

IVO SVETINA

IN THE NAME OF THE MOTHER

TRANSLATED by TINA MAHKOTA

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MODERATO CANTABILE

1955

Kranj, 15 May 1955.

THE POET: 15 May 1955. I was eight years and eight months old.

I walked into the house. The women touched me with their soft palms. The oldest exuded a bittersweet intoxicating scent, the scent of a small black animal that was in my dreams many times. She was my grandmother.

We went to the table and began a festive rite. From the corner, the Radione wireless watched us with an emerald eye; before father opened his formal address, we could hear the slave chorus from Nabucco third act.

We were happily munching away blood red cherries; the sweetest fruit of knowledge reminding us that life can be a holiday only once. But once will be always.

The family villa of the builder Josip Slavec, on whose ground floor we moved in when my father was transferred to Kranj due to »health issues« and took on the post of the KPS city committee secretary was sunk into fresh greenery.

In the adjoining house, built in the 1920, designed by a Jewish-born builder, the young Engelman played the piano. He repeatedly practiced Moderato cantabile, and the window frame outlined the image of a future artist who would lock his life into the great black shimmering thing to become its slave and master.

I wished the moment would never pass and that the bush of dark red peonies would never wilt, and that May would never turn into June, and that I would never grow up.

Prologue

1988 – RED INK

Anton Santini, *Young Love* (1891).

Anton Santini jr. and Vida Vovk.

ANTON ML.: Eleven o'clock! And yet I linger,
admiring autumn nature,
extolling the pale moonshine
and staring in the rushing Sava.

Underneath her window thrice
I hoped to wake her up,
but felt a sadness within,
and stepped back without a peck
on my beloved's cheek.

I shall ask the holy Father
how to tell my love
of the bitter hour of separation.
My heart keeps beating fast.
It's just struck four. I've waited enough,
weeping underneath her window.
Calm down, my heated heart!
There! I hit the pane. Will she wake up
and appear under the apple tree?
I must restrain myself from words
so as not to give away my misery.
Had I only kept quiet!
You know too well I couldn't speak
about my misery
because we soon must part
for a very long time.
What I have done is my rebuke now.

Vida enters.

VIDA: My heart cannot sleep tonight.

I knew you'd come.

ANTON ML: I said I would.

VIDA: Sit down so my father won't see us from the house.

ANTON ML.: Lean on my chest, darling.

VIDA: Hark! Footsteps! Is someone sneaking in the bushes on the left?

ANTON ML.: A wee birdie ...

VIDA: It grew louder!

ANTON ML.: It must be a big bird, a raven!

VIDA: Maybe. I listened furtively until late. You used to come earlier.

What kept you now?

ANTON ML.: I was underneath your window.

VIDA: I've read your poems, Anton.

You've opened your tender heart in them.

I most cared for the one about love

in a flaming heart.

They must have taken up a lot of time.

Some are a match to Prešeren's.

ANTON ML.: Keep them, if you liked them. I wrote them for you, Vida.

Act One

Scene One

1892 –

Žirovnica, 1892.

Anton and Katarina.

ANTON: He was buried under the snow.

KATARINA: Where on Earth did he get the gun?

ANTON: Not from the canon, I'm sure.

KATARINA: He spent the summer reading his articles in *Home and Abroad*.

ANTON: The canon's articles are educational, rousing knowledge not death.

KATARINA: Where did he get the gun? He could hardly buy it for he had no money. Did he steal it?

ANTON: From a classmate perhaps?

KATARINA: Why? Why?

ANTON: Who knows, no one's saw into his heart.

KATARINA: Dead now, cold, frozen. Nothing in it any longer. It lacked faith anyway. The canon often mentioned how he'd loathed God.

ANTON: He was indeed stubborn and obstinate. Your lot.

KATARINA: Ah, so it's me, it's my lot, as you put it, to be blamed for his demise.

ANTON: Suicide!

KATARINA: What about the school mistress in Zasip? Didn't he hang out with her last summer, walked to the Sava river and wrote poems for her?

ANTON: Vida? She's older than him, it was but flattery for her to have such a young lad courting her, no strings attached, not peril ... to keep her amused

KATARINA: No strings as you put it, no peril either. He's perished! Anton, my Anton is no longer gone!

ANTON: Our Anton is no longer!

Scene Two

1892 –

VIDA: You used to present me poems, adolescent, immature, and yet so sincere, warm-hearted. I never had the heart to tell you they were worthless! Young love! *Pause*. But now, now that you're gone, now when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, you're gone! You shot yourself? Oh God! How could you? Now everyone will point at me! It's your fault, he shot himself because of your rejection. But how could I have not; a young student, you? Presumably, you didn't leave a farewell note. Thank God! What if you mentioned my name? But we were seen together when we went walking.

Scene Three

1892 –

Anton, Katarina, Canon.

KATARINA: God, why are you so unfair?

KANONIK: God isn't unfair, Katarina. The law of contradiction commands us to comprehend infinite righteousness as the property of God.

KATARINA: So why did Anton do it then? Why did he end his own life! It's a sin!

ANTON: Tell me, Ivan, you are a Doctor of Philosophy, what must have happened to this boy to end his life? You're the one to know the answer.

KANONIK: Like all young people, Anton liked to indulge in vivid imagination; but few wondered why this was the case.

KATARINA: His death is hardly the result of overactive imagination!

KANONIK: He didn't choose death; it was his sensual perceptions that prevailed.

ANTON: Ivan, you're not making any sense.

KANONIK: Your grief is mine too, I'm just trying to explain why Anton killed himself. He was overwhelmed by the idea of an ideal person.

KATARINA: And who would that be?

KANONIK: A girl, I guess, he fell in love with.

ANTON: Vida from Zasip.

KATARINA: The school mistress. She's older than him.

KANONIK: In Anton's soul, her image was being constantly renewed and it never let go. A wise man wrote centuries ago that love is an inherent suffering, which makes one want to hug another person more than anything else.

KATARINA: Such a wise man. He probably never hugged anyone himself.

ANTON: But why she of all people?

KANONIK: Too strong faith in love, too weak faith in life.

KATARINA: Isn't love a faith?

ANTON: What about the faith in God? Didn't he live with you and shared your profound faith in the Creator?

KANONIK: God is the idea, the supreme idea, and therefore sensual. Out of the adoration of her, Anton thought she didn't pay enough attention to his feelings.

KATARINA: Have any of her letters been preserved?

KANONIK: He burnt everything before he took the train on Thursday. The stove was full of ash. It felt weird.

KATARINA: Can we put him to rest in the blessed earth though?

KANONIK: Of course.

Scene Four

1892

KATARINA: This water cannot wash away the pain that consumed you to end your life and reject it. Tone. I washed you in this water when I gave birth to you; the wound opened, the blood poured out and it was the will of heaven that kept us alive. You painful fruit of my body, you don't know how much I trembled for every step you took, how I listened to your every word! Then you started moving away, our home was no longer yours, you gazed somewhere beyond.

Praying. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Scene Five

1892 –

Vida and Canon

KANONIK: You asked me at the funeral to talk to me.

VIDA: Anton's death.

KANONIK: It's a burden upon all of us; a heavy burden because he took his own life, the life God gave him.

VIDA: He was in love with me.

KANONIK: I know, and his mother and father know it too.

VIDA: And now it's my fault. Everybody says so: even if they keep quiet, this is what they think.

KANONIK: It's up to God to pass judgment. When he shot himself, Anton lacked faith. If anyone, I must feel guilty for not taking care of him while he stayed with me in Ljubljana. He read my writings in which I underlined the power of sensual representation. Still, he got deeply sunk into his emotions day by day; this being a lower phenomenon of mental life.

VIDA: So what is love then?

KANONIK: We must distinguish human love which is limited to lust and gratification of sensory sensations.

VIDA: So the only true love is the love of God?

KANONIK: Not at all. Love between a man and a woman is sacred since it produces children; it is essential for the continuation of humanity.

VIDA: But I never promised Anton anything. No expectations, I told him, as we walked along the Sava river, when he recited me one of his poems.

KANONIK: Vida I know you write poems too. I read them in the Vrtec magazine.

VIDA: My humble efforts.

KANONIK: I don't think so; they're mature enough and express a love of the Creator. One impressed me particularly. The one that opens «»My soul is a lily ...«

VIDA: Canon, have I sinned?

KANONIK: Because you didn't love him? You never gave him any false hopes by agreeing to be his friend. You hardly have many friends in Zasip, so this is no sin at all.

VIDA: Why did he kill himself then?

KANONIK: A seed from which an evil flower blooms.

VIDA: My soul is a lily
in the middle of a lonely field,
my soul is a beautiful pearl

in the middle of a silent sea.

Why are you trembling, my soul?

The love of God is your angel;

the lonely field, the silent sea

are telling you: fear not, fear not!

SCENE SIX

1913 –

Trieste, September 1913.

Marija, Ivo

MARIJA: He's not breathing! Ivo! He's not breathing!

I VO: What?

MARIJA: Željko's stopped breathing!

I VO: Don't be silly, he's asleep.

MARIJA: I'm not being silly. He's died in his sleep.

I VO: I must call the doctor!

MARIJA: Doctor? Now? Why? His heart stopped; he stopped breathing. He's blue in the face.

I VO: No, no, this can't be true!

MARIJA: When I nursed him and put him in his cot, he was all pink, exuding a sweet scent, so warm and graceful. Oh God, why are you punishing us so much! Be damned!

I VO: God has nothing to do with it. It's all up to us, people. There's nobody up there, it's just us, on our own, left to our own devices.

MARIJA: Željko, my wish ...

SCENE SEVEN

1913-

Marija, Ivo

I VO: I was transferred. We must go back to Gorenjska.

MARIJA: You told me we'd make Trieste our home.

IVO: You know it's not up to me. They can transfer me any time they please.

MARIJA: Surely, since you're a postman, always ready to take a letter to an address, even if the addressee is unknown.

IVO: I won't have you talk to me like that! I'm the deputy supervisor of the Trieste Post Office. And a lawyer by education.

MARIJA: So I'm to leave it all and go back while the boy's grave remains here? Alone, abandoned, forgotten by all ...

IVO: We'll never forget him! We'll visit his grave. I promise you. After all, Žirovnica is our true home.

MARIJA: Your home!

IVO: Ours! And our children's.

MARIJA: Whenever you can't keep your promises, you blame others. I'm to make home for our children in an inn with village freaks making noise downstairs, while I read God fearing stories to the kids and sing them folk songs upstairs.

IVO: You know very well it's not up to me. Remember once and for all I'm just a civil servant, the authorities can send me anywhere, including Galicia or Bukovina.

MARIJA: But you have a family! You're a postman, not a soldier who can be transferred to Inner Mongolia if they please.

IVO: Maybe our children will be better off at the foot of Stol than here?

MARIJA: Where will they go to school?

IVO: Mother and father will be pleased to have us back.

MARIJA: There are good schools here, esteemed teachers.

IVO: I'll take care of everything as always, right?

MARIJA: No, you don't, Ivo. You couldn't stop such a calamity to strike us.

IVO: What do you mean, Marija? Tell me! Are you saying that I couldn't stop Željko from dying? Tell me if you that our son's death was my fault? Say it loud!

MARIJA: No, it was no one's fault ... It's just that he's gone. My sweet darling boy's gone ...

IVO: Our boy ...

SCENE EIGHT

Žirovnica, Springtime, 1914.

Anton Santini, his wife Katarina, his son Ivo, his wife Marija.

ANTON: I can no longer be in charge. I'm sixty-nine. The estate is big, what with the inn and the forests. Thank God you're back. I know that Marija's miserable. Trieste's a big city, while Žirovnica's just a village, but this is our family home, Ivo, never forget that! And now children will grow up at home, not abroad.

IVO: I wouldn't have come back, if I hadn't been transferred. They could have sent me to Lienz or further afield. I'm a civil servant, a lawyer!

ANTON: But the estate needs a master.

IVO: I didn't study to run an estate.

ANTON: This is and will be yours. After my death, yours only. Anton killed himself, France went to America, we never hear from him, Marija died when she was two. And Matevž's totally lost it after his wife died. His seeks remedy in alcohol.

IVO: We've lost out little boy Željko too.

ANTON: We've been through a lot, especially your mother, struggling with the inn day after day. The maids are so dumb she must do it all herself.

IVO: You're probably expecting Marija will help in the inn too?

ANTON: Who else then, bloody hell?

IVO: We've got four children, you've got four grandchildren, someone must raise them!

ANTON: She'll cope; Marija's a strong woman, you're so lucky to have her.

IVO: Lucky? You call it luck if someone invades your heart like a storm, and you lose your senses for good?

ANTON: Uncle Ivan could tell us a lot about luck.

IVO: He's a theologian, he'd probably say that God has divided fairly happiness and misery.

ANTON: If Vladimir and Bogdan ever want to study, they can reside with him in Ljubljana.

Let me ask you again, Ivo, since all we have is yours and your children's and their children's children.

