

GEORGE SPIRO

DOBARDAN

A Tragedy in 12 Scenes

Translated from the Hungarian by Andrew Bock

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Characters of the Play:

An Engineer
His Wife
Their Teenage Daughter
Guest 1
Guest 2
Sanyi [*Shun-yee*]
A Journalist
A Foreign Affairs Advisor
Wife's Girlfriend
A School Teacher
Refugee Women, Men, and Children

Time and place: Hungary, 1993-94. Between scenes, initially quietly, then progressively louder, the boom of artillery fire is heard.

Scene 1.

(Downstage right a dining area: dishwasher, break-front, refrigerator, television on top of the refrigerator, table. A computer sits on top of a small side table. A MALE GUEST [GUEST1], and FEMALE GUEST [GUEST2], ENGINEER, WIFE, are sitting around the table. They've just finished dinner.)

GUEST 1 I told you in 1991 that they were going to put the Iron Curtain back up, but now it's the West who want it up. They won't give me a permanent work permit, they make me go in and extend it every six months, and they're getting nastier about it each time. And they won't let me bring the family. I mean, the pay is good but I know they hate me, like I was, I don't know what, an Arab.

ENGINEER The Arabs discovered arithmetic.

GUEST 1 And now the Germans hate each other, too, with all the layoffs and everything. It's not only the foreigners, they even hate the East Germans... I can't believe how bad it's gotten these last few years - here and in Germany... I know this East German guy who escaped to the West about six months before the Wall came down. He still hasn't gotten any of his things back, by the way. Anyway, he said to me once that East Germany won the cold war, what with the unification of Germany and all. He's got a point there. The Germans have a caste system of their own: there are the Germans, meaning the West Germans, of course - the East Germans are a lower sub-caste, then there's the European Union nations, which is bad enough; but then comes us, the hangers-on, the rest of the world. We're the first to be kicked out of the country. You can find ways to raise the caste you're in, but the EU is the most you can hope for, it wouldn't even help that much, but that's the most you hope for... I don't know if it's worth fighting for, really... Germany is cut-throat these days, it's no better than back here. It's absolutely disgusting. And of course they act more like Nazis every day.

GUEST 2 And what about you two?

WIFE We're thinking of going to Canada or Australia. As far from Europe as possible. If the Russians start up again you can forget about our little country, let alone the rest of Europe. Anyway, we're not young anymore. It would take the rest of our lives to start again in a new country. I think we should leave for our daughter's sake.

ENGINEER For our daughter's sake?! Funny, you know I don't even remember wanting to have children. I told you then that it was bad idea, in a country like ours - in a world like ours - and that was a peaceful life we had. No one then predicted what this country would become.

GUEST 2 What grade is she in now?

WIFE Seventh.

GUEST 2 Then now's the time to do it. If you put it off she won't lose her accent and it'll be harder for her to adapt.

GUEST 1 You know, we send our kids abroad every vacation, and we send them to special language classes, summer camps, they study with a private teacher too - but I still don't know what's best for them, what I should be preparing them for... I don't even know how much longer the Nazis are going to let me stay in their country. They're laying off everyone they can, starting with the foreigners...

(The phone rings.)

ENGINEER Excuse me, I'll get that. *(Exits.)*

WIFE My family could have left in 1956, when I was seven. I told my father we should go, but he was an idealist. I remember, he said, Everything will be different from now on... At least a third of my class fled the country. I wrote my best friend for six months or so after she went to Canada, then we stopped writing... She must be doing well...

GUEST 1 You know, whenever those Nazis over there give me a hard time I feel this close to punching their lights out. I mean, who do they think they are treating me like that, just because German isn't my first language?! Just because I wasn't born in Germany? It makes me so angry that they think even the stupidest German is smarter than the most brilliant Hungarian.

GUEST 2 *(Earnestly:)* Because it's the truth.

GUEST 1 And it's going to drive me crazy.

WIFE That's why we should go to America. Everyone there is an immigrant, or remembers that their ancestors were.

GUEST 2 You know who the real geniuses are? The real geniuses are the ones whose parents emigrated.

(They laugh. ENGINEER enters, sits down.)

GUEST 1 I heard they're selling your building. Is it true?

WIFE That's right. Classic highway robbery. The money is going straight into the pockets of the Privatization Office. That building was built from our profits. The company's been axed.

GUEST 1 In Hungary it's called privatization, and in Germany it's called nationalization. It's more like internal colonialization. The consultants make the most. Ten to twenty percent. It's unbelievable. They pocket billions, legally, because they wrote the laws. That's what you call democracy. And they don't have the least bit of shame.

GUEST 2 Just wait, there'll be another revolution!

GUEST 1 There won't be a revolution or anything else because everybody's in on the corruption, at their own level, even the unemployed - black market work, pirating diesel fuel, there are countless rackets, the police are in on it, too, everyone is, that's what they learned

during socialism, just like South America or Turkey. It's the Hungarian approach to life, is what it is, really - officially sanctioned cynicism. But hey, it could be a lot worse, so long as the Romanians or the Serbs don't march into Budapest. Those Nazis don't give a shit about our part of the world. They know it's theirs anyway, so why would they pump more money into it?

WIFE

I think our government might be waiting for exactly that type of situation. A little border skirmish with the Romanians, and they declare a state of emergency. Then we don't have to play Democracy anymore. Just throw everyone in jail who makes a peep. One little war and a couple hundred thousand kids die as cannon fodder, just like in Yugoslavia. That's why we've got to leave, while we still have the chance.

GUEST 2

Girls aren't drafted into the army.

WIFE

But she'll have children, maybe a boy, and that's more potential cannon fodder. I don't want that. We should get the hell out of here. I should have left in '56. My parents should have left in '45. And my ancestors were idiots to settle in Hungary. Those stupid Germans! They should have stay put on their asses, back in Europe.

GUEST 2

Why, where did they come from?

WIFE

Saxony, I think.

GUEST 2

Weren't they Jewish?

WIFE

No, they weren't. Why, is that important?

(Beat. Enter Engineer.)

GUEST 1

Well, back then they couldn't have known where Europe was, exactly. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

Who was that on the phone?

ENGINEER

Nobody, work.

WIFE

The two of you haven't eaten very much... Why don't you pour them something...

ENGINEER

Of course. Sorry. What can I offer you, cognac, whisky, beer...?

GUEST 1

Hey, I haven't even asked what you're working on these days...

ENGINEER

Whatever comes up. There's not much work coming in right now.

GUEST 1

What do you think about this recession, huh? IBM, Volkswagen, Siemens, they're all firing thousands of people. Hey, remember the days when we were pirating software, and selling it to the Russians?... those were great times... Now the companies are saying that they knew it all along, and didn't stop us intentionally. Supposedly that's how they worked the market... and we kidded ourselves thinking we were so clever... We worked night and day for them, almost for free it turns out, we didn't even get a commission...

WIFE Those days are gone and they're not coming back. Now they roll right over us wherever they see the chance. That's what the two of us have been arguing about. He thinks the West hasn't changed its strategy. But he's wrong. We've been devalued. We're no longer an intriguing enemy. There's no reason they should pump more capital into Eastern Europe. That's what I keep telling him.

ENGINEER I know, that's what you keep telling me.

GUEST 2 Well! look at the time! Tomorrow we're...

GUEST 1 Really, it's gotten so late...

WIFE Stay a while longer, we see you so rarely, just once or twice a year...

GUEST 2 I know, it's terrible, we're all so busy now...

(The guests gather their coats. GUEST 2, GUEST 1 and after them ENGINEER, and WIFE exit. Beat. WIFE and ENGINEER return.)

ENGINEER Is she asleep?

WIFE Of course she's asleep. *(Beat.)* I'll clean up tomorrow. *(Beat.)* What's the matter?

ENGINEER What?

WIFE Who was that on the phone?

ENGINEER A friend.

WIFE Who?

(Beat. ENGINEER sits down and pours himself a drink.)

WIFE Who called, honey?

ENGINEER Remember a couple of years ago, when was it, three years ago, when I went to Bordeaux... I told you about this guy, he had a great sense of humor, you know, the one who told all those great jokes...

WIFE No, I still don't know who you're talking about.

ENGINEER I told you about him. He's bald, same age as me, he gave a great lecture. He spoke three or four languages...

WIFE And?

ENGINEER Nothing, he called. *(Beat.)* From Sarajevo.

WIFE What's he doing in Sarajevo?

ENGINEER That's where he's from.

WIFE And where is he now?

ENGINEER There, in Sarajevo.

WIFE Where the fighting is?

ENGINEER Where the fighting is... Somehow he got his hands on a telephone. He said that he's calling everyone... Probably everyone in his phone book. I asked him where he got the telephone from, he said it's not important. He said they have no food, and they're freezing, they're being shot at, and just about dead, and now he's calling all the people he knows to adopt a Yugoslav orphan. *(Beat.)*

WIFE What kind of orphan? There is no more Yugoslavia.

ENGINEER A Yugoslav orphan. He doesn't care. Croat, Serb, Bosnian, it doesn't matter to him - they have one language, one culture, and lots of orphans. *(Beat.)*

WIFE And?

ENGINEER That was it. *(Beat.)*

WIFE I'll clean up tomorrow. Let's go to bed, okay?... What's troubling you?

ENGINEER Just think about it: a man standing in a bunker somewhere, anywhere, up to his knees in rubble, and he gets a phone from somewhere, maybe steals a phone from the UN, he's near death, and he starts calling half of Europe...

WIFE Yes, it's terrible... Let's go to bed. We're getting up early.
(Black out.)

Scene 2.

(Darkness. Left center a cigarette is lit. We see the glowing ember, hear ENGINEER clearing his throat.)

WIFE What's the matter?

ENGINEER Nothing. Go to sleep.

WIFE What time is it?

ENGINEER I don't know, two or three...

WIFE Why are you smoking now? Why do we air out the apartment every night if you're going to smoke now?

ENGINEER I was thinking, what if we were to adopt a kid? *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER We wanted to have another child anyway.

WIFE We wanted to? I wanted to, you said no...

ENGINEER Because everything around us is so unpredictable. But maybe I'm wrong.

WIFE Honey, I'm too old for this. Why should we adopt? Go ahead and adopt a kid yourself.

ENGINEER I know, you're right, I know, it was just that phone call. Maybe he'll be killed tomorrow. It was his last wish.

WIFE Can we help that they're shooting each other down there? Let the UN help them. *(Beat.)* And who's going to help us? If we lose our jobs? If we have to leave the country? Do you think we could take another hungry mouth with us? Who isn't even related? Do you think that would make it easier for us to get visas?

(Beat.)

ENGINEER I never understood why no one helped the Jews. They just didn't. It was easier not to. The English, and the Americans too, knew about Auschwitz, they could have bombed the tracks, but it was easier if all the Jews died. It's not so different today.

WIFE Listen, there are thousands of refugees living all throughout our country, and they're not starving to death because they're being fed from our taxes... . Would you want to take a child away from its family? Orphans have grandparents and aunts and uncles. Just think about it. Let's go to sleep. And don't smoke anymore. *(Beat. The cigarette is extinguished.)*

Scene 3.

(Dining area. WIFE is doing the dishes. Enter ENGINEER.)

ENGINEER Hi. *(He takes off his jacket and reaches into the refrigerator and takes out a beer, opens it.)* Is she asleep already?

WIFE Yes, she is. She had her English lesson, went to fencing, and did her homework. She couldn't wait up for you...

ENGINEER It took so long to figure out what went wrong, our computer wizard really mucked everything up... You know what? I called the Immigration Office. They said that they're not authorized to do anything, a lot of people have already tried. Can you believe that? people want to adopt Yugoslav kids and no one has been able to do it yet! They told me to call the Croatian Embassy. I didn't even know that there was a separate embassy. It's not even in the phone book, but the guy at the Serbian Embassy gave it to me, saying that the Bosnians now have their own embassy in Zagreb. Anyway, I called, hoping that someone spoke English, but instead I got an answering machine, and I couldn't understand a word. Then I remembered that guy Sanyi, and called him up, you know, he's Serbian... or Croatian... on his mother's side, I think... He said that the embassy's number had changed, and he'd try to find it for me. Well, he found it, but the Bosnian Embassy in Zagreb had moved. He talked with someone who said that they've gotten calls from all over, West Europeans, Germans, Americans, from everywhere, but no one can adopt because you need a permit, and the Bosnian

government decided that they'd only allow adoptions after the war, until then they're not letting any children go, not even orphans, because they're Bosnian citizens... That was nice of Sanyi, we should invite him over some night... And you have to know the orphan's name, and supply the government all kinds of information, like how we both make incredible salaries... but only after the war is over... How do they know when it's going to be over? Oh, and they said that there are no real orphans, just kids who've lost one parent. I wouldn't have thought it'd be so difficult. The whole world sees the corpses live on TV everyday. *(Beat.)*

WIFE One stupid phone call and you're just dropping everything...

