOLJIBABAS

**GRANDMOTHER KOLJIBABA**: christen name GRANDMOTHER, the oldest and the youngest Koljibaba

**GAVRILO KOLJIBABA**: christen name Gavril, Koljibabas' Messiah and the youngest Koljibaba

**ODYSSEUS KOLJIBABA**: christen name Odysseus, Koljibabas' butcher-man and lover

**LISA KOLJIBABA**: christen name Elisabeth, Koljibabas' saint and lawful tart, second Gavril’s love

**MILORAD KOLJIBABA**: christen name Milorad (non-christen That Gavrilov – while he is invisible), gay, intellectual and Koljibabas' Judas

**GRANDFATHER KOLJIBABA**: christened and buried as Grandpa, as the only true Koljibaba he was the unintentional founder of the Koljibaba clan, appears only as a tombstone

**YOUNGSTER KOLJIBABA**: not yet christened, not yet born and undisputed, potentially the youngest Koljibaba who does not appear

2. OTHERBABAS

**LANA**: paranoid radio-speaker, first Gavril's love, a little bit pregnant, a little bit dead

**LANE**: radio misanthrope, gay Pinokio, a little bit alive, a little bit more dead

**PIG**: non-cow, non-seal, does not appear as a complete organism but in the form of pork products, and as shrieking

**MUSHROOMS**: the foundation of the traditional Koljibaba cuisine and national identity

3. SILHOUETTES, PROJECTIONS AND VOICES

**LIZARD**: alien, mythical demonic creature, angel, baptized as Underwear Model, appears only as a winged silhouette

**PROJECTOR**: primitive means of teaching and freelance simultaneous interpreter, appears as an organism, mechanism and as projection

**RADIO**: Poly-frequency body for communication, appears only as a voice (or for that matter – as many voices)

**SHIT**: inseparable part of Koljibabas' everyday routine, a metaphor that can be stepped in

(Note: All these characters and phenomena can be played by five actors and a few technical aids.)
I Act (Urban)

Outing 1.

Kolji-mountain, a night without a single star – but with an occasional beam of mountain fog. Between a low bad-looking tree and outside toilet there is a wire on which a large white sheet is drying. However, because of the darkness and fog, the tree and the toilet are just two unrecognizable contours, and wire is not visible. (On Kolji-mountain everything is inclined to the right side. Because the wind blows from the left.)

And on the sheet – an instructional film is displayed. For angels. Or for lizard-like aliens. Or any similar devil. Or for tourists.

If we want to say the truth (and we do) the film is not really a film, but a series of slides from an obsolete slide projector – as if the slides had been hand written and drawn. The projector is set on a hive (a silhouette of a hive), and next to it there looms a silhouette of a man who changes the slides. Every time he changes a slide, the projector makes a loud click. And the mountain resonates from all that clicking. Although, if we want to tell the truth (and we do) all this ‘supreme’ resonating somehow seems fake because the sound of the projector is mechanical and banal. But it surely resonates, and very loudly so.

In any case, whether because of low fog or ‘supreme’ echo, we get the feeling that we are someplace high. Maybe not in heaven, but close enough. Nevertheless, if we want to tell the truth (and we already know that we do) clicking is not the only sound to be heard: while the slides change there is a pig squealing somewhere. Squealing is quiet, not because the pig is discreet, but because it comes from a great distance, from a distant courtyard, perhaps even from another time. And maybe that’s not really a pig but some muddy archetype of the same, but whatever is the case the pig’s squealing is very real. It is being slaughtered.

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

THE MYTH OF KOLJIBABAS

ODYSEUS (From darkness): The origin of species. Phase one: the Koljibabas and mushrooms. The ancestors of today’s Koljibabas arrived to Earth from distant stars to escape large winged lizards. Therefore, the first Koljibaba are often called Astrobabas. Sometimes they are called Oldbabas and Arhibabas. When the first Koljibabe arrived from the universe, there was no life on the planet Earth. So the Koljibabas were the first living organisms on Earth and the only intelligent humanoids.

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

THOSE ARE THE FACTS.

ODYSEUS (From darkness): Some sources say that the Astrobabas that were the first to arrive on the Earth are actually not Koljibabas at all.
Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

**THIS IS PROPAGANDA.**

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KOLJIBABAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>= ASTROBABAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= FIRSTBABAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= OLDBABAS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= ARCHBABAS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KOLJIBABAS = NO. 1.**

Projector clicks. There is a a slide: empty

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Excuse me.

Projector clicks. There is a a slide: empty

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** On their long journey from the ancient homeland the Koljibabas took a several of their favorite pats – kolji-mushrooms. This nostalgic and emotional procedure was critical for the continued survival of the Koljibabas.

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Kolji-mushrooms have successfully adapted to the life on earth and thus became the first and key agricultural products, and in the first few years they were the only source of food. Kolji-mushrooms are the foundation of the traditional Koljibaba cuisine. But, because of a certain psycho-active component, they are also the foundation of the national identity. Kolji-mushrooms are both consolation and forgetness. And a memory card.

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Phase two: Planktons, plants and animals. Faced with problems in feeding the population, Koljibaba scientist have managed to produce in an experimental way a kolji-plankton – first land-sew-age mixture, and that, through monitored breeding of sewage with sea water, an ocean kolji-plankton too. After a thousand year, as the consequence of experimental use of sewage, there also appeared...
Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

**BATHROOM**

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Through breeding between kolji-mushrooms and ocean kolji-planktons they managed to get kolji-algae also known as...

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

**ALGO-MUSHROOMS**

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Through breeding between kolji-algae, i.e. algo-mushrooms and dead people they managed to get kolji-fish. And over the years, certain kolji-fish croled onto the land thus making a transitional form – the so called...

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

**PEAR-MUSHROOMS**

**ODYSSEUS (From darkness):** Reptile kolji-fish through further evolution became kolji-birds and kolji-pigs. Than they became dogs and wolfs... and so on. Over millions of years planktons, plants and animals further developed into numerous types and subtypes. There evolution is still going on.
Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

OTHERBABAS

ODYSSEUS (From darkness): Otherbabas come from sewage – no one knows how. They simply crawled out. Koljibabas and Otherbabas are in constant lively interaction. That interaction is called...

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

WAR

ODYSSEUS (From darkness): Although they have many moral and physical deformities, Otherbabas somewhat resemble Koljibabas. That is why it is very important to remember:

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

OTHERBABAS

ARE NOT

KOLJIBABAS!

Projector clicks. There is a a slide:

KOLJIBABAS

= No 1.
Projector clicks one more time and there is a slide which is not supposed to be there (the handwriting is different from the previous slides):

KOLJIBABAS ARE SHIT

ODYSSEUS (From darkness): What are Кољибабас?

LISA (From darkness): It is absolutely the same to step into a Koljibaba and to step into shit.

In darkness Odysseus slaps Lisa – she screams. Then he turns the switch light on and turns it towards Lisa. (From that moment on he keeps the light on her.) Lisa is rubbing her cheek.

ODYSSEUS: You are a Koljibaba too, you stupid woman. Than you are shit too. The auto-shovinistic kind of shit. The kind that minds its own smell.

LISA: I am, but I am also self-critical. At least I have this urge not to be shit.

ODYSSEUS: For the first time I see shit with special needs. Good for you. But although specific, shit is shit.

LISA: You know what Кољибаба ре?

ODYSSEUS: What?

Lisa presses a button – there appears another slide which is not supposed to be there:

KOLJIBABAS ARE NOTHING BUT SHIT

ODYSSEUS: Now I shall fuck all of you...

Darkness cuts it off like a knife – Odysseus’ voice, his lamp and the projected slide. (But there is no time for a pause – Odysseus’ sentence is continued by a radio speaker. With her own sentence.)

1. Dress your grandmother for apocalypse (if you can)

Gavrilo’s apartement – it is dark, but the sun is rising on the window. A grandmother barefooted is sitting in a wheel chair, and Gavrilo kneels in front of her and occasionally blows into her toes – he is drying her nails. Darkness slowly disappears, you can hear the radio. Radio stations change by themselves.

RADIO (Speaker): ... a mother, father, three underaged children and a dog. This is the ninth case of terrible family violence in our town in the last seven days.

RADIO (Politician): ... but we shall continue with all our capacities to work on further integration of our country into...
RADIO (‘Expert’“): ... unexplored world of myths and legends.

RADIO (Speaker): Fashion show of the underwear by the world famous brand White hot angels, inspired by our traditional folklore and middle age church frescoes, will take place in the place at the height of eight thousand meters.

RADIO (Tourist promoter): Meet the Koljibabas! Feel the welcome and warmth you have never felt before! Koljiji-mountain has this special micro-climate...

RADIO (Meteorologist): ... while over the better part of Europe there is meteoric rain of medium intensity. In the Mediterranean we expect new fires and floods, and in Scandinavia there are still problems with the lack of oxygen, and in our country...

RADIO (Female singer – sings); Mito, Mito, you drunk! Grandmother is bored with this so she turns off the radio. Outside it is daylight already and the apartment (actually the room) is flooded with sunlight. To the left there is a door that leads to another room, to the right you can exit into the corridor. The apartment is scarcely furnished, in the middle of the room there is a large roughly made stone tombstone (tilted to the right). On the stone there is engraved inscription:

GRANDFATHER KOLJIBABA

The grandmother’s wheel chair is additional adorned with some Frankenstein-like accessories: on the left side of the wheel chair there is a home radio, below there is a large truck battery, and on the right side there is a huge bag in which we can see a metal oxygen bottle and oxygen mask. On top of everything, there is a large metal stick attached to the wheel chair and it looks like a must – there is a bottle of infusion, almost empty, which is connected with Grandmother’s arm with a thin plastic hose.

If we want to tell the truth (and we do) the wheel chair is a veritable engineering grotesque and they look more like a hybrid of an armored vehicle and ambulance than a vehicle for invalid people.

Grandmother is old, she has two bulges on the forehead like two little horns, and over them she put adhesive bandage, and Gavrilo is young, unshaved and chubby like a teddy bear. The two of them obviously have the same stylist – Grandmother is wearing an orange running suit (the hood is a must) and at the moment she is barefoot, and Gavrilo has sneakers, jeans and a green top of running suit. (The hood is must.) If there is not such a large difference in age, they would look like a hip-hop band.

GAVRIL0 (Kneels, blows into painted toe nails): Is this enough, grandma? We shall be late.

GRANDMOTHER: Blow, blow, if you can blow with that drug addict of your, you blow into your grandmother’s nails. If your late grandfather saw how you treat, he would immediately turn...

GAVRIL0: Turn in what? He is not buried. And his tombstone weights twenty five kilos. Do you know how it is to carry twenty five kilos to the ninth floor?

GRANDMOTHER: You find everything difficult. Didn’t I tell you to put the wheels on it?

GAVRIL0: To put wheels? On a tombstone? Grandma, one of us has to be sane here.

GRANDMOTHER: Where I go – he goes. Blow a little bit more, it slowly dries near that corn.

GAVRIL0: If you wish to demonstrate your loyalty as a spouse, put the obituary in the wallet so you can carry it around with you!

GRANDMOTHER: Shame on you, Gavrilo. You bite so hard, straight to the heart, and you don’t brush your teeth. I’ll get sepsis from you. And I am already sick.

GAVRIL0 (Looks around the room.): Where did you put your sneakers?
GRANDMOTHER: I put them somewhere? I am an invalid! Who did you take after... You are not a grandson, you are...

GAVRIL: Shit.

GRANDMOTHER: Even worse. A lizard.

GAVRIL: Alright, grandma, I am a reptile. Now you tell me where the sneakers are. If you are an invalid, you are not crazy.

GRANDMOTHER: What do you mean I'm not?

GAVRIL: Oh, yes you are.

They both burst into laughter.

GRANDMOTHER: There they are, behind your grandfather.

GAVRIL: You want to jump and get them or...

GRANDMOTHER: Your are making fun of an invalid woman.

Gavrilo takes the sneakers from behind the tombstone and then he kneels again, takes out the socks from the sneakers and starts putting them on grandma's feet. It doesn't go easy.

GAVRIL: Sorry, grandma. Lift your leg a little. I'm kidding. And where was it that you fell?

GRANDMOTHER: I fell from the universe. And I did not fall but the lizards pushed me. When your grandfather and I were abducted by the alien, they kept him and threw me away.

GAVRIL: It's understandable that they threw you. Aliens also have nerves. Although I heard that you fell from a pear. Tiny one.

GRANDMOTHER: Even if I fell from the pear tree, again I did not fall but was pushed from the pear! And it was a very high pear tree!

GAVRIL: Grandma stumbled on a bonsai tree and fell. Then little green once came along. All around you there are some midgets, fuck. (Puts on one sock.) There it is!

GRANDMOTHER: You are a midget!

GAVRIL: Alright, alright, don't get upset. (He puts on the other sock on her.) Here is the other one. Now the sneakers.

GRANDMOTHER: Why don't you call the midgets to help you? I see you have good relations with them. Maybe you take drugs together?

GAVRIL: True, grandma, we sit in a circle around a tiny little pear three, roll seven tiny little joints and one normal one and blow. And Snow White is dancing. (It is impossible to put on the sneaker.) Aaaa! Come on already! (He grumps, pushes, in the end finally manages to put one sneaker on.) This was close. We have to buy larger sports shoes. What is your size?

GRANDMOTHER: That changes every year.

GAVRIL: What do you mean it changes? It can be that your feet are still growing at your age? (Manages to put on the other shoe.) There. Now we can go see the doctor.

GRANDMOTHER (Stares at her feet.): We can. When you change the sneakers.

GAVRIL: These are the only sports shoes that you have.

GRANDMOTHER: I know.

GAVRIL: So how can I change them?!

GRANDMOTHER: Change the sides. You put the left shoe on the right foot, and the other way around. You clever.

GAVRIL (He looks at the sneakers and rolls his eyes.) So I did, so what? You'll break the world record the next time. I arranged to see Lana while you are at the doctor's, and if they start the live program I won't be able to enter the studio. I can't change your shoes now. You can go like that.

GRANDMOTHER: It's out of the question. I don't want to be embarrassed there.

GAVRIL: Grandma, you already have a diagnosis. What else can they think? I can pick up the medicine without you.
GRANDMOTHER: And leave me alone?! How could you? You don’t take care of me, Gavrilo. I am still a young woman and it’s too early for me to end up in some squat, as neglected grandmother. What am I saying, a woman? I am a woman and a half.

GAVRILLO: Well, true, you are a little fat.

GRANDMOTHER: Shame on you! What will happen in fifty or seventy years? Who will take me to the doctor’s then?

GAVRILLO: I’ll take you. If I’m alive. (Sighs.) Alright, I’ll change the sneakers.

Gavril roughly takes of grandmother’s sneakers and starts putting them on again. This time properly. But it still doesn’t go easily.

GAVRILLO: We shall ask the doctor about that fat tissue on your forehead. You look like a devil. I am the only one whose grandmother has horns.

GRANDMOTHER: Better with horns, that with wings, like a lizard.

GAVRILLO: If you had wings, you wouldn’t be late. When is your appointment?

GRANDMOTHER: At nine, ten, eleven and twelve o’clock.

GAVRILLO: Again we are going to see four doctors?

GRANDMOTHER: I am very sick.

GAVRILLO: Turn that radio on, Lana’s show is about to begin. At least I can hear her voice. Fuck the planet where there is no mobile, television or internet.

GRANDMOTHER: What did you say was that thing that disabled all that?

GAVRILLO: Magnetic storm.

GRANDMOTHER: And how come the radio works?

GAVRILLO: It too works only on amateur frequencies.

GRANDMOTHER: Frequency, ha? It was the lizard that messed that up.

GAVRILLO: How can lizards mess something up?

GRANDMOTHER: How can you mess up my shoes? In the space there are million frequencies, and I have only two feet. Both imobile. But they are still pretty, though. I don’t miss the telephone, but it’s too bad about television. It’s hard to become a star overnight on radio only. Specially if the physical appearance is your main advantage.

GAVRILLO: Grandma, you are a grandmother. You are not a starlette. A phone would be ideal for you. On the phone you would fool the devil. It’s important that he doesn’t see you. You call the hell, and breath into the receiver. Just be careful not to make a huge telephone bill.

GRANDMOTHER: I don’t have to be careful, it’s a local call.

GAVRILLO: Local? I knew you had devil’s number! Eh, grandma, grandma. (He manages to put on sneaker on her.) Here it is.

GRANDMOTHER: Stop.

GAVRILLO: What now?

GRANDMOTHER: Gloves.

GAVRILLO: What gloves, look how hot it is.

GRANDMOTHER: I’m cold.

GAVRILLO: Yeah, right, there was draft while you were falling from the universe.

GRANDMOTHER: I will not go without gloves. You said it yourself that there is a storm outside!
GAVRILo: It's a magnetic storm, not ordinary... (He gives up.) Alright, alright. But you put them on yourself. Where are your gloves?

GRANDMOTHER: In the sneakers. I didn’t know where to put them so I put them there.

GAVRILo: In these sneakers?! It’s out of question.

GRANDMOTHER: I feel like naked without my gloves.

GAVRILo: Then we won’t go.

GRANDMOTHER: How can you be like that, Gavrilo? You see that this drug addict infusion is almost finished, and they haven’t sent the homemade one from Kol-ji-mountain. Besides, this thing is weark. There is not enough alcohol.

GAVRILo: In morphium there is not enough alcohol? There is no alcohol at all in morphium!

GRANDMOTHER: Well, I’m telling you it’s no good. In the Kolji-mountain they would give that to children. You know what, better you go alone. Just tell them I’m in pain and take the receipts.

GAVRILo: That is why you go to see four doctors. To get four prescriptions for morphium. And you tell me that I am a drug addict.

GRANDMOTHER: That’s because I’m very sick.

GAVRILo: Why didn’t you let me go earlier? Now I can’t manage to see Lana! (He starts going outside.) As if I was putting shoes on a centipede.

GRANDMOTHER: Gavrilo.

GAVRILo (Stops.): What is it?

GRANDMOTHER: I love you.

GAVRILo: I love you to, grandma. I’ll buy you an iguana.

Gavrilo starts towards the door again.

GRANDMOTHER: Gavrilo.

GAVRILo (He stops again.): What is it now?

GRANDMOTHER: You are not shit.

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Gavrilo simply waves his hand and leaves. Grandma turns the radio on.

RADIO (Lana): Herbert George Welles: The War of the Worlds!

RADIO (Lane): Radio adaptation by Orson Welles.

RADIO (Lana): Adaptation of the adaptation.

RADIO (Lana, Lane): Lana and Lane!

RADIO (Lana): The forty fourth rerun. Grandma turns the radio off.

GRANDMOTHER: Fuck Welles.

2. (Mega)herz

A radio station in a basement. Lana and Lane sit in front of the microphones with huge headphones on their ears. Broadcasting equipment is pretty obsolete (it is actually equipment for radio amateurs). Lana seems quite relaxed in a large overall, and Lane is all dressed up in a soft pastel shirt and tight pants. He is wearing women’s shoes with high heels. They are broadcasting live.

LANA (Into the microphone.): I hope you have enjoyed our little twice adapted radio apokalypse.

LANE (Into the microphone): In any case, we shall keep broadcasting it. Until the real one starts.

LANE (Into the microphone.): But, before the next rerun, while we are still alive, let us have some more of our live program.

LANA (Into the microphone.): Lana and Lane and...

LANA (Into the microphone.): The ode to joy.

LANE (Into the microphone.): On the day of mourning!

LANA (Into the microphone.): As always, marginal things are in the centre of our attention.
LANE (Into the microphone.): Gays, cosmopolits, non-believers and vegetarians strike back!
LANA (Into the microphone.): The day of mourning...
LANE (Into the microphone.): With the Ode to joy.

Lane plays the ‘The Ode to Joy’ and they both take off their headphones and turn off the microphones. Lane lights a prepared joint and draws the first smoke with joy, and Lana starts polishing her nails. He offers the joint, she waves her head. More to him.