IVO: Can't we find a forester to look after the woods?

ANTON: Do you realize at all how big they are? Beech and spruce, some trees are thirty meters tall.

IVO: Have you considered selling some to a timber dealer? I met many in Trieste. Pavletič, for example.

ANTON: I won't be selling anything. It's ours and will remain so!

Scene nine

1914 -

Katarina (64 years) and Marija (29 years).

MARIJA: They're asleep at last.

KATARINA: You're spoiling them.

MARIJA: Is it possible to measure maternal love? Can it ever be too strong?

KATARINA: There must be a reasonable rate in love. Otherwise it's Affenliebe.

Uncontrolled fluctuation of emotion... From one extreme to another...

MARIJA: I don't get it, Katarina. What are you're trying to tell me?

KATARINA: Love can easily fall ill fatally.

MARIJA: You mean Tone?

KATARINA: Not just him. Remember how many children died under this roof. Tone's sister Marija died when she was only two. And Željko.

MARIJA: Why do you mention him now? As if my wounds weren't bleeding still.

KATARINA: Frankly, since we're both women and mothers, I don't get it how he could have died in his sleep.

MARIJA: Are you suggesting it was my fault?

KATARINA: I never said that, but still, it's weird. Marija died of diphtheria.

MARIJA: Tone shot himself. And he wasn't a child anymore.

KATARINA: What does it say in the death certificate? They must have filled in the cause of death. They do it here, let alone in a big city like Trieste.

MARIJA: The doctor didn't know why Željko died. The phenomenon is called cot death.

KATARINA: If only you had been by his side.

MARIJA: I knew it would start, the moment we got back here.

KATARINA: It's not what I meant, Marija. I simply wondered when you wrote to me that my grandson died. It's not what I meant.

MARIJA: I don't know what you meant.

Scene Ten

1914 –

Ivo and Marija

MARIJA: Your mother doesn't like me.

IVO: Nonsense. She just finds it hard to show her feelings.

MARIJA: Hatred is a feeling too.

IVO: Don't be too harsh on her

MARIJA: She's too harsh on me, treating me as if I was a stranger. She pays hardly any attention to the children.

IVO: She's in pain.

MARIJA: In pain? What on Earth is wrong with her?

IVO: You know my dad is a tough man. He only cares about the estate, he spends all his efforts running it, taking care of the fields, forests, orchards.

MARIJA: I wish I had stayed in Trieste! There I felt free. The sea view itself is so reassuring and it always makes you feel you want to leave, go to the horizon and beyond.

IVO: Oh, my fair Vida!

MARIJA: Stop it! And we used to go to the opera there. We will ever go to Ljubljana? To see the *Nightingale of Gorenjska*?

IVO: I'll take you to Ljubljana. It was theatre that brought us together. You used to sell tickets in Šelenburg's when I first laid my eyes on you.

MARIJA: And shot me through with them. And then you told me you were Prešeren's relative, which impressed me ever more.

SCENE ELEVEN

1914

September 1914.

Evening. Family dinner. Anton, Katarina, Ivo, Marija.

ANTON: The war's begun. The Germans are in Belgium. It'll be France next.

IVO: England's now entered the war too.

KATARINA: What will happen to us?

MARIJA: Ivo, how come you've been enlisted?

IVO: Because I'm a lawyer.

MARIJA: But you have a family? Where will you be sent to? The frontline?

IVO: They're sending me to Prague be as a deputy chief of military prison.

KATARINA: You'll be in prison?

IVO: Yes, but not imprisoned.

ANTON: This is a high rank, deputy chief of prison.

MARIJA: You'll leave us alone here?

KATARINA: This is your home too, Marija.

IVO: I've decided to bring little Vladko with me.

MARIJA: Are you mad? He's only six, and you want to drag him in the war! No way!

ANTON: Ivo, have you thought it out well? This is very risky.

KATARINA: Ivo, let Vladko stay at home. He'll be fine here. Think of Melica, Vidica and Bogdan, how will they cope?

IVO: Vladko's coming with me. It's my decision. I don't want to be there without my family. There's no frontline in Prague either.

MARIJA: You're stealing my son!

ANTON: Marija, don't!

SCENE TWELVE

1914 –

Anton, Katarina.

KATARINA: Sometimes I can remember.

ANTON: Anton, is it ?

KATARINA: Sometimes I can see him, he's all white, silent, empty-eyed.

ANTON: I still don't get it why.

KATARINA: I don't get it that he did it because he was in love with the school mistress.

ANTON: I don't know, I can't imagine that love can be death too.

KATARINA: Did we love each other? Do we still do?

ANTON: Yes, we do, we live together, we have a family and a home.

KATARINA: This doesn't mean we love each other still. He'd be forty now and have a family.

ANTON: He died twenty-three years ago. No one can say what his life would be like. This riddle has no key.

KATARINA: Tell me, Anton, what kind of love is it that you kill yourself for its sake?

ANTON: Utterly powerful and unrequited, strong enough to break you and make your heart go berserk.

SCENE THIRTEEN

1914 –

Žirovnica, springtime 1915.

*A letter from Prague has arrived.**Marija, Katarina, Anton. Marija is reading the letter.*

MARIJA: A letter! At last! Mother, father! A letter has arrived.

KATARINA: Go on, read it. Let's hear it how our boys are doing.

ANTON: Go on, I can't wait.

MARIJA: Give it a rest so. One moment. *She starts to read the letter.*

»My beloved wife!«

KATARINA: Go on, although it's addressed to you, it's for all of us.

MARIJA: »Have no fear, we've settled down well here. Prague is an even bigger city than Trieste. We do live in a military penitentiary building located near the castle of Hradčani, but the flat is large, comfy and nicely furnished. We also have a housekeeper, whose name is Marija - how many are you! - taking care of us. Her surname is Križka.

ANTON: Near the castle, it must be lovely.

KATARINA: It's a good job they have a housekeeper. Read on.

MARIJA: »Let me report mainly on our Vladko. We don't speak Czech, I taught him a little, but I enrolled him in an Austrian school, and he has no problem with German. If he finishes this school, which is both a primary and a secondary school, as well as a cadet school, he'll graduate as a young Fähnrich, a cadet after twelve years.

ANTON: A cadet! This is a reasonably high rank.

MARIJA: They're hardly going to stay there for so long.

KATARINA: Of course not. The war'll be over soon.

ANTON: Who knows? Still, it'll hardly go on for twelve years!

MARIJA: What if it will? Twelve years? Not to see Vladko for twelve years! I told him not to take him with him!

ANTON: Calm down, Marija. Ivo's only saying what if.

KATARINA: Now, this is genuine Gorenjska common sense.

MARIJA: Leave it, will you. *She reads.*

»My Bursche takes him to school every day.« Who is a Bursche?

ANTON: A military adjunct. Very posh they are, to have a Bursche!

MARIJA: »At noon, after class, he picks him up and takes him back to the penitentiary. In the evening, we go out to various places for dinner with my new acquaintances, male and female. I like their company and the conversation runs smoothly after we've had some beer.« I knew it, I knew it.

KATARINA: Knew what?

MARIJA: That he frequented pubs and made friends with dodgy women.

ANTON: He hasn't said that. You've made it up!

MARIJA: Well, what sort of women frequent the pubs?

KATARINA: According to him, they are just acquaintances.

MARIJA: We've been hearing the echo of the gunfire from the Soča River, terrifying the kids. I must lie to them that it's thunder. We've had refugees from all over the place. We've had to turn the inn into a temporary shelter. We cook for them in the vast pots. Meanwhile, he's been drinking beer in Prague!

ANTON: Anything else?

MARIJA: His boss is called Šterngrbar. And that he bought a uniform for Vladko. Not only that he took him to Prague, he bought him a uniform too. What next? Send him off to the frontline?

ANTON: Calm down, Marija. You're upset because of the letter. To hear their news after such a long silence. Calm down. All will be fine.

MARIJA: Fine? Will there ever be anything fine in this world again? This bloody world!

Scene 14

1915 –

Marija.

MARIJA: Ivo, you can't possibly imagine how miserable I am. It can hardly be easy for you either. You knew it, which is why you wanted Vladko to join you. But what if this damn war lasts for much longer, setting us apart forever, never to meet again, never to see each other again, never to hug each other again? Your parents are trying hard to be nice to me. They treat me as if I were ill. In any case, I've been seriously ill since you and Vladko were gone. You might say that I still have Melica and Vidica and Bogdan. Bogdan wakes up every night, screaming. He misses you. Sometimes at night, when

everything is quiet, when the Soča cannons go silent, I feel as if I could hear Stol sliding down, huge and dark, coming close to squeeze us underneath.

Scene 15

1915 –

Prague, springtime 1915.

Ivo, 33 years, Captain Sterngrüber, 47 years. Prague military penitentiary.

STERNGRÜBER: Herr Santini, you've disappointed me. Deeply.

IVO: Captain Sterngrüber, I don't know why. Aren't you satisfied with my work?

STERNGRÜBER: No complaint about your work here in the penitentiary. But it's your activities outside the institution that have deeply disappointed me. Even more so, since I trusted you implicitly, both professionally and personally.

IVO: Captain Sterngrüber, I really don't get it.

STERNGRÜBER: STERNGRÜBER: Right then, let's try it differently. I'll say a few names and you tell me if you know them. Okey?

IVO: At your service, always, captain Sterngrüber.

STERNGRÜBER: Beneš. Do you know him?

IVO: No.

STERNGRÜBER: Černý?

IVO: Yes.

STERNGRÜBER: Hlaváč?

IVO: Yes.

STERNGRÜBER: Krejčí?

IVO: Yes.

STERNGRÜBER: Novotný?

IVO: Yes.

STERNGRÜBER: The list is very long, let me simply read out the names: Dvořak, Kolár, Mácha, Heybal, Souček, Skrušný ... You'll probably say you don't know them.

IVO: Captain Sterngrüber, I really don't get it what you want from me.

STERNGRÜBER: Mr. Santini, deputy chief of the military penitentiary in Prague, don't play dumb with me. You've been meeting with a dangerous group of insurgents, the so-

called Masaryks who seek to overthrow the monarchy! Right now, when we are at war, when the world is breaking apart, and tens of thousands of soldiers are bleeding all over Europe, not just across Europe, but also in Africa and Asia. This is a world war! I hope you understand that. I don't want to underestimate your natural intelligence. The Masarkys are nothing but a knife in the back of the monarchy! But you've joined them and dragged your seven-year-old son with you for cover!

IVO: What cover?

STERNGRÜBER: Shame on an Austrian officer, and a lawyer to boot, even though you never passed the state exam.

IVO: Your accusations, captain Sterngrüber, are completely unfounded and false. Someone tried to smear my name and told you things that don't exist.

STERNGRÜBER: It's an irrefutable fact that you've met these gentlemen in a special room of the National Café, and sometimes in even more clandestine locations. Just as you took your son with you for cover, these gentlemen took their wives with them! The prosecution will examine the details and you'll be tried at court martial by a swift procedure. Until then, you are forbidden to leave the penitentiary, and you will be put under surveillance. Make sure that your son won't be affected too much, as he's not at fault. Not only does he have a reckless father, but a very dangerous one too, wanting to overthrow Austria-Hungary. You know well that this is treason!

Scene 16

1915 –

Žirovnica. Summertime 1915.

Marija, Katarina, Anton.

KATARINA: Anton, you'll have to sell at least some of the forest. Is Čop still keen to buy?

ANTON: Stupid woman, it's wartime, no one gives a damn about a forest!

KATARINA: You should have sold it when he first mentioned it.

ANTON: I said it then and I say it again: I'm not selling anything!

MARIJA: Not even for the sake of your grandchildren?

ANTON: For the sake of no one. Do you get it? A forest is a forest, a gift of nature, my inheritance that I'll pass on to my grandchildren, and I'm not selling it for their sake!

Scene 17

1915 –

Praga, May 1915.

Ivo is writing a letter to Marija.

IVO: My most beloved wife! My dearest children!

As a result of political intrigue, I was brought before court martial. I was actually fortunate enough since such an act qualifies as treason, penalized by the death penalty. Thankfully, my boss, Captain Sterngrüber, backed me at the last minute. They took away my officer rank and assigned me to a Hungarian regiment in Budapest which is soon to be posted at the frontline further afield from the Carpathians. Vladko was expelled from the school he attended, but I transferred him to another. He was looked after by my wife's friend who was also in military service in Prague. This friendly lady, Helena von Hötendorf, is the daughter of the Director General of Railways. She's very smart, sensible and kind-hearted. She'll also arrange for Vladko to return to Ljubljana via Budapest, Vienna and Graz. I gave her your address; she'll send you a telegram when Vladko sets out. He's a brave boy, so there's nothing to fear about his long journey.