ENGINEER What am I dropping? I worked all day, I just made a few phone calls... God, he told great jokes.

WIFE Who?

ENGINEER Oh, my friend, who called from Sarajevo. He had the most incredible sense of humor.

WIFE I have an incredible sense of humor too, and so does your daughter.

ENGINEER What are you so upset about?!

WIFE Don't shout, she'll wake up!

ENGINEER She should wake up, and see what kind of world she lives in! Why shouldn't I do something? Why don't I do something? Maybe in the end I can't do a thing, but I should try!

(A sleepy teenager stumbles out in a nightshirt.)

WIFE Go to sleep baby, nothing's wrong, Daddy's just a little upset, he'll be fine, everything's alright.

Scene 4.

(Evening. Dining area. ENGINEER, WIFE, DAUGHTER are eating diner. The television sitting on top of the refrigerator is on. Stories about Somalia, Sarajevo, Georgia, shooting everywhere, corpses, and so on. Reports on Little Irma being flown off to England for treatment. Sky News or a German station is on, not Hungarian news.)

WIFE Why do we have to watch this?

ENGINEER Because this is what's happening. The whole world is watching this.

(Beat. They eat.)

ENGINEER The Bosnians aren't the only ones. The Serbs aren't allowing adoptions, either. I asked.

WIFE It's time you stop all this.

TEENAGER What's going on?

WIFE Nothing.

ENGINEER There's an Union of Hungarian Serbs - if you can believe such a thing exists - they tried to adopt orphaned Serbian children but the Serbian government said no. They've got Serbian refugees staying with them, but nobody knows how many. They said there hasn't been a migration of Serbs to Hungary this big for centuries. And the Serbs want to stay here. They say the Muslims and Albanians are pushing them north, in our direction. The Albanians are also Muslim, supposedly.

TEENAGER I can't hear the news.

ENGINEER Then you can't hear the news right now!

WIFE Why are you shouting? You should be happy she understands what they're saying. That's why we give her private lessons!

ENGINEER Sooner or later the Serbs will learn Hungarian if they stay, huh? They'll become Hungarians.

WIFE How could they become Hungarians?

ENGINEER Like the old, whoever, the Cumanians, Pechenegs who fled here and settled.

TEENAGER Let me listen!

(Beat. Only the television is heard. Seriously wounded are being evacuated from Sarajevo or elsewhere in Bosnia. Surgery taking place in empty operating rooms, by candlelight, etc.)

ENGINEER Sanyi said that the Hungarian Serbs aren't all at that happy about this migration business. They're happy that there'll be more of them, but they're unhappy because they've had their own Serbian dialect for hundreds of years, they have their own poets and whatever. And now all these new Serbs are coming from Yugoslavia and they're different. It must be strange for them.

WIFE Why don't you just stop it?!

TEENAGER Would someone tell me what's going on? You two have been going on like this for days!

WIFE Your father wants to bring you a little brother from Yugoslavia.

TEENAGER What?

WIFE He wants to adopt a Yugoslav orphan.

(Beat. TEENAGER turns off the television with a remote control.)

TEENAGER Why don't you guys just have one?

ENGINEER Darling, would you want a little brother or sister thirteen years younger than you?

TEENAGER I don't know... But you said that when I was little I wanted one.

ENGINEER That's right, you did.

TEENAGER Then why didn't you have one?

ENGINEER Because children were just for building socialism - and for cannon fodder.

TEENAGER What's changed now? Why'd you even have me? *(Beat.)*

WIFE This whole thing is completely irrational. Even the governments don't want to give the kids up. How about adopting a starving African child? If you want to adopt so badly? Or a Romanian child. They're smuggling Romanian kids out for US dollars, they even come to Hungary to give birth, it's money in the bank. Why don't you want one of those kids? How much better is Yugoslav kid? Aren't there any Chinese orphans?

TEENAGER How come I don't have a brother or sister?

WIFE We could barely get by as it was.

ENGINEER People are always having children when times are tough. That's when we had you, too. If babies were smart enough to be born only when the time was right, humanity would have died out a long time ago.

TEENAGER Then what are you even talking about now?

(Beat. TEENAGER turns on the television, again the news, starving people, murders, etc.)

WIFE You know, if your daughter ever develops a mentality like the one her father has, I'll wring her neck.

ENGINEER Oh, so I have a such a losing mentality? Who got us this apartment? Two rooms and an eat-in kitchen! How much did we put down and how much is our mortgage? My father, you could call him a loser. He didn't leave me a thing. He woke up every day and did his daily grind to help build this country up from its ruins. Compared to him I am a highly successful parasite.

TEENAGER Are you talking about grandpa?

ENGINEER Yes, I'm talking about grandpa. The Communist Party offered him gigantic apartments, one after the other, and he didn't take any of them because he felt others needed them more than he did... He believed that someday everyone will live equally well. Your grandpa, darling, was a communist, an idealistic fool, a fantastic, unselfish man. In school you're being taught that people like him killed and stole, and did other horrible things. Well your grandpa didn't kill, he didn't steal. The same people who did it then are still doing it today, just in a different name. Compared to your grandfather I am ruthless, and exploitive.

WIFE But not enough.

ENGINEER I've never created anything, I've never brought anything of value into the world. I stole western software which there was an embargo against, and I copied that software, and then resold it to even bigger idiots than we were. That's how we got this apartment. And if our company is closed down, it would probably be a good thing. The only thing I know how to do is copy, fake, and pirate.

TEENAGER You might get fired?

ENGINEER If my bosses have any brains at all, yes.

WIFE Maybe we shouldn't wait for that to happen.

ENGINEER You're dreaming! What skills do I have that I could sell abroad? What could I offer? There are thousands of computer experts better than I am and they're out of work. You think I'd find any kind of work at all?!

WIFE And now you want to bring a strange child into our home.

ENGINEER Because it's still better here in our home than where the shooting is.

WIFE Your father's gone mad, honey. He's become a communist now that there's no reason to be one.

ENGINEER Like hell I've become a communist - I just realized that what I used to have has disappeared... My country has disappeared. It's been yanked out from under my feet.

WIFE You don't know what you're talking about.

ENGINEER Sanyi said that a Croatian woman was living with him for a while. The woman had a Serbian husband. They lived in Belgrade for a long time, then the husband went to Paris, he was teaching there, and they divorced. But they still talked to each other on the phone. The woman found herself a Croatian boyfriend from Split, but then all the transportation and communication between Split and Belgrade was cut off, so, get this, the ex-husband in Paris would call the boyfriend in Split and pass messages from the woman in Belgrade. Of course after a while she couldn't stand it in Belgrade. People knew she was a Croat, which never used to be a problem, but it became one. She couldn't talk to anyone, so she came to Budapest for a few weeks and was living with Sanyi, and cried and cried that Yugoslavia used to be her country, and she doesn't have a country any more. It turns out countries do mean something to people after all... Then from Budapest she went to Zagreb, she's a Croat so she had to feel at home, right? But she it in Zagreb because everyone there is such a racist, and she doesn't want to be a racist herself, so she called Sanyi and had to explain all this in euphemisms because the phones aren't safe. Then Sanyi calls her boyfriend in Split, she won't call because her phone is tapped - it doesn't matter that she's a Croat, she moved there from Belgrade. And as Sanyi was telling me this long story I realized that I don't have a country any more, either. Everyone here is a stranger. The worst has come out in people. And this is freedom, the freedom

everyone always talked about. The same thing must have happened when the regime changed in 1947 and '48, all the garbage came to the surface then too, and after '56, but this is taking too long. For years now I've felt ashamed of myself because of other people. And what am I doing about it? Keeping my mouth shut. Camouflaging myself. How long can this go on for?

WIFE What have I been saying all along? We could still get visas for Canada or Australia. But we should do it now.

TEENAGER You guys want to leave Hungary? *(Beat.)* You could have said something. *(Beat.)* Or did you want to go without me? *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER In the West anyone older than thirty is old, they don't even think about hiring you. And what am I? I'm just a stupid Balkan. So go watch TV, honey, and learn all the languages you can, we'll pay for as many private lessons as we can afford, then you should leave while you have a chance. Leave your stupid Balkan parents here, honey, the first chance you get.

(Beat. An idiotic commercial plays on television.)

Scene 5.

(Stage left a cafe occupies a small part of the stage. During the scene someone bumps into the table, looks as though he's going to vomit, and is dragged out. Tasteless disco plays, fairly loudly. ENGINEER, JOURNALIST [JOURN.])

JOURN. You're going to need an International Press ID, and in Zagreb you'll have to prove that the newspaper which sent you actually exists. They only gave us one bullet-proof vest when we got there, but we brought a few from home, pretty good ones, Israeli. The only way you can fly from Zagreb to Sarajevo is in a cargo plane, there are no passenger flights. They got this little Russian plane, a Repchin, there's room for eight to ten to sit between the boxes of medical supplies they toss from the plane. It's a little like traveling third-class. But you'll need the ID to get on the plane, otherwise you're walking. If you're really thinking about going then be sure to bring Dollars or Deutsch Marks with you, that's the only money that works - and everything costs money. And UNPROFOR soldiers run everything, so you've got to deal with them.

ENGINEER I was wondering... Is it possible for people to phone out from Sarajevo? I thought all the lines have been shut off...

JOURN. You can phone out, you can do anything you want to, it's just a question of money. I called in reports over the phone. You can buy time on the cellular phones, the big shots got them, like the BBC, but it's expensive. You can call from the big hotels, too, but they're expensive, a minute runs you about 40 Marks. Everything's expensive. Three Marks for a cup of coffee, 15 Marks for a beer, five for

a pack of cigarettes, half a kilo of meat runs 50 Marks... But like I'm saying, you'll only get in with the International Press ID, but more importantly that's what's going to get you out. I think you could arrange to get the ID here in Budapest... what are you, an engineer? There's got to be some kind of technical newspaper, go buddy up to the editor, he'll give you a piece of paper saying you're working for him, take that piece of paper to the Union... I'll give someone I know there a call... It might cost money, but it'll cost you Forints, not Marks or Dollars... Sarajevo's a strange place, but it's worth seeing... it wasn't so dangerous when we went, you just had to watch out in the streets the snipers shot into... They shoot down from the hills into certain street, they shoot into the middle of the streets, there are even signs put up: „Danger - Snipers!” You run down those streets. We went before winter set in but we still froze, don't go during winter, there's no heat at all... Or water... We even saw a play, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Susan Sontag directed it... It was bad, but to the Sarajevoans I'm sure it meant that there's still life out there somewhere...

ENGINEER

Sorry, what was the name of that play? What'd you say about the director?

JOURN.

A Beckett play, it's famous, an absurd play... You haven't seen it? They put it on lots of times in Budapest... And Susan Sontag directed it. She's a broad from New York, she practically decides who gets the Nobel Prize for literature. She's a leftist, some sort of philosopher, a liberal... and she went from New York to Sarajevo to direct a play with Bosnian actors. Maybe her popularity at home had dried up and she was trying to find her way back into the spot light, but still, it was a brave thing to do. She could have stayed home on her ass. They told us they were never sure the actors would make it to rehearsal, because of all the shooting... and there was no lighting, so they rehearsed by candlelight... And if there was electricity, then the theater got priority, and the bakeries and the hospital... interesting... the electricity only flows if the power plant under Bosnian control can manage it, or they can come to an agreement with the Serbs, to give them X number of megawatts, and then the Serbs give the same amount to Sarajevo... They're doing business even during wartime... Anyway, the theater was full when we went, of course there's not much else to do... Either they sit in their burned-out apartments, or in their basements, and wait... They've been waiting for two years now, or a year-and-a-half, something like that... The little aid food is handed out with ration cards, that's all there is to eat - for the people who've run out of hard currency. And they wait. I asked them if the food flown in gets stolen. They said it gets stolen, but not more than the normal amount. They say that whoever is fat are either sick or stealing food. Someone even told me that they're happy the Serbs have completely surrounded Sarajevo, because otherwise refugees would come flooding in from the villages, hundreds of thousands of them,

and then everyone would starve. We didn't have an interpreter; a guy promised to come with us, but at the last second he backed out, said he was sick, so I couldn't talk with them as much as I would have liked to... It was hard to do stories like that, us standing there, them standing around, we used a Basic English book, just tried to get the gist of what was going on and that's what we reported... We were only there three days... It was exciting though, we could have been shot... But don't think we went just to prove what tough guys we were. It was something walking down a street where people are carrying water around with them, and stand in line for bread, the shooting could start any second, and it does, lots of people are gunned down, too, and the UNPROFOR soldiers look out from their armored trucks, but don't help. You're standing there, looking at people your own age, but the difference is if you want to you can go and climb into an airplane and go on home, but they can't...

