

# **Zoltán Kőrösi: Pigeons**

*(A tragicomedy)*

Characters of the play:

GRANDPA PIGEON, PAP: An old man of indefinable age who keeps mourning over his former butcher's shop – Mom's father

MR. Pigeon, DAD: A man around sixty who thinks that he is still in relatively good shape and knows what's going on around him

MRS. PIGEON, MOM: His wife, a run-down woman approaching sixty who sometimes looks much younger than her age, especially when she needs to.

MISS PIGEON, SISSY: Their daughter, just under twenty, takes after Mom, though she would not like that at all

PIGEON JUNIOR, SONNY: Dad and Mom's son and hope, just over twenty, does not take after anybody, at least this is what he thinks about himself

MS. ANNIE PIGEON, GOLDIE: Probably fifty years old, but still a woman and even more so when she needs to be!

POSTMAN: just like a rural Hungarian postman, or even more so

BALOG NEIGHBOUR: A neighbour who can see and speak only when it's unnecessary.

DOCTOR: A doctor who cures both body and soul, but time is his enemy.

PORTER: A boy who speaks very little but can carry a lot.

The scene: a house built at the turn of the century in a rural Hungarian town, the central part of a ground-floor flat, which is now considerably old but has seen better times. All doors open from here and all ways lead here.

I.

*We can see a worn-down interior, some kind of a hall or living-room. All the other rooms in the flat open from here. The furniture is of East-European design characteristic of the early '80s: a wall-unit, some armchairs, a coffee table, etc. In the focal point of the room there is a Christmas tree, still undecorated. The flat is jam packed, with space only remaining between furniture pieces.*

*There is a lot of preparation going on in the background. We can hear the sound of furniture being moved behind the scene, noises, clutter, then Dad appears in a tracksuit covered in spots of whitewash equipped with a bucket and a brush. He puts them down next to the table and sits down with a big sigh.*

*Mom enters.*

MOM: You are just sitting? Here?

DAD: I'm tired.

MOM: And what if I'm also...? If I'm also? Then nothing?

DAD: Not nothing. Everything, even then. Everything and you know it.

MOM: Of course. I know. For all you care. *(starts "packing" furiously, conspicuously doing things)*

*Pap enters, talking partly to himself*

PAP: A little bit just because... *(spots them)* Just... a little rest..., I thought I could watch a little telly, to see what's going on... You don't mind, do you? Don't mind... *(looks around in a surprise)* But where is the telly now?

*Sonny enters with a pile of clothes in his hands.*

SONNY: Come on, Mom, why does it have to be my room...

MOM: ... Sonny, I've told you before...

DAD: *(mockingly)* Sonny, that's a sunny room...

SONNY: No, it isn't. The sun never shines around here in winter.

MOM: *(to Dad)* What?!

DAD: *(with a sense of duty)* But if it shined, then it would shine into your room. Understand?

SONNY: *(assenting)* I understand. *(Sonny wants to enter the other room but Sissy stands in his way)*

SISSY: We can't even fit in there, can we?

DAD: You couldn't fit in there before either, my dear...

SISSY: *(to Sonny)* Are you happy now, you jerk?

MOM: Sis!

SISSY: You won't need to peep through the bathroom keyhole any more, do you?

SONNY: You're fantasizing, my little chickadee.

MOM: *(Moves the whitewash emphatically.)* Dad!

DAD: Ah, my little Mom, ...it's nice enough like that!

MOM: Are you telling me this?!?

DAD: What?

MOM: Dad!!!

SONNY: It's all gold and white... *(he giggles)*

DAD: Shut up.

SISSY: Up yours.

SONNY: You'd fancy that, right?

SISSY: Asshole.

MOM: Sonny!!!

SONNY: Why, others may?

MOM: What? What may others do?

Silence. The only sound is that of Pap muttering in the background, sometimes his words are incomprehensible, he is turning around looking for the telly

PAP: Where the hell did they put it...The telly...I've hardly sat down and I have to stand up again. I've hardly sat down. It's the coffee. Shit. *(giggles)* The coffee. And I don't even drink coffee. Huh! Even if she gave me some, I wouldn't drink it. And that's the reason! *(laughs)*

SONNY: All right then. *(Pushes his sister aside, and takes his stuff out)*

PAP: *(looks around while talking)* And that it stinks here. That *I* stink. That *I*. This is what they say.

DAD: *(sitting at the table, to Mom)* Then where are they?

MOM: What where?

DAD: *(calmly)* The other letters. And the postcards. The ones delivered by the postman. The telegram chap.

SISSY: Why, has the postman delivered anything? I haven't even noticed.

PAP: They don't even know what it means to stink. How could they! I could tell. The slaughtered pig with the hooks. On the beam. That. And the bowels. When being washed in the basin. Yeah. And the bones when cooked. Those stink. *(giggles)* And what about them? *(giggles)* They know nothing. Nothing. *(the rest of his speech turns into an incomprehensible mumble).*

MOM: There're no others.

DAD: Where. Get it? I'm asking where.

MOM: Where?

DAD: Where. Now. Where.

MOM: Well, suddenly all these questions! Come on.

DAD: Not because... Not because of that, and you know it. I'm not interested in that at all any longer.

MOM: He's not interested.

DAD: No. But really. Just for our sake. For Sonny, for Sissy, for Pap and for you. And for me, too.

MOM: I see... now, this I do understand.

DAD: Do you believe it?

MOM: *(with a sigh)* Well, all right then.

Mom fishes a small, nicely banded pile from under her apron: letters, postcards.

SONNY: *(comes back, spots the little pile on the table)* Oh, God!

DAD: Pardon me? Were you talking to me?

SONNY: No, I wasn't. The letters. So many.

MOM: Don't butt in.

SONNY: Why not? Butt in what?

SISSY: *(re-enters the room, pointing at the letters)* What's this?

MOM: What's what?

PAP: *(looks aside, at the letters, loudly)* The mail.

DAD: *(pointing at the letters)* But my dear! But... When?! How long? Why?!?

MOM: Questioning again?

DAD: Just a bit.

MOM: Many times.

SONNY: *(goes there, spreads out the pile, reads from a postcard pronouncing it syllable by syllable in Hungarian)* Mee-a-mee.

PAP: What? Mee-a-mee?

SISSY: Miami, you asshole.

MOM: Some time ago. Ten years ago. Or even longer. And even before.

SONNY: *(looking at another again pronouncing it in Hungarian)* Los Angeles... *(triumphantly)* There you are!

DAD: And you? Since then?

SISSY: What about her?

DAD: You also did? You also... wrote... letters, too?

MOM: I did. Sometimes.

SONNY: She did, too.

DAD: Sometimes? What do you mean sometimes?!?

MOM: Every two months. Monthly. Sometimes.

DAD: Sometimes. *(Taken aback)* You? To her? In secret?

MOM: Well... *(Points around vaguely)* First it was just Sissy... then also Sonny... and in the meantime the whole thing, just as it came... everything...

DAD: Everything? But why?

MOM: About us. That we're fine.

DAD: Fine. Fine?!? Everything?!? In secret... In secret, you kept writing that we were fine. There? To her? And I was...

MOM: This hurts, right? That you didn't even...

DAD: It doesn't hurt. It's just that I don't understand.

SONNY: You're not alone.

MOM: The school, for example. And the Thread. While it existed. And the family. That, mostly. The family.

SONNY: (*to Sissy*) Do you understand what's going on?

SISSY: Leave me alone. We were supposed to decorate the Christmas tree.

DAD: Ten years. You've been writing them for ten years?

MOM: Ten... I mean... maybe longer. It may easily be longer.

SONNY: (*looks at the pile, then reads*) Kisses: Goldie. Now there you are! Goldie! Just like in the telegram!

SISSY: What did you think, (*Hungarian pronunciation again*) Broosvilis?

MOM: First it was just her, Goldie, writing how she was. How she was doing. About all that money she was earning. That... well, you know that... And she wrote about what she was doing... there. About her... job. And then about her block of flats for rent... about what she had... And I wrote that we were fine. About how fine we were... er... So that she wouldn't think... very fine indeed.

SISSY: What block of flats? Fine? We were fine?

MOM: (*has decided to tell them*) Quiet! She wrote to me because... Because she wanted something. She wanted to ask something. That's what she wanted. And I answered fine, indeed. I mean that we were very fine indeed. Clear?

SONNY: Clear as a birthmark on a Negro's...

DAD: Quiet!

MOM: And I wrote to her that you, Dad, you'd been doing so well in the school that you became the headmaster... And Sonny was doing wonderfully... Because he was studying to be an engineer... because he was working hard... And Sissy was our delight... besides she was a manager.

SONNY: Engineer? Me?

SISSY: Ha-ha. Ha-ha.

SONNY: (*looks at her*) Manager! Top!

SISSY: Asshole.

DAD: This?!? You?!? To her?!?

MOM: And it's true that Pap is now retired, but he still works as a consultant... important... At the slaughterhouse.

PAP: *(might have overheard something)* The slaughterhouse didn't even exist at that time... the animals were brought directly to us... *(almost half-asleep, as if continuing something)*... Father was standing by the gate watching them... Exactly in the spot where I was standing myself when the police came... They were shouting at us, saying they didn't want to see us in the church-square any more...

SONNY: Of course, of course Pap! And the sausages and the frankfurters... that part comes next...

PAP: And everything that was hanging in the smoke-house, the sausages and the frankfurters were confiscated... They confiscated everything... They set it on fire... with petrol... They said they no longer wanted me there – us... I could go with Father if I wanted... *(his last words turn into mumbling)* I've got to go out...

DAD: Stay here.

PAP: Huh?

DAD: Sit down, stop pacing like a pigeon...

PAP: *(lifts his arms up and then drops them)* What pigeon?

DAD: *(waving his hand)* It doesn't matter. *(To Mom)* And she is arriving tomorrow. That's the result. Of your scribbling. That's the result.

SISSY: What's the result?

PAP: Nothing.

MOM: Don't act as if you were so bloody sad about it!

SONNY: Can you spit out what's going on?

DAD: Sad? Are you completely crazy?

MOM: Goldie... Goldie is an... auntie... Auntie Goldie... to you, she is your... aunt. In a sense.

SISSY: In a sense?

PAP: In a sense.

SONNY: Great.

SISSY: An aunt.

SONNY: From America?

MOM: And... she used to live here, too. Some time ago.

SISSY: Here? *(Looks around)* Where?

MOM: In town. Where Pap, your Dad and I lived, too. Until she left.

SISSY: For America?

*Mom nods.*

SISSY: But why?

DAD: It's a long story.

PAP: Very long...

MOM: Of course it is.

SONNY: Oh, Mom, say something!

MOM: Your dad should tell you if he's so sad about it! Or your granddad... Since he knows so much...

PAP: Now why me? Why are you saying this to me?

MOM: You know very well why...

DAD: But my little Mom... you know I'm not sad... it's just what comes next...

PAP: Just. Just-just.

SISSY: What comes next?

DAD: *(to Mom)* We have the whole thing here... the flat... and the furniture... now how...

SONNY: Don't soil yourself because of a guest! About such a... about Goldie!

MOM: Well... in fact she wasn't Goldie... but Anne.

SISSY: Anne?!?

PAP: Annie.

MOM: And she was pretty... very pretty... but...

SONNY: But?

MOM: But she wasn't... she wasn't like us...

SISSY: Like us?

MOM: Not you. Us.

SONNY: Aha.

DAD: She was just different.

PAP: Just-just.

MOM: Hush! She was... she liked money. A lot of money. And she didn't like the thread factory.

SISSY: Well, I still can't see what made her different...

MOM: Not just because of that. She wanted money. A lot of money. Didn't she, Dad?

DAD: That's true!

SISSY: Geez.

PAP: The money?

MOM: Yes, the money!

PAP: She left... the town... First, she just went to Siófok in the summer. To work. Then also to Pest.

SISSY: To Pest!

DAD: To work.

SISSY: Poor girl.

DAD: She used to wear golden knickers. Nylon. That's how she became Goldie...

SONNY: (*excited*) Golden?!?

MOM: Well! Well!!!

PAP: I need to pee.

MOM: And then she didn't come back any more. Of course. She didn't. Because at the beginning she was supposed to, but then later...

DAD: (*almost daydreaming*) They were always living it up. Money, and the city... We no longer had any news about her. About what she wanted to do.

PAP: Who said that?

MOM: Nobody. Somebody. Why the hell are you asking questions?

SISSY: Did she escape to America? Goldie?

MOM: But she only wrote about it much later. Years later. She was silent till then...

SONNY: Did she leave just like that, without saying a word?

DAD: Without saying a word... You can put it that way...

MOM: (*emphatically*) You can put it only that way. Some years later she wrote a letter... that she was also... working there.

SISSY: Working?

MOM: And that she was earning a lot of money... and one day she would buy a house...

DAD: Mom!

MOM: Relax! That she would buy a house to let out, and she would only live on that... she would collect the rent and she would simply be printing money...

SONNY: Not bad!

SISSY: Printing money!

MOM: First I didn't even bother to answer...

DAD: First...

MOM: But then I felt sorry for her... that she was there... alone...

PAP: (*realises now*) Did you write to her?

DAD: Good morning, Pap! Have we woken up?

PAP: Did you write? To her? In secret? You?

SONNY: About the manager. And the headmaster. And the engineer. Oh, and the consultant.

PAP: In secret? And we didn't even know about it...?

MOM: Ah, just relax! Anyway, it's pretty much the same now. (*to Sonny*) That came later, when time was creeping on. First I didn't say anything. Almost nothing. Nursery, kindergarten, school. And happiness. That I wrote about.

DAD: What?

MOM: Happiness. That it's good.

SISSY: (*obtusely*) What's good?

MOM: Love is good, and harmony is good. For us. In our home. The family. And you were also born after Sonny... Two kids, and there is Pap, too. And we live happily... the weekdays. Just like... just like this Christmas...

DAD: Is it good?

MOM: This is happiness.

SISSY: The weekdays?

DAD: And what about her?

MOM: She was happy. She was also writing about this and that...

PAP: I bet she was...

MOM: And then she replied that... that... once she would also like to have it.

DAD: Happiness?

MOM: Yes. And the every day thing. And love. That is in there. In weekdays...

DAD: The kids?

MOM: Relax.

SISSY: Great.

PAP: Just-just.

SONNY: And is she... is she still...?

MOM: Is she still what?

SONNY: Is she still like... like... working?

MOM: Come on! I told you she owned a house.

SONNY: A house. Of course.

MOM: A house. Where people live. Others. And work. Others. Tenants... She just collects the money...

PAP: Just. The money. Goldie. The money. Just.

SISSY: And how long?

MOM: How long what?

SISSY: How long is she staying?