I don't know when I'll be able to write you my next letter. And when I do, no one knows how long it will take to get to Žirovnica from the Carpathians. Most importantly, Vladko should return home alive and well. You'll see what a fine lad he's become. Dark hair and blue eyes. Fine-looking. Don't worry about me. There's a war, there's sorrow everywhere, people are dying, soldiers are being killed repeatedly without knowing why and for whom. Everyone talks about Vaterland one has to sacrifice one's life for, although it may not necessarily be one's home country.

A big hug and a kiss for you and my sweet children. And of course, all my love to my father and mother.

Yours, Ivo.

SCENE 18

1915 –

Žirovnica, summertime 1915.

Anton, Katarina, Marija, canon Ivan S

ANTON: The Germans are dropping bombs on London. From those balloons, the Zeppelins they call them. Unheard of.

MARIJA: Who cares about London. We haven't heard from Ivo for two months.

KATARINA: He must have written, surely. Who knows how long it takes for a letter to arrive.

ANTON: They must be censored too.

MARIJA: Censor-? What?

ANTON: Every letter is read before it's sent to the post office. Maybe Ivo wrote something that made them confiscate it.

KANONIK: My dearest suffering family. It was with great difficulty that I could leave Ljubljana, as there were "emergency measures" everywhere. "Emergency" in the sense that there is a general shortage of everything, not only food, clothes, medicine, but above all compassion and faith in Good that always overcomes Evil. Therefore, on Sunday, I will celebrate a mass in Zabreznica to comfort the needy. Any letter from Ivo recently?

MARIJA: None.

KANONIK: Is Bogdan getting any better?

MARIJA: He wakes up every night, screaming in his sleep, sweating, sometimes it feels as if he was delusional.

KANONIK: I'll arrange for him to be admitted by dr. Šerko and examined thoroughly.

KATARINA: It's nothing. Child's whims that'll pass sooner or later.

MARIJA: Pangs, mother, pangs! They're even worse than in adults.

ANTON: Come on, brother, let's go to the garden to have a quiet word. Marija, bring us a carafe of the Vipavec, it's gone a bit sour, but it'll quench our thirst, nonetheless.

KANONIK: In war, not only the muses fall silent, but the vines fail to produce sweet wine.

Scene 20

1918 –

Žirovnica, springtime 1918.

Ivo, Marija.

MARIJA: You've changed, Ivo.

IVO: The kids don't recognize me at all! Armela's staring at me as if I were a ghost, Bogdan trembles when I come near him, and Vida, a blue-eyed beauty just like you, runs away from me. Vladimir no longer knows Slovenian. Who knows what has settled in his infant soul.

MARIJA: Everything will be fine, Ivo, believe me. We'll be a family again, our wounds will heal. For the sake of the children.

IVO: Physical wounds yes, but ...

MARIJA: I'll heal all your wounds. I know the cure.

SCENE 21

1918 -

Anton in Ivo, father and son in sin.

ANTON: We've heard of Judenburg.

IVO: They were killed like dogs.

ANTON: It was a brave act though; it's been in the papers much.

IVO: Most of us were Slovenians.

ANTON: Hafner was the leader, right?

IVO: Anton Hafner, an extraordinary man, a plain carpenter but nonetheless.

ANTON: Were the insurgents betrayed?

IVO: Maybe, I don't know, but as you know yourself, usually there's traitors.

ANTON: Were they shot on the spot?

IVO: The insurgent officers were captured and placed before an emergency court martial the same day. They were sentenced to death by shooting.

ANTON: How did you manage to get away?

IVO: It was a narrow escape. Mercifully, I wasn't put to court martial, maybe due to my disability.

ANTON: As long as you're back, son.

IVO: But I'm no longer like I used to be.

ANTON: This is your home, your family, here's Marija and the children. You'll see that the soul recovers eventually too

IVO: Little do we know about the soul. Does it exist at all?

Scene 22

1918 –

Anton, Katarina, Ivo, Marija.

ANTON: Ivo, you'll have to take over. There's no other way. I can't do it any longer.

IVO: Did I study law to give orders to farmhands and maids? I definitely won't set a foot in the forest, I had more than enough of it in the Carpathians, lush green, and the next moment it was on fire.

MARIJA: Ivo, listen to your father!

IVO: I am listening. Very carefully, which is why I'm telling you I cannot start running the estate. I'm disabled.

ANTON: All you have to do is make sure everything stays the same and that our assets don't vanish. It's time of crisis, who knows how long it will last.

KATARINA: Ivo, stop being selfish. We're old.

MARIJA: You can count on me. The Entors weren't born with a golden spoon in our mouth. If anywhere, poverty was at home in Zagorje.

KATARINA: You see, Ivo, just like I stood by your father's side, Marija stands by yours.

IVO: Let me tell you something. If I'm in charge, it'll be done my way.

ANTON: Our way!

Scene 23

1919 –

*Žirovnica, June 1919. Katarina's death**Anton, Ivo, Marija, Kanonik*

KANONIK: I'm the only one in the family in whom religion has taken roots. Deep roots.

Therefore, now that Katarina has passed away, I cannot comfort you by promising you a life beyond this valley of tears, or with a prayer according to which all who believe in Him will live eternal life after death. So will Katarina, a wife, mother and grandmother. Since you're non-believers in the Almighty, let me conclude by saying that our community, the family and the nation, are founded in something we all have in common: the love of our neighbour, which is the most powerful and indestructible force, despite the lack of faith. The doctrine of Christ is an acknowledgment of love.

IVO: Tell me, uncle, where was God during the great carnage? Where was he hiding?

KANONIK: In all who believed in him, Ivo.

IVO: And in those who slaughtered others? Was he in them too?

ANTON: Don't trouble us with such questions now, son.

KANONIK: Ivo, I can understand you, although you don't believe me, because the pain of not knowing the comfort of faith is all the more terrible.

MARIJA: Let's cry out our grief, since crying is a kind of a prayer, uncle, isn't it?

KANONIK: Lord, grant her eternal peace and rest.

VSI: And let the eternal light shine upon her.

KANONIK: May she rest in peace.

VSI: Amen.

Scene 24

1919 -

Žirovnica, springtime 1919.

Ivo, Anton.

ANTON: You've been going to Jesenice much.

IVO: Workers need to be organized. They're worse off than in the monarchy. The new state takes advantage of them, banning them to go on strike despite the unions, threatening to quash them with violence and the army.

ANTON: Be careful, as today's allies can be your enemies tomorrow.

IVO: I'm not alone. There are a few of us from Judenburg.

ANTON: Don't forget, son, it's not just you now. You have a family, you're a landlord, and a revolutionary.

IVO: Father, I got familiar with Masaryk's ideas and his social programme in Prague.

ANTON: And paid a massive price for it!

IVO: You can hardly think that revolutionary affairs happen without casualties.

ANTON: But you don't have to be one of them.

IVO: If everyone thought that way, father, we'd still be in the Stone Age.

ANTON: Stop exaggerating, Ivo. Think of the French Revolution. In the end, they competed who would send more comrades under the guillotine.

IVO: A congress of the Social Democratic Party will take place in Ljubljana in June. This will be the beginning of an organized struggle.

ANTON: According to the papers, communism equals murder, violence, dictatorship.

IVO: Reactionary propaganda. Communism is and remains the fulfilment of ideals. And since you mentioned the French Revolution: the ideals of the French Revolution were freedom, equality, brotherhood.

ANTON Or death! You dropped that. You seem to forget, son, that you were the victim of the great carnage. Please stop going to Radovljica so often. I know you like playing cards, it's your Prague habit, as you call it, but please stop gambling.

Scene 25

1923 –

Žirovnica, January 1923.

Ivo, Marija.

MARIJA: You're hardly ever at home.

IVO: Business affairs, darling.

MARIJA: At night?

IVO: At night too. It's meetings I go to in Jesenice, sometimes in Kranj. Workers need to be organized.

MARIJA: Especially at night, right?

IVO: What are you hinting at?

MARIJA: I'm asking you.

IVO: You don't trust me?

MARIJA: Your father keeps urging me if I know anything about your business affairs.

IVO: I talk to him a lot about labour issues, general suffrage, even for women. Stop looking at me like that. He's fully supportive.

MARIJA: I know, because you took Vladko to the Communist Party congress in Ljubljana.

IVO: Yes, and I'm proud of it. He might follow me. If not, all will be in vain, Marija. Try to understand!

MARIJA: The war scarred you, it left a tiny little black, evil grain in you... Do you think it's easy to look after four children? Especially Bogdan, who's so sensitive.

IVO: Mothers give birth to them, nurture them, raise them. You possess so much loving power that you can handle everything. Not faith, but maternal love can move the mountains.

MARIJA: Thank you for the compliment. Shall I spread it on bread for the kids! Tell me why you go to Radovljica almost every night?

IVO: My friends and I enjoy a short break from our full-time duties. Besides, I can't sit in the inn at home, this wouldn't seem right.

MARIJA: Depends on what you're up to.

IVO: Up to? What do you think we're up to? We have a drink and play cards every now and then.

MARIJA: Cards, yes. Mrs Legat told me you played for money.

IVO: Mrs Legat running around like a headless chicken spreading gossip?

MARIJA: Ivo, dearest, do you really play cards for money?

IVO: Well, for symbolic sums. Anyway, I'm lucky with the cards, which means I'm not lucky ...

MARIJA: ... in love ...

IVO: Mici, my dearest, you know I love you like no one else. Going out with friends for a glass of wine and some fun with cards is hardly a sin. Trust me.

SCENE 26

1923 –

Žirovnica, January 1923.

Anton, Marija, Ivo.

ANTON: It's an addiction, a disease. Playing cards. Medja, the lawyer told me. For huge sums. The forests have survived the storms, snow, avalanches, but now you've put them on sale to pay off your debts.

IVO: I got trapped, I can't get out of it.

ANTON: I wish I could beat you up.

MARIJA: Have you considered the children at all?

IVO: The more I lost, the more I had to play to gain it back.

MARIJA: Ivo, pull yourself together and sort it out. Stop feeling sorry for yourself!

ANTON: You can't run even an inn. You'd waste it all. You don't deserve to carry our name.

IVO: Father, I told you I was unable to run the estate. It was your decision, father! It's your fault.

ANTON: My decision, yes. How was I to know you'd lost your sense completely?

MARIJA: Father!

Song.

Everyone came, but him,
if only he knew how sad I was.
The stars came, the moon came,
while I waited at home alone.
Other girls had sweet boys,
while I poured bitter tears.
Other girls locked hands with them,
while I washed my dead darling boy.

Act Two

Scene 1

1928 –

Žirovnica, summertime 1928.

Marija, Vladimir, Armela, Bogdan, Vida.

ARMELA: Ah, teacher, sir!

MARIJA: At last.

Armela enters (21 years).

ARMELA: You look nice, although a bit gangly.

MARIJA: He'll get stronger with my cooking.

VLADIMIR: You too, sis, you look like you were born in Trieste.

ARMELA: Which I was, silly you! Just like you. Did you know that some call Žirovnica little Trieste? I wonder why. Maybe because we have a new community hall, a new train station and a drama society too. Vida and I saw *Juntez* the other day, a tragedy, presumably. But we laughed so much that everyone was watching us.

VLADIMIR: How's your piano? Making any progress?

ARMELA: I don't want to boast.

MARIJA: Her teacher seems to be pleased.

ARMELA: I must practice a lot, so I should have it at home.

MARIJA: Armela, you do know...

VLADIMIR: Mother and sister, I'm the head of the household now. I'm in charge. I know a man in Ljubljana who can acquire the pianos

ARMELA: Really, brother?

VLADIMIR: Even from Vienna.

ARMELA: Are you really going to buy me a piano?

VLADIMIR: Well, not exactly a Bösendorfer ...

ARMELA: You're my favourite, my most wonderful brother!

VLADIMIR: Just make sure you stop buying these silly hats. You've got a closet full of them. Walking with them in the village ...

ARMELA: I put a hat on when I go to Bled. There's many a curious pair of eyes there.

VLADIMIR: Where's Vida?

MARIJA: Off for a walk to Zasip, she said.

Bogdan enters.

BOGDAN: Vladimir!

VLADIMIR: Look at you, of all people! God bless you!

MARIJA: Vladimir ...

VLADIMIR: Come here, so I can give you a hug, bro!

BOGDAN: You keep hugging me like some cuddly toy.

VLADIMIR: Bogdan! I've graduated at a teacher's college, I'm a teacher now, if I manage to get a job.

BOGDAN: You can work for me.

MARIJA: Bogdan.

VLADIMIR: Bogdan, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll climb Stol in the morning. You'll love it. In silence under the sky, we'll talk about everything. Deal?

BOGDAN: Deal, bro, unless.

Enters Vida.

VIDA: Here you are! You were spotted at the station.

VLADIMIR: You came running ... where from, my blonde beauty?

VIDA: I went for a short walk to Zasip.

BOGDAN: The place of misery.

VLADIMIR: On your own, fair Vida?

VIDA: Stop teasing me, you know that ...

VLADIMIR: You're fond of the Matič fella ...