LANA: I can’t today.
LANE: You think they will get us today?
LANA: Who?
LANE: How do I know who? A force from the universe, army, flood, neighbour because of a borderline, a gigantic men-eating bacteria...
LANA: I think the end of the world will not happen.
LANE: It will happen. Don’t tell me we changed our program scheme for nothing.
LANA: In fact, I am worried that it is not happening. There it is.
LANE: I admire you. I would never think of that. I have never heard that someone is worried that something might have happened to the apocalypse.
LANA: I admire you. I would never think of that. I have never heard that someone is worried that something might have happened to the apocalypse.
LANE: You are crazy.
LANA: I hate Gavrilo. Together with his grandmother.
LANA: That phenomenal grandmother is the only known fan of this radio. And Gavrilo has done nothing wrong to you.
LANE: What do you mean he didn’t? He exists.
LANA: If he didn’t exist, you would not hear the story of the Koljibabas. And then we would not have our radio drama. Gavrilo is alright.
LANE: The good ones are the worst. Those like him kept biting me up as early as the kindergarten: all good kids kept cheering for the Little Redhood, I was cheering for the wolf. But, I didn’t let it go just like that – on the first occasion, I spit into one girl’s cap.
LANE: She had a red cap. I was immediately thrown out of the kindergarten. And it’s good that they did – if I had stayed a little longer they would have killed me with the little buckets and shovels. The good ones. (He turns on the microphone – Into the microphone.) We interrupt our program because of an important information: In our country there are only good and civilized people. We have been using knifes and forks from the middle age. Especially the knives. (He turns off the microphone, talks to Lana.) It was both students and teachers that kept beating me up in the school. And I kept going against them. Once I took down the political map of the world from the wall and shit on our country. When someone was asked in a geography class to point at our country, he would have to point at shit. In the end I failed to pass the class because I kept calling Hamlet and Ophelia – Hamlet and Chlamidia. That’s when my father started beating me, too. And I started wearing dresses and asked to be called Chlamidia.
LANE: Tough moment.
LANA: Tough. She had a hard hand. Like a boxer. I relanted a little bit then – I told them that I wasn’t gay, but that I had cancer. It was much easier for them to accept.
LANA: Why isn’t he coming?
LANE: My folks would have been happy if I was proclaimed crazy, but I wasn’t – I was proclaimed gay. That nearly killed them. That’s when my mother started beating me up, too.
LANE: And then police came into my life. Because Chlamidia kept wearing dresses in which a naked bottom was seen. And bottoms endanger public order and peace. Although everybody has one. (He offers the joint
to her again.) You really don’t want? Take it, since I’m sharing. I share it only with you.

LANA: No, I don’t want to. I am being careful.

LANE: Why would you be careful since anyhow we are going to...

LANA: Gavrilo says that we might not.

LANE: Who? Ah, yes, Gavrilo. Those legends of his about the Koljibabas are great. And my favourite story is the one about Milorad from the Kolji-hill.

LANA: From the Kolji-mountain.

LANE: Whatever. You see, that Milorad, although I have never seen him, has all the predispositions to become my hero. You imagine a man who at his own wedding gets up and in front of all the guests declares that he is in love with the best man. Then he runs away into the mountain. My Chlamidia is nothing compared to that. No one is looking for me, and even if they found me in this basement they would simply slap me a few time like a puppy when it pees on the carpet – and if they find him, they will kill him like a wolf.

Lana goes to the door, then comes back. She is nervous.

LANE: You know, after they beat me up, the police always let me go. That’s because they think I am a fool. And I am not. They are fools. Some people are born, some spring up. Some people get baptized, some people receive vaccines. Some people are shit, and some... All people are shit. That is why I become radio amateur.

LANE: You say that as if you were an alien.

LANE: Maybe I am. In a man there is not a single human molecule. Not even atom. They were looking for it, didn’t find it. They found a few hormones. And a lot of shit. Which confirms my theory: People are mainly shit. Hormonally disturbed.

LANA: Is this some kind of a hint regarding what’s happening with my hormones?

LANE: What is happening? You are fine. You are the only one... you are not even shit.

LANA: Thank you very much. You really know how to make a compliment.

LANE: No, no, really. In front of you... I go down on my knees. You want me to kneel?

LANA: C’mon, don’t fool around any more. (She glances at her watch again, sighs.) Looks like he got angry. And I can’t tell him.

LANE (Kneels in front of Lana.): Lana...

LANA (She interrupts him, a little bit roughly.): Wait, Lane.

Lana puts on headphones and turns on the microphone. Lane is still kneeling.

LANA: Gavrilo... I don’t know if you are listening, but I want to tell you... I am pregnant. If your offer is still on, I shall marry you. I love you. And I don’t want to use drugs any more.

Lana turns off the microphone and takes of the headphones, Lane, astonished, is looking at her. Then he gets up.

LANE: And why were you hidding from me that you were pregnant? When did he propose?

LANA: Two months ago. But I turned him down. I didn’t know I was pregnant then.

LANE: Two months ago? Look at that. Koljibaba express. And I’m wasting time here. Never mind. (He kneels again.) Do you want not to marry Gavrilo and to marry me?

LANA: What? (She starts laughing.) Lane, you are gay.

LANE: I am not.

LANA: You are not?

LANE: I’m not. And I love you. I shall love you forever. Unfortunately, forever will last only for another few days.

LANA: Are you serious?

LANE: Most serious. I am not lying.
LANA (Pause.): I am sorry, Lane. It would be better if you were lying.
LANE (Pause.): It doesn’t matter.

But, if we want to tell the truth (and we do) it does matter. Very much so. Lane gets up, puts on the headphones and turns on the microphone.

LANE (Into the microphone.): My dear parents, there is something I have to tell you before this whole fucking world blows up. I am not gay. Fucking gay. There it is. (Pause.) Say hallo to your grandma, Gavrilo. (Pause.) And another thing:

3. Necrologue for the seals and the internal enemy

Gavrilo’s apartment, there are Grandmother and Odysseus. Odysseus is dressed in a green hunting suit, he is wearing a hunting hat and military boots. Next to him there is a violoncello box. Radio is on.

RADIO (Lane): Milorad, I love you.

Grandmother turns off the radio.

ODYSSEUS: How come he knows Milorad?
GRANDMOTHER: Lana is pregnant. That’s not good.
ODYSSEUS: Better her, than Milorad. When the little one grows up, I shall take him to the zoo. I’ll teach him to shoot. Another Koljibaba in defense of the homeland.
GRANDMOTHER: Don’t be stupid. You know he will not grow up. How can I manage to take Gavrilo to Kolji-mountain now? My calculation says that the world will come to an end in ten days at the most. And the worst thing is, I don’t feel so good. (She points at his box.) What’s that box?

ODYSSEUS: This? It’s camouflage. When an organism strikes another organism it’s either sex or war. And this is war. (He remembers something.) I’m sorry, grandma, you know I am a little... But I brought everything. Here it is (he is taking things out of the box) all home made food – cheese, sourcream, dried meat... This is the last tour. What was squeeking – was squeeking – there are no more pigs at the Kolji-mountain. Listen, grandma, why don’t we take her too?

Grandma starts eating immediately.

GRANDMOTHER (With her mouth full): Who?
ODYSSEUS: Daughter in low. She is almost ours now. And the young one is totally ours.
GRANDMOTHER: Since this thing started, she doesn’t leave the basement.
ODYSSEUS: Paranoia or phobia?
GRANDMOTHER: Both.
ODYSSEUS: Is she talkative?
GRANDMOTHER: Well, she didn’t get pregnant by being closed.
ODYSSEUS: Good for Gavrilo. That girl has everything.
GRANDMOTHER: Well, that cookie has to go back on the shelf. It’s no time for dessert. And the worst thing is – it was me who introduced them. I liked the show so I sent some dried meat by Gavrilo to the radio station. (She sighs.) I was running to much today. And what kept you?
ODYSSEUS: I was at the zoo.
GRANDMOTHER: Seals again?
ODYSSEUS: Again.
GRANDMOTHER: And you think that’s patriotic?
ODYSSEUS: I was simply feeding seals, grandma.
GRANDMOTHER: The world is coming to an end and you are feeding the seals. In the middle of a war. Admit that you get a hard on when you see seals.
ODYSSEUS: I do not! And you know that I am not picky and that I get a hard-on on any kind of organism, but seals, really... Although they are smooth.

GRANDMOTHER: Alright, I believe you. Do we eat seals?

ODYSSEUS: No, we don’t. We eat pigs, cheese, sour cream, chips...

GRANDMOTHER: And who eats seals?

ODYSSEUS: How should I know, Eskimos I guess.

GRANDMOTHER: That’s right, Eskimos. You see how the situation changes now? You give every cent that you have to feed the smooth little seals, and in fact you are helping enemy resources.

ODYSSEUS: Eskimos are far away, grandma. There is no chance that they get in touch with the seals that I fed.

GRANDMOTHER: And the invasion?

ODYSSEUS: It would not be bad if I could capture an Eskimo girl. I heard they put seal fat on them so they are smooth.

GRANDMOTHER: And I heard that they have beard and that they are all covered in moss!

ODYSSEUS: All of them shave nowadays, grandma. And I don’t believe that they are covered in moss. Because of the climate. Maybe it’s lichen. But who cares about a little bit of lichen?

GRANDMOTHER: A true patriot would pay a little bit more attention to the domestic beauty.

ODYSSEUS: Like who, for example? Milorad?

GRANDMOTHER: Like me.

ODYSSEUS: You?

GRANDMOTHER: Yes, me! What’s wrong with me? But no, you are waiting for the Eskimos to invade us.

GRANDMOTHER: The Eskimos don’t have the capacity for an invasion.

GRANDMOTHER: You are right, they don’t. But the seals can escape.

ODYSSEUS: Why would they escape when they like it her?

GRANDMOTHER: Because they might be working for them. It’s their seals. You make them fat here, and then one night they sneak out, open the cover, enter the sewage, then into the river and the sea...

ODYSSEUS: And?

GRANDMOTHER: And in one month the Eskimos get their proteins!

ODYSSEUS: So, what shall I do now, go back and make them womit? Or should I just kill them all preventively?

GRANDMOTHER: No need – it takes them one month to swim to their own, and the world will collapse long before that.

ODYSSEUS: Thank God that I have some luck for once.

GRANDMOTHER: I’m afraid I will not be alive on that day. I am so exhausted that...

ODYSSEUS (Remembers.): Uh, I’m sorry. Why don’t you say something? (He takes out a bottle from the violoncello box.) I brought you the infusion.

GRANDMOTHER: Is it homemade?

ODYSSEUS: If you put it on a flat tire, it would mend it.

GRANDMOTHER: Pear!

ODYSSEUS: Wild pear, from the Kolji-mountain. Eighty degrees. Shall I turn it on?

GRANDMOTHER: Turn it on. I am very sick.

ODYSSEUS takes off the empty bottle and puts on a full bottle with ‘infusion’. When schnapps starts going through, Grandma gets here energy back.

GRANDMOTHER: I’m better now. Instead of giving me the bottle right away, you keep on about the seals.

ODYSSEUS: Enough with those seals already! Do you know how huge a boat the Eskimos would need for an invasion? Besides, I’ve been thinking.

GRANDMOTHER: You were thinking? You could have died from that on the spot.
ODYSSSEUS: If the seals run away and made it to the open sea, they would get into the Humbolt's current which would take them to Galapagos. And there are no Eskimos there.

GRANDMOTHER: In Humbolt's? Alright, never mind the Eskimos now. Is there any news of those?

ODYSSSEUS: No, nothing. I am constantly on guard. But there is something new.

GRANDMOTHER: What's new?

ODYSSSEUS: They turned up. Not them, but something else.

GRANDMOTHER: Who turned up?

ODYSSSEUS: Mushrooms.

GRANDMOTHER: Kolji-mushrooms?!

ODYSSSEUS: Yes.

GRANDMOTHER: On the Kolji-mountain?!

ODYSSSEUS: All over the forest.

GRANDMOTHER: Now you tell me! It means that the prophecy is coming true. We should declare state of emergency up there immediately.

ODYSSSEUS: Shall I turn off the light?

GRANDMOTHER: What light? There is no public light on the Kolji-mountain.

ODYSSSEUS: Not on the Kolji-mountain, here.

GRANDMOTHER: Why would you turn off the light here?

ODYSSSEUS: Because of conspiracy.

GRANDMOTHER: It's a day light, you fool.

ODYSSSEUS: Then there is no use.

GRANDMOTHER: If the prophecy has started to come true, that means we have lack of time. But, there is still time to bring Gavrilo on to the Kolji-mountain, although our chances, after this pregnancy, are almost non-existent. Just when I managed to isolate him and make him soft. And he fell in love over the radio!

ODYSSSEUS: And planted a young one into her. Master.

GRANDMOTHER: You are a fool. But even a fool understands what we need to do.

ODYSSSEUS: Hold on, grandma.

GRANDMOTHER: What now?

ODYSSSEUS: Let us draw the curtains, at least.

GRANDMOTHER: Put something on that mouth and listen to me! (In a decisive voice.) WE have to hit upon ours, too. There is no other.

ODYSSSEUS: What do you mean hit the ours?!

GRANDMOTHER: Just as I said! There is a war going on! And in a war everybody is an enemy.

ODYSSSEUS: Everybody is our enemy in peace time, too.

GRANDMOTHER: That’s right, everybody. And that means even Koljibabas are our enemies.

ODYSSSEUS: It looks like you want me to go mad. First you taught me that all the enemies should be killed, and now you say that the Koljibabas are the enemies of the Koljibabas! What shall I do with that information now?! Does it mean I should kill us too?

GRANDMOTHER: Even you can’t be such a fool.

ODYSSSEUS: So how do I know which Koljibaba is to be killed, and which is not?!

GRANDMOTHER: I will tell you.
**Outing 2.**

*Kolji-mountain, a night without stars, fog, projector is clicking, the mountain resonates, and a pig squeals. Education film. On a sheet.*

*Projector clicks. Slide:*

**Illustrated ENCYCLOPEDIA KOLYBABICA**

*Projector clicks. Slide:*

**A apokalypse**

**ODYSSEUS** *(From darkness.)*: For the patriots – future Koljibaba’s National Day. For defeatists and traitors – the day of winged lizards.
Projector klicks. Slide:

WC
war crime
(see under 'pig slaughter')

Projector klicks. Slide:

C
COW
– NOT A PIG

Projector klicks. Slide:

E
Eskimos
– enemies

Projector klicks. Slide:

N
neighbor
– enemy
– shit

Projector klicks. Slide:

NCD
Neighbor's
cow
died
ODYSSSEUS (From darkness.): In the narrow sense – a term that reveals death of neighbor's cow. In a broader sense – any good news. Instead of “neighbor's cow died” in common use is also the colloquial term “neighbor’s cow went dead.”

Projector klicks. Slide:

NEIGHBOR’S COW DIED

Projector klicks. Slide:

S
seal
  – not a pig
  – not a cow
  – smooth enemies’ resource

Projector klicks. Slide:

E
– enemies
(see under ‘Eskimos’)

Projector klicks. Slide:

M
Milorad
– gay

Projector klicks. Slide:

G
godfather
ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): Generally speaking – an organism that is a witness to baptism and marriage of other organisms. In Koljibaba's case – it is the most important Koljibaba in the life of any Koljibaba. A new godfather cannot be chosen again, and if a wrong godfather had been chosen, then a special selection technique is applied. See under ‘pig slaughter’.

Projector klicks. Slide:

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): Excuse me.

Projector klicks. Slide:

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): In the literal sense – an organism for fastening. In a figurative sense – something irrelevant. Something that's nothing.

Projector clicks one more time and there is an interloper slide:

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): In the literal sense – a term that shows the obvious difference between godfather's and button's organism. In a figurative sense – this is the very foundation of the Koljibaba's value system. In case that godfather was not chosen well, in the 'gnb' term the word 'godfather' is replaced with the word 'Eskimo' – on this change is based the whole theory of relativity of the Koljibabas.

Projector clicks one more time and there is an interloper slide:

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): Why should his godfather die?

LISA (From darkness.): If a cow can die, a godfather can die, too.

Projector is turned off. Darkness. Little bit of music.
4. Requiem for a small radio orchestra and a solo shotgun

Basement radio station, Lana is polishing her nails, Lane is gloomy and silent. Odysseus enters the basement carrying the violoncello case.

**ODYSSEUS:** Are you two Lana and Lane?
**LANA** (Confused.): Yes, we are, what can we do for you?
**ODYSSEUS:** And who is who?
**LANA:** What do you mean who is who?
**LANE:** I am Chlamidia, glad to meet you.
**ODYSSEUS:** What’s that?
**LANA:** He is Lane, and I am Lana.
**ODYSSEUS:** You sure?
**LANE:** And who are you? A musician?
**ODYSSEUS:** Musician? Yes, I am. (**He takes out a switch light from the violoncello case.**) C’mon, turn off the light.
**LANA:** Why should we turn the light off?
**ODYSSEUS:** Little night music. It’s a conspirative piece. It must be in darkness.
**LANE:** It can’t be turned off. This basement was made like an atomic shelter and there must always be light.
**ODYSSEUS:** A military building? (**He puts the switch light back into the box.**) Alright, I respect that.
**LANE:** Listen, if you are a musician...
**ODYSSEUS:** Musician, musician. A solo player... (**he takes out a shotgun from the box.**) on th shotgun. And tonight we have a death march on the program. In two pieces. (**He points the gun at Lane.**) First piece: Gay requiem.
**LANA** (Afraid, to Odysseus.) No, man, don’t, what’s the matter with you?!  
**LANE:** Shoot, I don’t give a fuck. Kill the gay.
**LANA** (To Odysseus.): Don’t listen to him! (To Lane.) Now you want to quarrel with him! Are you insane?!

**LANE:** Why do you meddle? Let the man do his job. Can’t you see that he is jealous.
**ODYSSEUS:** Who is jealous?
**LANE:** Well, you are, solo player. C’mon, tell me, are you gay? Say it, say it.
**LANA:** Lane, don’t.
**ODYSSEUS:** Of course I’m not.
**LANE:** It shows. That’s why you suffer. You are missing the real thing.
**ODYSSEUS** (*Laughs.): You are crazy.
**LANE:** Logic is logic.
**ODYSSEUS:** And how come you know Milorad?
**LANE:** Milorad? From the woods. He does everything.
**ODYSSEUS:** Really? Interesting. I have just one more question. Technical question. This fucking program from the universe with a million reruns – is it still going to go on?
**LANE:** Radio drama? It is, you just press this button and it will keep on playing – that’s how it’s set. What’s that got to do with anything?
**ODYSSEUS:** I don’t want to stop grandmother’s program.
**LANE:** What grandmother? Listen, I have a technical question too: What does all this mean?
**ODYSSEUS:** It means that you are finished.

*Odysseus presses the trigger, shotgun goes off, and Lane falls down. He is dead. Lana screams then goes silent – she can’t move from the shock.*
ODYSSSEUS: Goodbye, gay. This is the end of the program for you. *(To Lana.)* A? As if I was a speaker. And I have never been on the radio. And know, the second piece. The romantic one. Let us have you play a little bit too. *(He opens his fly.)* C’mon, kneel and take it out.

LANA *(Afraid.)*: Take out what?

ODYSSSEUS: Microphone.

LANA *(Almost crying.)*: Please, don’t.

ODYSSSEUS: There is no use begging.

LANA: Are you going to kill me?

ODYSSSEUS: I am. Later. When we say goodbye to each other.

LANA *(Sobbing.)*: Please, don’t, I am pregnant.

ODYSSSEUS: Pregnant, so what? If I noticed every single detail...

LANA: But why?

ODYSSSEUS: Such a stupid question. We are at war. You see this gun? And I’m sorry, I really am. Mostly because of the young one. If only I could do something for you... Maybe I can.

LANA *(With a shred of hope.)*: What?

ODYSSSEUS: Well, first I will kill you. It takes half an hour for the human organism to cool off, and this is quite enough for me because I am fast and efficient. A soldier, fuck it. And you won’t give a fuck what I am doing because you will be dead. It’s not much, but it comes from the heart.

LANA: What a favour...

ODYSSSEUS: What do you mean? Speaking of time... *(He glances at the watch.)* Oh, man, fuck it! While I am wasting time with gays and pregnant women... *(He takes out a piece of paper and pushes it into Lana’s hand.)* C’mon, read it. Go on!

*Lana unfolds the paper and reads it. Silently.*

ODYSSSEUS: Hallo! What are you doing?

LANA: You said read it.

ODYSSSEUS: Into the microphone! Loudly! Hurry up!

*Lana sadly kneels in front of Odysseus.*

LANA *(She is sobbing and reading – to his fly.)*: Attention, attention, important news.

ODYSSSEUS: Are you normal? Where do you see the microphone there?

LANA: Take it our yourself, please.

ODYSSSEUS: Go to the real microphone, you fool!

LANA: The real one?

ODYSSSEUS: Hurry up, don’t make grandma wait!

*Lana quickly gets up and puts on the headphones. Odysseus approaches and puts the gun on her forehead.*

ODYSSSEUS: Read. Nicely.

*Lana places the paper in front of her and turns on the microphone. Then she clears her throat a couple of times. Then she starts coughing uncontrollably.*
Outing 3.

Kolji-mountain, a night without stars, fog, projector is clicking, the mountain resonates, and the pig is squeeking. Educational film. On a bed sheet.

Projector clicks. Slide:

**K-PARADOX**
(KOLJIBABAS’ PARADOX)

Projector clicks. Slide:

**THE POINT:**
Koljibabas are...

Projector turns off. It is dark, nothing can be seen. Nothing at all.

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): It went off. Oh, fuck it... Again you tried to connect it to the battery. If you want to do drugs, find the dealers or go some place where there is regular electricity! Do not touch my battery! (He is clicking, trying to activate the projector.) How can I make my point now?!

LISA (From darkness.): Sorry, I had a crisis. It is not my fault that I became addicted to electroshocks.

Odysseus turns on the switch light and points it at Lisa. The light immediately goes off.

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): The switch light went dead, too.

LISA (From darkness.) And what are you waiting for?