MOM: I don't know. Some days. Just for a short time. One or two days. She wrote that she was ill. And that she wanted to walk in the streets. To have a look. Once more. Memories. The fragrance, and the faces, too and the stones, everything. The houses and the trees. The Chemist's. The snow. And the Klein restaurant.

SONNY: There's no such place as the Klein restaurant.

MOM: But there used to be.

PAP: We used to have a shop, too... I was standing by my father at the counter, and I had a white apron, too...  
And at the back there was a cart-shed for the slaughter, where...

SISSY: Have a look? Is that what she wants?

MOM: Yes.

SONNY: But what? What the hell can you have a look at here?

*(Mom points around vaguely)*

DAD: Look at us, too?

MOM: Yes. Look at us, too.

SISSY: Look at me, let's say?

MOM: Let's say.

SONNY: And me?

DAD: And what about the money? Haven't you thought about that?

SONNY: What money?

DAD: Never mind. And the furniture...

SISSY: What furniture?

DAD: Never mind. And the child...

MOM: Keep your mouth shut! I can ask questions, too!

DAD: But I was just...

MOM: Don't! All right? Don't!

PAP: But you wrote those letters...

SISSY: That's fucking funny! That's why I should get jammed in a room? With him?

MOM: You should watch your language...

SISSY: Why?

MOM: Because we're a decent family none the less...

SONNY: None the less? None the less what?

*They all look at one another dumbly*

MOM: We'll act as if we'd forgotten what we had. I mean what we have. With Goldie. *(To Sissy and Sonny)*  
And you haven't heard anything, understand?

SISSY: I didn't understand anything.

SONNY: I understood the nothing.

PAP: What did you understand?

*Silence, Mom waves her hand. She puts away the letters.*

MOM: So? Then?

DAD: You, you keep saying so?

MOM: The whitewashing. If we're doing it anyway. We must carry on. And the tree, too. The decoration, and the tinsel. We're still nowhere.

SONNY: Oh, Mom, that room looks so pretty already. It's pretty enough. You shouldn't hurry with it.

MOM: Sonny!!!

DAD: *(to Mom, meditating)* Do you remember how I used to hurry in the mornings?

MOM: *(laughs)* You used to put on your tie round your head, you just loosened it...

DAD: My tie?

MOM: Yes. And you were already running in the street when you took it out of your pocket, and you put it on your neck and pulled it tight...

DAD: Which tie?

SISSY: *(to Sonny)* Do you have any idea how white walls are in America?

SONNY: You tell me. 'Cause you know, don't you?

SISSY: White beyond your wildest dreams *(she's ready to leave)* Right, I'm going, at least I'll do some packing... before you settle in there...

DAD: Right, let's go Sonny!

SONNY: Dad ! Right you?

DAD: If we're doing it anyway, it might as well be pretty.

PAP: Goldie... She was pretty... so pretty... Oh dear, dear!

SISSY: *(shouting from outside)* Mom!

MOM: But even so, you often didn't get in before the bell...

SISSY: Mom!!!

DAD: Often?

MOM: Or did you?

SISSY: Have you read that that guy Gere is a Buddhist?

DAD: It's not true, I was never late...

MOM: *(shouts back)* Which one is Gere? *(To Dad)* Sometimes you were.

DAD: *(offended)* Not even once in thirty years.

SISSY: Richard. The one with grey hair. The one you also fancy so much. You know...

DAD: I didn't even have a tie. Never. *(bashfully)* And do you still remember the time we'd go home for harvest?

SISSY: It's here, I've just read it...

DAD: I carried the meat in a briefcase on the train...

MOM: What do you mean he's a Buddhist?

SISSY: Just like that. Tibet and all that. And he loves everybody.

DAD: In wax-paper so that it wouldn't soak through. On the platform...

MOM: The wind was blowing my hair...

DAD: The meat from the town ! Of course if your grandfather had sold that lousy meat shop... In time...

MOM: If. Ha-ha-ha.

DAD: Yes. If.

MOM: (*furiously*) Then I wouldn't have slaved away at the Thread, and then we wouldn't be living in this lousy little town now.

DAD: It's not lousy. And it's not little either. Just a town. Simply a town. A nice Hungarian town. It's in Hungary and it's a nice Hungarian town. That's it.

SISSY: Madonna still wants another kid...

MOM: An other?

DAD: And I wouldn't have been running to the vo-tech in the mornings...

MOM: Two kids, that's all right. We have two as well. Two. Two kids. (*to Dad*) Don't say vo-tech. Say vocational technical school.

*We can hear a sudden and sharp ring at the door, twice, one after the other – everyone's startled*

DAD: Who the hell is that? At this time.

SISSY: (*comes back after hearing the ring*): It was twice, wasn't it? Then it must be the postman.

MOM: The postman? At this time? It can't be him.

DAD: Aha! The big secret-keeper!

MOM: What?

DAD: Why, didn't you conspire with him?

PAP: (*obtusely*) With him? With the postman?

MOM: Get the door, Pap ! You're just hanging around anyway. No use at all.

PAP: And there's no sinew on the bone either.

SISSY: Is there any problem, Pap?

MOM: You could also help now and again.

PAP: Help! Help!

DAD: So, open the door, all right? (*goes to Pap and shakes him by his shoulders*) Pap! Go out!

PAP: I don't have to go. Right now.

SISSY: It doesn't matter.

PAP: (*struggling to get out of his chair*) All right, all right, I'm going.

MOM: And open the door, too!

PAP: Which door?

DAD: The entrance door.

MOM: The exit door.

PAP: Why?

SISSY and SONNY: Because someone rang.

PAP: Someone rang?

DAD: Yes.

PAP: I didn't even hear it. *(turns back at the door)* How many times?

SONNY: *(He shows with his fingers that it was twice.)*

PAP: Then it must be the postman! The money's come!

SISSY: It hasn't come, it's been brought.

MOM: Surely. Open the door anyway.

*Another two sharp rings*

PAP: It must be very urgent. All right then. *(goes out)*

*Silence, breathless suspense*

*Suddenly a man appears, teetering from one side to the other, with a huge trunk on his back, then Goldie shows up from behind*

GOLDIE: *(She opens her arms wide in the middle of the room)* My dears!!!!

*They are astonished and don't move.*

GOLDIE: *(she makes an ordering gesture)* Put it down there! Watch the tree! Right! You can go now!

*The porter stumbles out*

GOLDIE: *(stops him)* Wait! *(she digs into the big golden pocketbook hanging on her shoulder)* Here, this is yours! A dollar!

PORTER: Thank you, madam, thank you! *(bows and is about to leave, but turns back again)* Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas and all the best to everyone!

GOLDIE: All right, just go now! *(looks around)* Well! Everything became so small here! I can't believe it! Either the house shrank or I'm taller...*shakes her head, then looks at the still astonished family*) No kisses?!? My little angels! No hug?!

*They all run to Goldie. Each of them tries to hug her, pushing the others aside, but no one touches her.*

MOM: My dear!!! We were expecting you... but only tomorrow... as the telegram...

DAD: Goldie!!!

PAP: Annie!

SONNY: Auntie?!? Auntie?! ?This one?!?

SISSY: Good morning!

GOLDIE: Slow down, slow down, my dears! Oh, I'm so tired. I haven't walked so much for ages! The taxi-driver said there was no way he could come up here... My legs... *(she stretches her legs, looking at her expensive, golden shoes in great amusement)* Well, my legs...

MOM: Take a seat, dear Goldie! Er... here! No... rather here! Pap, help me, please!

*(she jumps to her feet and starts arranging the chairs, then they place a chair in the middle of the room, which thereafter serves as a throne for Goldie)*

GOLDIE: Come on, my dear, leave it...*(she takes a seat)* This town...!

SISSY: Yes, this town.

GOLDIE: And you...*(looks Dad up and down)* as if time had flown by...

DAD: Well... Goldie... you know how it is...

GOLDIE: I don't know. And you're so... spotty...

SONNY: Oh dear, the whitewash!

GOLDIE: It doesn't matter. It wasn't easy... climbing up the hill... I say... It's nice that you live up here on the top of town...

MOM: Nice.

GOLDIE: Just like pigeons in a... where?

SISSY: In a pigeon-cote. In a pigeon-cote.

GOLDIE: Yes, that's right. It didn't come to me. Oh, my dears! How well you look! You must be Sissy, right, my dear?

SISSY: Well... I think so...

GOLDIE: And you must be... you must be... *(her voice falters)*

MOM: He's Sonny. Our boy.

SONNY: Presumably

GOLDIE: *(getting over her embarrassment)* Presumably he says! Look at him! He's a complete man!!! There are girls...presumably??? *(she laughs ambiguously)*

*All of a sudden we can hear a strong chime of bells*

GOLDIE: Gosh, is it noon already?

PAP: I doubt it.

DAD: The bells are ringing.

SONNY: *(embarrassed)* I...don't know...you know...that time has flown...I mean over us...

SISSY: The bells are ringing.

SONNY: You don't say...

MOM: Just relax, Goldie...What joy!

GOLDIE: But you, my dear, you haven't changed a bit...!

MOM: Come on, Goldie... You're the one who hasn't changed a bit! You haven't.

DAD: Not at all!

GOLDIE: You think so, my dear? (*getting interested, she smooths out her clothes like a whore*) Well, I don't know... My dears, I wouldn't want to incommode you, that's all.

MOM: Come on, my dear! You cannot possibly incommode us! You cannot!

GOLDIE: Surely I can! I mean, you should just carry on as if I weren't here! This flat is so nice... And your Christmas tree is pretty, too... so natural... everything is so natural here...

SONNY: What does that mean?

SISSY: It means it's crap.

GOLDIE: I know that Uncle Josey likes watching the telly...

MOM: Who? Oh, Pap? Of course! He used to like it. But broke...

SISSY: Pap?

MOM: The telly.

PAP: Did it?

MOM: Yes.

DAD: We'll get it fixed some time. Tomorrow. Or the day after tomorrow. Some time - some time.

PAP: Yes.

GOLDIE: Oh, you have no idea how happy I am now... Finally at home... Just being here makes me so happy... A happy Christmas...

SONNY: Is it so good here?

SISSY: Is it so bad there?

GOLDIE: (*she waves her hand*) Ahhhh!

SONNY: But that's... America! Right?

GOLDIE: Oh, my dear, that bustle... and that crowd... so many strangers... when it's quite enough to know that one part of the world is constantly behind your back... Love is the only thing that counts.

DAD: (*obtusely*) Pardon me?

GOLDIE: Love and being together. Come closer. Even closer, come on! Your auntie doesn't bite! (*she laughs*). I wish I could give you a hug!!!! Once someone I loved very much told me that everything in the world is made up of little parts. You see what I mean? That the chair is made up of little chairs. The table of little tables. And, let's say this bone in my hand of little bones. And those bones are made up of other, even smaller ones, and so on and so forth, endlessly. You see what I mean?

SONNY: Well, not really...

GOLDIE: I'm trying to say that everyone has these inside... being together... entrails, blood... flesh...

PAP: Flesh? Meat? I know what you're saying!

GOLDIE: You know...

PAP: About the meat...

DAD: Pap, this is about something else now!

MOM: Talking about meat... breakfast! You must be so hungry, my dear... Sissy, come and help me with the plates! My God, I don't know where my head is... we were only expecting you tomorrow... what a surprise!

SONNY: Breakfast? But it just struck noon!

MOM: Wait a minute! Sonny, you come, too. You must always have breakfast. And Dad, please come, too!

SISSY: But Mom! You want all four of us to go and fetch her breakfast?

MOM: Four? Yes, all four of you! No, sorry. Let's all stay here. You cannot start a day with an empty stomach.

SISSY: Are you all right, Mom? You seem so confused!

MOM: Anyone not coming should stay here.

GOLDIE: Just go, my dear, don't worry, you can go, no fuss...

MOM: Yes, dear Goldie, we're going...

*(she exits with Sissy)*

GOLDIE: Well...I call this a family. This is what I meant. Being together.

DAD: Yes.

*A moment of silence*

GOLDIE: Does this suitcase bother you here?

DAD: Goldie, you know we would tell you if it did! You know that... nothing that belongs to you would bother us... my God... after so many years...

GOLDIE: *(cool)* Because, if it's possible, I would rather keep an eye on it... All right? I got used to it so much...

PAP: My little Annie, we'll do everything as you like it...

GOLDIE: *(bursts into laughter)* Everything? The way I like it?

MOM: *(comes back with some plates and cups)* My dear, what a lovely big suitcase... We might just as well set the table on it...*(laughs)*

GOLDIE: Just tell me if it bothers you, my dear, because... Maybe you could push it under the tree, all right?  
*(Sonny and Dad push the suitcase aside a bit)* My dear, will it bother you there?

MOM: Not a bit! It's just like... a suitcase. It's the best place for it. My dear, I've brought you a lovely cup of tea in the meantime... *(gives the cup to Goldie)* Drink it, my dear, surely it will do you good... *(meanwhile she puts the plates on the table but watches whether Goldie is drinking the tea)*

GOLDIE: *(looks around)* You live well.

DAD: Oh, you know!

MOM: (*cutting in*) And you... what a lovely bag... and your shoes... and your dress... Goldie, you're happy, aren't you? You were happy... there, weren't you? It's a lovely tea, isn't it?

GOLDIE: Happy? Hah! (*she laughs*) My dear, the nature of happiness is just as diverse and unpredictable as that of men... Just as unpredictable as the nature of unhappiness...

SONNY: You're talking a bit strangely... Like a... like you were an actor.

GOLDIE: Everyone is like that. Everyone is like an actor, don't you think?

DAD: Sonny! Don't get cheeky. So soon.

SONNY: I didn't mean to hurt you...

GOLDIE: I know that. I'm a bit tired. It's probably because of the time... You know the jetlag.

PAP: Can you hear that? The bells again!

DAD: I can't hear anything.

SONNY: I can't either.

PAP: Are you sure? Because I can hear it.

DAD: You bet your boots.

*Sissy also comes back from the kitchen.*

MOM: (*with artificial vivacity*) Breakfast is almost ready!

GOLDIE: Ah, a family breakfast!

MOM: Oh, this is how we do it... the family together... meals are sacred in our house... The family is also sacred... The only problem, my dear is that we must set off right after eating.

SISSY: Where to?!

MOM: Come on, Sissy! I've got to pop in the factory... Your dad in the school... He's got to change as well... Your brother has to drop by the office... his office... Pap's got to go to the slaughterhouse... Everyone has duties... Everyone's got to leave... Even before Christmas... You know that, don't you?

SISSY: Well... I know.

PAP: Everyone?

MOM: Everyone.

GOLDIE: I loved your letters so much, my dear! Old memories! And all that joy! All you wrote about. About yourselves.