VIDA: Matič, yes, whom you don't like. I don't know why.

VLADIMIR: Let's not go into this today.

VIDA: You'll have to tell us at some point.

VLADIMIR: I will, trust me ...my fair Vida.

ARMELA: And me?

VLADIMIR: You're the prettiest pianist of Gorenjska!

Scene two

1933 - SCHUMANN

Žirovnica, January 1933.

ARMELA: I always miss the right note in the same place.

LEON: Ignore it. If you're too preoccupied, you'll repeat the error again and again.

ARMELA: I don't want to. It just happens.

LEON: That's why I'm telling you. Ignore it!

ARMELA: This is how engineers understand music.

LEON: This is how an engineering graduate understands his Mela. Anyway, music is one of the most precise things ever designed. No bridge in the world, no structure is as precise and as harmoniously built like a single Schumann's piano etude which you are struggling with.

ARMELA: No need to flatter me, dearest. I know love me and that you know your music too.

LEON: Leave the music then and indulge ...

ARMELA: ... indulge in what you're good at? Is that what you're trying to say?

LEON: Not with so many words.

ARMELA: But many kisses, and no plans!

SCENE THREE

1933 -

January 1933

Vladimir, Leon

LEON: Hitler, the chancellor? Such a creature is now the German chancellor?

VLADIMIR: Because they lost the Great War.

LEON: I don't get it.

VLADIMIR: He promised them he would put right once and for all the wrongs that have been done to them. Reparations haven't been repaid anyway.

LEON: For what it's worth, our kingdom is also a lawful dictatorship now. Do you remember what it said in the papers when the king proclaimed the constitution?

VLADIMIR: » ... we trust in our ruler who leads us down this path with a firm hand.«

LEON: »A firm hand indeed«!

VLADIMIR: By banning all political parties. It's vital now, Leon, that we see the demagoguery of political parties for their own benefit. We mustn't be taken in by the Belgrade bourgeoisie. The only force to be trusted is the Communist Party.

LEON: Its Bolshevik character is constantly being emphasized; presumably it's too dependent on the Soviet model. Should the Communists come to power, they'd rule with a firm hand.

VLADIMIR: Every authority is undemocratic to a certain extent. Was democracy of the ancient Greeks democratic? Definitely not. They had slaves which seemed totally democratic to them! Otherwise, Lev, our names are as revolutionary as possible: Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin and Lev Davidovich Trotsky.

LEON: Did you really get a teaching job?

VLADIMIR: Yes, in Lukovica.

LEON: How did your mother take it?

VLADIMIR: She'll deal with it. Why did I go to college then! Certainly not to serve behind the bar as an educated publican. My sisters and Bogdan will help her.

LEON: How's Bogdan?

VLADIMIR: Not well. Dr. Šerko's finding it hard to diagnose him since it's not a typical psychiatric disorder. His cyclical depression is most pronounced, making him so gloomy that he often feels completely lost. However, when it passes, he's brimming with optimism again. He can even do something useful. He loves to walk with the forester in the woods of Stol mountain, he talks to the trees, touches and hugs them. The forester feels mortified at times, not knowing how to react.

LEON: Armela and I are planning a trip to Venice. What do you think?

VLADIMIR: You don't need my permission, Leon. Go and have fun. ... This apparent peace may not last much longer. Just promise me something.

LEON: What?

VLADIMIR: Not to buy any hats for Armela. She's got a closet full of them. Makes me feel I want to throw them out sometimes.

LEON: How's your lady friend doing? Have you bought her a hat?

VLADIMIR: Milena? No idea. When we're together, it's like ... But when we don't see each other for a few days, a week or two, everything seems to wane ... The heart, just a muscle, is the most whimsical organ of all.

SCENE FOUR

1933 –

Armela, Vida.

VIDA: Why does Vladko hate Egidij so much?

ARMELA: I don't know. I know that his father had a major quarrel with our family. Even my grandad never mentioned it. He just waved his hand. The dispute goes back decades, centuries.

VIDA: Egidij and I love each other very much.

ARMELA: Go for it, Vida. Love is a rare, mysterious flower that doesn't bloom every day and for everyone. Don't mind Vladimir.

VIDA: But you heard him what he said the other day. And mother said nothing.

ARMELA: Since our father died, Vladimir has become the landlord. He's responsible for all of us, which is hard.

VIDA: You're always defending him, although you're older than him.

ARMELA: One year, it's nothing!

VIDA: You're afraid of him too. Admit it.

ARMELA: I'm not. I respect and love him.

VIDA: Of course, he's a good friend of your Leon's.

ARMELA: Not because of Leon, but because he experienced a lot of bad stuff. His father took him with him to Prague during the war, which was a big mistake. And when he finally came back, you don't remember it, he got off the train, kissed our mom's hand, and addressed her 'madam'.

VIDA: I like Egidij very much too.

ARMELA: Since our families are neither the Capulets nor the Montagues, it'll all be sorted out without swords and poison. Trust me, Vida

Song:

Will you still love me
when I wear a white coat
and carry a sabre and a gun
in my hand?

I would surely love you
if I was allowed,
but my mother told me not
for your cottage is too small.

My cottage is not big,
but I'm a decent lad,
in a month or two
you'll cry bitter tears over me.

I'm not going to cry,
I'll pick a new lover
who is rich and
has a big cottage.

The rich boy
won't care for you,
he won't look for you,
he won't pine for you.

6. prizor

1933 – VLADIMIR JE V ZAPORU

Marija, Armela, Vida, Bogdan. Kasneje Leon.

MARIJA: Vladimir's in prison.

BOGDAN: They're going to kill him.

ARMELA: Bogdan, they won't!

BOGDAN: They kill everyone who's in prison. They hang or shoot them. I read about it.

MARIJA: I know you're sad but calm down. He's in detention. Although it may take several months.

VIDA: Several months?

BOGDAN: Several years, I've read somewhere.

MARIJA: Bogdan, stop it.

ARMELA: How come he's been arrested?

MARIJA: I can't tell you who, but someone who's familiar with the case told me he'd been arrested in Jesenice in broad daylight when he was running a meeting.

VIDA: What meeting? They can't possibly arrest you for running a meeting.

MARIJA: Allegedly, he's a member of the banned Communist Party.

ARMELA: And a teacher too! He'll lose his job.

MARIJA: This is the least of our worries. I fear that the house will be put under surveillance by the militia.

BOGDAN: The militia's gone, it's cops now.

MARIJA: I know this is how we call them.

VIDA: And what will happen to us?

ARMELA: Don't worry about us. What matters is what happens to Vladimir. Maybe uncle canon could help. He's very influential and respected.

MARIJA: Yes, but he's a church dignitary. He can't possibly help a member of the banned Communist Party. Well, maybe he could help after all. I'll send him a letter today.

Leon enters.

LEON: I've heard Vladimir's been detained.

ARMELA: While we were indulging Venetian delights, Vladimir joined the banned party.

LEON: It's got nothing to do with Venice? Are you suggesting something?

ARMELA: I don't know, Leon, what's better: letting others decide your fate, or taking it in your own hands?

LEON: And end up in detention.

ARMELA: You're an opportunist, Leon.

LEON: You don't love me anymore?

ARMELA: Love's got nothing to do with it.

MARIJA: Stop it!

ARMELA: Something else, mother. Vladimir has a new female friend, but he hasn't introduced her to us yet

MARIJA: Let's not argue. As things weren't bad enough. I'm going to write to our uncle.

BOGDAN: Are we going to see him in prison?

MARIJA: Bogdan!

Scene Seven

1935 – GAVRILO PRINCIP

Ljubljanski zapor, januar 1935.

Vladimir in Preiskovalec.

PREISKOVALEC: Mr. Santini, six months and we haven't achieved anything.

VLADIMIR: Dare I ask, Mr. Investigator, what are we supposed to achieve? You and me?

PREISKOVALEC: You keep denying evidence. Time for phase two.

VLADIMIR: Mr. Investigator, you have so far not presented me with anything that could reasonably be called incriminating evidence. And if the so-called first phase is over, I wonder where you intend to move me. Have I not been in solitary confinement for six months now? I've been denied the basic rights of prisoners, including political prisoners.

PREISKOVALEC: You're acting as if you knew about the laws. But you don't seem to know that the constitution of the Monarchy of Yugoslavia passed in 1933 strictly bans setting up of illegal terrorist organisations intending to jeopardize the constitutional set up of the Monarchy.

VLADIMIR: Unfortunately, I cannot agree with you, Mr. Investigator. The constitution proclaimed by King Alexander in September 1931 is an imposed one. We're no longer a constitutional monarchy, but a dictatorship.

PREISKOVALEC: Your Bolshevik friends are serving long sentences in Sremska Mitrovica. for such claims.

VLADIMIR: Your actions show clearly that you don't have a single piece of evidence that I wanted to overthrow the monarchy or that I'm a terrorist. Some kind of Gavrilo Princip.

PREISKOVALEC: You're exaggerating, Mr. Santini! The law allows us to keep people like you in detention for as long as we need to find proof for indictment. We'll continue our talk in a month. Until then, think hard ... about your family too. We know that your mother asked that clergyman, canon dr. Santini, to intervene for you. But this is a modern state, the Church gets what it deserves, while King Alexander gets what he thinks is the best. He's the absolute ruler. Remember that, Mr. Santini.

SCENE EIGHT

1936 -

Žirovnica, July 1936.

Marija, Vladimir, Armela, Vida, Bogdan, Leon, Egidij.

MARIJA *bere*: »The entire Slovenian nation, especially its educated members, will make sure that the name of the late Dr. Ivan Santini is inscribed with golden letters in our cultural, ecclesiastical and charitable history ...«

BOGDAN: Do we really enter the eternity when we can no longer live?

ARMELA: Bogdan, our uncle spent his entire life serving God, and now He has called him to His side in the eternity.

EGIDIJ: A lucky family who has such a noble man.

VLADIMIR: I believe you've said it from the bottom of your heart.

VIDA: Of course he has; he knew him and even talked to him several times.

VLADIMIR: Christian love dictated his compassion to everyone, both rich and poor.

EGIDIJ: While we are poor cottage dwellers who can hardly deserve the attention of such dignitaries? Is that what you mean you, Vladimir? You, a Communist, and yet you say so!

MARIJA: Stop it! Both of you!

LEON: Grief caused by our loss must connect us... Yes, mourning is a kind of a renewal of the love for the deceased.

EGIDIJ: Nice words, Leon. You're trying to sneak in and enter this solid magnificent household with such words... Prešeren has been appropriated.

VIDA: Stop it, Egidij, Prešeren's mother was our relative, born in the house behind our cottage.

VLADIMIR: Mother, uncle deserves a decent tombstone. Modest but elegant to be rewarded a hundred times for what he's done for us, for all of us.

BOGDAN: He got you out of a prison.

MARIJA: Vladimir, do you know anyone who could do it?

VLADIMIR: A young architect, Maks Strenar. He is a student of Plečnik's. He's already build some nice things. I'll have a word with him.

LEON: Didn't he design Marija Vera's villa at the foot of Rožnik?

VLADIMIR: Exactly.

EGIDIJ: Plečnik's student? He must be expensive!

VIDA: Egidij, let's go to the garden for a bit.

EGIDIJ: You'd like to get rid of me, so I won't be a nuisance, right?

VIDA: Stop it! Let's go.

LEON: It's none of my business, but.

ARMELA: Say it then, you're probably going to say what we all think.

MARIJA: When Ivo almost lost all our property gambling, they sneaked around our house, asking if we needed any help. Help from them!

LEON: But ... Vida wants him to be hers ...

ARMELA: As I want you!

MARIJA: Let her have him!

BOGDAN: May I sing something for you now?

MARIJA: Sing, my son.

BOGDAN: What was the need of you, little one,
my baby dear, my darling son,
to me - a girl, a foolish young thing,
a mother without a wedding ring?

MARIJA: Bogdan, why on Earth are you reciting Prešeren?

BOGDAN: What was the need of you, little one,
my baby dear, my darling son?
To me – a boy, a foolish young thing,
to put shame on you,
but whether there was need or no,
with all my heart I love you so.

SCENE NINE

1939 –

Žirovnica, 22 August 1939.

Marija and Bogdan. Later Armela and Vida, also Vladimir.

MARIJA: You're a father now. It's a baby girl. How did you call her?

BOGDAN: She insisted on Tatjana.

MARIJA: A lovely name, Russian.

BOGDAN: I don't like it.

MARIJA: Why not?

BOGDAN: I don't like that the child is...

MARIJA: But the child is yours, Bogdan, right? Isn't she?

BOGDAN: I fear ...

MARIJA: Bogdan, who do you fear? The baby? The baby girl?

BOGDAN: For me, life is but a burden, mother! When Vladimir and I went to Stol years ago, I saw the overhang just below the summit. The sky was crystal blue, the wind was blowing, the sun was glowing like eternal madness, I made a wish to fly even without wings into the abyss and circle like a kestrel over the soft greenery of the valleys and finally land, without wings, on a white rock on a scree, where joyful chamois leapt.

