

GEORGE SPIRO

CHICKENHEAD

A Tragedy in 16 Scenes

(1985)

Translated from the Hungarian by Andrew Bock

Characters of the Play:

Old Woman
Professor
Woman
Father
Mother
Boy
Punk
Sergeant
Cop
City Building Inspector
Flirt
Teenager

Time and Place: Budapest, mid-1980s, an apartment building's internal courtyard, on the outskirts of the city. Upstage center is a tall, arched entryway with wooden doors. Up right, OLD WOMAN's apartment door. Stage right is WOMAN's door, and down right is PROFESSOR's door. Up left is a small garage, and left is FATHER's apartment door. Center stage is a carpet rack. Also center stage is a small plot of dirt.

Scene 1.

(Afternoon. From the carpet rack a dead cat is hanging by its neck. OLD WOMAN enters through the upstage entryway holding a plastic bag in one of her hands, blood dripping from it.)

OLD WOMAN Here kitty kitty, kitty, pssss psssss! *(She puts the bag down in front of her door and looks for her keys in her purse.)* Come on out now - I brought your food! *(She takes the bag into the apartment with her. Short pause, then she comes out.)* The chicken heads melted - they weren't frozen through well enough - but they're still good, kitty - I smelled them - now I don't have to go out again for another ten days. *(Beat.)* If you only knew what a line there was - I thought I wouldn't get any - but I did - I was praying the whole time that I would - they were buying 'em up in big bags - 20 kilos at a time - I thought I wouldn't get any but I did. We were lucky today, kitty - do you know that? What a long trip it was there and back - and then they melted - and the blood was dripping - what a long trip - I put them inside two bags - they watched on the street car - the blood dripping - well, come on and I'll give you some - some of the good stuff - then I'll chop it up and put it in the freezer so you'll have delicious chicken heads. Nobody has it this good - even you don't deserve it, kitty, pssss pssss! *(She walks around the courtyard looking for the cat.)* You didn't even eat breakfast - now where the hell are you? You must be hungry - I'll put them in the sink - I'll give you some then chop up the rest with the hatchet because they're frozen - I'll put it in the freezer - you'll have delicious kitty food - it's good for two weeks - at least twelve days - at least twelve days - you've got some life, you little animal - where are you? Kitty? *(She sees the cat hanging from the carpet rack. Beat. She cries out inarticulately, after a second walks shaking to the cat and with quivering hands grabs the twine and tugs at it until it breaks off. She hugs the cat to her breast, runs inside her apartment, and screams are heard. Her voice fades. Silence.)*

Scene 2.

(Enter BOY and PUNK from the arched entryway. BOY walks over to FATHER's door, turns the doorknob and tugs violently, but the door doesn't open.)

BOY Fuck.

PUNK Huh, not here?

BOY Fucking bullshit.

PUNK Not home, huh? *(BOY pounds on the door. Beat.)* No one's here, huh?

BOY Why ain't he fucking home? I come home - why ain't he fucking home? *(He pounds and kicks the door violently.)*

PUNK Why don't you got a key?

BOY From where? Huh? Idiot.

PUNK Why didn't they give you one?

BOY 'Cause they didn't.

PUNK My dad gave me one.

BOY Fucking great, he gave you one. I don't give a fucking shit.

PUNK Why didn't your old man give you one?

BOY Dude, man. Shut the fuck up.

PUNK Okay, then let's go.

BOY What the fuck for -

PUNK You just like want to fucking wait here?

BOY That fucking bother you?

PUNK We'll like come back later -

BOY Dude, man! I pictured me coming home - he's here - I pictured the whole thing. I come home and here's pop - I saw it lots of fucking times and it was cool - it was fucking cool. - I saw it all: we go to a game, drink beer, everything..

PUNK No game today.

BOY I pictured all this shit - you know?

PUNK No game nowhere today -

BOY Who fuckin' cares! I saw it a hundred times - I remember - fucking everything, man - why ain't he home?

PUNK We'll come back.

BOY Sit the fuck down - go to hell.

PUNK What? What the fuck, man?

BOY Nothing. Fucking dick.

PUNK Man he'll be here.

BOY Shut the fuck up. (*Short beat. PUNK sits down.*) Everyone was asleep - and I see me coming home - then I was already here - and everything was like I wanted - and it was mine - just mine - I could always see this - this courtyard - they snore - you can't sleep - the guard comes in at night to see if anyone's jerkin' off. (*PUNK laughs.*) Jerkin' off ain't allowed - but they do - there's a light on so the guard can see - but not everywhere - 'cause I got the bottom bunk and the light don't shine in my face.

PUNK Man, I'd like go for the top bunk.

BOY Fucking go then.

PUNK The top one'd be better, man.

BOY OK, the top one's fucking better. Yeah, you know. Try making your bed on the top - they jump you if you step on the bunks - I jump anyone who steps on mine. Make your bed in two minutes - 'cause the fucking guards comes in and if it ain't right they fuck you up. Get the top bunk. (*Short beat.*) Like you can fucking choose. Like you can say what you want. Smack you so hard you puke your fucking brains. It ain't like that. If your shoelaces break - smack! Lunch and you spill soup - - smack! And they knock your arm when you're carrying the tray or when you're lifting the spoon - and you can't fucking get 'em - 'cause they come in at night gauran-fucking-tee you're sorry.

PUNK Fucking rough.

BOY They steal your fucking tools - put grease on 'em - you don't know who - them. Then you fucking grease theirs like fucking hell - in two weeks you're greasing - and then they puke on your fucking clothes - then you get wasted and puke on their's - it's not like you think.

PUNK What'd they grease?

BOY The motherfucking tools! (*Mockingly:*) What'd - your balls!

PUNK Your tools?

BOY Their's. Such a dick stain. Their tools.

PUNK Yeah.

BOY Fuck it. You find a weaker kid and beat the shit out of 'em - - you got to - and if you don't - they fuck with you. You ain't in - you can fucking forget it.

PUNK It must be alright.

BOY What?

PUNK Over there.

BOY Fucking excellent.

PUNK There's like something there at least, that's like something. What's here, man? That's like something over there.

BOY They fucking do anything they want. We work in the factory - black market shit - we steal for them - do their work - they sell it - we even deliver it 'cause if not they fuck us up - the motherfuckers! And they got this whole talk - we should be grateful - they say all this fucking bullshit - one big family, they are our you know - our you know - they're our parents - our guardians - everything - and we should be happy we got a dick to piss from.

PUNK Man, they talk shit over here too, that's, like, everywhere.

BOY I got this - this fucking courtyard - I saw it lots of times - it was just bigger - taller - everything was bigger - why ain't pop home?

PUNK What'd you think, man? He didn't even write, did he?

BOY Just shut the fuck up - fucker.

PUNK You said he didn't write, you said it.

BOY I'm gonna hit you so hard you'll fucking explode!

PUNK What'd you want from your old man, he don't even know where you are. *(BOY suddenly punches PUNK in the face. PUNK looks stupidly up at him)* Hey, man, why'd you do that?

BOY Shut up. *(Short beat.)* Cocksucker. Be happy that's all you fucking got. Shooting your fucking mouth off. If you were there you'd fucking learn - I even told you - they don't even tell you - the teacher fucking drinks - they can't fire him 'cause there's not enough - you don't know why he smacks you - 'cause he hates all the boys - he's just there 'cause he gets a place to stay and he drinks. What's this?

PUNK What?

BOY *(Pointing to the garage:)* What the fuck is this?

PUNK Garage. A garage.

BOY What garage?

PUNK That's what it is.

BOY This wasn't here before! This wasn't here!

PUNK I don't know, man. It's here now.

BOY Why's there a garage here? Why right here? *(Short beat.)*

PUNK Okay, we gonna stay here for fucking ever, let's go. To the square.

BOY Why? What the fuck's there, huh?

PUNK Nothing, man, we just hang out. I go over there and see who's there. And sometimes - you came over - didn't you? I was there watching you come over, and I'm, like, thinking he looks like you. And you hit me, man! I was fucking happy it was you 'cause there'd be something happening. Something. Nothings ever happening around here. And then you, man, I didn't narc on you, did I, man, huh?

BOY Huh? What? What happened?

PUNK I remember. They took you away, I stayed fucking right here, no friend no nothing. Didn't even know why they took you. I asked people, no one knew nothing. I remember.

BOY That's history - I've been to - this is the eighth home since then - eight - they don't fuck with me - not me - I know how to deal - they don't fuck with me - can't fuck me over. I know who makes the rules - know right off. There's these fucking teachers who like boys - pretend to care about them - then go away with them - you can fucking guess. I don't fall for that shit - all that talk - the tough guards are full of shit too - and they don't do nothing to anyone - not me - no fucking way. *(Short beat.)*

PUNK Hey, where's the fucking cat?

BOY What?

PUNK It fucking climbed down! *(Laughs)* The fucking cat jumped down! *(He shows BOY the torn twine on the rack.)*

BOY They took it down.

PUNK She cut it off, huh? *(Laughs)* Bet she fucking freaked, bet she freaked. Too bad we couldn't see it. That fucking cat. Clawing the air scratching. *(Laughs)* Its four legs twitching, stupid cat. I'd a watched her take it down. *(BOY goes to FATHER's door and bangs on it.)* Hey, your old man, like, come home now, or what?

BOY Why the fuck ain't he here? I come home once why ain't he here?!

PUNK Let's go, come back later.

BOY Why this shit happen to me? Motherfuckinghell! Why this shit happen to me?!

PUNK Let's fucking go. *(WOMAN enters through the arched entryway, bags in both hands)*

BOY Hello.

WOMAN Hi. *(She puts the bags down and searches for her keys, opens the locks. BOY and PUNK watch. She turns around to face BOY.)*

WOMAN Is... Is that you? *(Short beat.)* They let you come home?

BOY Yeah.

WOMAN You've grown up handsome.

BOY Well -

WOMAN Your sister didn't come?

BOY I dunno.

WOMAN Why, where is she?

BOY I dunno.

WOMAN We haven't seen her for years.

BOY Me too. *(Short beat.)*

WOMAN And are you staying?

BOY No - just three days - don't you know where my dad is?

WOMAN No. *(She grabs her bags.)* How you've grown. I bet the girls are running after you. Sure they are.

BOY Good bye. *(WOMAN goes in and closes the door. Short beat.)*

PUNK Fuckin' a!

BOY What? *(Looks at the door.)*

PUNK Her tits! Fuckin' a.

BOY Ah, she's old.

PUNK Why? She ain't old.

BOY Ah, she's no good. Her?

PUNK Well she's alright. Why, wouldn't you fuck her? Huh?

BOY Then fucking fuck her. You don't even say hi.

PUNK Why, I don't even know her, why should I fucking say hi when I don't even know her?

BOY You come here for years and you don't fucking know her?

PUNK Why should I say hi? Huh? Why? Fuck it! (*Short beat.*) Let's go, what're we doin' here. There's nothing here, we'll come back, or go in and fuck her, let's fucking go.

BOY Fucking shit he ain't here - why ain't it like it should be - it never fucking is.

PUNK Let's fucking gooooo. (*Both exit.*)

Scene 3.

(*OLD WOMAN enters from her apartment crying. She walks to PROFESSOR's door and knocks.*)

PROFESSOR (*Walks out in pajamas and slippers, stops, looks at OLD WOMAN.*) Hello. (*OLD WOMAN continues to whimper.*) Is something wrong?

OLD WOMAN She was still warm! She was still warm! If I'd come home minutes earlier - if the streetcar had come - what am I living for now? (*She weeps.*) (*Short beat.*)

PROFESSOR Pardon me -

OLD WOMAN I come home, professor - I was bringing her from the market - bringing chicken heads - waited half an hour in line - the street car didn't come - I thought I wouldn't get any - so many people in line - and I waited and the heads melted - and they watched - then I come home - call her - called to her - she didn't come - I think she's wandered off - see her (*Sobbing*) hanging there - they hung her on the carpet rack - what is this rack here for - what for - around her small thin neck - around her neck - a string Professor! Around her neck. (*Sobs.*)

PROFESSOR That's terrible. (*Short beat.*) At least she had a good life. (*OLD WOMAN weeps.*) You did everything for her you could, yes, that's what's important. It's difficult to say something at a time like this... It was a beautiful cat, healthy, nice, an attractive little animal. I felt affection for it myself. (*OLD WOMAN weeps.*) I was just taking a nap in order to rest before my lesson. I'm very sorry that something like this has happened, I think it's horrible, but there's nothing to be done now. (*OLD WOMAN weeps.*) But it did have a nice life, and that's what important. A cat couldn't have had a better life, than the one she had.

OLD WOMAN Filthy murderers - all of them -

PROFESSOR Please, don't get yourself upset. I have to prepare for a lesson. I had five lessons this morning - with my one free hour - I'm very sorry. (*WOMAN appears in her doorway and listens.*)

OLD WOMAN How long I waited in the market - at the doctor's, when she was sick - I prayed for her when they kept her there - bought her chicken heads - you don't always get them - they grind them up for feed - when there wasn't any I bought liver - beef liver - because pork liver isn't good - I bought her western medicine when she needed - because they didn't have any - how I took care of her-her fur was so shiny-had her vaccinations-then they grab this little animal - they grab her - this little innocent animal - yank her up - string around her neck - yank her up - I'm sure she was calling out for me - - when - and I wasn't there - I couldn't help her - what she must have thought - what she must have thought - (*Weeps.*)

PROFESSOR Well, if you weren't here and you chose to go out, you chose to go shopping at that particular time -

OLD WOMAN Just this morning it came to me - there's enough for two more days - I didn't have to - I felt it - a voice told me there was enough for two days - that I shouldn't - she would still be alive - but I didn't listen - to the voice.

WOMAN Her cat die?

PROFESSOR Yes.

WOMAN And what happened, they hung it?

PROFESSOR It seems so. Pardon my appearance - (*OLD WOMAN weeps and coughs phlegm.*) You'll be ill.

WOMAN Where'd they hang it?

PROFESSOR Somewhere - on that carpet rack. Excuse my appearance. (*To OLD WOMAN:*) I'll bring a sedative, do you hear me?

WOMAN They hung it on the carpet rack?