ENGINEER

Did you take a camera?

JOURN.

I thought of bringing one, but what for? We see it live on TV anyway, the world sees it live... and so what? Think about all the films about Auschwitz and the Katin Forest they're even shown sometimes... and what happens, who cares?

ENGINEER

Are you sure it's possible to get a hold of a phone in Sarajevo?

JOURN.

What? *(Beat.)* I just told you, we called out for the paper.

ENGINEER

I mean, just an average person, someone who isn't a journalist call out.

JOURN.

Well, if he pays... in Marks... Anything is possible if you have currency, just like in Hungary.

ENGINEER

So you're saying that if someone decides to call all the people he knows in Europe, he could do it if he paid in hard currency.

JOURN.

That's right, that's what I've been telling you. We paid off the BBC to call in stories. The peacekeepers are making a little money on the side, as well. Especially the East Europeans, Ukrainians, and the rest... They do good business, I think they sell their weapons, too... Why do you keep asking me that? You think it'd be better if they couldn't phone out?

ENGINEER

Maybe. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER

So then I wasn't just imagining it.

JOURN.

You mind letting me in on what you're... ?

ENGINEER

Oh, it's just I got a call from Sarajevo a few days ago, someone I know there asked me to do something for him... but I started to doubt that he really called, maybe I just imagined the whole thing...

JOURN.

You're not sure if he even called? *(Beat.)*

JOURN. You could look into it... *(He takes out a notebook, starts flipping through the pages.)* We have a radio hook-up with the Muslims, it's called Radio Zid, which means Radio Wall. We go through Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh, to reach Sarajevo. Zdravko Grebo is the director there, wait a second, the number is right here... they can ask over the radio if your friend really did call, supposedly they do business with the UNPROFOR soldiers. I heard the whores in Sarajevo ask for batteries, not just money, batteries are worth a lot over there... whoever's listening to the radio will go find your friend... Here it is, write it down...

ENGINEER Thanks, I don't need it, after all. I'm sure he called.

JOURN. Write it down anyway.

ENGINEER I don't need it, thanks. I'm sure he called. I'm not going to start looking for him. He'd think I didn't believe him. Actually I just wanted to forget the whole thing... You've helped a lot, thanks again. *(ENGINEER stands up, hurries out.)*

Scene 6.

(Dining area. WIFE, GIRLFRIEND [GIRLFR.])

WIFE He even took vacation time. He didn't tell me he took the time off, I had to call his office to find out. Every morning he leaves like he was going off to work...

GIRLFR. He's having an affair.

WIFE That's not like him. He's been acting like a lunatic ever since that phone call.

GIRLFR. How long have you been married?

WIFE Sixteen... no, seventeen years...

GIRLFR. Listen to me: this is a mid-life crisis. Men his age go crazy. Women go crazy too.

WIFE That's what the psychologist said. He said we should think about going for family counseling... I haven't told him yet that I want to drag him into a doctor's office... do you really think so?!

GIRLFR. How often do you have sex?

WIFE I don't know, I don't count. Rarely. Does it matter?

GIRLFR. You should start an affair. Or start a business.

WIFE The psychologist said that we need an „open marriage,” and that we need to „verbalize our conflicts”... God what an ass. We've always talked openly about important things, at least we did until now, like our daughter's future, like how we should leave this country... If he comes home, remember, you just stopped by, you were in the area...

GIRLFR. You told me once already, I won't forget.

WIFE I'm sorry. *(Beat.)*

WIFE The shrink said not to mind if he'd found himself a Pretty Young Thing, I should be happy for him... that's what that jerk said... So I told him, I'm not jealous of another woman, I'm jealous of Sarajevo... You should have seen the look he gave me then... I was thought he was going to lock me up... He said I should check to see if he gets an erection in the morning... *(Beat.)*

GIRLFR. That's not a bad idea, maybe... my husband just masturbates... He doesn't even look at me, he does it when he thinks I can't see him, or when he thinks I'm sleeping, he starts grabbing... and tugging it... Then he snores happily... It would be better if he did cheat on me, but he doesn't, he's too weak. He was raised that way, with some kind of massive guilt complex. All marriages are the pits, if people take the time to tell you, you find out pretty quickly... I could kill my husband. But I keep my mouth shut. I bet he'd like to wring my neck too, but he doesn't have the strength... I don't either... Where would he find an apartment? then there's the kids, he doesn't have the money to buy an apartment... If we were rich... but it's not that, I know it's not a question of money... I've been having dreams like the kids are falling out of a window high up in a skyscraper, and then my husband jumps out after them. I just stand by the window watching with a grin on my face... what do you think he must dream about?!

(The sound of a key in the lock is heard.)

WIFE You were in the neighborhood, you just dropped by...

Scene 7.

(Dining area. ENGINEER, SANYI, WIFE.)

SANYI To be honest, what I'd really like to do is to stop doing all this for you. I can make a few more phone calls, bring you together with the Hungarian Serbs, and the Serb refugees, the intellectuals, who want to make a living here somehow because they hate what's going on in Yugoslavia, but I can't do any more than that, I mean I'm Hungarian, my last name is Hungarian, I can't help it that my mother is Serbian... I don't even speak Serbian very well, just the little bit I learned back when I went to visit my grandparents in the summers... They just barely survived Stalin, when Yugoslavia was Hungary's public enemy number one. My grandfather was arrested and put in jail for four years. Look, I'm a Hungarian, my father is Hungarian, my kids are Hungarian, my wife is Hungarian, Slovak really, but even her grandparents didn't speak Slovak... If there's a nationalist, right-wing takeover then I won't need any of this minority business hanging over my head. I'm Hungarian... I know

it's no great status symbol in the world, lower than all the other Slavs, even lower than the Jews... Listen, in a right-wing dictatorship they wouldn't care if I told them that Hungary's greatest poet had a Serbian father and Slovak mother, okay?... (*WIFE places drinks and snacks on the table.*) The truth is that the Hungarians are making money off this war. The embargo on Serbia is losing us a little money, but no one can tell me that we're not running guns to the Croats and the Bosnians... I'm not saying that as a Serb... I'm sure we're running weapons to the Serbs, too, fuel if nothing else... There's no way that the embargo isn't being milked... by everyone, all the big countries voted for the embargo, the Russians voted for it, too... the People are getting rich off it, on the southern border the black market is thriving, everyone's making money, even the customs officials... and I know that all the big players from the old Yugoslavia get together in Budapest, and Pécs, and Baja and places like that to do business. Everyone's out to make money. The Serbs, Croats, and Macedonians are all doing big business with each other, right here, they throw massive parties in the chicest nightclubs... they come driving up in the newest Mercedes, all kinds of people, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, and even the Albanians, and the Russians of course. All the Mafiosi... and this is where they come to spend their dough... They're not the ones responsible for the war, and if they spot the chance, they'll take all they can get. So they come to Hungary to wash the money, they set up a little Hungarian company, and the capital comes from the war... I remember they used to say that Hungary is the Switzerland of Eastern Europe... That's exactly what it is. No one cares how much money you have and how you got it. You could be just smuggling farmers or pillaging Bosnian villages, it doesn't matter... A restaurant opens in Budapest, a Hungarian restaurant, of course, that's all they need. The bank doesn't check, no one checks when the restaurant gets registered, and I think they shouldn't check. But if Hungary is really the cross-roads of Europe like they say it is, then we should at least be collecting customs on all this. There's no other way to make a living in this country.

WIFE

Help yourself, please, don't wait for us to offer.

SANYI

But of course it's all deadly. Next to Mohács there's a refugee camp with Croatian refugees from Slavonia, they came ahead of the Serbs, ahead of everyone, then Croatian soldiers came up in jeeps, rounded up the men, and took them back. The women and children stayed. They didn't force the men to go back, they just said that if you don't come with us you'll never be allowed back in Croatia again. It's hard to imagine that the Hungarian border guards didn't notice all those empty jeeps entering the country and then leaving with dozens of men... The border guards were either paid off, or it was a decision from high up in the government... You know, I was invited to a Serbian wedding not long ago, for a while I wasn't sure if I wanted to go or no, an old schoolmate's daughter was getting

married... those weddings are something else, they last three days, eating and drinking and staying up all night... Then one day someone handed me a message, they didn't even send it through the mail, saying that the wedding wouldn't be held where they told everyone it would be, but in a smaller place, farther out from the town... so I didn't go. If they're so afraid that someone might come and lob a few hand grenades in a well-known spot... do I need that? Like the way they slaughtered that family in Szeged. They say the kids had their hands held up over their faces, and the bullets went straight through their hands into their heads... then there was that little five-month-old baby, too...

WIFE

Tell my husband to stop it. He's wasting his time.

SANYI

I told him. But didn't really mean it. I mean, why can't something be done, why can't we do something about this? I'm not saying this because I'm half-Serbian. But because I feel half-human. A whole human being would be able to do something, but today all we have are half-humans everywhere. The whole world, as it is today, is fascist. Nazi, even better. That's the way the ones pulling the strings like it. No one can tell me that the bloodbath is bad for the superpowers. If it's good for us Hungarians then it's got to be good for them. The Russians fund the Serbs, the Germans fund the Croats, the Muslims fund the Bosnians, it's a world war, just a small one, and meanwhile the Americans fund the Russians who fund the Serbs, who kill the Bosnians and the Croats, which the American alliance is defending... You think they don't see it if I do? This is what's good for their countries, they can make more goddamn weapons, sell them, lower their unemployment, pass off their useless things sitting in warehouses as aid. The aid is really for the people handing it out, not for the people getting it... they make a big deal about this danger and that danger, and have to beef up their military... I guess I've got an old-fashioned Marxist attitude, huh...

ENGINEER

But why Yugoslavia? You're saying that the Yugoslavs didn't do a thing to create this situation themselves.

SANYI

I'm sure they did do something. But what they did is repeated again and again throughout the world and still you don't get disasters like this one. No, what happened was that the region doesn't matter any more. The Adriatic and the Mediterranean were strategic positions, and the money poured in, from both Russians and Americans. That's what made the Yugoslav miracle of the '60s and '70s. Us stupid Hungarians thought it was all because of the Communist Party; like hell it was all because of the Party, sure, it was all 'cause of the workers' councils, local governments, self-management, my ass: the whole song and dance was a huge sham, and us Hungarians believed it... No, weapons technology improved, and the region lost its importance, so now let them do whatever they want to each other, who cares? As a Hungarian, this frightens me. We've got freedom now. But where's the freedom going to take us? It's going

to take us right over there. The most dangerous kind of animal has been let loose in the name of some idiotic democratic philosophy, which might work in the West, but it'll never work in this part of the world, not among the animals in this part of the world.

WIFE Come on, you've got to admit that they've been killing each other for centuries in Bosnia and they've got good cause for revenge now...

SANYI No, I don't have to admit that. They never had any problems with each other, they lived together, had one language, one culture, and religion was not an issue. They married back and forth between themselves, no one gave a damn who was Serb, who was Croat, Bosnian, Herzogovian...

WIFE They don't have the same language! Serbian and Croatian are different languages - aren't they? Serbian is like Russian and Croat is, well, they don't use the Cyrillic alphabet.

SANYI What do you mean they're not the same language? There was this guy, from some village in the back woods of Herzegovina, his name was Vuk Karadzic, not the crazy poet who was a leftist in '68 and is now a Nazi, Radovan Karadzic. Vuk made the dialect from his village into the written Serbo-Croatian. You know what the difference between Serbian and Croatian is? Smaller than the difference between British and American English. And nobody has ever, ever, claimed that both aren't one language. There is no Bosnian language. It's impossible to say there is. And the alphabet they write with?! You can write Hungarian using the Cyrillic alphabet, too... or the Hebrew alphabet. My wife enrolled one of our kids into the Jewish school in Budapest, and I agreed to it even though I'm not Jewish. The children learn to write Hungarian using Hebrew letters so they get used to the alphabet. You can read and write Russian using the Latin alphabet just fine. The alphabet is a form of power, not language. There are Asian tribes which adopted the Latin alphabet a century ago, then the Soviets came into power and gave them the Cyrillic alphabet, and now that the Soviet Union collapsed they're using the Arabic alphabet. But it's still the same language. What they called Serbo-Croatian for a long time is one language, but two, no, four ethnic groups use it...

ENGINEER Four? Isn't it just three?

