

GEORGE SPIRO

THE GARDEN

A Tragedy in 12 Scenes.

Translated from the Hungarian by Andrew Bock
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Characters of the Play:

JANOS	[Yahn-osh] a writer and ranking communist official
ELVIRA	his wife, a painter
SWEETY	Janos' lover, a prostitute
SCHOLAR	Donci [Doon-tsy], a historian and thought criminal
ANNA	Donci's wife
DOC	a physician, close friend of Janos
PROFESSOR	Laci [Lat-see], an ethnographer
JUNIOR	a writer, Janos' younger brother
KATIE	a servant
LEPORICH	Janos' chauffeur
COMMANDATORE	a poet

Time and Place: Monday, May 24, 1954, a wealthy neighborhood in the hills of Budapest, Hungary. Stage left, the ivy-covered back wall of a house. A shuttered door is open. Down left an attached stone terrace. The rest of the stage is a garden; tall oak and pine trees, a trimmed lawn, and untrimmed bushes. The sky is visible through the foliage. No fence is seen.

Scene 1.

(Bright sunshine. Mozart's G-Major Trio is heard from a radio inside the house. For a long while no one appears. Enter right ANNA and SCHOLAR. They stop. SCHOLAR wears a worn gray suit, dress shirt, and new shoes. ANNA wears a pleated blue skirt and polka dot blouse.)

ANNA Look at this garden! They live here? In this garden? *(Beat.)* What a place! *(SCHOLAR walks toward the house.)* So this is where they live... in this house. *(SCHOLAR nods.)* It's paradise! I can't even... Fantastic. *(SCHOLAR stands motionless.)* Some people actually live like this...

(Enter KATIE from house.)

KATIE Who are you looking for, comrades?

SCHOLAR The people who live here.

KATIE Comrade Assistant Under Secretary?

SCHOLAR Yes - him.

KATIE Are you expected, comrades?

SCHOLAR He invited us. He sent us a letter.

KATIE May I see the letter, comrade?

SCHOLAR I didn't bring it with me.

KATIE Then I'm sorry. Comrade Assistant Under Secretary isn't home right now. Try again another time, please, and next time telephone to announce yourself.

SCHOLAR That's just great. We're leaving.

ANNA Why? We were invited here!

SCHOLAR We were sent a letter.

ANNA Still, we were invited!

SCHOLAR There was nothing in the letter about the watchdog.

ANNA She's not a watchdog. She's just a girl.

SCHOLAR I don't care what she is. She's a watch-bitch. Let's go.

ELVIRA *(From inside the house:)* Has someone come, Katie?

KATIE Two comrades. A gentleman comrade and a lady comrade.

ELVIRA I'll be there in a second!

(Silence but for the music. SCHOLAR, ANNA, KATIE wait. ELVIRA appears at the door. She stops, stunned.)

ELVIRA Donci! Oh, my dear, dear Donci! Oh my God! *(She rushes toward him.)*

SCHOLAR Hello.

ELVIRA *(Stops.)* Hello. *(Beat.)* Oh, God... So then you've been!... *(Laughs, jumps up and down.)* Katie, do you see him? See him?
(KATIE doesn't react, surprised by the display.)

ELVIRA Oh, marvelous! Oh, thank heavens! Let me see you... You haven't changed, right? You're perfectly fine! Donci! This is your wife?

SCHOLAR Anna. Anna, this is Elvira.
(The two women shake hands.)

ELVIRA Anna... Hello, Anna.

ANNA Hello.

ELVIRA Is this a new wife or the old one?

SCHOLAR The old one.

ELVIRA *(Takes ANNA's hand.)* Why, you're so young! You dear, dear girl... *(She kisses ANNA on both cheeks. ANNA stands, embarrassed.)*
 Katie, chairs! - You'll have coffee, right? - Katie, coffee, too!

KATIE On the terrace?

ELVIRA Yes. My God!
(Exit KATIE into house. The music plays. A beat.)

ELVIRA When?...

SCHOLAR Not very long ago.

ELVIRA I didn't know... we didn't know... Not right away... Even Janos only found out much later, he was beside himself you know, he tried pulling every single string... My God, it must be three years at least! - Would you like something to eat? We'll have a marvelous dinner tonight, Janos said to cook for ten... He said something this morning, something about a surprise... But such a big surprise! He already knew! And he didn't tell me! - He doesn't tell me much... He went out, out into the country, they took the car, he must be giving a reading somewhere... He's hardly ever home... But he'll be back soon... Donci! Well here you are! - Katie!
(Enter KATIE with two wicker chairs. She sets them on the terrace.)

ELVIRA This is Katie. She's our domestic-issue employee. I barely had any time left to work, so we were absolutely forced to...

SCHOLAR Of course.

ELVIRA She's a decent, hard-working girl... We've tried two others before her, but she's working out well - thank you, Katie.
(Exit KATIE.)

ELVIRA Come over here, sit down! - Donci!

(They step up onto the terrace. SWEETY enters from the house. She is an attractive young woman, dark complexion, wearing a flowery dressing gown.)

SWEETY Freedom.¹ *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA This is Sweetie. Well, that's what we call her. She's a very nice girl. She lives with us now. She studies German. *(Beat.)* Sweetie, this is a great man, a truly great man, among the few. A scholar. My friend! - and his wife, Anna.

SWEETY Hello.

ANNA Hello.

(They shake hands. KATIE brings out two more wicker chairs, puts them down, exits into house.)

ELVIRA Why don't we sit down?

(They sit down. The music plays. Beat.)

SWEETY Do you know German?

SCHOLAR Pardon me?

SWEETY Do you know German?

ELVIRA Of course he does. He's published in Italian, French...

(KATIE brings out a wicker table, sets it down, exits.)

SWEETY I hate it. The teacher's been stuffing my head with genitives and datives but I don't get a word of it. I get such a headache! I don't believe it's really a language!

ELVIRA Well, it's not easy. No, it is not easy.

SWEETY Hey, I'm not stupid. I could use my head for great things, Janos says. But I was working instead of going to school just to feed myself, so I didn't even finish fifth grade... And now I got to do this.

ELVIRA It's very important to know German. A world language.

SWEETY It's hard to catch up... but Janos says it's never too late... Do you know him?

ELVIRA They're old friends.

ANNA I only know his poetry... some of it...

ELVIRA He should be here any second now.

(KATIE enters with a tray of coffee, plates, cups, sugar, milk. She sets it down and serves them. The music continues, she exits.)

ELVIRA It's real coffee, you know.

¹ „Freedom”. During the Stalinist 1950s this was a common form of comradely greeting.

(They sugar the coffees, stir.)

ANNA

What a wonderful garden this is!

ELVIRA

I don't know - I think it's become a bit overgrown. You know how hard gardeners are to find. Still, it is quite nice.

(They drink the coffee.)

SCHOLAR

(To SWEETY:) Are you... a relative?

SWEETY

They're all real nice to me... Like I was a member of the family, really. Elvira, too...

ELVIRA

And we have to fix up the house, they promised us last year... The roof was leaking last winter, right down into my studio, we tracked down a roofer somehow, he was up there fooling around for weeks, I couldn't get any work done. *(To SCHOLAR:)* We converted the loft into my studio. I had made a complete mess of the downstairs, the guests gawking at half-finished paintings, you know I couldn't have that... The studio is absolutely lovely, a big window looks out over the garden in back. I'd like the two of you to see it.

SWEETY

Yeah, Janos' study looks out over the garden too, but on the bottom floor. He filled it all up with books, and it's just a little room! That's where he works. Outside are trees and bushes... a lot of birds, he writes about them in his poems. I'll show you, 'kay? *(She stands up, to ANNA:)* Come on.

ANNA

Should I go?

ELVIRA

Go on. Then I'll show you the studio.

(SWEETY and ANNA exit into the house. Beat. The music plays on. They drink the coffee.)

ELVIRA

Such a sweet thing... *(Beat.)* Did they rehabilitate you?

SCHOLAR

They won't rehabilitate me.

ELVIRA

Oh, of course they will! We've heard everyone will be. Just the fact that you've been released... thank God...

SCHOLAR

I was never convicted of anything. There's no reason I should be rehabilitated.

ELVIRA

I don't follow politics too much these days, but if you were in jail then they have to rehabilitate you now.

SCHOLAR

No they don't.

(Beat. The music plays.)

ELVIRA

Your wife is so sweet... *(Beat.)* Are you all right? You've aged and your face... I see wrinkles... but it doesn't matter... As for me, I'm going gray... Well, no matter. *(Beat. She jumps up.)* If you don't mind, this Mozart is making me nervous today.

(ELVIRA exits into house. SCHOLAR sits. The music plays a little while longer, then stops. ANNA and SWEETY call down from the upstairs window:)

ANNA Honey! You can see the whole city from the study! Kossuth Bridge, Margaret Bridge, Margaret Island, the Cathedral, Gellert Hill, the Castle, the whole city!

SWEETY Janos writes poems and newspaper things in that room. And in the winter, he puts bacon out on the window for the birds. *(To SCHOLAR:)* Don't you want to see?

ANNA Whose house was this?

SWEETY I don't know. Some banker's or factory guy's. But Janos and Elvira have been living here a long time. Since '48 I think...

ANNA It's gorgeous! Come have a look.

SCHOLAR I've seen it.

SWEETY The view's better from the studio. The trees don't block a thing. *(To SCHOLAR:)* Don't you want to look?

ANNA I'm going. You're not coming up?

SCHOLAR No, you go ahead.

(Beat. SCHOLAR sits. Birds chirp. The sound of a car's engine, then it cuts. Beat.)

Scene 2.

(DOCTOR [DOC] enters wearing a short sleeve, striped shirt, and long pants. JUNIOR wears Tyrol lederhosen with leather suspenders, a checkered short sleeve shirt. LACI [PROF] wears a dark gray suit, shirt, black tie.)

JUNIOR I was sitting right there beneath them, two sections away - there's no question. I'm telling you, the guy was sitting in the entourage!

DOC It could have been coincidence.

JUNIOR Coincidence? They arranged the seating weeks ago! There's no way an officer in the Secret Police could have been seated right next to the Prime Minister! There's no way!

DOC Why not? It's still -

JUNIOR Don't you two get it? They've come up with the best way to maneuver a takeover! It's elegant. No need for anyone to take sides - nothing. It could have been an accident. He just sits there and everybody sees. The entourage sees, too! Listen - they know what coincidences mean! It's godamn brilliant!

DOC Interesting.

JUNIOR *(Dramatically:)* But be still my heart. Someone's on the terrace.

(They walk closer to the terrace.)

JUNIOR Well, I'll be a son-of-a-gun if it isn't Donci!

PROF Donci?!

JUNIOR Yes, it is Donci. *(He walks up to the terrace, stops.)* Donci, what's happening, they let you out too? - It's either Donci, or it's his ghost, guys! - Hey, Donci!

SCHOLAR Hello, Junior.

JUNIOR *(Steps up onto the terrace.)* Not a black or blue mark on you. Let's see, both ears, your nose - is everything still there? - Supposedly before they release the patients they fatten them up, give them some new nails, fake balls, one or two kidneys -

SCHOLAR So as not to upset your delicate stomach.

JUNIOR Hey guys, it really is Donci!

(DOC and PROF also step up onto the terrace.)

SCHOLAR Hello.

DOC Hello.

PROF Hello. *(Beat.)* What are you doing here?

SCHOLAR *(Gesturing:)* This was not my decision.

PROF Janos? Where is he?

SCHOLAR I don't know.

JUNIOR Janos called me this morning and said something about a big surprise, and that I should bring Laci along.

PROF So you're the big surprise.

JUNIOR Where's Elvira?

SCHOLAR Inside.

(Beat. The birds chirp.)

JUNIOR Well, why stand around looking so bemused. *(Sits down.)* Have a seat, everybody.

(DOC and PROF sit down. Beat.)

SCHOLAR How are you boys? *(Beat.)*

SCHOLAR *(To PROF:)* Etelka?

PROF The same. *(Beat.)* Working. Writes her books day and night.

JUNIOR Etelka's fantastic, I'm telling you. She doesn't even budge, just writes and writes... *(laughs.)* And I'm always tinkering. That damn car is always breaking down. Everything in it rattles, and I'm always trying to fix it. I'm totally fixated! *(Laughs.)*

(Beat. Birds.)

DOC Really, how are you?

SCHOLAR Good. Just to experience weather again... The hours of the day, the seasons... The existence of time. We never knew what time it was. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR You got lucky being released in the Spring and all.

DOC In the winter there'd have been snow-that's also nice.

PROF That's true. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR Really, guys, I wouldn't mind sitting in jail for a while. I'd appreciate everything much more than I do now, that's for sure... *(Makes a face, laughs.)* Donci, could you arrange something for me? Talk to 'em for me, alright?! *(Laughs.)*

(Beat. Birds. Enter ELVIRA from house in a cocktail dress.)

ELVIRA Hello.

DOC Hello.

PROF Hello.

ELVIRA *(To PROF:)* Etelka didn't come?

JUNIOR I could barely drag him out here... Both of them wanted to work! On a sunny day! *(Laughs.)*

ELVIRA I'm sorry Etelka didn't come. It'd be good to sit down and talk with her sometime -Well, I don't know if we should wait for Janos, maybe we could have something cold to eat in the meantime...

JUNIOR Maybe a little lubrication in the meantime.

ELVIRA Where is Sweetie?

SCHOLAR Showing your studio.

ELVIRA Everybody, Donci brought his wife!

DOC You were married before... ?

SCHOLAR That's right, before.

DOC And she didn't get a divorce?

SCHOLAR No.

JUNIOR That's really something. It's beautiful. It's touching, really. Women just amaze me - from time to time. Let me tell you.

PROF What are you doing these days?

SCHOLAR Working.

ELVIRA Oh, that's good. That's very good. What are you writing?

SCHOLAR Nothing.

ELVIRA You said you were working.