DAD: Er... we also loved your letters, Goldie. And everything you... er... sent us.

GOLDIE: Not just loved them, I still love them. All of them. The whole lot and each letter separately!

MOM: Well... because the family... you know... my God! But what will you do, my dear if we're at work...?

GOLDIE: Oh, don't worry about me, my dear! I'll be just sitting and resting...

DAD: (*looks at Mom*) All day long?

MOM: While we're at work.

GOLDIE: Why not? I can do with some rest.

SONNY: After all that fatigue...

MOM: Sonny!

GOLDIE: *(taking a lasting look at Sonny)* As you're saying, sir. After all that fatigue...

SONNY: Sorry.

SISSY: He can't help it. He's an asshole. The poor thing.

MOM: Sis!

GOLDIE: Don't worry. There's no disgrace in work. No disgrace whatsoever. Is that right? But you know this better than me. Is that right?

MOM: Yes, of course.

GOLDIE: Oh, my God! Little Mom, I thought of you so much! Well, the childhood! How the memories come back! I remember your mother. As she was feeding the pigeons. She used to go behind the shop, to the pigeon-cote with wheat in her palms. She used to go there every morning. And the pigeons flew to her one by one, nicely taking turns.

DAD: *(opens his arms wide and then drops them down, he repeats this several times as if he wanted to fly with his wings)* The pigeons...

PAP: *(imitating)* The pigeons...

GOLDIE: So many pigeons... yes. And they were all sitting in a row... they didn't hurt each other, they waited for their turn...

MOM: We don't hurt each other, either.

GOLDIE: I know. That's why I'm here. Because of happiness.

PAP: *(muttering)* She couldn't stand blood... The smell of meat alone made her throw up... That's what she said... And she rather kept going back to the pigeons...

MOM: Shall I bring the breakfast?

*No one answers*

MOM: I'll bring it. *(She doesn't move)* I'll go out and bring it in. *(Not moving)* Then we'll just eat and talk. *(Still not moving)*

GOLDIE: It's nice here. It's so... peaceful. The memories come back one by one. Like the pigeons. *(She holds out her palm as if she had wheat in it)* Pick. Pick-pick. Come on, little pigeons, come on!

SONNY: *(He bends over, acts as if he was picking)* Yummy! Yummy! It's very tasty! Golden wheat! From real gold.

*Goldie draws Sonny very close to herself, patting him on the nape of his neck, while he is 'picking' from her palm – the scene is definitely erotic – the others are watching them in shock.*

*The doorbell rings – twice.*

DAD: Hoo-ha. What's going on here today?

GOLDIE: Someone rang. Is that right?

MOM and DAD: Pap!!!

MOM: You've got to go out anyway, haven't you?

DAD: Two birds with the same stone.

PAP: All right then. (*Exits, and the Postman enters immediately*)

POSTMAN: Good afternoon! Good afternoon! Good afternoon, ladies!

DAD: At this time of day? At noon? Mr. Secret-keeper?

POSTMAN: I beg your pardon?

DAD: I'm not pardoning anyone today.

POSTMAN: What do you mean noon? It's morning... The sun has just risen.

SONNY: Telegram? Another telegram?

POSTMAN: No, no! (*points at himself*) Moneygram! That's what I do now!

SISSY: Honey-cake.

GOLDIE: Good afternoon.

POSTMAN: Good afternoon, madam. Merry Christmas. (*Looks at the suitcase*) What a lovely big... trunk.

SONNY: A suitcase.

MOM: A bag.

DAD: Trunk.

SONNY: Ker-plunk.

POSTMAN: From overseas of course. I know.

SISSY: What money?

POSTMAN: A lot.

MOM: At this time of day? Here? Now?

POSTMAN: This is different now. This is particularly for a person. (*He reads phonetically*) Miss Anne Goldie Pigeon. If... she's here.

PAP: (*comes back*) Is it a telegram?

DAD: Yes. A telegram.

PAP: I thought it was a little bit of money at least.

SONNY: You thought so, Pap?

SISSY: It's a delivery.

GOLDIE: Allowance. From overseas. From home. To here. I thought it was easier this way.

MOM: Allowance?

GOLDIE: What's due, it's due. Each month. What do you call it... Pension! Yes, that's it.

POSTMAN: Then it's you, madam? Sign there. If you will, please. It's a must.

GOLDIE: Of course. I understand.

*(The postman does not give her anything, Goldie does not sign anything)*

MOM: We were just about to have breakfast... but you must be in a hurry...

POSTMAN: What did you say?

DAD: Will you sit down with us a bit?

POSTÁS: Oh, I really don't know... It's work-time... Hungarians don't eat while working. I mean they don't talk with their mouth full. And so on.

*We can hear the chime of bells*

SONNY: Bells are ringing.

SISSY: You don't say.

POSTMAN: And time...flies so quickly...*(sits down)* It's noon already...

GOLDIE: The postman... You bring messages, don't you?

POSTMAN: That, too, madam, that too. Money, too and messages, too. Now that you've mentioned it... *(he fishes out a little packet from his bag)* ...and the contacts... walking through lives and homes... especially in case of a lovely family like this...

DAD: Do you also have a parcel for us?

POSTMAN: No! This is mine! Sweet dreams, a happy day. Pills. Vitamins. Compound. It's a bio-product. Bio.

SONNY: Bullshit. Now he starting again.

POSTMAN: It's proven. It's been tested.

SISSY: He's crazy! He's a postman, and he's selling some kind of tablets all the time...

POSTMAN: Vitamins, please... Cheap. It comes in handy, especially in winter when there's no sunshine.

MOM: We don't want it. Understand? We've told you. We don't want it.

PAP: We need money. That we need. Very much. I mean we'd like to have some.

DAD: Pap!

PAP: But why...

DAD: Just because.

MOM: We don't want tablets...

SONNY: Where there's need, there's help.

GOLDIE: *(almost day-dreaming)* I was dreaming a lot, too...

MOM: The weather will turn bad... I've got a headache...

GOLDIE: In the container... *(to the Postman)* You know, once I was travelling for long time in an iron box. Far. Very far. We got to the free-port. Csepel. Five girls... Someone helped... the... work... we knew him from work. He was a big burly chap, his chest was all hairy, even his back... We were hidden in a container. In a big

iron box... I had the golden one on. And my tight spangly silver dress above it... As we were coming from work, at dawn, straight... And when the container was opened in Triest, only two girls out of the five were still breathing... In my spangly silver dress, like a fish out of water... It was dark and I was battling for breath... The spangles all came off... On the metal floor like scales...

DAD: Fish-coins.

POSTMAN: Er... I didn't know, madam, I beg your pardon.

GOLDIE: I was dreaming then, too.

DAD: Were you dreaming?

GOLDIE: Oh, of course. I was dreaming. About myself, too.

POSTMAN: Well... I don't have such a pill. But I'll ask. At the center.

GOLDIE: I was lying in the hot iron box, and in my dream I was swimming. I was a fish in the vast ocean... Do you understand this?

POSTMAN: Not really.

SONNY: Well, I know this feeling, too.

GOLDIE: And I was dreaming about a woman. She was standing in the back-garden, and the pigeons were flying onto her open palms.

POSTMAN: Your respectable mother? Was it her standing with her open palms?

GOLDIE: My mother? No. Almost. I thought so.

POSTMAN: I see.

SONNY: Good for you.

DAD: Now, that was enough. *(To the Postman)* Good-bye.

POSTMAN: Excuse me, and the pills? Don't you want them?

MOM: My little Goldie...

SONNY: *(to Sissy)* Do you understand what they're talking about?

SISSY: Leave me out of this, alright?

POSTMAN: Then you don't want them just now if I understood correctly?

MOM: You understood correctly.

PAP: *(to Goldie)* You were pretty. Oh, my little Goldie, very much so. And you're still very pretty.

DAD: That's true, Goldie, you're still...

MOM: You just shut up!

GOLDIE: *(holds out her hands, opens her palms and shows them to the postman)* Look...

POSTMAN: Yes, madam! What should I look at?

SISSY: Well, you can look at yourself.

POSTMAN: *(bends over)* Ah... this is a fish-scale.

GOLDIE: That's right. The scale of a fish. A fish-coin.

DAD: I told you!

MOM: What did you say?

POSTMAN: Yes, madam. Forgive me. I just thought I'd tell you about the pills, but if I was mistaken, then I'll just forget about it...

MOM: Goldie, please...

GOLDIE: Of course, my dear. Of course... It's so dark outside... The night fell so soon.

*Chime of bells again – they're all listening*

POSTMAN: Uh-oh. It's getting late.

SISSY: I knew we would be late.

SONNY: You didn't miss a thing.

SISSY: You must know.

DAD: Evening?

MOM: It's already seven.

PAP: Lights are on in the shop.

GOLDIE: Time passes quickly when we spend it chatting with loved ones.

POSTMAN: There's such a strange smell in the air tonight. Perhaps it'll snow? It'll be a white Christmas!

PAP: I must go out.

DAD: Stay here, Pap! You'd better stay here now.

PAP: Yes.

POSTMAN: But I can go, can't I?

DAD: Our relative (*points at Goldie*) lived on the other side of the ocean for a long time. She was very young when she left.

MOM: Very young.

POSTMAN: Well, she's still young if you don't mind me saying so. And if I may... she's very... pretty...

GOLDIE: Well, well! Mr. postman... I've returned home because I'm ill.

MOM: Are you in pain, my dear?

GOLDIE: Yes, I am. No, I'm not. I'm sleepy. I've got a terrible pain. (*Suddenly she looks very old, and like the elderly she talks to herself*) I couldn't give birth here... In this town... They told me to go to Budapest... There nobody was interested if my belly was growing...

SISSY: They told you that? Who told you that?

GOLDIE: And they also said they would look after him... Because it would be better for him... and for me, too, and for everyone...

MOM: Goldie, my dear, you should rest...

GOLDIE: And they also said they would look after him... Because it would be better for him... for everyone...

SONNY: Who are you talking about?

GOLDIE: But I will always send the money...

SISSY: The money? What money?

GOLDIE: I worked a lot... Very much... every night...

MOM: You know what, my dear? Put up your feet and lean back a bit, just relax! *(Signals to Dad, over her protests they put her feet up and cover them, they treat her as if she was seriously ill)*

POSTMAN: Well... excuse me, but my pills... if Madam wants to get some sleep...

DAD: You should go now, alright.

POSTMAN: If that's what you want?

MOM: Yes.

POSTMAN: Well... it's evening anyway...

*No one moves*

POSTMAN: I'm off then...

*Goldie lies in a reclined position, covered, her eyes are closed. The others are standing around her, no one moves.*

## II.

*The room is empty, nobody is present. The doorbell rings twice, then there's silence. Another two rings, noises.*

BALOG NEIGHBOR: *(From outside)* Hello! *(He enters)* Good afternoon! Hello! Pigeon family! Please! *(Stops, looks around)* No one's home? No one's home. Bless my soul. They're out and leave the house unattended. The door is open. All is left just like that. An open house. *(He giggles)* Of course! *(He starts searching the room)* Of course! Everything is just flung about *(gets to the suitcase)* Hey, hey! What a huge trunk. Suitcase. Bag. Really. How come they've got one like this? It could even be American! *(Bends down to have a look, reads with Hungarian accent)* Made in Taiwan. *(Tries to open it)* Damn it. It's locked. *(He stands up, turns away from the suitcase and kicks it as though by accident)* Oops. Oops-oops. It really is locked, isn't it. Well. What can a huge trunk like this contain? *(He tries to push it aside)* It's bloody heavy! *(He slams it)* A worker's fist is an iron fist! Ouch! That was hard! It didn't slam where I should have. Wait, let's just wait. Let's say a knife! A specialized tool. A little knife. An itty-bitty knife...some scissors... *(He starts humming, and searches the room for a tool while walking up and down, he finds a pair of scissors on the table)* Ahh, a friendly pair of scissors!

*We can hear the bell, twice, quickly one after the other. Then the door bursts open and the Doctor dashes in.*

DOCTOR: Good morning! I'm here. Where's the little patient? *(Stops, looks around)* Where's the patient?

BALOG: The patient?

DOCTOR: The patient.

BALOG: What patient?

DOCTOR: Not what patient but where. Where is she? This is what I'm asking.

BALOG: Well... I'm the only one here.

DOCTOR: *(Looks him up and down)* You're not ill.

BALOG: Well, now that you mention it, there is a sort of... around my liver, here if you touch it, look, a small lump...

DOCTOR: *(takes a step back)* You're not ill!

BALOG: Yes, I understood, sir. I am not ill!

DOCTOR: But where is she then?

BALOG: What?

DOCTOR: The patient. I was called here. To see a patient. It's urgent.

BALOG: You were called?

DOCTOR: Yes, I was called. By the Pigeon family...Don't they live here?

BALOG: They do. When did they call you?

DOCTOR: Yesterday. In the evening.

BALOG: Urgent? Yesterday? But it's no longer yesterday evening. It's the following morning.

DOCTOR: I could only come now... I had a lot to do.

BALOG: Aha. Well, there's no one here. No one's at home.

DOCTOR: Only you.

BALOG: Me? Me. Not me. Not me. I'm a neighbour. Neighbour Balog. That's who I am. I just popped in for a second. I don't really understand this either, these people are always at home. This is why... I just popped in...

DOCTOR: When there's no one at home?

BALOG: Well, you can't tell that from outside. Just if you're already in.

DOCTOR: What about the scissors?

BALOG: What scissors?

*The Doctor points at them*

BALOG: These? Scissors! I was just about to put them back. *(Goes to the table, puts the scissors down)*

DOCTOR: What a huge suitcase they've got here.

BALOG: Where? Ah! This one here? Nice. Very nice.

DOCTOR: A globe-trotting trunk. An authentic American piece.

BALOG: No-no. Taiwan.

DOCTOR: What's the difference.

BALOG: And it's quite heavy, too.

DOCTOR: How do you know?

BALOG: It looks heavy.

*The Doctor puts his bag on the suitcase, barely concealing his obvious efforts to open the suitcase with his knee and hands*

DOCTOR: Hmm.

BALOG: It's locked.

DOCTOR: What? Ah, the suitcase! Of course. Have you tried?

BALOG: No...I'm just guessing...

DOCTOR: *(Gives it a push with his knee)* Why would a suitcase be locked in a flat...why...to hell with it.

BALOG: Why, why. Because it's from Taiwan. Hungarians would never lock their suitcase.

DOCTOR: No?

*We can hear some noise from outside, Goldie appears in the door, but they don't notice her*

BALOG: I should know. I'm also Hungarian.

DOCTOR: I wouldn't lock it either.