Destiny is a pig (a wedding traditional tune)

*Gavrilo’s apartement, there are Grandmother and Gavrilo. Gavrilo is happy, almost euphoric, and Grandmother... she is not. On the Grandfather’s tombstone there are huge grandma’s underpants drying. The radio is playing.*

RADIO (Lana): You have been listening another rerun of the radio drama ‘The War of the Worlds’ by Herbert George Walles...

Grandmother changes the radio station – finds music. Gavrilo stands dancing to the radio tune.

GRANDMOTHER: You fool. What is the matter with you?

GAVRILLO: Listen to the bit. Shall we, grandma?

GRANDMOTHER: I can’t, Gavrilo, I am too old for that.

GAVRILLO: What do you mean old, you are a hotty!

GRANDMOTHER: That’s true.

GAVRILLO (Euphorically.): Are we having a good time, grand-ma?!

GRANDMOTHER (As if she was in a funeral.): We are, Gavrilo. We are having great fucking time. And why are you so happy? You took drugs again with the junk?

GAVRILLO: I didn’t manage to make it to Lana’s. But I listened to the radio in the bus.
GRANDMOTHER: And?
GAVRILo: I am getting married.
GRANDMOTHER: When?!
GAVRILo: What’s the matter, grandma? You are not happy.
GRANDMOTHER: I am, how could I not be. I just wanted to...
GAVRILo: What?
GRANDMOTHER: To paint the wheel chair for the wedding.

In the apartment above a dog starts barking again. Gavrilo totally loses self-control.

GAVRILo (Looking up, he shouts.): Buy some fish, you idiot!
(To Grandmother.) I know what you wanted.
GRANDMOTHER: I didn’t want anything, I swear. I love you.
GAVRILo: I love you too, grandma. But I shall not go to the Kolji-mountain.

Gavrilo goes to the other room – he is still dancing.

GRANDMOTHER: Like fuck you won’t.

Gavrilo returns from the other room – in one hand he is holding a suitcase, and in the other hand he is carrying some clothes. He puts the suitcase on the floor and starts packing.

GRANDMOTHER: What are you doing?
GAVRILo: I’m packing.
GRANDMOTHER: I knew it. You can’t escape from your destiny. And why would you run away. My dear, dear child. I am coming too.

Grandmother gets her underpants and starts wiping the Grandfather’s tomb.

GAVRILo (Stops packing.): And what are you doing?
GRANDMOTHER: I am polishing grandfather.
GAVRILo: You are polishing him with your underwear? How sexy.

GRANDMOTHER: C’mon, don’t talk nonsense. He has to get ready too.
GAVRILo: Excuse me, but where is he going?
GRANDMOTHER: He is coming with us.
GAVRILo: Grandmother, we are not going anywhere. I am going.
GRANDMOTHER: And what about me and Grandfather. Alright, we shall follow later. The important thing is that you immediately go to the Kolji-mountain.
GAVRILo: What Kolji-mountain? I am moving to Lana’s. Into the basement.
GRANDMOTHER: What?!

Grandmother is having an attack, starts suffocating. Gavrilo quickly puts and oxygen mask onto her face. Grandmother inhales a few times, then she gets better and takes off the mask.

GAVRILo: Are you feeling better, Grandma?
GRANDMOTHER: You assassin.
GAVRILo: Lana is pregnant. And she loves me.
GRANDMOTHER: Maybe she does. But how do you know it’s your child?
GAVRILo: Whose child could it be? She hasn’t left the basement for three months.
GRANDMOTHER: As far as I know, she is not alone in that basement. There is someone else, too. Someone who persuaded her not to leave the basement.
GAVRILo: Lane is sexually safe for women. And Lana is not going out according to her own will, because she is a fatalist.
GRANDMOTHER: How do you know what they do when they play the reruns? You say that he is harmless, but that Lane sounds like a male pig. And male pig is a male pig, even if he wears headphones.
GAVRILo: He is gay, grandma.
GRANDMOTHER: Oh, my son. You think they know who is who and what is what when they get high on drugs. I wouldn’t let that Lane take care of my dog. Especially a female dog.

GAVRILo (Starts packing again.): Come on, grandma...

GRANDMOTHER: Well, yes, grandmother is insane.

GAVRILo: You are not really insane. You are a person.... with special needs. And the court ordered me to be your guardian. But I am moving out now because I have to take care of someone else.

GRANDMOTHER: You are late, Gavrilo. Someone else took care of her already.

GAVRILo: That’s enough, grandma!

GRANDMOTHER: Alright, alright, have it your way. But if you had left Lana with a female dog instead with the harmless guy, now you would have puppets with head-phones running around you.

GAVRILo: What you are saying is physically impossible. The same way that it is impossible to fall down from space and stay alive.

GRANDMOTHER: I did not fall, I was pushed! And in the Kolji-mountain they are waiting for you as if you were a god.

GAVRILo (Demonstratively closes the suitcase.) Kolji-mountain, Koljibabas, Kolji-mountain! My head is ringing already from that Kolji-mountain of yours.

There is a door bell. Really.

GAVRILo: There is someone ringing.

GRANDMOTHER: There is no one ringing, Gavrilo. Those are just voices in your head. What did that drug adict do to you...

GAVRILo: It can’t be that you haven’t heard.

GRANDMOTHER: I haven’t heard.

GAVRILo: What do you mean you haven’t heard?!

GRANDMOTHER: What is strange about that? I am a person with special needs.

GAVRILo: You know you are. You need ears!

There is a door bell again. But there is also a dog barking – in the apartment above.

GRANDMOTHER: Now I’ve heard it.

GRANDMOTHER: Now you’ve heard it. But it is not ringing, it is barking.

GAVRILo: The door bell, Grandma, tha door bell! (Grandma simply shrugs her shoulders.) I am going to open. Then I shall get ready and leave. In the same way that you don’t hear the door bell, I don’t want to hear about the Kolji-mountain. I shall live on the radio!

Gavrilo goes into the corridor.

GRANDMOTHER: Like fuck you shall live on the radio.

Grandma turns on the radio.

RADIO (Speaker, in a broken voice.) ... but another catastrophic flood managed to put down the fire caused by meteoric rain. Still, the greatest danger for the population is still the fatal fog, or the clouds of hydrogen fog that contain no oxygen at all. The death rate in the areas covered by this fog is almost absolute and that is why our meteorological reports sound more like some kind of a global death chronicle. Unfortunately, today’s sum is even worse than yesterday’s: in Paris most of the population died under water, Moscow has been burning for seven days already, and Brussels had completely disappeared in the fog. There are no survivors.

Grandma turns off the radio.

GRANDMOTHER: So far so good.

Gavrilo returns, with him enters the Gavrilo’s guy. Gavrilo’s guy is ellegant, but somewhat shubby and seems a little bit pale. And he looks very much like late Lane.
GAVRİLO: There is a man. He says he knows me from my childhood.

GRANDMOTHER: What man?

GAVRİLO: This one.

GRANDMOTHER: I don’t see anybody.

GAVRİLO: You don’t see a living man, but you see puppets with headphones.

GRANDMOTHER: I don’t see the puppets either. Do you see them?

GAVRİLO: No, grandma, I see lizards who want to lure you into a space ship so they can push you again. And I will help them!

GRANDMOTHER: There are no lizards here. You are so sick...

GAVRİLO: Stop fucking around with me any more! When someone comes to visit, it is not polite to ignore him. The man is here!

GRANDMOTHER: Where?

GAVRİLO’S GUY: She can’t see me, Gavrilo.

GAVRİLO: I beg your pardon? What do you mean she can’t see you?

GRANDMOTHER: Whom are you talking to?

GAVRİLO: What the fuck is with you two?!

GRANDMOTHER: You two who? I am all alone. Gavrilo, my son, how many grandmothers can you see?

GAVRİLO: One grandmother. (He points at her.) And one man!

GRANDMOTHER: Alright, if you say so. Don’t you worry, it will pass. It passed last time too.

GAVRİLO: What last time?

GRANDMOTHER: You were small so you don’t remember. Even then you had someone whom only you could see. It’s the only invisible Koljibaba in history. We called him that Gavrilo’s guy. But that stopped.

GAVRİLO: I had an invisible friend?

GRANDMOTHER: Maybe he was your friend, but to me he was simply invisible.

GAVRİLO: This is impossible.

GRANDMOTHER, GAVRİLO’S GUY (At the same time.): It’s possible.

Gavrilo is confused. His resistance is going weaker.

GAVRİLO’S GUY: Listen, Gavrilo, the situation is simple – you can see me, she can’t see me. It would be best if you could accept that as soon as possible. We don’t have much time.

GRANDMOTHER: Alright, grandmother is going to take a little rest. (She goes into the other room in a wheel chair.) While you have your conversation with your company.

GAVRİLO’S GUY: Sensible woman.

GRANDMOTHER (Stops.) Grandmother wishes all the best for you, Gavrilo. Don’t forget that.

GAVRİLO: I won’t.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, goodbye. (She is not moving.)

GAVRİLO: Goodbye, Grandma. Go already.

GRANDMOTHER (Loudly – into the empty space.) Goodbye to you, too. I apologize for not being able to see you. I am, you know, crazy. (Then she leaves, finally.)

GAVRİLO: The invisible friend from my childhood? How come I don’t remember that at all? You remind me of a guy from the radio station. I first thought it was him.

GAVRİLO’S GUY: Well, it’s not. I’m a little angry that you forgot me. I remember every single detail.

GAVRİLO: Maybe I lost sight of you because you are invisible.

GAVRİLO’S GUY: Don’t be a chovinist. I am your best friend. Remember that.

GAVRİLO: I’ll remember.

GAVRİLO’S GUY: That was the best friendship in my life. And the only one. Then something told me I had to go. So I left.
GAVRILo: And where have you been until now?

GAVRILo’S GUY: In the woods.

GAVRILo: Something told you to go and you left? And into the woods. So much about you being my friend.

GAVRILo’S GUY: You are unjust to me. I had much worse time than you did. Do you know what it’s like when everybody is ignoring you? And you can’t even get angry with them – because they don’t see you. Even the wolves didn’t want me. There in the woods I was up for grabs for them, but even when they were starving they were eating plastic bags. Invisibility sucks.

GAVRILo: And why are you here now?

GAVRILo’S GUY: Something told me I should come. Something invisible.

GAVRILo: Well, yes. It’s logical.

GAVRILo’S GUY (Takes out a piece of paper from his pocket.): But I brought you something totally tangible.

GAVRILo (Takes the paper.): What is this?

GAVRILo’S GUY: The inheritance. The final verdict.

GAVRILo: And what did I inherit?

GAVRILo’S GUY: Your grandfather left you a property on the Kolji-mountain. It was long under dispute. First it took years for them to declare grandfather dead because his body was never found, so a part of it was supposed to be assigned to your grandmother, but in the mean time she was declared insensible and you were declared her guardian, then the whole procedure took a long time... One way or the other, it’s all yours now.

GAVRILo: Tricky. And what does the property look like up there?

GAVRILo’S GUY: There used to be a sanatorium for mental patients. Your grandfather was the manager for year. And nearby there was a small rocket station for destroying dangerous clouds – the state put those rockets there because of adequate altitude. And Grandfather didn’t mind that, he dealt with his patients.

GAVRILo: So, I inherited a madhouse. Which is a rocket base at the same time. Fuck.

GAVRILo’S GUY: There is nothing left there anymore. It’s all ruined. Actually, you inherited only the woods.

GAVRILo: And can I sell that woods?

GAVRILo’S GUY: It would be very difficult. But you must go to Kolji-mountain. Right away.

GAVRILo: It seems as if you were trained by my grandmother. What shall I do in the Kolji-mountain?

GAVRILo’S GUY: I have nothing to do with your grandmother. And they are waiting for you there. It’s your destiny.

GAVRILo: Who is waiting for me? Wolves? And what shall I do there? Chew on the plastic bags? My life is here. I am getting married and will have a child.

GAVRILo’S GUY: Soon you will find out that it is not your child.

GAVRILo: Not mine? And you still claim that you have nothing to do with my grandmother?

GAVRILo’S GUY: I have nothing to do with her. But, I can see the future.

GAVRILo: You are invisible, but you can see what is about to happen. Yeah, right. (Pause.) Alright, what is going to happen now?

GAVRILo’S GUY: In ten seconds grandmother will enter and turn the radio on.

GAVRILo: That kind of a prophet I can be, too. That happens every day hundreds of times.

Grandmother enters. Gavril is a little surprised. And Gavril’s guy is beaming. It’s like he trying to say ‘what did I tell you’.

GRANDMOTHER: Has that guy left?

GAVRILo: You see that he has. (To Gavril’s guy.) This doesn’t mean anything.

GRANDMOTHER: Has he gone or hasn’t he?

GAVRILo: Yes, he is gone!
GRANDMOTHER: I shall turn the radio on. To improve our mood.

_Grandmother turns the radio on. Gavrilo’s guy is beaming. Someone is coughing on the radio._

RADIO (Lana): Attention, attention, important news. For Gavrilo. Gavrilo, the child is not yours, it is Lane’s. I don’t want to see you ever again. Goodbye.

_There is a shot heard from the radio and something falls down. (If we want to tell the truth – someone falls down – it is Lana. But that’s radio.)_

RADIO (Odysseus, far away from the microphone.) Gay’s business – all the buttons are the same. Here it is.

RADIO (Late Lana): Herbert George Welles: The War of the Worlds!

RADIO (Late Lane): Radio adaptation: Orson Welles.

RADIO (Late Lana): Adaptation of adaptation:

RADIO (Late Lana, Lane): Lana and Lane!

_Grandmother turns off the radio. Gavrilo looks as if he were dead._

GAVRILo’S GUY: Destiny is destiny.

GRANDMOTHER: Male pig is a male pig.

GAVRILo: It seems that someone shot.

GRANDMOTHER: No way.

GAVRILo’S GUY: The microphone fell down.

GAVRILo (Takes the suitcase): Alright. I am going. It seems that I really have to.

GRANDMOTHER, GAVRILo’S GUY (At the same time, a little panicky.) Where are you going?!

GAVRILo: To Kolji-mountain.

_There is a dog barking in the apartement above._

GAVRILo (Looking upwards, he is yelling.): Die already, you barking little shit! At least I shall get rid of you.

(To Grandmother and Gavrilo’s guy.) Goodbye. I hope you are happy now. At least you two are all right.

GAVRILo’S GUY: I’m OK.

GRANDMOTHER: What do you mean you two?

Gavrilo leaves the apartement.

GAVRILo’S GUY: Good, good. What do you say, Grandma, ha?

GRANDMOTHER: Fuck good. It’s great.

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**Outing 4.**

Kolji-mountain, a night without stars, fog, projector is clicking, the mountain resonates, and the pig is squeeking. Educational film. _On a bed sheet._

Projector clicks. Slide:

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KOLYBABICA
FUTURISTICA
(koljibabas prophecy)

---

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.:) Our destiny is written down. First there will be signs: a combination real stones and fake angels will fall down, we shall drown both on water and air, a terrible truth shall be released from the cage, and the mushroom shall, in fear, climb the trees. When the wolves abandon meat, when the dead get up and start singing the hymn, when the Kolji-mountain is covered with the fog, when an icon starts crying and when there is no dried meat anymore – then they will appear on the sky. Flying carrions with tales.
Projector clicks. Slide:

LIZARDS

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): And then there will come the one whom we are waiting for. The superior organism. Koljibaba above all the Koljibabas – our savior. Superkoljibaba. The egg above all other eggs.

Projector clicks. Slide:

CIVILIAN

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): The prophecy says that Superkoljibaba shall be the youngest of all Koljibabas and that he will fly straight to the sky and defeat the lizards. We don’t know how, but he will.

Projector clicks. Slide:

GODFATHER

ODYSSEUS (From darkness.): Excuse me.

Projector clicks. Slide:

HURRAY!
Gavrilo’s apartement – Grandmother is in the wheel chair, holds a mirror in her lap and puts on make up: too intensive, with too many colors – she is over made up and it looks tacky in every possible way. Radio is on, radio stations keep changing on their on.

RADIO (Politician, routinely): ... and since Brussels practically does not exist any more, we delayed sending our elected delegation, but we are continuing, without any doubt, to work on further integration of our country...

RADIO (Female speaker, exalted): ... up in the clouds, into the exciting world of lace and satin! The fashion show in the airplane is definitely going to take place.

RADIO (Radio-missionary, fanatically): And the whole sinful planet has accepted that reality!

RADIO (Male speaker, in a broken voice): ... but in our country...

RADIO (Female singer – keeps singing, always the same thing): Mito, Mito you tippler!

GRANDMOTHER: Right. Like a starlette.

Grandmother puts her mirror away, picks up her underwear from Grandfathers tombstone and wheels the chair our of the apartement. Darkness.
II Act (rural)

6. The hunting season for unshaven

Deep Kolji-mountain woods. High too – almost up in the skies. Full of plastic bags. A little bit of darkness, a little bit of fog. It is dawning. Everything is tilted to the right side.

Gavrilo is standing in the woods holding a suitcase. He seems lost. From within the forest there comes some noise. Gavrilo hides in the shadows.

ODYSSEUS (From somewhere in the forest.) Stop, Milorad, I won’t touch you!

Milorad staggers out from the woods. He is dressed normally, but if we want to tell the truth (and we do) that’s where his normality ends: Milorad is bloody, beaten up and his clothes is torn – he looks like a wounded and haunted beast. Still, under all that blood and bruises, and by his clothes, you can tell that this is the man who told Gavrilo he was his imaginary friend (Gavrilo’s Guy). And that means that Milorad is very similar to late Lane, too.

Milorad looks around himself as if he can’t see and then he staggers on. After a few moments there is Odysseus. He is holding a gun. And a switch light. Gavrilo goes deeper into the shadows.

ODYSSEUS (Looking around.) I hear you have stopped shaving. That’s where you made a fucking mistake. I don’t mind seeing shit even. C’mon, get out you traitor I need some help. Please come out. If you come out I’ll give you some dried meat, and if I pool you out I shall cut your throat.

Odysseus starts into the woods after Milorad, and Gavrilo, amazed, looks after him. He doesn’t know where to go.

GAVRило: Where to now?

ODYSSEUS (Somewhere from the woods.) Milorad, stop, you unshaven cunt!

Then there is a shot. Gavrilo, afraid, winces and then he goes on too. But to the opposite side from Odysseus and Milorad.

Somewhere in the woods someone turns on the radio.

RADIO (Tourist promoter): Visit Kolji-mountain! It’s a destination the likes of which you haven’t seen before!

GROUP THERAPY, TRANSCRIPT 1. (SUBJECT: GRANDMOTHER)

GRANDMOTHER: My name is Grandmother Koljibaba, I am paralized and I can fly. I am sick for two grandmothers. That is why I demand that you give me in writing that I am the most sick person here. Grandfather says that Koljibabas, although they live in very concrete conditions, among shit, are nothing but abstraction. We do not have separate identities – every single koljibaba personality exists exclusively as a part of one and unique all koljibaba personality. In other words: All Koljibabas are one Koljibaba. That is why it is impossible to count us. My name is Grandmother Koljibaba and I am an alcoholic. Since all the Koljibabas are fools, I decided to take back my maiden name – Starlette. And now I am a young girl again. That’s what I think. My husband says it is delirium tremens.

7. Ceremonial opening of a road sign (with a happy ending)

Deep into the Kolji-mountain woods. Odysseus (holding a gun on his shoulder) and Milorad carry a large tin road sign. They place the sign down (a bit vague, as if just to get rid of it) and then they stand beside and take a look at it. Then they approach the sign again and turn it a little bit. The sign reads:
Milorad: But you hate gays! This is both paradoxical and contradictory!

Odysseus: Milorad, don’t annoy me. Kneel and play!

So Milorad kneels and plays. Nothing is seen because playing is taking place behind the road sign, but if we want to tell the truth, and we do, judging by Odysseus’ face Milorad is quite good at it.

Odysseus: Excellent!

8. A romance under a pear tree

A clearing on the Kolji–mountain, morning. There are two budges on the clearing. Like two fake tits. Uneven. Unattractive. In the wrong place. But they are there, and can’t be ignored. On the one side of the clearing there is a tilted outside toilet with a red heart painted on the door and a red hospital cross painted on the roof. Under the heart there is a sign: PERSONNEL ONLY. There is a picture of a naked woman. There is a lock on the door. On the other side of the clearance there is a low rachitic pear tree. There are almost no leaves or fruits – here and there a couple of old pears and a twisted leaf. And plastic bags. Although the tree is obviously dying, there is nevertheless life in abundance on it – both the trunk and the branches are covered with large strange mushrooms. There is a large bird cage hung on one of the branches. Instead of a bird, inside there is a book. Between that pear-mushroom hybrid and the outside toilet there is wire and a large bed sheet is drying on it.

All over the clearing there are stump logs: on one stump there is a goes cooker and some other kitchen appliances, on the second stump there is a projector pointed towards the bed sheet and a large battery, over the third stump there is a kneeted table cloth... A true little home. The Kolji–grandmother base. Everything is tilted to the right – the pear tree, the outside toilet and the stump logs, even the Grandfather’s tombstone and the kitchen pots.
Lisa is hanging the washed, but still bloody butcher’s apron, right next to the bed sheet. Lisa is unshaved and uncombed, but very feminine. She looks very much like the late Lana.