SCHOLAR I shelve books in a library. *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Isn't that something like being a stock clerk?

SCHOLAR Something like that.

JUNIOR What??? You shelve books for those idiots in the library?

SCHOLAR I do.

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* God! That's great! Donci shelves books! That's the best joke of this century!

ELVIRA *(To PROF:)* Laci, why don't you hire him over where you work. As a researcher or something.

PROF Me?

ELVIRA Sure. It'd be no trouble for you.

PROF Well, I'd be happy to, of course... but it's not that simple, unfortunately. But I'll give it a try, sure.

SCHOLAR I wouldn't work in the place where you were the director.

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* Ahhh, Laci, touché!

PROF Do you have a problem with me?

(SCHOLAR doesn't respond.)

PROF Can I help it if I wasn't thrown in jail? *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR Maybe he read some of your articles and didn't agree with them.

PROF I might have made a few mistakes in my life, but no one can say that I don't believe in what I write.

ELVIRA Laci has become a very respected man in society - all of his hard work has paid off... *(Short beat, she stands up.)* I'll go call the maid. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR *(To DOC:)* I don't think Donci would help hold your scalpel, either. *(Laughs)* The things you wrote! How female anatomy is perfectly suited for hard physical labor! How preferable it is that girls drive the tractors! They couldn't possibly harm their uteruses! Quite the opposite!

(He laughs. Beat. Enter KATIE, now wearing a white chambermaid's cap and white apron. She carries wine and wine glasses on a tray.)

KATIE Good afternoon. Freedom.

JUNIOR Hi Katie.

PROF Good afternoon.

DOC A pleasure.

(KATIE sets down the wine and glasses, exits with tray.)

JUNIOR *(Sniffing the bottle:)* Smells like Blue Nun. The real thing. From Sopron burghers. *(Pours the wine.)*

ELVIRA Where are Sweetie and Anna?

JUNIOR Schmoozing, dear.
(JUNIOR pours ELVIRA wine.)

ELVIRA Well, uhhm... To a happy return, how should I say this? Cheers, Laci.
(They toast.)

JUNIOR Delicious, isn't it? Over in Sopron there's this tour guide, what the hell's his name... He makes this wine.

SCHOLAR *(To PROF:)* What is Etelka writing these days?

PROF Books. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR *(To SCHOLAR:)* So, you go today?

SCHOLAR What?

JUNIOR The game!

SCHOLAR Me?

PROF Why should he have gone? Even I didn't go. I listened on the radio.

JUNIOR What are you so defensive for? Except for the hundred thousand people behind bars, the whole country listened to the game.

PROF I simply stated that I wasn't at the game, either.

JUNIOR Well I was at the game. And our boys were incredible! They've got to win the World Cup! Even Brazil couldn't beat us. The goals were amazing! When Kocsics let his left leg rip! And when Toth fell into the net on top of the ball! It's too bad Tsibor didn't score, he moved like a sack of shit out there on the field, they took him out a few times, but by then the English had screwed themselves for good. It was intoxicating, I'm telling you, intoxicating! At the end the whole team played to let him score, too... his tough luck... No one could have guessed seven to one, not even me!

DOC We'll all see it on the next newsreel.
(ANNA and SWEETY appear at the door. SWEETY is wearing a one-piece bathing suit.)

SCHOLAR *(To PROF:)* And Agnes?
(Beat. SWEETY holds back ANNA, who has started heading toward the terrace.)

SCHOLAR Where's Agnes? How old is she now? Fifteen? Sixteen? *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Agnes died. *(Beat.)*

SCHOLAR What?!

PROF Let's be a little bit more precise. Agnes didn't die - she committed suicide. She jumped out of a seventh-floor window.

SCHOLAR Why?!

JUNIOR Janos translated a poem not too long ago. One of the lines went: „A man, so like a blade straw, may be broken by a gentle breeze” - but they censored it. Not optimistic enough.

SCHOLAR But when?! Why?!

PROF Love. *(Beat.)*

SWEETY Look here everyone, this is Anna. *(She leads ANNA to the terrace.)* She’s a teacher! She teaches kids! Isn’t that great? A teacher.

JUNIOR *(Springing up:)* That’s a beautiful occupation. What am I saying occupation? A beautiful profession! *(He kisses ANNA’s hand.)*
(DOC and PROF stand, shake hands with ANNA bowing gallantly.)

SWEETY Isn’t she pretty? And when I told her so - you know what, her face turned all red! She acts like she doesn’t know it herself!

ANNA Please, don’t.

SWEETY Alright, I won’t embarrass you. What’s going on here, you guys are drinking already? *(She pours a glass and offers it to ANNA.)* Janos gets it from Sopron.

ANNA Thank you, not for me.

SWEETY Just a little.

ANNA I don’t drink.

JUNIOR Don’t force her. Teachers must exercise self-restraint.

ELVIRA Both of you sit down. - Katie! - Sit down.
(ANNA and SWEETY sit down.)

ELVIRA How do you like my studio?

ANNA It’s beautiful. The view... it’s breath-taking. I never knew how beautiful the city was. From up here.
(Enter KATIE.)

ELVIRA Katie, bring more chairs, please.
(Exit KATIE.)

JUNIOR And Elvira’s paintings?

ANNA Beautiful.

JUNIOR How beautiful? *(Beat.)*

ANNA I don’t really know how to talk about paintings.

JUNIOR Everyone knows how to talk about paintings. Besides, you are the public, you are the People! And not just anyone - a teacher! So how do you like them?

ANNA It surprised me... that she paints the garden. *(To ELVIRA:)* That you paint the garden.

ELVIRA Why, what should I paint?

ANNA I don't know. Maybe the garden is the best thing to paint.

ELVIRA Really, how did you like them? *(To SCHOLAR:)* Five months ago I had a large exhibition of my work, each review was better than the next. I don't believe the critics. They just wrote those things because of Janos. They think good reviews will win points with him. But Janos doesn't paint my pictures, I do. *(To ANNA:)* So you can tell me honestly.

ANNA They're beautiful.

ELVIRA They don't lack anything?

ANNA No. Nothing. I'm not a critic, but they're really beautiful. Very beautiful. They're so... green.

ELVIRA Green?

ANNA The garden might be a little less green, maybe.

JUNIOR Tada!

ANNA I mean the garden isn't entirely so green.
(Beat. KATIE enters with two wicker chairs, puts them down, exits back into the house. JUNIOR, PROF and DOC sit down. Beat.)

JUNIOR *(To SCHOLAR:)* Elvira is no longer a cubist, now she's a realist. Landscapes. You could say she's in her Repin period. *(Laughs.)* Trees, plants, flowers, prairies, branches, twigs...

ELVIRA Van Gogh painted flowers, didn't he?

JUNIOR Did I say he didn't? Sure, he painted some real nice sunflowers. You can paint flowers a lot of different ways.

ELVIRA You think I should paint a man stoking some furnace instead?
(JUNIOR shrugs.)

ELVIRA So I should paint the garden, right?
(KATIE brings two more chairs, then exits.)

SWEETY Elvira paints such gorgeous flowers. Sometimes I watch her hand just glide!... It's really something. And I've seen a lot of painters. *(To SCHOLAR:)* Once a bunch of people drew me, with charcoal, I stood there naked for hours, they were working and working, then the teacher showed them how they should do it, and they erased everything and started again, but none of them was as good as Elvira.

JUNIOR Of course, their hands were shaking. A flower... and a flower standing there in the buff! That's something different! *(Laughs, looks at SWEETY:)* Yes... She's a hot little number.

SWEETY As you sow, so shall you reap.

JUNIOR You snatched that one from me!

ELVIRA I don't understand where Janos could be. He should have been here a long time ago.

SWEETY He was all worked up this morning. Smiling, humming to himself...

DOC I don't like it when he's so worked up.

SWEETY I like it. *(To ANNA:)* He's something else! sometimes eight times a day!...

(Beat. Sound of a car's engine, brakes. ELVIRA stands. Enter KATIE from house.)

JUNIOR Janos is here!

Scene 3.

(Enter JANOS in a dark suit, white short sleeve shirt, tie. LEPORICH follows behind him in a square-cut untucked shirt, gray pants. COMMANDATORE in a white shirt, white tennis pants, tennis shoes. COMMANDATORE steps forward, then stops, hesitating. LEPORICH remains behind. JANOS walks to center stage, turns around, triumphantly points to COMMANDATORE.)

JANOS Well?! What do you say?! Who'd I bring?

JUNIOR *(Jumps up:)* Commandatore!

(ELVIRA, DOC, PROF stare dumbfounded. DOC and PROF stand up. JANOS takes off his jacket, walks over to the terrace, hangs his jacket on one of the chairs. His tie stays on.)

JANOS *(Kisses SWEETY on the mouth, then ELVIRA.)* Hello, Donci! *(Shakes hands with SCHOLAR, who stands up.)* Is this your wife? *(Kisses ANNA, who has also stood up, on both cheeks.)* Oh, how sweet! - Hello, Laci! Great to see you! *(Hugs him.)* Little brother! *(Slaps Junior on the shoulder.)* Well, what do you think all the lunatics in the asylum are talking about? Seven-to-one, of course! Even the most hopeless cases are thrilled! Soccer is a big deal after all. Isn't that right, Commandatore? Technology! Radios in the asylum. *(He looks at his watch:)* We missed the G Major Trio. I would have made it... If we didn't have a flat... Never mind, I'll put it on in a second... So, ladies and gentlemen, here's the surprise!

(He turns around. COMMANDATORE stands motionless behind him. LEPORICH fans himself with a newspaper - „Free People.” Beat.)

DOC You took him out of the asylum?

JANOS I thought he'd live with us, for a while, a few days, test things out. And if he likes it, then for good.

ELVIRA He's going to live with us?

JANOS There's enough room. And I've missed him for so long, for years!

JUNIOR They just let him out?

JANOS Of course. Why not? He's never hurt anyone.

SWEETY Who is he?

JANOS Who is he? A poet. The most talented of us all. We started out together in '37...

SWEETY A poet?

JANOS That's right, and the most fun, always. God, what good times we had... Well. Then, during the war, he just withdrew into a shell. He was sent to a few different hospitals, was let go for a while, then they sent him out to the asylum. What a beautiful garden they've got out there! A real arboretum. And everyone just walks around - it's really something! Whoever wants to work can work. No coercion. The dominion of freedom! Julius is doing a superb job.

ELVIRA And Julius just handed him over to you?

JANOS Why not? There's nothing's wrong with him. He said we just have to watch out for him a bit, otherwise he's perfectly fine. In the car we talked about Mallarme and Parnassians. There's nothing wrong with his mind. He wrote a couple of beautiful poems inside... *(Searches in his pockets:)* There aren't that many, but they're very good... What'd I do with them...

LEPORICH We left them at the institution, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary.

JANOS Oh yeah?

LEPORICH In the cafeteria.

JANOS Well, never mind. Julius collects them and makes copies anyway, he's collecting them for a book... Well? Nice little surprise, right? *(Stands, smiling triumphantly.)*

ELVIRA *(Walks toward COMMANDATORE.)* Hello.

COMMANDATORE Hello. Hello. *(Beat.)* Beautiful garden. *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Come, sit over here with us.

COMMANDATORE Thank you. *(He remains where he is. Beat.)*

DOC I'll bring a chair over there.

(Beat. DOC picks up a chair, brings it to COMMANDATORE, sets it down, slightly right of center stage. Beat.)

COMMANDATORE *(He stares at the chair for a long time.)* Toilet paper... Do you have toilet paper?

ELVIRA Toilet paper?

JANOS We've got some. We've got toilet paper. Katie! Bring some toilet paper.

KATIE How much?

JANOS How much? How much indeed... A roll.

(ELVIRA sits. JUNIOR pours. Beat. COMMANDATORE, absorbed in this activity, continues wiping himself.)

JANOS Well, ladies and gentlemen... What can I say? I'm very happy. There. The old gang's together once again. The old troupe. Everyone. Donci's finally back again, Commandatore... Who would have thought we could do it?... *(He smiles, moved by the moment.)* End of toast. Cheers everyone.

(They toast. JANOS kisses the three woman; ELVIRA and SWEETY on the mouth, ANNA on the forehead.)

SWEETY He's not drinking?

(They look over at COMMANDATORE.)

JANOS Maybe later. We'll leave him alone, and let him do it for as long as he needs to. *(To SCHOLAR:)* And you two? *(Smiles, to ANNA:)* At last I have the opportunity to meet you. You look just the way I imagined. Young, attractive, devoted. I'm so happy that the two of you came today. I wasn't so sure... Right, Donci? I just felt I had to bring the old gang together again. Just like old times, right? *(Beat.)*

COMMANDATORE Water. Is there any water? *(They look over.)*

ELVIRA He wants water.

JANOS I hear him.

ELVIRA Katie.

(KATIE enters.)

ELVIRA Bring him some water.

KATIE Right away. *(Exits.)*

(Beat. All watch COMMANDATORE, who is perched precariously on the chair. Enter KATIE with a pitcher of water and water glass on a tray. She brings the tray to COMMANDATORE, stops, visibly frightened.)

COMMANDATORE Thank you.

(He picks up the pitcher and slowly, meditatively, pours the water onto the chair. Beat. He begins wiping the wet chair with toilet paper. KATIE runs back to the terrace holding the tray.)

KATIE He poured it on the chair!

JANOS That's alright. *(Smiles at KATIE:)* Thank you.

(They watch COMMANDATORE.)

ELVIRA *(Quietly, to DOC:)* What kind of sickness is that?

DOC How should I know?

(They all watch COMMANDATORE.)

SWEETY Did he do that in the nut house, too?

JANOS No, he didn't. He didn't do anything. We talked. Completely normally. He didn't do anything. We just talked.

ELVIRA *(Quietly:)* Did he recognize you right away?

JANOS Yes, right away. And you don't have to whisper in front of him. He recognized me right away.

ELVIRA Was he happy you came to see him?