BALOG: Well, then you're also Hungarian.

DOCTOR: And the Pigeons? Aren't they Hungarian?

BALOG: *(Helplessly opens his arms)* Hungarians are hospitable people. That's for sure.

DOCTOR: That's right! Hungarians consider a guest sacred.

BALOG: And Hungarians would never lie.

DOCTOR: Hungarians are truthful, openhearted and straightforward.

*(In the meantime Balog takes up the scissors from the table and hands it over to the Doctor)*

BALOG: Hungarians do not talk with their mouths full.

DOCTOR: *(Taken aback)* What? *(takes the scissors)* Ah, of course. Chit-chat is not their cup of tea.

BALOG: Yes, sir. Hungarians always have their doors open.

DOCTOR: Come on! *(He makes an ordering gesture to Balog)* Come here, help me a bit! Open! Open! You mean open? It's not open!

BALOG: *(Goes to him, helps in the loosening)* We've survived the Tartars, the Turks, the Austrians and the Russians, too, we'll survive again, no matter what comes.

DOCTOR: It's not about surviving, it's about opening.

BALOG: Well, this is what I've just said.

DOCTOR: *(Finishes loosening the suitcase, puts the scissors down, he anxiously examines Balog's retina)* Are you sure that you're not the patient?

BALOG: Well, since you're asking, my liver...

DOCTOR: Leave me alone with your liver. I'm a vegetarian. Come on, press it a bit. *(He tries to open the suitcase again)* The hell with it! It's definitely locked!

GOLDIE: *(Steps forward away from the wall)* What are you doing here?

*The Doctor and neighbour Balog jump back from the suitcase, Balog trips over and falls onto his back, the Doctor drops the scissors, they are trying to conceal what they were doing before in a humorous way)*

GOLDIE: I asked what you were doing here?

DOCTOR: Ta-talking.

BALOG: *(getting on his feet)* Yes, madam. We're just talking.

GOLDIE: Do you live here?

BALOG: We? Yes, we do, of course. I mean no. Not exactly.

DOCTOR: I am here officially, madam...I was called. I am the doctor.

GOLDIE: Doctor? I thought you were a mechanic.

DOCTOR: No way, madam! A doctor.

BALOG: And I am Balog. The neighbour. Neighbour Balog.

DOCTOR: *(Gracefully handing over the scissors to Balog)* And if...may I ask who the madam...the ...young lady is?

BALOG: *(Hissing to the Doctor)* Don't hand them to me, put them down yourself!

GOLDIE: Young lady? Hahhh! You're so kind! Considerably kind!

BALOG: Are you also looking for someone?

GOLDIE: As you say. Looking. You put things politely. The Pigeons. Among others things. I mean for the most part.

BALOG: Well, unfortunately, they're not here. They aren't... at home.

DOCTOR: *(Puts the scissors down)* They've left. Whoosh. *(He indicates with his hands as if he was a bird)*

GOLDIE: Is something the matter with you?

DOCTOR: I apologise. It was part of the explanation.

GOLDIE: Strange.

BALOG: *(misunderstanding)* Well, these are strange people, madam. They invite you and then they leave. Especially at Christmas time.

GOLDIE: Do you know them?

BALOG: Me, madam? Like a family physician! I mean, better. Better than that. Closely. Inside out. *(The Doctor acts as if he wanted to examine Balog)*

GOLDIE: They're decent, brave, hard-working people, aren't they?

BALOG: You tell me! They're decent, honest, hard-working. Who?

GOLDIE: The Pigeons.

BALOG: All right! Of course. *(To the Doctor)* Leave me alone! You keep bothering me! Nothing is the matter with me. *(To Goldie)* Those people. The Pigeons are very decent people...*(looks Goldie up and down)* And the lady... what did you say you were doing here?

GOLDIE: Me? You know... I lent something to these people... the Pigeons'... something very important... a long time ago. A very long time ago. I'm here to get it back...

DOCTOR: *(He intends it for the "examined" Balog, but Goldie misunderstands)* Well, in my opinion it won't be easy.

GOLDIE: What do you mean? You don't like this lovely family?

DOCTOR: Who? Madam, I don't even like myself.

BALOG: Lovely family? Well, well! *(Points around the room)* Have a look around!

GOLDIE: Of course. Obviously, they don't have an easy life. They work all day long.

BALOG: Oucccchhh! That's what you get for talking too much!

DOCTOR: Do you have any pain?

BALOG: Get off my back! *(To Goldie)* Do you really think they're at work?

GOLDIE: Aren't they?

BALOG: It's been years since they last stepped out of the house. Almost! I should know.

DOCTOR: Didn't they?

BALOG: No one did.

DOCTOR: How do they then make both ends meet then?

BALOG: Who the hell knows. An allowance or something. They've got a rich relative or something. *(He shows it)* From overseas! That sends them money. This is what I call work!

DOCTOR: From overseas?

BALOG: Aha. From far away. Like this suitcase. I'm sure it was sent by her. Some old lady. They say. She supports them.

GOLDIE: An old lady?

BALOG: *(With uncertainty)* Well, madam... I only heard it from the postman...

GOLDIE: And these people don't work?

BALOG: Imagine that! Some people are such lucky beggars. They even bought this house with the money! When it was still cheap. Under the Communists. I mean after. When Mr. Pigeon was forced into retirement, and Mrs. Pigeon had been retired for years... yet they had money to buy a house. See what I mean?

DOCTOR: You know so much.

BALOG: You pay attention. That's why you exist. That's our *raison d'être*.

*Goldie comes inside and sits down*

BALOG: *(ironically)* Please, have a seat.

GOLDIE: Thank you. *(to the Doctor)* And what about you?

DOCTOR: I was called. To see a patient.

GOLDIE: You were called? But no one is here.

DOCTOR: Not now. But there was yesterday. Yesterday. Evening. They told me someone took ill.

BALOG: Their relative perhaps. The American.

DOCTOR: Perhaps.

BALOG: The journey, you know and the fatigue...

GOLDIE: And has she recovered yet?

*The Doctor opens his arms*

GOLDIE: *(To Balog)* And what about their son? Do you know anything about him?

BALOG: Sonny?

GOLDIE: Why, is there another one?

BALOG: No, there isn't. *(Wondering)* As far as I know.

GOLDIE: As far as you know.

BALOG: And... if you don't mind me asking... what did Madam lend... to these people?

GOLDIE: I do mind.

*Door banging, noises from outside*

MOM: *(from outside)* Hello! We're home!

BALOG: They're home.

MOM: *(Entering)* My dear, I hope you've had a good rest...*(notices the Doctor and Balog)* And you?

DOCTOR: Good afternoon, Mrs Pigeon.

BALOG: Good afternoon.

MOM: *(She examines them suspiciously)* What are you doing here? *(Shouting)* Dad! Come in!

DAD *(Enters)* Ah, Doctor! And you as well neighbour Balog?

GOLDIE: We're having a nice chat with these gentlemen. About life.

BALOG: I was just saying to the madam that Hungarians had suffered a lot, but they never gave up. Because the Hungarian soul has a spark that never blows out. However, it can produce big flames when needed.

DAD: Spark? What spark are you talking about?

GOLDIE: And I was telling them about the loan I am here to collect.

MOM: Were you?

DOCTOR: The madam is exaggerating. We've just got a little engaged in conversation.

MOM: Just a little?

BALOG: Something like that.

DAD: And now? What's going on now? What did you say? I haven't understood a word.

GOLDIE: Well, only that, nothing really. You've got home from work, and we were just talking. With the gentlemen. Because the gentlemen were discussing some kind of repair. And some cure.

DOCTOR: We did not discuss any repairs at all. Only a cure.

MOM: That's it! We called the doctor here ourselves.

DOCTOR: You see?

DAD: Yesterday.

MOM: But there's no need any more. It's not pressing any more.

DOCTOR: Isn't there a patient?

MOM: No. It was a mistake.

DAD: A misunderstanding.

DOCTOR: And was there?

MOM: What?

DOCTOR: A patient.

GOLDIE: No, there wasn't. Not here.

DAD: No?

GOLDIE: No.

MOM: But thank you anyway.

DAD: Very much. But there's no need. *(They push the Doctor towards the door)*

DOCTOR: Well then, perhaps I should... go now... a lot of patients are waiting for me... And we were also talking about Hungarian hospitality...

MOM: Thank you, Doctor, anyway for coming so soon...

DOCTOR: And your respectable relative?

DAD: What about her?

DOCTOR: At least I could have a quick look at her, if I'm...

MOM: You've been looking at her all along, wasn't that enough?

BALOG: Uh-oh!

DOCTOR: Is it... the young lady?

MOM: Young lady!

GOLDIE: Yes, it is.

DOCTOR: I'm so sorry. If only I had known!

GOLDIE: Don't worry, Doctor. I'm fine now. Am I right, my dear?

MOM: Of course.

DAD: If you say so.

GOLDIE: *(to the Doctor)* But we'll talk later, won't we?

DOCTOR: Pardon me?

GOLDIE: Because a little talk can't do any harm... don't you agree?

DOCTOR: I do. I mean whatever you think.

MOM: *(Forces one or two bank notes in the Doctor's hands)* We'll let you know if we need you, Doctor, all right?

DOCTOR: I was just *(looks at the money)* well if you, then... all right! *(tries to eavesdrop from behind Mom and Dad, to Goldie)* It was my pleasure, good-bye...

GOLDIE: Take care, Doctor! In these hard times, you never know...

DAD: What?

BALOG: The slippery pavement for instance.

DAD: For instance.

DOCTOR: I'll take care, I will... *(we can hear his last words from outside, he is literally forced out from the room)*

DAD: Now. We're done with this.

MOM: Not altogether.

DAD: What do you mean?

*Mom silently points at neighbour Balog*

DAD: Aha. *(To Balog)* What shall we do with you?

BALOG: If you don't mind... nothing.

MOM: Nothing? Just like that?

BALOG: I just came over... because the door was open... for a second... but I'm not here... and not anywhere else... in fact I'm nowhere... *(he is backing up, he's almost out)*

DAD: Stop!

BALOG: *(stops immediately)* Yes, sir?

DAD: Were you talking?

BALOG: You mean with the lady? Oh, come on...

MOM: Entering other people's flat. Right? *(They start in a low voice, but they get louder and louder, and finally end up shouting)*

DAD: Peeping through the fence for years. It wasn't enough, was it?

MOM: Digging through our mail-box. Right?

DAD: Stealing the newspapers, right?!?

MOM: Staring through the window, eh?

DAD: Writing letters, right?

MOM: Molesting us, making proposals, right?!?

DAD: *(surprised, to Mom)* What?

MOM: It's not important.

DAD: What do you mean it's not important?

MOM: Not me. Sis. These days.

BALOG: *(He has totally collapsed, but he pulls himself together)* I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to... I was having such a nice chat with the madam... about hospitality... about life... about feasts...

DAD: Nice?

MOM: How nice?

GOLDIE: *(Cuts in ironically)* What's that, did you get scared?

MOM: *(Nervously)* You've misunderstood something, my dear.

GOLDIE: Of course. As always.

DAD: But Goldie! She didn't mean that...

GOLDIE: Of course, she didn't. *(goes to Mom, and looks closely into her eyes)* I know pretty well how she meant it... I know...

MOM: Do you?

GOLDIE: Yes, I do. I've had time to think about it.

BALOG: Excuse me, I...

MOM: *(She's still face-to-face with Goldie)* Get out of here!

BALOG: *(Martially)* Did you say this to me? Me? *(Contemplating)* All right then. I'm not offended. *(To Dad)* But I might come back later, understand?

DAD: I think I just soiled myself.

BALOG: You're ridiculous. *(Goes out but turns back at the door)* You know what you are? Ridiculous. Ha-ha-ha ha! Understand?

*No one answers him*

*Goldie and Mom still stand in the same position, tense, face-to-face*

BALOG: They don't understand. No problem. You will once. You will. *(leaves)*

DAD: And now? What's gonna' happen?

*Silence. No one makes a move. The faces of Mom and Goldie are almost touching.*

DAD: Can you hear it? Stop, stop it! Mom, at least you should have... you should...

*He walks around them in a panic.*

DAD: Or you, Goldie... you have always been so clever...

*He practically collapses.*

DAD: Oh, Dear. What's gonna' happen now?

MOM: *(Suddenly shakes herself as though awaking from a nightmare)* Now? My dears! Let's dress the Christmas tree! All right? *(She runs around hysterically, takes out a box of Christmas decorations, hands some to Goldie, some to Dad, then going around the suitcase she runs to the tree and starts hanging the decorations)* That's what's gonna' happen! That's what's gonna' happen! This is gonna' be the greatest happiness. Decorating the tree of love together. The crystal balls and little stars. And the little angels. It's so beautiful. Many little angels!

*Goldie and Dad are watching her silently with the decorations in their hands. Neither of them makes a move.*

GOLDIE *(Calmly and coldly)* Stop it. Stop fooling around!

MOM: Why? This is why you came home, isn't it? For the love and peace! For the happiness? For the fooling around?

GOLDIE *(shouts at her)* Enough! I said stop it!

*Mom freezes and the decorations fall out of her hands clinking*

*They are standing motionless in silence.*

GOLDIE *(smiles unexpectedly)* An angel flew over us...

*Silence*

DAD: What do you want to do with us?

GOLDIE: Me, my dear? Why would I want to do anything with you?

MOM: Are you taking him? Are you taking everything?

GOLDIE: I only came to take what's mine. I have nothing to do with you. I don't care about you.

DAD: What's yours?

GOLDIE: Yes. You mean nothing to me. Nothing. Zero.

MOM: What do you think? Is that what a man is made of? Nothing? That a child is nothing but flesh and bones? Hair and face? That's all? What do you think? You can just come here and take him?

DAD: My dear Mom...

GOLDIE: He is my flesh and blood. He is my child.

MOM: So what? What does that mean? That you were with him at night? You changed his clothes when he wet himself? That you taught him to walk? Took him to kindergarten? To the school? You were feeling his forehead? His hands? That? Is that what it means?

GOLDIE: He is my child. I gave birth to him.

MOM: What? What did you give birth to? His memories? His thoughts? His feelings? What has he got to do with you? Until yesterday he didn't even know you existed. What has he got to do with your world? What?

GOLDIE: Stop shouting! He will learn. And he will also learn that there is a happier life... than this one here. This pathetic melodrama... With you. This miserable, filthy pigeon-cote. He will learn that there is a place where life really happens. And that his place is by his mother's side.

MOM: What do you know about happiness?

GOLDIE: I don't care. I'm taking what I came for. I've let you mislead me for years. For years.