MARIJA: Stop saying that, Bogdan, be strong, be a father to little Tatjana, give her all your love, because she'll give it back to you full measure. Trust me. You don't have to marry Meta, just make sure to look after your baby girl. They can move in the cottage. We can repair it, install electric wires.

BOGDAN: The one called Meta doesn't like me. She told her parents that she didn't want a baby and that I forced her ...

Armela and Vida enter.

VIDA: Congratulations! You've beaten me! Now we're aunts.

ARMELA: It's a girl, right?

VIDA: Where are you hiding her?

ARMELA: Meta stopped me and said, at last I'm a woman now.

VIDA: A child is a gift for everyone, even when desired, it's always unexpected. If only I could ...

Vladimir enters.

VLADIMIR: I spoke to the Štravsés. I told them that your baby won't be a bastard. We'll take care of it and Meta too. They can live in the cottage for a while.

BOGDAN: I won't live for a while. For me, time is but an executioner ...

SCENE TEN

1939 –

23 August 1939.

MARIJA: How many more must I lose to wash away the sins that have been thrown into my lap by you up there, the Blind Almighty! Where did I go wrong? When? How? I was just giving out love ... more than I had ... When Željko died, the world collapsed for the first time. Ivo couldn't handle everything that came his way. He wasn't a bad guy, but he lacked the strength to live an ordinary, simple life. And now... now that Bogdan has left of his own volition, leaving behind little Tatjana with those blue eyes of ours ... Vladimir is going underground. War is upon us again, it's started already.

Scene 11

1941 –

Žirovnica, 1 June 1941.

Marija and Vladimir.

MARIJA: A fine suit you have.

VLADIMIR: Fit to go underground.

MARIJA: You look like a bank clerk, hardly a groom of the revolution.

VLADIMIR: They're less suspicious if you look smart, clean shaven, wearing a tie.

MARIJA: Summer's coming very slowly and tentatively. The cherries are still hard and sour.

VLADIMIR: Who's going to pick them this year?

MARIJA: I'm 56. 18 years ago, you took your father's place when his face turned blue on
the rope around his neck.

VLADIMIR: The train's coming, I must go. ...

MARIJA: How I waited for you a long time ago on the station, waiting for you to come back
from Prague. You kissed my hand when you got off the train. It was war then too.

Act Three

Scene one

Žirovnica, late April, 1941.

Vida and Armela.

VIDA: You're having a baby.

ARMELA: Well, yes, Leon and I got married to have children. To be a family.

VIDA: But now? It's wartime. We'll wait until it's over.

ARMELA: And when will that be?

VIDA: Soon, they say. Before Christmas.

ARMELA: The Great War lasted for four years. This one will be longer, trust me.

VIDA: When's the baby due?

ARMELA: In mid-July. Leon is quite obsessed with it, he's staring at my belly, laughing.

VIDA: I really wouldn't dare. We'll wait.

ARMELA: Children have always been born, in times of war, natural disasters, born to exiles, refugees. That's why the human race has persevered.

VIDA: Have you chosen the name yet?

ARMELA: Nastja, if it's a girl, Željko, if it's a boy.

VIDA: Željko.

Scene two

1941 - BUNKER

Marija.

MARIJA: The Germans set up a bunker just off the railway, a few hundred meters from our garden. They're constantly watching us. Vladimir can't come home anymore. Leon was stopped and had his ID checked several times and was taken to Jesenice for two days. They must be suspicious of him too. Egidij's the only one who's careful, too much perhaps. He's terrified at the sight of a German uniform. And often the inn is packed with them. It's a good job Heda speaks German, she serves them quickly and gets rid of them soon. They aren't heavy drinkers though. Salesmen-like, disciplined. And on the buckles of their belts it says »Gott mit uns!«. What a shame! If at all, God should be with all of us suffering from the German madness. Little Tatjana is so lively. I let Meta and her girl stay in the attic room, it's better than the cottage.

Scene Three

1941 - CIGANI

Armela and Leon.

ARMELA: You've been taken to Jesenice again.

LEON: Don't worry. They only want to scare me. They kept asking me about Vladimir, if I knew where he was, and if he calls at the house at all.

ARMELA: First they take people to Begunje and then to concentration camps.

LEON: Have no fear, I'll stay by your side, I won't leave you, Nastja needs her dad.

ARMELA: She has such dark complexion and black, curly hair, as if she were a gypsy...

LEON: Gypsies used to sneak around.

ARMELA: I'll give you ... two gypsy kisses.

Scene Four

1941 –

Armela, Vida, Egidij.

ARMELA: He's in Begunje. I went to Jesenice to ask if they knew where he was. »Of course we do. In Begunje, it's safe there in the castle as you call it,« an officer mocked me, »Katzenstein, in German, you're so proud of your Slovenian, Slavic roots!«

VIDA: They might release him after all.

EGIDIJ: Unless they shoot him in Draga.

ARMELA: Egidij, don't ...

EGIDIJ: Sorry, but these are the facts... sad, bad...

ARMELA: Facts?! You think it's a fact when they shoot someone just like that, because they say he's a bandit!

VIDA: My dearest, I know this is hard on you, especially now that you have Nastja.

ARMELA: We both do, Leon's still alive!

Scene Five

1941 –

Žirovnica, autumn 1941.

Marija, Vida, Egidij.

MARIJA: They've taken all three.

VIDA: Where?

MARIJA: At the HQ I was told that Armela Okrožnik was taken to Ravensbrück with her daughter Nastja. But they don't know anything about Leon. They probably put him on a transport for Dachau ... Unless they've killed him already.

VIDA: Nastja's only a baby!

EGIDIJ: I told you, wartime is no time to have children.

Scene Six

1941 - BOJANA

Ljubljana, October 1941.

Alojz – Štefan and Mira – Vlasta

ŠTEFAN: I must go to Gorenjska as soon as possible. The formation of partisan units should be urged. The situation up there is very different from Ljubljana region.

MIRA – VLASTA: I must make arrangements for Nasta. I'll put her in care of Zihel's mother.

ŠTEFAN: That'll be the three of us gone underground.

MIRA – VLASTA: In Idrija, at my mom's, it'd be even more dangerous.

ŠTEFAN: We won't be able to visit her. She'll grow up an orphan.

MIRA – VLASTA: What are we to do then? By the way, I'm pregnant again.

ŠTEFAN: Pregnant?

MIRA – VLASTA: Don't act so surprised. Surely, you know how children are made.

ŠTEFAN: The storks bring them, don't they?

MIRA – VLASTA: You're a stork yourself. Handsome, but a stork nonetheless.

ŠTEFAN: Be careful. In Kropa, there's a safe spot at the Kovač's. I'll be leaving messages for you there.

MIRA – VLASTA: You know, Štefan, when we first got I married, I ...

ŠTEFAN: ... imagined our life together differently. Me too, Vlasta. When the Great War was over, I was ten years old, and I distinctly remember soldiers in torn up uniforms with hollow eyes; moving like ghosts, aimlessly. And now it'll be like that again. The only difference being that we know why we're fighting for. Not for a better life, because life is as it is, worse or better, it's only life. For our children.

MIRA – VLASTA: Our girls.

ŠTEFAN: How do you know it's a girl?

MIRA – VLASTA: I can feel it. I can feel something gentle inside me.

ŠTEFAN: You wouldn't say that about a boy?

MIRA – VLASTA: Looking at you, I don't think so.

ŠTEFAN: How are we going to call her?

MIRA – VLASTA: Something combative.

ŠTEFAN: Bojana?

Scene Seven

1942 – LEON'S LETTER

Žirovnica, late autumn 1941.

LEON *reading a letter*: »My dearest everyone! I'm assigned to a transport to Dachau. I won't ask you how you are. Not knowing what's happened to my Mela and Nasta is the hardest. I keep thinking of them all the time, of those few happy months we spent together. Even if I never come back, and who does come back from hell, I hope Mela and Nastja will survive ... so you can hug them for me. Love, Leon.«

Scene Eight

1942 -

Ljubljana, summer 1942.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I admit it, I didn't know you were pregnant. Maybe it's even better for the conspiracy.

MIRA – VLASTA: Such times! When a pregnancy can be a conspiracy. But this conspiracy will be over soon.

VLADIMIR – IVO: We must organize a regional committee in Gorenjska before that. After Dražgoše, there is a lot of mistrust among people.

MIRA – VLASTA: Štefan reported that he managed to gather enough people in Kropa who believe in uprising.

VLADIMIR – IVO: How's your daughter? Is she safe?

MIRA – VLASTA: She's with Zihel's mom in their house in Koseze. This may be the safest place since the Italians would never believe there was an entire assembly of ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: ... underground kids living right next to the barbed wire. We better part now. See you again on Tuesday at 3.

MIRA – VLASTA: As for conspiracy, to see you like this, I'd say you're a dull bank clerk.

Scene Nine

1942 –

Unknown location somewhere in the Gorenjska region.

Štefan and Mira – Vlasta.

MIRA – VLASTA: I've brought it now, Peter's letter. It's every bit a bit as angry as any of his.

ŠTEFAN: A fanatic, but without them our liberation struggle would be doomed. Have you arranged to be admitted to the maternity ward?

MIRA – VLASTA: I have. Dr. Lunaček will admit me.

ŠTEFAN: He can be trusted. He's a Liberation Front member.

SCENE Ten

1942 –

Ljubljana, November 1942.

Vladimir – Ivo in Mira – Vlasta.

VLADIMIR – IVO: How's the baby?

MIRA – VLASTA: It was a girl ... Bojana.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Was?

MIRA – VLASTA: Congenital heart failure. Nothing could be done. She lived for two months only.

VLADIMIR – IVO: So sorry for your loss, Vlasta. I know it won't make it any easier if I tell you how sorry I am. I've heard that ...

MIRA – VLASTA: Yes, Štefan's dead too.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Ambushed?

MIRA – VLASTA: No, betrayed, by one of the locals. A whole troop of Krauts came and shot him ... Above that beautiful church on Jamnik ... The Krauts couldn't be bothered to make sure he was dead. He staggered into the thicket. For almost four days he was dying with a severed abdomen. Then the men from the village found him and buried

him ... like an animal ... otherwise the foxes would feast on him ... You see, Ivo, this is how much our lives are worth today.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I believe that every life offered for freedom is hundredfold repaid ...

MIRA – VLASTA: Poetry ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: Not poetry, but faith in our struggle. After all, we're not alone. Have you seen what happened to the Germans in Stalingrad?

MIRA – VLASTA: And how many innocent people were killed ... How many children, Ivo!

VLADIMIR – IVO: Sorry, I must rush. I have Italian lessons at three with dr. Kante.

MIRA – VLASTA: I hear he's very valuable.

VLADIMIR – IVO: As head of the Ljubljana political police, he's a fantastic associate of Vos.

MIRA – VLASTA: But won't he be uncovered?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Only if someone grasses on him. The information I get from him, with an Italian grammar book between us, I take to Marjeta at once, and she takes it to Peter and Krištof.

MIRA – VLASTA: If he gets grassed on, you'll be too.

VLADIMIR – IVO: And the entire Vos leadership.

Scene eleven

1943 -

Ljubljana, end of October 1943.

Vladimir – Ivo in Mira – Vlasta.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Were you in Kočevje?

MIRA – VLASTA: Yes. What a magnificent assembly it was. Peter and Krištof held wonderful speeches that clearly outlined our future path; a united Slovenia will join Yugoslavia of equal nations. Delegates were chosen for the 2nd Avnoj council. I got elected to the National Liberation Committee.

VLADIMIR – IVO: How long are you staying in Ljubljana?

MIRA – VLASTA: I must be off to Štajerska to act as instructor of the regional Party committee.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Did you see Nasta?

MIRA – VLASTA: I did. Although it's even more dangerous now with the Germans lurking everywhere.

VLADIMIR – IVO: How is she? Is she well?

MIRA – VLASTA: She didn't even recognize me. When she saw me, she burst into tears and hid. You can't imagine how I felt. I almost said, damn it, this is my daughter and I'm her mother. That's my only mission in life, not this brutal carnage.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Vlasta, you're overreacting, which is perfectly understandable. We must believe in our struggle, we must!

MIRA – VLASTA: You must promise me something, Ivo. You'll take care of Nasta, if something happens to me.

SCENE TWELVE

1945 -

End of January 1945.

Vladimir Santini – Ivo, Investigator.

PREISKOVALEC: By the order of comrade Peter, I must ask you about the events that took place in December in Ljubljana.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I hope you know, comrade, that your 'I must ask you' is an interrogation. But, I'm used to it.

PREISKOVALEC: No sarcasm and irony, comrade Ivo.

VLADIMIR – IVO: As you know, comrade Investigator, I was told at the beginning of December to leave Ljubljana as soon as possible. Peter and Kristoš, the leadership of the Slovenian party, reckoned that it had become too dangerous for me.

