

Dragica Potočnjak

For Our Young Ladies

Translated by Lesley Wade

Ledig House, Omi, U.S.A., 2006

Characters

BRINA 4, 14 and 18 years old

KATARINA Her mother, 24, 34 and 38 years old

BORIS Katarina's husband, her ex-husband and Brina's father, 34, 44 and 48 years old

POLICEMAN Younger

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR Older

VICAR

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

Notes

The Vicar and the Public Prosecutor can be played by the same actor.

The four-year-old Brina is only partially visible onstage. Her voice is heard over a loudspeaker. She can be also shown on a screen, stretched like a white horizon behind a tree-trunk.

Katarina's voice is somewhat modified in the imaginary scenes.

The set remains the same throughout, representing different times and places. Downstage left is a solid old armchair, next to it a small table with a light and telephone. On the left and right are large doors, the left leading to the outside, the right to a child's bedroom. Downstage right is the entrance to the kitchen, not indicated by a door. Upstage centre is a tree-trunk.

Events in the play take place today, four years ago and fourteen years ago. Time differences are indicated by costume, and possibly the staging.

1.1

Today – a few hours ago.

Brina, wearing a long white bloodstained dress, is standing by the armchair, talking on the telephone.

BRINA: What do you mean you don't understand me? I got a rifle and shot them. All of them that came out of the lake. ... The lake! Horses... First there were only two of them, but when they kept on coming out I got a rifle and ... Because they ate my children! Actually it was her. She did it, one after the other, all my children! ... What's so strange about that? She opened her big gob and ... I couldn't have any more ... No, you don't get it! She ate the children I gave birth to! That mare! Gigantic, glistening, lit by the sun ... That's got to be easy enough to understand ... No, please don't hang up. I'm frightened. I don't know ... Send someone round. Oh please ... No, I'm alright. Quite alright .. Well there is blood, there's blood everywhere but ... No, not from the horses, hers! She wouldn't die, she crawled after me ... What? Yes. No, I killed the horses in my dreams. That's right, in my dreams! ... Don't you know what dreams are then?! What I'm telling you, I saw it in my dreams ... The children were in the dreams too. I brought each one that was born out into the sun. The horses came up out of the lake, a mare and a stallion, and she started to ... One after the other. All of them ... Why? ... In dreams you can give birth a hundred times, a thousand ... No, I haven't yet ... Is someone going to come? ... Eighteen, today actually, it's my ... Yes. No, I'm not celebrating. I mean, I was celebrating, but then this happened ... Yes ... I'm not imagining anything ... No! No! ... You listen to me, you lousy cunt, you just fuck ... For fuck's sake, don't you get it, I'm fucked! I'm well fucked, and all you can do is take the piss, go fuck ... Yes! Yes! ... All right, yes, whatever ... Yes. No. *She lets the receiver slip out of her hand.*
After a pause. I really didn't want to. I didn't. Maybe I was dreaming. No. Wait! Wait for me!

1.2

Immediately beforehand.

A feeling of unreality. A strong beam of light. Katarina, dressed as she is at the end of the play, slowly enters it, with her back to us. Music begins with the tinkling of little

bells, gets louder and changes into the ringing of bells, which are not church bells however.

1.3.

Following on from the above.

A light on Brina downstage.

BRINA: It's not true what I said, forget it ... Yes ... And even if it was ... What? No, I'm not mad, she was though! Perhaps she really was ... Oh, what do I know. *She throws down the receiver and runs after Katarina.*

2.

Fourteen years earlier.

The sound of bells far off in the background. Katarina – dressed differently now – runs onto the stage. She looks all around her.

KATARINA: Brina, Brina, where are you? I know you're hiding again. I know you're ... Come on out, darling. Brina?

The doorbell rings. Katarina opens the door.

Good morning. Oh!

INSPECTOR: Good morning, ma'am. Know this one?

KATARINA: Brina, I've been looking for you. Where were you ...?

INSPECTOR: By the river, near the bridge, apparently she was sitting looking at the water.

KATARINA: Oh my God!

INSPECTOR: Everything's alright. A policeman found her. But the little girl couldn't remember where she lived. So we drove about a bit, and when she caught sight of her house she was very pleased.

KATARINA: Thank you. I thought she was asleep. I didn't know she'd ... Brina, you shouldn't have ...

INSPECTOR: Don't tell her off now. She's been frightened enough already. Aren't you going to go to your mum?

KATARINA: Come on then. *To the Inspector.* You'd never believe it, I'd only just started to miss her. But she loves hiding and ... I thought she'd ... She's such an overactive child you know.

INSPECTOR: I can see that. You must watch out for her a bit more, ma'am. It turned out all right today, but it might not have. Go to your mum, Brina.

KATARINA: Come on, I'm not cross with you. See, I'm not.

INSPECTOR: This is your mum. Brina, this is your mother, isn't it?

KATARINA: Of course I am. She's obviously in a state of shock. She's only four.

INSPECTOR: You're four already? That's great! Let go of me, Brina, I've got to get back to work. Be glad that you've found your mum.

KATARINA: Let go of the kind man, Brina, he's got to go.

INSPECTOR: Where's your husband, ma'am? Perhaps he could ...?

KATARINA: Oh, him ... he's at work. He's always at work. Look, Brina, Mummy loves you, I love you very ..., you know, don't you.

BRINA: No you don't!

3.

Fourteen years ago.

Boris is in pyjamas. He is standing in front of the door. He hesitates for quite a while. He starts off, then disappears. After a moment he returns. A moment later he stands still and then enters warily. Before closing the door he looks around, making sure no-one has seen him.

4.

Today – a few hours ago.

Brina enters from the side. She is wearing jeans and a shirt.

BRINA: Where have you put it? Where is it?

KATARINA *answering from the kitchen* : Just look for it. Look.

BRINA: Where am I supposed to look then? This is childish.