PROFESSOR (*To OLD WOMAN:*) Now listen to me, stop it, you'll choke, you'll strain your heart. You can't keep this -

WOMAN It must have been the kid.

PROFESSOR Which kid?

WOMAN You know, that kid. They let him come home, I saw him earlier. I come home after waiting half an hour in the store, I come in all loaded down with my bags, and there's this big kid standing here. It must've been him.

PROFESSOR Please calm down, I'll bring a sedative if you want -

WOMAN Here on the carpet rack? This one?

PROFESSOR (*To OLD WOMAN:*) Please, I'm asking you to pay attention -

OLD WOMAN Murderers, killers, everyone.

PROFESSOR Please -

WOMAN I'm sure it was him. I come in with all my bags, and I see right off they're just hanging around, him and his pal. Didn't even recognize him, but then I realized how long I haven't seen him for - I don't even know how long, a long time. He's really grown - it was him alright. As soon as I opened the door I knew he must have found his way here, when he's supposed to be in the boys' home. He must have broken out.

PROFESSOR All kinds of strangers drift in and out of here.

WOMAN I don't know, no one comes around here much.

PROFESSOR Every type of man drifts in and out of here.

WOMAN I don't know, I don't see anyone.

OLD WOMAN An unprotected little animal - a little animal - how can there be - how can they even - they're not human...

PROFESSOR Please, you mustn't talk like that. Emotions such as those need to be kept in perspective.

OLD WOMAN Don't you tell me what I should do!

PROFESSOR Right, I'm sorry, perhaps it wasn't -

OLD WOMAN Don't you tell me - you might be a man of learning - still - don't tell me! You're not going to tell me what I should feel!

PROFESSOR Really, the last thing I wanted to do - I just took the liberty to point out that calling everyone a murderer - because of a cat - though a very nice cat - is not very appropriate.

OLD WOMAN Killing a defenseless little animal - that is appropriate? She was the only one - the only one. (*Weeps.*)

WOMAN You don't have to hurt her feelings. What are you hurting her feelings for?!

PROFESSOR I'm not hurting her feelings, I didn't hurt the cat's feelings either, thank you very much. It was a nice animal and it's a shame that - and I'm very sorry, but still - (*OLD WOMAN erupts weeping again.*)

WOMAN Did you see it? It was up there? It was hanging on that?

PROFESSOR Please, I didn't see it. (*OLD WOMAN weeping again.*) I'm very sorry, I don't think I can do anything for her. If she needs any medication please tell me, I have to prepare for my lesson. (*He goes into his apartment and closes the door.*)

OLD WOMAN And him - too - all he can say is I shouldn't - shouldn't what? And if it had been his? What would he do? What would he do?

WOMAN I don't even dare walking home after dark, but how can I afford taxis all the time? Where could I make that much? I bring the work home with me, but I could never make that much-it's terrible the kind of scum that drifts around here.

OLD WOMAN Why's he sticking his nose into this? They're always sticking their noses in everything. An educated man. Still, he doesn't have to stick his nose in.

WOMAN All a person can do is be afraid.

OLD WOMAN What does he mean, tranquilizer - I stood in line at the market - they pushed and shoved - I stand there to bring her something - I come home - she's hanging there by her neck - and I should take a sedative. People have no compassion - none!!

WOMAN It was hanging there by it's neck? It hung there?

OLD WOMAN What?

WOMAN The cat. The kitty. They hung it? (*OLD WOMAN cries.*) Where is it now? Is it inside? In there? (*OLD WOMAN points to her apartment, sobbing.*) Does it look real ugly, its eyes, are they bulging out? (*OLD WOMAN weeps.*) Bury it, as soon as you can. It's no good in there - - it'll start rotting - it's got to be buried.

OLD WOMAN She was such a good cat - you could talk with her - if she was thirsty she'd climb in the tub - not even in the tub, she'd just go in that direction - and she knew that I knew from that - and she'd thank me for her food - even when she was hungry - she'd come over - rub up against my leg - and then eat - even when she was hungry - and she'd get angry - with her face to the wall for half a day - and wouldn't talk to me - and she could be grateful - like no one else - we lived together for so long - twelve years - twelve years - nine of those only with her - nine - she'd come to bed - at my feet - get comfortable and go to sleep - and she trusted me so much - yes trusted - when she slept deeply she'd lie on her back - with one of her paws she'd cover her eyes - she slept there like a child because she knew she was safe with me - I never hurt her - no one ever - such a sweet little animal - and now and now - (*Cries, then silence.*)

WOMAN Yeah - it's good you had a cat - maybe a cat - that's good. (*Beat. Enter FATHER from arched entryway.*)

FATHER 'Lo. (*He walks to his door and looks for his keys.*)

WOMAN Look at what your kid did! Look!

FATHER What?

WOMAN She's completely a wreck! Look! (*FATHER looks at OLD WOMAN, stares.*) Your stupid kid! Your kid! That's what I'm talkin' about!

FATHER What?

WOMAN He hung her cat! Here on the carpet rack! He hung it! Your son, your son! It's a good thing that she only had one cat! A good thing!

FATHER Where's cat? What'd you want? Where's my boy? Huh? What'd you want? What'd want now again? What the hell all you want with me again?

WOMAN Don't you see she's crying?

FATHER What? She's crying. So?

WOMAN Well I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised. This is what became of your son, a sadistic animal, that's what.

FATHER What'd you want from me? For chrissake what you need? Jesus Fucking Christ? Where's my boy, huh? Well where? In boys' home, no? Well ain't he there? What you want? For chrissake what'd you want from me? They're always lying, back and forth. Always. Now what'd they want? Didn't she take him way? Huh? Wasn't it her? Wasn't that enough? Why, ain't I earnin' a living? I earnin' or ain't I? I work. Don't I work? What'd you still want, huh? What'd I do? Who? What cat? What'd they want all the time? What'd I'm doin' here? I ain't doin' nothing. Fucking enough already.

WOMAN Your son killed her cat? Do you understand? Killed it!

FATHER He did good. He did real good. He ain't even here? Why, is he here? He ain't been here for how long? Where is he? Is he here? (*Unlocks his door and throws it open.*) Is he here? Yes? Come and look in case he's here. Well, where is he? Please come over here. You. Come over here and look. Where is he? Huh?

PROFESSOR (*Opens his door, in a shirt and jacket but without a tie and still in his slippers:*) Please, I'm asking if possible do not shout. I'm asking nicely.

FATHER I ain't shouting! They're fucking with me all the time! All the time! Why? Huh? You're an intellectual, for chrissake tell me, what'd I do?

PROFESSOR Please, don't shout. I can't work this way. (*He goes back in and closes his door.*)

FATHER There, 'cause he's an intellectual? That's why? Always me? What'd I do to him? He's an idiot. An ass. Such a great educated man, look where he lives. A prick. (*Goes in his apartment and slams the door.*)

WOMAN If I ever have enough money, I'm getting the hell away from here. Why do I have to live here? (*OLD WOMAN sobs quietly.*) Cut it out. Go inside. Bury it somewhere, okay? Go inside. Like that. Be careful. And bury it, the sooner the better, it has to be buried. (*OLD WOMAN goes inside. WOMAN closes her own door, walks over to the garage door, checks the lock, then goes into her apartment and closes the door.*)

Scene 4.

(Enter two police officers. They look around.)

SERGEANT What a godamn long driveway.

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT This is one of those real old ones. From when those horses and carriages were around.

COP Yeah. *(Beat.)*

SERGEANT They can come into these kind - at night. Because it dark. So they come in.

COP Yeah. *(Short beat.)*

SERGEANT You don't got to worry during the day 'cause it's day out. But the night. There's not much lights around here. None. It's dark as hell.

COP Yeah. *(Short beat.)*

SERGEANT When you come in at night-you keep your back to the wall.

COP Which one?

SERGEANT What?

COP To which wall?

SERGEANT Which wall?

COP Well there's one: here, and one: there. Wall.

SERGEANT To one of them, it's the fucking same, ain't it the same? To one of them. So they can't come from behind. Get it. And that's how you go, nice and slow.

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT But you don't got to come in. You see - it's dark as hell. So you forget about it.

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT You go into a bar - you go in - both of yours - there's always two of you - you go in - you don't do nothing. They're fucking scared of you just the same. You're inside - then you go out. Get it. Don't take drinks. They're always trying this and that, they buddy up to you, 'cause they're scared. Get it. Never show 'em you're scared. 'Cause they're scared. If you check ID's, then check the others. Get it. Don't check the regulars.

COP How'd I know?

SERGEANT What?

COP That they're there?

SERGEANT Who?

COP The ones who ain't the regulars. How'd I know they ain't the regulars?

SERGEANT Because you're there regularly, and you see who's the regulars.

COP Yeah. *(Beat.)* What are we doin' here?

SERGEANT We're just here. Don't got to do a thing.

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT We look around - 'cause this is our beat - this here - we let 'em see us then we go.

COP Don't see no one.

SERGEANT 'Cause they ain't here. Or they're inside. We look around and we go. *(Beat.)*

COP Now what are we doin'?

SERGEANT We're here. This is our fucking work. *(Beat.)*

COP Hey, a carpet rack.

SERGEANT Yup.

COP We had a carpet rack.

SERGEANT Had?

COP Yeah. Like this.

SERGEANT Well there you go. *(Beat.)*

COP I don't know where it went.

SERGEANT What?

COP Uh, the carpet rack. At our place. At my whachacallits. My step-mother's. My first one. It was like this. Then it wasn't there. I don't even know where it went, I didn't see 'em take it, they just took it away - when was that? *(Beat. Enter FATHER from his apartment. He's drinking.)*

FATHER Hey.

SERGEANT Hey.

FATHER I'm going out of my fucking head. It's always something.

SERGEANT What's the problem?

FATHER I come home-from my fucking job - my shit job - I don't know - you know - I'm running between two machines - then I'm coming home on the bus - packed in there - and then I come home and they start in on me - they're shouting - I don't know what's their problem - they always fuck with me, always. Their fucking mothers.

SERGEANT Yup.

FATHER He's not here - for how long - 'cause they took both of them - his sister too, took her - and they blame me godamnit - I'm going out of my fucking head. Have a drink you guys?

SERGEANT Can't now.

FATHER Yeah, come on, a short one.

SERGEANT Can't.

FATHER Okay, still, just one.

SERGEANT Can't now.

FATHER Really - it can't go on - I can't take it - I come home and then this. Really you won't have a drink? Homemade.

SERGEANT Thanks. No.

FATHER I come home - get this - I'd fucking had enough - then this. Like it wasn't enough - then this too. *(Enter OLD WOMAN, black scarf on her head, the dead cat clutched to her breast, she stops center stage, and all stare at her.)*

OLD WOMAN I have to bury her - she has to be buried. *(She stands still.) (Beat.)*

SERGEANT A cat. It's dead.

COP Yeah.

OLD WOMAN I don't know - I didn't even - she was warm - now I have to bury her - I don't know. *(Beat. She puts down the cat, stands, then goes back into her apartment.)*

FATHER This is the shit she's throwing at me - her cat.

SERGEANT What?

FATHER That my kid - who ain't home for how long - that bitch.

OLD WOMAN *(Enters with a spade.)* She has to be buried. *(She looks around.)*

FATHER Not here. This is a garden. Corpses ain't going to rot here - - not here. *(OLD WOMAN looks at him. Beat.)* No way - corpses here - the flys'd come real quick.

OLD WOMAN They said I had to bury her - so where?
(Beat.)

SERGEANT I think I don't know. But I guess you can bury it.

FATHER Bury it! What'd I care - but not here. This is my garden.

SERGEANT Hey, it's not just yours. This is a public, interior courtyard.

FATHER I don't care. Bring a permit - from the council - what do I know. *(OLD WOMAN stands, crying.)*

SERGEANT Make yourself useful - dig it for her.

COP Here granny, I'll do it.

OLD WOMAN NO! Go away! Go away! *(COP shrugs. Beat. OLD WOMAN starts to dig. WOMAN appears at her door and watches. OLD WOMAN digs as all watch. She holds the cat to her breast, strokes it, kisses it, places it in the pit.)*

COP No coffin? *(He laughs.) (OLD WOMAN stares at him, then takes the dirt and lets it pour through her fingers. All watch. She kneels, levels the dirt. Beat. COP whispering:)* Is she praying?

SERGEANT Quiet. *(OLD WOMAN, perhaps praying, stands up then exits into her apartment.)*

FATHER She's crazy, no? She's completely loony. Crying over a godamn cat. It's crazy.

SERGEANT *(To COP:)* No need to shoot off at the mouth. She's fucking mourning. They do that.

COP Right - I -

SERGEANT You fucking deal with people, that's the worst of it. So you got to learn to keep your mouth shut.

OLD WOMAN *(Enters with a bag in her hand, blood dripping from it.)* What should I do with this? Now what should I do with this? *(She walks to the grave, stops.)* Two weeks - enough for two weeks - I waited in line - brought it home - the street car didn't come - now what should I do with it? Her dish is inside - in the kitchen - underneath the sink - her little dish. *(Runs inside.)*

COP What's that?

SERGEANT Food and whatnot.

OLD WOMAN *(Enters with a plastic dish in her hand.)* This was her dish - - now what should I do with it? *(Beat.)* I look at - in the kitchen - I see her dish and I cry. I can't - how can I - it can't - her dish - I can't leave it there. Twelve years - - and always from this dish - this was hers. It was always there - under the sink - she'd tug at her food - drag it across the floor - I always had to clean up after her - twelve years - every day - how I scolded her - *(She stands up, tries to break the dish in half, can't, puts it down on the ground, exits into her apartment.)*

FATHER She's a lunatic. I'm serious she's nuts and they listen to her - not to me - just her. She reports me and then they believe her - her! Why don't the council see this now? Why?!