JANOS Yes, he was happy.
(Beat. COMMANDATORE wipes the chair.)

JUNIOR *(Looks at his watch:)* Well, we still got time yet. The broadcast starts at six.

JANOS Let's bring the radio outside. There's an extension cord - would you get it, Katie?

KATIE Right away. *(She exits into the house.)*
(Beat. They watch COMMANDATORE.)

COMMANDATORE Do you have more water?

JANOS An unlimited quantity. Wait a minute, the hose is right here, I'll hook it up to the faucet.
(JANOS walks behind the house and brings out a coiled garden hose. He squats and connects the end to a faucet in the middle of the garden. He places the other end into COMMANDATORE's hand, walks back over the faucet and squats.)

JANOS Should I turn it on?

COMMANDATORE Please.
(JANOS carefully turns on the water. COMMANDATORE holds the hose steadily in front of him, then raises it above his head and turns it on himself. JANOS watches astounded for a few moments, then turns off the faucet. COMMANDATORE is nonetheless soaked. JANOS stands frozen, at a loss for words.)

JANOS Was that enough?

COMMANDATORE Yes, for the time being. Thank you. *(He smiles at JANOS, then begins wiping himself and his clothing with the toilet paper.)*
(Enter KATIE with a „People's Radio.”²)

KATIE Where should I put it?
(Beat. They watch COMMANDATORE. KATIE places the radio on the edge of the terrace, and plugs in the extension cord which disappears into the house.)

² „People's Radio”: The only radio available in Hungary in the 1950s, a small, plain box with no tuner and three buttons. It received only the two Hungarian stations.

KATIE I put the radio here.

ELVIRA Good.

(All watch COMMANDATORE wipe himself. JANOS walks back to the terrace and sits down. LEPORICH appears at the door, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He stops, looks at COMMANDATORE.)

SCHOLAR The people's radio. *(All look over at him.)* The people's radio.

JANOS That's right. The people's radio.

SCHOLAR That's interesting. *(Beat.)*

SWEETY What's so interesting about it?

SCHOLAR *(To JANOS:)* You had a short-wave radio. An Orion.

JANOS Had one.

SCHOLAR It worked perfectly. We used to listen to the BBC. Then the government requisitioned it. They returned it to you in '45.

ELVIRA That's right. Not the same one but one like it.

SCHOLAR And... when was that? Even in '49 I listened to it at your place. What a great radio that was.

ELVIRA It's down in the basement. Something burned out in it.

SCHOLAR Interesting.

JUNIOR What's so interesting?

SCHOLAR *(Stands up, and walks to the radio.)* Such an ingenious contraption! Budapest 1, Budapest 2, and this little white circle in the middle. The other days I was visiting some friends and I asked them what this little white circle was. Their eight-year-old little boy just brushed me off with a wave of his hand and said: „That's the foreign places.” And a foreign-sounding noise did come out of it. Maybe a Slavic language, with a little Italian stuck in. It's a wonderful set-up. How comforting to know that the outside world is so tiny and full of static, while there are two Hungarian stations. Extra Hungarian non est radio.³ Our Hungarian inferiority complexes are perfectly solved using this brilliant little contraption. There is no outside world. Only Hungary.

LEPORICH It may be adjusted to receive foreign stations for those who require it.

SCHOLAR Yes, precisely that was the technical challenge: how could the receiver be made to jump directly from Budapest One to Budapest Two. So that we couldn't receive any other stations. That was difficult to figure out. But they did. And thank God. *(He goes back to his chair, sits down.)*

JANOS That radio is a very inexpensive radio. I've gone out to rural areas where electricity had just been installed, and those people were

³ „There is no radio outside Hungary.”

already listening to the people's radio. And they were dirt poor! They listened to that radio as though it were God himself talking to them. The language of the people is Hungarian, and so we must speak to them in their language. *(Beat.)*

LEPORICH

If Comrade Assistant Under Secretary would like, I could adjust the radio to receive other stations, as well... It would be easier that way to... The receiver is, as you know...

JANOS

That's not necessary. *(Beat.)* If I wanted to, I could bring up the short-wave from the basement. Only one tube burned out in it. But I'm very happy with the people's radio, Comrade Leporich.

(SCHOLAR picks up the newspaper from the parapet and begins paging through.)

KATIE

He's still doing it.

(They look. COMMANDATORE is still wiping himself.)

SCHOLAR

Here it is! *(All look at SCHOLAR.)* If you don't mind, I'll read from a poem which appeared in today's issue of „Free People.” Not in its entirety, just a few passages. Title: With Sound Serenity.

(Beat. SCHOLAR looks at the others, then begins.)

I watch Julie, her soft hands,
The dimple on her chin, her ever so slight mound.
In her eyes, so blue, serene, and sound
A burning conviction is found.
This playful shimmer,
Like light, is extinguished then rekindled again -
In her serene, blue eyes,
This burning conviction remain.

(He looks up.) Is once enough or should I read it again?

JUNIOR

Once is enough.

SCHOLAR

I went through this four times this morning, and I still don't understand it. „Slight mound.” „Burning conviction.” „Shimmer, like light, is extinguished then ignited again.” A shimmer is itself a form of light, isn't it? It can't be „like” light - a shimmer is light. *(Beat.)*

In her serene, blue eyes
This burning conviction remain.
Yes, this conviction is ours,
Ours, Comrades, Communists,
The future speaks there in her smile,
Whose secret we unfold
For both in joy and in sorrow
Spring fruit ripens in the garden;
And our grandchildren soon shall recount
How we never, no never, left them in want.

(*He looks up.*) What can that mean? „The future speaks there in her smile / Whose secret we unfold”?

PROF What don’t you understand? The future is there in her smile.

SCHOLAR So then where’s the secret?

PROF The future is always enigmatic.

SCHOLAR Ah-hah. And it speaks. Enigmatically. In her smile.

PROF This is verse, not prose. You can’t read into it so literally.

SCHOLAR Ah-hah. „And our grandchildren soon shall recount, how we never, no never, left them in want.” ... Nicely convoluted. (*Reading:*)

Julie struggles yet to sit
 She will soon sit then walk... (*Looks up.*)
 In the secretive future. (*Reading:*)
 In her eyes will soon be told
 Living wonders of the world...

This is good. What are living wonders? Animals? Plants? The pre-historic mammals, maybe? Poetry. And the wonders are told. In her eyes. The little girl doesn’t see these wonders, no no, the wonders are told - where? In her eyes. From where? Her pupils? The retina? And they’re alive! (*Reading:*)

Soon she will admire her own son spell-bound,
 The dimple on his chin, his ever so slight mound.

(*Stops, looks up.*) He also has a mound. And he’s a boy. Well, it is possible she’ll have a boy. But he too will have that ever so slight mound. Can a penis be described as a mound?

JUNIOR It’s a lyric vision.

SCHOLAR Of course. This is verse, not prose. But how could a little boy have the same ever so slight mound as a little girl...

ELVIRA (*Stands up, walks behind SCHOLAR, looks into the paper:*) Perhaps it’s her chin’s mound.

SCHOLAR What?

ELVIRA Well, both times it says, The dimple on her chin, ever so slight mound. So then her chin is her mound. Her chin’s dimple, and her chin’s mound. (*Beat.*)

SCHOLAR Chinmound! What a fantastic new word! Superb neologism! Dimpled chinmound. It’s possible. Of course, it’s obvious! That’s the explanation! Thank you Elvira!

She will soon admire her own son spell-bound,
 The dimple on his chin, his ever so slight mound,
 And ripening in our hearts, all aflame,
 Robust Communist conviction is found.

(*Beat.*) Nice. (*He puts down the paper.*)

JUNIOR And?

SCHOLAR Nothing. This is how we must speak to the People. Not in some foreign language, no no: in their own language.

JUNIOR What do you want? You're the only person in the city who's read it through to the end. It was ordered for the Congress, they scraped it up, and here it is.

PROF It may not be perfect, but it is sincere. Right? At least it's sincere!

ELVIRA Laci, don't... Donci's become somewhat prickly. It's understandable. You don't have to...

PROF It isn't the poem's imagery that bothers Donci, but the spirit of the poem. He's never accepted it.

SCHOLAR That's right. And this was written by a national bard. The minstrel of our united nation.

JANOS I didn't write that poem!

SCHOLAR You could have written it.

(Beat. ELVIRA dashes back to her chair and sits down.)

SWEETY It's not a bad poem. It's a beautiful poem. Everyone who has a little girl loves her just like that!

ELVIRA Sweetie!

SWEETY *(To PROF:)* I'm sorry. You always have to be so careful what you say, I hate it.

JANOS You don't have to be careful, darling, we love you as you are - sincere.

JUNIOR *(Points to COMMANDATORE.)* What is he looking at? - For minutes he's been staring at something. A complete zombie. What are you staring at, Commandatore?

COMMANDATORE Molehill... here... too. *(They look over. Beat. Birds.)* Molehill.

ELVIRA Molehill. There's a molehill here, too.

(Beat. COMMANDATORE begins wiping the chair again.)

SWEETY Why's he doing that?

ELVIRA *(Stands up, walks to COMMANDATORE, stops, watching him:)* Why are you doing that? Is the chair dirty?

COMMANDATORE The bacilli.

(Beat. COMMANDATORE offers a self-effacing grin to ELVIRA, then the others, and continues wiping.)

ELVIRA Can I help? So you won't have to...

COMMANDATORE No! Just me! Just me!

ELVIRA Alright, alright then...

PROF Making a mistake is not the same as cheating. There are several kinds of mistakes. Unintentional mistakes are not the same as the rest, because there was no bad intention. There's no reason to blame oneself today.

JANOS And yet still we feel persecuted. Still we are unable to spring from this emptiness. Not only me, Donci. Not a single one of us. Today, when we are the beneficiaries of this system in which certain things... happen. Today, when we live as few live. Right, Sweetie? Very few. I say we must go back to that smoky little room together, those of us left alive and breathing. Those who didn't make it will ever know what we suffered - this was the greatest gift we could have received. And now we know we've squandered it. Yes. But it's not too late!

JUNIOR *(To ANNA:)* Did your husband tell you all the shit we pulled during the war?

ANNA No, he didn't. We didn't have enough time to... let him tell me.

JUNIOR *(Bursts out laughing)* Picture this, Annie, when was it? 1943 New Years' Eve, that's right, because in '44 I was already living in a closet and that's where I shat, too, right there in the closet... So anyway, in '43 Donci came up with the idea of knocking on someone's door...

DOC It wasn't Donci's idea, it was Commandatore's.

JUNIOR Okay, it was Commandatore's idea, but Donci was there.

DOC That's right.

JUNIOR So. We fix ourselves up in a complete stranger's apartment... we said we were their distant relatives...

DOC Fleeing from Transylvania.

JUNIOR Right, fleeing from Transylvania. We went in, over there by the Technical University... what's that street called... right on the river... *(Laughs)* They open the door, Donci went in first with some insane spiel... the guy thought we really were his wife's relatives... The woman thought we were her husband's relatives...

DOC Complete with a half-decorated Christmas tree, candles, cranberries, the whole bit...

JUNIOR The missus weighed about 240, the girl 200... God, what sows!

PROF We got the man drunk...

DOC Janos immediately balled the wife...

JUNIOR Donci her daughter...

DOC No, first you did...

JUNIOR Like hell! I waited my turn for the wife!

DOC Our professor emptied his liquor cabinet.

PROF Sorry. Commandatore helped me in that affair. He just watched the women, but he drank alright.

JUNIOR That's right, even then Commandatore wasn't quite... Etelka, on the other hand, ran out. Etelka is our professor's wife, Annie, she's not here now, but she's his wife even today. So Donci climbed on the daughter. Then sooner or later everyone was on the daughter... Except Commandatore. The husband saw what was going on, but didn't want to see, relatives, you know... Christmas... the war... what an idiot... Then we left... In the morning, on that glorious first day of 1944, they must have thought angels had visited them... The Visitation! *(He laughs, DOC laughs with him, Beat.)*

ANNA Is that what happened?

SCHOLAR Yes. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR Why, what should we have done? We weren't even sure we'd live to see the next day. You know, sinners and saints both only live once - - and then there's us! We didn't know whether we'd live even once!

JANOS Annie, you shouldn't take what Junior says at his word. He's a writer, and so he embellishes. He adds flourishes to the stories he tells.

JUNIOR I'm adding flourishes? Let me tell you some real stories!

JANOS You're not telling stories now. *(Beat.)* Perhaps, Anna, this little anecdote embodies that emptiness we felt. And to fill it we tried to believe, and we tried to love. And we sincerely simulated this belief and this love - we hardly knew what we were doing. Before the events, which... which we, too, to some degree took part in. We couldn't know beforehand. Now we know. And we are struggling to regain our purity of being, lightness of spirit, that warmth we started out with... true sincerity, the ability to forgive... they couldn't have disappeared completely...

KATIE *(Enters.)* Food is served. *(Exits.)*

ELVIRA *(Stands up.)* It can't be eaten cold. I made the salad. I suggest we go in.

JUNIOR Everything else can wait, but not the food. *(Laughs, stands up.)*

DOC *(To SCHOLAR:)* A cornucopia. Go have a look.
(PROF stands up, goes in the house.)

JANOS Comrade Leporich, if you think...

LEPORICH No thank you, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary.

JANOS Then just a small glass.

LEPORICH We still have one appointment today.

JANOS Don't tell me.

LEPORICH *(Takes out a notebook.)* The Academy. Petöfi's revolutionary poetry.

JANOS I'd completely forgot. How about a little fruit?

LEPORICH I ate. But I might have a taste.

JANOS Please, be my guest.

DOC Is this going to be dinner or lunch?

JANOS Dunch.

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* If we were in Pest, it would be punch... *(Laughs)* I know, we're in Buda, better quit being such a Boeotian. Diner, souper, soiree! in which an ex-con and a lunatic are served! Let's go! Food's on!