KATARINA: So you're not a child then?

BRINA: No, I'm an adult now. *She searches.* Oh come on, where have you put it? I can't be bothered any more ...

KATARINA: You won't get your present then!

BRINA: What a nerve. *She sits down in the armchair.* Got any music? Something, you know – it's as quiet as a graveyard. Really spooky. Whoooo, whoooooooo.

KATARINA: I hope you're hungry.

BRINA: Yeah. *More quietly.* No.

KATARINA: Have you found it?

BRINA: Not yet. Oh yes, I have. I have! *She bends forward and looks under the armchair. The gift is hidden there.* My present, my present! My present, oh yes.

Katarina enters, a dishcloth in her hand. Brina opens her gift.

KATARINA: I wonder if you'll like it.

BRINA: Course I will.

KATARINA: Not necessarily.

BRINA: Yes I will.

KATARINA: Hope so.

Brina is disappointed.

BRINA: A nightdress? You know I don't like ...

KATARINA: It's not a nightdress. Try it on.

BRINA: Well it looks like a nightdress.

KATARINA: It isn't though. Try it on.

BRINA: What is it?

KATARINA: A dress. See, I can see you don't like it.

BRINA: No, I do though. It's just ... Where am I going to wear it?

KATARINA: Anywhere. Especially when you want to look extra nice for your boyfriend.

BRINA: Stop bugging me! Do you always have to ...?!

KATARINA: Oh dear, something's burning.

Katarina exits.

BRINA: No it's not. *Particularly loudly.* No, it's all right you know. It's really lovely. Thanks! Really. It's fantastic actually, except ... *More quietly.* As it's not really a nightdress.

KATARINA: You might even really like wearing it. Try it on.

BRINA: Not right now.

Katarina enters holding a bottle.

KATARINA: What's this then?

BRINA: Can't you see?

KATARINA: Don't you know I don't any ...?

BRINA: That's why.

KATARINA: How do you mean?

BRINA: For fun. I'm clean now, aren't I, people can push it around me till they drop and I don't give a fuck. It's the same for you.

KATARINA: Did he tell you to bring me this?

BRINA: No. I didn't know what to bring you and it seemed like a good joke.

KATARINA: A joke?

BRINA: Yes, a joke.

KATARINA: Well it isn't, just so you know!

BRINA: It's a test though.

Katarina exits.

BRINA: You can always chuck it out. Pour it down the toilet. That'll be cool.

KATARINA *from the kitchen:* He put you up to it, I know he did ... You'd never have thought of a thing like that.

BRINA: I did though! *More quietly.* For fuck's sake, do you always have to get on my nerves, I mean always? Not once have I ... A bloody nightmare! *After a while and more loudly.* Don't get cross now. Hey, I'll pour it away and it'll be cool. And we'll put on some good music ... We mustn't argue today of all days. It's really shit. I don't want any more arguing. *More quietly.* I'll even wear this bloody awful dress if you'll just stop being a pain. *After a while and more loudly.* Hey, I must tell you what I dreamed about! Something really weird. Like my dreams are trying to tell me I'm never going to have any children!

She exits to the kitchen.

KATARINA: Not that as well!

We now hear them both from the neighbouring room.

BRINA: Where's the bottle then?

KATARINA: Gone.

BRINA: Great.

5.

Fourteen years ago.

Katarina, exhausted and dishevelled, worn out, throws herself into the armchair. Boris comes in raging immediately after her.

BORIS: Great! But I've asked you a thousand times, don't call me, don't spy on me. I'll come when I come. If we're together, or rather, if I'm with you, then a man has a right to expect we should trust each other. That we ... Like I trust you.

KATARINA: Yes.

BORIS: Because that's what I've decided. A person makes a decision and ... We all have opportunities ... you too. Well, you have been letting yourself go a bit, but still ... Still I made a decision and I trust you. You, though, you've done everything bar sending private detectives after me. I've only got to stick my nose through the door and you pounce on me with your reproaches. Reproaching me! If only once you'd, just once ...

KATARINA: Can ...?

BORIS: No! You listen. You listen first! And don't interrupt, don't interrupt me!

KATARINA: Can I tomorrow than?

BORIS: No! Classic. Go on, now just say I've got myself worked up. That I'm ...! Because I'm not! It is normal for a person to raise their voice if they want to tell someone something. If they want anyone to hear them. If they want anyone even to hear them!

KATARINA: You're very ...

BORIS: What?

KATARINA: Yes.

BORIS: What is it I do to you? What do I do to you? Go on, what? You don't know? You don't know. Because I don't do anything to you. Because all I want is to explain something to you. Well and what if I was worked up. If I was. Who was it got me worked up? Who is it who's getting at me the whole time, who reproaches me, doesn't let me get a word in edgeways? Who?! Perhaps I do it to myself? Me, known for his perverseness, I enjoy it, because then I can be in a bad mood again. I can hardly wait to ...! Every day I can barely wait to get home so I can lose my temper again. It's great fun. Except soon I'll really have had it up to here!

KATARINA: I need to go to sleep ...

BORIS: Sleep?! She'd like to go to sleep! Anything, so long as she doesn't have to listen. You want to go to sleep? Stare into space! So I can listen to her sighs! But if I ask her something it's – oh, nothing. If I touch her – leave me alone. And now she wants to sleep?! She wants to sleep and we still haven't said a word. Have you any idea what it is I want to talk to you about? No, because you're not interested, you're not interested, and that's why you keep on interrupting me. I've only got to open my mouth and you're jumping down my throat. Do you realise this? Perhaps you don't. I don't think you realise it at all. You see sweetheart, if you didn't keep saying over and over ... Then I wouldn't either. I'd be ... Why won't you look at me? Look at me. Go on, look at me.

KATARINA: No.

BORIS: You already have anyway. You have a bit already. Look, I do know you don't really want it to be this way, you'd like ... We'll talk and ...