SANYI The Montenegrins are the fourth. Believe me, the people never bothered each other. True, during the Second World War there was the Serbian Royal Army, the Chetniks, who fought the Germans, the Croats, and the Communists; there was a fascist Croatian Army who fought on the side of the Germans against the Chetniks and Communists; and there was the Communist Army which was ethnically mixed and fought everyone. They say that more Yugoslavs were killed by other Yugoslavs than by the Germans. I believe it. But not along ethnic lines. The Hungarians living in Yugoslavia after the war were wiped out along ethnic lines at most,

just like the Hungarians wiped out the Serbs and the Jews during the war. That was revenge. But it's a lie that they massacred each other along ethnic lines in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Even the Turks didn't. No one, ever. That's a lie created by the western press. What's going on now is something new and something modern. And it's another horrible lie that these different ethnic groups would have started a religious war. It never would have entered their minds, you can believe me on that. Not even the Muslims. The Muslims didn't touch anyone for hundreds of years because of religion. Of course that's changed now, that's a new development, too. They did take slaves and make Christian orphans into Turkish mercenaries, they called non-believers pagan, but they never bothered people just because of their religion. They converted people and they waged war, of course. But religious wars and racism are European inventions. Islam picked it up, but it's become a kind of Europeanized Islam. The superpowers are telling everyone a big lie. There might be peace someday in the old Yugoslavia, but the vendetta will last for centuries. This is where we are at the end of the 20th Century. Worse than the darkest Dark Ages. Back then they'd say, You're a witch, and they burned you at the stake. But no one said, Your mother and your daughters are witches too, and your people from the beginning to the end of time have been witches, and we're going to burn every one of you. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

What can I offer you?

SANYI

Oh, water, thank you. They're telling me I'm drinking too much again. Maybe they're right.

WIFE

The way you're talking I'd think you were Bosnian.

SANYI

Try to imagine that two divisions of the Hungarian Army are surrounding a small city near Budapest because of the Turkish minaret still standing in the middle of the city. And try to imagine that the Russians are funding one division, and the Germans are funding the other one. And the people in the city can't get food, or weapons, and are forced to turn to the Turks for help if they want to survive...

ENGINEER

But it's not the same. We don't have minorities, except for the Gypsies.

SANYI

But they don't either! There are no minorities, they're one people, that's what I've been saying for half an hour... They have one language and one culture... and their history has been the same for a long time now.

WIFE

Yes, but it was similar with the Czechs and the Slovaks and look what happened to them...

SANYI

That's different. Czech and Slovak are two separate languages, really, even though they're very similar, but more importantly the mentality is different... The Czechs are really Slavic Austrians, and the Slovaks are really Hungarian. The Slovaks are just as narrow-

minded as we are, and look at their language: the emphasis falls on the first syllable of words, and they even have short and long vowels like we do... Hungary and Slovakia shared a thousand years of history... What the Slovaks don't realize of course is that even though they speak Slovak, they're really Hungarian... Anyway, this whole nationalism thing doesn't exist, it never existed. Idiots with no talent for doing anything else created nationalism in the 19th century so they could make a living 'cause they couldn't do anything else. They were power hungry... But let's keep this conversation to ourselves, okay? People have been hung for saying less these days...

(WIFE pours for everyone. They drink. Silence. They drink. Silence. They drink.)

Scene 8.

(Restaurant and nightclub with a Gypsy orchestra. The elegantly dressed Hungarian nouveau-riche are enjoying themselves. There are many foreigners as well, the Germans are the loudest. There might be some southern Slavs among them. At one of the tables, in the back, hidden by other tables, ENGINEER and FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISER [ADVISER] are talking. They are heard over the din through cordless microphones. Perhaps the audience can't immediately see where they're sitting. The first and second Gypsy violinists go about their business from table to table. A female singer stands with a dulcimer player on a small stage. She sings. Waiters bustle back and forth carrying plates of rich food.)

ADVISER Yeah, and where could I go? A Hungarian advisor to the Foreign Ministry... The mistake I made was to turn down the offers to work for the security services or military intelligence... those guys were snatched up after '89, just like the communists snatched up the fascists after the Second World War... At least you have a trade.

ENGINEER Me? What's my trade? I graduated from the university ten years ago, I forgot everything I learned a long time ago.

ADVISER Start your own business, you know what pliers are, what slide rules are, what do I know? I learned English, German and French, as best a Hungarian can learn them. For decades I've kept a little archive at home, clippings from the papers... about Asia, mostly... Do you know the size of the archives the western newspapers keep? All on computer, gigabytes galore... and my little collection, it's impossible to move an inch in my apartment, it's just a giant heap of garbage is what it is. Maybe I've learned to think a bit, but who'd be interested in that? Twenty-something yuppies somewhere in Washington are making the decisions which affect our future, and they know less about the world, then... then a Zulu witch-doctor in the last century knew about the Maxwell Equation! We're at the mercy of stupid little Ivy-League brats, who's filthy-rich fathers paid their way into those schools. It's horrible. Well, if you look at the people who wrote up the Treaty of Versailles, they were all

university professors, and look at the job they did... The world has gotten so complex in every way that governments need geniuses more than ever now, but only idiots are in power around the world. I make a living too, by dispensing advice on foreign affairs to our idiots here... I win distinctions and awards and they throw my papers straight into the garbage... And maybe they should throw them in the garbage, my reports on how badly the world is being run really don't matter at all.

ENGINEER

Then why do they pay you?

ADVISER

Because they're snobs. They pride themselves on having enough money to pay advisers, and economic experts... I don't know where the money comes from. Somewhere.

(Short beat. The gypsy ensemble blares, the patrons stuff their faces, enjoying themselves.)

ADVISER

What'd you want to ask me about? Yugoslavia?

ENGINEER

Right.

ADVISER

Why are you so interested?

ENGINEER

No reason in particular, I just don't understand what's happening down there.

ADVISER

In Marxist terms, it's a class war.

ENGINEER

(Laughs.) I haven't heard that one before.

ADVISER

I never was a Marxist, so I can allow myself this now... Look, it's very typical of nations experiencing the problems of modernization. I've seen this in Asia. South America isn't so different, either. You've got the challenge to develop the country into a modern, industrial nation as a given... and this is in conflict with the interests of the majority of the population. It doesn't hurt the people who will have some kind of useful skills in the new scheme of things, unlike you and me, for example... These people sell their networking connections and get paid well for it, that's what the so-called privatization consultants do... the old communists you go through to pay off the Russian Mafia... That's what the Westerners are looking for, not much else... and one or two real experts, managers, international lawyers, maybe a writer turned politician... or the elite, either in government or in opposition... All that bickering back and forth in the parliament isn't for principles, but so the Westerners will give them more money. They'll do anything for the scraps thrown at them. But the masses are left out of all this, they start turning into paupers. We could call them the people, from the nationalist point of view, or the population, from a liberal, democratic one. The people are being pushed aside. We have the same situation in Hungary, but the black market is helping some to get by... Anyway, after Tito's death it didn't take the communists too long to figure out that the money coming from the yanks and the ruskies was drying up... actually, they didn't have to figure it

out - they felt it. The communists knew that they wouldn't survive in a new regime, they were done for if Yugoslavia started to westernize... That was a hard-line police state under Tito, the rest of the world just didn't realize it... and the army was enormous. In Belgrade I would just stare at the two massive Ministry of War buildings, even half of one of them would have been enough for a country that size... Tito didn't know where to put all the old partisans... two massive buildings, it was a military dictatorship even if everything seemed peaceful... and all the soldiers were illiterate, they had no skills, they existed to serve Tito... and it's understandable they didn't want to be buried along with him... so they resurrected national chauvinism. It was mostly the writers in the beginning, but writers won't create anything new if left to themselves... Everything had to be fed to them from above...

(The lights dim. The band stops, and disco music and a striptease starts up.)

ADVISER

(Pleased:) They've got this going now, too? I had no idea. Pure Asia. Anyway. The communist leadership had to look for a way to salvage themselves, so they looked around for what and who they could count on. What they saw was that they could count on the uneducated, destitute, unemployed masses... that these were the people they needed because they were the majority of the population. Now what was it they could give to these people to do with themselves? War. Nothing more. Put a weapon in their hands. The partisan myth was perfectly worked out in Yugoslavia, and they showed all the Rambo films on TV and anything else like them. Make them believe that all the other Yugoslavs and the outside world wanted to rape, pillage and plunder them, and they in turn would go out and rape, pillage and plunder. And that's what happened. They armed destitute people who would have become even more destitute in the modernization process, and gave them military and ideological training, which took seven or eight years, and no one gave a damn. Meanwhile the big shots were practicing fascist oratory, they had a good teacher to learn from, Tito. Then when the big moment arrived, when they had to choose either to become a Western or an Asian country, everything was in place for another Asia. A man called Ante Markovic was Prime Minister when the moment came. He was sitting on top of a better country than Poland at the time, and he could have done it, but he was an idiot, he didn't realize that by that time the majority of the people didn't want that anymore. Because the masses had been told that it's pillage and plunder, and the masses democratically elected the voices that told them that, and then they really did begin pillaging and plundering, which won't work without murder and war. And the Americans gave their blessings, Baker went over there, and said, Go ahead, we've already come to an agreement with Gorbi. That's probably what happened. Everyday there are more signs showing that the KGB created and spread this newfangled Eastern

European chauvinism, because if the Eastern bloc has got to go their own way, then they should at least destroy one another, crush each other into dust - then back come the Russians as peacemakers. Just look at the people spreading fascist ideology here in Hungary, it's obvious... What you have is the union of two classes: the elite and uneducated destitute masses together against the middle-class. The biggest mistake was to underestimate how well those Yugoslav fascists know their business. They're professional politicians, and they learned their profession under Tito, absolutely no scruples. You know, it's my suspicion that the whole situation can be summed up by what happened to Tito's private castles. Tito had somewhere around a dozen castles throughout Yugoslavia that belonged to him. After he died it wasn't possible for one man to get all the mansions, but one guy will take this one, another guy take that one, you can come to terms, the big shots thought. And that's just what happened and that's what continues to happen with war. The bastards are coming to terms with massacres.

(The strippers are applauded. Lights go up. The strippers pack up and leave. The Gypsy band starts playing again.)

ADVISER

This isn't an ethnic war, not at all, all of the ethnic groups down there are warring happily, because it's the only way for the unemployed masses to acquire things and survive. Even the Bosnians are doing it willingly, and they're getting killed in the biggest numbers. The first bloodbath in the Sarajevo market, which they showed all over the world, wasn't the Serbs, as it turned out, but the Bosnians. They did it so that the UN would get involved. The second one, the bigger one, in February, that was the Serbs... Then they show some emaciated guy on the screen, how he's in a concentration camp, and Bosnian, it turns out he's a Serb, a common criminal, and he's got TB... pure fabrication, from every side... Peter Brock, a reporter from a paper called the El Paso Herald Post, wrote an entire book on how the Bosnians make up all these stories... which have got to be true, but Peter Brock was probably getting something from the Serbs or the Russians... Only the corpses don't lie... And there was another reporter too, Pulitzer Prize winner, who did a story with a Serb mass murderer, what's his name, Borislav... Borislav what... Herek or Harak... It was a front page story for weeks, then it turns out that this first-rate reporter was taken for a ride, still he got the Pulitzer Prize and no one thought of taking it from him even after the shit hit the fan... That's why I'm saying this is a class-war, but packaged in nationalist ideology, it makes it difficult to grasp. The dispossessed are fighting this murderous war against everyone for whom a Europeanized Yugoslavia would have meant a positive change. They're also fighting against everyone who were well off under Tito.

(A magician steps up on the stage, and the lighting changes. The magician conjures for the audience, who applaud at the appropriate times.)

ENGINEER

Then it's in the majority's interest to keep the war going, if what you said is true.

ADVISER

Of course it is. Look, it's obvious, they're killing civilians, not the other armies' soldiers. It's not because the soldiers are scared, but because this is how they can keep the war going for the longest time, in front of the international media. They're thrilled that the peacekeepers are there... not because the army gets the aid sent down there for the suffering civilians, and of course they do, it's more than that. All the armies steal, smuggle, loot, but what's most crucial to them is that this state of emergency is recognized by the entire world. This way they don't have to keep even the appearance of democracy in their little republics. And Western Europe won't step in to stop it, because in their own refined way they're fascists, too. Of course not domestically, just internationally. At home they're incredibly humanistic, democratic, but internationally they're real colonial fascists. Just look, is one English or French UN soldier's life worth a thousand Bosnian, Croat, or Serb lives? Aren't I right? The war is good for them for a lot of reasons, I mean for the Western countries. That's what television is good for, to show that they're just a bunch of wildmen, let 'em kill each other, why get involved? Let's blur together Eastern Europe with Africa and Asia, the Western media says, and they do. Look at that, I'm just as bad as them. Why should I care if they group Eastern Europe with Africa and Asia? Aren't they just people too?

(The magician exits, change of lighting, the band enters, and starts playing from an operetta.)

ENGINEER

Have you ever been to Sarajevo?