OLD WOMAN *(Enters with a hatchet in hand. Walks over to the dish, breaks it with the hatchet, then strikes the chicken heads in the bag. All watch her.)* Look! Here's your food - look - here it is - look. *(PROFESSOR appears at his door, now with shoes on but still without a tie. He watches OLD WOMAN grinds what is left into the ground with the spade and her foot.)* There was never room in the freezer for my food - now there will be - my food will be in it - in the freezer - I took you to the doctor when your paw was infected - I bought medicine - western medicine - no more - not for anyone - I've had enough. *(Stomps the ground.)* Here it is - Look - *(She pants, looks around spitefully, throws the spade down next to the hatchet, runs inside her apartment, slams the door behind her. Beat.)*

FATHER A lunatic - ought to be locked up, huh? - completely nuts - - and she reports me - they come snoop around - say there's no order - that I don't give him nothing to eat - and they didn't give me an apartment - nothing. And so they come - 'cause the old woman - that bitch - says that she'll take them in - this here - who asked her? What's it to her? And so they fucking come over here - I'm pissing in my pants I'm so embarrassed - what I'm supposed to do with them by myself - I was on workers' comp. - wasn't I? Tell 'em, professor! Then they come sniffing around here - fucking shit - shake their fucking heads - when someone like this ought to be locked up - a lunatic. *(Exit PROFESSOR into his flat, he closes his door. Beat. WOMAN goes in her flat, closes her door. Beat.)*

SERGEANT Well, we'll be going now.

FATHER Why, ain't she insane? And then they take both of them away from me - because of fucking her - why, what'd I do?

SERGEANT We're going now.

COP This carpet rack - we had one like it - where'd it go? I don't get it. Too bad I can't go back home - and ask when -

SERGEANT Well, see you.

FATHER Yeah, see you. See you guys.

COP Good bye. *(Exit SERGEANT and COP.)*

FATHER This is a loony toon. I'm telling you - buries her cat - I'm telling you. *(SERGEANT and COP exit.)* See you guys! *(Short beat.)* Buries her cat, I'm telling you. *(Exits into his flat and closes the door.)*

Scene 5.

(Enter OLD WOMAN from her apartment. She stands, then walks towards WOMAN's door, stops, walks to PROFESSOR's door, stops, and knocks. PROFESSOR opens the door, not wearing a tie, holding a book.)

PROFESSOR Good afternoon.

OLD WOMAN Don't be upset with me, professor - that I've come over - that I'm bothering you.

PROFESSOR Not at all, it's just that I'm preparing for my lesson.

OLD WOMAN Don't mind me, professor - but somehow I have to -

PROFESSOR Of course. *(Sighs.)* I'm preparing a lesson but, please, come in.

OLD WOMAN No - I'm not - it's just that I have to - don't worry - I've calmed down - I won't - I'm not like that anymore - so, so disturbed like before - I was before - wasn't I?

PROFESSOR No, not at all -

OLD WOMAN But I've - please believe me - I've calmed down, really - I'm not here to - it just can be so painful - I won't cry - not anymore - it just can hurt so much -

PROFESSOR Yes. Absolutely. (*Short beat.*)

OLD WOMAN Because I knew - I was scared of this - of what would happen to me if - if - (*Her voice falters. Short beat.*) I won't cry, professor - don't worry - I was scared about what would happen - and I thought if I die first - if she outlives me - oh, it was a terrible thing - an ugly thing - what would have happened to her - who would feed her - I wanted to make it - so that I wouldn't have to mourn her - so that she would mourn me - it wasn't good of me.

PROFESSOR Yes, well this is how things are. For a time -

OLD WOMAN Because I thought - if she went first - then what would happen - how should I say this - as though, and she was still alive - but I cried so that I would - how can I say this-so that I would mourn her before she - but you can't do it - I just wanted to cry - and it was good to think about these things - truly - because then I could cry - people have to cry sometimes - they have to - but this isn't how - it's so different from the way I - please tell me, professor - this a terrible thought - is there a God? (*Short beat.*)

PROFESSOR Why do you ask? (*Short beat.*)

OLD WOMAN Because if there isn't - I don't know - if there isn't then I don't understand anything - then I don't understand anything at all, professor - but if there is - if there is - then perhaps I still am somehow - He - you see - He is punishing me - and all this - all this - is how it should be. Because if He, then I - deserve it - I deserve this, too. This too - believe me. (*Short beat.*) There has to be a God, Professor. And I deserved this - because I've sinned a lot. Yes. And so this - this here - this has to be - it has to be this way and I have to bear it - this too - because I deserved it. Yes. I didn't go to church, professor - just when I was very young - not after that - I didn't even think about such things - - just later - even then not really - not the way - just when I was sitting in the waiting room - in the clinic - there were parrots, cats, dogs, hamsters, guinea-pigs, mice, there were terrible people there, too - who caught stray dogs and brought them in for twenty Forints - for experiments - they were awful people - and it shows - I can spot them out right away - and the dogs - poor things - didn't suspect - they're so stupid - but the others were decent people - there were children and old ladies - gentlemen - I watched them and prayed - Oh Lord, just don't let me end up like them - who only have their cat left. I prayed - those were decent people - and I thought about why destiny was punishing them so much. That's what I was thinking about. There was once - when was it - there was this nice old lady - she must have been, I don't know - 80 or 90 years old - with such a wrinkled face - very wrinkled - she brought a little cat - she brought a little cat - that's all she had left - a little kitty - the kitty's brother died - not that long ago -

and that one also got sick - and the old lady was very frightened - she told me she had a myna bird - and when her husband died the bird knew that he had and stopped eating and starved to death. She was very smart - the old lady said - very smart. (*Beat.*)

I went there so often - she always had something wrong - but it was okay - because I talked with those people - they all complained - and they didn't listen to me - just them - not to me - but it was alright - I sat there and thought - why people are so unlucky - not all people - just those that don't have families - not everyone has a family, professor - you don't have one - right - for example - and we grow old - alone - and there's nothing worse than not to be mourned after - I wonder why that is. But I never thought about - really deeply, even then - because I had my cat -

PROFESSOR

Yes -

OLD WOMAN

I don't want to keep you, professor - but this is - this is - when you're young you think something still might - even - even if you don't hope - because you can't not hope - when my daughter died during the siege* she was so small - but it was different back then - so many died at her age - and I thought we could still - but no - my marriage was no good, professor - but still I thought there could be something - but no - and when my husband's leg went bad - you didn't live here then, professor -

PROFESSOR

I didn't live here then.

OLD WOMAN

He was diabetic and first his toes started to rot - then upwards - they cut it off at the knee and then he walked on crutches - - and I nursed him for a long time - but I didn't love him - I nursed him faithfully because even if I don't love him I should at least care for him - and then they cut off his whole leg - I took care of him and buried him beautifully - even then I didn't think about these things because I had things to do - I had hope - I had such hope that there would be something more - that there wouldn't be nothing. It was bad when I retired - that was very bad - but I still had my cat - and I worked at home and that was good - but I didn't make much - and I got so angry - and even then, professor - even then I didn't have to think - there has to be a God - who is punishing me now so much for all my sins!

PROFESSOR

Well, yes.

OLD WOMAN

Do you know why the Lord is punishing me? Because I wasn't good. That's why. I didn't love my husband. I'm saying this aloud, Professor because I have to. I couldn't love him - I didn't even give it much thought - just when he said that I love the cat more than him - he didn't have his leg then when he said that - then I realized that I really did love the cat more than him - and I lied to him - called him stupid -

* The siege (1944-45). Both Allied and Russian forces bombed Budapest into rubble in a long, bloody drive to liberate the city from the Fascists.

but he wasn't stupid - he knew it, too - but I saw that he liked it - that's why I said it - I really loved the cat more - and I didn't love him. But I took care of him - cooked for him - and I didn't love him. That was a sin. Don't say - I know. And I go out to his grave - pay them extra - but still they don't take care of it. And I committed bigger sins, too. In the Nazi time - right before the siege - they came to me to hide them - and I was scared - and I said go away from here - because I was scared - everyone was scared - - and they caught them and I heard later that they didn't come back. I turned my back on them because I was scared-everyone was scared-but they died because of me, professor - it's true - I haven't told a soul, professor - but that's what happened.

PROFESSOR

You can't be sure that -

OLD WOMAN

I know, professor - it was because of me, I know - I forgot about it right away and didn't even think about it later - but it was definitely a big sin, Professor. And if the Lord is punishing me so much - so much - then it was a big, big sin. And there were other sins I committed, too - many -

PROFESSOR

Please, look -

OLD WOMAN

In 1946 I had an abortion because I was starving - everyone in the city was starving - but why couldn't I have got food? Tell me, professor, why? I could have - even while the whole city starved! And then I would've had a child again - abortions were illegal - but still I had one - because we decided - me and my husband - that we had to - he didn't earn much and I agreed - because the world then was a terrible place - but I know now that it was a sin - a big sin - - because the world is terrible - always terrible - I know - and then I didn't want children from him - I don't know who with -

PROFESSOR

Please, look here: people commit many such sins, everyone, and still the Lord does not punish them all uniformly. I believe that everyone has their own God. Everyone has their own. Because He is inside us. And there are those who will never understand this. In them the Lord doesn't exist. Still, they are human, just a different kind, somewhat - and we mustn't look down on them, because they too are human. And because He is inside us. There is something within us. And we therefore are capable of suffering. Of feeling deep emotion and suffering. And we are truly rich because of this, immeasurably rich. And this is good. This is a gift from God. He has given us the ability to suffer, and this is unique in all creation. We are blessed by Him.

OLD WOMAN

I don't know - but He's definitely watching if He can punish us all this well. And the smallest things don't escape His eye - it has to be - because if not then we suffer for nothing - but perhaps this way there's a - how do you say it - there's a -

PROFESSOR

Moral.

OLD WOMAN

Yes! A moral - to what's happened to us. Isn't that it, professor? Oh, I'm sorry - I don't mean to keep you so long -

PROFESSOR Oh, not at all.

OLD WOMAN I'm thinking that - it's time - it's time for me to be good. What do you think, Professor?

PROFESSOR Well, I think that you've been good until now, and those sins which you recalled were not very big sins -

OLD WOMAN If they weren't so big then why is the Lord punishing me?! (*Short beat.*)

PROFESSOR Perhaps they were sins, big sins, cardinal sins -

OLD WOMAN That's right - and now I have to repent for my sins - that's it - I'll do it for them. And if I'm good - and I have some time still - then maybe something better will come out - something better -

PROFESSOR Of course. There's nothing that can't be put right.

OLD WOMAN Oh, I don't know - I wake up in the morning - then what do I do, professor? I wouldn't go to the market just for myself - even though it's cheaper - and now I don't have to buy anything for the cat - I get up in the morning - then what do I do? But if I'm good, professor - then there's still a chance that something, professor. There's still a chance.

PROFESSOR That's right.

OLD WOMAN How can I do something good, professor? (*Short beat.*)

PROFESSOR Well, out of the blue I don't really know.

OLD WOMAN I need something to do for a long time - something that's hard.

PROFESSOR Yes, I understand.

OLD WOMAN I don't know - I could clean your flat - everyday - for free -

PROFESSOR Thank you very much, but I like to do that myself.

OLD WOMAN But I'll do it for free -

PROFESSOR It has nothing to do with money - I like to do it myself.

OLD WOMAN I see. I don't know - maybe these people here - the woman is coming and going all the time as it is -

PROFESSOR These people? He takes his wife back time and again instead of just once putting his foot down, still, it's what he deserves. You'd be wasting it on them - but we'll find you something. We'll find you something. I'm here, trust me, we'll find something. I'm preparing for a lesson now, but afterwards we'll find something. And please calm down, you know your intention is very important.

OLD WOMAN What?

PROFESSOR The good intention has merit all its own. And we'll find something. Now I have to - Good bye. Good bye. (*PROFESSOR closes the door. OLD WOMAN stands, then knocks on WOMAN's door. WOMAN opens.*)

OLD WOMAN I don't mean to disturb you -

WOMAN No, no -

OLD WOMAN I'll clean for you - for free - free - every day - I'll shop for you - I have time - lots of time - and it's good to shop - on the way - standing in line - there's always something - faces you can watch -

WOMAN Thanks, no. I'm fine just the way I am -

OLD WOMAN Then tell me what I should do! What should I do?!

WOMAN Oh God.

OLD WOMAN You live here all alone - you're pretty - young - you live here alone - you need a husband - I'll find you one - you know what? I'll find you one.

WOMAN No don't. I will. I'm full of guys.

OLD WOMAN Yes - your guys - after one night they leave you - don't you think I see?

WOMAN 'Cause that's the way they are. It doesn't matter. I like it this way.

OLD WOMAN You can't - that there's no one for - that you wouldn't have - it can't be.

WOMAN Yes it can.

OLD WOMAN You can't - I know - it's ruined me - have a baby - with anyone - why do you take those pills - you need a family - I'll help you -

WOMAN Where are you going to find me one?

OLD WOMAN What?

WOMAN A guy. I have twenty a year. Minimum. At least fifteen. Where are you going to find one for me?

OLD WOMAN I'll look after it - I have time - I'll find you one - here's the professor.

WOMAN The professor! He wants to be ten years older than he really is! He walks bent over when he knows someone is watching - the professor! You don't have to help me, look for a new cat instead.

OLD WOMAN No! Never again - I wouldn't do that to her - even if she's not alive - I cheated on my husband more than once - and that was bad - even though I didn't love him - still it was bad.

WOMAN Yeah, if you have someone to cheat on. (*Short beat.*) Just relax, you're worked up, but it'll pass and then everything will be alright.

OLD WOMAN Don't you understand? You don't. It's not that - that - she died - it's not that. You don't understand - the professor doesn't understand either - it doesn't matter that he's educated - if he doesn't understand.

WOMAN He doesn't understand, he doesn't understand a thing. Well, come on in, I got a little cognac from work from one of the guys who want to make it with me, but I won't as long as I keep getting the cognac. Come on in, it'll do you good.

OLD WOMAN I don't know - there's no place where a person can just be - - while there's still -

WOMAN I come home, too - bring my work - draw - measure - it's no dream but if I don't bring it home what'll I do? Where can I go? I can go over to my girlfriend's and get drunk, but I can't do that every day. She comes over here - we cry - get plastered - but she can't come over here every day. We couldn't stand it. I go to my mother's - every Saturday afternoon - then that becomes a chore - at my class reunion last year they were showing their kids' pictures - a lot are already divorced. I sleep here at night - alone - it's better this way 'cause they stink - got fungus of all sorts - trichomoniasis - all kinds of strange - I sit down put on a record - have a drink - I can't even get to sleep at night without a couple.