LISA (Singing): Mito, Mito, you drunk...

All of sudden there is a thunder. Kolji-mountain is resonating from the thunder, and Lisa looks upwards into the skies and rushes to take off the bed sheet from the wire. But when she removes the bed sheet, behind it she sees Gavrilo holding a suitcase. Lisa is surprised so she screams. Then she screams again. And again.

Gavrilo steps from behind the bed sheet. From then on the two of them keep circling one another like two scared little beasts – it is just a matter of time who will strike first.

GAJRILO: What is the matter with you?
LISA: Nothing. I love screaming when I have company.
GAJRILO (Looking at her.): You look so much like one...
LISA: Female drug addict.
GAJRILO: I beg your pardon?
LISA: All female drug addicts are the same. And they are all whores.
GAJRILO: That’s not what I wanted to say.
LISA: Then sorry. Maybe your girl is not a whore, maybe it’s a coincidence that we look alike. Are you hungry?
GAJRILO (Looking at her, mesmerized.) God, you are so similar. (Then he draws back.) What?
LISA (Loudly.): Do you want to eat?
GAJRILO: No, thank you.
LISA: Is everything alright with you? You look like you’ve been eating shit.
GAJRILO: Well, I have.
LISA: And do you want to fuck something?
GAJRILO: I beg your pardon?
LISA (Even more loudly.): I’m asking if you want to fuck something.

GAJRILO: Don’t shout, I can hear you.
LISA: Sorry, I thought you were deaf. Even if you were deaf...
GAJRILO: Then what?
LISA: Nothing. Deaf people fuck too.
GAJRILO (Laughs.) I am not deaf, I just find it... strange.
LISA: Even those people fuck too.
GAJRILO: You are not really a whore, are you?
LISA: What else could I be here? You know what they say: Heaven is in the sky, shit is on the earth. And I am on the earth.
GAJRILO: When the girl that looks so much like you fucked me up, never mind how, I thought... I died. That is why I came here. To bury myself. And then, when I saw you, I thought I was being born again. Until you said you were a whore. Fuck, it’s a stillborn.

Gavrilo and Lisa come closer to each other, just a breath away. There are sparks between them.

LISA: I shall bring you back from the dead. Today is the day of mourning – I’ll give you discount.
GAJRILO: Why is it a mourning day? Because of the end of the world?
LISA: What end of the world? We are celebrating the National Day. And one thousand years without a bathroom.
GAJRILO: I wish you were not a whore. And that the thing that you offer is for free.
LISA: Not even with a discount? And what do you want – that I should pay you?
GAJRILO: Then I would be a whore, too.
LISA: I would pay what you ask for.

Gavrilo’s and Lisa’s lips are so closed that a kiss seems unavoidable. There is not even a place for a breath between them. But...

LISA: There is this one thing... it’s regarding shit.
And it's finished. Gavrilo moves away. As if he had just been slapped. In any case, the kiss will not happen.

GAVRILo: Now you have to mention shit. It was hard enough for me to accept that you were a whore.

Lisa: I am not a whore.
GAVRILo: You told me you were.
Lisa: So what, you told me you ate shit. Besides, even if I were a whore, I didn’t say I liked it. Maybe you like to eat shit.
GAVRILo: Maybe I do. But at the moment I'm full.
Lisa: Alright, then we shall wait for you to be hungry. The important thing is that you like shit.
GAVRILo: Well, I don’t.
Lisa: Well, I’m not a whore.

End of quarell, pause, they are looking for a way to break the distance.

GAVRILo: What do you live of?
Lisa: God is taking care of that.
GAVRILo: God is your customer?
Lisa: I told you I was not a whore. I am just... market oriented. Why would God pay to whores? When he wants to fuck someone, he fucks. Whomever he wants, whenever he wants. As far as I know, in a few days he will fuck us all. And when God fucks, he tears it all apart. There will not even be any shit left.
GAVRILo: And do you have anybody else? Apart from God?
Lisa: Now you are interested.
GAVRILo: I am not! If you don’t want to tell me, you don’t have to.
Lisa: Yes you are, you are. When a man is interested who fucks the woman, that means he wants to deep it in too. You know who fucks me? My husband. He fucks me, he feeds me, he insults me and doesn’t let me use the battery. But I use it any way. It’s my bonus.

GAVRILo: You are nothing like a whore.
Lisa: Who is nothing?
GAVRILo: Fuck it, you mind everything I say. You mind when I say you are a whore, you mind when I say you are not a whore. How can you be a whore if you fuck for food and electricity? And for little warm human communication. Everybody does that.
Lisa: In any case, my husband says that the male thing can be seen in my eyes. And he knows what he is talking about. I am an excellent whore.
GAVRILo: What thing?
Lisa: Communication. The thing that God likes most.
GAVRILo: And what do you do apart from that... communication?
Lisa: I cook, when I have what to cook, I use the battery, when it's not empty, and I am waiting for the Mesiah. And I paint. Sometimes.
GAVRILo: What do you paint?
Lisa: Religious stuff.
GAVRILo: Right, that’s logical. And what is that thing in the cage?
GAVRILo: I can see it's a book, but why do you keep it in the cage?
Lisa: Because it is dangerous.
GAVRILo: What is in that book that makes it dangerous.
Lisa: Facts.
GAVRILo: I don’t understand.
Lisa: Facts are shit.
GAVRILo: To you, everything is shit. How come your tongue is still moving from all that shit?
Lisa: If you mind that, why don’t you untangle my tongue for me?
GAVRILo: Maybe I will.

GAVRILo and Lisa go close to each other again. This time they are more determined.
LISA: There is one more thing regarding...

GAVRило: Shut up.

LISA: OK.

And that’s it. They kiss. Then they don’t let go.

GAVRило: Who are you? But really.

LISA: Lisa.

GAVRило: Like Mona Lisa?

LISA: Like Elisabeth.

GAVRило: This is some kind of Kolji-mountain shortening.

LISA: Don’t spoil it.

GAVRило: Sorry.

GAVRило: And who are you?

LISA: And who are you?

GAVRило: Gavrilo. From Djokonda.

LISA (Twiches.): Gavrilo who?

GAVRило: Gavrilo Koljibaba. Grandson of that stony grandfather over there. And a grandmother from the universe. Who has obviously arrived before me.

Now it’s Lisa’s turn to move away. But she doesn’t move away but pushes Gavrilo away.

GAVRило: What is it now?

LISA: How can you be a Koljibaba?!

GAVRило: There is nothing I can do about it.

LISA: The Koljibabas are shit!

GAVRило: I don’t claim we are a very respectful family, but it’s too much. And what are you, pray?

LISA: The same as you!

GAVRило: You are Koljibaba too?

LISA: I am and I am ashamed of it. But you should not be that! Gavrilo Koljibaba. You are the one we are waiting for.

GAVRило: Why are you waiting for me?

LISA: Because you are special. You’ll hear all about when we gather over dinner.

GAVRило: And what shall we do now?

LISA: I don’t know. I would never think you were shit. But you are.

GAVRило: I would never think you are a whore either.

LISA: But I am. But for you it’s free.

GAVRило: What is free for me?

LISA: Everything.

Again they start moving towards each other.

GAVRило: This is almost an incest.

LISA: I know.

GAVRило and Lisa kiss again. They have decided. They don’t let go.

GAVRило: You whore.

LISA: You shit.

They kiss again. Somewhere in the woods a shot is heard. The shot interrupts the kiss.

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GROUP THERAPY, TRANSCRIPT 2 (SUBJECT: ODYSSEUS)

ODYSSEUS: My name is Odysseus Koljibaba, I have amnesia from time to time, I have an over-empaahized and uncritical sexual drive and I am pathologically evil. The worst thing is that same time I’m a bit nervous, too. Grandfather says that my anxiety comes from the fact that I am not able to connect emotionally. I think that the main problem is that the Koljibabas are unruly fools. I love military discipline – regular shaving, regular arms maintenance, you eat what’s there, you shit wherever you can, you shoot everything that moves and you fuck everything that you capture. War is a hundred times better than peace. My name is Odysseus Koljibaba and I have killed and raped several humans and animals. But I didn’t do it alone. There are two of us. One hates people, the other hates animals.
Deep into Kolji-mountain, dusk. And plastic bags. Gavril and Lisa sit next to a deep hole wearing bloody butchers’ aprons. Gavril is working on a small stick with a huge butcher’s knife, and Lisa, holding exactly the same knife, is showing him where from the wind blows.

LISA: ... and because there is always wind from the left side, everything on the Kolji-mountain is tilted to the right.

GAVRIL: A wind can blow from east, west, north... How can it blow from left or right? If you watch from here, the trees are tilted to the right, but if you look from the other side then it is tilted to the left.

LISA: Why should I look from the other side when there is nothing there? Recently the foreigners wanted to build a school. But we protested. Real demonstrations. We even had signs: He who builds a school for someone else, let him go there himself.

GAVRIL: Why did you protest?

LISA: There are no children on the Kolji-mountain. It was the government wanted to scare those foreign fools. Then these catastrophes began and they gave up. We have our own school – Odysseus holds school as outing. He even has a projector.

GAVRIL: Odysseus? Odysseus Koljibaba?! And whom does he teach when there are no children?

LISA: No one. He is practising. He wants to be ready in case there are children. But there will be no children here. From the hole that he is dipping in the children do not come from.

GAVRIL: What hole he is dipping in?

LISA: Never mind. Anyhow, we have nothing. Before Grandmother came we even did not have a radio. Nothing. And this is the center of Kolji-mountain.

GAVRIL: What do the outskirts look like then?

LISA: It looks the same. When there is wind, you can watch plastic bags fly, and when there is no wind... than you look at the hole and wait for someone. Wait for you.

GAVRIL: You wait and you look at the hole. That’s how Eskimos hunt seals. (Looks inside the hole.) It looks deep.

LISA: Be careful, you might fall in.

GAVRIL: And, what is inside there?

LISA: There is nothing any more. But we keep looking nevertheless.

GAVRIL: And what was there?

LISA: It used to be a wolf’s lair.

GAVRIL: You took me to a wolf’s lair?!

LISA: There aren’t any wolves any more. This is a pigsty no. But there are no pigs. For more than three months now we keep watching for nothing.

GAVRIL: And where are the pigs? The wolves ate them?

LISA: We ate them. The wolves escaped earlier, when we came here.

GAVRIL: What is a pig like that a wolf is afraid of?

LISA: Home style Kolji-mountain pig. It was a bit wild, but gave excellent dried meat. Everybody is wild here.

GAVRIL: What happened with the neighbours?

LISA: We used to have neighbours. The neighbours used to have cows. It was the worst thing you can imagine.

GAVRIL: Poodles are worse.

LISA: Do you know how huge is cow shit?

GAVRIL: And?

LISA: And what?

GAVRIL: From the pigs?
Gavrilo: Then they run away from the wolves. First the wolves drove away the neighbours, than the pigs drove away the wolves.

Lisa: You are not even close.

Gavrilo: Alright, who did the neighbours run away from?!

Lisa: From us. The Koljibabas.

Gavrilo: And cows?

Lisa: Cows died earlier. Because they ate mushrooms.

Gavrilo: What kind of a story is this, fuck it?! As if I was listening to grandmother. The neighbours fed cows with mushrooms?!

Lisa: Not the neighbours, we did.

Gavrilo: It seems that only the wolves are tame here.

Lisa: I could be tame. If I want to.

Gavrilo: And do you?

Lisa: You decide. I am already into you.

Gavrilo embraces Lisa with the arm that holds the knife. Then Lisa embraces him. With the arm that holds the knife. Then they kiss. Slowly, tenderly. Then there is passion — they keep on rolling around the hollow. And they are kissing, passionately. And embracing. With knives. It’s either sex or war — if we want to say the truth it’s difficult to tell. Somewhere in the woods there is a shot. Somewhere close. It stops the kiss.

Gavrilo: Who is it that keeps shooting?

Lisa: Odysseus.

Gavrilo: Odysseus?

Lisa: My husband. When he is like that, he keeps shooting. And, unless you please him, he can do everything to you. Better let me fix that.

Gavrilo: Fix what?

Lisa: Never mind. You just watch that something doesn’t fly out of the hole.

Gavrilo: What could fly out of the hole?


Gavrilo: I didn’t even dare touch a poodle.

Lisa: You are not even close.

Gavrilo: Alright, who did the neighbours run away from?!

Lisa: From us. The Koljibabas.

Gavrilo: And cows?

Lisa: Cows died earlier. Because they ate mushrooms.

Gavrilo: What kind of a story is this, fuck it?! As if I was listening to grandmother. The neighbours fed cows with mushrooms?!

Lisa: Not the neighbours, we did.

Gavrilo: It seems that only the wolves are tame here.

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Gavrilo: Who is it that keeps shooting?

Lisa: Odysseus.

Gavrilo: Odysseus?

Lisa: My husband. When he is like that, he keeps shooting. And, unless you please him, he can do everything to you. Better let me fix that.

Gavrilo: Fix what?

Lisa: Never mind. You just watch that something doesn’t fly out of the hole.

Gavrilo: What could fly out of the hole?


Gavrilo: I didn’t even dare touch a poodle.

Lisa: You are not even close.

Gavrilo: Alright, who did the neighbours run away from?!

Lisa: From us. The Koljibabas.

Gavrilo: And cows?

Lisa: Cows died earlier. Because they ate mushrooms.

Gavrilo: What kind of a story is this, fuck it?! As if I was listening to grandmother. The neighbours fed cows with mushrooms?!

Lisa: Not the neighbours, we did.

Gavrilo: It seems that only the wolves are tame here.

Lisa: I could be tame. If I want to.

Gavrilo: And do you?

Lisa: You decide. I am already into you.

Gavrilo embraces Lisa with the arm that holds the knife. Then Lisa embraces him. With the arm that holds the knife. Then they kiss. Slowly, tenderly. Then there is passion — they keep on rolling around the hollow. And they are kissing, passionately. And embracing. With knives. It’s either sex or war — if we want to say the truth it’s difficult to tell. Somewhere in the woods there is a shot. Somewhere close. It stops the kiss.

Gavrilo: Who is it that keeps shooting?

Lisa: Odysseus.

Gavrilo: Odysseus?

Lisa: My husband. When he is like that, he keeps shooting. And, unless you please him, he can do everything to you. Better let me fix that.

Gavrilo: Fix what?

Lisa: Never mind. You just watch that something doesn’t fly out of the hole.

Gavrilo: What could fly out of the hole?

GAVRILo (From the hole.): How can you bring anyone when no one can see you? Find a branch and pass it to me. Now it doesn't stink that bad. (Pause.) Fuck it, he left. Hay! Haaaaay!

10. Marriage idyll (with a happy ending)

Koljibabas’ anti-lizard rocket toilet-air

GROUP THERAPY, TRANSCRIPT 3 (SUBJECT: MILORAD)

Milorad: My name is Milorad Koljibaba and I am doubly disturbed – I am both gay and an intellectual. All Koljibabas are fools but I’m supposed to be the biggest fool of them all: a well-read gay. In other words – not one of the pack. Grandfather says that in fact I am not disturbed and that the reason for all my problems is that I belong to minority, but I think that the fools are right and that there is a horrible future for Milorad Koljibaba.
Then the battery goes empty – projector switches off, and Lisa stops shaking. From the woods there comes Odysseus carrying Gavrilo on his back.

ODYSSEUS: Why are you whining so much, may you numb?!
I thought the wolves were back.

LISA: You saved him!

Odysseus throws Gavrilo as a back pack and starts wiping his show against the grass, and Lisa runs to Gavrilo and starts kissing him.

ODYSSEUS: I have never stepped into a bigger shit. And it stinks as if it has gone bad.

LISA: My Gavrilo.

GAVRANO (Pulling away): Alright, alright, take it easy.
(Than he moves his lips, tasting Lisa's kiss.) What have you eaten?

ODYSSEUS: A banana, what else. (He is still wiping his shoe.) As if this shit is from a dinosaur, fuck it. It is two meters wide. What will happen when others step into it...

GAVRANO: How come there are bananas on the Kolji-mountain?

ODYSSEUS: I grow them. (He is still wiping his shoe.) And you can’t take it off, good quality shit... as if imported. Completely unknown. As if we didn’t have enough of the known shit.

GAVRANO: Well, that I would like to see, a Kolji-mountain banana.

LISA: Trust me, you don’t want to see that.

Odysseus gives up wiping his shoe, then he tries to turn on the projector.

ODYSSEUS: There it is, completely dead. (To Lisa.) How can I lecture now? What do you say, you divorcee? I am delighted that we have divorced...

GAVRANO: He is Odysseus?! And you were with him...

LISA: I had somehow to calm myself. I thought I would never again see my Gavrilo.

ODYSSEUS: It is not a sedativ, it is a teaching tool. Now I shall have to lecture just by talking.

Gavril goes to the outside toilet and tries to take the lock off.

ODYSSEUS: What are you doing?

GAVRANO: I need the key.

ODYSSEUS: You can’t go there, it’s a military object. Go into the woods.

GAVRANO: It looks like a toilet to me.

ODYSSEUS: You are obviously a civilian. It looks like a toilet, but it is not. It’s a camouflage. A war is science, Gavrilo. If you ever go to war, and you will – don’t go without me. Remember that.

GAVRANO: I’ll remember. Can I at least have some toilet paper?

ODYSSEUS: What do you need the paper for, wipe yourself with grass.

LISA: No, no, no, don’t use grass. You are from a city, you might get rush. Better use a plastic bag.

ODYSSEUS: At your age, I wiped myself with nettle.

GAVRANO: Alright, I’ll wait.

Grandmother comes from the woods. She is breathless.

ODYSSEUS: What’s the matter with you, Grandmother?

GRANDMOTHER: I’m barely alive. I have seen many things, but something like this...

GAVRANO: Did someone attack you?

GRANDMOTHER: An ambush. I fell into guagmire. Have you ever seen an invalid in guagmire?

LISA: No, we haven’t. But we would love to.

ODYSSEUS: What did you fall into, Grandma? Did someone throw you in?

GRANDMOTHER: I got stuck in shit. But that is no shit, it is so huge...

LISA: Let’s baptize it.
GAVRILo: Baptize who?

LISA: The shit. Before it goes all over the place. Who shall be the godfather?

ODYSSEUS: To baptize shit? Being a godfather is a sacred thing.

LISA: Coming from a man who killed Milorad’s godfather and took his place.

ODYSSEUS: That’s different. My being godfather to Milorad is the spoils of the war.

GRANDMOTHER: He is right there. A gay cannot choose his own godfather.

GAVRILo: Maybe you should give me the key to the toilet after all.

LISA: Wait, Gavrilo. Now we are baptizing this shit. Your shit must wait.

ODYSSEUS (Hears something, looks up in the sky.): Lizards.

LISA: What a name you came up with. We are not going to call by out greatest enemy. And in the plural.

GRANDMOTHER (To Lisa.): Where can I hang the underpants?

LISA: Don’t put them anywhere. Kolji-mountain might sail away if you spread them.

GRANDMOTHER: We’ll see who shall sail away.

Now they all hear some kind of noise from the sky.

ODYSSEUS: Lizards! Alarm!

GAVRILo: What lizards?

Lisa approaches agitated Gavrilo and embraces him. Odysseus takes out a key from his pocket and in panic tries to unlock the toilet. Noise is getting closer.

GRANDMOTHER (To Odysseus.): Faster, you are not an invalid! (To Gavrilo.) Gavrilo, my son, you just keep on breathing.

GAVRILo: Why should I breathe, what is going on?

ODYSSEUS (Manages to unlock the toilet.) Now I shall fuck you totally.

Odysseus goes into the toilet and closes the door. The roof of the toilet opens up (By Odysseus’ arm) and from it there goes thick black smoke.

GRANDMOTHER (Grabs an oxygen mask.): Fog!

LISA: Gunpowder, grandma, gunpowder. Don’t scare Gavrilo.

Gavrilo starts coughing than sometimes thunders nearby. There is fire from the toilet – Odysseus has launched the rocket. Gavrilo stays even closer to Lisa, and Odysseus, with black spots all over him, goes out of the toilet, coughing.

ODYSSEUS: Launched!

ODYSSEUS: I got him! Grandma, I got him! War is mother of all things!

Grandma, Lisa and Odysseus start embracing each other and celebrating, then they sing in unison. Gavrilo watches them, petrified.

GRANDMOTHER, LISA AND ODYSSEUS (sing)

Kill, kill, kill the lizaaaard, lizaaaard, liza-a-a-rd!

Kill, kill, kill the lizaaaard, lizaaaard, liza-a-a-rd!

All of a sudden, quite unexpected, from the sky there falls a full plastic bag. Directly on Gavrilo’s head. Gavrilo falls down, and Lisa screams and throws herself at him.

LISA: Gavrilo! Gavrilo, say something!

GAVRILo (Stands up, rubs his head.): I am such a horse.

ODYSSEUS: Gavrilo is done. He is out of his mind. And we kept waiting for him for so long. They bomb civilians, those fucking lizards...