ADVISER

A long time ago, in the '70s, I had delicious pljeskavica in the Bash-charshiya,¹ and beer from Zagreb. And of course I looked at Gavrilo Princip's footprint in the asphalt, over by the bridge, over where they supposedly shot the Archduke. If the Bosnians ever have a minute I'm sure the footprint will be destroyed. I bet they've blown up the Bash-charshiya, too. Then future generations will build it up again, and they'll erect a huge monument to the millions who lost their lives, the way they always do, and it'll be very moving. Then in a few years alienated youth will paint a swastika on it, or a red star... if there are any people left at all, which isn't so sure. What we have, I think, is a new Yalta: the Americans want to pass the region off onto the Russians, and that's why they were so careful with Gorbachov, and that's why they coddle Yeltsin. They need a strong Soviet Union but not too strong. To be a threat to

¹ Bash-charshiya: the main market square in Sarjevo.

Europe. And they're thinking maybe they should give the Balkans back to Russia, and maybe Hungary too, but the Russians are taking it slow, they're securing an option on the Muslims in Asia, with Persia and Turkey... that's where the money's going... while they pretend they want to drive Islam out from Europe, they'll even give up all the southern Slav Muslims to do it, which the Persians and the Turks are supplying with weapons... That idiot Yeltsin almost screwed everything up in Warsaw when he said he wouldn't stand in the way if Poland joined NATO... America had a conniption fit, called him up, saying, Really, Comrade Yeltsin, what do you think you're doing? Whereupon Comrade Yeltsin sprang to attention, Forgive me, he said, it was taken out of context... You know, I think America is officially going to give Serbia to the Russians, and soon... the poor Russians couldn't manage it on their own... The only question left is China, as always... and Japan... America isn't even interested in the Atlantic region... It's no worse now than any time before, it's just that the weapons are more powerful, and there are more of them, and now you slaughter a couple more million people with them than before... Even in Budapest now, a basement increases property value for the shelter it provides.

(The band plays a song from an early 20th Century operetta.)

ADVISER

Let's get a bottle of whisky, what do you say? If it's really the end of the world, as I've been conjuring up for you...

(The band drowns them out.)

Scene 9.

(Dining area. ENGINEER works at the computer, smoking. WIFE enters in a night gown and sits down at the kitchen table.)

WIFE How much longer do you want to work?

ENGINEER I'm almost done.

WIFE I figured it out. Are you listening? I figured it out.

ENGINEER What's that?

WIFE You're not listening. I'll tell you when you're listening.

ENGINEER I'm listening.

WIFE Remember when we got married how you told me that you were crazy about me, but what you really found attractive was that I was smarter than you? *(Beat.)*

WIFE Remember?

ENGINEER It rings a bell. I probably said a million stupid things when I was courting you.

WIFE And I believed I was smarter than you, I loved your, your... what was it, oh yeah, your honesty... and we got along so well... But now you've become so, so... I had to make my move.

ENGINEER Make your move? On whom? Do I know him?

WIFE There's a lot of money to be made in privatization right now... and a Hungarian American guy walked into the office the other day. He didn't make the best impression, but I could tell that he needed contacts... and I've got contacts, and I know whose palms to grease to make a business take off... I took him aside and we talked a bit. I told him that I don't need his money, I need a job.

ENGINEER A what?

WIFE A job, for a few years somewhere in America. There's a huge amount of soft jobs in America. The Senate votes for millions in aid for Eastern Europe, and they don't know what to spend it on, and they've got to spend the money on something, anything. Just like the European Union did, and like COMECON used to do, they're all the same. Look at the biggest companies, and the amount of money they budget to buy people off, it's no secret, and it's worth it to them. Like glass beads and fire water for the Indians, only now we're the Indians. I told the guy that I'll bring together all the people he'll need to move his company in on the Russian market, and I'm not asking for a percentage, or a certain amount of money, but what I do want is a soft job, it's easier for everyone, one or two phone calls is all it takes, and I'd be at the IMF.

ENGINEER Where is the IMF, New York?

WIFE I don't know, I think so, does it matter? Anyway he said we could work something out.

ENGINEER Don't be so stupid! You think he's going to come through on it?

WIFE I am not stupid. Aren't I, with all my experience and connections, worth as much as some twenty-year-old shit bank clerk who nets 200,000 Forints a month? As soon as he brings me the job appointment I'll give him the names. Not before then. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER You offered him... you'd sell out your country?

WIFE Me? What am I selling out? Information, to do business with, which is useful to him and to our dear country, useful because it'll be invested in... And if he breaks into the Russian market, and he makes money, then so what? The old COMECON is coming back, one way or another, it's definitely coming back, and the West is going to make the most from it. At least it's going to work this time. What's so wrong about that? The strongest always take the most, isn't that the way it's always been? Connections are valuable, not raw materials. Anyone who makes it anywhere in life is selling connections. What is so morally wrong about that?

ENGINEER That's absolute bullshit. You're deluding yourself... do you know what people pay for those green cards? but let's say your deal comes through... you'd go to America?

WIFE We would go: you, me, and our daughter. She'll go to college, and I'll have a soft job with all the stupid bureaucrats, and you, if you get a work permit... I know it won't be easy, but if you do get one... and if you don't then you could look after the house and study what you want in the meantime... you could even teach... (*Beat.*)

ENGINEER Don't you think we should have had this conversation some time ago?

WIFE No, I don't. You've been completely obsessed with your Sarajevo. When you snap out of it, then maybe we'll start communicating again.

ENGINEER Then why are you telling me all of this now?

WIFE I thought I could keep you from going through with this whole thing.

ENGINEER From going through with what, honey? Am I getting ready to rob a bank? Am I going to run out and murder someone? Shouldn't I keep you from taking your twenty or thirty million, it doesn't matter if they hand it over in cash, in kind, in trade, or in a job... shouldn't I keep you from becoming a gangster like all the rest of them, who play along with the game, and who you despised so much, and not out of jealousy? Didn't we use to think alike? That this insanity called privatization is just as big a robbery as nationalization was in 1948? Maybe bigger... there's never been anything like this in all of Hungarian history... this „transfer of ownership.” Starting tomorrow we're having a free-market economy, that's what they said. It's beautiful!

WIFE But nothing has changed now, you know that. It's not working, we've just got soft communism multiplied, and with less talented people running things...

ENGINEER No, something has changed. The bold-faced looting, that's new. Never has so much been stolen from a society... legally, as they say... Don't you agree with me?

WIFE Yes, I do agree with you. So?

ENGINEER And so you're joining the looters?

WIFE I'm not joining the looters. I have never had one single Forint placed in my little hands that I did not earn myself, and I never will. There are soft jobs in the big international bureaucratic agencies, agencies getting bigger, more bureaucratic, and less effective. I know that in your little Marxist brain they're exploitive agencies. But if I don't find a little niche to jump in, then someone else will. Those agencies aren't only exploiting Hungary, but the whole world, the United States, and Japan, too... everybody. It's global.

And there is absolutely no one who can say what the real effect of those bureaucratic decisions are. You yourself said so, we talked about it, the huge tariff war that's being fought by the Americans with the Japanese, and with China and Europe... Hungary isn't even on the map of the world, is it?

ENGINEER

So?

WIFE

What do you mean, so? So what are you talking about? and what antiquated Marxist idea are you drawing all this from? That all of a sudden your country is your beacon of light, and you want to die here knowing that we've become part of the Third World? Because that's what we're becoming, not that much better than Uganda or Biafra.

ENGINEER

What the hell are you talking about?

WIFE

I'm talking about our lives. Who wouldn't leave now if they had the chance? Aren't you the one who's crying because all your friends have left the country? You're hoping day after day that you'll get e-mail on your computer so you can at least send letters back and forth to the universities where they teach. You're the one complaining that the ones who stay go crazy. You say that you will too if things go on like this for much longer... Well, it's going to go on like this for a very long time. You have responsibilities to your family. To me, and to your daughter. Is it so terrible for a Hungarian to survive somewhere else, anywhere else, and not stay here to rot? For years you've been depressed because everyone has disappointed you, everyone is acting like animals, and it makes you want to vomit. You think I don't want to throw up as well? I know, the worst always comes out in people in times like these, you've said it many times, it's „an anthropological outrage”, a „bad gene encoded in us humans”... but then why should we succumb to it, why shouldn't we believe in a way out? Why do you think there is no way out?

ENGINEER

I'm succumbing to it? You think I'm accepting this? What am I doing here? I'm just a minute part of the six billion part mess called humanity. For a long time now I haven't thought that I was any more than that, but I do think that I can save at least one life, one little child, who is innocent for sure... That's why I've been so frantic lately - isn't that an act of defiance? Isn't that an act of revolt? And you think I'm succumbing?

WIFE

You want to save a stranger's life while you ignore your own family. What about your daughter and me - we don't need to be saved? War could break out any minute, and there'll be slaughter right here just like in the streets of Sarajevo... even without war there's murder, everyone's nerves are already shot, we're slipping... This place is going to become another Africa, Asia, South America... but you know all this... and this is what you want to subject us to, you want us to sit here and rot with you. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER I'm not making anyone do anything. You want me to be just as selfish as the rest of the world is, and which is killing us. I don't understand why you think it's so tragic that I want to save an orphan. Why could you explain that to me?

WIFE Because it's crazy, that's why. And because I want you to come to your senses. Okay, let's say we adopt a child - but why not a Gypsy?! There are thousands of Gypsies in orphanages. Let's go over to one of them, pick out a kid, bring him home, and take him with us, when my... deal... comes through.

ENGINEER I want a Yugoslav orphan.

WIFE My God, don't you see that you're thinking like a racist?! How much worse is a Gypsy orphan than a Yugoslav? How can you differentiate between orphans? if not on racial grounds?! *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER Maybe you're right... really, why do I... *(He turns off the computer, which for some time had been showing a screen-saver.)* That's a good question. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER *(Reaches into the refrigerator, and takes out a beer.)* You could have brought home some beer.

WIFE So could you. On second thought don't. You're drinking too much.

ENGINEER *(Opens the beer and drinks from the bottle.)* So what? Others are on drugs. Like you, with that American dream of yours. Even more so if it comes true. You think it's so great over there? I'm sorry I couldn't bring you when I went. You're dreaming, that's your drug, you have no idea how lonely the Americans are. And they're suffocating - everybody is insane in America, everybody. I didn't meet one normal person the whole time I was there... Do you really think that America is the new world, and not a part of this old world, with all of its misery?

WIFE I asked you something. I asked you how you differentiate one orphan from another.

ENGINEER And I said that was a good question. Your first good question in ages. *(Drinks from the bottle.)* My friend from Sarajevo called. That's how.

WIFE Too bad you don't have a Gypsy friend.

ENGINEER Yes, it's too bad, but I don't. My friend from Sarajevo called, not anybody else. And that's when it hit me. That I've had enough. What have I become? Watching that fucking TV and all the satellite channels I've become an idiot, I'm no longer human. Looking at it rationally, you're right. I know that. But this is what I've become obsessed with, I'm obsessed with this Yugoslav orphan. And if I can't save even a Yugoslavian orphan... then it's not only my failure... it's more than that... I know I might just be saving him in vain, there could be another Yugoslavia right here, and he'd just die a few years later - but if people thought that way then doctors would have no reason to operate. This is some kind of

test for me. I want some kind of, I don't know what, a diploma, that I can do this. And not just me. The world should prove itself too... maybe I'll pass the test... and the world will fail... but I need to know. And if the world fails then at least I'll be exonerated, and I'll go with you to America to be a house-boy. But not until then. Not even if the skinheads beat me bloody tomorrow. Do you need a husband, a father for your child, who couldn't do something as simple as that? Could you respect a man like that? Until now our lives were depressing and shitty, but at least it was peaceful, and now that's over, maybe forever. It made us dreamers, and it made us infantile. It's taking us too long to grow up. The nightmare we see all around us is because people can't grow up, they're clinging to their childhood, and children are the cruelest of all. They don't know how to hide their feelings. Children aren't adorable, sweet, snips and snails, children are murderers. I want to grow up, and I want to save one of those little murderers. That phone call could have been from anyone, but it struck me to the bone. That's all it did. If you can't understand even the basic idea of what I'm telling you, if you really can't understand me... and I have to lecture to you like I would a stranger... then our marriage hasn't been a marriage. Our marriage has been two stupid infants who came together and made a baby, because someone told them where they had to stick it, and that's it. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

Okay. I'm not saying that I don't understand you. And I'm not saying that it hurt when you didn't ask if I was interested in that guy who I offered my... deal, transaction to. It hurt, but I don't want to talk about that now. Let me say this, though: a man who feels the need to grow up, and then turns a blind eye to all his other responsibilities because of that need is not exactly normal. Both you and I know that the family is the only place left in the world where people can treat each like human beings... That's why I'm so hurt that it's your family you've turned your back on, and you waste your energy on some surreal rescue mission. You're wasting your energy. I have nothing against you wanting some diploma, or whatever else you want to call it, which you have to earn yourself. But you're not going to earn that diploma by procrastinating. You've known for a long time, just as I have, that this orphan rescue mission is impossible, but you won't give it up because it keeps you from making decisions. A grown-up makes decisions. If I was grading you for that diploma, you'd fail. You're throwing everything out the window because of one phone call. And you're happy this way, this way you don't have to make decisions about what really matters. And when other people make decisions for you, when I make decisions, then you're all up in arms. What are you so upset about? Do you think I'm unable to grow up? You think your daughter won't grow up like you didn't? You're wrong. Your daughter decided a long time ago that she's getting the hell out of here, and you'll be very surprised one day when you come home and find yourself in an empty house.