OLD WOMAN I don't know - this whole business - when I'm nervous - I chop wood - and they've figured out so many clever things - all kinds of things - but how a person should live - if they aren't young anymore -

WOMAN Even if they are -

OLD WOMAN If my older brother hadn't been killed - he would've had so many friends - and I would have had a lot of men courting me - a lot. But - look here - I have a little money - it's hidden in the wall - so there'd - I saved it - back when I worked at home - so there'd be - and when I took from it I always put it back later - from my pension, too - sometimes I just ate soup - so it's there in the wall. Because I was thinking what would happen - if she had a serious problem - it's so expensive - but that's not really true - or if we went on a trip somewhere - even that, he never would let me take him anywhere - I bought one of those wicker baskets - closed it up - but you still had to hold it because she kicked - she was so strong - and how she cried in that basket - I thought we'd travel somewhere - if I only knew where! What am I going to do with it now?

WOMAN It'll come in handy, don't you worry, the way prices are going up.

OLD WOMAN But I don't need it - what do I need - I'll give it - there must be someone who really needs it -

WOMAN Don't even think about me - I've got money. I'm doing real good. I've even got a garage - I wouldn't have believed it few years ago - that I'd have my own garage and apartment - but I got it - at least I've got that - *(Starts to weep.)*

OLD WOMAN But there's nothing wrong with that -

WOMAN Should I get a cat? To baby? And if it dies? Should I get a dog? I'm too young for that... *(Cries.)*

OLD WOMAN Oh God.

WOMAN How can it be - that I come home and make myself busy in my room - my room - mine - I waited for him to - I couldn't help it that he died - I took care of him-he smelled-nobody would even look at him.

OLD WOMAN What do you mean, I bought him apples -

WOMAN No one - just me - I had to smell him - I couldn't do anything about it - was it good for me that he died - did I kill him? I took care of him like I was his daughter - I cried over him and buried him, too - then I could have moved into his room but I stayed in the small one - and I wake up at night - the floor's creaking - even though I had it repaired - and it cost a lot - and it still creaks - the dresser creaks, too - even though I threw his away and bought a new one - but he's in that one, too - almost every night - as if I'd poisoned him - or he's taking revenge on me - that I'm still alive - take sleeping pills - bring up guys so I don't have to hear the creaking by myself - I can only fall asleep with pills - I'm too young for this - why aren't there any more convents - they're so nice and cool inside - oh, this life is - don't be mad at me - don't be mad.

OLD WOMAN Why - I sit in the kitchen - heat it with a hot plate - the kitchen isn't that big -

WOMAN I'm moving away from here - I'm trading this place and the garage - I can get a two and a half room flat for this one with the garage - I'm giving up my car too - I'm fixing up my room and one more, too, so if a certain man comes it'll be ready for him - just so it's far away from here - it'll be better over there - and everything will be fine. Don't be mad. And believe me: I loved that cat. Really. So believe me - anything I can do - really.

OLD WOMAN If you want I'll sleep here with you at night - at your place - the floor won't creak then.

WOMAN No! No! I can't stand anyone sharing a room with me. I can't stand anyone's smell. It's my flat! Mine!

OLD WOMAN I'm not - I'm not - or maybe you can come over to my place - there's no ghost at my place.

WOMAN No way am I coming - I fixed this flat up - every piece of furniture - I painted it - no way am I coming - I come home, close the door and everyone can go to hell - I could've got a phone line put in - this one guy who wanted to get me into bed told me he could get a line put in - not here, no way - they're not going to come from all over the neighborhood to use my phone - not here - that's all I need -

OLD WOMAN Alright - I'm not -

WOMAN Because they're jealous - it's unbelievable how jealous people are - they're all so jealous - that I've made it - what have I got? But I worked for it all - no one's ever helped me - never - let them work for it, too. Who do they think they are? No one's going to leech off of me - no way.

OLD WOMAN Why? - is that what I want? - me? - darling girl? - I'm going to put you out? No, sir - just go rot in your flat - in your garage - drop dead in your apartment, darling girl! (*OLD WOMAN runs into her flat and slams the door.*)

WOMAN Everyone go to hell! Leave me alone! Enough! (*She runs into her flat, slams the door, the sound of putting the chain on the lock is heard. PROFESSOR appears at his door, looks out, grumbles, goes back in, closes his door.*)

Scene 6.

(*FLIRT and TEENAGER enter from the arched entryway, stop in front of PROFESSOR's door.*)

FLIRT Laci and Mara are going out but they're just making out, Ildi said they're just making out. She's still into Laci but he won't even look at her, even though he's just making out with Mara. Ildi doesn't even think he's touched her tits yet. Laci's got really big hands, huh?

TEENAGER (*Going through her notebooks:*) Ah-huh.

FLIRT Forget about that already.

TEENAGER Okay, wait a second. (*Reading aloud:*) Allegorical expression is valid when it is ambiguous, it's meaning apprehended, for only on the surface are things unambiguous. (*She looks up.*) Things are unambiguous only on the surface. Things are unambiguous only on the surface. (*Reading:*) Symbolism rejects positivit... positivit... positivist simplicity, considers naive its explanation of causality... (*Looks up.*) Explanation of causality. Explanation of causality...

FLIRT Hey, Laci's hands are huge, right? Think how big his cock must be.

TEENAGER Yeah, big. (*Reading:*) ... explanation of causality, but also views existence simply as an attribute, thereby intimating a world devoid of causes and precedents, enigmatic and predetermined... (*Looks up.*) Enigmatic and predetermined...

FLIRT If you were in Mara's place, would you let him do you?

TEENAGER Just leave me alone, okay? (*Flipping through, reading:*) Para... Paradoxically it is in the motif of partic... particularity, that the personal image of God was created for the I, which then was manifested in anti-anti-particularity... the bidding of the sexes.

FLIRT What?

TEENAGER (*Examining it closely and reading:*) The bidding of the sexes... (*Looks up.*) Bidding of the sexes, bidding of the sexes... (*Reading:*)... the feeling of responsibility for all humanity explains... that with humanity's unique impulses... (*Looks up*) What is the bidding of the sexes?

FLIRT What?

TEENAGER What does that mean? The bidding of the sexes?

FLIRT Who the hell knows. You're a girl, Laci's a guy, like that, right? (*Short beat.*)

TEENAGER *(Reading:)* ... humanity, with its unique impulses, have fused them into God's image, historically. *(Looks up, silence.)*

FLIRT Mara doesn't even have tits. Does she have tits?

TEENAGER Leave me alone for a second.

FLIRT She doesn't. Do you think they'll grow? I don't think they will. I'll have a boyfriend - with a car - Mazda - or Honda - my hair will be long - it'll fly in the wind - watch me go then -

TEENAGER *(Reading:)* ... humanity, with its unique impulses, have fused them into God's image, historically. *(Short beat, then she starts to cry.)*

FLIRT What?

TEENAGER *(Wiping her tears and sniffing:)* I don't even know why I wrote this down, I wrote down so much... *(reading:)* All symbols, directly or indirectly, refer to the central figure, the I. The redup... redup-li-cation or accumulation of nominals and verbs, moreover, demonstrates the neither separately nor together are they able to fully give expression to the subject...

FLIRT Let me see. *(Takes the notebook, flips through it.)* Fuck, you wrote a lot. All this is from the textbook?

TEENAGER Not just. There's a second book too.

FLIRT *(Reading:)* The natural and the spiritual man have become separated from one another... *(Looks up, sighs, reads.)* ... Biological prison, death, and sex: *(Laughs. Reading:)* Biological prison, death, and sex: from the realization of the former's inescapability arose man's second face, the spiritual face of man. *(Looks up.)* You're an idiot. *(Reading:)* Love of God was born from our respect for humanity, the love of ourselves: Prometh... promethean humanism. *(Looks up, whistles, reads:)* ... religious vocabulary, though twisted in the head in man... *(Laughs, reads:)*... has nonetheless allowed a profound, worldly feeling - an anthropological optimism - to be expressed through it. *(Beat, she reads to herself, furrows her brow.)* This is nothing. It's just saying that man is miserable, and that there's a happier thing who is just imagined in the mind, and that's God. *(Reads silently, laughs.)* Are you listening? *(Reading:)* Several important characteristics of man as both historical-social being as well as spiritual being have come to light: His mundane nature, his earthly immortality. His sense of community. His gender. A grammatical poeticism - the distilled comparative... *(Stands up, shouts.)* Distilled! That's great! *(Reading loudly:)* ... the distilled comparative was not, least of all, harbinger of the above attributes... In The Love of Ourselves there are 47.8 comparatives per hundred poems. Later, the number jumps to 56.6. And as is so often the case with lyric verse, this increased frequency belies the work's intended message. *(Looks up, smiling.)* Well?! Distilled comparative! This is how it was in the book?

TEENAGER Yeah.

FLIRT Distilled comparative! God!

TEENAGER Let's go in.

FLIRT Distilled comparative! Great!

TEENAGER Let's go in.

FLIRT What's the rush?

TEENAGER I've got to get into a school - I got to! I can't stand them - I want to get away - and I'm gonna - 'cause I'll into a school in some other town - see? You've got no problems at all - but I can't stand it - you know? My stupid rotten father, my stupid rotten mother - I can't stand it there!

FLIRT Don't freak. *(Beat.)* Who ever is dumb is dumb. You could stand on your head and... *(Beat.)* Distilled comparative! *(Burst of laughter, then she knocks on PROFESSOR's door.)* *(PROFESSOR comes out in suit, tie)*

FLIRT Good afternoon, sir!

TEENAGER Good afternoon, sir!

PROFESSOR: Good afternoon. Please come in. *(The girls go in, TEACHER after them, he closes the door.)*

Scene 7.

(OLD WOMAN comes out with a piece of paper in her hand. She hesitates, then goes to WOMAN's door and knocks. WOMAN opens her door as much as the chain will allow.)

WOMAN Hello.

OLD WOMAN This here - I'd like to ask you -

WOMAN I'm sorry about - don't be mad -

OLD WOMAN What?

WOMAN Please don't be angry about before -

OLD WOMAN Oh, it's not important -

WOMAN I didn't want to - I'm just a little upset - I didn't really think that -

OLD WOMAN Read this and see if it's good -

WOMAN What is this?

OLD WOMAN Will.

WOMAN A will?

OLD WOMAN Look at it and see if it's okay. *(WOMAN removes the chain from the door, comes out and takes the piece of paper, reads.)* The top there's the title too - will.

WOMAN Ah-hah. (*Reads.*)

OLD WOMAN I was sitting inside - crying again - then I knelt down - in the kitchen - strange that it was in the kitchen - I was kneeling - and then I prayed - and I cried - and then at once - I don't know - like a voice, really - I couldn't understand it - it was like - they told me - what I need to do - for who -

WOMAN Dresser, mirror, easy chair, the bed -

OLD WOMAN Double bed, box spring - we made it - it's more than forty years old - good strong double bed - hard wood frame - that's what they used back then.

WOMAN And who are you leaving all of this to? All of this?

OLD WOMAN Well - to the boy - he was such a nice boy - poor darling - how he liked me - how he took care of his father - that stupid man - and how happy he was when he could come over to warm up - he never came in - just sat by the door - he was blue - this is good - because while I was kneeling there it happened - as if someone - whispered to me - I heard it - I don't know it was like a - voice - and then everything became so clear - I calmed down - and then I knew - what I have to do. So I sat down - wrote everything down - everything I have - didn't leave out a thing - I went through the whole place, it's all in there -

WOMAN Yeah, and so what am I supposed to do?

OLD WOMAN Well - tell me if it's okay like this - or if I need something else - because it's such a good thing - it's so right - it has to be right.

WOMAN I'm sure it's alright - it's just - I don't know - I think it was the boy - who - the cat -

OLD WOMAN I wrote the title there - will - see there?

WOMAN I see it. But I think - he doesn't need it - I think -

OLD WOMAN The date is at the bottom there - today's date - where I wrote it down - and I signed it - I think I need to stamp it or something -

WOMAN I don't know. I don't think so -

OLD WOMAN Is this one copy enough -

WOMAN Oh, it's got to be - you wrote it in your own -

OLD WOMAN Then sign your name.

WOMAN Me?

OLD WOMAN I need two witnesses - I know - I heard - you need two witnesses for everything.

WOMAN Okay, I'll sign my name - then what? Let's say you leave everything to him forever when you die - but I hope you live for a real long time yet.

OLD WOMAN Maybe a few years still.

WOMAN And then he gets it all?

OLD WOMAN Only then, of course. I need it until then - I'm still using it.

WOMAN Yeah - okay - I can sign it - but what's the rush? You still have time - maybe you'll change your mind ten times before then.

OLD WOMAN Never. It'll stay like this. I knelt there - on the kitchen floor - and all at once - it happened. I know it has to be this way.

WOMAN Yeah - I don't know - I've never been a witness to something like this before. If I sign it and somebody challenges it - and my signature is on it -

OLD WOMAN What do you mean challenges it. What?

WOMAN Okay, forget it, I was just thinking -

OLD WOMAN Why haven't you signed your name yet?

WOMAN I'll sign it but you still need two witnesses -

OLD WOMAN If I need two then two.

WOMAN Maybe you can get the professor, too. *(She knocks on PROFESSOR's door. Short beat, then she knocks again.)*

PROFESSOR *(Opens the door.)* Yes.

WOMAN We have a problem here, professor.

PROFESSOR I'm having a lesson now. Please come back later.

WOMAN Right, but can you tell us if we need two witnesses for something like this.

PROFESSOR Please, I'm working. Come back later. *(Closes the door.)*

WOMAN Let's not bother the professor now. Why don't you think this over until then, and if you haven't changed your mind still - then -

OLD WOMAN I don't understand! Why can't anything be done easily here! Nothing - not even when it has to be done! Why?

WOMAN You can do it a little later -

OLD WOMAN No I can't! I wanted so much from life and nothing ever came later! I don't have any time! I don't have any time!

WOMAN Oh God, why are you -

OLD WOMAN You don't understand - I didn't understand for a long time, too - you can't know when you have time - that there's no time -

WOMAN You're still healthy.