MOM: What do you know?!? To drop a child into the world? You, you fucking whore. What do you know? We are really happy... *(breaks down, starts crying)*

DAD: *(Goes to her and clumsily embraces her)* Don't cry, Mom, don't cry... We are happy... *(to Goldie)*  
Happy...

GOLDIE: *(Angrily)* A whore? Of course! A whore. Goldie, the whore! Because I let you make me a whore. To drop a child? Of course! Whose child is this? Why did I have to give birth in secret? Of course, there are no answers now. There are no answers even after so many years? The butcher's beautiful wife, who couldn't stand the stench of the butcher's shop! That's the answer, right? She couldn't stand it even at night in bed! And her daughter, right? You, Mom, you have always been as cold and frigid as your mother! Why did your mother escape to the back, to the pigeon-cote? Why? You should talk now! Now you should talk! Why did I have to sleep alone in the small room? Why? As though you didn't know what was going on in the house. You slept well, right? You slept well every night. Even when I wanted to scream. Did you sleep well at that time? Even when a huge hand smelling of flesh was keeping my mouth shut? Even then? You knew everything but it was easier to lie, wasn't it? Oh! The poor little girl. Oh! Our poor relation! We have done so much good by adopting her. Oh, we are so merciful. She gets everything at our place. We live as a happy family. And at night I was hiding in the pantry, petrified, trying to figure out whose steps I could hear in front of the door... And then the disgusting hypocrisy... oh my dear, if it happened at least the whole world shouldn't know about it. Right? You were competing to see which of you could sweet talk the best! We'll take care of him, you shouldn't even come home! Of course! If I had tried to come home, right? God, I let you lie to me for years... Because that's what was good for the child too... I let you live off my money, while you acted like I didn't exist at all... What more could you want? You want me to disappear without a word? As though I never existed? No way. No way. I'll leave but I'll take him with me. And what's more I'll even take your memories away with me. Yes! I'll take everything. Years? Days? Months? All right! Then all will be mine! Mine! For my money and for my suffering! Do you understand? I'll take everything! And you'll have no children, you'll have no family, no memories and past, you'll have no future and you'll have nothing! You'll have nothing left! I'll take your memories and your future! And when I take them, I won't even have to move my little finger. Do you understand? You are nothing. Understand? Nothing!

MOM: *(runs to her)* Try it, you little shit! You will perish from it, before you even notice it!

GOLDIE: *(Laughs mockingly)* No, my dear. No. You will perish. You! You will perish from staying here in your wretched misery! Your hopelessness! With your old age! With your loneliness!

DAD: Goldie, watch out! Watch yourself!

GOLDIE: Shut up! You shouldn't make a sound. You're dead already. I can smell your stench, and I have to throw up! What is there here? Guano! Pigeon shit! The smell of wet feathers. What a family nest! I have to laugh! Well, just keep the nest warm by yourselves!

MOM: *(Attacks her)* Enough! *(Starts beating her)* Go to hell, you fucking whore! Get out of my house, you bitch! Go back to where you came from! I won't let you!

GOLDIE: *(Laughs triumphantly)* From your house? From your house?

DAD: *(Desperately)* Mom! Mom, don't! Don't do that! *(Then he also runs there and tries to hit Goldie)* You fucking stinking whore! You lying bitch! I'll kill you, you bitch! I'll kill you, you traitor!

GOLDIE: Traitor? Am I the traitor?

MOM: You should have died before you came here, before you came here! You should have died!

*During the fight they move back and forth and knock over the Christmas tree.*

*During the commotion a scream can be heard from outside.*

SONNY, SISSY: *(Still from outside)* We're home! *(they come in)* Hello! Good evening!

*(They stop in a surprise.)* What are you doing?

*Nobody answers. The fighters let go of each other slowly, Dad stands the Christmas tree up.*

MOM: We started decorating the tree. But it fell over.

SISSY: *(Cheerfully)* Of course, Dad never carves the trunk right... right Dad?

SONNY: We heard screams.

DAD: Yes. A bad move.

SONNY: Look! A lot of decorations broke!

MOM: Bring in the dustpan and the broom.

SISSY: One second.

MOM: *(Starts shouting without transition)* Not in one second, but now! Bring them in! If I told you to bring them in, then bring them immediately!

SONNY: What's wrong, Mom? What happened to you?

DAD: Nothing, son. We have to clean it up.

GOLDIE *(Straightening her clothes which got disheveled in the fight)* I'm tired *(looks at Sissy and Sonny)*  
Tired...

SONNY *(pushes the same chair to the same place where it was at the end of the first act)* Sit down here, if you are tired, Aunt Goldie. Rest a bit. Sissy and I will decorate the tree. Right, Sis?

SISSY: Sure.

GOLDIE: *(Sits down.)* Thank you. I have to rest a bit.

SONNY: And Dad and Mom will also help. Right?

DAD: Of course.

MOM: We'll help. As always.

SONNY: And you can sit around and watch. Okay?

GOLDIE: Good. That'll be good ...my son.

SONNY: *(Surprised)* What? Of course, Auntie Goldie.

SISSY: We could also listen to some nice music, don't you think?

GOLDIE: That would be good.

*SISSY turns the radio on, and "Angel from Heaven" can be heard...*

SISSY: Why, it's as though it was Christmas already.

*PAP enters.*

PAP: Here I am. And you? Are you celebrating already? Isn't it a bit early?

MOM: Yes, Pap. It is a bit early.

PAP: You just couldn't wait, could you? What love! Such love! I know. You just can't stop it.

GOLDIE: Love. You are right, dear. There is nothing that would be worth more.

*The sound of "Angel from Heaven" fills the room. Goldie is sitting in the chair again the same way as at the end of the first act. The others are standing immobile, then slowly they are carried away by the music, and they start singing, too.*

### III.

*The room is empty. It's dark. It's at night. Goldie is sitting in the throne-like chair, the same way as at the end of the previous scene. Her eyes are closed. She is motionless. There is a tang, as if a bell rang or a clock chimed. A single light shines from somewhere above projected onto Goldie from the side. Pap sneaks in.*

PAP: *(Waddles slowly like an old man and mutters.)* Psss... I have to go many times... even at night ... *(he looks around, and suddenly all the signs of old age disappear from him and he hurries to Goldie. He whispers below his breath.)* Finally. Little Annie! Are you asleep? *(Goldie doesn't make a move and she doesn't answer)* All right, all right, I didn't mean to bother you. You also need some rest. But... if you are sitting up anyway ... Don't think I didn't understand, I did. Every word. Then. And now. And now, too. *(Giggles)* Just those were different times. You know that, don't you? I wanted to keep the shop... I just wanted... But before it could have been mine, they had already taken it away from me.... You don't even know what's like to become an employee in a shop where your father used to stand behind the counter. ... For years I kept my white apron I received from him ... and it killed him ...in a few days... *(he sits down and he is virtually talking to himself)* Then they accused me of theft, and fraud... They said I stole ... as though I hadn't realised why they were picking on me... As though no one else had done that. ... Of course by that time you were no longer at home. ... *(he is silent)* Are you asleep? Are you asleep, Little Annie? No problem if you are asleep. At least I can talk at ease. *(He is silent)* Well, because I'm old I can say whatever I want to... Just snooze away as though you can't hear anything. ... *(silence)* God, how I hated when she started backing away. I could see that she was holding back her with all her force. I could see that she was hiding it, I could see that she was walking slowly so that I wouldn't notice... And me? What would have been good for me? That didn't count? The angel-faced wife,

right? Who was respected and loved by everybody, right? Who is so delicate that she cannot stand the smell of flesh, right? Who is too delicate for a butcher. Who wants to throw up even at night, right? *(he waits a little)* Her motionless face and motionless body. It wasn't my fault, you know? She wouldn't have stayed even if I had asked her. *(Silence)* I did ask her. I got down on my knees next to that bloody pigeon-cote, that's how I asked her. And she didn't even look at me.... Her suitcase was in the kitchen... A large, elegant trunk... What should I have done? Hold her back with force? I had no strength. *(Silence)* I remember the pigeons didn't want to fly away even when the flames reached the top of the pigeon-cote... They were nesting or something. Have you ever smelt burning feathers? I know what stinks... Like sparks cracking away. I know what stinks... *(silence, he is panting)* I thought if I had money, I would have the shop. I thought it was possible for it to stay the same. No shame, no waiting. That's why I said you should go away. You know? Little Annie. That's why. I was alone. And you were beautiful. So very beautiful. Even your breath could not be heard when you were asleep... as quiet as an angel... You were like an angel. You really were. Then suddenly you became a mature woman *(grabs Goldie's hand)*. You didn't even know I'd been watching you at night, did you? Though I was tired and smelly, my arms and legs were dead from fatigue, but I was just sitting there and looking at you as you were sleeping... I even held my breath. *(Starts crying)* It wasn't my fault. Not my fault. It's not possible for a man to be alone. That's not possible. *(Comes to his senses)* Do you mind if I hold your hand? You don't mind, do you? *(lets her hand go)* You also knew that here it wasn't possible. A girl. The pride of the school. Whose belly was starting to grow. You said you knew it and understood it! The shop's, mine, the others'. It's everybody's shame. *(silence)* The shame. In this bloody town. *(Silence)* You were clever, Annie. You were always very clever. You know I liked you for that, too... your cleverness. Will you also be clever now? Will you? *(Silence)* *(Continues chewing it over)* You can't stay long. That would upset everything. Not only the past. And not the shame either. Who cares about that? Right? *(Steps back)* I've got to go to the toilet. You see. I always have to go. That's what I've become. They say I stink, too. And they don't even know what stench is. Everybody has their place. Everybody. Are you asleep, Annieka? *(He starts crying)* I didn't want this... not this! *(He grabs Goldie's hand)* Take me there with! Okay? You see, I'm still not so old, am I? Let me go with you. No, don't say anything, just think about it. I know you are clever. Believe me I could still help you. We could again be together, like in the old days. With the child, right? With the child... Or we could take both of them, that's what you want. *(Backs away humbly)* All right, all right, I'll stop bothering you. I'll let you think it over. All right, I'm gone. Just take your time and think it over. I'm off. You're clever. I know you're clever. My clever angel. *(While speak he backs all the way to the door, then looks at Goldie in silence for a moment and exits)*

*There is a tang, a bell or a clock.*

*The room is motionless.*

*Dad opens the door quietly and carefully and looks into the room, looks around then sneaks over to Goldie.*

DAD: Goldie! Wouldn't you rather go to bed? You are just sitting here all alone... of course I know you were like this before... Daydreaming all the time... But if you want to lie down... I can help... Of course I don't mean to say that... Not that you aren't as beautiful as before. Not even beautiful. You look bloody good, you know? Gorgeous... Even now you look extremely gorgeous... May I press my forehead against your hand? Do you mind? Thank you. How soft and cool you skin is. The years really don't show on you... Your hair... your eyes...

your figure... your bosom. Little kitten. You aren't angry because I say that, right? It's so good like this! So good. Pussy-cat. My little kitten. Goldie! You know that I'm happy that you came home! I didn't even hope ...to see...you. I missed you a lot. You wouldn't believe how many times I thought of you. Of course, I mean we got by, somehow. But you know that. How wouldn't you? Why, from your money... See? I'm so happy I don't even know what I'm saying... A happy family... We were, indeed. *(suddenly breaks down)* You were always on my mind ... that little pantry.... the smell of your breath... your skin. And then when you left one day, and I didn't hear a word from you... I nearly went mad... You know, we haven't even gone down from the hill for years? I'm just looking at the town from the window, but I don't have the strength to go down. As if I were locked up in this wretched pigeon-cote, but we only keep ourselves hostage. The postman sometimes brings some news, that idiot, that bastard... but I'm not interested any more. I'm just looking down, I'm just staring out of my head and I'm waiting... And I don't even know what I'm waiting for. *(He pulls himself together a bit)* Goldie, I have been waiting for you! I know now that I have been waiting for you! At night, when I was awakened by some noise I stared out the window for hours... to see if the crowns of the trees would move outside... That rotting, penetrating blackness... Yes, now I know. *(He laughs with forced cheerfulness and ease)*. Hey, you were really naughty! And I could only see you in front of me... It was impossible not to notice it. And you knew how to do it. *(Making excuses)* You know it wasn't because of me. I didn't want you to go. I didn't. That bloody shop and the bloody *(he hits himself on the mouth)* excuse me! I was just taken by emotions. You see the effect you have on me? Even now... The same way... The same... In here it's still the same. *(Silence)* Later it wasn't possible. The... the child. The way he stayed here... then Sissy was born... and suddenly everything became different... the school too... You know one day after the other... and it wasn't possible to step out of it... out of the everyday life... we just got entangled in it like some kind of a net... and... it wasn't possible... *(giggles)* Me, a director! Did you believe it? They barely put up with me. They could hardly wait for me to leave. I hadn't even put in all the years. They put me into the workshop before that. He could do no harm there, I heard them say. And they didn't even keep it secret before me. And they laughed. They always laughed when they saw me... believe me it was impossible to put up with that... They should have tried to laugh when... Ssssh. They weren't even born at that time. It was easy for them to laugh, the assholes. *(Silence)* Are you angry? I understand if you are angry. But I hope you don't believe that I ...with them...? With this bloody old man and his daughter? I hope you don't believe that, do you? *(Kneels down at Goldie's feet and says almost whimpering)* No, it's not possible that it's too late! It's not possible! It's not possible that the time...just like this! Without any traces, without any sense! It's not possible. *(Silence, panting)* If you want, I'll go with you. Wherever and whenever you want. That's the least I can do. And then there'll be no more waiting. Just one word and we're out of here. Right? We'll go down from this godforsaken hill. *(Waits)* You aren't saying anything? Okay, no problem. I understand that, too. Of course I do. You always knew how to keep silent. I also liked that about you. And I can wait. If anything, I really know how to wait. *(Stands up)* That's it. I'll wait. Goldie! You know that I'm still...that I'm still a man, don't you? But a small sign is enough. All right? Because I'm ready. *(starts to slip out of the room but he turns back)* All right? I'm ready.