ENGINEER

You know what, I don't care. Maybe I don't even love her anymore. I just needed to love her because of that biblical commandment, I was genetically obliged to love her because she was small, and sweet, and needed to be protected, and loved. Now she's huge, what's there to love in her? She's independent, different, isn't she? She's just another person. She should look after herself. Let her have her children wherever she wants, with whoever she wants. I wish her all the best. You can go, too. I'm getting older, thank God. There's not much good or beautiful about getting older, nothing, except for the fact that my penis doesn't stand erect all the time. That's a real blessing. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER

You heard me. And you understand me, too, I can see in your eyes, I know your eyes. I'm fed up, fed up with everything. I'm fed up, honey, fed up with creation. And you're disappointed? I don't just despise those murderous gangs, I despise my penis, too. What good were all those erections? How did they get to control my life, and I become their slave?!... There's no nation that wouldn't abuse it. Censor it, tie a knot around it, put a condom over it, castrate it. Well, I've had enough. That's what I realized when I got that phone call. Why do I have to love only my relatives? Christ himself said that there is no more family, there are no more blood ties! *(Beat.)* Don't think that I've lost it completely, that I've stopped thinking normally. I still do, believe it or not. I've started seeing my father in a completely different light. My father was a deeply religious man, but he didn't know it. He thought he was an atheist. He was an idiot. But he was fantastic man. He believed what that half-witted prophet Christ taught, that we're all equal, that there are no ties of blood, and that there is love. But we aren't equal, there are ties of blood, and there is no love. That's why he had to teach there were. He lied, basically, but he was lying in the face of a deep human need, and that does exist. And if now I've become so curious about what that human need is capable of in the face of reality, then it's because I'm following my father's example, who I'm sure was following his own father's, all the way back to the first stupid monkey who climbed down from a tree and got hemorrhoids and lumbago. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

Why don't you just say you don't love me anymore. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER

Well, I don't really love you anymore. I want to be honest with you. But who do I love? I don't love anyone. If that makes you feel any better. Most of all I don't love myself. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

Fine. Alright. Don't think I'm completely insensitive. It's just the ranting and raving I can't stand... I called a few adoption agencies. I mostly got answering machines, in Hungarian and in English, probably for the Americans. It's all very discrete. The agencies must launder the kids like they were money. But one of the agencies told me what was involved. The mother lets them know in the hospital she doesn't want the child, and that she wants to sell it.

The adoption agency arranges it so that the adopting parents take the child directly from the hospital. The child's not left alone for even half a day. The adopting parents pay the agent fifty thousand Forints and they can take the child. Then the mother and adopting parents come together before the authorities, and they declare the intention to adopt. It becomes legally binding after four to six weeks, and then the adoptive parents pay the agency an additional 300,000 Forints for handling the case, which is supposedly very complicated. So it'll cost about 350,000.

ENGINEER

350,000? is that what a person is worth?

WIFE

That's what a baby costs, if you want to buy one. They warned me that the state officials usually deny adoption if the parents are over forty-five. I figure another 100,000 would be enough for them to overlook it. So it'd be 450,000. For that much you can buy yourself a baby. We have 300,000 in the bank. I wouldn't object if we borrowed 150,000. We'd pay it off somehow. And this way is faster than going through all the official channels... If you want one so badly, we'll get ourselves a child for 450,000.

ENGINEER

That's great. *(Beat.)*

WIFE

So what do you think?

ENGINEER

You go ahead to sleep. I want to finish this.

(Exit WIFE. ENGINEER turns and faces the computer.)

Scene 10.

(Bosnian refugee camp in southern Hungary. Stage left a corridor, stone floor, a coal-burning stove in the corridor, a woman is standing by a kettle on the stove, stirring occasionally. At the upstage end of the corridor, a television sits on a stand, off. Off the corridor doors open left, the first one opened half way, carpets on the floor inside: the prayer room. Shoes and boots are in front of the other doors. Right only one door is open, and a large room is visible, the fourth wall facing the audience is missing. The room occupies two-thirds of the stage, though not the entire depth of the stage. There are ten beds in the room, a few cribs and playpens in the middle with toddlers inside. Children sharing a few beds. At the end of the room, opposite the beds, old women are sitting on beds, not moving much, some are sleeping. Stage right a window, or windows, with a curtain. A lit single naked light bulb hangs from the ceiling. In the middle of the room, center right, is an oil stove. Left, near the door, but in the room, are many pairs of shoes. The actors are barefooted, or wearing socks or stockings. Carpets scattered on the floor, blankets on the beds. The room is clean. Brooms lean against the wall. A few shabby dressers serve in part as partitions for the room. There are a few chairs serving as tables, clothes and tableware on them. Down right, a young woman is lying on a sofa, facing the wall, her head closest to the audience. She moves occasionally, but doesn't make a sound. Enter TEACHER and ENGINEER right.)

TEACHER We used the textbooks from Zagreb until last year, but they've been banned now, I can only use the math and physics books, but none of the rest. Everything has to be taught in Bosnian.

ENGINEER Someone told me it's all one language.

TEACHER It is. I thought I spoke Serbian, or what was called Serbo-Croatian, in Zagreb it was called Croat-Serbian... and that's the language I teach in... but I'm forced to tell them that it's Bosnian... the Bosnian Embassy in Zagreb put out a Bosnian dictionary which everyone has to follow, there's a so-called cultural adviser who decides which words I can use, and which ones I can't... which word is Bosnian, which is Croat, and which is Serbian... and I have to follow what he writes, because they come out here and check, and some of our money comes from the government. And I don't say „Bosanski jezik, the Bosnian language” like I should, instead I say „naš jezik, our language”... This is a Bosnian school, and we're recognized as a Bosnian school, the children's' diplomas will be accepted in Bosnia...

(Enter a man from one of the rooms. He sees them.)

MAN Dobar dan.

TEACHER Dobar dan.

(Man exits into another room.)

ENGINEER How do you speak Hungarian so well?

TEACHER Because I'm an ethnic Hungarian - but my husband is Serbian. One day we got a tip from one of his friends that he should disappear, in the morning they were going to come and draft him into the army, that's when we came to Hungary. We're doing well, we were lucky... I like to teach, and our meals are taken care of. My husband found work on a farm... and we can afford an apartment...

(As they walk on, TEACHER greets the woman cooking in the hall.)

TEACHER Dobar dan.

WOMAN Dobar dan.

TEACHER *(Opens the first door on the left.)* This is the prayer-room... Every building has one...

ENGINEER *(Peeks in, but doesn't go in. He turns around.)* Are many of them religious?

TEACHER No, not many, some, but not many... They keep Ramadan, not too much else... a few of them wash their feet a couple times a day, but not many... and we don't cook pork... Religion was never an issue in Yugoslavia... at least I never felt that it was... I don't know what you're interested in seeing here...

ENGINEER Anything, really... I don't know, whatever you like...

TEACHER We've got a mixture of people here from a couple of villages... at first everyone was thrown together, but now they're divided by villages... because of all the tension... There were elections in the camp recently, and young people from the biggest village won... .angry young people... It's pretty bad for the rest of them...

ENGINEER But they're all Bosnian, aren't they?

TEACHER Yes... that's why it's good that my husband doesn't have to live here, he's Serbian... it doesn't matter if he went AWOL from the army because he didn't want to kill, he's still a Serb... There's this other camp - where is it? Lakitelek - where they mixed everyone together, and they had to close the camp down because of all the fighting, some used knives, horrible people. Serbs too, bragging how they killed dozens of Muslims... and they might have just been lying... So we can't put them together. The ones who came first and have their relatives with them are doing the best... the new ones don't talk very much... and the ones from the smaller villages...

ENGINEER Are they learning Hungarian?

TEACHER The children have lessons... but mostly they pick it up outside the classroom... they translate for their parents at the market... The older ones don't want to learn Hungarian - it would mean that they're never going home... that there's no hope... so they just sit... But I don't know what you're interested in...

ENGINEER I don't know exactly, either... I was thinking of starting up a foundation... to help them... the kids, I mean... are there orphans here?

TEACHER There are children who've lost one parent... none who've lost both...

ENGINEER So, some kind of foundation...

TEACHER That's great, we always need money. The Immigration Office has been very helpful... but we're always applying for more money. The people who come to help are all very nice, really... We get some charity from abroad, The Knights of Malta bring us a lot of things, last year the Italians sent us so many oranges that they were giving them away in town to the Hungarians...

(Three or four kids enter right.)

KIDS Dobar dan! Kako stre?

TEACHER Dobar dan, deco... Hajde, kazi, zasto nisi bio danas u skoli? Je li?

CHILD Pa ne zam, ovaj, nisam mogao... zaspao sam...

TEACHER Nemoj vise, jel cujes?

CHILD Necu vise...

(KIDS disappear into a room at the end of the corridor.)

ENGINEER The children can go into town, if I understood that right.

TEACHER Everyone has a camp ID which allows them to come and go as they like - as long as they haven't broken any of the camp rules... there's a curfew at ten o'clock. And alcohol isn't allowed in the camp, but of course it gets carried in under the jackets. The guard doesn't really check, they throw the bottles over the fence, and then come pick them up. They can work, too, for 50 to 100 Forints an hour... Food and shelter is given to them here, and heat, there's an oil-burning stove in every room, and there's plenty of oil...

ENGINEER Well, it's pretty cold here.

TEACHER We don't heat the corridor. So everything is provided that they need, except money. Well, they're given 500 Forints a week, but that's nothing... that goes for cigarettes... There were one or two people who saved up their money and went home, and somehow made it back to what used to be their village, then they tried to come back to the camp but weren't let in, because you only get refugee status once... So they live and work outside the camp now.

ENGINEER Illegally.

TEACHER Illegally. They can't get work permits, only the Transylvanians get permits, but there are promises to get them work permits, too. The mayor owns land, and he has refugees working for him. The police are all landowners, too, and the refugees work for them. The Hungarians here don't mind it, unlike other towns... I think they know they've come to a good place, this is a good camp, a few had been in other camps before this one, and they say so.

ENGINEER How did they get to this camp then?

TEACHER If somebody breaks a rule in another camp, they get sent here. If someone in this camp breaks a rule, they get sent to another one... It's the only discipline there is in the camps. Legally, these people aren't even refugees, they're asylum seekers... they can't be put on trial and they can't be sent home... But being sent to another camp is pretty bad, because no one trusts them... and that's bad... The people here realize that this is a good camp and that the local Hungarians are good people. They'll tell you themselves. These Bosnian boys date Hungarian girls from the town, there are some real Casanovas among them, and there's no problems with the dating, I've been here for a year and-a-half and there hasn't been a single fight over a girl... The boys just don't have any money... That's what they miss the most... that's why there's not much need for the guard outside... there's just one police officer here... even the fence isn't needed. Where could they go with no money? Whoever had money went West a long time ago.

ENGINEER I thought they closed the borders to refugees, like what Germany did.

TEACHER Yeah, most of them still go to Germany, since then... they're leaving from this camp, too...

ENGINEER How?!

TEACHER There's a Bosnian man, from Sarajevo, who left not long before the war... and arranged things... For two thousand Marks a person, he takes them to Germany.

ENGINEER But they have to go through Austria, and then to Germany... that's two borders...

TEACHER He arranges things, and he delivers. They're given visas, real visas.

ENGINEER He must have paid off dozens of Austrian and German officials.

TEACHER He took care of things.

ENGINEER But I just read the Germans are sending back 100,000 southern Slav refugees, back to their ruined villages and towns. They say the reason is that the fighting has stopped there!

TEACHER That's right.

ENGINEER So this Bosnian Raul Wallenberg, together with his German and Austrian colleagues, take these people's money without any promise that they won't be sent back to where life is worse than in this camp... then they bleed another two thousand Marks a head, and make the same trip again, losing all their money... *(Beat.)* Shrewd.