(ELVIRA, DOC, JUNIOR, LEPORICH walk toward the door.)

SWEETY *(To JANOS:)* I love it when you talk like that. You talk so good! I love it.

JANOS Oh, darling! *(Kisses her, pushes her toward the house, and walks over to COMMANDATORE.)* Come in, the food's ready.

(SWEETY, ELVIRA, DOC, JUNIOR and LEPORICH watch COMMANDATORE.)

COMMANDATORE *(Stops rubbing, looks at the chair, then sits down, looks up, meditatively:)* Thank you. *(Beat.)*

JANOS But we'll bring it out if you want to eat here.

COMMANDATORE No, thank you... I've eaten today.

JANOS Yes... that's true... but it was a while ago... *(Beat.)* Just tell us if you get hungry.

COMMANDATORE Of course.

JANOS *(Walks to the terrace, to SCHOLAR:)* Let's go in.

(ANNA stands up. ELVIRA, JANOS, DOC, JUNIOR, SWEETY, LEPORICH watch.)

ANNA Aren't you coming in?

SCHOLAR *(Remains sitting.)* I don't know. *(Beat.)* You go ahead.

ANNA You could be a little nicer to them. Now that we've been invited. And you don't have to constantly badger them. *(Beat.)*

ANNA *(To the others:)* We're coming in a second.

ELVIRA It'll get cold.

(ELVIRA, JANOS, DOC, JUNIOR, SWEETY, LEPORICH exit into the house.)

Scene 4.

(Beat.)

ANNA What's wrong now?

SCHOLAR Nothing.

ANNA You know it would be nice if you could be happy just for once. It's just terrible the way you're sitting here, just like at home, with such a tragic expression on your face.

SCHOLAR Well, I guess we've survived this, too. Almost. We lost Agnes.

ANNA Who?

SCHOLAR Laci's daughter. She committed suicide.

ANNA Who's Laci?

SCHOLAR Oh, the professor... he was sitting there. *(Beat.)* She was a smart girl, very pretty and sweet. There was none of Etelka's bitterness, just her intelligence. She was the only child in our circle of friends... We just adored her. It was as though she was everyone's child. She was somehow proof... that when children like her are born into the world... then there's still hope... That biologically at least the world's not completely lost. *(Beat.)*

ANNA Sweetie, she said a lot of things in the studio... She's Janos' lover, that's why she's living here. Janos „keeps” her... Janos is her best „master,” that's how she put it.

SCHOLAR Janos is her what?

ANNA Master. She said before Janos she had a lot of masters, but Janos is the best one so far.

SCHOLAR Let's leave. Alright? Let's go. This is too painful for me. I really did love these people at some point. It's terrible to see... that this is what's become of them. *(Beat.)*

ANNA They're interesting! They're okay.

SCHOLAR These people?

ANNA They enjoy life! They enjoy having a garden, drinking wine, things like that.

SCHOLAR This garden is too good for them. You know whose it is? The state's. It was issued by the government. Janos got it before he even lifted a finger. And he's serving them well for it.

ANNA They're your friends.

SCHOLAR They were my friends.

ANNA We were invited to come here. You can't go on acting like this. You can't go on like this all the time. What have they done to us? You're going to end up like him. *(Points to COMMANDATORE.)* Just like him. I can't say it's a pleasure living with you.

SCHOLAR I know.

Scene 5.

(Enter JANOS from house.)

JANOS What's the matter, aren't you two coming in? *(Beat. He walks over to them.)*

ANNA We're not hungry. We ate before we came.

JANOS *(Sits down.)* Hey, what's the problem? Can I help?

ANNA No, you can't. Not even you. No one.

JANOS Oh, but I might.

ANNA Not with this. You know what's so awful? Not that for three years, innocently he... because he was innocent, you can believe me. Not that I was fired, had to become a sales girl, that they harassed me to divorce him, a class traitor... because it was so obvious that I wouldn't get a divorce, even if I starved to death first... It's what keep me alive. Not for his sake but for myself. I had somebody. Something that I could count on. Who was behind bars. Someone they couldn't take away from me. Who I could send packages to - for three years. Do you understand? Packages to somebody, who's mine, who exists, and who is mine only.

SCHOLAR Anna...

JANOS Let her! What she's saying is magnificent!

ANNA We had such a short time together, a few months... He was my everything! I didn't know him, it's easy that way, huh? I swear, not many people had the peace of mind I had for those three years. Because he was so far from me. I couldn't visit him, and so he became more and more important, and more and more perfect... They were crucifying him, and compared to that my problems... I could go out to the park... I don't think you understand what I'm trying to say.

JANOS Of course I understand.

ANNA And I hoped he would come back looking just as young as when they took him, in pajamas, half-asleep.

SCHOLAR Please...

ANNA I stood there in my nightgown, five of them came and surrounded him... like an armed robber!

JANOS Terrible!

ANNA And that's how I survived. I could have gone mad. What I went through, what should I send him? What does he need?! They told me that he wouldn't get it anyway, it'd be stolen, and yet night after night... from the few lousy Forints I had. But that's how I managed. I should be thankful that they took him away. Just not that they let him out.

JANOS Anna! (*Beat.*)

ANNA Then a man rang the bell... just rang the bell, some person... he looked like him, didn't even look so bad, but not like... It wasn't him I sent the packages to... and he just rang the bell and walked in... into my room, which I had cleaned for him, like a crazy person, sometimes twice a day, because he might come back at any moment, he might come in the morning, or at night, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, but he's coming, and then a man just walks in... as if he were coming home from a day at the office. And looks up at me like I was his savior.

JANOS He couldn't help that. (*Beat.*)

SCHOLAR Don't say these things, Anna. Not even if this is how you feel right now. This is too serious. (*Beat.*)

ANNA I'm sorry. - I'm sorry. Let's go, I wanted to come here, we didn't really need to. Let's leave.

JANOS You don't really think I'd let you go now, do you? Such a marvelous person? Do you know what value and rarity a such woman as yourself represents? There are no real women today. Men spend their lives without a real companion, hunting for meager substitutes. There are no women who might be a man's companion, physically, spiritually, a soul mate! And yet we pretend that there were... we pretend. But there are none. We have no real partners.

ANNA I'm not his partner. He drags all kinds of books home, in every language, and I don't even understand the titles.

JANOS That doesn't matter, Anna. A woman doesn't need to know those things, but something else. What you do know.

ANNA He doesn't need me. I'm just in his way.

JANOS But you can't know that. You're too young, and still have no confidence. But the man does not exist to whom you would not be equal partner. I understand you. The moment I saw you I felt that you were a woman...

SCHOLAR (*Stands up.*) I'm going to go eat something. Just go ahead and seduce my wife.

ANNA Why are you being like that?!

SCHOLAR Alright, I won't be like that. I'm hungry. You both go ahead and debate what exactly it is that I need. (*Exits into the house.*)

Scene 6.

(Beat.)

JANOS I've hurt his feelings. *(Beat.)* I honestly didn't mean to! Quite the opposite. Life is so hard... for a person like him... he... He was the happiest fellow among us.

ANNA Let's go inside.

JANOS The most important person in my life. Even if I haven't seen him for years. It was enough for me to know that he existed. And yet... I'm unable to find the right words, both of us are...

(ANNA pours herself a glass, downs it.)

JANOS It only natural he's become so ill-natured. With all of his problems. And toward those who would help him. It's also understandable that he's jealous.

ANNA He's what?

JANOS Jealous.

ANNA Him? He cares more about his crummy books than he does about people.

JANOS It's written on his face. The way he looks at you. And how he only said a few words to you. - I'd be jealous too.

ANNA He has no reason to be! None!

JANOS I don't mean to hurt your feelings, either... *(Beat.)*

ANNA Let's go in.

JANOS I want to help you.

ANNA I don't need your help. I'm not so bad off.

JANOS I want to help you in my friend's interest. You're not the one I'm concerned with. If any other woman had come with him, blind in one eye, with a wooden-leg, a hunch-back, I would have wanted to help her as well. *(Beat.)*

ANNA Don't you think you should have started helping sooner if he's such a great a friend of yours?

JANOS Oh, yes I do.

ANNA Before they took him away.

JANOS Donci was detached... but you're right, I shouldn't have let him go.

ANNA Why do you think he's so desperate for your help?

JANOS Because there's no one else who will stand by him. *(Beat.)*

ANNA Maybe I'm too insensitive.

JANOS That's possible, too.

ANNA What? What about all your compliments?

JANOS At times a man will exaggerate in his own interest.

ANNA You lied to me.

JANOS In all likelihood, yes.

ANNA I'm not really such a great catch, but you just can't let me go, right?. Maybe Sweetie falls for all this...

JANOS Who?

ANNA Sweetie, if I understood her name right. Upstairs, in the studio, she described your manly attractions to me in detail. Well, when I saw you I have to admit I was surprised. Looking at you I wouldn't think you were capable of living with two women. Or are there others, too?

JANOS There are.

ANNA Don't you think that's immoral?

JANOS No, I don't. I don't hurt them, I help them - I liberate in them that which is natural and gives rise to pleasure. I would be acting immorally if I were to withhold myself from them.

ANNA Such self-sacrifice.

JANOS Oh, no, not at all. I also enjoy it. I take pleasure in this natural endowment. I would never think of hindering others with theirs, I simply live with my own.

ANNA Let's go inside.

JANOS I'm surrounded by beasts! I'll be just like them soon! I'm unfaithful to Elvira and she tolerates it! While she plays the role of the dignified wife and celebrated painter. Sweetie reads pulp fiction, adores operettas, and is desperately in love with movie actors! *(JANOS laughs, ANNA looks at him sadly.)*

JANOS These men... who in better days were good, decent men... I think of my younger brother - it was as if I saw myself in a twisted mirror, my mannerisms... Doc is emptied of any human emotion, a meat grinder, nothing interests him but his career... And Laci... our famous professor.

ANNA I'm not interested!

JANOS Killers wallow in my soul! I killed Donci, too, I know... not directly, I could even redeem myself now, but I don't.

ANNA Don't talk about that! *(Beat.)*

JANOS What?

ANNA Not that! Talk about something else!

JANOS What should I talk about?

ANNA Do I know? You should know! *(Beat.)*

JANOS

I don't know a thing. All I know is that I need you. The moment I saw you I was struck. You could help take me to this new golden age. Don't think I'm exaggerating! Sometimes a glance is all it takes to grasp everything. The entire person, undivided, the body and the soul. This is what's happened to me, not half an hour ago. *(Beat.)* You're my soul mate. My equal. A man can struggle with you, fight for what is right. Independence. Personality. You're precious as any king's ransom, the dearest, through which a man may find himself - through which I will find myself! *(Beat.)* It's simply tragic that we didn't meet under different, more equal circumstances. Too much clings to me: power, spotlight, poetry, but it all means nothing to me. I would have liked to meet you at a bus-stop somewhere, in a threadbare suit, worn briefcase, a nobody... and approach you like so!

ANNA

Like in a movie.

JANOS

I'm jealous of everyone who leads a humble life. Of course it's not seemly for me to say so, but even Donci... This guilt, insomnia, this drunken feeling of sin - which I can rationally reject, but is impossible to come to terms with emotionally - I wouldn't wish on an enemy. But in this country today, everyone above a certain standard of living with even the most minimal morals finds it inescapable.

ANNA

Move into an apartment.

JANOS

You'll laugh: I've played with the idea very seriously! But I won't give up this garden, for I have a philosophy of life which I don't want to give up, and I won't - and that philosophy is one of happiness. Life should be filled with joy, glory, full of wonders. My job is to proclaim joy, especially now when it's so difficult to find... This is my modernity! Why will Hamlet not commit suicide? Have you ever thought about it? He would happily commit suicide, but he is afraid: „... for in that sleep of death what dreams may come?“ Fearing the horrors of the world to come he chooses the lesser evil: life. In Shakespeare's day they knew that life was not good. They would have run to their deaths if the vision of hell hadn't restrained them. The idea that life is good is only a few hundred years old. We have nothing over on the other side - and that is worst of all. Life is good by comparison... And you agree with me. We both grew up in this belief, to some degree. And I am grateful, for this is progress! This is Europe, this is the Renaissance, this is the Enlightenment, this is revolution! I will not regress back to any religion, any kind of mysticism, any form of oriental fatalism or submission... this is the struggle! You believe and you are suffering, Anna, because those who have been wronged, who are weak, try to convince you that there is greatness and nobility in suffering, but you are a healthy, whole person, born for pleasure and happiness... *(ANNA stands up and throws her arms around his neck.)* Our senses and

our feelings are smarter than we are, Anna, thank God. Courage does not lie, Anna, in our ability to help a wretched...

ANNA

You don't have to talk anymore.

JANOS

Courage lies in our ability to discard that part of our personality, which seems real, but which in fact is an alien morality forced upon us. Naturally, through the giving and taking of pleasure...

(ANNA lowers JANOS' head, kisses him, and pulls him down to the ground. JANOS takes off ANNA's underwear. Sounds of copulation. COMMANDATORE watches, dazed. Birds chirp. After a lengthy time LEPORICH appears at the door, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He notices the couple, watches them with interest, then looks at his watch.)

LEPORICH

Excuse me, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary. *(The sounds cease, JANOS rises to his knees.)* We must leave for the Academy.

JANOS

Yes. *(He stands up, zips his fly, straightens his tie, runs his fingers through his hair, then looks down at ANNA, lying on her back.)* My love, my dearest, I must go, Petöfi's revolutionary poetry, half an hour, stay here! I'll come back for you!

(JANOS runs out stage right. LEPORICH picks up JANOS' jacket on the chair, exits after him. ANNA sits up, then stands up, staggering a little, drinks from the bottle. She notices COMMANDATORE, who turns his head away.)

ANNA

(Walks over to COMMANDATORE.) Were you here?

COMMANDATORE

I'm far away, young lady. Out there it snows, quietly. Always.