*Silence, no motions.*

*There is a tang, a bell or a clock.*

*The door opens but no one enters – but Dad after some hesitation hides behind the suitcase - in a way that he can be seen by the audience all the time, with his reactions as well– from time to time he tries to open the suitcase, he keeps trying during the scene as well.*

*Suddenly Sonny appears on all fours sneaking behind the furniture.*

SONNY: *(Creeps over to Goldie)* Ha-ha! I surprised you, didn't I? You're not asleep yet, are you? Auntie Goldie! *(Listens)* Hey? It's totally ridiculous that I have to call you Auntie? Such a bombshell. Shall I stay quiet? All right, I'll be careful. *(Climbs all the way next to Goldie)* Not that they would wake up to anything. You know what? They are asleep even when their eyes are open. *(Giggles)* Sleep-walkers. *(Giggles again)* That was good, wasn't it? Sleep-walkers. Auntie Goldie, is it true that they... they ... are golden, is it true still now? Okay, okay, just asking. Don't get upset. You don't have to answer. But I think you should be ashamed of it if they were. You are not like that... I mean you are like that, very much so... Get it? ... Anyway, everybody is so shy in this fucking family. Sis, right? The little creep! Says I'm peeping at her in the bathroom! Bullshit! And what if I do. What about it? I have seen better, believe me. A lot better. Not in real life yet, but I will. I'm not that kind of guy, do you believe it? It's in my blood to know what's cool. *(Silence, then wondering)* I wish I knew why the hell you came back to this shitty little town. When nowadays even the flies go away from here to die. The air is like dishwater these days. I will always be Sonny here. *(Brightens up)* Are they really gold? That's fucking great! *(Pause)* Can I say something? Three days ago I didn't even know you existed. No, not three, two. Two. Do you believe it? My mother was hiding your letters. *(Thinking)* At least that's what they said. If only I knew how she did it... and why? She must have worked it out with the postman...and I didn't notice anything...but they can't keep any secrets from me. Believe me! *(Brightens up)* Have you noticed? The chimney opening in your room? What's mine is now yours. They don't even know. That it's enough to lean close to it and you can hear every word in the house. As if they were circling in the walls. Every word. *(Silence)* Listen, Auntie Goldie, shall I tell you something? If I had known about you, I wouldn't be here now. Because seeing that we are kind of ...kind of relatives, then I could live with you, no? *(With awe)* I mean not here in this room, but there in America... America! God! America! Auntie Goldie, how much is that allowance? Must be a nice sum. I've heard that there are these American pensioners, especially if they had such good ...such good jobs... who pull together all their money and have the time of their life, travelling, parties and everything. I mean you are travelling now, aren't you? Listen, I want to ask something! Okay? So, I don't even want to ask, rather I want to say something. When you go back. When you're at home again. At home. So I thought that there would be something there for me. Right? Don't think I'm a child. Only they would like me to be. I know how to work. Look at my biceps if you don't believe me. Look! Touch them, you can even squeeze them. All right, you don't have to if you don't want to, I just thought. They aren't like this from doing nothing, but from labour. I would work hard, believe me. *(Giggles, something occurs to him)* Do you have any golden wheat? *(Leans over to Goldie's hand and starts licking it)* The pigeons have arrived... pigeon-dog... bow-wow. *(From Goldie's hand he is going upwards toward her neck licking playfully but erotically, imitating a dog)* I have feathers on my back..., I love my mistress... hmm-hmm, a good mistress, smell, I pick up the scent, grrhhh-grrhhh, good dog, good dog. *(He is licking her neck when he stops)* You see, I'm not so much of a little brother? *(Hets scared for a moment and steps back)* Are you angry now? *(He calms down)* That's good. I thought so. I really did. *(Giggles,*

*humbly*) Just tell me, Okay? Just tell me. I mean if you tell me, then I'm Okay. Okay? *(He abruptly runs all the way to the door)* Well it's fucking good that we agreed. Fucking good. *(Runs out)*

*There is silence and no motion in the room.*

*Dad, who was holding himself back as he listened but reacted to everything, starts moving around.*

DAD: *(whispering)* Goldie! Psssss! Goldie!

*He would stand up but at the same moment there is a tang, a bell or a clock, and he hides again in panic.*

*Mom appears in the open door.*

MOM: *(Talks openly almost loudly)* I thought you had gone to bed. Well, of course you are used to staying up. All right, all right, that's not why I said that. I don't want to fight. Again. I mean I don't want to fight, I want to talk to you. *(Stands in front of Goldie)* That's why I said so. Perhaps that's why. *(Pulls up a chair and sits opposite Goldie)* Because now you think that you won. Right? *(Snaps)* That's all there is to it, right? You came here and swept me off my feet, right? Well, haven't you changed at all? All right. You may still be the same, but I'm not. And you know what? The world isn't the same, either. Not at all. Is that what you think? And you also think you're happy? Right? Is that what you think? To see this... The happy family... I'll tell you something, all right? You left empty-handed, and you will again... I know why you came home, and I know what you want... You will leave here empty-handed, is that clear?

You've got no child, have you?

You've got no husband, have you?

You've got no family, have you?

Shove your bloody money up your ass! *(Panting, silently stares at Goldie)* All right, all right, all right. *(Calming down)* I didn't want an argument. You started it. You see we get along fine. *(Again attacking)* And you'd want to take away my family from me? My son? My husband? My father? Away from me? Never! Never ever!

I could tell a couple of stories about you and suddenly America wouldn't look so nice. You get your shameful ass back there... that's not why I'm saying it, sorry. The Coquelicot and the Eden... *(Suddenly breaks down and pours over Goldie's hand)*. Don't do it, Annie, don't do it! Don't take them away from me! Why, you see what there is... There is nothing else, but this... *(cries)* I... I... love... my husband... very much. If he couldn't have been my husband, I wouldn't be around now...if he couldn't have been my husband... let alone America... I couldn't have gone. I wouldn't have dared. I love my son... so much... as much as it's possible to love a child. And when we weren't even expecting it, Sissy was born. I couldn't have told them. I didn't know what was going on with you for years...and later...only whatever news we heard... and I believed it best this way. *(Cries but then pulls herself together)*. All right, all right. All right. Okay, I won't cry in front of you. When you aren't even willing to reply. You think you can humiliate me even more with this, don't you? Is that what you think? Well, you're right. But no problem. I don't care about that either. We'll stay here! Sissy, Sonny, my husband, the whole family. You can't hve any of them. None of them. *(Slyly)* But what would you need all this for anyway, dear Annie, what for? You know how good you look even now? You could do so many things. You have money. With money everything is possible. Travel. Comfortable rooms. Men. Sunshine. There are so many things before... *(Frankly)* What was it like to see the town? The polytechnic. Of course today it some kind of a

grammar school. And the Thread. It doesn't work any more. They closed it in ninety-one. *(Laughs)* So much about my letters, right? Well, I don't think you wrote the truth to me all the time! Tenants and flats for rent! Ha-ha-ha. Good profession! *(Slyly again)* Annie! We shouldn't always... I mean you could help me. And I could help you. You could help me... even with Dad... if you still want to... if you still want him...so be it, if you still want that at all. He is not like he used to be, that's true. But if you want he may go with you. And you. You would give me some money like so did far. That would work, wouldn't it? Perhaps it wouldn't matter for you, but it would make a difference here... it would actually be a bargain for you, wouldn't it? And the children. A husband is a good husband if he isn't with you all the time. Ha-ha-ha. I don't need much. I really don't. Will you give it some thought? Because then I'll let you. All right? Just think, my dear, carefully. You know that I can help you. And when you go back, we could correspond again. You see? Like before. Just like before. That would be nice, don't you think? *(Meditating)* Palm trees... the blue ocean... Miami by night... Annie, you know that it only takes one word and I'll stand by you. *(Waits)* But even without a word. *(on the way out she turns back at the door and blows a kiss)* Just get some rest, my Annie, rest. Just inhale deeply the good home air. And think. About our agreement, Okay? Bye, my dear, kisses. Good night. *(Exits)*

*Dad and Goldie are left in the room. Dad starts whispering again.*

DAD: Goldie! Pssss! Can you hear?! Gold...

*Two tangs or chimes can be heard and Sissy appears in the door. Dad hides.*

SISSY: *(cheerfully)* Hi, Auntie Goldie! Who are you talking to? *(looks around)* Wow, it's so dark in here. So exciting. And... you are alone? You were talking to someone, weren't you? I heard. Or to yourself? *(laughs)* I hope you don't talk to yourself. Sorry, it's not that... There is nothing... wrong with that... just that out loud... I usually think... *(comes in very close)* I don't do much else... not much... Do you mind if I come here a bit? I mean, am I bothering you? It's so good talking to you... It's good. As though we've known each other for a long time.

*She sits down next to Goldie, she is silent and immobile After a long pause she starts speaking dreamily, quietly.*

Sometimes I too... wake up... at night, but I'm only half awake... I'm not asleep but I keep on sleeping... at these times I have the most beautiful dreams... *(silence)* what you said about grandma... then... they told me she died before I was born... and now I don't understand... is it possible that she isn't dead? That she is alive and well somewhere?... I don't understand... so strange,... we might even meet somewhere... *(Pause and then with sudden anger)* They know how to lie! There is nothing else here but lies. Because they think they are so bloody clever...! The happy family, right? Mom with her shopping bags, Pap with his bloody telly and his stench...! My father with his lamentations, with his helpless lamentations. And on top of all that there is this pervert little shit, who peeps through the keyhole when I get dressed. They think that they are so clever. And they are proud that I go to the office. Sissy, the goddess of all secretaries, right? If you knew... doesn't matter. I won't rot here with them. With these people! In their little house on top of the hill. A house over the town. Crap. I will get out of here. From their filthy little town. I'll get it together, you'll see. I have my methods...*(fondles herself amused)* I'm not a bad chick, am I? You can tell. How much do you think I could earn? I can see what men need to open their wallets... but I could learn a few things from you. Is it true that you have a whole block

of flats for rent? And you earned it all from that. Oh boy, I can work my butt off here for the rest of my life, and I would still not have the money for a block of flat. Tell me, Goldie, haven't you ever though that you'd need somebody to eventually take your place? A trainee, for example. Who is also a relative, right? Don't think I can't work. If I have to, I can be so obedient that you won't believe it. Just so I can get away from here. *(A little surprised at her own words)* But you won't tell them this, will you *(silence)* Don't tell them, okay?

*Silence*

Often I think that in the world there is nothing new anywhere... there isn't anything new anywhere... everything is always the same everywhere. *(Silence)* But it would be impossible to bear that... just being half awake and dreaming on like that... *(snuggles up to Goldie, and puts her head on Goldie's hand)*

*A bell or a clock chimes three times with long pauses between them.*

*SISSY sits immobile and falls asleep with her head on Goldie's hand.*

*DAD waits and then sneaks out of the room.*

*Silence and no movement.*

*A bell can be heard from the distance.*

*Slowly it is getting lighter, the sun shines in, it's the morning.*

*The room is in full of sunshine, Goldie is sitting on her "throne", Sissy is sleeping leaning against her hand. We can hear Sonny singing outside.*

SONNY:           Come out sun, oh bright sun,  
                      All the pigeons in the garden, with cold are done  
                      Come out sun, oh bright sun,  
                      All the pigeons in the garden, with cold are done

*(comes into the room and imitates flapping with his arms)*

SONNY: Oh, what a beautiful, sunny day, isn't it?

SISSY: *(Wakes up, yawns, stretches)* Hello, Auntie Goldie! Ah, I had such a strange dream!

SONNY: Well, there are a lot of them in this house!

SISSY: A lot of dreams?

SONNY: Strange things.

SISSY: Don't pay attention to him, Auntie Goldie. You know that he is a jerk. How cold your hands are! Aren't you cold?

SONNY: ...All the pigeons in the garden with cold are done...      SISSY: *(getting more and more nervous as she is feeling Goldie's cold hands)* Auntie Goldie! Auntie

Of course they're cold in the morning...

Goldie!

Let the poor thing sleep a bit.

She is not responding!

She is totally cold... and doesn't even move... Do you

You'd also be tired if you had to be our guest... hear? Sonny!

SONNY: *(Stops fooling around)*: What?

SISSY: *(She lifts Goldie's hand and it falls down lifelessly)*

SONNY: Is she asleep?

SISSY *(She shakes her head)*

SONNY: Are you sure?

SISSY *(She nods)*

SONNY: *(He jumps back in fear)* Fuck!

MOM enters

MOM: Sonny! How many times have I told you'd watch your language. *(To Goldie)* Good morning, dear. Good morning, Sissy!

SONNY: *(points to Goldie with popping eyes)* F... f... fuck!

MOM: Now that's really enough, son! I'm sorry, Goldie, he doesn't usually do that. Only occasionally.

SISSY: Mother!

MOM: Yes, dear?

SISSY: She isn't angry. Not at all. Not any more.

MOM: What?

SISSY *(Lifts her arm and lets it fall back down in the same way as before)*

MOM: Sissy! What are you doing?!

SISSY: *(Shouting)* Don't you get it? She isn't asleep! She isn't asleep!!!

MOM: That's not possible. *(She goes to her and feels Goldie)* My god.

That's not possible. My god. *(desperately looks left and right, then shakes Goldie)* Wake up, do you hear?!

Wake up, you bitch!

DAD *(Enters, and sees that Mom is shaking Goldie like mad)*

DAD: *(runs to them and tries to grab Mom)* Mom, are you starting it again?! Leave her alone. Leave her alone. Understand?

*(Mom lets go of Goldie, and Goldie falls into Dad's arms)*

DAD: No problem, Goldie, no problem.

SONNY: Oh boy. But there is.

*Mom is standing silently and frozen.*

DAD: *(He is just starting to realise that something has happened.)* What did you do to her? She fainted, the poor thing.

MOM: She didn't faint.

DAD: She did. Look at her. She is unconscious.

SISSY: Well, that's true.

MOM: She didn't faint.

DAD: *(He starts realising the situation, he is looking at Goldie)* No?... She didn't faint? She didn't Then?... Oh shit *(He jumps away from her, and the lifeless body leans to the side)*

*They are standing astonished and helpless.*

SISSY: What will happen now?

*No one answers.*

SISSY: Dad, Mom, what will happen now?

*They are standing silently.*

*A door slams outside, then Pap's voice can be heard as he is entering the room.*

PAP: The early bird, gets the... gold. ha-ha-ha-ha! Good, isn't it? *(He takes out a bouquet of flowers from behind his back.)* Voilà! Golden flowers for my golden flower. *(Hands the flowers to the leaning Goldie when he realises the situation)* What's going on here?

SONNY: Nothing, anymore.

PAP: *(Offers the flowers to Goldie)* Flowers.

DAD: Leave her alone!

PAP: What ...what happened?

MOM: The famous butcher...well, what do you think? She's taking a nap!

PAP: So soundly?

DAD: Idiot!

MOM: Father, open your eyes.

PAP: *(leans over very close to Goldie, nudges her, then drops the flowers)* This ...this is ...oh bloody hell.

DAD: That's right.

SONNY: So here we are.

MOM: At least seat her straight up!

PAP: *(moves her back into her previous posture)* And now what?

MOM: Now? Now, I don't know.

SISSY: We have to call the doctor, don't we? Or the ambulance, right?

SONNY: The ambulance? Here? What for?

SISSY: *(louder and louder)* Something has to be done, right mother? Something has to be done. Something has to be done!