PREISKOVALEC: How can you prove it?

VLADIMIR – IVO: If you knew the basic rules of conspiracy, you'd know that written decrees are delivered by couriers and are to be destroyed immediately.

PREISKOVALEC: So, there's no written evidence whatsoever? Meaning that you arbitrarily abandoned the task entrusted to you by the Party!

VLADIMIR – IVO: I'm not going to discuss it with you. I demand to see Peter or Krištof.

PREISKOVALEC: I'm sorry. If that was possible, I wouldn't be here now. You're constantly dodging my questions. I'm here to ask questions, and you're to explain why you did what you ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: The so-called great raid started after I left to go to the woods.

PREISKOVALEC: My point exactly.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Yes, indeed, but you don't seem to get it that I didn't leave Ljubljana of my own free will. I wonder who could stay in Ljubljana for four years, especially after the Italian capitulation?

PREISKOVALEC: Some say those who were most familiar with the situation and had good connections with the Gestapo!

VLADIMIR – IVO: Enough, comrade, I'll say no more. It could be inferred from your words that I had contacts with the Gestapo, that I was a collaborator ... a double agent ...

PREISKOVALEC: You said it, »could be inferred«, I never said it. Even if you refuse to talk to me ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: This is no talk, comrade, it's interrogation.

PREISKOVALEC: Just one more question: how come that as soon as you left Ljubljana safely, there was a hostile raid, killing all the important members of the organization; they seized the archives that were supposed to be stored safely in the basement of the Kralj's house in Trnovo.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Unfortunately, your questions prove that you haven't got a clue about the situation. I could have stayed in Ljubljana, taken the risks, destroyed all the documents, but in the end the Gestapo would still find me, arrest me, interrogate me, torture me ... kill me. The matter would be resolved. Pure as a tear, a bloody tear.

PREISKOVALEC: You're getting sentimental, comrade Ivo. The Gestapo would have certainly been a bit more respectful to its loyal informant.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Enough. I can't take this anymore. Tell them, especially comrade Peter, but also comrade Marjeta, that I'll clarify the situation only with them.

SCENE 13

1945 –

Žirovnica, May 1945.

Marija, Vida, Egidij.

Singing:

May the freedom song now sound
through woods and forests

across the world
to oppressed Slovenian homes.

MARIJA: Well, it's here at last.

EGIDIJ: What will it be like, this freedom?

VIDA: A huge responsibility.

EGIDIJ: The freedom according to the Communists?

MARIJA: I've lived in two monarchies: the Austro-Hungarian and Yugoslav. We never even dreamt of freedom back then.

EGIDIJ: Everything was dictated by others: in Vienna or in Belgrade.

MARIJA: Ever heard of freedom sitting on a throne, Egidij?

VIDA: They said that the internees are coming home. Maybe Melica and Nastja will be here soon.

MARIJA: We can only hope that they survived. Things that those monsters did in the camps.

VIDA: Medical experiments on children.

MARIJA: It defies imagination.

VIDA: Some have already received notices from the Red Cross.

EGIDIJ: Pepca from Moste was told that every trace of her husband and son had been lost.

MARIJA: And Leon? Where is he?

Singing:

Mother Slovenia, we are your sons,
Our life is yours when you call us.
Mother Slovenia, shackles are broken,
we stand ready for good.

Until the fight is over, everyone into the fight!
Into the fight for freedom for the new
Yugoslavia
Liberty and new Yugoslavia should live forever.

Scene 14

1945 –

Žirovnica, autumn 1945.

Marija, Mela, Vida, Egidij, Vladimir – Ivo.

MARIJA: I never thought we'd be together again.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Call me Ivo, I got so used to it that I hardly ever respond to Vladimir anymore. Armela, I'm so happy to see you, forgive me, I know you went through hell.

ARMELA: And so did Nastja. They let her stay with me just for a few months so I could breastfeed her, although there wasn't a drop of milk in me. Then they put her in Kindergarten, a simple shack as well. Because of her dark complexion and curly black hair, I was constantly asked if I got her from a Gypsy. Her blue eyes saved her from ... The kids were taught German, you could hear them saying »unser Führer« for two years. She can't speak Slovenian anymore.

MARIJA: All will be different now.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Mela darling, I'll take care of you and Nasta and everybody else.

ARMELA: You can't bring Leon back from the dead ...

EGIDIJ: How about you, Vladimir, well, Ivo, if you insist, it can't have been easy for you either?

VLADIMIR – IVO: It wasn't easy for anyone. No one, not even for the collaborators, they betrayed their own people and themselves by so doing. They won't be punished by God as there is no God. At the council in Kočevje we decided to put them on trial after the war.

EGIDIJ: Fair trial?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Fair? I'm not sure fairness applies to those who renounced their own people out of free will and swore allegiance to Hitler.

EGIDIJ: Isn't justice always shown with blindfolds? She's blind.

VLADIMIR – IVO: If need be, we'll remove the blindfolds.

MARIJA: Vladimir, Ivo. Maybe your father's name will be your amulet.

VLADIMIR – IVO: The inn will have to be closed. I've heard people gossiping that German soldiers were served here during the war.

EGIDIJ: So much for this new freedom. One isn't allowed to run an inn anymore.

VLADIMIR – IVO: We must keep our home, Egidij. Would you prefer they took everything away from us?

EGIDIJ: Barely has the much-praised freedom come, it's already leaving.

ARMELA: For me and Nastja, every day that isn't spent behind the barbed wire is freedom.

VIDA: Vladimir, well, Ivo, have you met any female comrades?

VLADIMIR – IVO: I'll introduce her to you shortly.

MARIJA: What's her name?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Soča, Dana, Vlasta ... Now she's Vlasta. Her husband was killed in 1942. She has a daughter, almost the same age as Nastja. She survived the war in hiding. Her name's Nasta.

ARMELA: Nasta and Nastja ... how lovely ... how sad in lovely ...

Singing:

Who are the young boys,
marching through the village,
who are the young boys,
with glowing faces?

Young partisans they are
steadfast in their spirit,
young partisans they are,
fighting for the new world.

Who are the young girls
with rifles on their shoulders,
who are the young girls,
have they got no fear?

Young partisans they are,
following their heart's voice
young partisans they are,
they left their fear at home.

What's this young army like,
singing in the village,

what's this young army like,
so fresh and different?

This is our true army,
this is our great strength
it's a partisan army,
bringing us good news.

INTERVAL

ACT FOUR

1. prizor

1947 –

Ljubljana, 1947.

Vladimir – Ivo in Mira – Vlasta

VLADIMIR – IVO: We're not getting anywhere like this! They're playing cat and mouse with us.

MIRA – VLASTA: Have you spoken to Kardelj?

VLADIMIR – IVO: We're in touch on a daily basis.

MIRA – VLASTA: And what does he say?

VLADIMIR – IVO: To be patient. And he never fails to remind me that I'm the chairman of the State Commission for the Annexation of Territories in Zones B and A of the Free Territory of Trieste... That I am accountable.

MIRA – VLASTA: You can't possibly carry this burden alone.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Kardelj and Kidrič are very assertive. They think that the Paris Peace Agreement is in our favour.

MIRA – VLASTA: Well, I didn't want to tell you before, but you did agree to take the post.

VLADIMIR – IVO: You're implying it was my mistake?

MIRA – VLASTA: Maybe I should explain to them that you don't have the right qualifications for such a responsible ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: Vlasta, watch your tongue! You're going to backstab me?

MIRA – VLASTA: I didn't think that ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: You didn't think anything. We must re-claim Trieste in a peaceful way. This is part of our revolution too.

MIRA – VLASTA: Sorry if I offended you, but lately ... I thought our relationship would be different after the baby.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I'm talking about the negotiations with the Anglo-Americans, and you're on about children.

MIRA – VLASTA: Not children, but our relationship.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Relationship?

MIRA – VLASTA: Yes, we're husband and wife.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I'm so distressed right now. I asked for a flat to be arranged for us in Koper so we can be together more often. There's an empty villa in Semedela.

MIRA – VLASTA: A villa in Semedela? Nice. But it won't mend our relationship.

Scene two

1947 -

Koper, 1947.

Vladimir – Ivo, Mira – Vlasta.

VLADIMIR – IVO: As Aldo and I were on our way to Koper and the border, I saw Nasta travelling on a cart with a donkey. I stopped the car and took her to school myself. Such embarrassment!

MIRA – VLASTA: Do you fear for your ... reputation?

VLADIMIR – IVO: You know me well enough that I don't give a damn for such reputation. But then again, I'm the chairman of the State Commission, I wear a uniform and have the rank of lieutenant colonel ... And my daughter's riding a donkey to school!

MIRA – VLASTA: I think your bad mood is mainly to do with what's been going on in Trieste.

VLADIMIR – IVO: It's not that simple. Of course, we're no match to the Anglo-Americans. We're facing professional negotiators, skilled in war affairs and diplomatic intrigues, whereas we're used to relatively simple partisan ideological and domestic sentiments. We don't know much about the actual political, geographical, historical, ethnographic situation.

MIRA – VLASTA: You must persevere. This is of the utmost importance.

VLADIMIR – IVO: More than important. It's about whether Trieste will ever be ours or not. I resent Kardelj for not giving me more detailed instructions. He should have briefed me exactly about the Paris peace negotiations. Kardelj seems to be a great ideologist, making plans about the future, but in practical matters he fails totally.

MIRA – VLASTA: You should write to Kidrič or go to Ljubljana yourself and explain the situation.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I'm on the phone every day. The problem is that there's no common stance among the Slovenians in Trieste. Also, the United Nations Security Council has not yet appointed a governor. Meanwhile, the fascists openly agitate »per la salvezza della patria«.

Scene Three

1952 –

Ljubljana, January 1952.

Mira – Vlasta, Vladimir – Ivo.

MIRA – VLASTA: What they did to Bishop Vovk is outrageous. How could the police allow it? Burn a man alive! This is how we damage ourselves; we turn people against us. Most of the Catholics are decent people. Not all are reactionary and former collaborators.

VLADIMIR – IVO: The Church made a fatal mistake of not supporting the national liberation struggle, and set people up against the Communists, telling them what would happen to them when we win. Look at what they did at Urh! And many other places. Kocbek wrote to Bishop Rozman twice to urge not to sow discord among the people.

MIRA – VLASTA: It'll be hard to convince them we're not hostile to the Church as such, but its role during the armed struggle. It'll take a lot of effort. The fact that the boys were drunk when they doused Bishop with petrol and burnt him is not helping either.

VLADIMIR – IVO: In Novo mesto, a mob had already gathered at the station. According to the official statement by the Ljubljana diocese, they tried to stop the Bishop enter the church to bless the organ.

MIRA – VLASTA: Isn't your little Tili related to the Bishop?

VLADIMIR – IVO: His niece. My mother took her under her roof when she left her home in Vrba. No one knows exactly what happened there. The rumour has it, when the Bishop came home, he used to pay too much attention to the pubescent Tili.

MIRA – VLASTA: Do you think there's any truth in it?

VLADIMIR – IVO: I don't know, and no one will find out. Tili won't tell no one. She may have, but my mother locked it in her heart for good.

SCENE FOUR

1958 –

Žirovnica, February 1958.

NASTJA *to Nasta*: It's been ages.

NASTA: I'm always so happy to see you, I mean it.

TATJANA: Nasta, what's new in Ljubljana?

NASTA: Well, a lot. Sometimes I go dancing on Saturdays.

TATJANA: Are you allowed?

NASTJA: I'd love to go too. You do know uncle Ivo though. I'm slightly scared of him. He can be nice, but then out of the blue, like a storm, the lighting strikes ...

NASTA: The young ones too, Vlasta and Ivo, are a bit afraid of him.

TATJANA: How old are they now?

NASTA: Vlasta is eleven, Ivo is nine.

TATJANA: Going to school already?

NASTA: Of course, Ivo's in the third grade. Vlasta plays the piano. We're moving to Ljubljana soon anyway.

NASTJA: But the house in Kranj is beautiful, truly posh. And the garden, with a water fountain and a greenhouse.

NASTA: Tatjana, do you have a boyfriend?

TATJANA: Franci seems to be keen.

NASTA: Franci who? Everyone here's called Franci.

TATJANA: Franci Zupan.

NASTJA: Every other family is Zupan.

TATJANA: I'll come to Ljubljana and you'll take me dancing.

NASTA: If you bring along one of the Francis.

TATJANA: Zupan.

NASTJA: Have you seen *River of no Return*?

NASTA: Yes. Isn't Marilyn great?

NASTJA: And Robert Mitchum, what a tough guy.

NASTA: I loved the song too. *River of no Return*.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I've arranged with the architect Maks Strenar to design the tombstone.

VIDA: It was freezing in the cemetery, wasn't it? Anyone care for a schnaps?

MIRA – VLASTA: We all do!

VIDA *Tili*: Tili, bring the bottle and the glasses.

ARMELA: To mum.