LISA (To Odysseus.): You are out of your mind! (To Gavrilo.) Everything will be alright.

GRANDMOTHER: Gavrilo, my son, don’t you worry about it. If you are a horse, you are a horse. You’ll be a horse for a little while and then it shall pass.
GAVRILo: It won't go away while I am here. I am a horse because I came to the Kolji-mountain.

LISA: He is alright! (She is embracing and kissing Gavrilo.) You scared us all.

ODYSSEUS: Although in war conditions it is not a bad thing if a man goes a little bit crazy.

GAVRILo: Let us at least see what's in the plastic bag.

ODYSSEUS: Wait. Maybe it's a bomb.

GAVRILo: This is an ordinary plastic bag.

GAVRILo: Maybe it's a bag, and maybe it will surprise you – have you ever heard of surprising mines? When I was at the front, we used to fill up poisonous snakes with gunpowder and let them crawl behind enemy lines.

GAVRILo: You filled up snakes with gunpowder?!

ODYSSEUS: You never heard of bursting snakes? Well, you really are a civilian... That's my invention – a combination of gunpowder and poisonous gas. That's why I am so sought after.

GAVRILo: C'mon, it's a plastic bag.

GRANDMOTHER: Wait!

GAVRILo: What now.

GRANDMOTHER: Let me stand aside.

Grandmother goes to the side, Gavrilo takes the bag and opens it. Then he takes out a hand full of bracelets and necklaces.

GAVRILo: Bijouterie.

LISA (Approaches and starts looking what is in the bag.) There are some really nice pieces.

ODYSSEUS: Bijouterie? You see how they humiliate us? What are we here? Some wild people from Polynesia? Eskimos? (He looks at the sky and shouts.) We are civilization, you tailed mother fuckers! Culture! It is not a safari, you sons of bitches...

GRANDMOTHER (Sees something in the sky.): There is one!

ODYSSEUS: Where?

GRANDMOTHER: Over there. Look how he is falling down slowly.

ODYSSEUS: Now you are mine.

Odysseus grabs the gun and runs into the forest. The other keep looking at somebody who is falling down.

LISA: He is going to fall straight into the shit.

GAVRILo: Can I go to toilet now?

LISA: Go, my love, now it's OK for civilians.

GAVRILo: Alright. (He starts, then stops in front of the naked woman picture.) Look at this – a picture is crying.

GRANDMOTHER: When the icon cries... That's it. Prophecy.

GAVRILo: This is an icon to you? (All of a sudden he jumps and screams.) Ааа!

LISA: What's the matter?

GRANDMOTHER: The icon spit on him. Respect, Gavrilo, respect.

GAVRILo: It seems that a bird shit on me.

LISA: It is normal here. Shit from above, shit from below.

GRANDMOTHER: And in the middle there is shitty Koljibaba. That's called a Koljibaba sandwich.

GAVRILo: So, I can go?

LISA: Go.

GAVRILo: What if that one that is falling is taken by the wind onto me?

LISA: Then wait for the disturbed one to catch him.

GAVRILo: I can't wait any more! And how should I know that he is caught?!

LISA: You'll hear it.

There is a shot in the woods. Gavrilo runs into the toilet.

GRANDMOTHER: He caught him.
12. Treatment of Prisoners of war (with a happy ending)

Kolji-mountain woods, close to the clearing. It is dusk and the sun is low. Behind the bed sheet, in the sun’s counter-light, there are two silhouettes quite clearly seen: Odysseus is standing and holding a gun pointed at some creature with huge wings on his back that is kneeling in front of him. (That winged creature could easily be an angel. Or a winged lizard. Or some other similar devil.)

**ODYSSEUS** (Silhouette.): How many of you are there and are you all with wings?

The angel is mumbling something that cannot be understood.

**ODYSSEUS** (Silhouette.): You are pretending that you are crazy, ha? You bit your tongue when you fell down so you can’t admit anything? Well, that’s where you are wrong – I’ve known that commando stuff for a long time. (He starst touching the angel.) And what is this. Is that a real tit or a camouflage?

The angel is mumbling something that cannot be understood. He is protesting.

**ODYSSEUS** (Silhouette.): A? What? Well, you know what – since you are not fair, we shall not talk at all. Anyhow, I do not understand the enemy language. And I don’t give a fuck what you are going to say. I know what I shall do with you. (Odysseus opens his fly – there is going to be a felacio again.) Come on, play! (He points the gun at angel’s head.) Play when I’m telling you!

And the angel plays.

**ODYSSEUS** (Silhouette.): Yes, you lizard!

Someone turns the radio on.

**RADIO** (Female spaker): Airplane fashion show of the world famous brand White hot angels inspired by our traditional folklore and middle aged church frescoes has ended up tragically. The plain with model fell at the Kolji-mountain and it is assumed that no one survived. The probable cause for the fall of the plane is thick fog in combination with meteoric rain, although there is some speculation that the plane was shot down by an earth-air rocket.

Someone changes the radio station.

**RADIO** (Late Lana): Adaptation of the adaptation.

Someone turns of the radio.

**GROUP THERAPY, TRANSCRIPT 4 (SUBJECT: LISA)**

**LISA:** My name is Elisabeth Koljibaba and I am a fanatic. Grand father says that I’m the so called born addict and that it is connected to the structure of my personality. He is right: Everything that I tried – I got addicted to and that it is connected to the structure of my personality. He is right: Everything that I tried – I got addicted to. And I tried so many things – both from chemistry and physics. And they tried to cure me, they really did. Even before grandfather. Even with electroshocks. And what happened? I got addicted to electroshocks. I am addicted to grandfather, to mushrooms, to god and to the end of the world... I am addicted to everything. And most of all I am addicted to Koljibabas. All Koljibabas are addicted to Koljibabas. The Koljibabas are born on drugs. And crazy. I am Elisabeth Koljibaba and they call me Lisa. They also call me lolly-pop. Although I am not addicted to that. Only to that. But drug dealers are. I am sure that Koljibabas will be my ending. I shall simply overdose. But what can I do when I can’t get off. I am sure that, the first time that I die, I shall want more.
13. THE LAST SUPPER

Kolji-mountain, night. All Koljibabas are here (Gavrilo, Grandmother, Lisa, Odysseus, even Milorad). They are having dinner. On one stump log there is a large pot, and over the largest log they have placed Grandfather’s tombstone – so it serves as a table. They are sitting on the logs. Except for Grandmother – she is in a wheelchair. On the wheelchair there is a stick with a bottle of infusion and on top of it there are huge underpants. A flag on the mast. Underpants on a stick.

ODYSSSEUS: Alright, I was wrong. But how could I have known that it wasn’t a lizard but a model? If only she hadn’t placed those wings on her back. I only know that I had the best intentions.

GRANDMOTHER: Yes. To kill someone.

ODYSSSEUS: And you knew, didn’t you?

GRANDMOTHER: It’s different, I’m sick.

LISA: Lizards, models... it’s all the same. Even their mother couldn’t tell what is what.

Everyone is smiling. A bit mushroom-like.

ODYSSSEUS: What have you done with these mushrooms? They taste tortured.

LISA: That’s the recipe.

GAVRILo: I think it’s very tasty.

GRANDMOTHER: Breathe, Gavrilo, breathe. You don’t know these mushrooms.

ODYSSSEUS: We could have put a seal in, too. Since we have no pork.

MILORAD: How would you lure the seals?

ODYSSSEUS: With sardines.

Everyone starts laughing. Gavrilo doesn’t see why they find it so funny. But it is funny. It’s mushrooms working.

GAVRILo (To Milorad.): So, they can see you. I knew it. You look like a guy from the radio.

MILORAD: Was he gay?

GAVRILo: He looked like gay to me.

ODYSSSEUS: Me too.

GAVRILo: How do you know whom I’m talking about?

LISA: All gays are the same.

GRANDMOTHER: Like negros. Ha, ha, ha...

Everybody is laughing. Mushrooms have taken over the whole situation. They are all crazy – a bit on their own, a bit altogether.

LISA: Once upon a time Koljibabas used to eat mushrooms every day.

ODYSSSEUS: Too bad I don’t remember that.

GRANDMOTHER: We have forgotten, but the mushrooms remember.

GAVRILo: They hit so hard... Pot is nothing in comparison.

MILORAD: Like an earthquake.

ODYSSSEUS (Grabs his gun.): Where is earthquake?

GAVRILo: There is not going to be an earthquake, is there?

LISA: No, there isn’t. But I would understand if there was.

GRANDMOTHER: This year the mourning day went just fine. You just keep breathing, Gavrilo.

14. THE KOLJIBABA PRAYER

(OUR LIZARD)

LISA: We have forgotten to say the prayer. C’mon, grandma.

GRANDMOTHER (Praying.): Oh, you lizards on the sky please don’t come down.

ODYSSSEUS (Praying.): Because there are organisms down here.

LISA (Praying.): Because there is communication down here.

GRANDMOTHER (Praying.): Because there is war down here.

MILORAD (Praying.): Because there is shit down here.
ODYSSSEUS (Praying.): Because there are Koljibabas down here.

GRANDMOTHER (Praying.): Oh, you lizards on the sky, do not come down.

MILORAD (Praying.): Because everything stinks down here.

LISA (Praying.): Except the communication. It does not stink.

MILORAD (Praying.): Except when it doesn’t have a bath for a long time.

GRANDMOTHER (Praying.): Oh, you lizards on the sky, do not come down.

ODYSSSEUS (Praying.): Because everything stinks down here. At least sometimes.

MILORAD (Praying.): Except for shit.

LISA (Praying.): Shit always stinks.

GRANDMOTHER (Praying.): Shit is a character.

GRANDMOTHER, ODYSSEUS, LISA, MILORAD (Praying.) Amin!

GAVRIL: What?!

GRANDMOTHER, ODYSSEUS, LISA, MILORAD: Amin!

GAVRIL: You are all crazy. You should all go to therapy.

Other Koljibabas find Gavrilo’s words to be harsh and there merry craziness all of a sudden transform into some fatalistic seriousness – it seems that his mentioning therapy had a therapeutic effect. Or the craziness as such has become serious.

15. PHOTOGRAPH FOR THE FAMILY ALBUM

ODYSSSEUS: All Koljibabas are crazy, Gavrilo. And you too are a Koljibaba.

LISA: That means you are crazy just like the rest of us.

ODYSSSEUS: Crazy and produ.

GRANDMOTHER: You are stupid if you are not crazy. You are our Mesiah. That’s why we had to persuade you to come here. In any way possible.

GAVRIL: That means... I have turned out to be a stupid fuck.

GRANDMOTHER: Fuck as fuck. Even more stupid.

LISA (Embraces Gavrilo.) All that doesn’t matter. What matters is that you are here.

GAVRIL: What do you mean it doesn’t matter? What a fool I am...

ODYSSSEUS (Embraces Gavrilo.) Yes, you are a fool. Blood is no water. The important thing is that you arrived on time.

GAVRIL: On time for what?

LISA: For the prophecy.

GAVRIL: What prophecy?

LISA: The youngest Koljibaba shall climb to the sky and defeat the lizards. And that’s you.

GAVRIL: Me?

LISA: You, my love.

LISA: Especially me.

ODYSSSEUS: And me.

GRANDMOTHER: And Grandmother. You would love him too, if you were a true Koljibaba.

MILORAD: I am not a Koljibaba! And neither are you!

GRANDMOTHER: No one likes you, you fool! Everyone loves Gavrilo.

LISA: Milorad, do not frighten Gavrilo.

MILORAD: Do not trust her, Gavrilo. No one likes you here.

GRANDMOTHER: No one likes you, you fool! Everyone loves Gavrilo.

LISA: Especially me.

ODYSSSEUS: And me.

GRANDMOTHER: And Grandmother. You would love him too, if you were a true Koljibaba.

MILORAD: I am not a Koljibaba! And neither are you!

LISA: Milorad, do not frighten Gavrilo.

MILORAD: He should not be afraid of me, but of you. You killed Grandfather.

GAVRIL: Who killed grandfather?

MILORAD: These people here.

GRANDMOTHER: Just ignore him, Gavrilo. Grandfather was taken by the lizards.

MILORAD: I will not be ignored anymore! They killed Lana, too. And your child inside her.

GAVRIL: That was not my child. Lana told me herself. (To Grandmother.) You didn’t really kill Lana?
GRANDMOTHER: We had to. Just in case.

GAVRILo: But why?!

GRANDMOTHER: If that radio-amateur in her stomak was really yours, then he would be the youngest Koljibaba. And who would fulfil the prophecy then?

ODYSSEUS: That’s why we had to kill Lana. Her and Chlamidia.

GAVRILo: Who is Chlamidia?

LISA: It doesn’t really matter.

MILORAD: It never matters to you when someone kills a gay.

ODYSSEUS, GRANDMOTHER, LISA: Shut up, you gay!

ODYSSEUS: It’s better this way.

GAVRILo: What’s better?! You killed my girlfriend and now you expect me to climb to the sky and kill some lizards! Lizards do not exist!

LISA: Gavrilo, you have me now.

MILORAD: Wait, wait, I didn’t say that lizards didn’t exist.

GAVRILo: Who the fuck are you?! I just thought you were the only sane person here, and you now say that lizards exist!

MILORAD: I am your best friend. When you go up there, take me with you. Up there you will certainly need an intellectual.

LISA: Why you? Gavrilo and I love each other. The logical thing would be to take me.

ODYSSEUS: If he is taking anybody, he will take me. This is a war and Gavrilo is a civilian.

GRANDMOTHER: Gavrilo, my son...

GAVRILo: Enough! Enough. You have fucked up my life.

MILORAD (Approaches and embraces Gavrilo.) They did it, Gavrilo, not me. They have fucked up both your life and mine. And now they want to ruin the apocalypse, too.

ODYSSEUS (To Milorad.): When have you started working for lizards, you traitor?

LISA (Pushes Milorad.) The Koljibabas didn’t fuck up anything, the Koljibaba were born in shit!

MILORAD: Gavrilo, you are not a Koljibaba.

GAVRILo: I am not a Koljibaba?

MILORAD: You are not. Your parents were not Koljibabas. They were grandfather’s patients, just like these people. Only grandfather was a Koljibaba.

GAVRILo: What is he talking about?

GRANDMOTHER: Ignore him. He is crazy.

MILORAD: No one here is Koljibaba. I took grandfathers’s book from the cage. It is all there. ‘Pathology of colectivism, syndrom Koljibaba – individual histories of illness’. Illusions, delusions, psychosis, neurosis, phobias, addictions, obsessive-compulsive and manic-depressive disorders, anxiety, narcissism, aggressiveness, pathological lying, passive-aggressive disorder, paranoia and sexual disorder – that’s us! And we are all in the book! All the crazy and proud Koljibabas! Who do not exist.

All crazy and proud Koljibabas go quiet. The silence lasts long, too long.

ODYSSEUS: You should not have touched grandfather’s book, Milorad. I should kill you, and I like you so much.

GRANDMOTHER (Takes the gun from Odysseus.) C’mon, children, let us take a picture.

They all merrily stand in front of Grandmother. Only Gavrilo needs to be pulled by Lisa, as if he were a zombie.

GRANDMOTHER: Are you ready? You give me a sign, and I shall make the click.

GAVRILo (To Lisa.): What is she going to take the picture with?

ODYSSEUS: Alright, Grandma, shoot.

GRANDMOTHER: What do you mean shoot? This is not shooting. You should say bird.

ODYSSEUS: Alright, Grandma, we are ready.
GAVRILO (To Lisa.): She is holding a gun.
LISA: Don't be afraid, Gavrillo.
GRANDMOTHER: Is it alright? Now!
ODYSSEUS: Birds' organism!
GRANDMOTHER: What do you mean birds organism? It should not be that.
ODYSSEUS: What's wrong?
GRANDMOTHER: I told you to say bird.
ODYSSEUS: So I did.
GRANDMOTHER: Birds' organism is two words. Say one word, any word.
ODYSSEUS: Any word?
GRANDMOTHER: Any word.
ODYSSEUS: Alright. Are we ready?
GRANDMOTHER: Yes, we are.
ODYSSEUS: One word.
GRANDMOTHER: One only.
ODYSSEUS: So, you are ready.
GRANDMOTHER: C'mon already!
ODYSSEUS: Seal!

At that moment, as if by a command, all of them move one step aside, away from Milorad (Lisa pushes Gavrillo). When Milorad stays alone, Grandma pulls the trigger – the gun goes off, and Milorad goes down. Gavrillo is petrified.

GAVRILO: Why did you kill the man?
GRANDMOTHER: He told us we were not Koljibabas.
GAVRILLO: So?
LISA: That's how we treat the identity crisis.
GAVRILLO: With a gun?!
ODYSSEUS: Traditional medicine.

16. MAMMUTH, DODO AND WE (HYMN IN THE FOG)

Kolji-mountain clearing, night. Koljibabas are still standing in the position for taking a 'photo'. Except Milorad who is lying down and bleeding. Grandma is still in front of them. She is holding a gun.

LISA: What shall we do now?
ODYSSEUS: We are not all here.
GRANDMOTHER: Who is not here?
ODYSSEUS: You see that this one is lying down.
GRANDMOTHER: C'mon, get him up.
GAVRILLO: Grandmother, he is dead.
GRANDMOTHER: Fuck dead. He has to stand up when we sing the hymn.
LISA: The dead will rise and sing the hymn. That's what the prophecy says.
ODYSSEUS (Kicks Milorad.) Get up, we are singing the hymn!
GRANDMOTHER: C'mon, get up or I will kill you!
GAVRILLO: You already killed him.
GRANDMOTHER: So what, I'll kill him once again.
ODYSSEUS (To Milorad.) Come on, get up, don't mess things up. (Kicks him again.) Get up, you traitor!
MILORAD (Lying down, barely speaks.) I can't, I'm dead.
LISA: What a man. First he is whining that everybody is ignoring him, and now that we need him and that we are all gathered around him...
MILORAD (Gets up a little bit.): You really need me?
GRANDMOTHER: You are the only baritone.
MILORAD (Although dead – he gets up with Odysseus' help.) Alright, but this time only.
LISA: There won’t be any second time.
GRANDMOTHER (Rais
tes the gun up): Alright?
MILORAD: I shall sing soprano.
GRANDMOTHER: Shut up, you gay. C’mon: three, four...

Koljibabas sing the anthem. In front of them, as if in front of a real choir, there is Grandmother standing and conducting. She uses the gun. Gavrilo, confused, is standing on the side. He thought he had seen everything. (The anthem is actually the song of young nazis ‘Tomorrow Belongs To Me’ from the musical ‘Cabaret’. But the text is Koljibabas’).

MILORAD (Sings, solo.):
Over there, far away, there is a road for

Everyone has gone there.
Only the backwards stayed here
– Not a poodle, not a wolf, but us.

Lisa joins him.

MILORAD, LISA (Sing.):
This road is quiet as heart’s murmur
Everybody has gone long time ago.
In the express pot, on a silky string:
Lake Jackyl and Haydn – it is truly us.
Odysseus joins Milorad and Lisa.

MILORAD, LISA, ODYSSEUS (Sing.):
The warms want meat, the knife wants blood,
Everyone becomes a vampire here.
We have already slaughtered all the pigs
– There is only plankton, naylon and us.

Grandmother joins Milorad, Lisa and Odysseus.

MILORAD, LISA, ODYSSEUS, GRANDMOTHER (Sing.):
When the knife goes again, I will be holding it,
Everyone will run away from the knife.
Only the fools are still standing in the line:

Only mamooth, dodo,
Only mamooth, dodo,
Only mamooth, dodo and us!

They are singing more loudly. The hymn is thunder-like.

When the knife goes again, I will be holding it,
Everyone will run away from the knife.
Only the fools are still standing in the line:
Only mamooth, dodo,
Only mamooth, dodo,
Only mamooth, dodo and us!

While Koljibabas sing the last verse, the clearing begins to fill up with thick fog – mory-fog. It’s happening very fast – as if someone is blowing it in. The Koljibaba choir begins to cough and choke.

GRANDMOTHER: Mory-fog!

Grandmother quickly puts on the oxygen mask. All the others and coughing trying to breathe. But there is nothing to breath in. So they fall down. And die.

GAVRILo (Lying down, choking.): Grandmother...

GRANDMOTHER (Through the mask.) Breathe, Gavrilo, breathe.

So Gavrilo tries to breathe. But there is nothing to breathe in. So he dies.

All of a sudden, there is wind. It’s coming from the sky, like a helicopter. But it is not a helicopter. One way or the other, the wind blows. And in a moment it sweeps away the fog from the clearing.
Grandmother takes off the mask from her face and carefully breaths in several times. She is satisfied, she can breathe. Then she looks at the Koljibabas lying down.

GRANDMOTHER: Now I am the youngest Koljibaba. I feel like a starlette.

17. THE KOLJIBABAS FLY TO THE SKY

From the dark above there is a ray of light falling upon Grandmother. She tries to move, but she cannot, she is trapped. And then, slowly, without exiting the ray of light, Grandmother’s wheel chair starts going up to the sky. The scene somewhat resembles riding a panoramic elevator.