KATARINA: Leave me alone please.

Katarina moves away from him.

BORIS: When you don't want to listen any more, when know-all doesn't feel like it, it's – fuck off. Fuck yourself! I'll tell you to fuck off, you'll see, you won't be coming back again. Do you understand me?

KATARINA: No.

BORIS: Well, at least you're honest, at least that. As a start that's ...

Boris approaches her again. Katarina pushes him away, he shoves her forcefully into the armchair.

KATARINA: Stop it, Boris, calm down or else ...

BORIS: Are you going to threaten me? Instead of apologising! If you'd even apologised occasionally for some of the crap you dump on a person. But no. How could you! Madam is too proud. She's always provoking, always the first to start it. And she pounces on you with it, like a bloody hysterical old woman, oh how she pounces! Cracks right down on you. Just so she doesn't have to hear anything that might still do her some good. Oh no, she'll rather peck away, repeat herself over and over, repeating the same thing a hundred times like a chicken And all the time she'll make out she's as innocent as the Virgin Mary. She'll look at me with those big cow's eyes of hers, flutter her eyelashes, anything so as not to have to ...

KATARINA: At least vary your vocabulary ... I know it all off by heart!

BORIS: But I don't know yours, I suppose?! You're interesting, I suppose?! You're as boring as shit! Nothing but shit you are. And I'm not putting up with you any longer. Surely you don't think I'm such an idiot that I'll go on ..., that I'll always ...? You underestimate me, darling, you underestimate me a lot.

KATARINA: Who's underestimating who?!

Boris hits her.

BORIS: Why are you with me then, eh? If you're suffering so very much?! You poor thing. I feel so sorry for you. Oh, how I pity you, what a poor thing you are! A victim, really. *He laughs.* A typical victim. She doesn't want to be, but somehow she just is. Because in fact she does everything she can to become one! Be a victim then, go on, whatever you want, but you're not fucking me about any more, oh no!

KATARINA: Brina's crying.

Katarina gets up, Boris pushes her back down into the chair.

BORIS: She's not crying at all. I've got better hearing than you. *He listens.* What will she think of next, just so she can keep on blaming me for things.

KATARINA: I can hear her. Let me go to her.

BORIS: So, who's stopping you. Except she's not crying! But you're going to go now anyway and wake her. You're going to go and wake her just so you can say what an arse-hole I am, I've shouted at you so much I've woken her up again. There she is, sleeping soundly behind five closed doors, but arse-hole that I am, I've woken her up. And why?! Because I hate her! I hate my own child because ...

KATARINA: Stop it, please, stop!

BORIS: So do something about it then.

KATARINA: I'll go mad, I will ...!

Katarina runs off, Boris follows her with his eternal monologue.

BORIS: Of course you will. Did you think you wouldn't then? Because I reckon you already have. Mad. I've told you – You should have gone to the doctor's ages ago. I've been telling you for far too long. And the kid will too in the end, I wouldn't be at all surprised, I wouldn't be surprised because ...

6.

Today – a little earlier.

The room is as before. Brina's corpse in a pool of blood. Standing over her a young policeman, talking on his mobile phone.

POLICEMAN: All the necessary ... that too, that too. Yes, they have to be seen by a doctor. Although there's no doubt about it. No doubt, they're both ... I don't know ... I won't now. As soon as possible, I hope, 'cos I'd like to get home, today if that's still possible. Go on, we had to wait three hours yesterday for a lawyer ... Yep, there's one practically every day now. What can you do. Although they're mostly men. Usually it's a son kills his father, ...yes, usually, but here it's, well ... That's the way it goes ... You can't do anything ... yes ... What can you do ... Yes, we're waiting. ... One of 'em's a bit of all right. Was! *He laughs. He looks down at the corpse, touches her bare leg with his shoe and lifts up her skirt.* No, not bad at all. ... Right, young. I reckon she's not twenty yet. ... Sexy? Well, it's hard to say now, unless you ... *Laughs.*

The Inspector enters from the kitchen.

INSPECTOR: Get your mitts off!

POLICEMAN (*into his phone*): Yes ... you too.

He puts away his mobile phone.

INSPECTOR: I'd say she did it at least five hours ago. If it was her. Hard to see it wasn't. It all points to it. Hardly any other possibility.

POLICEMAN: I agree.

INSPECTOR: She's pretty cold already.

POLICEMAN: When was the call then?

INSPECTOR: Didn't I tell you to make enquiries. About three hours ago, but I want it exactly ...

POLICEMAN: O.K.

INSPECTOR: We'll have to collect fingerprints, it can't be helped,. Once the others get here we won't be able to do any more.

POLICEMAN: But I've already ...

INSPECTOR: It's as if I'd met her before. I don't know, the whole time we've been here ... But I can't remember.

POLICEMAN: Which one, this one or that one in there? *He points in the direction of the kitchen, from which the Inspector had entered.*

INSPECTOR: No, no, this one. *He points at the corpse.* Anyway we'd booked the older one, she used to get drunk. The neighbours used to call us non-stop 'cos she got rowdy. Nothing much.

Silence.

POLICEMAN: I remember. *After a while.* How much longer will it take for her to bleed to death?

INSPECTOR: You bloody stupid idiot, didn't you go to school? There are more and more idiots all the time! Well, do something then!

POLICEMAN: Don't get excited. You've got a phone, make a call.

INSPECTOR: You call the professor, if he's still alive, and pass him over to me straight away.

POLICEMAN: What professor?

INSPECTOR: Yours, so I can ask him if he knows.

POLICEMAN: I only wanted to check.

The Inspector reaches into his pocket and offers him his knife.

INSPECTOR: Here you are, check it out. I'll time it. Oh my, when you're gone, I can't tell you. You're not even listening to me now.

POLICEMAN: It's like she moved.

INSPECTOR: You're not listening, are you.

POLICEMAN: Leave off.