TILI: May I say something too?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Of course, Tili, you're part of the family.

TILI: Well, I don't know how to say it, but Mrs. Marija was such a noble woman. She took me under her roof when I had nothing. All these years, I've tried hard to pay her back,

I've done everything she told me, and more. I'm very sorry she's departed now. She was so good. But now I don't know if I may stay ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: Of course, Tili, you're staying in your room in the attic and you'll continue to look after the house.

EGIDIJ: Did gran ...?

VLADIMIR – IVO: What?

EGIDIJ: Did gran write a will?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Not now, I'm too upset with dr. Kraus who had kept secret the true cause of mother's illness for so long.

VIDA: He came to see her almost every day.

VLADIMIR – IVO: After he established it was too late for the operation.

MIRA – VLASTA: Such operations are still very risky.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Vlasta, stop it, you know nothing!

MIRA – VLASTA: Of course, I do, dr. Ahčin explained it to me.

ARMELA: Mum's gone. Let's not argue.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Who's arguing, Armela?

EGIDIJ: So, no will?

VLADIMIR – IVO: No and no need for it either.

EGIDIJ: How are we going to divide?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Divide what? All we have is ours.

EGIDIJ: Everything single item needs an owner.

VLADIMIR – IVO: As for the property: I had to put a word with my most powerful comrades to stop our house from being nationalized. Some party members on the People's Committee reckoned the inn should now be made people's property. Even though the inn's been gone since 1945.

EGIDIJ: And so have the woods, almost.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Egidij, please desist from commenting. Today we buried our mother and grandmother ...

VIDA: Ivo, he meant no harm.

ARMELA *to Ivo*: Vladimir, say something uplifting. You're good at it!

VLADIMIR – IVO: I beg you not to discuss our inheritance, our common assets. There'll be a hearing in court shortly to determine the shares of individual heirs. The law is very specific about the beneficiaries. I'll take care of Tatjana personally.

TATJANA: Uncle Ivo!

VLADIMIR – IVO: They cannot live in the cottage any longer, we'll build a small residential building. The garden is big enough. Money can also be obtained if we sell one part of the fields, meadows and maybe forests too that are of no use to us anymore.

EGIDIJ: I hope that Vida and I can stay under this roof.

VLADIMIR – IVO: No need, Egidij, to be hostile. We're moving to Ljubljana, we were given a large flat in a new building, and if I manage to find a job for Amela in Eles, herself and Nastja can live with us. So you and Vida will be alone in the house. Isn't that enough? I'm sorry you're alone, no children, I'd love them if you had them, and all of us to, right?

NASTA *to Nastja*: We'll be together so. I go to the Bežigrad High School... Will you enrol... The teachers are okay, and so are the classmates. One guy is great, the son of the painter Pengov, he plays the trumpet...

NASTJA: Do you really believe mum and I will move?

NASTA: Well, Ivo always keeps his word.

SCENE FIVE

1959 – ANNA KARENINA

Ljubljana, springtime 1959.

Nastja is reading Anna Karenina.

NASTJA: No, no, no. Vronsky, what a bastard! *In Russian*: »And all at once she thought of the man crushed by the train the day she had first met Vronsky, and she knew what she had to do. With a rapid, light step she went down the steps that led from the tank to the rails and stopped quite near the approaching train. She looked at the lower part of the carriages, at the screws and chains and the tall cast-iron wheel of the first carriage slowly moving up, and trying to measure the middle between the front and back wheels, and the very minute when that middle point would be opposite her. "There," she said to herself, looking into the shadow of the carriage, at the sand and coal dust which covered the sleepers— "there, in the very middle, and I will punish him and escape from everyone and from myself."

NASTA: Playing truant again, eh?

NASTJA: You're not going to tell anyone? I'll say I had a headache.

NASTA: If you do it often, we'll all end up with a headache. You know your mum, how rough she can be.

NASTJA: Have you read *Anna Karenina*?

NASTA: Yes, but I haven't finished it.

NASTJA: You must. The best book in the world. What an opening! »Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.« Do you think our family is happy?

NASTA: Sometimes I feel there's a lot of hidden, obscurely lurking misfortune here.

NASTJA: We're both orphans. We should be happy for whatever life grants us, even if only fleetingly ...

NASTA: We've been scarred by the war.

NASTJA: Sometimes I remember the camp. Tatty images, horrible scenes of women in striped dresses, well, pyjamas, really, I can hear wooden clogs, and suddenly all goes white, the noise, dogs barking, the blinding searchlights, screaming, crying and barking dogs and crying and... a dead baby next to me...

NASTA: I always grew stiff if there was a knock on the door. Mother told us to be quiet as mice, it could be men with guns in front of the door. Once they entered the house, they were massive, wearing dark, long coats, shiny boots ... I only had eyes for their boots, the glistening leather, it seemed almost alive ... as if they had strange black animals on their feet.

NASTJA: Tatjana's an orphan too, and illegitimate. Uncle Bogdan committed suicide a month after she was born. Luckily, Ivo's now a father to both of us, although he's only my uncle ...

NASTA: And my stepdad.

NASTJA: Sometimes he's so grim and gloomy.

NASTA: Mom says he has problems at work, he doesn't get along with his former comrades. He keeps saying that he carried his head in his bag for four years. I find it hilarious to imagine him going out with his head in a briefcase. Where did he put his hat?

NASTA: Have I mentioned that Mrs Jeras arranged for me to go to Paris for six months?

NASTJA: To Paris?

NASTA: To study French.

NASTJA: I'll join you! Wouldn't it be nice?

NASTJA *singing* :

Non, je ne regrette rien
Ni le bien qu'on m'a fait, ni le mal
Tout ça m'est bien égal
Non, rien de rien, non, je ne regrette rien
C'est payé, balayé, oublié, je me fous du passé.

Avec mes souvenirs j'ai allumé le feu
Mes chagrins, me plaisirs,

Scene Six

1963 - ALBANIA

Ljubljana, Springtime 1963.
Vladimir – Ivo in Mira – Vlasta.

MIRA – VLASTA *poje:*

When the stars glow in the night,
my thoughts drift away,
the mandolin starts trembling
and plays a lovely melody.

Sing me once again,
mandolin, your gentle tune,
I used to sing
under your window.

Sing me once again,
mandolin, your delicate tune
I loved so much
sing me in the morning
sing me in the evening
when the sun sets
when you sing
the spring is in my heart.

Sing me one again,
mandolin, the song of mine
I sang in the starry night

to hear your echo
and the spring was in my heart.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Read it. The postman brought it; it's not even registered.

MIRA – VLASTA: From the President of the Executive Council.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Read it.

MIRA – VLASTA »To Comrade Ivo Santini, Titova 25b, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

By the order of comrade Petar Stambolić, President of the Federal Executive Council,
and in compliance with Article 36 of the Act on State Officials, as of April 20, 1963 you
are ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: retired.

MIRA – VLASTA: From June 1, 1963, you will receive a pension of 8600 dinars.
Impossible! That's not on! How could they do it?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Don't be naive. This is exactly what they wanted. For a very long time.

When I was in Koper, and then transferred to Kranj due to »health issues« ...

MIRA – VLASTA: It was only yesterday when you were at the anniversary of the OF ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: They were all there: Maček, Ribičič, Kraigher, Šentjurc, Marinko...

Maček and his jokes, bad ones, as always... Patting each other on the shoulders,
toasting... You know I never liked formal events. I was soon off.

MIRA – VLASTA: They act like in the Soviet Union.

VLADIMIR – IVO: As early as 1947, Maček almost shot me, by accident. He was fidgeting
with a beretta in his hands, as if cleaning it, and suddenly it went off, the bullet missed
me by a few inches. He laughed and said, fuck, aren't you lucky. I don't think he ever
»forgave« me for saving his wife on the night of May 9, when we crossed Ižanka.

MIRA – VLASTA: Mica.

VLADIMIR – IVO: We were ambushed, and some terrified Germans and collaborators
opened fire on our jeep. We jumped out, Maček landed one bloody German in his lap,
while I grabbed Mica around the waist and threw her into a ditch full of water and frogs.

MIRA – VLASTA: What are you going to do now? After all, you're still a member of the
SZDL Board.

VLADIMIR – IVO: How come you're so naïve! Their aim is to hurt you too, you're a high-
ranking official, plus a decorated war hero! They want us to fall out, get a divorce. They
might think it will break me and I'll shoot myself! They'd love that.

MIRA – VLASTA: Stop it! I lost one husband already. I won't lose you too.

VLADIMIR – IVO: What am I to do then? Go underground again?

MIRA – VLASTA: What are we going to tell the children?

VLADIMIR – IVO: You'll tell them I was ill and needed to get out of Ljubljana for a while. I'm going to call Olaf and arrange to go to Split for a few weeks. You know, Vlasta, I'm relieved though. For almost twenty years, I've endured constant harassment, accusations that I have cooperated with the Gestapo... And when they offered me the ambassador's post in Albania, they thought I'd go on my knees for this honour. Albania!

Scene SEVEN

1963 – PARTHENOGENESIS

Ljubljana, 1960s continue.

Vlasta (16), Ivo (14).

VLASTA: I have to re-sit biology.

IVO: How ...? Will you tell them?

VLASTA: Are you insane?

IVO: How are you going to revise? In secret?

VLASTA: I'll take my coursebook with me and revise at the beach and in bed.

IVO: But in Split we'll all be bunched together.

VLASTA: No one's going to keep an eye on my book.

IVO: It might be suspicious that you read so much.

VLASTA: Mind your own business. I'm not sure that all those books you've read will be of any use to you in life. Maybe you should study biology too?

IVO: Well, do you know what is parthenogenesis?

VLASTA: Asexual reproduction that has never been documented in mammals.

Scene Eight

1963 –

Mira – Vlasta, mother, children Nasta, Vlasta, Ivo.

MIRA – VLASTA: There's something I must tell you. Your father's been sent into retirement suddenly. He's very hurt.

IVO: Ah, the letter?

VLASTA: Keep quiet!

MIRA – VLASTA: He's been betrayed by his comrades. Not for the first time.

NASTA: No one had a word with him?

MIRA – VLASTA: No, they were together at the anniversary, nothing ...

VLASTA: What will he do now?

MIRA – VLASTA: Father looks tough enough, but we don't know how he really feels. He won't tell me anything.

IVO: He'll be at home all the time now?

VLASTA: Do you worry he'll keep an eye on you?

NASTA: Stop it, you too.

VLASTA: Are they going to take away our flat?

NASTA: No, they won't .

Scene Nine

1965 –

Strunjan, Vila Kozara, July 1965.

Vlasta, Ivo.

IVO: » O Tania, where now is that warm cunt of yours, those fat, heavy garters, those soft, bulging thighs? There is a bone in my prick six inches long. I will ream out every wrinkle in your cunt, Tania, big with seed. I will send you home to your Sylvester with an ache in your belly and your womb turned inside out. Your Sylvester! Yes, he knows how to build a fire, but I know how to inflame your cunt. I shoot hot bolts into you, Tania, I make your ovaries incandescent. Your Sylvester is a little jealous now? He feels something, does he? He feels the remnants of my big prick. Look at that arse! It's massive. I'm telling you, I can barely hold her when she rides me. You don't forget arse this size.«

VLASTA: Won't you come for a swim? What are you reading all the time?

IVO: Nothing special.

VLASTA: Not Jules Verne again? Aren't you a bit too old?

IVO: Just something.

VLASTA: Show me.

IVO: No way!

VLASTA: Why not? Is it something you're not supposed to be reading?

IVO: No, it's nothing like that.

VLASTA: O, you swine. This? *Tropic of Cancer*! Where did you get it?

IVO: I borrowed it.

VLASTA: Keep reading it, you might learn something. It's a smutty book they say. I'll read it later. Come for a swim now.

ARMELA: Auntie Armela's now taking you all to the beach. Hurry up, Ivo.

Scene Ten

The Doors; Light My Fire

You know that it would be untrue
You know that I would be a liar
If I was to say to you
Girl, we couldn't get much higher

Come on baby light my fire
Come on baby light my fire
Try to set the night on, fire

The time to hesitate is through
No time to wallow in the mire
Try now we can only lose
And our love become a funeral pyre

Come on baby light my fire
Come on baby light my fire
Try to set the night on, fire yeah

Scene eleven

1965 - SVIT

Ivo, Vlasta, later Nasta.

VLASTA: Have you been drinking again?

IVO: Svit has hung himself.

VLASTA: Svit? What, why did he do?

IVO: Nothing, which is why it's so ...

VLASTA: How did he behave?

IVO: You mean, if he had a rope around his neck?

VLASTA: Give me a break.

IVO: We were at Mrak's having a few pints. Early, at about five. Suddenly, Svit stood up and said: I'm off home, see you later. We didn't stay much longer. We went to Šumi.

NASTA: What's the matter with you? You look as if someone died.

VLASTA: Yes, Svit did.

NASTA: Javoršek's son?