*Suddenly the bell rings twice.*

*They look at each other in a fright. Sissy shuts up.*

DAD: Someone rang.

SONNY: You don't say.

MOM: Shut up!

*Silence*

DAD: Someone should open the door.

MOM: You are the man of the house!

DAD: Me?!?

*Another two rings of the bell.*

SISSY: They know we're at home.

MOM: Pap.

PAP: No way.

MOM: Well, yes. And whoever it is don't let them in. No one can come in here, do you understand?

PAP: Dear Mom... I...

MOM: *(Shouting at him)* Hurry up! Go!!!

*PAP goes out, and just as he is out the POSTMAN appears in the doorway. Pap is behind him.*

POSTMAN: Good morning! Good morning, ladies! Good morning! I'm sorry, it being just before the holiday and all that, I'm sorry ... but there has been a little accident.

DAD: What?

SONNY: How do you know?

POSTMAN: Well... I noticed... *(he looks at the Christmas tree)* Oh, I see you are also decorating the tree...

MOM: What did you notice?

POSTMAN: Yes! Yes, sir! It's my fault, I beg your pardon, I only noticed it afterwards, perhaps because of the special circumstances, so I'm sorry but I had to come back...

MOM: What are you talking about?

POSTMAN: The signature, I beg your pardon. Madam's signature.

DAD: Goldie's?

POSTMAN: Yes, yes please, so that the money could come monthly. Here. From America. Because yesterday this was forgotten. The happiness, and the... everything else... perhaps the pills... I don't know.

SISSY: The pills.

MOM: At this time?

POSTMAN: Yes, I know... I just thought is not quite the holiday yet... and at that time not officially... if it's possible...

SONNY: Possible? A good joke!

*Disturbed silence*

POSTMAN: Ha-ha...An angel passed. You know they say this when...

DAD: We know.

MOM: Give it to me. What has to be signed.

SISSY: Mom!!!

MOM: Shut up!

POSTMAN: Yes, yes I beg your pardon, I have it ready here. (*Holding the paper and a pen out towards Mom*)

MOM: (*to Dad*) Help Goldie! (*To Goldie*) My dear, you should sign this. (*To the Postman*)

She is still a bit tired, the poor dear.

POSTMAN: Er... um, yes, I can see that. I'm sorry for coming so early.

*The family members, including Pap as well, help Goldie to "sign" the paper. In the meantime, as much as possible they are trying to cover the chair and Goldie, and the Postman is trying to peep.*

POSTMAN: Good morning Madam! How was the first night at home? Did you count the corners? You know, because of the wishes...

SONNY: This was not the first, but the second.

POSTMAN: Of course, of course.

*Uncomfortable silence*

MOM: Here, the paper.

POSTMAN: Thank you very much. Indeed.

DAD: Not at all. Really.

POSTMAN: Well, then I'm off... I'm going. (*he heads out*)

DAD: Wait a minute!

POSTMAN (*Startles*) Yes?

DAD: Goldie says...

POSTMAN: Yes?

DAD: ...that those pills... that you were talking about...

POSTMAN: Pardon me?

DAD: Yes. That she would need them. Next time, when you come to us.

POSTMAN: Oh, perfect, Madam, very well! Which one would you like?

MOM: The vitamin. The complex one. The one that's good for winter.

POSTMAN: I'll get it, I'll get it. (*Starts heading out again*) And very happy holidays for the entire family!

PAP: The same to you. And to your family.

POSTMAN: Thank you. I'll tell them. (*Exits*)

*As soon as he is gone, the entire family disperses from Goldie as though magnetically repelled. They move to the farthest possible corners and they stare at Goldie from there.*

SONNY: And now?

*Silence*

SONNY: Doesn't anyone have anything to say? (*Shouting*) Nobody?

MOM: Stop shouting! We have to think.

DAD: You should have done that before. Before you let the postman in.

MOM: What do you mean let him in? Nobody let him in.

SISSY: He somehow came in.

PAP: It's not my fault.

DAD: Sure. It's nobody's fault.

MOM: Enough! (*Rubbing her temples as she is thinking, without noticing it she starts walking around and ends up by Goldie.*) We have to figure something out.

DAD: Of course, we do.

MOM: (*Almost like thinking out loud*) If Goldie doesn't exist, there is no problem with the family.

SONNY: What problem?

MOM: (*She doesn't pay attention to the remarks*) And if there is no problem with the family, that's good.

PAP: That's very good.

MOM: But if she doesn't exist, her money doesn't exist either, no more, no more deliveries, no monthly allowance...

SISSY: What deliveries?

DAD: Shut up.

PAP: Money.

SONNY: Money? Was Goldie sending money here?

MOM: And if that doesn't exist, that's no good.

PAP: That's no good at all.

MOM: Because if there aren't deliveries and allowance, then the family doesn't exist...then nothing exists...

SISSY: (*to Sonny*) Do you understand this? (*Sonny only answers with a grin*)

MOM: The question is if it is possible... (*stops*)... if it is possible for Goldie to exist when she doesn't exist... and for her not to exist when she exists...

DAD: My dear Mom, are you well?

MOM: And could we act as though she existed when she doesn't, but everything would be as though she did....

*Silence, Mom is standing next to Goldie, leans over to her and looks at her for a long time.*

MOM: Pap!

PAP: Yes?

MOM: Pap!!!

PAP: Yes?

MOM: Do you remember the shop at the corner of Hunter street?

PAP: I do. What shop?

MOM: Where you used to go all the time. The stuffed animals. Foxes, rabbits, wild boars.

Glass eyes. Dear head up on the wall. The rabbit with the gun. Remember?

PAP: I do.

DAD: Mom, you are not trying to say that...

MOM: I'm not trying to say anything. I'm not saying anything and I don't want anything. I just want us to stay alive. I just want the family to remain. That's what I want. Only that. You have to want that. Do you understand? You have to want that.

PAP: But I haven't... I haven't... for years...

MOM: That's not a problem. You should be a hero now. If you are such a big man.

PAP: Say something... you should also say something...

DAD: I'm not saying anything that's for sure!

MOM: See?

SONNY: Pap is a hero.

SISSY: Our Pap!

PAP: I'm telling you I haven't done it for years...

SISSY: What haven't you done?

SONNY: Why? What has he done?

DAD: You should just shut up, boy!

PAP: That's right!

MOM: See, Daddy! You cannot forget something like this.

PAP: Can't you?

MOM: If I say so... And there is no hurry. We have time. What we have the most of is time. Oh! We don't have anything else, but we know how to wait and pass the time. And this is enough. Time...what's so interesting about time that they should always talk about it. I'll tell you. Time means being more patient than the others. Being able to wait and pay attention. Not being afraid and tremble and hide. No, no, no! Not even that. Just to wait and do it. Whatever it demands. We know that, don't we?

DAD: Well... if you say so my dear...

MOM: That's why the future is ours. That's why. But only if we are clever. Do you understand? If we are clever. Are we clever? Are we clever?

IV.

*The room has been decorated for the celebration. The Christmas tree is its usual place, of course completely decorated by now, a few garlands and ribbons show that it's sometime around New Year's Eve. Goldie is "sitting" in the same place, in the same chair. From the background estrade music raises the atmosphere, sometimes louder sometimes quieter. Everything is the same but somehow the room seems definitely altered.*

*There is more light, it's brighter, and what's more striking is that there is more space, the room is more spacious. The walls are further away from each other, there are new plants and fresh flowers and decorations. It is definitely a friendlier and happier flat. All this can be sensed on the clothing of the family members, all of them are dressed more elegantly and more formally, and their behaviour is also more dignified, more ceremonial than earlier.*

*Pap enters with a potted plant in his hands. He goes to Goldie, places the plant in front of her, moves it around a bit, he is looking at Goldie as though she was a piece of furniture, he is arranging the plant in a way to cover Goldie a bit. When he is finished, he is about to leave but he steps back, he finds something to adjust on Goldie, then he takes a garland and places it around Goldie's neck. Mom enters.*

MOM: Daddy! What are you doing there again?

PAP: *(disturbed)* I brought her a plant ...to make her more beautiful... and also the celebration...

MOM: Well, just leave her alone... all right? You're always bothering her!

PAP: *(Flares up)* Well I have something to do with her, haven't I?

DAD: *(As he enters)* You shouldn't be so full of yourself... look at her hair! Ridiculous!

PAP: That's really not my fault...

MOM: Still, leave her alone, all right? It's not good for her if we always bother her. *(She goes to Goldie, tidies her hair, and for a few seconds looks at her lovingly. In the meantime Dad also enters.)*

DAD: *(Walks though the room anxiously and counts)* One-two, three-four-five-six ... I don't understand this. I just simply don't understand this!.

MOM: What's the problem, sweetheart?

DAD: Tell me, Mom, have I shrunk?

MOM: Pardon?

DAD: I asked you if I have become smaller than I was before?

MOM: Come on, Dear, what's on your mind?

DAD: Just that one week ago this very same room was four steps shorter. And the width as well. Four steps shorter both ways. So either my legs are shorter or the room is bigger.

MOM: I went into town, oh dear... how much it had snowed. But I've bought some frankfurters and horse-radish for the evening!

PAP: With skin?

MOM: With skin!

DAD: See, we survived to see this day... the new year has come, the family is together in peace and happiness, all the loved ones are together... *(to Goldie)* Including you, of course, dear Goldie, as you are not a guest among us any more... *(waits, listens – from the radio a very cheap version of a waltz can be heard, perhaps the Blue Danube)* My dear Mom! Can you hear this music? Do you know what this is? Do you? Do you remember?

MOM: Oh, Dad, of course! We danced to this at the commencement ball... oh God, ah, we weren't even dancing, we were almost ... *(She starts humming the tune and dances to the waltz alone)*

*Dad steps to her and offers to accompany her like a gentleman.*

DAD: Madam!

MOM: Oh! Yes!

*The music becomes louder and they are waltzing around the room. Pap is looking at them smiling, then he steps to Goldie and asks her for a dance, then as though he was holding the woman in his arms he also starts dancing in the room.*

*A bit later Sonny enters:*

SONNY: Wow, the party has started in here and you didn't tell me. *(He starts shouting)* There is a party!!! *(He reaches into his pocket and starts throwing confetti into the air.)*

DAD: There is more room to dance, son! A lot more. The younger ones can also start!

*Sissy also appears.*

SISSY: Oh, you are so nice together! *(Runs into the room, makes a few turns and then she stops near Goldie)*  
You are as nice as the angels! Christmas and New Year's angels!

MOM: Come on, my little girl, you are exaggerating again!

SISSY: No, Mom, not at all! Just look at Goldie, look at her!

*(The others also group in front of Goldie and they are looking at her)*

SISSY: You see, how beautiful she is? She is as beautiful as an angel!

MOM: Because she is, my dear, she is! A real angel! Our angel!

SONNY: Do you know what?

SISSY: No, what?.

SONNY: Let's say we're also!

SISSY: What?

SONNY: Angels!

DAD: Not bad! This is an angelic family that descended onto a hill top. Angels! We're all angels!

MOM: Angels?

DAD: Sure! You especially, my dear!

MOM: Ah, you! You...you naughty boy! All right, give me a kiss!

DAD: Ho-ho! *(They embrace, Dad gives a kiss to Mom)*

*The music becomes louder again, they start dancing again, Mom with Dad, Sissy with Sonny, Pap alone.*

MOM: Hey, my dears, watch out for the Christmas tree!

SISSY: Oh, Mom, you are always just worrying, take it easy a bit.

DAD: You know, my little girl, the family is always the first to Mom. She never thinks of herself.

PAP: That's true!

*The dance continues.*

*Suddenly the bell rings twice.*

DAD: Why, it's not that?

PAP: But of course it is!

DAD: Is it perhaps a guest?

SONNY: Who rings twice?

SISSY: The finance secretary.

MOM: Oh, I've become totally dizzy!

PAP: An unexpected guest is always a great pleasure!

SONNY: Leave it, I'll open the door!

SISSY: Come on, dear Sonny, I'll go!

SONNY: No, my dear Sissy, don't you worry, I'll open it! *(He runs out and a bit later he appears herding the Postman.)*

SONNY: Look, who is here!

POSTMAN: Happy Holidays, Happy New Year to everybody! To the whole kind family!

DAD: Uh-oh, the Postman, what a nice surprise!

SISSY: Our Postman!

MOM: Have a seat in our home, if you have a little time!

POSTMAN: Thank you very much, you are very kind... Wow, everything is so nice and spacious here. Looks so big, doesn't it? And light, too! I see the celebration has already started... well, new year, new delights...

DAD: No, no! The delights are not new! On the contrary! The delights are always the same!

POSTMAN: What do you mean?

DAD: *(He shows proudly)* Pap, Mom, Sonny, Sissy!

POSTMAN: I see.

PAP: A glass of schnapps? To the beginning of the new year?

POSTMAN: Well, thank you...

PAP: Don't thank me, young man, drink it! Sissy, glasses!

SISSY: I'm flying, my dear Pap!

POSTMAN: *(He looks around and he looks at Goldie as well.)* Hey, what a beautiful family!

*(The others agree with him proudly)*

*SISSY returns with the glasses, and Pap with the brandy and pours for everyone*

*The bell rings again.*

PAP: Here we go!

DAD *(shouting)* Come in! We are open!!!

*The Doctor appears in the doorway.*

DOCTOR: Good morning, happy holidays to everybody.

MOM: Doctor, you arrived at the best time. How come you go where the birds don't fear to tread.

DOCTOR: Oh, I just wanted to pay my respects... in this nice, spacious flat... have I told you what a nice flat you have?!

DAD: Come on, Pap, fill a glass for the Doctor quickly.

PAP: I have already, dear! *(Fills one more glass and places it in front of the Doctor, then he fills another and takes it to Goldie)*

DOCTOR: Thank you, thank you!

DAD: I owe a debt of gratitude.

PAP: What debt?

SONNY: Drop it, Pap, it's not important.

PAP: Then I'll drop it.

DAD: Let's raise our glasses!

SONNY: But Dad, what shall we drink to?

DAD: To happiness!

DOCTOR: That's right, Mr. Pigeon, let's drink to happiness!

*All of them clink their glasses shouting Happiness, Happiness!!!*

*They put the glasses back onto the table.*

*In this moment Balog neighbour appears in the doorway.*

BALOG NEIGHBOUR: Oh, damn it, have I missed the best part?

DAD: Come on, neighbour, come on! You haven't missed anything.

BALOG: Have you reorganised the flat?

SONNY: What do you mean?

BALOG: What I mean? Me? Nothing. I don't usually mean anything.

DAD: Well, good.

MOM: Pap, refill the glasses!