(ANNA shuffles back to the terrace, stands. Beat. The birds sing. The rumble of a car, it fades away. ANNA picks up her underwear, quickly disappears behind the house left into the garden.)

Intermission.

Scene 7.

(Birds are heard singing. COMMANDATORE roosts in his chair. ELVIRA, SWEETY, JUNIOR, DOC, PROF, SCHOLAR, behind them KATIE, enter from the house.)

JUNIOR

Why did the Party Congress begin today? It's obvious: they knew we'd demolish the English! God, what national unity, what unity!

DOC

But what if the English had beaten us?

JUNIOR

Then we'd have capitalism here tomorrow. Two weeks ago when the Yugoslavs beat the English two-one the Central Committee dropped its jaw. Tito is screwing us over again! Think about it! our win isn't worth so much now!

SCHOLAR

Where's Anna?

ELVIRA You left her with Janos, didn't you?

SWEETY Janos went to the Academy. To give a talk.
(*Beat. SCHOLAR looks at COMMANDATORE.*)

SCHOLAR Have you seen Anna? Anna... my wife. (*Beat.*) Do you know who I am?

COMMANDATORE Of course, Donci. Hello.

SCHOLAR Hello. (*Beat.*) My wife was here... I left her with Janos.

COMMANDATORE She was here. She went for a walk. In the garden.

SCHOLAR With Janos?

COMMANDATORE Janos has left. In an automobile.

ELVIRA Your lunch is getting completely cold! Don't you want to eat?

COMMANDATORE Thank you. (*Beat.*)

ELVIRA Katie, bring out that folding table and set it... while everything's hot.

KATIE Right away, ma'am. (*Exits.*)

ELVIRA I thought we'd have the bloody marys and fruit outside.

DOC (*Looks up*) It's going to rain.

ELVIRA Yes... The air is so heavy!... But we won't get caught in it. - I mixed the bloody marys myself.

SWEETY What a great name, bloody mary! It's so... exciting! I'd never even heard of it before I came here, I pictured something really strange, like some kind of magic potion... But it's good.

DOC He's still not on? (*Walks to the radio, turns it on. A folk song is heard.*)

JUNIOR (*Laughs*) The Congress is dancing.

PROF This is still „Good Music for Good Work.”

DOC (*Turns off the radio.*) This godamn daylight-saving's time has got me completely turned around.
(*KATIE enters with the folding table, pushes it close to COMMANDATORE's chair, runs back into the house.*)

PROF If we weren't on daylight-saving's time, the speech would be starting later, right? Mozart would be starting now.

DOC Right. It's an hour later now.

JUNIOR What do you mean later? Earlier!

PROF Earlier? What are you talking about? Six o'clock has now become seven o'clock.

JUNIOR That's why it's earlier! 'Cause it's six o'clock!

PROF I'm saying, at seven o'clock it's really six o'clock!

JUNIOR You boob! Yesterday at midnight we had to set the clocks forward an hour.

DOC That is why it's later, Junior. Figure it out. One hour more is one hour later.

(JUNIOR shakes his head, but remains quiet.)

ELVIRA Well, the dogs don't know about the time change. *(To SCHOLAR:)* There are so many dogs out here again. Everyone owns a dog... They invite us to dinner, but they're scared... they think the dogs will protect them... *(Beat.)* Now the dogs bark an hour later. Or rather, at the same time.

JUNIOR That's right, only us humans are dumb enough to fall for it! *(Laughs.)*

(KATIE enters with a table cloth, tray, sets the plates and cutlery.)

ELVIRA Katie, the bloody marys and fruit.

KATIE In a moment. *(Exits into house.)*

(ELVIRA, then JUNIOR, DOC, PROF, SWEETY sit down.)

ELVIRA Donci, aren't you sitting down?

SCHOLAR I'll look for Anna.

ELVIRA Oh, let her walk through the garden. She hasn't seen it yet.

JUNIOR Sometimes you just got to let the misses roam free. Let her think she's not really a slave after all. *(Laughs.)*

(SCHOLAR sits down. KATIE brings the food, places it on the table before COMMANDATORE. Beat.)

KATIE Bon appetit. *(Beat.)* Please begin.

(Beat. KATIE goes back to the terrace. She watches COMMANDATORE.)

ELVIRA Thank you, Katie.

KATIE I'll bring the rest right away. *(Exits into house.)*

SWEETY Does he eat?

DOC Most likely.

(All watch COMMANDATORE.)

SWEETY Maybe he's one of those kinds who don't eat meat. There's a word for 'em.

PROF Vegetarian.

SWEETY That's it!

JUNIOR If he gets hungry he'll eat. We've just got to leave him alone.

SWEETY *(To SCHOLAR:)* You didn't eat very much.

SCHOLAR I had enough.

PROF Might we take that as an insult?

SCHOLAR If you like. *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Others were locked up, too, you know, in the old regime they locked people up too, and they didn't become so... so...

SCHOLAR So what?

ELVIRA So sensitive...
(SCHOLAR bursts out laughing.)

SWEETY It's got to have been hard on him.

ELVIRA It's hard for us as well! Just that things like what happened to him can happen... It takes a real toll on us! On everyone! But he doesn't have to... without reason!

JUNIOR *(To DOC:)* You know what's next? The political prisoners are going to stream out of prison en masse, parading their principles, and then showing off their bruises they'll nicely give all of us the boot. That's next. *(To SCHOLAR:)* I'm not talking about you, Donci, naturally. *(To DOC:)* How much do you want to bet?

DOC Come on.

JUNIOR Just wait. We'll be the traitors of the working class, and they'll be the saints. If they'd stayed out of jail, then maybe they wouldn't have stayed so immaculate. But they locked 'em up, and now they're coming back. Pretty soon they'll be the ones lecturing us.

DOC There aren't very many of them. And the ones who survived are happy they've still got a hole to shit from.
(Enter KATIE with fruit and bowls, places them on the table, exits.)

ELVIRA *(To SCHOLAR:)* Don't let this talk bother you, we're all just a little nervous right now. The heat will do it to you. Help yourself everyone.

SCHOLAR *(To SWEETY:)* This is quite peculiar for me, Sweetie. There was a time when these people here were my best friends. When they didn't have power. Really. They meant an incredible amount to me. They were like my family. An ideal, a real home existing around ideas. Because of these people I didn't leave the country when I should have. Isn't that strange?
(Enter KATIE with a tray of bloody marys. She places it down, stands.)

ELVIRA You may go now.
(KATIE, slightly taken aback, exits.)

DOC Well. Let's get on with it. *(Walks to the radio, turns it on. A march - „Sports March” - is heard.)* There are a lot of people who manage to work quite happily in this country. *(Turns off the radio, walks*

over to COMMANDATORE:) Why don't you eat something. Do you know what that is? Tenderloin! The real thing!

COMMANDATORE Thank you. Just a little longer... I'll eat in a moment. It's good, to eat. Just a little while longer.

DOC What's the cooking like down there?

COMMANDATORE The cooking is good.

DOC I can imagine. *(Beat.)*

COMMANDATORE Good. Plentiful. *(Beat.)* Just a moment. Please be patient.

DOC Oh, I'm not rushing you. Take your time. *(Goes back to the terrace. To ELVIRA:)* This wasn't one of Janos' brighter ideas.

JUNIOR No, not really.

(DOC sits down again, takes a strawberry, eats.)

ELVIRA Whipped cream?

DOC *(Indicating no:)* Hmmmm.

JUNIOR Your figure! *(Laughs. Beat.)*

(SCHOLAR stands up, disappears left behind the house into the garden.)

Scene 8.

JUNIOR Well, those two aren't destined for a long life together.

SWEETY And she's so sweet.

JUNIOR That's why.

SWEETY Donci, he's not even so old. If he wasn't so nervous, he'd be a good-looking guy.

JUNIOR You'd sleep with him, huh?

SWEETY I would.

ELVIRA It won't happen, Sweetie-pie. Donci has principles.

SWEETY So what if he does, did the both of you have principles?

ELVIRA We were friends. Friends. Do you know what that is?

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* Donci didn't need Elvira. He took his hormones to a whorehouse. So his soul might muse unadulterated.

SWEETY He's an alright guy.

DOC He's in love with his wife, Sweetie. So in this case you should forget about your true calling in life.

JUNIOR Probably impotent. For years after they get out his kind droop hopelessly.

(Enter ANNA right. They look at her. She stops right of COMMANDATORE.)

ANNA Didn't he come back yet?

ELVIRA He's looking for you in the garden, dear.

ANNA I didn't hear the car. *(Beat.)*

JUNIOR *(Bursts out laughing:)* We're talking about Donci. He seeks your Highness' presence in the garden. *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA I'll warm up the lunch.

ANNA No. Thank you.

ELVIRA Then at least have some fruit.

ANNA No. Thank you. *(Beat. To COMMANDATORE:)* The garden is so lovely. *(COMMANDATORE looks at her, silent.)* Why don't we go for a walk?

COMMANDATORE I'll stay...

ANNA I'll show you around, okay? I've just seen it. It slopes in back, completely untouched.

ELVIRA We've planned on putting a trellis there for years now... .

ANNA It'd be a shame to ruin it.

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* It seems the ladies differ in taste.

ANNA The garden is perfect as it is.

ELVIRA Oh! *(Beat.)* I'm so happy you're enjoying our garden.

ANNA It's not good for you to sit here in one place, you should go for a walk... I'd be happy to have a talk with you.

COMMANDATORE No, I'd rather stay... *(Raises his hands in defense, brings his two fists in front of his eyes, like binoculars.)* All that is happening... is, behind a veil of rain... You are there, too. *(Laughs.)* This is good, you are there... There's no problem... I'm still here.
(Beat. KATIE appears in the door, stops.)

ANNA Okay, don't misunderstand me, I didn't...
(COMMANDATORE lowers his hands, looks apologetically at ANNA. ANNA smiles back, nods, walks to the terrace, sits down, sighs, smiles. Beat.)

JUNIOR It's not so easy with him. No woman yet has been able to catch his eye... You see, not even you! *(He shakes his head.)* Try one of us. Me, for example, I'd gladly be a sweet two-some with you. *(Laughs)* Hasn't yet been a teacher. A post office girl, pharmacist, wife of a ship captain, librarian at a „meet the author” evening yes, but a teacher... I wrote about a few of them in my last book, did you read it?

ANNA No.

JUNIOR It was just published. My best book.

ANNA I haven't read any of your books. (*Smiles at JUNIOR.*)

DOC (*Laughing.*) Well now! A teacher, and she doesn't read...

ANNA There's so much to... I just don't find the time, for the classics, for anything.

ELVIRA I'm sure you must be very overworked.

ANNA It's not the teaching which takes up my time, but what comes afterwards.

SWEETY Oh, I'd love to teach little kids! It'd be so fun!

ANNA If there weren't 45 of them in one class, all crowded together... and they weren't kept inside all day... when the sun is out... hunched over, forced to keep their hands behind their backs... What they need is exercise, to run around. But during the ten-minute recess they walk in a circle, single-file. And I have to keep them in line, with a whistle in my mouth... They walk in a circle like little prisoners, seven, eight-year-old kids... This would be a wonderful place for a school.

ELVIRA Here?

ANNA Such a big garden. They'd love it. Seventy, eighty children would fit in the house. Two teachers would be just enough. And I'd cook for them. The school food is disgusting. There could be a slide in back of the garden. The children could play in the smaller rooms. The dining room would be the classroom, the studio the day room... We wouldn't need a thing... just a few benches and tables... Whoever is bored in class would go out and play... (*Beat.*) But this must be boring for all of you.

JUNIOR Not at all! Just the opposite! It's very interesting. (*Beat.*)

ELVIRA Bloody mary?

ANNA Thank you. (*Helps herself, has a sip.*) It's delicious.

SWEETY Elvira made it.

ANNA It's very good.

Scene 9.

(*Beat. SCHOLAR enters stage right, from the garden, stops right of COMMANDATORE's chair. COMMANDATORE watches SCHOLAR. SCHOLAR looks back at him.*)

SCHOLAR How long are you going to sit here for? All day?

COMMANDATORE Why not?... This is good.

SCHOLAR Good?

COMMANDATORE Good.

SCHOLAR Other places are just as good, right? Anywhere. Wherever.

COMMANDATORE Just as good.

SCHOLAR Sure, you know best... *(He's shaken up. Pause.)*

JUNIOR Let him sit there. Who's he bothering?

SCHOLAR For how many years have you been sitting around - wherever? Seven? Eight? *(Beat.)* You didn't count. Why should you count... Oh God. *(He moves to the terrace, stops. To ANNA:)* I've been looking for you everywhere.

PROF Your wife has become possessed by this garden. She seems to think it's hers. *(ANNA drinks.)*

SCHOLAR Don't drink on an empty stomach. You haven't eaten today.

ANNA Not true. I ate.

SCHOLAR Like hell you ate!

ANNA Like hell I did eat! I had two rolls at school.

SCHOLAR When was that? And you never even eat breakfast.

ANNA Because I'm always rushing out in the morning. *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Sit down, Donci... Some strawberries?

SCHOLAR No, thank you. We'd better be leaving.

ELVIRA Already? You just came!

SCHOLAR Yes, but I have a lot to do. We have a lot to do.

ANNA I'd like to stay.

ELVIRA You see! After so many years you really could spend one afternoon with us.

JUNIOR What's the matter, you've got to go shelve books for those schmucks this instant?

ANNA He worked this morning, like I did. He wants to go home to read.

JUNIOR So you'll read tonight.

SCHOLAR I have a lot of reading to do.

DOC I wouldn't have thought many books have been published in the last three years that you would want to read.

SCHOLAR Books existed before then.

DOC You've read all those books.

SCHOLAR Then I'll read them all again. I have a new perspective now. *(To ANNA:)* Let's go.

ANNA Let's stay.

JUNIOR Let her stay! You've become so forceful! I wouldn't have recognized you. Let her stay if she's enjoying herself!