IVO: Yes! Javoršek's son.

VLASTA: When did you find out?

IVO: In the evening. It was already dark. Oresteia was on in the Drama. Someone came running to Šumi and cried Svit has hung himself ... Then, I don't know ... the lights went out, we emptied our glasses, went out, crying, screaming, then we fell silent. The girls were crying; Monika, Barbara, Nataša, Katja, Mika, Maja ...

NASTA: What's wrong with you all?

IVO: What do you mean?

NASTA: The suicide club.

IVO: There's no club. His old man fucked up Svit. The bastard. When Svit was in trouble, he had him admitted to the madhouse ... as a cover up.

VLASTA: What happened, remind me.

IVO: His girlfriend dumped him, so he went a little crazy and started smashing cars outside the Vič cinema.

NASTA: And Javoršek dumped him in the madhouse?

IVO: So his son wouldn't embarrass him any longer.

VLASTA: Didn't he stay with us for a few days?

IVO: After his release, when he had nowhere to go. The parents were in Split with Olaf and Danica.

NASTA: Ivo, promise me something.

IVO: Never to hang myself?

NASTA: I'm telling you as your older sister, and I mean it, never ever think of doing something like this! There's nothing more valuable than life in this world. Trust me...

VLASTA: Watch it, if you ever try something like this, I'll beat the ...

IVO: Maybe this is a solution after all? To shake off everything. You're never drunk again, never in love, you're freed from your stupid ambitions ... even poetry. Fuck Camus! Is this a philosophical question at all? Do you dare or not? And what do you prove with it? To whom? To the one who dumped you to be with your best friend now? You're no longer a stupid kid imagining people crying at your funeral. I don't know, Svit, maybe we all needed your death to ... at least for a while ... sober up? Did you have to sacrifice yourself so we could grow up finally?

Scene twelve

1968 – THE SLOVENIAN APOCALYPSE

Ljubljana, October 1968.

442 Ivo Svetina 442

THE SLOVENIAN APOCALYPSE

And Death was made a contagious disease

MIŽEK FIGA

THE WILD ARAB

ANTON SVETINA

AND BOOGEYMAN MATAJ ARE A-RIDING

WE MET UP IN KRIM

SAID BYE TO THE DEVIL

WENT OUT TO SLOVENIA

REEKING OF DEATH

OUR HORSES LEAPT OVER DITCHES

WE STOPPED AT THE CASTLE

MIŽEK FIGA
EATING SAUSAGES
THE WILD ARAB
CHASING A GIRL
ANTON SVETINA
SITING IN A PEAR TREE
BRANDISHING HIS GUN
THE BOOGEYMAN MATAJ
STUCK HIS HAND UNDER A SKIRT

HURRY UP BRIGADES
KILL ALL THE DEATHS
CATCH ME A WOMAN
THEN LEAVE US TWO ALONE
F.S.
FREE THE NATION

PLAGUE IS CHASING DEATH
FAMINE WILL INDULGE WAR
THE FOUR HORSEMEN ARE REAL
THEY FIND THE WOODS TOO THICK

WE RODE MANY A NIGHT
MIŽEK FIGA GOT WET
THE WILD ARAB SLEPT IN A TREETOP
ANTON SVETINA ACTED LIKE A BEAST
THE BOOGEYMAN MATAJ WAITED FOR 1 MAY

PLAGUE IS NOT SO RISKY
YOU GO TO WAR
FAMINE WILL MAKE YOU THIN
DEATH NOT LINGERING
IS READY TO DANCE

WE CROSSED SLOVENIA
GREW FOND OF THE WORKERS
WE INFECTED THEIR WIVES
AND EMPTIED THEIR BEDS

STOPPING IN THE WOODS OF ROG
WE HEARD BOR SINGING
AND COUNTED FIVE CORPSES

THE SUN CHASED US INTO THE HOLES
WE SOON MADE A PARTISAN PREGNANT
SET THE LORD OF TURJAK CASTLE ON FIRE
AND DROWNED THE NEARBY BATALION

IN THE EAST WE ARE KUMROVEC
IN THE WEST ČEDAD
WE LEFT THE NORTH TO MOHOR
GOT MARRIED TO CIRIL IN THE SOUTH

OUR HISTORY
IS FULL OF WINE
THE LANDLADY IS A GENERAL
MEASURING THE CASK PRECISELY
PRINCE MARKO FUCKED BRDAVS
KRPAN WENT OFF WITH THE EMPRESS
TO CHOP OFF HER HEAD

THE BUTCHER CRAVES
TO BE SUNTANNED AND RICH
READY TO LEAVE HIS WIFE WITH THE TAXMAN
AND HIS DAUGHTER TO THE SHEPHERD
MIŽEK FIGA
TRAVELLED TO THE WORLD OF NIGA

SELLING HUNGER
BUYING PANCAKES
DEATH MAKES BUT A SHORT STOP HERE
WE SLOVENIANS ARE HELTHY AND TOUGH

THE WILD ARAB
IS RIDING AN ARAB STUD
BRANDISHING HIS MEMBER IN LJUBLJANA
WHAT A ROWDY BUNCH
TO TURN A HERO INTO A CORPSE

SAINT ANTON SVETINA
LEFT THE POST AND WINE
YOU ARE A GHASTLY DEATH
WITH CREAM CHEESE AND SHANK IN THE SADDLE

THE BOOGEYMEN CELEBRATED
THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY
GOT OFF THEIR HORSES IN A PARISH HOUSE
WITH POCKETS AND TROUSERS FULL
DECORATING EACH OTHER

WE LEFT KRIM
VIA THE SWAMPS AND WATERS
TURNING HAGS INTO WITCHES
SETTING FIRE TO THE COLLECTIVE
FAMINE PLAGUE DEATH AND WAR

WE CAUGHT THE STAR IN THE VIRGIN FOREST
HAD IT PINNED ON OUR FOREHEAD
ENEMY BULLETS DID NOT LOVE US
WE HUDDLED ON THE BOARDS
SOME WERE LEFT BELOW

IN BELA KRAJINA WE ROBBED
THE PEASANT WOMEN
MUNCHEDED THE CHERRIES
WENT OFF TO CROSS THE SAVA RIVER
AND BURNING VILLAGES
FULL BEDS
BATHROOMS
AND THEN OFF NORTH

LITTLE SHEPARD GOAT GIRL

MIŽEK FIGA FELL ILL
WE DETECTED HONEY IN HONEYWELL
THE ARAB SADDLED THE ARAB WOMAN
FAIR ANTON KEPT SEEING FAIR VIDA
THE BOOGEYMAN WAS FOOLED
WE MADE OUR BED OVERNIGHT
POKER IS A GAMBLE

ONE NIGHT WE WERE AMBUSHED
THE ROBBERS MADE A FIRM STAND
PLAGUE FAINTED BECAUSE OF BAD SMELL
DEATH LOST ITS SCYTHE
FAMINE STAGGERED IN THE GRANARY
WAR GOT DRUNK

FARMHANDS SLEPT IN THE FIELDS
THE GIRLS WASHED THEM
IT WAS 1 MAY
MY MONTH OF MAY
PEACE IN THE COUNTRY
LIKE SOFTENED VIRGINITY

AFTER THE CELEBRATION WE PARTED

TURNING HORROR INTO FEAR
 PLAGUE GOT MARRIED TO FAMINE
 WAR TO A LOVER FROM HEAVEN
 HORRIBLE HAGS LEFT
 FOR CROATIA

LEAVING SLOVENIA
 HI HEE HI HO
 HEROIC SLOVENIA
 THE APOCALYPSE HAS LEFT

TO THE MEMORY OF MY P.E. TEACHER

Scene Thirteen

1968 –

Ljubljana, the same day.

Vladimir – Ivo, Mira – Vlasta.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I had a word with Štefan. He said the whole thing was blown out of proportion. The editor Seliger made a mistake when he published a statement in Delo, with a 140,000-print run. The poem was published in Tribuna with a 15,000-print run.

MIRA – VLASTA: Lidija called me and asked me how we could let this happen.

VLADIMIR – IVO: They can hardly think it was us who wrote the wretched poem.

MIRA – VLASTA: I told her Ivo was of legal age and responsible for his actions. Just like us.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Štefan said he'd have a word with a lawyer, if Ivo would be interrogated.

MIRA – VLASTA: I do wonder where Ivo got these ideas from. I know it's a poem that cannot be read as a historical document, but anyway.

VLADIMIR – IVO: When I told him about our family, grandfather, father, the war and post-war times, he listened to me so eagerly. It's a good job I didn't tell him everything.

MIRA – VLASTA: You haven't told me either.

VLADIMIR – IVO: There are things that should never be said out loud, and events in life that remain buried deep inside.

MIRA – VLASTA: But this is all we have. Our memory.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Not memory, our life.

SCENE FOURTEEN

1988 -

Ljubljana, June 1988, Novak's inn.

Ivo and Ivo, father and son.

IVO: What do the doctors say?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Metastases.

IVO: And what have they proposed?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Nothing. It's too late. Luckily, at this age, it's progressing slowly.

IVO: Are you in pain?

VLADIMIR – IVO: My hip, yes. Ivo, let's have another half-litre of wine. *Pause.* How's Mia? How's Svit?

IVO: Not too bad.

VLADIMIR – IVO: You don't sound very persuasive. Problems with Mia again?

IVO: Well, you know how it goes.

VLADIMIR – IVO: Ivo, if it hadn't been for your mother, I'd would have been ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: When do you have to be back in hospital?

VLADIMIR – IVO: By three, they said. Just like in the army. Cheers! To you, my son. I've done my bit. Be careful, they won't leave you alone because of me.

IVO: You've served in an honourable way.

VLADIMIR – IVO: I need to ask you something.

IVO: That'll be the first. So far, I've been the one asking you.

VLADIMIR – IVO: This is very important to me. When I'm gone ...

IVO: You're not going anywhere.

VLADIMIR – IVO: No need to comfort me, Ivo.

IVO: I know, but this is so ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: I never told you everything about our family. Especially regarding my father. He committed suicide. It's not true though that he did it because he'd lost his entire property. He left me without saying goodbye ... he didn't even leave a note. Make sure my son, that they won't come up with any speeches or eulogies. Please bury me privately.

IVO: What about a death notice?

VLADIMIR – IVO: After the funeral. I wish to be buried in Piran, next to the church at the top, with the view of Trieste.

IVO: Not in Zabreznica?

VLADIMIR – IVO: Definitely not.

IVO: But all of yours are ...

VLADIMIR – IVO: As I said. Not in Zabreznica! Respect my wish, do as told! Make sure your mother won't interfere. She's so trustworthy and naïve, she might be persuaded to allow a formal state funeral with flags and speeches. Will you give me your word, son?

SCENE FIFTEEN

1991

Žirovnica, August 1991.

PESNIK: Žirovnica, August 1991. All are gathered in the garden, the dead and the living. A family reunion of a sort. With food and drink

Can everyone please take a number representing their age when they died or your age in 1991. of 91.

From left to right, from the oldest to the youngest.

Now, dear family, at the count of four, we switch sides so that the oldest is on the right and the youngest on the left. We're a bit slow. But we can do it again.

Now let all the living step forward. Now the dead please step in front of them.

Now a family photo. Great-grandmother Katarina in the middle. Great-grandfather Anton next to her. Brother Ivan next to them. Children Ivo and Anton junior. And their partners Vida and Marija. And their descendants Vladimir, Armela, Bogdan and Vida. And their partners Egidij, Leon, Mira-Vlasta. And Štefan, her first husband. And the children and relatives Tili and Tatjana, Nasta, Vlasta, Ivo, Nastja... Now you may take your phones and take photos. Do take a photo if you please. Once for a change. And share it on social networks.

PESNIK: So, you and Igor are definitely leaving for America?

NASTJA: Yes, we are. To America. Yes, he got an offer from the IBM. We'll live in New Jersey, across the Hudson River. Frankly, I'm not looking forward to it. I'm scared. I'll be there all day, Igor at work, you know what's it like in America and the boy at school.

Song:

When I asked you if you loved me,
you didn't say a word,
just shook your head,
and kept waiting me in vain.

Grey clouds in the sky
obscure the sky,
a white snowflake is falling,
look, the first snow.

It's snowing, look,
you may remember me again.

A white snowflake is falling,
to remind me of you,
and those days and nights too.

Epilogue

1991

New Jersey, 26 December 1991.

NASTJA: What am I doing here? What is here? Nothing. Greyness, wind, dark river, strangers. And Christmas, which is supposed to be a family holiday! What a holiday! What a family. »Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,« said Tolstoy at the beginning of *Anna Karenina*. A stranger forever. A stranger in one's life. As if I was still in the concentration camp. Sombre, stern, hard people everywhere. Even the river... as if it were black marble, like a tombstone... What was it again that Karenina was thinking at the station looking at the carriages, the big iron wheels crushing everything underneath ... »I will escape from everyone and from myself.«

Darkness, long darkness.