TEACHER Some must be able to stay in Germany... the ones with family there, there's usually a way... *(Beat.)*

TEACHER The lucky ones went to Canada, they didn't have to pay a thing. But Canada won't take any more refugees, they said so. *(Beat.)*

TEACHER Why don't we go into this room here, it's bigger than the others, and this way you can speak with some of them... The people in here have been in the camp a long time... it's not worth trying to talk to any of the new ones, they're all too scared. *(They open the door.)*

TEACHER Dobar dan zelim!

OTHERS Dobar dan.

TEACHER Ovaj gospodin ovde hoce da vam pomogne, on ce stvoriti jednu privatnu zaduzbinu...

A WOMAN Sta je to? Zaklada?

TEACHER Ne znam, kako se to kaze na nasem jeziku...

ENGINEER What's the problem?

TEACHER Foundation... how do you say it...

ENGINEER Foundation... fund...

OTHERS Fond, fond! Privatni fond!

TEACHER E, tako je. Privatni fond. Pa zato je dosao da vas pita sta bi trebalo... ovaj... kako bi mogao najbolje da potrosi...²

A MAN It's real nice that he wants to help... Come in, sit down...
(ENGINEER and TEACHER take off their shoes, sit down on chairs which have been quickly cleared for them.)

A WOMAN Would you like some coffee? Of course you want coffee.

ENGINEER No, no, thank you, I don't want anything...

2ND WOMAN Please, we drink Turkish coffee, we grind the coffee right here...

ENGINEER No, thank you...

A MAN Ladies, make some coffee... Smoke?

ENGINEER Thank you... *(He takes out his cigarettes and the two men take from the other's pack. They light up.)* What about the children...

OLD MAN The children? They're all going to smoke anyhow, it won't hurt 'em to get used to it young. *(Laughter.)* My grandfather lived to be a hundred, smoked all of his life.

ENGINEER Where is the coffee from?

OLD MAN We get it from the Hungarians... and the Red Cross...

A WOMAN The Red Cross helps us, we send letters through the Red Cross...

TEACHER That woman over there, she didn't know what happened to her son for half a year... he was in a POW camp... she didn't know if he was alive or dead... then one day she got a letter from him...

WOMAN Before I had to leave I went to that camp... and spoke with him from behind the fence, I paid the guards off to speak with him. But then I had to flee from my home, and I didn't know... *(On the verge of tears:)* If they killed him or not... But they let him out... and he married... my son got married... he married a girl from the next village... they met in Tuzla... and I wasn't there for my son's wedding... *(Cries).*

2ND OLD MAN Sometimes they let the boys go... nothing surprises me anymore... They took a Serbian boy from our village who was hiding from the army, didn't want to be drafted... the soldiers came and found him... and said they were taking him to the army, said it didn't matter that the boy had hid from them, they'll take him all the same... and they took him to the edge of the village they shot him through the forehead... a lot of people saw it... they kill their own, too...

MAN They come down from the hills, rob, kill, then go back... they tear the earrings off the women, cut the rings off the fingers...

² Translator's note: The conversation which follows is in the refugees' native language, not in Hungarian. Their dialect is rough and rural.

2ND WOMAN Some people help, even though they're Serbs... sometimes for free... but mostly for money...

MAN For money, that's right.

2ND WOMAN 800 Marks a person, that's how much it costs... for the children, too... and they take you over to safe territory, over rivers, on rafts, and row boats, people on the other side take you from there.

ENGINEER 800 Marks?

2ND WOMAN 800 Marks.

ENGINEER Eight times six that's forty-eight... that's 48,000... A baby would cost me 450,000... In Central Europe a person's life is worth about half a million Forints... and in the Balkans only one tenth of that... That's not much.

TEACHER I don't understand. 450,000 Forints? For what?

ENGINEER And the hope for a better life in Germany costs 2,000 Marks... that means that life itself is worth less than the opportunity for a better life somewhere else... that's odd... And they don't try to rip you off?

2ND WOMAN No... you pay them when you're on safe ground...

ENGINEER But what if they take the money and then just leave?

MAN They wouldn't do that, it's not worth it, because news travels fast... everyone knows everything in the villages... It's better to do it right and make the money...

ENGINEER But the Serbs know this is going on, don't they?

MAN They know, and they get their cut, too...

ENGINEER So the ones with money can escape, the ones without money can't.

MAN That's what this is all about.

A WOMAN We paid our way out, too, and were walking when we ran into a Serb patrol... and the captain said I could kill all of you, but I couldn't care less if you live or die. Then he took all our valuables, all our money, and gave us two bags with food in it, and said, Now run that way, into no-man's-land, straight that way, our troops fire into it, and so do the Croats, and the Muslims, and if you make it then you'll live... And so I ran with my children... My husband was shot in our courtyard two months before that, the children saw it... we ran...

OLD MAN The snipers get 300 Marks for shooting a civilian...

MAN 300? That was a long time ago! 500 Marks!

WOMAN A second person has to watch the sniper kill with binoculars and confirm it... The army don't like to pay...

OLD MAN Sure, there's no reason to believe that.

WOMAN I don't think there are enough of them to do it.

MAN Some say they don't get any money for killing, they do it 'cause they want to.

WOMAN I couldn't be at my son's wedding, in Tuzla... He wrote me that there are too many refugees there now, and if any more come everyone'll starve... they're under the blockade, too... I had a big family, there were twenty of us, and now only my son is left, and I couldn't be at his wedding...

2ND MAN They're a mixed group in Tuzla, you got Serbs there, too... and the chemical factory... they don't dare blow it up, everyone'd die... even sitting here in this camp we'd all die, the wind'd carry the chemicals this far... but see there are Serbs in that town, and that's why they won't blow it up... There are train cars filled with gas on the tracks surrounding the city, if the snipers shoot into them they'd die, along with everyone else...

OLD WOMAN I went with my children and grandchildren to Slovenia, we heard that if they had found us in the house the next day they would have shot us, oh, God, we had a big, beautiful house. We went all the way to Prague, there's a camp there too, we didn't see the city but they told us we were in Prague. They wouldn't let us leave the camp. It was so bad we escaped, they wanted us to escape I think, and so we went back to Slovenia, to the coast... The Hungarians let us through... And we walked... for days on end... with the children and grandchildren... But we didn't have any money, or relatives, and at least in Prague they gave us food to eat, even if it wasn't good food, so we went back to Prague... but they wouldn't take us back because we'd already been there once. So they handed us over to the Hungarians, who brought us here... It's good here... the Hungarians don't know how good they have it. But they'll know after they get chased from their houses, become homeless, but till then they'll never know, we didn't know.

MAN Now we know.

2ND MAN All the world is going to know what it's like, they don't want to know, but they're gonna. The Russians start up, and the Ukrainians... that'll be the real thing... then all of Europe will know what it's like... because Slavs are like that, like us, they'll kill the next man for nothing, the world doesn't want to know now, what we're doing to ourselves, but they'll know soon enough.

MAN The Hungarians are decent people, I don't even want to tell them what's going on... I was in another camp too, by mistake, farther East, and we went out and worked for the farmers... but they didn't pay us by the hour... we just got food... and some worn out clothes... but only us Muslims... Hungarians from Romania didn't get money, or clothes neither, just food, and they had to live in shacks, or barns, I even saw people living in pigsties. Plastic tarps above their heads, with pigs all around, and the weren't Gypsy... they worked them like slaves... 'cause that's the way the farmers are there. The farmers around here are good people.

2ND MAN We're just not earning any money. We won't get anywhere like this. I'd like to see Budapest, they say it's a beautiful town. It's the capital of this country and I'll never see it.

TEACHER We took the children to Budapest for two days about half a year ago.

2ND MAN My kids went, but I never will. My kids said it was real nice.

YOUNG W. Sarajevo was a beautiful city, too.

MAN That was a beautiful town.

YOUNG W. I'm from Sarajevo, I left on the twelfth day of the war with my husband and two-year-old boy. He couldn't talk yet. We ended up in the camp in Palichi...

OLD MAN That was a terrible place, that camp in Palichi. They put up huge tents, with nothing on the ground, the wind came right in, the rain poured in... they gave us pork every day, and the guards laughed at us because we wouldn't eat it... they gave us bacon fat on purpose... the guards cooked it over an open fire... we just ate bread... and the slices were thin...

2ND MAN They don't give you much bread in Palichi.

MAN The Palichi camp was like hell on Earth... and that was the idea of the camp: to keep us moving on, North into Hungary... they gave us blue passports, for a month, three months sometimes, then the passports expired. Hungarians said they would take the refugees running from the Serbs. But whoever said they wanted to go on to Austria or Germany was sent back... Only the ones who said they'd stay in Hungary were let in the country... Whoever didn't know that and said the wrong words was sent back, I heard, they couldn't even stay in Palachi. Who knows if they're still alive today.

YOUNG W. We were there in the Palachi camp, then came over to Horgos, and then my husband said he was going back.

ENGINEER Going back where?

YOUNG W. To Sarajevo. He has a big family, and he was the only one who left. He couldn't stay away when the rest of his family was there without him. He took our daughter and went back to Sarajevo. But I didn't have any family in Sarajevo... so I ended up here. With family in Hungary it should be easy for them to come back. I graduated from the university, I'm an art historian, I know English, German, and Italian, but it's not a real skill - no one needs an art historian... We talk on the phone, sometimes, it's hard, the line goes through Zagreb, and through Belgrade sometimes. Of course he says everything is fine... my daughter learned to how to speak, but she can't say the word mama, because she doesn't have a mama there... she talks about her cat...

OLD WOMAN Cats and dogs, and plants, they're very important...

YOUNG W. My daughter's still alive, along with 800,000 other children, a fourth of them are wounded, the rest are dead. My husband says it's much worse in Mostar than in Sarajevo, everyone has been living underground for months, like rats, and my husband, he's a historian, he said that if he heard the Louvre was bombed now he wouldn't blink... he says everything's okay. I don't know if they'll starve to death, or be shot first... and I'm sitting here.

2ND MAN Next time you talk with them you better tell them that if they die the tombstones above their heads should be made out of stone, and chisel the names into it. It can't be made out of wood, because whatever is made of wood they'll burn. You'd never find them... Whatever is wood is burned.

2ND OLD WOMAN The poor ones are the luckiest, the ones who never worked at all are left alone, there's nothing to take from them. Sometimes they shoot those people too, but not so much. The ones with jobs, with nice houses, those are the ones that get shot. They come and shoot them. Then they rob them, then they burn the house down.

WOMAN You better stay in the closet, or the hallway, the shrapnel ricochets, and slows down, and it doesn't go through the second wall...

MAN The ones in charge, they're all criminals. Major criminals. Most of them were in prison under Tito, embezzlers, robbers, and now they're the leaders. It's the same thing everywhere, in America it's the same. It's not only the Serbs. The question is how to keep them back. That's the question. There are criminals in America too, but they have limits. Where the limits are, that's where the freedom is. Still America's got lots of criminals.

2ND MAN The Serbs think that everyone is after them... they're dead-sure it's them against the world... But the world is after us, we're the ones getting killed, and we don't have weapons... and no one does a thing for us... The ones in the West, they prod Izetbegovic on, we know that, they say he should trust them, and so he drafts any man left standing on two legs into the army, like the others, and then the Westerners forget us, and we're killed off like flies, for two years this is what we've had...

3RD WOMAN We knew we had to go before the war came. The Muslims, Serbs, Croats never bothered each other, we couldn't even tell them apart, we'd been marrying each other for a long time. And then comes Radovan, that poet, and he says he wants to talk peace, and we took off the very next day, we found out the third day they killed our family, every last relative we had, butchered them...

WOMAN The closet, the hallway is the best place to hide, there's only one wall in the front room...

MAN This is the way they planned it, for years, there was the Yugoslavian People's Army, and nobody talked about cutting up the country, but they had already put together the militia and armed them, trained them, they did it all from above, people didn't know a

thing about any of it, and didn't want to, people still don't believe it today...

2ND MAN

A few times the Yugoslav People's Army protected minorities, Muslims, Croats... rarely, but a few times they did... I've even heard of Serbs switching sides and fighting other Serbs.

OLD MAN

They're hill people. They come down into the villages, break into the house, smash everything up, then turn on the television and watch it.

(Enter two women with coffee, place it on a third table, pour the coffee, other women are quieting the children, men enter, take off their shoes or boots, sit on the carpets. Some of the women are busy with the children for the entire scene.)

YOUNG W.