INSPECTOR *indicating the corpse:* I examined her, there's no hope.

POLICEMAN: Pity.

INSPECTOR: No it's not. It's better for her. After what she's done, it's just as well. Sometimes even God is merciful.

7.

Fourteen years earlier.

A tall tree. The tree-top is all that can be seen. A child's legs are dangling from one of the branches. They move to the rhythm of Brina's children's game.

BRINA: I like eating red cherries,
Black ones even more,
And I like going to school
More and more each year.

Make way for us here
For our young ladies ...

You are pretty, you are pretty ...

KATARINA *calling from offstage:* Brina, Brina!

The singing stops, the legs hide. Katarina enters from the side.

KATARINA: Brina, Brina? *She stands still.* I know you're here somewhere. Where are you, Brina? Dinner's ready. Brina, where are you hiding?

She even looks up at the tree-top. She exits. The legs start to dangle again. Katarina comes back. The legs go up. A cough. The tree starts to shake. Brina coughs, the tree shakes. Katarina stops beneath the tree. She looks up.

You've climbed up again. Brina! I know you're up there. I can see you.

BRINA: No you can't.

KATARINA: Yes I can. Come down.

BRINA: No!

KATARINA: Go on.

BRINA: Come and get me.

KATARINA: You know I can't. Come down, or I'll have to call the police.

BRINA: No you won't.

KATARINA: I will. The one with the moustache.

BRINA: So what. He's nice anyway.

KATARINA: Oh, but he'll get really cross now. And then Daddy will get cross too.

BRINA: With you!

KATARINA: Yes, with me.

Apple blossoms fall.

KATARINA: Don't pick them.

BRINA: Look, they stink.

KATARINA: Thank you, but we won't have any apples if you ...

BRINA: Yes we will. Granny said you have to knock some of them down, to make the others better.

KATARINA: Well Granny knows.

BRINA: Yes, she's really clever. Like Daddy.

KATARINA: Yes, well she's his mother.

BRINA: And that's why I'm very clever as well.

KATARINA: If you don't come down you're not. *After a pause.* Brina. *After a pause.* Have you pooped in your pants again? *Leaves and blossoming branches come tumbling down.*

KATARINA: You have. And do stop throwing things down! Come on. I'm not going to do anything ...

BRINA: You told a lie yesterday as well.

KATARINA: That's not true.

BRINA: Yes it is. That's why you get so dizzy in your head, because you tell lies.

KATARINA: What do I do? What are you talking about?

BRINA: Granny told me.

KATARINA: That bloody woman! Come down right now! Otherwise I'll tell your father.

BRINA: You're going to anyway.

KATARINA: That's not true. Come on. It's getting dark.

BRINA: So what.

KATARINA: You're covered in poo, I can smell it from here.

BRINA: And you've got a dirty mouth. You're rude. You've got a dirty rude mouth!

Blossoms and twigs rain down.

KATARINA: Come on. We've got to get you cleaned up. If Daddy finds you up in the tree, and with poo in your pants, he'll go mad. Be sensible, darling, you're big enough now. You can understand everything, Brina, please be a good girl and do what Mummy says.

BRINA: As long as you don't smack me.

KATARINA: You know I won't.

BRINA: You will. You're only saying ...

The branches sway dangerously.

KATARINA: Be careful, you'll fall!

BRINA: So what!

KATARINA: Then you'll be put in a grave.

A long silence.

KATARINA: You'll be put in a grave, you really will, if you don't get down right away! I'm telling you, you will. And soon as well.

BRINA: Where's God now then?

KATARINA: Asleep, because it's late already.

BRINA: It's still day time though.

KATARINA: It's evening. He goes to bed early.

BRINA: What, because he's so old?

KATARINA: Yes. Now get down or I'll ...! I'll lose my nerves!

BRINA: You already did yesterday. So he can't see me now?

KATARINA: Who?

BRINA: God.

KATARINA: He sees. He can see when he's asleep as well. He can see you're not being good.

BRINA: You're going to go to your grave!

KATARINA: Yes, I am, sooner rather than later because of you.

Brina starts to cry.

BRINA: Not the grave, not the grave! I'm getting down now, aren't I. Mummy. I'm going to fall.

KATARINA: No you won't. Go slowly.

BRINA: I will!

KATARINA: You won't. Watch out, Brina. No!

8.

Today – a few hours ago.

A feeling of unreality.

Brina, barefoot and dressed in the long white dress she wore in Scene one, is standing over her own corpse, which is still lying in a pool of blood next to the armchair, as in Scene four (with the Policeman and the Inspector). She stands there for a long time. She is looking at her corpse very calmly. Slowly she turns and stares upstage, from where a white light shines, illuminating the stage. Music. The light focuses into an increasingly narrow beam; Brina slowly steps into it. She disappears into the distance, leaving her corpse onstage.

9.

Fourteen years ago.

Katarina stumbles onto the stage. She bangs on the door.

KATARINA: Let me out. Do you hear? Unlock it. Brina. Now what are you playing at? Unlock it! Didn't you get enough smacks yesterday, do you want some more?

BRINA *from offstage:* You will. From Daddy! You will, not me.

KATARINA: We both will if we don't behave. So stop messing about, Brina. Do you hear me? I know you're cross with me, but this is wrong, you know. And I'm going to play with you, I've just got to do the cooking first. Granny has to eat on time Brina! Darling, this isn't a joke any more. I'm going to make pancakes for you. Whatever you want, I'll ...! *To herself.* I'll give you a damn good hiding first. *After a pause.* All right, that's the limit! It's enough, open the door! Unlock it and stop playing tricks. Brina, I won't tell you again. Unlock it, because I'm cooking. I'm cooking! Don't you disobey me, or ... Brina, I won't tell you again...! Open it, you bloody little brat! Open it, do you hear me?!

BRINA *from outside:* I'm not listening! Can't you hear I'm not listening!