(If we want to tell the truth, it could be that Grandmother is not flying. Because, if we want to tell the truth, her going up to the sky could very well be yet another fantastic picture from the Koljibaba myth caused by crazy mushroom. But, we don’t want to tell the truth.)

So, the ray of light is lifting Grandma to the sky. And the radio turns on by itself — in the beginning it’s only making noise and mixing frequencies, than it haules like a wolf and then squeeks like a pig. And then there is late Lana.

RADIO (Late Lana): You have been listenig to yet another rerun...

GRANDMOTHER: Fuck the rerun.

Grandmother is already high above the earth. But she is still going up. And the radio turns on again.

RADIO (Late tourist promoter.): Meet the Koljibabas! Visit Kolji-mountain! New paradise for tourists!

The radio station changes by itself.

RADIO (Late Lane, with his ‘universe’ voice – he is acting): We, the winged lizards have come to you as tourists. Based on what was seen, the sanitary inspection has declared the place closed and has performed disinfection, disinsection, deration and the apocalypse. All the shit are dead.

GRANDMOTHER (Disappearing in the sky.): Like hell they are dead.

In the very next moment grandmother disappears. She has flown away. Projector clicks for the last time. By itself. Slide:

LIKE HELL ALIVE

RADIO (Late female singer): Mito, Mito, you drunkard!

And then everything goes off. Silence and darkness. If we want to tell the truth, and we do, it was about time.

A онда се све йоискључује. Тишина и мрак. Ако ћемо Јраво, а хоћемо, и било је време.

APOCALYPPTICA COLYBABICA

(or, if we want to tell the truth – the end)
Fedor Šili

THE WIZARD
Born in 1983 in Belgrade. Graduated from dramaturgy in 2006 in the class of professor Siniša Kovačević at the Academy of Art BK.

His production *Belgrade – London* was played as the part of the play Belgrade stories 4 in the Student Cultural Centre, directed by Boriš Lišešević. He is associate of the New Drama in the National Theatre.

Worked with Branko Dimitrijević as the dramaturge of the plays *Fertile Days* by Boris Lišešević and Jelene Kislovski Lišešević, directed by B. Lišešević, Atelier 212/Cultural Center of Pančevo, and *The Servant of two masters* by Carlo Goldoni, directed by B. Lišešević, Grad Theatre Budva/SNT Novi Sad/National Theatre ‘Toša Jovanović Zrenjanin’.

Participated in the Week of modern British drama in the National Theatre. Translated the dramas *The Associate* by Simon Bent and *The Rebellion* by Jelena Kajgo. Wrote articles for the Dictionary of YU mythology. Worked as associate on the scenarios for short films *78 days of love* and wrote songs for the album ‘The unexpected arrival in Blackpool’ by Viborge Dalace.

(source: www.nova-drama.org.rs)
Translated by > Vera Krmpot

CAST:

THOMAS MANN
KATIA PRINGSHEIM, LATER MANN
HEINRICH MANN
MICHAEL MANN
HANS GERLINGEN
MARIA ALBREHT, LATER GERLINGEN
HANS GERLINGEN JUNIOR
SAMUEL FISCHER
VLADISLAV MOES
BERTHOLD
PROFESSOR WEBER
JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE
Good evening. Allow me a few words before we begin. I shall read you something that was written by Monika Mann, one of the Thomas Mann’s daughters:

“Once I saw Hamlet with him, with this memorable scene of a duel in which Hamlet’s hand bleeds. After the play, my father told the actor: “That thing on your hand was real blood, wasn’t it?” The actor replied impudently and drily that it was – toothpaste. It seems to me that my father at that point experienced an overall desillusion. But in that impudence that was hidden in the toothpaste trick my father soon found some deep joy. What a daredevil, when he can play with people like that! It was with simple toothpaste that he presented Danish royal blood! My father kept thinking about that, but it was actually an old trick. In that strict, passionate wish to re-create the world, there was something child-like, some diabolic tendency to imitate, to create illusion, to bluff. I can imagine a moment in which my father looks at some decoration of extraordinary value, and immediately after sees another one, completely the same but fake, and almost in love with it he watches the imitation finding it to be just wonderful!”

I hope this is clear. What you are seeing tonight is an illusion, just like toothpaste that pretends to be blood on the actor’s arm. We do not present reality. Certain characters are based on real people, and some of them are not. We are telling a story, no more. It’s time to begin. Are you ready? The story begins in 1891 and Thomas Mann is answering professor’s questions...

1.

A school in Libek, 1891. Thomas Mann is standing up and answering professor’s questions.

PROFESSOR: The fall of Bastille?
THOMAS: 1805?
PROFESSOR: No. When did Napoleon die?
THOMAS: Ouch, I know this one...

He is thinking for a long time. Other students start laughing.

PROFESSOR: Well? What about the date?
THOMAS: I knew it, but I forgot...

Students laugh.

PROFESSOR: Silence!

They become quiet, from time to time somebody smiles.

PROFESSOR: Mann, this isn’t good. How do you plan to pass exams when you know nothing? These are elementary things, everybody should know that. And you simply keep staring at me. Sit down and start studying or you will fail the exam. Understood?

THOMAS: Understood.

PROFESSOR: I didn’t have this problem with your brother. Thomas is still standing, unsure of himself.

PROFESSOR: Sit down already, you fool.

2.

Schoolyard. Thomas is sitting on a bench and reading. There comes Hans Gerlingen.

HANS: Hey, writer!
THOMAS: Hallo, Hans.

Hans sits down next to Thomas, takes out two cigarettes from his pocket.

HANS: Stole them from my father.

Thomas is laughing.

THOMAS: You are not afraid he will find out?

HANS: Come on, to notice two cigarettes only?

Hans takes out matches, lights his cigarette and brings the match to Thomas to light his cigarette.

HANS: I hear that professor Weber is angry with you.

THOMAS: Weber is an idiot. “Why aren’t you like Heinrich?”

HANS: He is an idiot. But you haven’t studied at all again, right? Do you know what I did just know?

THOMAS: With a girl?

HANS (Half whispering, in confidence.) I kissed Eva Mayers.

The school is full of girls. Come on, find one for you.

THOMAS: What girl? Come on, you are kidding me.

HANS: No kidding! You are so phony, writer. Who are you dreaming about, then, about Goethe? Look at all this beauty around you. I think that Klara fancies you.

THOMAS: Which Klara?

HANS: Manfredson.

THOMAS: Klara Manfredson should be avoided. She looks like a dragon.

HANS: You are so difficult. Alright, you just keep waiting for love to strike you.

THOMAS: I’ve been reading something wonderful. Schiller’s Don Karlos. I can give it to you to read, if you want.

HANS: Maybe we have that at home. My parents have shelves full of books but haven’t read a single one. I’m going riding. Want to come with me?

THOMAS: Riding, that’s not for me.

HANS: You’ll just keep on sitting here, as always... You are so difficult. I don’t know why I like you so much. See you later.

THOMAS: See you.

Hans leaves, Thomas takes out a notebook and a pencil from his bag, starts writing. A very pretty young girl passes by, Maria Albreht, and comes to Thomas.

MARIA: What are you doing?

THOMAS (Bit confused.): Maria!

Maria sits next to Thomas.

THOMAS: Nothing special. Just writing, nothing much.

Maria takes the notebook from Thomas.

MARIA (Reads.): Confessions of Felix Crull... funny.

THOMAS: It’s nothing. You know what Goethe did at my age?

MARIA: No. What did Goethe do at your age?

THOMAS (Confused.): Well, I don’t know, but it must have been something important.

MARIA: Have you really read that, Goethe?

THOMAS: Not everything, but I’ve read Faust and Wert-... I wish so much to be like Goethe! To be a writer, you know, a great writer. That’s all I want, to be a writer. Do you know Hans Gerlingen?

MARIA: I know him.

THOMAS: He says I need a girl! I tell him – ‘Hans, that’s stupid.’ I don’t have time for that.

MARIA: You prefer ro read?

THOMAS: Yes. And to write.

MARIA: Lier.

THOMAS: Why would I lie? Believe me, it’s the truth.

MARIA: You don’t find me pretty?

THOMAS: I don’t say you are not... ummm, yes, you are... yes, you are pretty. The prettiest... But, everybody knows that! Why do you ask me such stupid questions?

MARIA: Curiosit...y.

THOMAS: Well, I’ve told you. As Goethe says in the second part of Faust, actually Faust says that about Helen...

MARIA: Read to me.
THOMAS: Second part of Faust? I don't have it here.
MARIA: I don't mean Goethe… something yours. Felix Crull.
THOMAS: No one was ever interested...
MARIA: I am interested… read.
THOMAS (Reads.): ‘The day was coming to its end when I heard the names that begin with letter K. But, it was as if destiny wanted to play a game with me…’
Maria throws her hands around his shoulders and kisses him.
MARIA: Nice?
THOMAS (Dizzy.): Nice..
MARIA: You see. If it means anything to you, I think you will be a great writer. The greatest writer!
Maria leaves, smiling.
THOMAS (Not concentrated, for himself, wonders and keeps hand on his left cheek where he received the kiss that made him smile.): Love...

3.

Thomas Mann, and a few other boys. School yard. The biggest of the boys, Berthold, approaches Thomas and grabs the book from his hands. Thomas is trying to get the book back, but fails, because the boys keep throwing the book among themselves so he doesn’t know where to look next. Finally, the book is back in Berthold’s hands.
BERTHOLD: What is this? Egmont? You are the biggest idiot in the classroom and here you are showing off with the books, ha? You think the girls will like it?
THOMAS: What's it to you, you monkey, give me back the book right now!
BERTHOLD: What did you say?
THOMAS (Not so sure as before.): That you are a monkey...
BERTHOLD: Here is your book!

Berthold opens the book, tears page by page and throws the pages of Goethe into Thomas’ mouth. The children laugh. Thomas is angry, but not physically strong so he tries to push Berthold away from him. Everybody laughs. Berthold stops this pushing with a strong slap that rings through the whole school. Thomas starts crying. There is a school bell ringing. The children go to classes, Thomas stays behind. He collects the torn pages of Egmont and puts them back inside the book.

4.

Dream. Thomas Mann, Goethe, and hundreds of books around him. Goethe is of huge proportions.

THOMAS: Goethe?
GOETHE: It’s me.
THOMAS: I am… I am...
GOETHE: … Thomas Mann.
THOMAS: Yes. Hey, is it really you?
GOETHE: What do you mean?
THOMAS: Are you really Goethe?
GOETHE: Of course I am.
THOMAS: Johann Wolfgang Goethe?
GOETHE: You are really boring. I’ve already told you I'm Goethe. This is your dream. And you are 15 now. Since you dream of me, it is not by accident.
THOMAS: Excuse me, it’s just… I can’t believe I am standing in front of a giant of German literature. Faust, The Sorrows of Young Werter...
GOETHE: Ifigenia in Tauride, Egmont...
THOMAS: Oh, I haven’t read Egmont – because of that fat idiot from school, Berthold! This morning he tore my Egmont and kept pushing pages into my mouth!
GOETHE: That's because you are showing off. Read at home, not at school.
THOMAS: I read both at home and at school... I want to be a writer, Johann, I want to be as big as you, and to be even bigger one day!

Goethe is insulted.

THOMAS: I'm sorry...

GOETHE: No, no, its' nothing. It is the tragedy of professors – every student wants to surpass his professor – you are not the only one. Your brother also often dreamt of me.

THOMAS: I knew it! He would never admit that!

GOETHE: Truth to tell, he more often dreamt of Sofokle...

THOMAS: He is a fool, Goethe, my brother Heinrich knows nothing! How can you compare Sofokle with great Goethe! My brother might be older than me, but he is a complete dilettante!

GOETHE: Naturally, Thomas. He knows nothing about writing. And you will be a better writer, no comparison there!

THOMAS: I'm so glad to hear that!

5.

Thomas Mann, Heinrich. Heinrich throws a magazine in front of Thomas.

HEINRICH: Die Gesellschaft. They published my story.

THOMAS (Pretends that he is not interested.): Really?

HEINRICH: You want to read it?

THOMAS: Alright.

HEINRICH: You don't have time for that. You want to make us look like idiots, you stupid little thing? To fail all the exams and embarrass your father the senator and your brother, writer? Start studying already!

THOMAS: What, now you are a writer because you wrote one story?

HEINRICH: There will be novels, too. You'll see.

THOMAS: You will see when I get the right inspiration, what masterpiece I shall write.

HEINRICH: No, no, you can't be a writer.

THOMAS: Why not?

HEINRICH: Because two brothers cannot be writers. It's impossible. It simply doesn't work that way. One brother would always be in the shadow of the other. Since in our case it would certainly be you, there is no reason for you to try.

THOMAS: And you are so sure that it is you who will be a great writer?

HEINRICH (Points at the magazine.): Hey, which one of us has had his story published? Who is preparing the first book for the publisher? You'll see, the name of Heinrich Mann will be celebrated! And you... you should think how to get better grades. Otherwise, while your brother will be compared with Pushkin and Goethe, you will be a waiter at some restaurant in Libek.

THOMAS: Alright, if you think so. But in ten years, I shall be a better writer than you. And my wife will be prettier than yours.

HEINRICH: Is that a promise?

THOMAS: Yes.

HEINRICH: Well, we shall see about that.

6.

Thomas enters the school. Maria appears after him.

MARIA (Behind his back.): Are you going to the class?

THOMAS: To the class... Are you going?

MARIA: I haven't decided yet...

THOMAS (Encouraged, takes her hand, makes her sit on the bench, next to him.): Don't go to the class, neither will I, sit here, next to me, so we can... We can talk... Or you can kiss me again if you want to...
MARIA (Laughing.): Oh, you men! My mother says, Maria, be careful of the girls, they will gossip behind your back, and all the men will be very interested in you just because they want a kiss from you! It seems my mother is right...

THOMAS (Anxiously.): No, it’s not that! I don’t know, maybe it’s true for the others, but not for me! I swear! I would like to write, just for you, so you would like that, that would be as if you loved me.

MARIA (Laughing.): And all that for a simple kiss?

THOMAS: Is kiss so unimportant?

MARIA (Gets up, amused.): Little mister Mann, it seems that you pay too much attention to it... I kissed you, so... it doesn’t mean a lot, you know?

THOMAS (Not sure of himself.): No girl has ever kissed me, they barely look at me...

MARIA: You want to kiss me?

THOMAS: More than anything in the world.

MARIA: Come on then.

She takes a pose. Thomas approaches, a little scared. Then he kisses her. Into the cheek. She laughs.

THOMAS: What?

MARIA: I didn’t mean... there.

THOMAS: But?

She looks at him. Thomas takes her strongly and kisses her in the mouth.

7.

Thomas and Goethe.

THOMAS: Goethe, I haven’t told you the best thing – I am in love!

GOETHE: Really?

THOMAS: I am – I’m in love with Maria Albreht – she is the prettiest girl in the whole school.

GOETHE: Ah, youth. Love, passion, yearning... it’s all very nice Thomas. Does she love you?

THOMAS: Goethe, she kissed me!

GOETHE: But she is the most beautiful girl in the whole school. Don’t you think that a better match for her might be, for example, Hans Gerlingen?

THOMAS: Hans! Never mind Hans! Goethe, don’t be a fool! Hans is a good guy, but I am Thomas Mann. You understand?

GOETHE: Yes, I understand completely.

8.

Thomas Mann sits on a bench. Hans approaches.

HANS: Greetings, you writer. Are you reading?

THOMAS: Hans, listen to this! ‘I could have the most beautiful and happiest life if only I were not a fool. It’s not often that circumstances fit so easily: to fill up a human heart with great things, like these where I find myself now. And one thing is, ah, completely...’

HANS: What is that?

THOMAS: Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werter.

HANS: Oh, aha, good. Not bad.

THOMAS: It’s a great piece, Hans.

HANS: I have no doubt. I think I am in love.

THOMAS: With whom?

HANS: Maria Albreht.

THOMAS (With a smile of superiority.): Is that so? Good luck, my friend.

HANS: I took her riding! We stayed for three hours. We spoke about you. She likes you, you know, she says you are nice but a little clumsy. You got so wired up about one single kiss.

THOMAS (As if this is the last hope to stop this conversation which is most awful for him, he goes back to his oldest solution): Have you read Don Carlos?
HANS: Ouch, I will read it today, believe me, only if you promiss never to mention it again... I am joking... I could read it with Maria... What was it, Goethe, right?

THOMAS: Schiler...

HANS: Yes, good old Schiler... she is more interested in that than I am...

THOMAS: There are places in Don Carlos that are so pretty that they shake you up, something bursts... the place where the king cries because the marquise betrayed him... you get all wired up because it’s an awfully stiff and serious king. He is always so lonely and without love, now he thought he had found his man and he betrayes him too...

HANS: Yes... sounds nice... I have to go, I have a date with Maria! If you need anything, I am here for you. He leaves.

THOMAS: How stupid of me! Goethe warned me about Hans, but I wouldn’t listen! Serves me right!

Standing up, he watches Hans. Then, in resignation, he takes Goethe and starts reading.

THOMAS: I could have the most beautiful and happiest life if only I were not a fool. It’s not often that circumstances fit so easily: to fill up a human heart with great things, like these where I find myself now. And one thing is, ah, completely for sure: our happiness depends solely on our heart.’

Closes the book, takes his backpack, takes all the papers out of the bag, tears the papers watching them swing in the air.

THOMAS: I will write better stuf: this is a promise. Just to take out this meaningless feeling of love from my soul.

He closes the book. Lies down on the bench.

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

1.

FISCHER: To Thomas Mann and the Buddenbrooks!
EVERYBODY: Long live!

THOMAS: Thank you, thank you...

1901. Munich. Restaurant. At the table there are Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Samuel Fischer, their publisher, Hans Gerlingen and Maria Albreht (now Gerlingen).

FISCHER: I have to apologize for pushing you to shorten the book. I admit I was wrong.

THOMAS: You don’t have to apologize, Fischer. It is a great man he who can admit his mistakes.

FISCHER: For 16 years I have been in publishing and I haven’t read a book better than the Buddenbrooks. And the critics! If someone told me I would publish a book without a single negative critical review I would laugh into his face. Even Demel who likes to tear the books into pieces – Heinrich you remember what he said about your book...

HEINRICH (In a bad mood.): I remember.

FISCHER: It was a little bit unfair, it’s not a bad book, but even Demel can’t deny that you are a genius! That’s something! We have already sold the first edition. By the way, how did it go today with that girl from Berliner Tageblat?

THOMAS: I was so tired, I could barely answer all her questions properly. Interviews with journalists are extremely tiring.

FISCHER: We have to talk about translations, you know.

THOMAS: If I had to give interviews to the English and the French I would not have the strength to write another book.

HANS: I haven’t read it... but Maria says it’s a great piece!
MARIA: It is, indeed... congratulations Thomas, the piece is extraordinary.
THOMAS: Thank you, Maria, it means a lot to me. And the fact that you haven’t read it doesn’t surprise me at all. Have you managed to read Don Carlos?
HANS: Of course not. What, you are going to make fun of me for not reading...
THOMAS: Schiler.
HANS: Yes, him.
THOMAS: Come on, Hans, it’s been ten years since we haven’t seen each other. Since we moved from Libek to Munich I haven’t seen you and Maria. The cable that I sent to congratulate you on your wedding was our last communication, I believe.
MARIA: Yes, five years ago. Unbelievable...
HANS: I’ve always wanted to contact you, but... First we went to England, than to Italy, we almost have no permanent home. My father bought me a pension house in Monte Carlo when I married, every summer we go there. But, when we saw... actually, when Maria bought your book, we simply had to see you.
HEINRICH: Yes, the book is quite alright.
FISCHER: Quite alright?!
HEINRICH: Come on now, let’s not overreact... I am glad for you, Thomas, I really am. It’s just... you stole so much from the lives of our former neighbours in Libek for your book! You think they won’t be offended when they read the book?
THOMAS: So, let them be offended.
HEINRICH: And the moral obligation of a writer?
THOMAS: What moral obligation? The only obligation that a writer has is towards his work.
HANS: By the way, have you graduated from school?
THOMAS: No, I haven’t.
HANS: So, officially you are not educated?

MARIA: Hans...
HANS: What, my love, I’m just asking.
THOMAS: Don’t worry, I am not offended.
HEINRICH: It is not right that someone so great gets upset so easily.
THOMAS: Very funny.
FISCHER: Heinrich, I don’t understand you. The Buddenbrooks are the most read book in the whole country. Why don’t you write a book like that.
HEINRICH: Is that so? Then I could bring you my new manuscript tomorrow and you would read it? I wouldn’t be knocking at the close door as I have been doing for the last three months? And you wonder that Demel wrote such a good review of the Buddenbrooks?! It was he who brought you that manuscript, that’s why you read it and published it so fast!

FISCHER (Angry, getting up.): I won’t have you talk to me like that! It is exactly because Demel is so strict that I realized how valuable that book is!

HEINRICH (Gets up too, face to face with Fischer.): And the fact that he and Thomas are good friends has nothing to do with it?