ANNA I feel so good. I'm so happy. Just like... Like when I was in high school. There was this time, I was going to school one morning, waiting for the street car, I had finally solved my math homework from the night before, the street car came, and the sun shone on the window, pure red, I looked across to Buda, even the windows across the river were shining, the windows, everything was so sharp, pure, everything was... Maybe this was what they mean by a state of grace. It was the most beautiful morning of my life.

(*Beat. SCHOLAR sits. Beat.*)

SWEETY (*To SCHOLAR:*) You should eat something. You didn't eat. You just had one piece of bread.

DOC You don't have an ulcer by any chance?

SCHOLAR I do. Everyone gets one.

DOC You should eat more. Try to neutralize the stomach acids.

ANNA He doesn't eat. I don't have the time to worry about it, and I don't. My stomach is fine, he doesn't eat because he doesn't want to. He just eats the same things he did in prison. Bread, and he cooks some horrible gruel, with disgusting gristle floating on top... He buys the gristle at the butcher's. He won't let me cook for him. He's getting ready to go back.

SWEETY Go back where?

ANNA Prison. (*Beat.*)

DOC Come on, Donci! They just let you out!

JUNIOR (*Laughs*) Well! That's swell! Donci's getting ready to go back!

ELVIRA Donci, are you really?...

SWEETY That's why he's not eating? He won't eat 'cause he's scared that... ? He should eat more! We didn't have food back home, but when we did you couldn't stop us! When you got food you got to eat it! It's so stupid he doesn't eat! - Katie! You got to eat everything when it's there, right?!

KATIE Um, that's right. Or pack in ice what's left, or dig a ditch deep enough to...

SWEETY You got to eat everything! And eat more if you're not sure there'll be any left the next day!

DOC But tell us... you think they'll bring you back?

SCHOLAR (*Laughs*) Is it out of the question, theoretically?

ANNA He says... each state is only transitory. Especially when something is good. Only you don't have to fall into that trap, that's what he says. That's the trap. - Did I say it right?

DOC Pardon me - what's the trap exactly? That they finally let you out and you have food to eat? Could you explain that one to me?

SCHOLAR The problem might be that they forget about me and they don't take me back. Who knows? That in itself might destroy me. *(Laughs)* But I don't want to bore the company.

JUNIOR Oh, please, just go on and bore us... This must be some kind of psychosis.

SCHOLAR Obviously.

DOC Are you afraid that... you'll forget? Or what the hell are you talking about? Are you afraid you're getting soft? *(To ANNA:)* Does our dear friend sleep on the bed?

ANNA Me? Where else would I sleep?

DOC No, him. Does he sleep on the floor?

ANNA No.

SCHOLAR I didn't bring the planks home with me, if that's what you're thinking.

DOC That's what I'm thinking. *(Beat.)*

SCHOLAR A few years ago I still had some bonds... From the Monarchy. War bonds from 1916, 1917. My grandfather bought them... and went bankrupt because of them. Then they disappeared. Printed nicely on each one was the maturity date. Like the peace bonds today. I remember, the last maturation date would have been in 1990. *(Laughs)* They thought it was possible to look ahead, to plan. If the monarchy issued a bond in 1916, then in 1990 the monarchy would exist if only because of the date on the certificate. That's how they planned. Generations ahead. Everything was permanent and reliable. It's funny, really, looking back today... That was really a unique way of thinking.

ELVIRA Don't take this the wrong way, Donci, but to think they're going to send you back to... When they've admitted that mistakes were made!...

SCHOLAR It wasn't necessarily a mistake.

ELVIRA What do you mean not necessarily a mistake? What are you talking about?

SCHOLAR Maybe I made the mistake, thinking I couldn't be... and didn't have to be taken to prison. But why not? There's no need for a specific motive. Of course, they provide the motive. But even that was unnecessary. There's a shortage of everything... and they have to take from those who have... It really doesn't matter what, it could be an apartment or a book... But even that's unnecessary. Our very existence is built upon forced labor. By comparison everything else is transitory, random... and futile. It's easy to forget. Some never even realize... One or two weeks of eating well and you're as stupid as before. *(Beat.)*

PROF You believe that? You think that our society... is built upon forced labor?

SCHOLAR Every society, Laci... Not only ours. Every single one, if that makes you feel better. You know, Laci... it's a big mistake to think that slavery, feudalism... and all the rest... tribal society, for example... that they've disappeared. They haven't. They're right here. Deep within Europe, deep down, they've all remained. In the reflexes of a common criminal, in a prison guard's family life... they've all remained. The propaganda continues. And the people responsible are people like us. And some not only propagate it, they honestly believe it, too. But come on now, in the second half of our century, Laci, it's time to wake up... It's time. This is the century of triumphant cannibalism, Laci. It doesn't matter what you call it, fascism, whatever... I'm not saying this to convince you... I don't want to convince you... and I don't expect you to try to convince me of anything, either. You're fine as long as you have your illusions, your vision of changing the world... As long as you're proclaiming something, anything, it could be anything, but not the truth... I'm not trying to change your ideology, Laci, you can live with it, and if you report me to the police because this is what I believe, then you did the right thing, your ideology is a good one, I admit that... I only said all this because you happened to ask. *(Smiles at PROF.)*

ELVIRA Do you cook?

ANNA I'm sorry?

ELVIRA I mean you do cook, don't you, dear?

ANNA Cook? Sometimes... But he never eats what I cook. But I always buy ice for the ice-box. *(To SCHOLAR:)* If you want to go, there's milk and eggs in the ice-box... Buy some bread. *(Beat.)* When would I cook? I never cook just for myself. And I have such a stupid teaching schedule... This week I work mornings until Wednesday, and afternoons from Thursday, and next week the reverse. *(Beat.)*

PROF What do you think, what do you think it is that I'm doing?

DOC He doesn't think anything, he has a philosophical temperament, it's just coming out now.

PROF One passage coming from that philosophical temperament referred to me...

JUNIOR Oh let it go. He's a hurt man, he's just looking to hurt someone back. Forget about it.

PROF How, without saying one word, do you tolerate your husband... asserting such views... publicly. I honestly have to say that the mistake they made was not that they locked him up... but that they let him out.

SCHOLAR There's truth in that. Prison is like childhood - very instrumental in shaping a man, though perhaps not effective enough. *(Stands up.)* Let's go. I have no time for this.

PROF You have not time for what?

JUNIOR Forget it!...

PROF What don't you have any time for?

SCHOLAR For this. Wasting my time here.

ELVIRA And what do you mean by wasting your time?

SCHOLAR Maybe you all have time. But I don't.

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* Don't tell me they're coming for you tomorrow morning?

SCHOLAR Early in the morning. Two, three in the morning... Maybe they won't bring me back, and I'll simply keel over one day. That's bad enough, isn't it? - Anna, please...

ANNA One afternoon won't change a thing! - Since he's come home... he's a lunatic. He just reads and runs back and forth in his room, mumbling to himself, swearing... At night I wake up and he's stomping around, turning on the light, flipping through pages, clearing his throat, walking around like this, just like a crazy person. *(Beat.)*

SCHOLAR That's my business, don't you think?

ELVIRA Janos is the same way! He'll get an idea, some line for a poem, or an image will come to mind, and he won't be able to go to sleep until he finishes! - It's a good thing.

SCHOLAR Janos knows precisely what he has to write. He's a happy man. Myself, on the other hand... The authors I read, they've lied so much, too much, I go through mountains of books before stumbling across one random honest line... those places where their towers of ethos have collapsed... which they built so strenuously... They steal my time, too, everybody... The living, the dead, everybody steals my time. I've got to hurry! I've got to defend what is so pitifully small now, it isn't even worth defending... Precisely because it's worth nothing, it's become so dwarfed and diseased... And everyone can throw my time away, but I can't... I'm not allowed to wake up at night... Reflecting is forbidden... Of course, this too is an illusion, it's my business... I know... I have a goal, towards which I must strive - the perfection of my so-called unacceptable personality. And this is Europe, mere pretense, the belief in progress, which never was... Yes, there is no trace of humility in me, of wisdom, no trace! Maybe three years was too little... It wasn't even three... Inside I was told that after three years comes the big transformation... something irreversible, that's when the individual breaks, precisely after three years... They could have kept me in for another few weeks! I came out the same as when I went in... I didn't learn a thing... I've only lost my patience. *(Silence,*

SCHOLAR looks them all over, then looks at ANNA. To ANNA:)
There is a poem... inside it came to mind... I'd repeat it to myself...
because it's beautiful...

SCHOLAR

God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
For they too serve who stand and wait."

You know the man who wrote that had gone blind... I'd read it first
before the war, then forgot it... I didn't think I knew it by heart.

SWEETY

Who wrote that?

PROF

Milton. *(Beat.)*

SWEETY

Sounds like German to me.

JUNIOR

(Laughs) Almost.

SWEETY

I didn't have French nannies when I was growing up, okay? I can't
help it!

COMMANDATORE

The last line is wrong.

SCHOLAR

For they serve too who only stand and wait.

COMMANDATORE

That's not it. „For they also serve who only stand and wait. For
they only serve who stand and wait... For they too slave who stand
and wait..."

SCHOLAR

Slave?

COMMANDATORE

Slave.

SCHOLAR

Serve.

COMMANDATORE

Slave.

SCHOLAR

Serve.

COMMANDATORE

Slave.

SCHOLAR

„They serve Him best who only stand and wait."

COMMANDATORE

„They also slave who stand and wait."

SCHOLAR

Milton knew servitude, Commandatore. You know slavery.
(COMMANDATORE concentrates, mumbles to himself.)

SWEETY

He not so nuts after all... Oh, sorry. *(Beat.)*

COMMANDATORE

„His state / Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed / And post
o'er land and ocean without rest; / They also serve who only stand
and wait." *(Pause.)*

ANNA

That's beautiful. *(Pause.)*

SCHOLAR

That's it. He's got it. *(It grows darker.)*

COMMANDATORE Thousands at his bidding speed... No! He does not bid! (*All look over, COMMANDATORE has stood up, and is shaking.*) At his bidding... that's not good... It's not right! It's not true! The Lord does not bid! He does not bid! It is not so! Milton is wrong! Milton is a fake! He's lying! Bad! Bad! Bad! (*COMMANDATORE, weeping, collapses into the chair, shaking violently.*)

ELVIRA Commandatore! (*To DOC:*) Do something! He's crying!

DOC I see that.

ELVIRA My God.

DOC (*Stands up.*) Do you have any tranquilizers?

SWEETY We got some sleeping pills!

PROF He's a maniac.

JUNIOR Forget him. Let Janos deal with him.

KATIE I'm not going over there again! I'm not going over there!

ELVIRA (*Stands up.*) A tranquilizer.

DOC Do you have a tranquilizer?

ELVIRA Just make him pass out... do whatever it is you do.

JUNIOR It's just like Janos to leave us with this pain in the ass.

SWEETY I'll bring a sleeping pill. (*Runs into the house.*)
(*COMMANDATORE weeps, shakes in the chair.*)

ELVIRA Go over there, for Christ's sake! He's dying on us!

DOC What should I do with him? Bite off his ear? What should I do?

ELVIRA You're a Doctor! That's why you're here, because you're a Doctor!

DOC I don't have a damn clue what to do. I can slice 'em open, cut out what's inside, then sew up 'em back up, but what do I do with someone's soul? How do you cut it out? Where is it in the body?

PROF He's a maniac. It's that simple. If he attacks, there are more of us.

KATIE Get him away! Please!
(*Enter SWEETY with a prescription bottle.*)

SWEETY Where did you get that?

SWEETY From your paint box.

ELVIRA That's mine!

JUNIOR (*Laughs*) Tuck it away for a little trip to the next world, maybe?

ELVIRA That's mine!

KATIE Get him away! Please! Get him away!

ELVIRA Shut up!

SWEETY Should I take it back?

KATIE Get him away!

PROF Don't scream! Don't scream! (*Beat.*)

DOC There. Everything's alright now.
(*COMMANDATORE shakes, but isn't weeping.*)

DOC (*To SWEETY:*) Put it back.

SWEETY It's Elvira's. (*Puts it down on the table.*) Elvira can go hide it in the paint box.

DOC (*Sits down, to SCHOLAR:*) Next time you'll recite a better poem, better.

JUNIOR (*Laughs*) What an outburst, huh? „Milton bad!” Jeez.

ELVIRA (*To KATIE:*) You will not shriek, understood? Do not shriek or I will dismiss you.

KATIE He's going to kill... I can feel it... Forgive me, ma'am. (*Runs into the house.*)

ELVIRA It's just terrible how you can't find decent help. All the girls are going to the factories.
(*COMMANDATORE sits motionless. Beat. PROF looks at his watch, stands up, goes over to the radio.*)

PROF It's past six. We missed the beginning. He's already on.
(*He turns on the radio. Frenetic applause.*)

PROF I told you! It's Rakosi!
(*The applause continues.*)

SWEETY It's raining.

ELVIRA The table-cloth... Katie!

JUNIOR A shower. Shit.

ELVIRA Katie! (*The applause dies out.*)

VOICE OF RAKOSI Looking back over the time since the time of our Liberation, we may state that over the course of our thousand-year history...