KATARINA: Oh, I'm going to give you one! No, I'm not going to really. Just open up, Brina. I really have to come through. I know you're cross with me. Open up and we'll talk about it. Open it for me, Brina darling. You mustn't play tricks on me like this. Are you listening? Answer me, are ...?

A child's laughter from the other side.

Brina, don't go away. Do you hear. I'm cooking lunch, it'll all be burned. It'll set on fire. We'll be burned up. The house'll burn down! Brina, Brina! Open up, open up! Open it, Brina, Brina, do you hear, can you even hear me? Bloody little brat! Open it! Little devil. Oh, this can't be happening! Hey, it's all going to go up in flames. At least get away from the stove. And turn it off. Turn it off or it'll ... Granny'll be set on fire. Everything'll ... I'll be suffocated in here. Brina, Brina, where have you gone? Where have you gone to?! This isn't happening. It's not happening! Brina, I know you don't know what you're doing, but this is serious. I really mean it, there'll be a fire! Things are cooking on the stove and if it ..., if it ... Brina, we'll both go to hell. God's looking down at us. I know you're still there. We'll go to hell. Both of us. Except you'll go first because you're wicked, because you're going to burn the house down. That's very wicked, you know. I might die now and you'll never see me again. I will, I'll die and it'll be your fault. But Brina, darling, I don't want you to go to hell. It's terrible there. It smells and it's hot, so hot, like it'll be in here soon.

Silence. The door opens. Smoke starts billowing through it.

BRINA *from outside:* What are you getting worked up about, I was only joking!

10.

Earlier today.

Katarina is in the same position. The smoke remains.

Then the light changes, with music in the background. An atmosphere of unreality, ritual.

Brina enters from the side, wearing the simple long white dress. She looks like an angelic young woman; her movements are soft and gentle, unlike in real life. Katarina looks at her. Brina gives her a relaxed smile. Katarina begins to speak. Slowly. Her voice is different, somewhat distant. Brina does not speak. She does respond to everything, only differently. Katarina's movements are also softer and slower than in real life. The dialogue flowing between them is soft and gentle. There exists a great mutual affection between them.

KATARINA: I left through the roof. Without sadness. Immersed in purest bliss. There are no borders here. An intoxicating radiance behind the horizon. Hovering. A beauty that embraces. Flowing like milk. A spirit. Whitening everything. Trickling, with the scent of indescribable secrets. Magnificence is taking a bow. Infinite. The foam of day. The mercy of God?

A garden of cherry-blossom, apple trees, a garden of pomegranates. All trembling.

There are words that no longer exist. I should be sad. But I am all that has been and that has been fulfilled.

All is mine. All that I've been and that is all I have. Without regret.

Brina takes her by the hand.

No need to know – where to?

They set off together. After a while.

I am. Without regret.

Katarina slowly looks back. Brina follows her. Katarina disappears. Brina remains in the spotlight. As though she were watching Boris.

11.1.

Fourteen years ago.

Boris in pyjamas. He is standing in front of Brina's door. He hesitates for a long time. He exits. After a moment he returns. He comes to a halt and then enters warily. Before shutting the door he looks around to check that he has not been seen.

11.2.

Fourteen years ago. Following on.

Katarina in her nightdress. She goes towards the door, stops and turns. She exits. After a while she reappears with a bottle and a glass in her hands. She sits down in

the armchair. She pours a drink for herself and drinks, all the while looking at the door. After a while she approaches the door. She listens, then opens it and enters.

Brina (18 years old) is sitting under the tree watching them.

KATARINA: We're going to take some medicine, Brina. Just medicine.

Light within.

And you get out! Right now!

Boris comes out, followed by Katarina, who says to Brina:

I'll be right there, darling, wait just a moment.

To Boris, who is about to disappear from the stage.

We've got to discuss this. I'm going to report you if you won't discuss it.

BORIS: Serious words.

KATARINA: It's not the first time, and I won't have it!

BORIS: She was coughing, I was going to the bathroom, she was coughing and I went to see if she wanted a drink of water or something.

KATARINA: Boris, we both know very well. There's no need to ...

BORIS: I don't. Tell me, what ...

KATARINA: I know you've been going in to her for a long time now. I know that ...

BORIS: The child's unwell ...

KATARINA: Yes, but you ...

BORIS: What? Go on, what?!

KATARINA: I know you've been going in to her. That you touch her. I know.

BORIS: Well you ...

KATARINA: Yes, but you're a man.

BORIS: Yes, and her father. And ...

KATARINA: You shouldn't do that.

BORIS: What? I don't get it.

KATARINA: Don't act like an idiot. I know you've ...

BORIS: Are you trying to say I ...? You're suggesting that ...

KATARINA: I know!

BORIS: You're mad. This is really ...!

KATARINA: I'm going to divorce you. I'll find a job and ...

BORIS: Please do! Suits me.

KATARINA: I'll be taking Brina with me.

BORIS: Oh no you won't!

KATARINA: I won't allow you to, to ... take advantage of her!

BORIS: How? Where this coming from? Where's your proof? You know I could have you prosecuted for ...

KATARINA: And I could you.

BORIS: No, this is really crazy, my own wife ...

KATARINA: I've been watching you for several months now.

The door shuts with a bang.

BORIS: The child's trying to sleep!

KATARINA: I don't know if she ever sleeps. That's probably why her health's so poor. Recently.

BORIS *more quietly:* Recently? *Then forcefully.* You're going to regret this forever!

Boris grabs hold of Katarina so that she is unable to defend herself. He covers her mouth and drags her into the next room. Katarina kicks out, but Boris is much stronger than her.