Sometimes we talk on the phone, they say that they're alright, and I don't know if they'll starve to death, if my daughter will freeze, she can't even say the word Mama... and I'm here and I watch TV, we watch a lot of TV, pictures of back home... on the Hungarian TV we saw Sarajevo, it's ruined... and a Muslim boy was singing, a hippie, and he was singing the most beautiful poem we have in our language... „Ostajta ovde, sunce tudjeg neba/neca vas grijat, ko sto ovo grije/grki su tamo zalogaji hljeba/gdje svoga nema i brata nije...” *(She cries. Silence.)*

TEACHER

A poet called Aleska Santic wrote that poem during the First World War... when a lot of people left the country... I could translate it like „Stay/the sun in a foreign sky will not warm you/as our sun warms you/each mouthful of food tastes bitter/where you have no friends/where you have no brothers...”

YOUNG W.

And he sang that beautiful poem, this ugly hippie, and behind him the flags were waving. My Sarajevo government made a call to arms out of that beautiful poem, that pure poem, a call to join the army... I know that us Muslims are being killed more than any other people, but it's disgusting that we made a recruitment song, a stupid pop song out of that beautiful, pure poem... The Croats did the same, for two or three years now, used their best poems... and the Croats didn't start it, now they're doing it, too... *(Beat.)*

MAN

We watched TV out here in the hallway in the beginning of January, at night there was this international concert for Sarajevo... Marika translated for us so we'd understand what the Americans, Swedes, and other do-gooders were saying... There was this American woman who talked for about half an hour... she had two rows of shining teeth, she showed it off to everyone, false teeth, that's what they've got there, false teeth... She was trying to make herself famous, saying that we're starving to death, we're all being killed, and the UN isn't doing a thing about it... we're living off the good will of the Hungarian government, and we're thankful, to you, too, who want to help us, and thank you very much for being interested... but all of us had jobs, we worked for a living, we had

lives just like anyone else, our children all went to school, we weren't any worse than anyone else in the world, than the West Europeans... we had a country, too... and then they say all those kind words on the TV, and in one second all our suffering turns into empty talk...

YOUNG W.

Those people who made the films about Sarajevo risked their lives, I'm sure... but ever since they made a pop song from that poem I can't help but feel that they're sponging off the ones who died, and getting rich from those movies, if they don't get killed first... I don't have the slightest right to feel that I'm safe, when I think of my family... everything about this war is wrong, the humanitarian aid is wrong, the international solidarity concert was wrong, and I bet the people who organized it meant well... but it was wrong... Look, we've got camp identity cards... is this so much better than a concentration camp? They didn't burn the numbers into our skin... and they don't make us work everyday, they leave us alone, and it's costing you, it's costing the Hungarian government a lot of money... and we are grateful... even with all the benefit concerts for us this is still just a big concentration camp...

MAN

We made some mistakes too. We're not so innocent. I keep being reminded of a Serbian writer, a drunk who sent himself to his grave with the bottle, he lived in the middle of the 19th Century lived in a bar and didn't have a family, or job, he was just as poor as we are now, but the poems he wrote are the best. His stories, too, and he wrote two plays...

YOUNG W.

Dura Jaksic?

MAN

That's right. In one of his plays there's this one part where a woman travels to Belgrade because the Turks have arrested her son for something or another. So she goes to Belgrade to beg the Pasha to let her son go. But her son has been hanged, and the guards at the gate know it when the woman comes to them and asks to be let in. They make fun of the woman and pretend that her son is still alive inside the fort. They make a fool of her. And the woman puts up with their insults because she thinks she can save her son's life. She pays off the guards to let her in to see the Pasha. Those guards are Turks. And we're just like those Turks. It's not the religion: I'm not religious, but Islam is a good religion, just like the Christian and Jewish religions, just as good, there's not too much difference between them, but there is a Turkish soul, and that's what's inside us, us Slavs. No mercy, for no reason at all. It's the Tartar-Slavic fascism, and the world doesn't understand it, it's not like the Germans'. There they had factories, and they organized everything rationally, but here it's just, it's just destruction, like Dubrovnik. If we've got it bad we'll take others down with us, we'll take the whole world down with us, and if the Russians make it this far, they'll blow up everything up. You should read that play, it's a good one.

TEACHER It hasn't been translated, I don't think.

MAN Then translate it, Marika. These people ought to know what to expect.

(Beat. The children need some attention from some of the women. The adults drink the coffee, smoke.)

ENGINEER And is the food good here?

A WOMAN It's good. What was it today? Vegetable soup, kasha, beef goulash, and we can go back for seconds. We got no complaints. The Hungarian government is treating us real well. We know there are people without jobs in this area, more and more of them every day, and still we get good meals every day. We're very very grateful for the Hungarian government's kindness.

ENGINEER I'm not here as an official of anything, I'm not working for anyone. I'm here as a private person, who'd like to help if I can...

TEACHER He's not an official from any office, you should believe him...

2ND WOMAN We're happy to talk to officials, that one woman comes, and she's very good to us...

TEACHER From the Immigration Office, they're very nice...

2ND WOMAN She wants our children to learn a trade, but there's no money for it, and there's no craftsmen in the town to train our kids, but she sure means well...

A WOMAN We know she means well, and if we ever go home again we'll remember everything they did for us here.

ENGINEER And her? Who's she? *(He points to the woman lying down, facing the wall.)*

OLD WOMAN She's just come, they shot her whole family, 18 of them, she can't talk yet, it's always like that at first.

ENGINEER *(Stands up.)* Well thank you for the hospitality and the conversation...

OTHERS Thank you for coming. Come again.

(ENGINEER and TEACHER put on their shoes.)

TEACHER Dovidjenja.

OTHERS Dovidjenja. Hajde, zdravo. Prijatno. Sve najlepse.

(ENGINEER and TEACHER leave the room. The woman cooking over the stove in the hallway is still there. Kids are running about.)

Scene 11.

(The courtyard outside the refugee camp. The entire stage is visible. The backdrop is a painted cloudy sky. Flat land. A fence strung with barbed wire runs up left to right. In the courtyard snow and mud. A few empty barrel-like objects, unrecognizable tools, maybe a broken wheelbarrow, old shovels. It's late afternoon. The sky is high and cloudy. Grayness. Deep up right, on the other side of the fence, a dirty little truck sputters into view and gets stuck in the mud. The driver gets out, curses, gets a board of some type from the truck, huffs and puffs as he fits it under the front tire. He climbs back in the truck, starts it, but the truck doesn't move. He gets out again, fools around with the board, and repeats the process a number of times. Children run on stage right, chase each other, run out upstage right, within the fence. Enter ENGINEER and TEACHER.)

TEACHER I don't know if this is what you...

ENGINEER It was, everything is much clearer to me now... I just don't know how much money I can pull together, no amount would be enough here...

TEACHER The UN gives us some money, too... it's not very much... The Immigration Office wants to open more camps near more cities soon, and we need it... There'll be a Serb-Albanian war soon... and we expect the Ukrainians and the Russians to be coming as well... Everyone knows the Western countries want to keep the East European and the Balkan refugees in Eastern Europe... that's why we'll keep getting money, but it won't be enough... It's not the money... Elections are coming up soon, and the government doesn't have time to bother with us, the new government will have other problems to think about, it's going to be two years before they'll debate us again, who knows what will happen... Say, if your foundation were to sponsor the children to learn a trade... make it worth while for one or two businesses to hire them and teach them... the Hungarian laws don't help... there's no tax break for businesses...

ENGINEER That's a good idea, thank you.

TEACHER But it won't help too much, I'm afraid... *(Short beat.)*

ENGINEER Sometimes people in my line of work intentionally spread computer viruses, while the whole time they're sitting on top of the program to stop it. Then when the virus has infected enough computers they sell the program for lots of money. I guess it's the same in politics, only the anti-virus programs aren't good enough.

TEACHER I wouldn't know, I teach the so-called Bosnian language and history... At home I taught Hungarian, that's what my degree is in...

(Up right two young, suspicious figures appear. They notice ENGINEER and TEACHER, stop, then slowly walk back and disappear left.)

TEACHER Did you see them? They're the new camp leaders. They're young and they're violent... Everyone's scared of them, even the ones from their own village. That girl, the art historian from Sarajevo, I can't believe she talked so much, she never says a thing, she just listens, because she's the only one from Sarajevo, and it's so hard for her. She doesn't have anyone to talk to. *(Beat.)*

ENGINEER Some people like to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders... like Atlas... Some Hungarians are just like Atlas... trying to keep alive the old way of doing things, the normal way, they try to carry their institutions on their backs... but they're collapsing under the strain, because everyone's gone mad... the whole world has gone mad.

(Beat. Two figures appear on the other side of the fence, next to the truck. They toss bottles over the fence then disappear right. The truck driver guns the engine again.)

TEACHER What's worst is how they sit there, or lie there, and don't do a thing. These people fled Bosnia thinking that they'll return someday. Some of them have been just sitting now for two years, all their relatives were murdered. Mother, daughter were raped, house burned to the ground, or another family moved into their houses. These people will die here, they want to die. And this is a good camp, most of the camps are much bigger and much worse than this one. The Hungarians don't want them, they set up a dozen policemen in each camp, not just one, and the police beat the refugees with billy clubs, the police have to protect themselves, and the refugees fight with the Hungarians... maybe it's better for them that way, if they've got to fight for something... they'll forget... I don't want to go back home, the Hungarians will be run out from Bosnia anyway, I know the Hungarian government is trying to reach an agreement with the Serbs, but it won't help... and my husband wants to go back as soon as possible, even though he speaks Hungarian as well as you or me, but still he feels he's Serbian, and that's where his homeland is... He's never gotten a break in life, maybe it's a little better for him in Hungary, but home is Serbia... I just don't understand why people need a homeland. It should be stopped somehow. Why should we have a homeland? What good is it for? It's good for pain and suffering. Maybe if this war ever ends I'll have to leave my husband - if I still love him then. What would I go back for? What would happen to me there? We're alright for now, we have a roof over our heads, I've got work, and I like my work, not every Hungarian from Yugoslavia has it this good, I'm not just complaining... If you don't mind, what is it that you do?

ENGINEER I'm an engineer, I futz around with computers, mostly, as much as a person can here.

TEACHER That's wonderful for you. You were born here, you take it for granted that you've got a country of your own. But where is my country? I've become so attached to so many people here... and

these children love me... then along comes a breeze and takes them who knows where... and they forget me. Me, a Hungarian teaches them their own language! Which is called who know what now... I teach them their history, their literature... and they forget. They'll forget me too. And the ones who make it to the West will forget their language... People don't need a language or a country of their own. We've got to stop this somehow. But it can't be done with money, aid, or private foundations.

(Figures appear by the fence, inside this time, pick up the bottles, and disappear right.)

ENGINEER

You know, I've been thinking of switching careers and becoming a social worker, maybe... there are shelters for Hungarian homeless people... I could help them... or even work in a camp like this one...
(Beat.)

TEACHER

You've got a profession of your own. I think it's better if someone can work in the field they were trained in for as long as they can...
(Beat.) Strange thing is, ever since this war started... I've met so many good people, even back home the people who told us what was going to happen... there are good Serbs, too... good people, they'd be friendly and good-natured if they could... Ambassadors have come to see us, clergymen, they brought blankets, food, money, everything... and I can't understand how, if there are so many good people in the world, the weapons are in the hands of the hoodlums. You didn't come here with a gun... you didn't come here to sell drugs... and we've got plenty of drug dealers... lots of them come through this camp... Most of the people here never hurt a soul, but still look where they ended up, and this is where they are going to die... more and more of them... What is it in us that makes us act this way?

ENGINEER

God only knows. I'm not religious, but if I were I'd say that God realized he'd messed things up, and used the wrong material to create Adam and Eve. Now he doesn't have the heart to hold us close, so he's leaving it up to us to look out for each other.

(Children enter right running and kicking a soccer ball between themselves, then run offstage right.)

ENGINEER

Thank you for your help and for translating for me...

TEACHER

I'll walk you to your car.

ENGINEER

Thanks, I'll find my own way.

(They walk in opposite directions. The truck starts up finally, puffs off up right.)

Scene 12.

(Down left the dining area. The refugee camp is still seen, with the barbed wire fence, high clouds in the background. The refrigerator, side table, and breakfront are missing, only the dishwasher and table remain. Where the ceiling lamp was, a single naked light bulb now hangs. All the chairs but one are gone from the table. The computer sits on the table. Enter ENGINEER right, he turns on the light, automatically reaches for a beer in the refrigerator, finds it missing, stops, looks around. Stands motionless. He notices a note on the table, picks it up and reads it. He sits down. The sound of artillery fire, which has been increasing between scenes, is now heard very loudly. ENGINEER turns on the computer, goes through DOS and the Norton Commander, to Windows, clicking twice on the Games Icon. He calls up Tetris, sets it to level seven, and begins playing. The computer screen is facing the audience, and he plays with his back to the audience. A couple of figures appear on both sides of the fence, they pass unidentifiable objects back and forth to each other, then disappear right. ENGINEER plays with enthusiasm. The artillery fire booms.)

Black out.

Curtain.