ELVIRA Katie!! (*They stand up. It's raining very hard.*)

V.R. ... our people have never lived through such profound economic, social, political and cultural transformations, as during the last ten years. (*KATIE enters, ELVIRA motions, and runs into the house. PROF, JUNIOR, DOC hurry into the house. SWEETY stands, ANNA and SCHOLAR stand up.*) In scarcely ten years our country's economic system has radically changed, our economic structure has radically changed, our country's mode of production has changed, and production relations have changed. (*KATIE exits with a portion of the dishes. SWEETY brings in the bloody marys.*) The socialist system is now the sole master of industry, transportation, commerce, and banking. (*ANNA goes in the house.*) Factories, means of

transportation, and banks have been nationalized, and are now property of the workers' state. (*KATIE enters, clears the remaining dishes.*) Commerce today is under state management or has become a cooperative. The appropriation of private capital has been executed according to the needs of the workers' state. (*Exit KATIE with dishes and table-cloth.*) A powerful socialist sector has arisen in agriculture, encompassing one-third of entire agricultural production. Our social infrastructure has fundamentally changed. The classes themselves have changed, and class relations have changed. (*KATIE runs out, stacks the chairs.*) Land-owners and the gentry have ceased to exist. The commercial bourgeoisie have been terminated. In Hungary today only empty relics can be found of these exploitive classes. (*KATIE runs in.*) The final exploitive class, the rural bourgeoisie, has been reduced to a few members of the Kulak class. In number, knowledge, culture, and organization, the working-class, our society's governing class, possessors of power, have grown in great numbers, accumulating essential experience in government. (*COMMANDATORE lifts his face to the sky, bathes it in the rain, laughs.*) Within the working-class, those governing our nation, the people's economy, and society have been elevated to a new level. The sheer number of the working-class has increased by half a million, that is, by fifty percent. Within the working-class, wage differences of the last ten years have been eliminated. Our workers are united, organized, and have become, by means of single-minded political struggle, the national ruling class...

(*KATIE runs out, grabs the radio, runs inside the house with it. COMMANDATORE is alone on the stage, showering his face in the rain, smiles. Beat. It pours, and then slowly subsides. The sun comes out. COMMANDATORE sits, smiles.*)

COMMANDATORE Even now... Still in our time! It rained! (*He laughs happily.*)

Scene 10.

(*COMMANDATORE sits on the chair. His clothes are wet. Next to him, on the folding table, the food is soaked. From within the house, Rakosi's speech is on, unintelligibly. After a time, ELVIRA appears in the door. She stops, calls back.*)

ELVIRA Katie! The folding table, the table-setting! They're drenched! Bring them in!

(*Beat. SWEETY appears next to ELVIRA. She looks at COMMANDATORE.*)

SWEETY Soaked! (*Goes back in.*)

(*DOC, JUNIOR, PROF, ANNA enter from the house.*)

DOC It stopped.

(Enter SCHOLAR. KATIE enters with a tray, walks into the garden. She stops short, hesitating.)

JUNIOR *(Laughs)* She doesn't dare go over.

(Beat. Enter SWEETY with a towel, she walks over to COMMANDATORE.)

SWEETY Take off your shirt.

(COMMANDATORE stares back at her.)

SWEETY Let's go, one-two-three. I won't let you catch pneumonia.

(COMMANDATORE takes off his shirt, SWEETY takes it, throws it down on the folding table. She begins drying off COMMANDATORE's head, upper body.)

JUNIOR She still doesn't dare go over! *(Laughs.)*

(ANNA walks over to her chair, tilts the water off, dries the chair with a napkin.)

ELVIRA Go and get those settings!

(KATIE creeps over, quickly puts the food on the tray, runs into the house.)

SWEETY Take off your pants too, they're wet.

COMMANDATORE No...

SWEETY No back talk. One two three. *(COMMANDATORE stands up, quickly takes off his pants, sits back down in his underwear, ashamed, tries to cover himself up.)* Don't be scared, I won't bite it off.

(She throws the pants onto the table, kneels down in front of COMMANDATORE, starts drying off his legs and feet with the towel. ANNA sits down in her chair.)

ELVIRA Katie! Dry off the chairs!

(They watch SWEETY at work. KATIE enters with rags. She wipes the chairs. ANNA sits. Beat.)

SWEETY *(Finishes drying him off, stands up, looks at COMMANDATORE:)* You got a nice, athletic body. *(COMMANDATORE curls up into a ball.)* Too bad you're completely screwed up. *(COMMANDATORE flashes his apologetic smile.)* Really, you've never been with a girl? *(Beat.)* Too bad, nice body. *(Picks up the pants and shirt from the table, exists.)*

(Beat. JUNIOR sits down next to ANNA.)

JUNIOR Would your highness allow me to be seated here?

(Laughs. Beat. DOC, PROF, ELVIRA sit down in their former seats. KATIE wipes the table, squeezes the water behind the stone parapet in the garden, wipes the table again.)

ELVIRA That's enough, Katie. You may put on the tea.

KATIE Right away.
(Exit KATIE. Beat. Enter SWEETY.)

SWEETY I hung the clothes up to dry.
(SWEETY sits down in her chair. Beat.)

ELVIRA *(Screaming:)* Katie! The radio, please!

SCHOLAR Elvira, thank you for having us. Most pleasant. Good bye, everyone
- Anna...

ELVIRA Don't leave yet. At least wait until Janos returns, he'll be so hurt...

SCHOLAR This is a small country, we're bound to run into each other.

ANNA Even the storm was beautiful here... It's nothing like that in the
city, it just pours and it's dark. But even the storm here is more
real, untamed. *(Stands up, looks out behind the house from the
stone rail at the end of the terrace.)* The city is so beautiful now, you
can see it all from here... How strange that I live down below there... in
an apartment building, me... Look at the lights... it's beautiful.

SCHOLAR We'll watch it from the bus.

ELVIRA You both hardly ate a thing, let me pack a few things into a picnic
basket. Some home-cooking. *(Laughs)* So you'll have something in
the ice-box.

ANNA No, thank you.

SCHOLAR Come on.
(ANNA stands at the end of the terrace.)

ANNA It's so strange that I live down in the city.

SCHOLAR Strange. Let's go.

ANNA My life is passing me away. I've been sentenced to live down
there... For my whole life.

SCHOLAR I'll buy a house up here in the hills with the money from my first
two Nobel Prizes. Come on, let's go.

ANNA I'm not going. I'm staying.

PROF Where's the radio?

JUNIOR It must be heating the water.

ELVIRA Katie! The radio!

SCHOLAR Alright, I'm leaving. The bus goes to Moscow Square... What time
does the bus stop running?

ELVIRA I don't know, we usually take the car...

SWEETY At ten.

ANNA I'm really staying here.

SCHOLAR Okay, I heard. You're staying here. *(Starts right.)*

ELVIRA Donci, please... I'm asking you!

SCHOLAR *(Stops, to ELVIRA:)* You have no right to ask!... Anna wanted to come here, she insisted... And then your face came to me, the way it was... That's why I agreed to come, really... That was the hubris.

ANNA I don't think I'm coming home tonight.

SCHOLAR Oh no?

ANNA I don't feel like coming home. Any more.

(Beat. Enter KATIE with the tea, she places it on the table.)

ELVIRA I've asked for the radio twice now!

KATIE I'm sorry, I couldn't hear, the radio was too loud. *(Exits.)*

SCHOLAR Let's talk about this at home.

ANNA Don't be mad with me. I don't want to hurt you... It just happened this way. *(Beat.)* I'm in love with Janos. I slept with him. Earlier. *(Beat. Enter KATIE with the radio.)* V.R. The result has been the creation of a new nation in place of the old bourgeois nation; year by year, month by month, day by day, our socialist Hungarian Nation is moving forward. The People are becoming one with the Nation. For the first time in our thousand-year history the Hungarian People themselves are masters of the Nation.

(Fantastic applause. SWEETY jumps over to the radio, turns it off.)

SWEETY When earlier?

ANNA While you were eating.

ELVIRA When?!

ANNA So I'm not going home with you. I'm not coming home to you. *(She sighs, sits down again in her chair. Beat.)*

JUNIOR If I only knew why the ladies are so crazy about him! He doesn't even exercise... He can have any woman! *(To ANNA:)* Tell me, how'd he sweep you off your feet? Maybe I could...

ANNA He had a nice smile. So you don't have a chance.

(DOC stands up, takes the radio in the house.)

PROF Well, now that we're all so nicely settled in together, maybe I'll have some tea. *(Pours himself tea. Beat.)* Have some tea, Donci. Or are you in such a hurry? You can't have that much to do... Numen lumen can wait. *(Laughs.)*

JUNIOR *(Excited:)* Annie, you know what Janos' motto always was? „A hole is a hole is a hole!” That was Donci's maxim for a while too, at some point... And we kept to it even during the worst of times. In her own common way, Sweetie says, It ain't soap, it won't get no smaller. Right, Sweetie? Now that's valid here in this situation, too. So don't think that this is serious on Janos' part! Nothing doing! He has no emotions, wise up! I have emotions! I would respect you, I swear! - What'd ya mean he has a nice smile? I have a nice one,

too! (*Grimaces at ANNA.*) Isn't this nice? My facial structure is very similar! But I have emotions, too!

PROF Isn't this sweet? (*Laughs, drinks his tea.*)

SWEETY It didn't take the two of you a lot of time... It was pretty quick.

PROF (*Bursts out laughing:*) It took you a little longer, didn't it? And this is your profession.

SWEETY I can still be a teacher... I'll finish high school through the mail!

ANNA Please, don't stand there looking so miserable... And don't look at me like that! For three years the drain was backed up and I didn't clear it because your hair was in it... I dusted your books every week, took them off the shelves, and placed them back where they were, so you'd find... I didn't move back in with my mother, even though she wanted me... Two police officers were moved into the other room in our apartment, they yelled at night, fought, and I stayed there... Every year I made the pickled cucumbers, the way you like them - with lots of garlic. They rotted in the jars. (*Beat.*)

PROF That must be good. I love garlic. (*Beat.*)

SCHOLAR What do you think you're doing?!...

ANNA Nothing. I don't know. Who cares.

PROF Junior will bring the wedding dress and dowry in his car, just wait a few more minutes, Anna dear. Or wait, he doesn't even have to. Elvira will give you everything: bed linen, blankets, everything...

ELVIRA Have a little taste, please!

PROF Me? I just want to help the young couple. (*Laughs*) Just don't tell me, Elvira, that this is the first time...

JUNIOR Move in with me! Hey, over here, move in with me! I live in a nice place, too... You'll have your own room, it looks out over a nice, big park... There's privacy. I make so much money, you wouldn't believe it... I have two books published a year... And I have my own car... Janos just has the government -

ANNA Go away!

JUNIOR Janos is going to leave you anyway... He doesn't need you.

ANNA Go away!

PROF Interesting... Perhaps I'm not the best judge of these things, Donci... But I wouldn't have thought that your wife was such a whore.

SWEETY Oh, she's not! And I know plenty. She's just dumb still. Young. (*To SCHOLAR:*) She wants to live a little. It's no big deal. She'll go back to you anyway. Until then I'll sleep with you if you want.

JUNIOR Why not with me? Why with everyone else? always!

PROF *(To JUNIOR:)* Somewhere I read, Junior, that if a pregnant rat fornicates with a male rat stronger than the one which got her pregnant, she miscarries and becomes immediately pregnant again by that stronger rat. That's the way it is. *(To SCHOLAR:)* That's the way it is.

SCHOLAR I can't believe this! You're sitting there as though you were one of them!

ANNA I'm not sitting here like that.

SCHOLAR As if we hadn't come out here together... from home... two hours ago... Aren't you ashamed to sit there?

ANNA Please, don't... This doesn't suit you...

SCHOLAR What? What doesn't suit me? *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA Would you like a little tea, Annie?

ANNA What?

ELVIRA Tea. Don't you want a cup of tea?

ANNA I don't drink tea. And I don't have a dowry. No one I know gives a dowry.

PROF I thought it was still a custom. Forgive me, Anna dear, you know, I haven't been among the people for such a long time... If I remember correctly, though, dowries are given still. But if you say that these days they aren't... Have some tea, Donci! You really could wait for Janos, it would make him so happy!

JUNIOR Annie, come home with me, this here isn't for you. Janos doesn't need you... he needs every woman... I would respect you, believe me... I'm a bachelor... Why stand along side the rest of them - number three? A part of the harem? Think about it!

PROF Number three?! And all the others! Who throw themselves out of windows?

ELVIRA Some day I'm going to draw all of you... hideously ugly, loathsome, pig-headed amphibians with claws, scaly tails, gills, drooling, pustulant amoebas...

PROF Don't forget to put yourself in the picture, too, like all the great masters... innocent, oblivious, a flighty dragonfly... Not a hunter... no, one who is hunted, the poor thing. But still you had Sweetie get Agnes over here... If you couldn't be the only one... then at least Sweetie shouldn't either... You were the one!

ELVIRA You are a lunatic!

PROF You were the one.

ELVIRA Somebody tell him he's crazy! *(Beat.)*

ANNA *(To SCHOLAR:)* You'd better go. Your books are there for you. You don't need to live. Your books are your substitute for living... so at night you can stay awake and meditate on everything.

(DOC enters from house, stops.)

PROF He say anything?

DOC Nothing yet. He just started on foreign policy.

ELVIRA Some people were moved into Donci's apartment... Police officers...

DOC Kick them out. There are a couple of guys in the hospital right now who could take care... I can take care of it. Just say the word.

ELVIRA Donci, did you hear that?

SCHOLAR *(To ANNA:)* You don't know... you have no idea... Do you know whose garden this is?... Who you?... One of the worst miscreants... who was ever born.

JUNIOR Really, now...

SCHOLAR A heel-licker... an inquisitor... an elegant Auschwitz doctor selecting for the gas...

JUNIOR Come on now!

SCHOLAR Didn't you read his poetry? No? I'm sure it's here... They'll show you. An entire shelf. Half of it is full, the other half is commissioned already. That trash... Traitor... A savage... A hired pen... I know it all by heart... Everything that he's written... Not a line will remain, not one... but I'll know them all by heart... even after I'm dead I'll know them all...

 Through curses of the enemy
 Stalin's greatness is clear to me
 Great Stalin, may you live long enough
 To see my sons grow big and tough.

 That's what he wrote! And he wrote this, too:

 A poor Korean orphan dreams
 Through the silence of the night,
 And standing there beside her bed,
 Is Rakosi, tucking her in tight...

 This is the kind of trash that bastard wrote...