You're going to report me?! You get pissed every night, you bloody ...! And now you're going to report me? Do you think anyone'll believe you? No-one. Ever! Just look at yourself. Look what you look like. You stink. That's why I can't do it with you any more. Is this what we agreed? Look what you've done to yourself. I take care of everything, pay for it all. But you ...! You'll leave all right, but on your own! And I'm not giving you a penny. The child's staying with me. You can't even look after yourself any more. That's the truth. It soon will be. It's obvious to everybody that ...! You haven't got a hope. No-one's going to ask themselves ... You bloody bitch!

They disappear into the kitchen. Silence. Then the door slowly opens. We see only the silhouette of a child wearing a nightdress.

BRINA: Mummy, are you coming? Mummy?

12.

The sound of bells. Church bells ring loudly and prolonged.

13.1

Four years ago.

The reception room at the police station. The bells stop ringing. The Police Inspector, now in uniform, paces nervously up and down. The Vicar is sitting in an armchair. Brina is standing in the background, turning a packet of cigarettes over in her hands.

INSPECTOR: Well, now you've seen how it sounds in here.

VICAR: Lovely, lovely.

INSPECTOR: Lovely? I'm sorry Reverend, but sometimes it feels like my ear drums are going to burst. You saw how we had to stop talking, didn't you. We had to wait for the ringing to stop. And it's like that at least five times a day.

VICAR: Oh, we're all oversensitive to something. Me to this, you to that, the young lady to ...

BRINA: To crap weed.

VICAR: Pardon? Yes. But you see the lord above receives all that, because, how can I put it – he understands. He understands everything. Lovely, lovely.

INSPECTOR: It's not lovely! We're not in a church here, this is a police station. We have to work here, not ...

VICAR: Are you suggesting, Superintendent, that we don't work? Come on. God has assigned us all different tasks in life, different duties. This to me, that to you. And we all strive to perform them according to our best conscience. To the best of our ability in fact, isn't that right Miss?

BRINA: Fuck off.

INSPECTOR: Now now, girl.

VICAR: What's she doing here, if I might ask?

BRINA: I stabbed my father to death. First my mother, though, and my grandmother, I roasted my grandmother as well – *She laughs.*

INSPECTOR: Drugs.

BRINA: What do you mean, drugs? I only nicked some condoms! *To the Vicar.* Do you need any?

VICAR *more quietly:* So what are you going to do with her now? What do you normally do with that sort?

BRINA: They stick a pole up our arses. Do you want to help then?

INSPECTOR: One more mouthful like that and I really will. *To the Vicar.* I have to stop her somehow.

VICAR: I understand, although you might try speaking to her nicely first before you ...

INSPECTOR: Don't talk morality to me, we all know yours is pretty threadbare.

VICAR: Well, this really is too much, you know.

BRINA: Blah, blah, blah.

They both shoot her a cursory glance.

INSPECTOR: I didn't mean anything by it, but ... couldn't you please just let me get a word in edgeways?

VICAR: You're talking all the time, aren't you?!

BRINA: Blah-blah, blah-blah, blah-blah. Blah-

INSPECTOR *to Brina:* It won't be just a pole, you'll be getting something else as well! *To the Vicar.* I mean, I didn't say you don't do any work, but nonetheless ..., I mean, this really isn't important.

VICAR: Oh, but it's very important indeed. It's all important.

INSPECTOR: Yes, but right now it's only the decibels that are important!

VICAR: Decibels?

BRINA: Deci-bels.

INSPECTOR: Yes, decibels!

BRINA: 'The bells of hell go ding-a-ling-ling.'

INSPECTOR *to Brina:* I'll lock you up! *To the Vicar.* People are perfectly entitled to complain, we'll all be deaf soon. I've got hundreds of complaints in the files. You know full well I've been passing them on to you. But you don't do anything about it. You behave as if the problem didn't exist, as if everything was just fine and how it should be. I reckon you just threw them into your waste paper basket!

BRINA: Oh, you shit!

VICAR: If you're not going to get rid of her, I will! And just so you know, every single request or as you like to call it – complaint, has been dealt with and ...

INSPECTOR: Well, and? That's the bit I'm interested in ...!

VICAR: We discovered, however, that one after another was unfounded, because ...

INSPECTOR: Because, because?

VICAR: Because, as you yourself well know, we are in compliance with the regulations. Each of our bells rings in compliance with the law, Inspector. It's a pity I should be the one to have to tell you this. Nevertheless, I will accept an apology, even though a man in your position should be aware of the laws of this country and not be bothering us unnecessarily.

Brina quietly sings - ding – dong, dances and takes off her t-shirt. The Vicar is so wrapped up in himself that he doesn't notice her, and for the moment the Inspector isn't bothered by what he sees.

If you were even a little bit cultured, you would also know that bells are actually music. Church music. To cite an analogy you might perhaps understand, the ringing of bells is like the music of angels. We ring them at certain times of the day and on specific occasions, at a funeral say. God has commanded us to help a person's soul on its way ...

Brina steps in front of the Vicar.

BRINA: To hell! But first we finger it, pry around in it. We bruise it, oppress and trample on it. And then we're shocked because our little soul isn't lovely any more. So young and already so corrupted! Huh!

VICAR: You're from the devil, you are!

BRINA: But Granny told me we're all from God.

VICAR: You're too young to be able to understand.

BRINA: But when I'm old I won't exist any more. Now what?

INSPECTOR: Now get your clothes on, get dressed nicely. Get dressed, girl.

13.2

Four years ago. The same place, but somewhat later.

The vicar is sitting in the armchair. Brina is bending over him, holding out an unlit cigarette under his nose.

BRINA: Let's see if you've got any fire.

VICAR: Where?

BRINA: Aren't you going to show it to me?

The vicar grins lasciviously.

VICAR: You're not the least bit ashamed, are you?

BRINA: You should be.

VICAR: Because I saw you naked?

BRINA: You haven't seen me yet.

VICAR: You're all mixed up. Come to church sometime.

BRINA: I don't like it.

VICAR: Come and I'll teach you a thing or two. I'll explain Christ's suffering to you.

BRINA: It's you that's corrupt, not me.