OLD WOMAN That's it - I don't have a problem in the world - still I have to die... *(cries.)*

WOMAN Oh God - please don't - why now -

OLD WOMAN Nothing ever came of anything - and I couldn't understand why - life was so long and boring - still now it just seems like a minute - when I dream - I see - how short it was - I have this dream - I'm running in the garden - a long time ago - my mother and father are there - and then I believe - in the dream - that anything can happen - but I'm scared - so scared they're going to die - my mother - my father - and I check to see if my mother is sick yet - because I know she'll get sick - but she's not sick - and I'm so scared that she'll get - and my father is so young - I don't see how - he was still alive - how could I remember all this - how old was I - four years old - but I knew before what you aren't supposed to know ahead of time - and so I don't know - when I wake up - if I should be happy that I saw them - or that the whole thing is terrible - (*OLD WOMAN weeps. WOMAN fidgets.*)

WOMAN Listen. Come on in, I've got some cognac -

OLD WOMAN (*Angrily:*) Why won't you sign it? A person can't even ask this much from someone - to scribble their name - not even this much!

WOMAN It's not that -

OLD WOMAN A person doesn't do anything bad her whole - just helps - others - and then this - when she needs something!

WOMAN It's not like that -

OLD WOMAN Why, is it so tiring - will it hurt your hand?

WOMAN You still need two witnesses -

OLD WOMAN The professor, too - an educated man - but even he won't help! (*OLD WOMAN throws herself at PROFESSOR's door and pounds on it.*)

PROFESSOR (*Angrily opens his door.*) Don't disturb me! What a place!

OLD WOMAN Yes! What a place! A person begs for help and then - and then - (*WOMAN waves to PROFESSOR.*) It doesn't matter to you even if someone is rotting right next to you! It would only take one word - but nobody could care less! That's the truth! (*TEENAGER and FLIRT appear at the doorway and giggle.*) I suffered all of it - fine-until the end - fine - but this is too much! When - in my life - was there - when? Tell me! And then a person writes down - too late - but at last - does something - good - and then this, too - not even this - I can't get a signature - even that's too much for them - (*Cries.*) (*The two girls giggle quietly.*)

WOMAN She wrote her will, needs a signature - two witnesses -

PROFESSOR Give it here. (*Takes the will from OLD WOMAN, reads it. Short beat.*) You're leaving it all to him? To him? (*OLD WOMAN nods, sniffles, blows her nose.*) Fine. I find nothing reproachable about this. Let's sign our names and everything will be fine. (*Looks for a pen in his pocket.*)

TEENAGER (*Hands him a pen.*) Here you are, sir.

PROFESSOR Thank you. (*Signs the paper and hands it to WOMAN.*)

WOMAN I don't know - I think you need to put down your identification number and that kind of thing.

PROFESSOR Here you are. (*Takes back the will and writes his ID number.*)

WOMAN I don't know mine by heart. Wait a sec. (*She exits into her apartment. Beat.*)

PROFESSOR There, you see everything can be put right. Everything can be solved perfectly. And there's absolutely no need to pound on the door.

OLD WOMAN I knelt there - on the floor - and prayed - for the Lord to help me - and you see - He helped me. He told me. I'm sure it was Him.

PROFESSOR Ah yes. Then everything's worked out.

OLD WOMAN Thank you very much, professor.

PROFESSOR Not at all.

OLD WOMAN It's good - there are still good people. I knew you were always one of them.

PROFESSOR Ah yes. Now please if you don't mind I have a lesson. (*He ushers the girls back in, closes the door.*)

OLD WOMAN No matter what - it's good that there are good people. (*Waits, then knocks on WOMAN's door, short beat.*)

WOMAN (*Opens the door, stands there.*) I don't know where I put it -

OLD WOMAN It doesn't matter-when you find it you can put it down then. (*Short beat.*)

WOMAN Okay, I'll do it then.

OLD WOMAN Here you go. (*Hands her the will.*) (*Beat.*)

WOMAN Maybe you better think about it some more - why to him, what for -

OLD WOMAN What?

WOMAN They'll take it away from him anyway - drink it up - yell - - they won't wait - not even 'til you're - they're like that. It'd be better if you don't. I've dealt with the courts and God save me from having to go back - one signature and there's so much trouble - it's better if you didn't. Or go to a - you know - what's it called - a notary - that's it - a notary - and they'll stamp it - that's the best - then nobody'll have to get mixed up in it. But if there's anything else I can do - anytime - count on me. (*Short beat. WOMAN closes her door, the sound of the chain is heard. Beat.*)

OLD WOMAN (*Tears up the will. Throws it in front of WOMAN's door:*) Look - you worm - look here - clean it up! (*OLD WOMAN runs into her apartment, slams the door.*)

Scene 8.

(Enter BOY and PUNK from the arched entryway.)

BOY But they don't pay you - just when you're working for some guy jerking off in the john. This prick gave me a fifty once - you know those leather - you know - you put round your neck - you know - - leather -

PUNK Coin holders?

BOY Yeah. I got change for the fifty so it'd be full - 'cause I wanted it to be full - then it was full -

PUNK Cool.

BOY 'Cause if we get paid we drink - hard - there's a fucking millionaire - got his own private club - he's cool - 'cause if we ask him - he stays open late - eleven - later, too - he got two fucking Mercedes - fucking fuckwad.

PUNK Fucking great. *(Laughs.)* Fucking fuckwad! That's a good one. Fucking fuckwad! That's a good one!

BOY It's a bitching club - we fucking show up and they take off - and it's a fucking rough club - then Kares starts screaming - and no one says a fucking word - 'cause we're the wolves - I gone there alone and shouted - some song - and no one said nothing - and I was alone.

PUNK Cool. That's pretty fuckin' cool.

BOY You can break out at night - I've broken out a lot - tied fucking sheets together and out the third floor window.

PUNK Like in a movie?

BOY See - like today - I just up and walked out - the guard just watched me - not everyone'll do it - and the girlies are waiting - down below - two or three of 'em - and then - fuck - man - you go to it - all night - and when you're done - back up the fucking sheets -

PUNK Cool -

BOY They suck you off - and man -

PUNK Shit -

BOY Cause I'm good to them - man - and they love it - and just with me. *(Beat.)* Everything's there - there's a secret tunnel - everyone knows it - machine guns - when we find them - and when we do - whoa - fuck.

Scene 9.

(Enter OLD WOMAN carrying a broken crutch.)

PUNK *(Quietly:)* Watch it, man, the old lady. *(Beat. OLD WOMAN sticks the crutch into the ground where the cat is buried and pushes it in as far as it will go.)*

BOY Hello. *(OLD WOMAN looks at him but doesn't recognize him.)* Hello. Don't you know me?

OLD WOMAN What?

BOY It's me - don't you know me?

OLD WOMAN Who? *(Beat.)* What? *(Beat.)* You - you?

BOY Yeah -

OLD WOMAN Sweet Mary and Joseph - it can't be true - it can't be true - *(Beat.)*

BOY *(To PUNK:)* Fuckin' say something already -

PUNK Hello.

OLD WOMAN You're bigger than - than your father - too - oh Lord -

BOY I'm strong too - I work out - well - you can push the walls - that's the work out - but I'll get strong -

OLD WOMAN To grow so much in such a short time -

BOY Not so short -

OLD WOMAN This is a - I thought - you had such a thin neck - you were such a small, sickly child - such intelligent, sad eyes - such a frightened face - how could this - how can it -

BOY I dunno - but it's alright 'cause they can't beat me up now - they can't pull nothing on me -

OLD WOMAN Oh - do you remember? You came over - when they locked you out - you came in to warm up - do you remember?

BOY Well - yeah.

OLD WOMAN I gave you food - but you didn't want to eat - you were just cold - do you remember?

BOY Naw - I ate something - this thing - noodles and stuff.

OLD WOMAN Noodles?

BOY Yeah - that was good.

OLD WOMAN Noodles and Cheese?

BOY Well - maybe - something like it.

OLD WOMAN What could it have been? When did I ever make something like that? Noodles and cheese?

BOY It was kind of - you know - had that stuff - paprika in it. That's it. It was good.

OLD WOMAN Then it was potatoes au gratin!

BOY I dunno -

OLD WOMAN Yes, of course - it was potatoes au gratin! Don't you remember?

BOY Yeah - yeah -

OLD WOMAN Of course - and how you loved it - of course - it was potatoes au gratin! (*Beat.*) They way he ate - poor boy - even though he said he wasn't hungry -

PUNK Good one! (*Laughs.*)

OLD WOMAN Because his father wouldn't give him anything for three days - he went without eating anything at all -

BOY No - it was just that - he didn't have any money then - that's why -

OLD WOMAN Oh no, he had money!

BOY No - really - no!

OLD WOMAN He sent you to steal food - didn't he? He just lay there - 'mourning' after his wife who went out whoring!

BOY No - he was sick - it was official!

OLD WOMAN Sick! As soon as they took you to the boys' home he stood up - 'cause there was no one to feed him! And he was sick!

PUNK (*Laughs.*)

BOY Shut your hole you fuck! (*Beat.*) It wasn't like that - you're not saying it right - it wasn't like that - he had a fever - they registered it - who would'a looked after him - who?

OLD WOMAN Why are you defending - he didn't even heat - you were frozen - you were blue - don't you remember?

BOY Yeah - 'cause it was cold -

OLD WOMAN But then he heated it when you went off to school - what do you mean - it just cooled off in the afternoon so you'd feel sorry for him - I saw it all - you felt so sorry for him -

BOY No - no!

OLD WOMAN What do you mean no? I saw it!

BOY But no!

OLD WOMAN You didn't even have a hat - I knitted one - I lent them my pot - and then begged them to give it back - they didn't even wash it - I had to scrub out the filth - and your mother when she was here - (*Beat.*) Well - you're here now - and that's good - that you're - but I knew it - I asked and received it from the Lord. I don't know - if you're hungry I can cook something. This is a - what do you call it - an act of grace from God -

BOY Have you seen my dad?

OLD WOMAN Well - you're back now - *(To PUNK:)* he was such a good, clever boy - well I'll go in now and write another one - so he'll be alright - you know?

PUNK Ah -

OLD WOMAN I don't know - he won't fit in the bed - but I'll buy a bigger one - I didn't think about that - and will you grow any more?

BOY Will I what?

PUNK *(Laughing:)* Will you fuckin' grow any more?

BOY Shut your godamn hole!

OLD WOMAN How you speak! Don't speak like that! *(Beat.)*

BOY I wasn't -

OLD WOMAN I'm telling you - and a long time ago I bought everything - baby things, too - children's' clothes, too - such nice things - I saw them in the window and liked them so much - they felt so good - the material - and I bought everything - and hid them - so my husband wouldn't see - it's all down in the basement - in mothballs - - I don't know - I think you've outgrown them now - you were so much smaller - when I bought them - but it'll be good for when you get married - for your children - so I'll put them in, too - I'm going in now - and I'll write a new one - my Lord - when someone has completely given up - all of a sudden - *(Smiles, goes in and closes the door.)*

Scene 10.

(Beat.)

PUNK That old bitch is crazy -

BOY It ain't true - I went in 'cause it was cold - it ain't true that I ate - that fucking bitch is lying - how the fuck could dad heat the fucking place, huh?

PUNK She didn't see the cat -

BOY Shut the fuck up or I'll smash your head open!

PUNK Man -

BOY Why ain't no one here, godamnit!

PUNK Maybe he's back -

BOY Just you shut up - just you shut up -

PUNK Yeah, okay, I wasn't - *(Beat. BOY gathers his strength and pounds on FATHER's door, beat. Silence. BOY pounds harder, then kicks the door. FATHER opens it.)*

FATHER (Screaming:) Fucking hell! (Beat.)

BOY Dad - (Beat.)

FATHER What is it?

BOY Dad -

FATHER That you? (Beat.)

PUNK Hello. (Beat.)

FATHER You're big. (Beat.) Did you break out? You broke out - or what is this?

BOY I didn't break out! I didn't break out! They let me!

FATHER They did?

BOY For three days!

FATHER What? Three days?

BOY Three days! They let me! (Beat.)

FATHER So they let you. (Beat.) Well. Hey. They let you out - you got the papers? That they let you out? 'Cause they'll come out - snoop around - and I'll take the wrap - you know.

BOY I've got them - why don't you believe me - why don't you believe me -

FATHER Okay, I believe you - you know - so - they let you out? (Beat.) How many days? What'd you say?

BOY Three days.

FATHER That's good - three days - that's good. What's this? A break? Or what? (Beat.) I mean you could'a wrote - before - you could'a wrote you were coming - next time write ahead - when you're coming. 'kay? Say something!

BOY I didn't know.

FATHER What?

BOY That they'd let me out -

FATHER Why didn't you know? They didn't say or what?

BOY No. (Beat.)

FATHER Right - it don't matter - they didn't say - right - then you couldn't know - when you're coming - you see - no problem - I'm here - good thing - that I'm here. (Short beat.) Were you here when - - I wasn't? Were you? Today?

BOY Yeah.

FATHER Hey - look here - tell me - did you touch that cat? Huh? The old woman's cat - but don't lie to me!

BOY No.

FATHER No?

BOY No.

PUNK We ain't even seen no cat.

FATHER It died on her and they're blaming me - you didn't?

BOY Naw.

PUNK Naw.

FATHER You guys can tell me - stupid bitch - she deserved it, huh? Well. Go ahead. No one's around - did you touch it?

BOY No.

PUNK No.

FATHER No? 'kay - alright - alright then. (*Beat. They stand.*)

PUNK Okay, I'm leaving. I'll come back later.

BOY I dunno - I'll go too.

FATHER Where you going now? Why you got to run off all the time? You're not going nowhere.

PUNK You stay here - I'll come back - see ya. (*He runs out. Beat.*)

FATHER Run after him - if you've had enough - that at last you come home after so long - and then you can't stand to see your old man - go run after him. (*Beat.*) You know - if you'd wrote - then we could'a had some food - something - everything - it would'a been better - next time try telling me -

BOY But I couldn't - they didn't want to - 'cause they need that fucking - fucking - that paper - from the council - but the council guy - the custody supervisor - don't give it out - if the parents don't ask - they didn't ask - you didn't ask - and without it there ain't no way - but then the headmaster couldn't take it - I kept bugging him - he's alright - let me out - without the papers - he ain't allowed to do it.