*There is great cheering and laughing, neighbour Balog mingles among the others, they are patting him on the shoulder, Pap refills the glasses again.*

DAD: Well then...

MOM: Let's drink again...

DAD: To what?

MOM: To happiness!

SONNY: That's right!

PAP: Happiness!

MOM: Let's drink to love!

SISSY: To togetherness!

*They drink and band the glasses down on the table.*

BALOG: Hey, this will put hair on your chest!

POSTMAN: *(Sashays toward Goldie)* How good madam looks! Well, there is no place like home.

MOM: Don't be so modest, Mr. Postman! Her home and your vitamins.

DOCTOR: I'll tell you it's not only that.

DAD: No?

PAP: No?

DOCTOR: Of course not!

*The atmosphere becomes tense in a second.*

PAP: But what?

DOCTOR: But what? Come on! Don't act as though you don't know anything! As if you didn't understand anything.

PAP: *(He starts getting scared)* We shouldn't act like that?

DOCTOR: Of course, you shouldn't! Right, Balog neighbour?

BALOG: *(ready for duty)* Yes, Doctor! What do we think?

DOCTOR: Like someone who doesn't know anything at all

MOM: But...we really don't know anything...Doctor!

DOCTOR: *(laughs triumphantly)* Of course, you do! Of course. Why are you so secretive?

BALOG: Secretive?

POSTMAN: Bless my soul...

DAD: *(Totally terrified)* The secret? You mentioned a secret? We don't know any secrets...

DOCTOR: *(to Balog)* See, what they are like?

BALOG: Well...I think I see...

DOCTOR: *(to everybody)* Of course I say secret. And you don't know about it? Come on!

You know about it. You are all in it. In it completely. You know what. Pour me another, Uncle Pigeon.

PAP: Yes! *(He pours with his hand shaking)* I'm pouring, I'm pouring honourable Doctor.

POSTMAN: Hey, mind your aim!

SONNY: This is always the problem with Pap...

MOM: Shut up...

SONNY: I just...

DOCTOR: *(to Balog and the Postman)* The Pigeons are like that. Like that!

BALOG: Well, if you say so, then they are like that.

DOCTOR: I'll tell you.

POSTMAN: Like what?

DOCTOR: Like us. Good, decent people!

DAD: You say so?

BALOG: Unfortunately.

DOCTOR: And that they wouldn't know what I'm talking about! Friends, let's raise our glasses to the Pigeon Family.

POSTMAN: Let's raise our glasses. Let's!

BALOG: Hooray, hooray!

*They all drink.*

DOCTOR: *(ceremoniously)* My friends! Happiness is not a gift, not a present, not a package that falls into one's lap. Not at all. You have to work for happiness. Indeed! If necessary, you have to suffer for happiness. And not on holidays. Because what's the secret? My friends, happiness is there in all of us. By God! It's hiding in our everyday life. But there are those who are able to find it and mine it out from the dirt and the dust, and there are the others who pass it without noticing it. Because happiness is able to nest itself in a way that if no one reaches for it, perhaps we'll never find it. Do you understand this? Do you?

SONNY: Well... not really...

SISSY: We didn't expect you to...

MOM: Stop!

DOCTOR: This is the most important. That you have to do something. Dare, want, do. My friends, this is the secret. As I do go to many different places, I glance into many homes, I can tell you that this is a nice family, the Pigeons really found out what the secret is. Because they have found love within themselves, because they have

found the happiness of belonging within themselves, ...so they have found the delight of togetherness, they found in themselves the bonds of the heart, they found happiness.

POSTMAN, BALOG: That's right. That's right!

DAD: (*proudly*) We have found them!

DOCTOR: And never forget that you cannot fake happiness. Happiness is a fragile-feathered, easily scared, tiny-weenie blue bird. It rarely visits us, and if it gets scared, it will fly away and never return.

MOM: Oh, Doctor, you speak so nicely.

SONNY: I hope I can remember it.

DOCTOR: And then one can pine in vain about where the time has gone, where they lost their minutes, hours, days and years, where they put their happiness.

DAD: He is absolutely right. Absolutely.

SISSY: You've said that, Dad.

DAD: Because he was right then as well.

DOCTOR: My dear friends, mankind is like that... because the past happiness just causes pain to the heart... it's like the memory of the snow last year, it's like last year's sunshine, it's like the spring shower in the past, the memory of which is kept by the arid and cracked ground...

BALOG: (*proudly*) An educated man.

DOCTOR: The present happiness is like the life-providing dew, the balmy breeze, the caressing sunshine... Happiness, my dear friends is a treasure that we have to mine from ourselves and if we have found it, we should hold onto it tight, very tight... and we mustn't let it go.

PAP: Well, just give me your glass, don't hold that so tight...

DOCTOR: And you know what I'm asking now?

SONNY: No, we don't.

PAP: No?

DAD: No.

DOCTOR: Can I ask?

DAD: Yes, Doctor, excuse me.

DOCTOR: So. So you know what I'm asking now? (*silence, he looks around at everyone*) I'm asking now if it's possible to live without happiness? I'm asking now is a man a man without happiness?

*A rhetorical pause – but everybody starts shouting.*

DAD: No, of course not!

PAP: It's not possible.

SONNY: It's not possible and it's forbidden!

MOM: No way!

POSTMAN: Well... I don't know...

BALOG: He is right! The doctor is right!

SISSY: What a serious and nice man... So mature... but still so nice...

DOCTOR: It's a mistake, my friends! A big mistake!

SONNY: Great.

DOCTOR: It's possible, it's possible to live without happiness and love! Unfortunately, it's really possible.

PAP: (*not understanding*) Possible?

DAD: He says it is.

MOM: Are you serious, Doctor?

SISSY: (*Like a whore*) Why are you saying such a thing?

POSTMAN: Well, if it's possible, it's possible.

DOCTOR: Well, just look around! How many people live without love? How many people live without knowing what happiness is? They are like a stone on the side of a hill, into which water drops carved holes...

PAP: (*He is smelling his glass*) What water?

DOCTOR: But that hole remains hollow forever...

MOM: Oh, he is speaking so beautifully...

DOCTOR: They are... stumbling blind and deaf, because they don't open their eyes and they don't open their ears...

SISSY: Doctor, I'll open them!

DOCTOR: I'm asking again: is it possible to live without love? Is it possible to live without happiness?

PAP: Now I really don't understand...

SONNY: You aren't alone, Pap...

DAD (*to Mom*) Now is it possible or not, my dear Mom?

MOM: You just pay attention!

DOCTOR: Yes! It's possible! But is that life? (*rhetorical pause*) And I say to this, my dear friends, that it isn't. That's not life. It's only the shadow of life, sleeping with eyes half way closed, a projected picture on the wall, pretending and a grim dream!

BALOG: That was on the tip of my tongue.

POSTMAN: See!

DAD: Let's drink to this!

PAP: Right.

DOCTOR: Silence! Because what does happiness mean at the same time?

*Silence*

DOCTOR: Happiness means that we look into the eyes of others and find the real meaning of life. That's what happiness means. Now, come on, my friends, let's hold each other's hands.

MOM: Now?

SONNY: Everybody?

DOCTOR: Yes!

SISSY: Yes! (*squeezes through the others to the Doctor and holds his hands, and looks into his eyes from a very short distance*)

DOCTOR: Am... yes, Miss. Hold each other's hands and look into each other's eyes. (*the members of the party form a circle slowly and grudgingly around and behind the Doctor – partly facing the audience, they take each other's hands and look into each others eyes turning left and right*) That's it! And if you now think that why, there is love in me, there is happiness in me and then you go outside into the snowfall...

SONNY: We'll go outside?!

POSTMAN: Well... it's quite cold...

PAP: I'm quite tired...

MOM: Silence... that's not what he meant!

DOCTOR: You will take happiness with you wherever you go...

SISSY: Yes, yes. Yes!!!

DOCTOR: And if you meet your fellow-man, your eyes will meet...

SISSY: Yes, yes, yes!!!

DOCTOR: And they will also receive their part from happiness, and they will go on to seek other eyes and other encounters...

SISSY: Yes, yes, yes!!!

DAD: Sissy, stand a little further back, OK?!

DOCTOR: Because our happiness gives power to others, and their power will transfer to others, more and more people... I can already see it!!!... Until finally the whole town, the whole country, the entire people will just be a chain of interconnecting happy glances... you see my friends, the beginning of the New Year, the beginning of happiness!!!

(*He is standing in the middle of the circle, the others are holding each other's hands, pathetic silence.*)

SONNY: Is this gonna happen?

DAD: Well... I don't know.

POSTMAN: This is gonna happen if he says so...

BALOG: I beg your pardon, but we have been happy... I can remember...I can remember...

MOM: What can you remember?

BALOG: A long time ago... when I was a child... for example... and sledding... I liked that...

DAD: Sledding?

BALOG: Yes... big snow... and the pig-killings... like at your place recently...

PAP: At our place? Pig-killing?

BALOG: Of course. I saw it. You know that I see everything.

MOM: Certainly. We know that very well. The pig-killing. You know, Pap.

BALOG: And later too... I can remember... the sparkling uniforms... the shining buttons... the music, the trumpets and the drums... we were marching in straight lines on the main street towards the main square, the flags were blown by the wind and the sun was shining... we were, yes, we were happy...we were singing... very happy... *(Lets the hands of the others go, and he goes backwards with his head hanging down while he keeps saying: Happy, happy...)*

*The others are standing confused, then they let each other's hands go and move apart*

POSTMAN: The madam is so quiet today, isn't she?

MOM: Perhaps it's because of the holiday, the emotion.

DAD: Oh, I think she is also thinking about what the future will bring for us...

SISSY: *(Puts a garland around Goldie's neck)* Auntie Goldie, are you also happy together with us? *(To the others)* You see, how happy she is...

POSTMAN: Of course, looking at it from the educated America, you must see it very different...

MOM: Goldie isn't looking at it from there. Not any more. And it's not different.

POSTMAN: Sure, sure, excuse me. I understand.

DOCTOR: And if you want to know, we are also educated. Very well.

SISSY: That's right.

SONNY: Absolutely right!

BALOG: You see, Doctor, you are right about that.

DAD: So, shall we drink to that?

PAP: I'll pour the drinks immediately!

*(They hurry to fill the glasses)*

DAD: To our education!

POSTMAN: Bottoms-up!

*They drink*

BALOG: Your Christmas tree is very nice.

MOM: Thank you. We decorated it together. Sissy, Goldie and me.

SONNY: And me?!

MOM: Of course, of course, you too, my son!

POSTMAN: And it shows, if I may say so.

BALOG: And the... *(points to the suitcase)* Have you opened it?

MOM: That?

DOCTOR: That.

MOM: Well... I don't really know.

DAD: Not yet.

BALOG: And don't you think... don't you think you could...

SONNY: No?

BALOG: I mean we together... If the Doctor is also ...

DAD: I don't know what we think.

MOM: I hope you don't.

DOCTOR: If the Madam wouldn't mind...

BALOG: I don't think she would.

POSTMAN: I don't think so either.

PAP: I'm quite sure about this.

SONNY: Dead sure.

DOCTOR: Then perhaps?

DAD: I don't care...

MOM: If you have nothing better to do...

*They start slowly, hesitantly towards the suitcase, they are feeling it, turning it and trying to move it but in vain.*

DAD: Phew, it's bloody heavy...

PAP: Of course it is!

MOM: Why do you say that?

POSTMAN: Why not?

SISSY: *(almost dashes into the group)* Quickly, quickly, they are starting!

SONNY: What?

SISSY: The fireworks are starting! Quickly! Come, everybody!

*They run there, they are pushing each other to the edge of the stage, they are facing the audience, they are looking above as though they were looking through the window. The fireworks start with a deafening noise, there are flashes, explosions and they are just staring. Naturally they react as well, showing each other the "explosions", the "rockets" and their enthusiasm can be heard as well.*

*At that moment the porter appears behind them in the doorway.*

PORTER: Good evening! *(He stops helplessly, he greets them more loudly)* Good evening!!! *(He waits, then he shouts as loud as he can.)* Good evening! I ...I came for the package! The madam said that I should take it! The suitcase! Should take it away! Me! Good evening!... *(no one answers)* Then I'll take it. *(He waits, but no one*

*answers him*) Then I'll take it. *(goes to the suitcase, he has serious difficulty in lifting it, moans and groans, keeps dropping it, paces back and forth, knocks over the Christmas tree, then starts and finally manages to carry the suitcase out of the room.)*

*The others don't notice anything, they are looking at the sky and the fireworks.*

*Some time after the porter has gone, the fireworks stop.*

SISSY: Oh, how beautiful they were!

MOM: Magnificent!

BALOG: God, those stars!

DOCTOR: Entertainment, gaiety, beauty and happiness!

POSTMAN: Fireworks, Doctor. Fireworks!

DAD: They were really beautiful, weren't they?

POSTMAN: Beautiful. What's beautiful is beautiful. No doubt about it.

PAP: Let's drink to this!

DAD: Can't argue with that.

*(So far they have been starrng upwards and now they turn back towards the room)*

DAD: Sonny, pour quickly for everybody!

BALOG: Hey, the year is almost over!

POSTMAN: What year are you talking about?

DAD: That doesn't matter!

SISSY: Oh, Mom, the Christmas tree fell over!

MOM: Come, let's stand it back up!

SONNY: Here you go! Here, here! *(He hands out the glasses)*

DOCTOR: Well, then, my friends, what shall we drink to?

DAD: To ourselves!

MOM: To the family!

SONNY: To the New Year!

SISSY: To the fact that there is a party!

PAP: To drinking!

POSTMAN: To the postmen!

DOCTOR: To the doctors!

BALOG: To the neighbours!

PAP: To the butchers!

DAD: To the working people!

MOM: To love!

SISSY: To love!

DOCTOR: To the years!

DAD: To Goldie!

MOM: To the family!

SONNY: Happiness!!!

POSTMAN: To the fireworks!

SISSY: To the birds! *(She is showing it with her arms, flapping them up and down as though she wanted to fly.)*

BALOG: To the birds! That's good. That's very good. *(He also starts flapping)*

SONNY: Wait! I'm coming too.

POSTMAN: I am a crow with a letter in my beak. *(He also starts flapping)*

DAD: I'll stamp the area code on you in a second...

DOCTOR: That's beautiful. Oh, we are so beautiful!

SISSY: We are beautiful, aren't we, Doctor? Beautiful...

DOCTOR: Well, then my friends? Where do the leaves fall in autumn?

ALL OF THEM SHOUTING TOGETHER: *(Complicit laughter):* Down!

*They all drink up, and then they all stand looking at each other immobile.*

*It sounds as though the Hymn was playing in the background.*

*The End*