VICAR: You don't talk to me like that.

The Policeman enters in uniform, followed by Katarina, who is obviously drunk.

POLICEMAN to Katarina: Wait here Ma'am, I'll be right back.

Katarina mumbles something. Brina follows the policeman.

Where are you off to?

BRINA: The toilet.

POLICEMAN: Wait, I'll have to ask the Inspector.

KATARINA: Don't bother, she's running away from me.

POLICEMAN: Do you know each other?

KATARINA: I know her, but she obviously doesn't me any more.

VICAR: Well, that's nice.

Katarina goes over to the Vicar.

KATARINA: What crime have you committed?

The Policeman laughs.

POLICEMAN: Sorry.

KATARINA: Women get priority. Unless you put me on your lap.

The Vicar quickly gets up.

Thank you, you're very kind.

Katarina sits down.

POLICEMAN: The Inspector won't be long. *To the Vicar.* Would you like to wait for him somewhere else?

VICAR: No, it's really interesting here.

The Policeman exits. Silence.

KATARINA: Well now I feel at home. I've actually got exactly the same armchair at home. In fact, it's the only one her father (*pointing at Brina*) my ex would let me take from the house.

BRINA: I don't know what she's talking about.

KATARINA: He's a real bastard.

VICAR: You mustn't talk like that.

KATARINA: A political one. You definitely know him. He's always on tele.

BRINA: Stop it!

KATARINA: I'd offer you something to drink, but ...

VICAR: You're not at home.

KATARINA: No, although – *Laughs.* It feels like it. No, I know, it's only because of the armchair. *To Brina, very loudly.* I know you're not pleased to see me, but I am you, my girl. It's been ages since I've seen you, I've looked everywhere for you. You're very good at hiding. *To the Vicar.* But everything was different once, when she was still a little girl, so pretty, a tiny little thing, ringlets she had, oh yes, she was

so sweet and nice, she used to pick apple blossom just for me. She only picked them ...

BRINA: To throw at your head.

KATARINA: You see, now just look. You can see how she's turned out.

VICAR: I wouldn't wonder if I were you, madam.

KATARINA: I don't though. What's there to wonder about? Is there any point in wondering? What could be different? Nothing. The same old shit. There's shit in the best of families. Especially these days. We're all ashamed of each other now. Parents of their children, children of their parents. It's completely normal now. But you're bound to have some good advice on the subject, aren't you, Reverend? I don't mean in general. Personally, I'm only interested personally.

VICAR: I'd suggest a good confession for a start.

KATARINA: Yes, it's been a long time since I've been to confession. It's about time my soul got a bit of stocktaking. *Laughs.* Yes, maybe that would help! Is it a sin if ...

VICAR: It is, but God will forgive you for his benevolence is great. Nonetheless you do have to repent first.

KATARINA: What should I repent of? I've done everything in my life all wrong, even though I always wanted only the best. Really though. But it didn't work out. As though the devil always had his finger in it. Some people (*she looks at Brina*), some people are born unlucky, what can you do.

BRINA: For fuck's sake, shut up! I'm going to be sick.

VICAR: Not here though, go to the ..., anyway, you know.

KATARINA: It's just an expression. I might be too ...

VICAR: You won't though.

KATARINA: Not right now, although ...

The Inspector enters, bringing with him some kind of instrument for measuring.

VICAR: Just in time! These ladies here are feeling sick.

INSPECTOR: Good. That you waited. Now we're going to investigate together by how many decibels you're infringing ... We'll wait a couple of minutes more. *To Katarina.* Are you really feeling bad?

KATARINA: Bad, it's very bad, and it's not going to get any better. But what can we do, it's just the way it is.

INSPECTOR: You'll sober up nicely overnight, and tomorrow you can go home.

KATARINA: But I'm not drunk at all.

INSPECTOR: No. *To Brina.* Aren't you going to tell us anything else? Are you still being so stubborn?

BRINA: No.

INSPECTOR: What if we've discovered that ...

VICAR: Astonishing, isn't it? That these ladies are in fact related. This is in fact her daughter.

BRINA and KATARINA (*almost simultaneously*): No! Oh, you bastard!

INSPECTOR: Is that right? Well, this is excellent. That I did not know. Interesting.

BRINA: I'm not! This is the first time I've ever laid eyes on her.

KATARINA: And me her. I swear! *To the Vicar.* To think I trusted you. Why do all the jocks always double-cross me? Every one of them I trust double-crosses me in the end. Bloody fucking jocks! There's your sin. A sin crying out to heaven. And that you've got nothing to drink here! Come on Mr Inspector, I bet you've got something, you must have, or you couldn't put up with this shit day in day out.

INSPECTOR: Keep your voice down, Ma'am.

KATARINA (*to Brina*): Have you at least got a fag-end?

BRINA (*to Katarina*): For fuck's sake, shut up for once!

INSPECTOR (*to Brina*): So you really are her daughter then? I'm glad. I'm glad your mummy's not dead yet.

KATARINA (*to Brina*): Oh, you little bitch! I'm not dead yet! But I will be soon. Very soon. Just a few hundred more litres to go, and I'm there! And I'll go to my grave. My grave, darling.

Brina pounces on Katarina, knocking her to the floor. The Inspector jumps between them. He holds onto Brina.

INSPECTOR: Calm down, girl, calm down.

BRINA: I'll kill her, one day I really will!

Brina weeps as she is held by the Inspector.

KATARINA: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, darling. I won't any more. I'll give it up tomorrow, I'll really give it up.

VICAR: You should have a long time ago, Madam. Well, you shouldn't have started.

The Policeman enters, astonished.

INSPECTOR (to the Policeman): Take her away. She can lie down in my room. Everything's going to be all right, my dear, calm down.

KATARINA: I'm sorry, Brina, I'm sorry.

INSPECTOR: You calm down too, Madam.

The Policeman takes Brina away. Silence. After a while.