FATHER Oh yeah? I dunno - didn't say nothing to me 'bout it -

BOY I wrote you - a long time ago - to call me back home - then the council dude'll come over -

FATHER Here? Nobody's coming over here - been here enough for me - cocksuckers. (*Short beat.*) Why - you ain't written - I got nothing - really - when?

BOY Oh - long time ago - I dunno - a year and a half ago - I dunno.

FATHER I didn't get it - nothing - they must'a lost it - mailman don't even come out here - I didn't get nothing. (*Beat. They stand.*) So - what's it like there?

BOY Aw, it's okay.

FATHER Okay?

BOY Okay.

FATHER Where is it - where'd you say?

BOY This one?

FATHER Yeah.

BOY Far - where that factory - next to a farm.

FATHER But you didn't go there first -

BOY No - I was here - in juvenile detention - J.D. - then - I dunno - they move you all around -

FATHER Food? Shit, huh?

BOY Not shit - it's okay.

FATHER It's okay?

BOY It's okay. There was this one place - where was it - it sucked - but it's pretty good. They give seconds - on everything.

FATHER Don't tell me - bet they're starving you the bastards - stealing food -

BOY No - really - they steal - but not food - and if food - there's still enough - *(Beat.)*

FATHER And what'cha guys do there?

BOY Oh, I dunno. What we gotta - hang out.

FATHER And?

BOY Nothing.

FATHER And what - you learning a trade?

BOY Yeah. But there ain't a lot - we grind shit - things like that - hang out - you can hang out - *(Beat.)*

FATHER Your stupid sister - bet she's earnin' -

BOY I dunno - 'cause they split up the brothers and sisters-so I dunno where she went -

FATHER Ah, she's turning tricks - didn't even write once - became a whore, huh?

BOY Dunno. *(Beat.)* Once a big fucking mess - someone put a frog in the guard's bed.

FATHER What? A frog?

BOY Yeah - and they didn't know who did it -

FATHER Who?

BOY This fuckup - this asshole - he was up all night - they made us get up - we stood at attention by our beds - but we didn't narc him out - big mess. *(Beat.)* There's lots of frogs - we make 'em smoke - you shove it in their mouth - it smokes and smokes - gets real big and blows up -

FATHER The frog?

BOY Yeah. *(Beat.)*

FATHER You don't smoke - hear? Don't tell me you smoke -

BOY Naw.

FATHER You smoke?

BOY No. *(Beat.)*

FATHER There's nothing here - Fero left -

BOY Fero?

FATHER Yeah - the bookie - you know -

BOY Fero?

FATHER Yeah - he went private sector - he came back once - says he's earning five times more - he's lying 'course - but he's earning - came back in a suit - good thing he didn't wear those - gloves - gloves - he don't go to the games no more - funny, huh? *(Beat.)*

BOY Once I dreamed - it was so bad - cut off your leg - this machine - I dunno - you were running at me - on one leg - and blood was coming out of the other - an' it wasn't there - and I was running away from you - and you were on one leg -

FATHER What - my leg - got cut off?

BOY And you were running -

FATHER Which one they cut off?

BOY Dunno - I dunno which one. Nothing happened - with your leg?

FATHER Ah - my leg - ah! *(Beat.)*

BOY And - I was - scared - that slivers would go in my eye - and they'd take it out - my eye - they took it out - the whole thing - and I saw - from the one they took out - what they took out - and nothing went in it. *(Short beat. BOY points to the garage.)* What's that?! It wasn't here! What is that?

FATHER Garage - the stupid cunt's - she got a car - inside - 'cause the bitch don't know how to drive - failed five fucking times - - good one, huh? *(Laughs.)*

BOY But why a garage - why here -

FATHER It's a garage. *(Short beat.)*

BOY The shed was there -

FATHER Yeah.

BOY It was good - the shed - you could always go there - the shed -

FATHER It was rotting - fell down - why? *(Beat.)* How's come you're so fucking big?

BOY *(Takes a paper bag from his pocket and opens it.)* Dad - - look -

FATHER What is it?

BOY I made 'em - out of metal - with a saw - animals - look - - without a drawing -

FATHER *(Takes one or two into his hands:)* What's this?

BOY What? That's a cow.

FATHER This?

BOY You got to turn it 'round - a cow -

FATHER A cow - yeah - really.

BOY I do all kinds - I just start and it 'comes an animal - first I gave 'em to the - sluts - 'cause they like 'em - after that ten Forints each. Good, huh?

FATHER Good.

BOY I do it real good - I didn't even know I could - they said it's so hard - I can even do small bits - the teacher is doing it with me - can you believe it.

FATHER That's good. *(Short beat.)* I was taking a nap - reading before.

BOY Dad - I'm a wolf.

FATHER You're what?

BOY A wolf - 'cause when the guard's there or the workers - they lay low - but then they go - and at night the wolves - they rule - whoever don't go along with 'em - they get fucked up -

FATHER What do you mean wolves?

BOY The gang - you can't disrespect 'em - they beat the shit out of you - when I was little I thought I could fuck up - once they took me to the hospital - 'cause of that - knocked out these two teeth. *(Shows them.)*

FATHER The motherfuckers.

BOY But now I'm a wolf - it don't matter in a new place - I know there too - how to be wolf - in eighth grade I knew - I see right away who's boss - you can tell - and I tell him okay - I don't wanna fuck with you - and it ain't always the strongest guy - but you can tell.

FATHER That's good. *(Beat.)*

Hey, I'm in my prime - this is the best time - I'm not even forty yet, huh? Any woman sixteen to forty-five is okay by me - but I'm not so easy no more - I'm particular - your whore mother took my best years - wrung me - like a rag - but no more - a person learns - what you can and can't do - these chicks come over - at work, too - there are these chicks - just smocks on - no underwear, nothing - smiling at me like hell - but I look after myself - I learnt what you can do and what you can't do - *(Beat.)*

BOY And dad - you okay?

FATHER Me? Yeah, I'm okay. Why - how should I be - nothing special - I bust my ass - during the day - morning shift - but we'll find something - what to do - for those three days - I dunno - we'll go out - here and there - do everything -

BOY And - I dunno - someone look after you?

FATHER Me? Don't need it - why'd they look after me -

BOY I dunno - like me - back then -

FATHER Ah - don't need to - that was then - ah - *(Beat.)* You were real good to me - really - when I was messed up - you were real good to me - they took you right then - when I was messed up - bastards - your stupid sister didn't give a shit - then they came and took her - *(Beat.)* Okay - soon - it's a mess inside - don't matter - nothing's where it was - we'll put it back -

BOY I'll clean.

FATHER Ah - what for. It'll get done. *(Short beat.)* Hey, I was thinking - what shit - that you're in there learning a trade - why don't you work - and earn something.

BOY Dunno - everyone goes over there -

FATHER That's bullshit. Look at me - if I wanted to - I could earn more than the other fucking workers - if I wanted - what the hell for - hey - how about - if say you get out - back - and use some muscle - a big guy like you - I don't know what good this trade is - you'd be earning - I'd be earning - that'd be some money, huh?- if they'd let you out - what'd you make now - you bust ass for them for years - you don't make nothing - but not if they liberate you - then you'd see - I dunno - come home - we can talk them into it, right - they'll come looking around again - the motherfuckers-but we'll talk 'em into it - us two, huh? *(Laughs.) (Beat.)*

BOY Dad - I want to stay here - dad... *(He erupts weeping.) (Short beat.)*

FATHER Stop bawling - why - what'd I say - hey -

BOY *(Weeping:)* It's shit, fucking shit -

FATHER Hey, I said we take care of it -

BOY I don't want to go back!!

FATHER You don't want to - you don't want to, okay - I'm saying that, too - we'll do something - you're here now - what'd you say - how long? How long you staying?

BOY I don't want to go -

FATHER When are you leaving? Tomorrow?

BOY Day after tomorrow.

FATHER Good - then you have three days, huh? That's good - stop bawling - you just said it was good over there before - didn't you? The food - the wolves - why - what did I say - that you're coming home soon - and we'll make shitloads of money - but go back now - 'cause they'll come say you ran away - blame me - and I'll get screwed again - I know - then our - don't you get it? *(Beat.)* Good - three days - what do you want to do? - What'll we do?

BOY *(Sniffing:)* I dunno.

FATHER Why don't you know? Should I know? When I was your age I knew - I chased girls - went to the movies - you know - there wasn't T.V. then - we played ball - the boys over there - you all play ball?

BOY There's no field -

FATHER Why not? That's why we never have a winning team - I always say - why ain't there places - the papers say it, too - still nothing - why ain't there a field there?

BOY I dunno. There was a ping pong table - they took it - a guard has it -

FATHER The ping pong table - it's not his, huh? It's yours - and he took it, right?

BOY I never saw it - they told me -

FATHER You got to stand up to things like that - get it back - why don't you stand up? Don't give up - they'd take everything - 'cause you leave it there for them - they'll take it every fucking time - tell them I said so. *(Beat.)* Okay - let's say we go out - okay? - cruise around - or you go to the movies - I dunno what's on - I'll give you money - you'll get a twenty, okay? I'll read - 'cause I usually read after work - you'll get a twenty. *(Beat.)* I'll clean now - didn't have time - but now that you're here - it's a good thing - that you came home - I'll clean up - *(Beat.)*

Scene 11.

(CITY BUILDING INSPECTOR [C.B.I.], a woman, enters carrying two large fishnet bags full of groceries, and a briefcase. She stops.)

C.B.I. Good afternoon! Is this number forty-four?

FATHER This is forty-four.

C.B.I. I don't understand, there's no house number outside. I've been wandering around for half an hour, no number, no street name -

FATHER 'Cause it fell off - and I made one - put it up - it was up there - 'cause the old one was so - was so - worn off - the council came - said it ain't - regulation - took it down - said they'd do it - since then nothing.

C.B.I. I just don't understand. On the fence of the neighboring lot it says twenty-eight... I asked and no one knew.

FATHER The mailman don't come in - 'cause he says he don't have to if there ain't a number - old woman lives here and stands outside for her pension - 'cause the mailman don't come in - we ain't even here. *(Laughs.)*

C.B.I. *(Puts her bags on the ground and takes out a drawing from her briefcase, opens and studies it.)* I don't understand. This isn't what's here.

FATHER What'cha looking for?

C.B.I. I'm from the council.

FATHER Council?

C.B.I. The council.

FATHER Please - here's my son - they took him away to state custody - but it's bad over there - please let him go.

C.B.I. Custody case. *(Looks at the drawing.)*

FATHER They took him away - illegally - his sister, too - please come in - my place is in order - clean - I work - then they take my kids away.

C.B.I. I said that's a custody case. There is a custody official. Go see him. *(Looks around.)* I don't get it.

FATHER Please let him go - and make me his - his - how do you call it - who looks after him - you know -

C.B.I. Guardian. *(Points to the garage.)* What is this?

FATHER Garage.

C.B.I. Well it isn't here.

FATHER It's that woman's - lives there -

C.B.I. You mean it isn't a residence?

FATHER This? I said it's garage - that woman's -

BOY There was a shed there - shed - mine -

FATHER I'll call her out - don't worry. *(He knocks on WOMAN's door. Silence, he knocks again.)*

WOMAN *(Opens her door, but just as much as the chain allows.)* What is it?

FATHER Come out - council came 'cause of your garage.

WOMAN What do you mean the council? I got a permit - it's mine.

FATHER Council says it's residence.

WOMAN *(Takes the chain off, comes out, walks toward C.B.I.)* You're from the council, comrade?

C.B.I. I am.

WOMAN This is my garage. I got a permit - inside, I can get it. There wasn't anything here - just a rotting shed. I made it.

C.B.I. Well it doesn't appear on this drawing.

WOMAN What do you mean it doesn't appear? I went to the council, it's been here a year and a half -

C.B.I. When did we inspect the premises?

WOMAN I don't know... *(To FATHER:)* Did they inspect?

FATHER When they took my kids away - my son, too, illegally - 'cause the old bitch reported me - even though she's crazy - just buried her cat - tell her - she buried it, no? Didn't she bury it?

WOMAN Well, yeah.

C.B.I. What's this, a garden? I have a garden here.

FATHER This is a garden.

C.B.I. Not an interior courtyard? *(Short beat.)*

FATHER Is this a garden?

WOMAN I don't know. Why, is there a difference? *(Short beat.)* The professor knows for sure, and he can say that this is a garage - *(Goes to PROFESSOR's door, knocks, pause, knocks again.)*

PROFESSOR *(Opens his door.)* I implore you to let me work!!

WOMAN I'm sorry, but this comrade here is from the council. Please tell her if this is a garden or a courtyard, and that garage there is mine - tell her!

PROFESSOR I've asked you all a hundred times not to bother me while I'm teaching -

WOMAN But they're here from the council!

C.B.I. *(To PROFESSOR:)* This is number forty-four?

PROFESSOR Yes, it is.

C.B.I. Nothing is the way it should be. I've come here to inspect for the gas hook-up. But the neighboring lot is number twenty-eight and there's no number on this one. And this garage doesn't exist.

PROFESSOR One second. What gas hook-up?

C.B.I. We're hooking up the gas here.

PROFESSOR Now?

C.B.I. In the next three months.

PROFESSOR Pardon me, but I happen to know that they're going to raze this whole building.

C.B.I. That's right.

PROFESSOR If they're razing it, why hook up the gas? It would have been good if we'd gotten it sooner, but if they're tearing it down now why do it at all?

C.B.I. City planning called for gas in this building. There wasn't the capacity before. Now there is.

PROFESSOR This will cost the council a lot of money.

C.B.I. You're right. So be happy that you're getting it.

PROFESSOR If they start now, we'll use it for a few months, half a year, a year, then along comes a bulldozer and clears the whole place out. They'll move the public utilities. That's very expensive. They'll build ten-story panel houses like the others in the neighborhood. They'll put down new pipes.

C.B.I. That's right.

PROFESSOR Wouldn't it be simpler if you didn't bother hooking us up now?