 Trust in him who trusts in you
 Whose every thought belongs to you,
 Lift your eyes that you may see
 Our shining star: Rakosi

 The rhymes! The rhymes!

 Into our country vipers were cast,
 With hands of steel he gathered them fast,
 Our country is now forever clean
 Never again will vipers be seen.

(Beat. The sky begins turning red.)

DOC He placed it in front of me, saying here, this is my death sentence. He was as white as a ghost. They kicked out a few dipshits from the Soviet Writers' Union. One of them because he was married four times.

JUNIOR Voloshin.

DOC What?

JUNIOR Voloshin. That's his name.

SWEETY Janos only got married once.

DOC But he has lovers. He's having conniption fits about a new Mafia being put on top, the morality Mafia, and he'll become public enemy number one - idiot - and he won't be able to crawl his way out of it... He sat there whining to me... He doesn't know if he should be writing denunciations. If he should give a speech at the Writers' Union conference... He should lay low until it blows over. Let's wait and see what happens! Let the others shoot off their mouths, they'll overplay their hands soon enough.

SWEETY He's a poet! He doesn't need to explain a thing, he's got inspiration!

JUNIOR Tushy, just shut your second set of lips for one minute, okay?

SWEETY Just because you need dirty magazines to...

DOC *(To ELVIRA:)* Tell him not to write anything about anybody. The Comédie Française went to Moscow... Churchill is making guarded statements... The Romanian General Secretary has been given the boot... He just has to wait! - There. *(Drinks his tea.)*

(Beat.)

COMMANDATORE They come quietly.

(All look at him.)

COMMANDATORE They come, gently rustling, gently moving. *(Beat.)*

Scene 11.

(Sound of a car's engine. Brakes. Beat. JANOS rushes in right, behind him LEPORICH.)

JANOS What'd he say? Did he say something? Who's talking now? Did the Prime Minister speak before the Secretary General? Who spoke first? Where's the radio? *(Beat.)* What's wrong? *(Beat.)*

PROF You've been expected.

JANOS I came as soon as I could. They asked questions. How could one emulate Petőfi today... What would Petőfi write about today... Would Petőfi have laid down his life in Korea... *(Laughs)* I couldn't get away! And two theater students recited poetry... I had to sit through the whole thing... They let me go after the speech started... We raced over... Is something wrong?

PROF Our little teacher has anxiously been waiting for you.

JANOS How nice. (*Smiles at ANNA.*) Where's the radio? You took it in? It rained here, too? (*Looks at his watch.*) It can't be over yet.

JUNIOR The little school teacher has fallen in love with you.

JANOS (*Laughs*) How flattering. (*ANNA stands up. Beat.*) Annie... How charming! (*To SCHOLAR:*) You are one lucky man! - But sit down, Annie, you're not ready to leave already? Stay a while! I am sorry I had to rush out... Today... I'd forgotten about the... I shouldn't take on as much as I do. I hardly have any time left to work! (*Turns toward COMMANDATORE.*) And him? No problems, right? (*Beat.*) He took off his clothes? Well, fine, it's warm. I'd gladly do the same right now... Comrade Leporich, now you really can have a drink.

LEPORICH Thank you, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary. I might listen to the speech.

JANOS Why aren't you all listening? The whole country is listening! Our fate rests on this speech! The radio didn't break, did it? We'll go to the neighbors!...

JUNIOR He's still talking foreign policy.

JANOS Yeah? And?...

SWEETY Did you sleep with her?

JANOS What?

SWEETY Did you sleep with her? Anna.

JANOS How should I know? What difference does it make now?!

SWEETY Anna said you did. While we were eating.

JANOS While you were eating? (*He smiles at ANNA.*) What can I say, she's such a lovely, attractive, charming girl, I would have gladly.

ANNA The driver was here.

JANOS Excuse me? (*Beat.*) Comrade Leporich, do you understand what she's talking about?

LEPORICH No, I do not understand, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary.

JANOS (*Smiles at ANNA:*) I don't either.

ANNA He saw, too... Commandatore.

JANOS Commandatore? (*JANOS walks over to COMMANDATORE.*) How are you? (*COMMANDATORE looks straight at him.*) You're not cold?

COMMANDATORE No.

JANOS How's everything for you here?

COMMANDATORE Good.

JANOS Was there any trouble?

COMMANDATORE No.

ANNA He watched the whole thing! He saw it!

JANOS Commandatore, I don't completely understand what this sweet little girl is talking about. Do you understand? *(Beat. JANOS walks back to the terrace.)* The truth is I could have come back sooner... But there was this student, one of the theater students... and she recited so beautifully with such enthusiasm, such emotion... Right, Comrade Leporich?

LEPORICH She recited beautifully.

JANOS She did Petöfi's „September"... Now that's not exactly a revolutionary poem... *(Laughs)* But she recited it very well. So I just had to talk with her... I thought she was wonderful. *(Smiles.)* It's so stirring to see how sensitive and talented the young people are... so full of faith. We might learn something from them! *(He sits down.)* Donci, I've been reflecting on the way home... How would you like to write for us? Anything you want. I think the situation now is such that you could publish with confidence. An essay, a review, anything. I don't want to push you, but if something comes to mind, think of me... would you?

SCHOLAR If something comes to mind. *(Laughs scornfully at ANNA.)* Of course.

(Beat. ANNA runs in the house. Beat.)

Scene 12.

JANOS Is there anymore tea?

ELVIRA Katie, put some water on for tea, please...

JANOS If not then forget it. *(Smiles at KATIE.)* They gave us coffee. - Did you hear that Lajos Nagy is in the hospital? They say he's ready to kick...

JUNIOR That's what he's telling everyone so they'll give him the Distinguished Worker of the Republic award.

JANOS Of course. Last week we called all the editors together. We want to put out a memorial issue. I suggested that we include Milan Füst as well... It might work. - Donci. It would be so good. If you have the strength... So not only idiots will be writing about him.

SCHOLAR I... will not write... for you.

JANOS For me?! Not for me! Lajos Nagy was so tragic, how he's been censored over the years! Because he remained honest as so few authors did. Now we have the chance to write about him... There's no telling if two months from now we will... We must seize the

opportunity... Now that it's possible for us to even ask Milan Füst, that petty bourgeois writer... And they're not screaming „reactionary,” but they've thought about it... Donci, you simply have to take part in this. We can't be dragged back into the cult of personality. Think about it, please. We need every upright, honest man we can get. It would be a luxury to draw up into a shell... for a man with such a brain! „When you see a thief you join with him; you throw your lot in with him.”

SCHOLAR

Then I'd have to write about you - if it were important enough. But it's not. And if I were to write about you there wouldn't be a scandal. Without morality there is no scandal.

(Beat. COMMANDATORE looks up toward the roof of the house, is paralyzed with fear, his face becomes contorted.)

JANOS

Oh, don't worry about me... I'm just doing my job as best I can... But the youth, who are still enthusiastic, sincere, devoted... We need to write about them, Donci. You know... against all the odds... I'd really like to appear on a book jacket again with you.

(KATIE notices the paralyzed COMMANDATORE, her eyes follow his stare, and she screams. SWEETY looks up.)

SWEETY

God! *(Puts her hands in front of her mouth.)*

DOC

(Looks up, stands up, stares up, motionless.)

JUNIOR

(Looks up, laughs nervously.)

SCHOLAR

(Looks up, shudders.) Anna! What are you doing? No!...

ELVIRA

(Doesn't look up, but starts shaking uncontrollably.)

PROF

(Stares straight ahead, clasps his ears.)

(Beat. ANNA's body comes falling down from above, with a huge clap on the ground behind the stone barrier.)

ELVIRA

Oh God!... Oh God! I can't look... *(Shakes, cries hysterically.)*

(SWEETY runs behind the terrace. DOC starts after her. SCHOLAR runs after them.)

SCHOLAR

Anna! Don't die! Don't leave me!... Stay with me. *(Whimpers.)*

DOC

Don't touch her!

(Beat. SCHOLAR whimpers. KATIE enters.)

SWEETY

She's alive!

DOC

Of course she's alive. Get away from her, I have to get closer! *(DOC crouches down, can't be seen by the audience.)*

SCHOLAR

Anna! It's me! Look at me!

DOC

Get back!

(SCHOLAR backs up, stands shaking, looks at the ground.)

JUNIOR Why now? Why?!

PROF That was just one and a half flights, at most. One and a half. What's one and a half flights?! (*Whimpers, laughs.*)
(*ELVIRA trembles. Beat.*)

DOC (*Standing up:*) I don't know, there might be broken bones... maybe her spine... She might make it. If there's no serious internal damage. Maybe she'll just be crippled. Nobody touch her. (*Jumps up from behind the terrace.*) We have to get her out of here...

LEPORICH I'll call an ambulance.

DOC Takes too long. Maybe the car...

LEPORICH Isn't that dangerous? (*Beat.*)

DOC She's in a bad spot here. (*Looks around.*) We'll take her out onto to the street. She fell out of a tree, something like that.

ELVIRA Oh my God, so!... (*Weeps.*)

DOC Calm down. We need a board...

JANOS The big pastry-board. Little woman. She'll fit. Katie! Get the pastry-board! Immediately!!
(*KATIE runs into the house.*)

SWEETY You can't move her! Her spine's broken! My sister is a nurse!

DOC Shut up! I'm the doctor!

SWEETY You can't!

DOC Shut up! (*Beat.*)

SCHOLAR Anna, don't die... I'll take care of you... You'll get better! I'll be with you no matter what... Don't be scared...
(*Whimpering, KATIE enters with a large pastry-board. DOC takes it and crouches down by ANNA's body.*)

DOC Somebody get over here!
(*JUNIOR runs over. They put ANNA on the board. Faint whimpering.*)

ELVIRA I can't stand that sound, I can't stand it...

JANOS It'll be over in a second, dear... you don't have to...

ELVIRA I'll hear it forever... Forever!

DOC Her leg... it's hanging down... someone grab it!
(*SCHOLAR joins DOC and JUNIOR. They lift up the board, SCHOLAR holds ANNA's leg.*)

DOC Slowly, carefully.

(DOC, JUNIOR, SCHOLAR slowly march ANNA through the garden right, KATIE crosses herself, follows them. PROF turns in his chair, watches the procession. JANOS stands next to ELVIRA. ELVIRA turns away. COMMANDATORE stares straight ahead, listening to something only he hears. Beat. DOC, JUNIOR, SCHOLAR disappear right, SWEETY runs after them. Beat. The sky darkens.)

PROF One and a half flights, maybe not even.

LEPORICH Fairly high flights. Old building. It's at least five meters.

PROF Eighteen meters, now that's something. Eighteen! *(Whimpers, then laughs.)* Touché, Donci! Touché! You won't have such a big mouth anymore. Touché.

(Beat. JUNIOR and DOC enter.)

DOC She fell out of an apple tree, out by the street.

JANOS It's horrible how you just can't help the people. They won't let you! This is what happens to them! Commandatore, too... Such opaque people!

DOC That's not what this is about! It's not about Commandatore! You were too scared to look Donci straight in the eye, and that's why you dragged Commandatore out here... *(Yells:)* I told you who Donci was sitting in prison with! Didn't I?! We need his help to help ourselves, don't we?! He was our only way to those people!... The only way! And you go climb on top of his wife! What's horrible is that you can't put a harness on your cock!!! *(Beat.)*

ELVIRA You know what you are! A butcher!

DOC *(Nods mockingly:)* I'll call the ambulance.

(DOC exits into the house. It grows darker.)

JANOS Katie, a drink!

KATIE *(To COMMANDATORE:)* That's what they get! They all end up this way! Every one of them! *(Runs in the house.)*

ELVIRA It has to be scrubbed! Until then I can't look over there... It has to be scrubbed.

JANOS Alright, Katie will scrub it down in a little while. - How is she?

JUNIOR Pretty ugly. *(Shaken up, he exits into house.)*

(Enter KATIE with a bottle of brandy.)

JANOS Glasses, too.

ELVIRA Don't... need them.

JANOS Darling... Why wouldn't we need them - Katie, glasses, please.

(KATIE places the bottle on the table, goes back in the house. It's dusk.)

JANOS It's cooled down quite a bit. And the sun's barely gone down...
Hmmm, and it's Spring.

ELVIRA She's going to scrub it, right?

JANOS That's right, darling. I told you. Didn't you hear me? (*KATIE enters with a tray and glasses, places them on the table, exits back in the house. JANOS to PROF:*) Come on, let's have a drink. (*PROF stands up.*) Oh, come on. (*PROF goes in the house. ELVIRA pours, drinks. SWEETY enters right.*) How is she?

SWEETY She's talking. (*Beat.*) I left them alone. They're all lovey-dovey.
(*ELVIRA exits into house. Beat.*)

LEPORICH What should I do with him?
(*JANOS stops, turns around, stares at COMMANDATORE.*)

JANOS Oh, yeah. Bring him back to the asylum early tomorrow morning.
The rest of your day is free.

LEPORICH Thank you, Comrade Assistant Under Secretary.

JANOS (*Looks at his watch:*) I wanted to do something... What was it... I was late for everything today... I missed the G-Major Trio, too! (*Shakes his head, starts toward the house.*) Well, come on in, now you really can have a drink!

LEPORICH He's not going to get cold out here?
(*JANOS shrugs his shoulders, goes in the house. LEPORICH after him. Beat. Nightfall. The lights go on in the house. KATIE closes the door, light escapes from the shutters. Beat. Quiet hissing sounds... COMMANDATORE looks up, then looks down to the ground. The hose suddenly begins slithering. COMMANDATORE smiles. Hissing. Rustling. Shadows. From the house the G-Major Trio is heard. He takes deep breaths, excited. Dinosaurs slowly, quietly appear, rustling in the garden; a few tyrannosauruses in addition to the herbivores. G-Major Trio is heard. A gentle breeze blows. The tree branches rustle. COMMANDATORE laughs happily. The prehistoric creatures slowly, peacefully envelop the garden.*)

Curtain.