THOMAS: Sit down, for heaven’s sake, everyone is looking at us...

Heinrich and Fischer sit down, in a bad mood. Uncomfortable pause.

THOMAS (To Hans and Maria.): Why don’t you come to see me tomorrow. Neusenkirchner 16. We haven’t seen each other for so long, we have so much to talk about.

HANS: I am busy the whole day tomorrow. But Maria is free, right?
MARIA: Right, I’m not doing anything.
THOMAS: Shall we say around four o’clock?
2.


MARIA: Good afternoon.

THOMAS: Don’t be so formal, please. Hello is enough among friends.

MARIA (Laughing, a little bit embarrassed): I haven’t seen you for so long. I didn’t know how...

THOMAS: You keep saying, both you and Hans, how long we haven’t seen each other... but we are not strangers, right? By the way, you haven’t changed a bit. You are the same as ten year ago.

MARIA (Laughs, still somewhat embarrassed. She doesn’t know why.) It’s a compliment, I hope.

THOMAS: Of course, what else could it be?

MARIA: And you have changed so much...

THOMAS: You think? Maybe. I don’t know. How is it with you and Hans?

MARIA: It’s good. We travel all the time, see everything. Maybe we shall go to England in summer. To London. In Madrid we saw a monkey. It was in the cage, you know.

THOMAS: In the zoo?

MARIA: In the street.

THOMAS: But what’s life with Hans like?

MARIA: It’s good...

THOMAS: Since you have a pension house in Monte Carlo... what else could you wish for!

MARIA: You have become more... clinical.

THOMAS: I would say more honest. I’m sorry Hans couldn’t make it.

MARIA: He is sorry, too. He sends his regards.

THOMAS: It’s a lie. We haven’t seen each other or heard from in ten years. Now that my book is out, all of a sudden he remembered me... I doubt that this is your first time in Munich...

MARIA (Starts towards the door.): I didn’t know you invited us in order to insult us.

THOMAS (In panic.): Stop, stop, stop! I didn’t mean that. Please stay. Have a sit.

Maria slowly returns. She sits down.

THOMAS: Forget what I said. Really. It was stupid, I admit.

He sits down. Takes out a cigarette and lights it.

THOMAS: Cigarette?

MARIA: No, thank you.

THOMAS: Do you have any children?

MARIA: No.

THOMAS: And you have been married for five years?

MARIA: What do you mean?

THOMAS: You don’t sleep with Hans? (Maria looks at him or just nods.) For how long?

MARIA: For a year – almost a year.

THOMAS: You say I have changed? No, I haven’t changed. I haven’t become better, I’m doing the same thing I did at school. I dream and I write. That’s all. Remember, when we were at school, you asked me whether I liked you? I wanted to tell you that you were the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. I haven’t changed my mind. Now that I have seen you, and I know that you have married a fool... writing and glory don’t mean a thing to me. You are the only one I love.

MARIA (Standing face to face with Thomas.): Hans is...

THOMAS: ...nice. And I am a genius.

He takes her and kisses her passionately.
Fischer’s office. Knocking.

FISCHER: Come in!

Heinrich enters looking scared, holding some kind of a manuscript.

HEINRICH: Good afternoon, Sam.

FISCHER: Ah, it’s you. Come in.

HEINRICH: I brought you a manuscript. As I told you I would do.

FISCHER: What? Ah, yes. Put it on the desk. Give me just a few weeks, maybe a month...

HEINRICH: I know what that means.

FISCHER: I am going to read it, don’t worry, and then we shall talk. Alright?

HEINRICH: Yes... alright. Thank you.

Pause. Heinrich is standing, Fischer is sitting down and writing something. After a while, Fischer notices that Heinrich hasn’t left yet.

FISCHER: What is it?

HEINRICH: Sam – this means a lot to me.

FISCHER (Glances at his watch, gets up, goes to the closet, takes out a formal suit, starts putting it on.) Sorry. I’m late... Have to go to this ceremony and I’m late... The whole day in the office... tell me, feel free...

HEINRICH: It’s just... it really means a lot to me, if you read this this...

FISCHER (Dressing up.): Of course I will read it, what do you think!

HEINRICH: The only thing I wanted to be in my whole life is writer. Nothing more.

FISCHER ( Stops, takes a look at him.) But you are a writer. Are you not?

HEINRICH: I guess so. But it’s not like I thought it would be.

FISCHER: Eh! If everything in life was like we thought it would be... the world would be a much nicer place, wouldn’t it? And now, don’t you worry, come in one month and we shall talk. Do we have a deal?

HEINRICH: It’s a deal. Thank you.

He leaves.


FISCHER: Ah, yes, I almost forgot – the editor of the Literary Gazzette called me this morning – he says the Buddenbrooks are among the nominated for the book of the year.

THOMAS: Who else is nominated?

FISCHER: Prokosh and Erenberg.

THOMAS: That reward is mine.

FISCHER: We have to talk about Heinrich.

THOMAS: What?

FISCHER: This is not the place. Are you writing something now?

THOMAS: Tell me, is it possible that a man can’t write anything good if he is happy?

FISCHER: Never mind that now, enjoy yourself. But, I have to introduce you to this girl – Catherine Pringsheim.

THOMAS: Catherine Pringsheim? Who is she?

FISCHER: Her father is the professor of mathematics at the university, Alfred Pringsheim.

THOMAS: Why should I meet the daughter of some professor?

FISCHER: You and your stupid questions! The girl adores the Buddenbrooks, her father and I are good friends so she asked me to meet you. It’s no big deal.

THOMAS: She is not the only one who likes my book.
**FISCHER:** Just do this as a favor to me... her father is a good friend of mine.

**THOMAS:** Alright, no problem.

**FISCHER:** Katia!

**THOMAS:** She is here?

**FISCHER:** Of course she is here!

*Catherine Pringsheim arrives.*

**FISCHER:** Let me introduce you... Thomas Mann, miss Catherine Pringsheim.

**THOMAS:** Glad to meet you.

**KAATIA:** Likewise...

**FISCHER:** Alright then – I shall leave you now, so you can talk...

*Thomas throws him an angry look that said – ‘why are you leaving me alone with her?’*

**THOMAS:** So, your father is Alfred Pringsheim, the professor?

**KAATIA:** Yes. I shall be the same, I hope.

**THOMAS:** Ah, you are the first woman at the Munich University? I read about you.

**KAATIA:** Yes. I’m studying mathematics.

**THOMAS:** Don’t get me wrong, but who needs that?

**KAATIA:** What do you mean by that? Without mathematics there is nothing...

**THOMAS:** And without art?

**KAATIA:** There is no need to evaluate things in that way. Your book is fantastic, but you can’t say it’s more valuable than mathematics.

**THOMAS:** Does mathematics reveal truths about man?

**KAATIA:** But does art help man live better and in a more simple way?

**THOMAS:** Of course it does.

**KAATIA:** But not more than mathematics. You are wrong there.

**THOMAS** *(Laughs.):* I must admit I am fascinated. You know, usually when someone wants to praise my book I feel I could die of boredom... and you – you want to talk to me because you liked my book, but you do it in such a way that you humiliate art.

**KAATIA** *(Laughs.):* I am sorry, I didn’t mean to insult you... *(Starts talking in a more relaxed way.)* anyhow, you started it!

**THOMAS:** Me?

**KAATIA:** You immediately wanted to let me know that mathematics is nothing but a waste of time!

**THOMAS:** And you could have agreed with me right away so there would be no quarrel!

*He laughs.*

**KAATIA:** I hope I’m not asking for too much, but I would very much like to see you again – I find you very interesting.

**THOMAS** *(Confused.)*: Why not?

*Music takes over. Darkness.*

**MARIA:** Maria lies in bed. Thomas enters the room, dressing up.

**THOMAS:** Maria, it’s just occurred to me...

**MARIA:** What?

**THOMAS:** Why don’t you leave Hans?

**MARIA** *(Laughs.)*: What?

**THOMAS:** Leave him. You don’t need him.

**MARIA:** You are crazy!

**THOMAS:** I have never forgotten you. That’s why I sent that stupid cable on the occasion of you wedding... I could not stand seeing him with you. Anyhow, look what is being offered to you!

**MARIA:** You think you are better than him because of one book? Hans is not very clever – but he is an honest, good man.
THOMAS: He took you from me.

MARIA (Cinically, a little bit angry.): I fell in love with him.
I wasn’t yours in the first place so that someone takes
me away from you.

THOMAS (After a short pause.): You know, in my youth I
wanted to be Hans Gerlingen, but I knew I would never
be that. The most able, the most handsome, the most
liked boy at school. All those first places in running
competitions and similar stupidities, the darling boy
of all the girls... so I somehow just went along with
him. However, now I am satisfied that I am Thomas
Mann. Has he read anything that I wrote?

MARIA: Hans? No, not really... he is not very fond of
books...

Thomas laughs.

THOMAS: I’ve started thinking about this little story...
I’ve been thinking about that for quite sometime...
ever since the school, actually.

MARIA: And what is it about?

THOMAS: It’s about this boy, Tonio Kreger, weak in all
other aspects except the intellectual aspect. His best
friend, Hans Hansen, is the best student, fenomenal
in sports, and there is his great love Ingeborg Holm
who doesn’t like Tony, but marries the handsome,
empty-headed Hans Hansen.

MARIA: Thomase! You wouldn’t dare!

THOMAS: Whyever not?

MARIA: That is so obvious... if Hans reads that... maybe
he will get angry...

THOMAS: He will not get angry because he is not going
to read it.

MARIA: Alright, but someone else will read it, they will
understand...

THOMAS: So what? Don’t you worry... why are you like
that? I have offended half of the population of Libek
in my master piece... So what? Anyhow, I am an art-
ist – I am allowed to do anything.

FISCHER: Look, your book is a sensation! Give me some-
ingthing as soon as possible, it will sell like this. (He snaps
his fingers.) That’s the real thing! Good for you, good
for me, good for everyone. If your second book be-
comes that same success, I would be more inclined
to finance some other... writers.

THOMAS: What do you mean?

FISCHER: Your brother is a good writer, no question there.
But the thing that he had written, I read that a mil-
lion times before.

THOMAS (Tired and a bit angry.): What is the point?

FISCHER: The point is that if there wasn’t you, i.e. if he
wasn’t your brother I might continue publishing his
books... why not? But now he has this huge prob-
lem when his younger brother Thomas Mann makes
people exstatic.

THOMAS: And what of Heinrich?

FISCHER: We have published his books and everything is
so... lukewarm. Decent reviews, Demel’s of course,
decent circulation, decent books – and nothing. There
are too many writers of this kind, and only Heinrich
has this problem that his younger brother Thomas Mann makes
people exstatic.

THOMAS: The point is, therefore, that Heinrich’s book can
be published only if I write something before that?

FISCHER: Something as successful as the Buddenbrooks.
With that success I can publish Heinrich, no prob-
lem, as a little footnote in the season, and I hope he will be satisfied with that. If you publish, after that we shall do Heinrich’s book.

THOMAS: And what if Heinrich writes a master piece?

FISCHER (Laughs.): In this business there is a princip – if there is no master piece before the writer is thirty years old, there will never be. (Thomas is trying to say something, but Fischer raises his hand). And don’t you tell me now that Goethe wrote his first major thing when he was fifty something. Heinrich Mann is never going to write a master piece. You bring me your novel, I’ll be glad both to read it and to publish it. But now is the time for another huge book. About anything, fairies, princesses, trolls, it doesn’t matter, all the Germans would buy five copies each. That is good for you, good for me, and that is very good for Heinrich… Think about that.

7.

Thomas and Heinrich.

HEINRICH: Little Tomy, from pure menice you became a writer, from pure menice you shit on our family and our friends in your book… and all of a sudden you are a fucking writer… where is justice in this?

THOMAS: Not again this, please! Am I supposed to apologize that people liked my book?

HEINRICH: For months I’ve been going to see Fischer, months…

THOMAS: It’s not going well for me too, if it means anything to you. It’s been five months since I’ve started Tonyo Kreger and I’ve written no more than ten pages… It’s like I have no inspiration, I don’t know, you tell me, is it possible that a man cannot write something good if he is happy?

HANS: I’ll kill you, you cunt, I shall kill you!

Heinrich stops Hans, pushes him away from Thomas. Hans is still full of anger and adrenaline.

THOMAS: Hans...

HANS: Don’t you say a word. Not a word!

Hans is trying to control his anger. Every moment he might hit Thomas again.

HANS: She is pregnant.

Thomas stares at him, astonished.

THOMAS: Pregnant?

Thomas starts laughing in disbelief. Hans grabs him.

HANS: What are you laughing at, you fool?

THOMAS: You want to hit me again? Come on, hit me, Hans. Come on.

Hans is just standing and looking at Thomas. He pushes him away, but not strongly. More out of frustration.

HANS: I am taking her to London tomorrow. We shall see how to handle this. You thank God I haven’t killed you right here on the spot.

THOMAS: I am grateful to you for that.

HANS: What were you thinking? What was in your head? You wanted to make a scandal, you fool?

Hans is angrily staring at Thomas. He is still on the edge of attacking him again. He manages to control himself, but with visible effort.

HANS: Go to hell.

He starts towards the door.

THOMAS: Hans!

Hans stops, turns around.

THOMAS: I didn’t mean that, Hans, I swear to you. Forgive me.

Hans is looking at Thomas.

THOMAS: If only I were like you.
Hans leaves. Heinrich is looking at this brother for a while. They are both silent. Thomas slowly returns towards desk and sits down. He frowns.

HEINRICH: So, you are both a writer and Don Juan. I did not expect that from you.

THOMAS: Shut up.

HEINRICH: You fool! You have everything in your hand! Glory, writing, rewards, everything you wish for! You are sad because of some silly woman?

*Thomas, in a fit of anger, attacks Heinrich.*

THOMAS: Silly woman! I love her more than I love Goethe.

*Thomas moves away from Heinrich.*

THOMAS (In resignation, to himself.): I loved her more than Goethe...

Then, as if by accident, he turns over a chair. Then he destroys the whole room, turns over the table, chairs, everything. Exhausted, he falls down to the floor.

HEINRICH: Thomas... You can’t have it all. You know that. And don’t be too sad. I am sure that her life is not very difficult.

THOMAS: How could it be difficult with horses and a stupid fool?

*He laughs, with difficulty.*

8.

Thomas Mann, Catherine Pringsheim. Six months after the previous scene.

KATIA: And that’s the whole theory. It’s very interesting, isn’t it?

THOMAS (Not interested): Very. And that is, like, some kind of a revolution in mathematics?

KATIA: Of course! I think that Doblin is some kind of a genius!

THOMAS: I believe you when you say that Doblin is a genius. Listen, I have a proposition for you. Are you interested to do a job for me?

KATIA: What kind of a job?

THOMAS: A difficult one. To be my assistant, to take care of me, to be my support.

KATIA: What are you talking about?

THOMAS: I am offering you a job of being my wife.

END OF PART TWO

INTERMEZZO

1.

Thomas and Katia Mann in a hotel room in Venice. The year is 1911. Thomas is sitting in an armchair, tired. Katia comes from the adjoining room.

KATIA: I have put your clothes in the left closet, the children’s things are in the right one... Your notebook I put in the fifth right drawer. Erika and Klaus are sleeping... you should see them... two little angels... oh, what is it?

THOMAS: It turns out I have written a silly love story. The royal highness is a disaster...

KATIA: We have come the Venice to take a little break. From everything. Is that clear?

THOMAS: Clear.

KATIA: So, not a word abut the Royal Highness or any of that stuff. Please.

THOMAS: Yes, you are right. As always. I need a break. This writing is too much of an effort. Now with the children – to tell you the truth, I think that was the
problem – their constant crying and screaming, I cannot concentrate on writing. I can’t put down two sentences properly, immediately there is crying...

KATIA: We shall not talk about that now… you promised.

THOMAS: I know, I know, I’m just saying. The life of a writer is difficult… Katia, I have to go for a walk. I won’t be long, half an hour – an hour at the most. When I return, please see to it that I have something to eat, look at the menu here, and have the children sleeping, I want to work tonight. See if my clothes is wrinkled from travelling, and if it is take it to the staff to press it. There is money, if you need to pay something extra.

KATIA: I will, Thomas. Will you be home by eight o’clock?

THOMAS: Yes, for sure. I told you, I won’t be long.

KATIA: Alright. I am going to unpack the things.

She takes suitcases and brings them to the other room.

THOMAS: Katia...

Katia stops.

THOMAS: What would I do without you?

3.

Fischer’s study. Fischer is writing something, sitting down. Knocking.

FISCHER: Come in!

Heinrich enters.

FISCHER: Oh! Its' you!

HEINRICH: I wanted to bring you something – a text for the magazine.

He gives Fischer some papers.

FISCHER (Reads.): »An Essey on Zola»... You wrote this?

HEINRICH: I did. 

FISCHER: Zola? You think I don’t understand who this is about? You are writing against your brother. Are you sure you want this published?

HEINRICH: Tell me the truth – would my work have a better reception if I weren’t his brother?

Pause.

FISCHER: Probably.

HEINRICH: Then print it.

2.

Thomas Mann on a beach, wearing a suit. He is sitting in a reclining chair, reading newspaper. He smokes a cigare. He is looking at Vladislav Moes, a ten year old boy making a sand castle. He watches him persistently, with yearning. The boy finishes the castle, looks at Thomas Mann who smiles with approval, i.e. wants to make it clear to the boy that his sand castle is very good. Vladislav is smiling too, then gets up and quickly kicks the castle that falls apart. Then, smiling naughtily, he runs away and disappears. Thomas Mann is looking at what used to be a sand castle and then he gets up and leaves.
PART THREE

1.

THOMAS: Ladies and gentlemen it is my honor to address you today about... *(The year is 1929. Thomas Mann in his study practices a speech. Behind the door there are children playing, very loudly. As Thomas continues to practice, the noise becomes louder and louder.)* Ladies and gentlemen it is my honor to address you today about... *(The noise in front of the door reaches climax.)* What is this? *(He goes to the door, opens it and takes a look outside.)* I should have known... Michael, my son, come to your dad for a moment.

*Michael Mann, his ten year old son enters.*

THOMAS: Come here. Sit down.

*Michael sits down, the father and the son are looking each other in the eyes.*

THOMAS: Do you know what daddy is doing, Michael?

MICHAEL: You are preparing a speech.

THOMAS: You are right, I’m preparing speech, in honor of Goethe who was a great writer just like your father. This is the speech I shall deliver before three hundred and more most intelligent Germnas in about a week. And, it is very difficult for me to prepare this speech when there is such noise and screaming in front of my study, do you understand?

MICHAEL: Yes, father.

THOMAS: Good. My suggestion is, therefore, that our relations from now on be strictly formal. Do you agree with that?

MICHAEL: Yes, father.

THOMAS: Let us shake hands.

*Father and son shake hands.*

THOMAS: Alright, Michael, now you can go get ready to go to sleep. I am coming in about fifteen minutes to read you a story.

MICHAEL: Alright father. *(Gets up and starts towards the door.)* Dad...

THOMAS: Yes, my son?

MICHAEL: Can you read Thumbelina?

THOMAS: No, son, because tonight I am reading the Happy Prince. It’s much more interesting than Thumbelina. Go now, don’t be the last one to go to bed again.

MICHAEL: Alright father.

*The boy leaves. Little bit later Thomas gets up and leaves too. The telephone rings. Michael runs in, picks up the phone. Thomas enters, stands beside the doors.*

MICHAEL: Hallo? Just a moment... dad, it’s for you. They said you’ve got the Nobel prize.
2.

Heinrich is hugging Thomas.

HEINRICH: Congratulations.
THOMAS: You are not jealous?
HEINRICH: Jealous? I could strangle you right here, on the spot.
THOMAS: Ah, artists are a wonderful kind.
HEINRICH: Specially writers. From day one I knew you would fuck me up. The moment you wrote the Buddenbrooks, I knew it was the end of me.
THOMAS: How can I forget all the drama you were making about the Buddenbrooks?
HEINRICH: I know, I know. I was so full of shit. It was easier for me to fool myself that you were published because of some connections, or anything else but to admit that you are simply a better writer. You hold it against me, for sure.
THOMAS: I don’t hold it against you, we are brothers. I know what a difficult man you are. If you were not like that, maybe I would never start writing.
HEINRICH: No, no. It’s your destiny, Thomas. With your talent... you had to be a writer. I see that Klaus has started writing. You must be proud.
THOMAS: Why does he want to be a writer? That scares me. Look at the two of us. And I have six children. If another one starts writing it’s going to be a bloodshed.
HEINRICH: Let’s hope they will not be like us.
THOMAS: He shows certain talent. He is still young, though.
HEINRICH: Either you are a good writer or you are not. The age doesn’t matter.

Pause.

THOMAS: You are a good writer too. Excellent writer. I’ve always thought that. I read Evgenia, it’s a great book.
HEINRICH: You are so full of shit. I have made peace with my destiny, thank God. The older brother of a genius. There are worst things than that. Come on, tell me, what is Nobel prize like? What’s all that like – king’s reception, worldwide glory... I don’t know. I’ll never know. I should be so ashamed of myself. I write books that nobody reads. No critic has even glanced at them. But what is happening with this unfortunate country of ours? Have you seen those fools of the national-socialists?