C.B.I. Don't get excited. It's been approved.

WOMAN Don't cause trouble. If we have gas when they assign us new apartments, they'll have to give us better ones.

PROFESSOR Still it's a waste, if you please. The state is throwing away a lot of money. (*FLIRT and TEENAGER listen closely at PROFESSOR's door.*)

C.B.I. That's right. Is this definitely number forty-four?

PROFESSOR This is number forty-four.

C.B.I. The way I see it, even the measurements are wrong.

PROFESSOR If they're hooking up the gas up now - fine, so be it. But then maybe you don't have to tear down the building. It's not in bad shape, neither are the other houses in the neighborhood - they've renovated quite a bit, not that long ago - the new buildings will hold just a few more people than all the houses they'll destroy. And there are beautiful gardens here, with fruit trees, all of them will be destroyed. It's a shame.

C.B.I. A decision was made. You should be happy you're getting it for free.

PROFESSOR These are brick buildings, there are basements below them, they're in good shape, they can take another forty-fifty years. That's more than block housing can.

C.B.I. Please, would you please just leave me alone. I get an assignment and I do the best job of it I can. You can go to the complaints office. Open late Mondays.

FATHER Hey, gimme a paper that everything's clean here, I don't drink, I work, he works, too, please look, what a big guy he is!

C.B.I. Explain to him, this is a custody case.

FATHER You're from the council - I'm talking to the council now - tell 'em - what happened - when my wife left - I stayed here - I was messed up - my boy looked after me - 'cause I couldn't get up - and he brought me food - everything - cleaned - washed - 'cause his sister also ran off - if I didn't have my son - I would'a died there - he was just a little kid - and he did it all - then they reported me - and the council took him from me - it was like that! Tell her! It was like that!

WOMAN Yeah, 'cause the old woman wanted to help - to take him in - - and that's when they came out and the state saw. But he couldn't have gone to the old woman's - 'cause you would have fought - so they took him.

C.B.I. *(Sighs and looks at BOY:)* And?

FATHER He wants to come back - it's no good over there for him - why can't he come back?

BOY Let me stay here - I dunno - I always imagined - that I could come back - and be with dad - here - even though he didn't write - but I wanna be here - with him. *(Weeps.)*

C.B.I. Please, go to the custody office.

FATHER *(Opens his door.)* Come inside - everything's where it should be - clean - please take a look - there's room for him here - *(PROFESSOR goes back, ushers the girls in, closes the door.)*

C.B.I. A caseworker will come out soon, alright, do you understand? *(She puts the drawing back in her briefcase and picks up her bags.)*

WOMAN This garage has a permit - I can show you - it's inside - so I've got a good two-room flat with garage coming to me - please make a note of it.

C.B.I. They'll be out here soon.

OLD WOMAN *(Comes out in a clean, very girlish dress too small for her, wearing make-up and holding a piece of paper. Shouting:)* Get away from there! *(C.B.I. jumps in fright.)* You're stepping on the grave! The grave! Get out of there!

WOMAN Wait here - it's only a cat - they hung it - *(C.B.I. turns to go. FATHER runs after her, grabs her arm.)*

FATHER This dusty old whore - I'm reporting her now - she took my boy away - that's what happened -

C.B.I. Let me go!

FATHER She didn't have the right - she didn't have the right. A nut case - burying her cat here - and the council believes this!

WOMAN *(To OLD WOMAN:)* She came from the council -

OLD WOMAN *(To C.B.I.:)* Sign this for me - my will - only the professor was willing - no one else - please sign it -

C.B.I. Let me go!

OLD WOMAN I'm leaving everything - to this boy here - everything - furniture - everything - my money, too - ten thousand Forints - that too - I wrote it all down - please sign it -

C.B.I. I'm not signing anything! Let me go - you're all mad! I'm here to bring you gas!

FATHER She took my boy - so she could be his guardian - I know the game - she'd get the money - as his guardian - sure -

OLD WOMAN Don't you get it, you imbecile? I'm leaving everything to your son?! Don't you get it?!

FATHER What?

OLD WOMAN This is a will - I'm leaving everything to him - my money - - ten thousand Forints - that too - and I'll take him in - I'll turn in an petition -

FATHER You have money, huh? But it should'a been mine, you stole it - I figured it out - 'cause the check for guardians is four hundred a month at least - I know - I'm not stupid - you think I don't know? You stole 9,600 Forints from my pocket - that much - 9,600 - I counted it!

OLD WOMAN Who? What? I stole - from you?!

FATHER 'Cause if I'd been his - his guardian - for the kid - then - I'm not even counting the girl - then it'd be that much. You can figure it out! That's how much you owe me!

OLD WOMAN This is - this is -

FATHER You reported me - said I just lay around. *(To C.B.I.:)* She reported me - said I just lay around - cause I was having a hard time - 'cause this here - she wanted to get her hands on that money - from the boy - she could count! But she didn't get the money - 'cause the case worker came - saw what was going on - and I didn't get it - fucking hell - I didn't! *(To OLD WOMAN:)* 'Cause if you weren't such a piece of shit - I'd get it!

WOMAN What happened was the case worker came and saw that things would explode if the old lady - that's why she didn't want to - she really meant well - you can believe that.

FATHER Yeah, and I would'a wrung her neck - for sure -

WOMAN The boy was so good - nursed his father - skipped school - worked so there'd be money - they threw him out of school 'cause he stole money -

BOY I didn't steal money! Just from my sister! I didn't steal!

WOMAN His father just laid around - the boy cooked for him - cleaned - everything - pretty unlucky thing that the council came - but I know the council meant well.

C.B.I. *(Freeing herself:)* Go to the custody office! *(She flees out the arched entryway.)*

OLD WOMAN At least sign this - I need two witnesses - sign it! *(C.B.I. is gone.)*

FATHER *(Shouts after C.B.I.:)* I didn't even beat him-never! Everyone beats their kids - me never! *(Beat. To BOY:)* Why, did I beat you?

BOY No.

FATHER There! A slap here or there - but beatings never! You got to take him out from where they beat the shit out of him - but you never do - just from me - when they're big - when they're earning - that's another thing - 'cause if they ain't here - they won't give me a bigger place - that's what it's about - I know! 'Cause the council - why do they butt in - why - when it's tough enough as it is - why do they fuck with me - why?

WOMAN They meant well - that was a real nice case worker.

FATHER Even so why they messing with me - why they messing with me - (*To OLD WOMAN:*) You're a godamn snitch.

OLD WOMAN I have nothing to say to you. I'm leaving everything to your son. But I have nothing to say to you. (*To WOMAN:*) To you, too - you worm - you can't even sign this - but it doesn't matter - because the Lord doesn't want evil to rule the Earth. (*To BOY:*) Soon you'll see -

WOMAN I'm a worm! I'm here defending you - and then - then - you were always worming your way - always - you got rid of the only man - - the engineer - who rowed -

OLD WOMAN What? Me? Who?

WOMAN He was the only guy that - but you were all over him - with 'come and have some coffee' - you were always watching us when he came over - and he couldn't take it - the only guy who - who -

OLD WOMAN You are insane.

WOMAN Me? Me? What did you say to the old man - about me - up until the end - he told me - that I was just there 'cause of the flat - until the end - because I'm young - and beautiful - you were vile - 'cause you were jealous - I know -

OLD WOMAN What? Me? That was an old man!

WOMAN Younger than you!

OLD WOMAN A broken down old man! I pitied him - 'cause you did as little as you could - and he rotted here alone all day - so I invited him in - bought him apples - you were afraid that I wanted that flat - and the only vileness that's here is -

WOMAN You spy on us - when the professor and me are talking - you run out right away - so that nothing -

OLD WOMAN That is -

WOMAN Yes! That!

FATHER (*Laughing, to BOY:*) Hear that? Ripping each other apart - great, huh? (*Laughs.*)

WOMAN You just shut your damn mouth - the most you're good for is looking out your window!

FATHER Stupid whore - sleep with everyone - you think I don't see - with everybody - your tits are always hanging out for me to see - whore.

WOMAN Soon - I'll - I'll - (*Runs in, shuts herself behind her door, sound of the chain being put on.*)

OLD WOMAN What did she need with my cat? She'd try to call her over - and that stupid thing even rubbed up against her -

FATHER Your cat! (*Laughs.*) Your stupid cat! Your cat bit the big one, honey! The pussy packed! Kitty, kitty, psss, pssss, here kitty. (*He laughs, starts jumping around the crutch, imitating American Indian chanting, waves for BOY to come over.*)

BOY (*Laughing*) Dad... Dad... (*Joins him jumping around the crutch chanting.*)

OLD WOMAN (*Watches them, pulls herself together, stands motionless.*) My Lord, thank you, for once again reminding me - my Lord! (*FATHER and BOY dance around the crutch slapping their palms to their lips while they chant.*) You know, Lord - why this must be - you know, Lord - (*FATHER and BOY stop, panting. FATHER puts his arm around BOY who is taller than him. OLD WOMAN dries her tears, smearing her make-up.*) It's alright, Lord - it doesn't matter at all - even so - even so - (*She exits into her apartment and closes the door half-way.*)

FATHER (*Panting:*) Well, what do you fucking say? (*Laughs, panting.*) Ah, fuck, whoah -

BOY (*Laughing:*) Dad - oh, fuck - (*Enter MOTHER from the arched entry-way, carrying several plastic bags. She stops.*)

FATHER (*Clears his throat.*) Got to get some exercise, huh? - Soccer or something - (*He wheezes.*) (*BOY sees MOTHER, steps toward her, stares, becomes nauseous, sits down in front of the garage, numbly looks at her, beat.*)

MOTHER Wha' happen'? (*Beat.*)

FATHER Nothing - fucking nothing - here's your kid - don't you see him? (*MOTHER looks over at him dumbly.*) Well, go inside - clean up - dammit - I can't even give him nothing to eat - where you been for fuck's sake - when he comes home - and clean up - you take your bed into the kitchen - 'cause he's sleeping with me in the room - okay? Don't fucking stand there looking at me - don't look - and put your things away - (*MOTHER walks into the apartment in silence.*) Your mother's here - came back a while ago - now she's here - she came back - she's staying here - at least she cooks, huh? - Should I throw her out? - Then what? - At least she cooks when she's here, huh? - What is it? - What the fuck is it? - Why ain't you said nothing - she's your mother for chrissake. (*Beat.*) Ain't nothing between us - she can come back - what can I do - where's she gonna go? They always kick her out - where would she go - let her cook - who cares - let her do what she wants - let her marry some dope - if she finds one - but she always comes back - ain't working out for her. (*Laughs*) Who needs

an old bag like her? It don't work that way - just she thinks so - I ain't saying a word - for a man this ain't old - this age - I'm not forty yet - I'm still something, huh? This is the best time. Every babe 16 to 45 is okay by me - but I watch myself - I've learnt what you can do and what you can't do. *(Beat.)* What're you sitting down for - your mother's cooking - I'm going in. *(Beat.)* Come on in soon - you'll need food, huh? - come on in soon. *(He goes in, closes the door. Beat. BOY sits in front of garage.)*

Scene 12.

(Enter PUNK.)

PUNK What's happening, man? *(Beat. PUNK sits down next to BOY in front of the garage.)* I went to see if anyone was coming, no one did. *(Beat.)* What's goin' on?

BOY That fucking bitch.

PUNK What's goin' on?

BOY *(Stands up, picks up the hatchet.)* I'll smash her head open - - I'll smash - *(PUNK listens.)* I'll smash her fucking head open! *(Screaming, he smashes the lock on the garage door, breaking it off.)*

PUNK We taking the car?

WOMAN *(Enters.)* Jesus! What are you doing? Why? *(She runs back inside, leaves the door open a crack, puts the chain on and looks out in terror.)*

PUNK *(Opens the garage door, and looks in.)* A little Polski.

WOMAN Please, don't!

PUNK She's fucking scared to come out! *(Laughs.)*

WOMAN Don't do it - I'm begging you - don't!

PUNK We taking it?

BOY Sit your ass down.

PUNK Can't drive, man?

BOY No. Sit the fuck down!! *(PUNK sits. Beat.)*

WOMAN No - please - no! - *(Beat.)*

PUNK The bitch is freaking out. *(Laughs.)*

BOY Shut up. *(Beat. WOMAN stares out fearfully. Beat.)*

Scene 13.

(Enter FLIRT, TEENAGER, and PROFESSOR from his apartment.)

PROFESSOR So then next week.

FLIRT Yes, professor. *(Takes out her money.)*

WOMAN Professor!

PROFESSOR *(Looks over.)* Yes.

WOMAN Nothing, I'm sorry that I bothered you, during your lesson -

PROFESSOR No problem, no problem at all. *(Beat.)* Furthermore, I would just like to say that this prayer, this brilliant, deeply human prayer is a prayer of desperation; it is not only the finest Hungarian poem of this century, but perhaps of all Hungarian poetry, because, as I've pointed out, like the greatest writers of this age, Dostoevski and Nietzsche, for example, the writer here struggles with experiences which, as they say, have remained pertinent to this day - experiences the entire world faces, if you will - but this isn't what's most important. Rather, this brilliant, desperate, deeply felt prayer, this soul-searching exclamation, if you will, is the ultimate expression of the spirit that believes in spite of itself. And I dare say in this it even surpasses the greatest of poems. Because in this poem its author does not seek refuge in the Lord because he has found his salvation, not because of God's existence, nor because the poet believes in His existence, in another poem he refers to the Lord as an 'old God.' This is not a weak man seeking solace, but rather a mature, earnest person who weighs the consequences of our renouncing this forever - unresurrectable Lord, if you will. *(Meanwhile, FLIRT has been making eyes at PUNK.)* And as this earnest man is perfectly honest about his weakness, for this very reason he no longer remains weak, clearly shown when he writes:

Let us give ourselves faithfully
For of Spirits, he is best
Nothing remains in which to believe,
Let us believe this may-be Lord

Please note that until this point the poet has referred to him as God, and now, all at once, addresses him as Spirit, capitalized, naturally. The Spirit could also be an evil spirit, please note. The poet is saying, even if there is a God, even if there isn't, even if good, even if evil, there needs to be one, even, surely, especially when Nothing remains in which to believe. This is an incomparably deep thought from a somber, desperate man. The poet is saying whatever spiritual nature exists, hovering above man, be it disastrous, hostile even towards man, it is still better that it exist than not exist. And this is what is found so beautifully expressed in the final stanza, the Hungarian poet's four most beautiful lines, which I ask you to learn by heart:

For of Spirits, he is best
And dreadful it can not be
That belong to no one, or to man
Life, life, life

Please note, if you will, that even if good, even if evil, the Spirit here is designated the best Spirit. Its quality makes no difference, just that it exists. And the explanation: It is horrendous and impossible, that above all life belongs to no one - please note the paradox, the adjective, independent of the poet, dreadful commingles with the soul of the poet's outcry, It can not be - and after that for the first time, that life belongs to no one. Only after this comes the truly deep, great thought, which unfortunately has been proven correct to this day, the most terrible prophecy which any poet has penned, the heaviest cassandrian prognostication which has come to pass:

And dreadful it can not be
That life
Belong to no one, or to man

Because man is undeserving of life, because man when he wins dominion over the Earth wreaks havoc upon it. (*Short beat.*) So then please learn not only the final stanza, but the last two. (*Short beat.*) And if you come to these conclusions for yourselves, then these eight lines will come to mind, even so, even if now you don't understand them completely.