THOMAS: No one will take them seriously.
HEINRICH: You think? I hope so. I’ll tell you one thing: if Hitler comes to power, I’m leaving Germany immediately.
THOMAS: Hitler to come to power? No way.
HEINRICH: You’ve always been a political dilettante, Thomas. Mark my words: if that happens, pack your bags immediately.

3.

Dream. Goethe again, but there is no more disproportion between the two writers.

GOETHE: I have to apologize to you. I was so unfair. I doubted, I have to admit, that you are the man who can be my heir as the great German writer. However (he waves the Magic Mountain as evidence) I am reading the Magic Mountain for the third time... capital piece in our literature. I like it very much.
THOMAS: Really? You really like the Magic Mountain?
GOETHE: Really... you wizard.
THOMAS: Wizard! That sounds so nice!
GOETHE: What did you want, wizard? And call me by my first name, we are equal now.
THOMAS: Look, master, I wanted to know... Is life... I mean... my life... Am I pleased?
GOETHE: Where does this come from?
THOMAS: Just like that... From nowhere.
GOETHE: Everybody's life is what he makes of it. You are a writer and you must be happy... are you?

THOMAS (Impatiently.): Quite pleased, I am a genius. But, there is something else.

GOETHE: What?

THOMAS: I have this tendency to... and maybe I am wrong in that, but I think I have a tendency to be unfair towards people. I have six children and I keep them all... at a distance...

KATIA: Michael tried to kill himself last night again.

GOETHE: How is so?

THOMAS: We are sitting at the table and I see one of them – Gol – and I tell him – you are ugly. But, actually, he is not that ugly as he is dirty... he doesn't like to wash, and he likes all kinds of rough games... games in mud, in sand, in the rain... I am looking at him and it occurs to me that he is ugly and I tell him that. Later I couldn't apologize to him... I didn't have the courage. When a man has six children he cannot love all of them the same.

GOETHE: True.

KATIA: He took fanodormin. I called the doctor.

THOMAS: I always thought that daughters are nothing serious, that there is more poetry in having a son, that a son is continuation of me, but... I imagined he would be different.

GOETHE: What were they supposed to be like.

THOMAS: I don't know. Simply different.

KATIA: You are not worried at all... a suicide, Thomas.

GOETHE: Are you scared when you see that he is like you?

THOMAS (Rubbs his forehead.): Who is he supposed to be like, but me?

GOETHE: Are you having a headache?

THOMAS: I have difficulty sleeping lately. I have to take medicine to go to sleep. Maybe people like me are not supposed to have children.

GOETHE: You are afraid that your children will be just like you, or worse, that they would be nothing like you.

THOMAS: What is this now?

GOETHE: You burned your diary?

THOMAS: I have no idea what was there. I wrote nothing, nothing, I swear to you, Goethe! Banal stuff, love stuff. It's not worthy of being written!

GOETHE: Well, now, it depends. Are you ashamed of your feelings?

THOMAS: I am not ashamed. It's just there is no need for anyone to read it.

GOETHE: Maria Albreht, now Gerlingen, you wrote that you loved her!

THOMAS: Yes, yes, that must be it.

GOETHE: Why are you lying to me?

THOMAS: What do you want from me? What do you want me to say?

GOETHE: You didn't write that you were in love with Maria Albreht. Maybe it's Hans? That you are in love with Hans?

THOMAS: In love with Hans? I have a wife, I have six children! Why are you talking nonsense? I can control, Goethe, I can control those things. All my life I keep them under control.

GOETHE: Why are you angry?

THOMAS: How come you don't understand? It is my duty to have a wife and children! It is expected of me!

GOETHE: Your duty? And what is it that you want?

THOMAS: What do I want? That! That's what I want! A wife and children! That's what I want to have! That's what I have to have!

GOETHE: Well, you have them, Thomas. A wife and six children.

THOMAS: Yes, yes, I have, that's right.

GOETHE: Then you must be satisfied. You think one thing, you do another thing, you burn your diaries, you take...
medicine in order to go to sleep, and then you fight with Goethe in your dreams. Yes, you have reason to be satisfied.

THOMAS: To be satisfied... I live a lie, Johann. I did not have the courage, I have never had the courage... Once I was in love, I felt love. I want to be different. I just don't know how.

GOETHE: What is it that you want, you have become a great writer...

THOMAS: Great writers die, too. A man chooses his own way, you are right, but what if that man is incapable of choosing? What then?

Pause.

GOETHE: Don't burn your words, Thomas. Don't sacrifice a single word. The moment is coming when other people will do that instead of you. They should not be helped in that.

THOMAS: What are you talking about?

GOETHE: Can't you tell? Can't you feel the strange atmosphere, strange odour in the air, can't you hear the beastial screams in our country? Our people, it is about to face the biggest and the bloodiest crises that you can imagine. Mark my words. Don't forget anything so you want wonder any more. The thing that this new epoch is about to make is the epoch of terror. You said it yourself, Wizard!

4.

KATIA: You called me?

THOMAS: Yes. (Ceremonially, but very warm.) Katia, yesterday I had this truly collosal dream. In this dream I spoke with the great Johann Wolfgang Goethe! To tell you the truth, I don't remember all the details of that dream, but I remember the most important part of it. Katia, Goethe called me the Wizard.

5.

Thomas and Hans Gerlingen Junior.

HANS: You are Thomas Mann?

THOMAS: It's me. And you are?

HANS: Lieutenant Hans Gerlingen.

THOMAS: Hans Gerlingen?

HANS: Yes. I am here by an order. We are preparing fireworks. We are creating a pure national language and culture. As for those writers who do not fit into pure national language and pure national culture, their books we shall burn down.

THOMAS: Writers such as...

HANS: Pacifist writers, socialist writers, Jewish writers, among others. Your wife is a Jew?

THOMAS: She converted into Lutheran when we married.

HANS: And her family?

Pause.

HANS: Your children? Erika and Klaus. There are indications that there life is not in line with... our way of life.

THOMAS: I am not interested in your way of life.

HANS: She is a lesbian, he is gay. Do you know that? I think you do. You have made a magnificent mess, writer. Look how many grotesque elements you have in your family. I would not be surprised if there were communists, too. We do not like things like that. We stand for family values. Your children have created an interesting cabare. Die Pfeffermuhle. It is very interesting to us. We hear that Klaus escaped to Paris. Erika is still in Germany.

THOMAS: Are you threatening my family? Let's deal with the essence. Why are you here?

HANS: I am here to give you your last chance to avoid shame. Our nation is facing a new beginning, there will be a renewal of the nation and the great German writer is stuck in Switzerland... why?
THOMAS: Because Hitler is going to destroy Germany.

HANS (Gets very angry, starts towards Thomas.): Hitler will save Germany! Hitler will create a greater Germany, he will make Germany great again, Germany that can stand proudly, right next to the French, English and Americans! And you – your speeches, your essays? You spit on your own nation, you traitor!

THOMAS: I don’t spit on Germany, but on nacizm!

HANS: Ah, yes, I understand. We know everything about you, Mann. That Jewish guy made you famous. You don’t see that the Jewish are to blame for our decline, that those parasites ruined us! Your bloody books were printed by a Jewish guy so you cannot accept that people in power now will stop their bloody greed. (Pause) Think about it. What have you to lose? Give a few statements where you shall say how devoted to Hitler you are, that your political views are in line with his, take a few photos with his fuhrer, you get a few invitations for dinners, ceremonies, and so on. That’s all. It’s not that much. You would be in your country, with your own people, so? Where is harm in that?

THOMAS: The harm is that I would support a madman and a murderer.

HANS (Bangs his hand on the table.) You fool! How dare you talk like that about his fuhrer! But, be careful, think again before you give me your response. Because my orders are that, in case your answer is negative, to give you this.

He takes a letter from his pocket.

THOMAS: What is that?

HANS: That is a letter which says that Klaus lost his status of a German citizen. In fact, that he is no longer German. Letters like this are being prepared for you and your family. Anyway, take a look yourself.

Thomas takes the letter, reads it.

THOMAS: Nice...

HANS: You are not surprised?

THOMAS: Surprised? I’ve been expecting this for months! Whenever I get a telephone bill, I ask myself maybe this is the letter hidden inside. When I get a letter from Germany, that is the first thing that occurs to me, maybe this is the letter that wipes me out from the history of my nation. I don’t know any longer who works for you, how many people you were able to sway to your side, who turned against me, people who used to praise me before and now turned against me, burning my books. I did not know I was so important that you would come to see me personally, to tell me what I already knew, but alright. I am flattered with your attention.

HANS: You are making fun of this! You already have a bad reputation for leaving the country, people already throw away your books disgusted by them, they don’t want to read them, you understand? If you refuse to come back to your senses now, if you refuse the hand that fuhrer generously offered, then you betrayed your people.

THOMAS: Why am I so important to Hitler, or to Gebbels? What do they get if I take photo with them? And what do they lose if I don’t do that?

HANS: Imagine, what a dementi that would be, what public advertisement, what a strike against the English who threw our country into mud, if a great writer, a genius, Nobel prize winner Thomas Mann publicly declares his support for Hitler, for Germany! Come back to Germany, you will be a national hero, Nobel prize winner, genius! If you refuse, you can wipe your bottom with your Nobel prize, it will be worthless! You will be wiped out from history. It will be as if you never existed at all.

THOMAS: I will be honored to be wiped out from history that you are writing.

HANS: So, you refuse? Definitely?

THOMAS: Definitely.
HANS: You have become a national traitor. English puppet. American servant. You and your family.
   *He gets up. Starts towards the door.*

THOMAS: Just a moment!

HANS: What is it?

THOMAS: Your name is Hans Gerlingen?

HANS: Hans Gerlingen Junior.

THOMAS: What is your mother’s name?

HANS: What’s it to you?

THOMAS: Yes, I know, it has nothing to do with me, I’m just curious. Please.

HANS: Maria.

THOMAS: Albreht... I knew your... parents.
   *Hans runs towards Thomas, gets him by the throat. Father and son look each other in the eyes.*

HANS: Don’t you mention that to anyone, understood? We are burning your books, you think someone would brag for knowing you?
   *He lets him go and leaves.*

HANS: My mother used to love your books. She would read Tonio Kreger and cry. Every time.

THOMAS: And now?

HANS: She would be the first one to throw Kreger into the fire.

THOMAS: It’s not true.

HANS (Smiling.): It’s true! We used to live in England, then we went back to Germany when Hitler came to power because my father wanted that! So that we can again be proud for being German!

THOMAS (Almost shouting.): It’s not true!

HANS (Starts laughing.): I hope you are happy with your choices, writer.

THOMAS: Lieutenant!

HANS: What is it?

THOMAS: If you killed me right now, I would be eternally grateful to you.
   *They are both standing up, staring at each other. Hans takes his gun.*

HANS: Seriously?

THOMAS: Yes.

HANS: Don’t you mention that to anyone, understood? We are burning your books, you think someone would brag for knowing you?
   *He lets him go and leaves.*

6.

1933. Berlin. In the Opernplatz there is a huge pile of books. Fire engulfs the books by Kafka, Kipling, Tolstoy, Zid, Hashek, Thomas Mann, Klaus Mann, Heinrich Mann.

7.

*Thomas and Goethe.*

GOETHE: And, what now? War?

THOMAS: It turns out war, Goethe, it turns our war.

GOETHE: No, not war, Thomas. War... that means nothing. Bloodshed. It turns our bloodshed. It turns out death. That’s all, and nothing more.

THOMAS: We don’t belong to the same nation any longer...

GOETHE: Why? Because they took your citizenship? Just remain superior, Mann, just remain superior. You are better and more clever than the whole Germany put together.

THOMAS: Yes... you see Johann, about that... I’m no longer so sure.

GOETHE: Why?

THOMAS: I am not sure just how clever can be a man who doesn’t know who he is...
GOETHE: And what man does know that? That jurk Breht? How can you know who you are when no one knows what life is? Life is a circus with no sense. In the end we all turn into dust. And there is nothing left from dust. Man lives, loves, tries hard, loses, wins, dreams, and in the end it is all gone. In the end, it is all in vain. What’s left behind a man? The world is a circus, and we are all clowns in that circus, one man is a genius, another man is a fool, they are both clowns. Sleep now, Thomas, in your sleep you are protected from the world, until the world finds the way to wake you up... and the dreams are nothing but mirrors of the circus, just shadows of those clowns... do you believe me?

THOMAS: I believe you.

GOETHE: Then dream. Dream one more time, until you forget everything. Life is the matter of a moment, it’s over before you wake up.

THOMAS: Son, do you know what is happening in the world?

MICHAEL: Something very bad, it seems to me.

THOMAS: Yes, Michael, you could say that. Having in mind that there is a catastrophe looming over us, not us as Germans, or former German but the whole world, I would like that personal stupidities be reduced to a minimum. (He waves some papers). Do you know what this is?

Michael innocently raises his hands indicating that he doesn’t know.

THOMAS: Another bill for car repair. I have stopped counting how many cars you have crushed.

MICHAEL: Remember the first time I did that?

THOMAS: When you were six years old.

MICHAEL: And you gave me a proper beating with a stick, if I remember correctly. No, I don’t hold it against you. You had the right to do it. I had no excuse then. But this time I do. I was drunk.

THOMAS: Ah, I’m not surprised.

MICHAEL: Yes, who would say. By the way, I would like to ask you something.

THOMAS: Money?

MICHAEL: How did you guess?

THOMAS (Laughs.): You want me to give you more money? I think my life was over the day you were born. I have to support a wife, six children, older brother... What is it that you need this time?

MICHAEL: I am getting married, father.

THOMAS: What?

MICHAEL: You haven’t heard me? I’m getting married.

THOMAS: You are 19.

MICHAEL: I love her. That’s enough.

THOMAS: Are you serious?

MICHAEL: My father, wizard, I have changed. I don’t play with drugs anymore. I don’t run away from home. I don’t try to kill myself. Alright, maybe I still have an issue with alcohol, but otherwise...

THOMAS: Yes, it’s a good thing that you are not a drug addict, just alcohol addict.

MICHAEL (Provoking him.): Unlike Klaus? What is it that he is interested in, morphium, right? Or heroin?

Pause.

THOMAS: What do you need the money for? To continue drinking with your fine friends?

MICHAEL: No. I’ll set myself straight, father, I swear to you. I need the money so I can have a family that will live a decent life.

THOMAS: I shall take care of you.
MICHAEL: Like you took care of us?
THOMAS: What does that mean?

MICHAEL: When I was 8 years old, we were reading a slade, and I felt like peeing. I was too afraid to tell you, so I wet my pants. It was easier than to ask you to stop the slade.

THOMAS: Michael...

MICHAEL: I will stop drinking. I won’t make any more trouble. You won’t get anymore bills for my shit. Now I’ll have a wife, we shall have children...

THOMAS: How much do you need?

MICHAEL: Say ten thousand dollars.

THOMAS: Ten thousand! What do you need that much for?

MICHAEL: Make it my wedding present!

THOMAS: Michael, listen to me. Whatever you think of me, I really wish nothing but the best for you. (Michael laughs). I am serious. Tell me the truth – this money, what do you need it for? Some trouble again?

Pause. They look into each other for a long time.

MICHAEL: It’s just... to pay off some debts, that’s all. (Angry) If you don’t want to help me, you don’t have to! But I will get myself straight, I swear, I swear. Everything will be alright when I get married.

9.

GOETHE: The war ended. It’s over.

THOMAS: I know. It was over almost four years ago.

GOETHE: And? You did not return to Germany?

THOMAS: How can I go back after everything that happened? You think that everything can be forgotten? You think we can just say never mind, no big deal? Academics who had celebrated me before used to write petitions that I should be banned from going back into the country. And I’m supposed to say, all-right, you got little carried away, but I forgive you all? You think it can go that way?

GOETHE: No, I don’t think that.

THOMAS: I shall never again live in Germany.

GOETHE: I understand, I forgot. I am sorry for your loss.

THOMAS: Thank you.

GOETHE: To lose a son is the hardest thing. Believe me, I know. Specially when it is a suicide...

THOMAS: Johann! Let me ask you something – if I may.

GOETHE: Go ahead.

THOMAS: What will happen with Michael?

GOETHE: You want to know?

THOMAS: Of course.

GOETHE: He will become a violin player. Great artist. He will study German literature in Harvard. He will become a professor at Berkly.

THOMAS: He will be happy! I am glad to hear that, Goethe.

GOETHE: But he will have to give up playing violin because of neuropathy. And in the end he will kill himself.

THOMAS: He will commit suicide?

GOETHE: You can’t run away from destiny.

THOMAS: And what about the others, Golo, Elisabeth, Erika, Monika, what will happen with them?

GOETHE: I can’t talk about that. Even in dreams there are certain rules.

Goethe disappears. Quietly and carefully. Michael enters.

KATIA: Why did Klaus kill himself?

MICHAEL: I don’t know. Maybe he himself doesn’t know – didn’t know. I always thought if some of the Mann brothers will kill himself that would be me.

KATIA: Don’t’ say that.

MICHAEL: Where is father?

KATIA: In his study. Writing.

MICHAEL: Writing?
KATIA: Your father is a genius, Michael. Don’t forget that. And don’t think that he doesn’t suffer.

*Michael enters Thomas’ study.*

MICHAEL: Father.

THOMAS: Michael. You are back.

MICHAEL: Obviously.

THOMAS: How was it?

MICHAEL: How can it be? They buried him. What did you think would happen? That Klaus might get up from the dead?

THOMAS: You are making fun of this?

MICHAEL: Sorry, wizard. Since I was the only member of the family at the funeral, I was not sure that you cared.

THOMAS: You think it is easy for a father to bury a son? Or a mother?

MICHAEL: I can’t stay long. I have rehearsals tonight.

THOMAS: Rehearsals?

MICHAEL: You didn’t forget, I have a concert in two months?

THOMAS: I didn’t forget. I can hardly wait to hear you playing.

10.

Thomas, Katia.

KATIA: Michael played wonderfully! Wasn’t it lovely?

THOMAS: Yes, I think that he has talent.

KATIA: Who would say that he would get himself straight after everything he’s done?

THOMAS: Katia, have you ever regretted marrying me?

KATIA: Where is this question coming from?

THOMAS: I don’t know. When I heard Michael playing tonight... It just remained me of something... something sad... And everything that I wanted... everything I wanted was to start from the beginning again. That everything starts from the beginning. To start fresh, not to make mistakes as I used to. If I had had a second chance, I would be so happy... but these things don’t happen in this world. Sometimes I remember our beginning, the leaves were falling while we were walking wearing fur coats in Munich that does not exist any more.

KATIA: And spoke of mathematics...

THOMAS: And of art... *(He laughs.)* And I was happy the whole time, and you were happy, because you had a future, because we both thought we had a future... *(He laughs loudly.)* And where was our future? In doctor Faustus and dirty socks! In Magic Mountain and poached tomato! This is what future brought to us. And I have the feeling that I knew all that, I knew all that in my dreams, because Goethe spoke to me, or someone else. I forgot.

Pause.

THOMAS: Katia, what happened to us?

KATIA: What do you mean?

THOMAS: How come we ended up like this? Glued to art, glued from life, it is as if I haven’t lived but kept watching other people live, and I did not know, I did not think I could do the same. You also did have to be this way... everything could have been different.

KATIA: What’s the matter with you... it was worth being your housewife since I helped you create... anyhow, one lost life means nothing compared to Magic Mountain.

THOMAS: It was not worth it. And it was not just one lost life, Katia.

KATIA: I loved you. Maybe I still love you. I don’t know anymore. But I do know that I have always loved the Buddenbrooks. And the Magic Mountain.

*Katia gets up, leaves. Thomas Mann remains alone. Lights are slowly fading away until they completely disappear. From semidarkness comes young Thomas Mann, sits at a desk and starts writing Tonio Kreger.*
YOUNG THOMAS: Have I forgotten you? No, never! I haven’t forgotten you, Hans, nor you, blond Ingeborg. I was doing it all for you, and when I heard approval I secretly looked around myself to see if you are taking part in that... have you read Don Carlos, Hans, as you promised me beside the garden door? Don’t do it! I’m not asking you to do that any more. What do you care about a king who is crying because he is lonely? Your blond eyes should not get clouded and should not disappear in dreams, looking at verses and melancholy... If only I were like you. If I started once again, grew up like you, honestly, happily and simply, properly, neatly, in accordance with God and the world, if I were loved by those who are innocent and happy, if I married you, Ingeborg, and had a son like you, Hans – if I lived without the curse of knowing and without creative pains, lived, loved and praised the Lord in blissful simplicity!... If I started once again? But that wouldn’t help at all. Everything would be the same – everything would happen the way it has happened already. Because it is a must for some people to wander around because there is no right way for them.

Young Thomas gets up, takes the papers. For a moment it seems that the old and young Thomas Mann look at each other. Then, with his head down, young Thomas leaves the room. The Wizards has lowered his head, as if sleeping or as if he is dead.

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