TEENAGER

But we do understand them, professor.

PROFESSOR

And if they come to mind, then, no matter how strange, you will be comforted. You will be comforted, because you will feel as if you too are a part of something great, a part of something awesome, in which great souls before, like our poet Endre Ady, have also suffered. And then you will feel the beautiful, great community to which mankind belongs, a humanity capable only of destroying life, but, if you feel it, then the spirit, the spirit which Ady speaks of will appear in you, the Lord will then appear in you. (*PROFESSOR wipes his tears. The girls stand. Beat. Then PROFESSOR clears his throat.*) So please learn the last eight lines, I have to leave now -

FLIRT

Thank you. (*She hands him the money.*)

PROFESSOR

Yes - (*He takes the money.*) Thank you. So in two weeks then. (*He quickly exits back into his apartment, leaving his door open.*)

TEENAGER

(*Giggling.*) God!! FLIRT

PROFESSOR

(*Comes out with a shopping bag.*) I forgot to pick up a few things - when I came home from school I didn't have it with me - my bag - I'm hurrying - good bye. (*To WOMAN:*) Good bye.

TEENAGER

Good bye! FLIRT (*PROFESSOR exits.*)

PUNK

Fucking look over there -

TEENAGER Come on, let's go.

FLIRT Where are you going?

TEENAGER Let's go!

FLIRT Cute guy.

TEENAGER Come on.

PUNK Fucking look at that -

BOY Leave me alone.

PUNK They're looking over here, huh? They're looking.

TEENAGER *(To WOMAN:)* Hello.

WOMAN *(Quietly:)* Hello.

TEENAGER Okay, let's go. *(PUNK stands up, moves a little closer to the girls.)*

FLIRT The one who's sitting cute, isn't he? *(PUNK stops.)* Maybe he can't get up. *(PUNK bursts out laughing.)*

TEENAGER Hey, why now -

FLIRT He's sitting there like a dead something.

TEENAGER *(Giggles, then stops.)* Don't start with them. *(FLIRT and TEENAGER start walking toward the arched entryway. WOMAN listens.)*

FLIRT *(Looks back.)* He can't come.

PUNK Let's fucking go!

BOY Whores!

TEENAGER *(Angrily:)* Let's go! *(TEENAGER and FLIRT exit.)*

PUNK Hey, why'd you - didn't you fucking see - they wanted it, man? Didn't you fucking see that?

BOY Your fucking mother. Shut up. *(WOMAN stands silently.)*

PUNK *(Walks over to BOY, sits down.)* What the fuck, man? *(Beat.)* Cute bitches - why'd you - *(Beat.)* What, man? Your old man gone or what? *(Beat.)* Why don't you got a fucking key - I told you to get one - I got one. *(Beat.)* Hey - she's looking here - look -

BOY Shut your mouth you stupid fuck. *(Beat.)* She stole dad's money - ten thousand Forints - that bitch -

PUNK What?

BOY That stupid old shit - it's all 'cause of her -

PUNK What? That old woman - the cat -

BOY *(To WOMAN:)* What're you looking at? What're you looking at? What are you looking at?

WOMAN No - please -

BOY You took my shed - mine - why'd you take it?! *(Cries. Beat.)*

PUNK Hey, man, don't -

WOMAN I didn't know - don't be angry - I didn't know -

PUNK What, man -

WOMAN What can I give you - if you want something I'll gladly -

BOY You go to hell! Don't stare! I'll smash your car if you stare!

WOMAN No - not that - I'm not staring - just don't -

BOY Go to hell!!! (*WOMAN goes inside but peeks out of a crack in the door.*)

PUNK Fuck it up - her car, huh?

BOY You stupid fuck -

PUNK Hey, man, what's up with you - (*Beat. PROFESSOR comes in with bread, milk, wine, and cold cuts in his bag. WOMAN, hearing his footsteps, appears in the doorway.*)

WOMAN Hello.

PROFESSOR I didn't bring my bag in the morning - forgot it - so I had to go shopping now. I had five classes, and I forgot. I had to go out after class - in the afternoon - otherwise I couldn't get the East German earplugs - those are the best - there's a shortage you know. Those are the best. (*Towards the boys*): Hello, boys. (*To WOMAN*): The TV is always - so I need sleeping pills, too -

WOMAN Yes, you've said that many times.

PROFESSOR But I try not to take too many - Geza Chath smoked opium - have you read him? I'll tell you about him - he's written beautiful short stories - well, good bye.

WOMAN Good bye, professor. (*PROFESSOR goes in his flat, closes his door.*)

PUNK Hey, she's looking. (*PUNK takes the hatchet in his hand, looks at her. WOMAN closes door, the sound of the chain is heard. Beat.*)

BOY She stole from dad - the money -

PUNK The old woman? At least we did her cat, huh? (*He puts down hatchet, beat.*) Don't freak. We go in and she gives it back - (*Beat.*) There's no way she won't give it back - we go in and she gives it back - (*Beat. He picks up the hatchet.*) She'll see this - shits her fucking pants - then out comes the money, man - (*Beat.*)

BOY Four hundred's mine.

PUNK What?

BOY 'Cause she stole nine thousand six hundred - and she's got ten thousand. So four hundred's mine.

PUNK Why - I'm going, too - ain't I?

BOY I didn't ask you.

PUNK Yeah, she'll give it up to you, stupid.

BOY Okay, two hundred's yours.

PUNK Why two hundred - five thousand.

BOY You dick. Dad gets nine thousand six hundred. *(Beat.)*

PUNK Well, you know, man, your fucking dad-

BOY Watch it, man, I'll fucking smack - *(Beat.)*

PUNK Dunno - we need something - put over our heads -

BOY Fuck - what for?

PUNK Well, we need something - don't we?

BOY Fuck. *(Beat.)*

Scene 14.

(Enter SERGEANT and COP from the arched entryway. BOY and PUNK stand up. PUNK holds the hatchet in his hand.)

PUNK Hello.

SERGEANT Hey. Who's this?

PUNK Well, he's - you know - him.

SERGEANT Identification. *(BOY takes out his ID, hands it over. SERGEANT flips through it.)* Hey, is that you? I didn't even know you. *(To COP:)* His son.

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT You're at the boy's home, ain't you?

BOY Yes.

PUNK He broke out! He told me! He broke out! *(Beat. BOY looks at PUNK, takes out a piece of paper, hands it over. SERGEANT looks at it, shows it to COP.)*

SERGEANT Is this an official leave permit? *(COP studies it.)*

BOY It's official.

SERGEANT I didn't ask you. *(Short beat.)*

COP Well - permit.

SERGEANT Stamped and dated?

COP There's a stamp. There's a date.

SERGEANT Letterhead? *(COP nods. He takes it back.)* This is an official leave permit. For how many days?

BOY Three.

SERGEANT I didn't ask you.

COP *(Looking at paper:)* Three.

SERGEANT This is an official leave permit for three days. *(He gives the paper back to BOY who puts it away.)* It is forbidden to keep anything within the covers of your State identification.

BOY Ain't nothing in it.

SERGEANT I did not say there was something in it, but that it is forbidden to keep anything within the covers. Is that what I said? *(Beat.)* Is that what I said?

BOY Yes.

SERGEANT The state identification must be kept with you at all times.

BOY I had it with me - ain't it with me?

SERGEANT I did not say that it wasn't with you. Did I say that you didn't have it with you? *(To COP:)* Did I say that?

COP No.

SERGEANT *(To BOY:)* Is that what I said?

BOY No.

SERGEANT The State identification must not be mutilated. *(Beat.)*

This is not mutilated. Its loss must be reported to the appropriate police authority. *(Beat.)* Here. *(BOY takes it back and puts it away.)* You seen your father?

BOY Yes. *(WOMAN opens her door a crack and listens.)*

SERGEANT Okay, carry on. *(Beat.)* So, what's doing? What you been doing so far?

PUNK Just hanging out.

SERGEANT Okay, carry on.

WOMAN Hello.

SERGEANT Hello. *(Beat. WOMAN withdraws, locks herself in, sound of the chain. BOY walks in direction of OLD WOMAN's door. PUNK follows after a brief hesitation. BOY opens her door. Both go in. Beat.)*

COP That was a woman.

SERGEANT Yeah.

COP Got to be a whore - ought kick her ass - why's she always screwing - *(Laughs.)*

SERGEANT That was a joke? Stupid godamn joke! *(Short beat.)*

COP Me - no, I didn't - I didn't - really - I even sleep in my uniform - *(Beat.)*

SERGEANT Well, sometimes little ones like this forge another date - scratch out the old one - or use ink remover. Got to watch that - and they lie - say they had it - and lost it on the train -

COP Yeah.

SERGEANT But this is a good kid - when his father was sick - he looked after him - took care of him - even though his father was sick - after his old lady had left him for the second time - she was still alright then - his sister whored around - real business like - so the kid's alright. *(Beat. COP leans against the wall in the arched entryway.)* Beat, huh?

COP Naw, just you know -

SERGEANT I didn't say this was easy - walking around all day. Over here - over there. Your fucking feet kill you, huh?

COP No, just my back -

SERGEANT That's the way it is - in cold - in heat - you breathe in the dust - the smoke - to keep the peace - that's the way the work is. *(Beat.)* You'll get used to it - and you got to be careful - pay attention - but you'll get used to it. *(Beat. Suddenly, a scream, crashing sound, then silence. COP jumps away from the wall, looks alarmed.)*

SERGEANT *(Impatiently:)* What got you - you shit your pants?

COP What was that? *(Beat.)*

SERGEANT Nothing - the TV- a police story - *(Beat. They listen.)* Okay, we were here, let's go - *(From OLD WOMAN's flat come BOY and PUNK, pale, their hands and shirts covered in blood, they stop.)*

PUNK Why'd you have to - why -

BOY Her brains - her brains - *(Both are about to vomit. COP and SERGEANT stare, then jump on them. They make the boys spread their arms and legs. BOY and PUNK don't resist. They handcuff the boys to each other.)*

SERGEANT *(To COP, kneeling on BOY and PUNK:)* Go look -

COP *(Enters OLD WOMAN's flat hesitantly. Beat. He comes out visibly nauseous, then breathes deeply and slowly recovers.)* Caught in the act! Caught in the act! *(COP and SERGEANT pull BOY and PUNK up, rush them out quickly and disappear.)*

Scene 15.

(WOMAN unchains her door, opens it, sniffles. She has a new lock in her hand, goes to the garage door, puts it on, takes the old one, starts back toward her apartment. Stops, walks towards PROFESSOR's door, knocks, waits, then goes back into her apartment and locks the door.)

Scene 16.

(Beat. FATHER and MOTHER come out of their apartment.)

FATHER Where's that kid...

MOTHER The thing came today - stupid - the whole day I - I didn't - they ran around all day - I was - I don't even got time - to take a shit - and that - you know - died, huh? It's suspicious - said on the radio - suspicious - at ten - but I couldn't go - the others - I got a headache - but the others don't care - yeah - and I come home - by the church - really in his heart, huh? With that - with that, uh - with that wood - hook - at the end - metal, huh? I don't get it - but it's that - terrible - they're going around - all the time - I don't got enough time - to shit - and their big mouths -

FATHER Yeah, don't start -

MOTHER Why - I had enough - they come - Ersi, too - stupid bitch - comes over - talking - while I - but I said - why not - when the big shots, too, huh? You'll see -

FATHER Shut your mouth! *(Beat. From WOMAN's flat comes Leonard Cohen's „Who by Fire.” FATHER looks up.)* They're already over there - hear that?! They're already over there! *(Beat, except for the song.)* Well, the kid is here - clean the fucking place up - 'cause it's bad for him - if he sees that we turned the room around - you go into the kitchen while he's here -

MOTHER Why should I go? Where? And the radio said that, uh - you know -

FATHER Why're you going to the fucking kitchen - 'cause - that's fucking why - and he's coming home soon - that's the way it's going to be -

MOTHER What'd you mean he's coming home?

FATHER He's coming home - then I'll be appointed his thing - that's it - his - I'll be his guardian - that's it - that's at least four hundred a month - see - I'll be appointed - 'cause he's a strong kid - he'll go out and work - who the hell needs his trade - he'll be earning four thou, five - fucking strong kid - see - how much does a kid like that eat - let's say - he eats a thousand - he'll get another thou - that's two left - maybe three - see - so go to hell - and clean up -

MOTHER I'll clean up - I'll throw out your stupid books -

FATHER Just try it - you piece of garbage - just try it -

MOTHER I'll throw out - stories -77 Hungarian Folk Tales - an old jack - ass like you - reading stories -

FATHER Hey, those are good fucking - and it's nothing to you - what I do - be happy you can stay here - go clean up inside - what I says goes! *(MOTHER goes in. Beat.)* There. 'Cause it'll be the way I want it to be. *(Heads toward his apartment.)* What's on the fucking TV? *(FATHER walks in, slams the door.)*

Curtain.