INSPECTOR (to Katarina): You've got a bit of explaining to do now, Madam. We've called her father actually.

KATARINA: My ex.

INSPECTOR: He says he's been looking for her for a week now. Apparently she's run away. But the gentleman's abroad at the moment. He won't be back for two days. The girl's fourteen years old. Somebody has to look after her! Why isn't the girl staying with you in the meantime, if you are indeed her mother?

KATARINA: Because the court gave him custody! She's only allowed to visit me. Once a month. And not more, which is hopeless, but ... Apart from that Brina doesn't want to be with him at all, because ... In fact she shouldn't be with him either, because he ...

INSPECTOR: Nor with you, if I've understood it correctly.

VICAR: So then, she must be put into some good institution or other!

KATARINA: Yes. I don't know. Something anyway that would be best for the child. Because he's literally, she's being literally ... Anyway you know what.

The sound of bells. Everyone tries to shout over them.

INSPECTOR to Katarina: I can't hear you! To the Vicar. Now can you see what goes on here?

VICAR: Hell. Pure hell.

14.

Earlier today.

A murky light. Music. The bells are fading away in the background. Brina is wearing the white dress, Katarina is standing next to her, looking at her lovingly. When she speaks, her voice has changed, is distant. Everything gives us the impression of an unreal space.

KATARINA: Dreams are also God's work. But I'm not dreaming. I'm walking hurriedly through time. I can't describe it.

You don't need to. You know. Do you already know it all? How far are we going? You with me, how far?

How gentle everything is. The river. Like a soft valley of tears. Like warm summer rain. Leaves from close by. The intoxicating fragrance of a meadow, tall grass, flowers, undiscovered plains, stretching out. An ostentation of time.

Memories don't meet. Go. Keep the light and don't look back – there's no longer any need for me to say this.

I have all that I was, and that's all that I have. Yearning is past. Only thought responds. Without regret.

Brina gestures gently to her that they must be on their way.

There are souls everywhere. Across the bridge? I can't get across. When you step on it, does the path extend?

Oh, my happy soul. All has been written.

Slowly they disappear into the distance.

15.1

Fourteen years ago.

Boris is sitting in the armchair. He is holding a sheet of paper and a pencil. He repeats loudly and almost by heart what he has written on the sheet of paper. He also makes corrections from time to time. He is trying to sound convincing, to find the right tone and expression. He is working with a fair amount of affectation.

Brina's legs are dangling from the tree.

BORIS: Yes, I understand you completely, but do try to understand me too. I would really not like my daughter to grow up in an environment that is unsuitable for her. A child has to be taken care of, and that care should be of the highest possible quality. The child should be provided with everything it needs for a carefree and happy life. For this resources are needed above all else. And someone incapable even of earning their own living shouldn't be burdened with the responsibility of another person. I would of course provide financial support for the child in any event. However,

mentally stimulating activity and intellectual development are also important for the little darling, and I am entirely capable of providing these. Besides this, I also love her immensely. This is why I cannot allow her to be taken away from me! I won't allow you to take something from me that belongs naturally to me! I will not allow it! *He stops.* No, it's not right.

He begins again.

Dear Right Honourable Judges, I actually do not know how to begin. Nonetheless, I acknowledge that it would seem to me to be almost inadmissible that your decisions should be based merely on the grounds of some generally enforced laws which, however, if they are examined in detail, have no evident foundation in reality. I would myself prefer, and with good reason, or rather would have nothing against it, should my daughter live primarily with her mother from now on. But although I would wish this, I simply must not allow it, namely on the grounds that I will submit to you in more detail in the following; although you are to a certain extent, I am sure, already familiar with these. In order for you to believe me, I have to go back in time, in the hope that none of you will find this tiresome. My wife and I met when she was still very young. She wasn't even fifteen yet. I was almost twice her age. Love really doesn't take age into account. She was a really wonderful girl and I was only too happy to believe she was older. We had to be discreet for quite a few years, but perhaps this made it seem even better. Until, until I married her. I am an aesthete by nature, but she suddenly began to change, I don't know why, but she wasn't the same any more. She somehow became more and more depressed, pale, grey, as if she had somehow turned in on herself. Especially after giving birth. I sent her to the doctor, but ... She had changed too much, and suddenly you can't carry on. But after that our daughter grew and blossomed. She was the most beautiful little girl. Attractive, obliging and rather more like her mother. So slim and delicate, soft, tiny, she would gaze at me with such innocence, when, when ... *As if answering a question.* No, no, I'm talking about how I remember my ex-wife now. Yes, the one who's indicting me here today. I did love her once in fact.

He begins again.

I absolutely agree that the child's well-being must come first. I also understand that my daughter would want to stay with her mother, or rather with my ex. However, at the same time I feel certain you will not allow this. My daughter doesn't yet realise, she is still too young to know. What can a four year old child know anyway. Not enough to be able to say anything. Brina is my daughter and believe me, I would never do her any harm. Sometimes I caress her, give her a kiss, and I've never noticed that she didn't like it. Quite the contrary, she presses up against me normally, as a child would their father. But anyway I don't do anything like that to her. Sometimes when I look at her, I'm reminded of my wife, but that's normal. It's also normal that all children seem the most beautiful to their parents. We're also proud of our children because they're ours. Your child is the only thing that's really yours. Especially when they're little, when they're the most dependent on you. If you have children yourselves, then you'll know what I'm talking about. When you first take it into your arms, you feel it's breath, its skin, when you feel how it clings to you, how it follows every move, every word, how they surrender themselves to you with all their heart,

with the whole of their little body, when you know that they belong to you, that ..., then ..., then you ... No. I haven't got lost. And all this is normal.

BRINA *off*: I like eating red cherries, black ones even more ...

He tries again for the last time.

BORIS: I will try to be brief, however I would ask you to grant me your attention and listen to what I have to say. My daughter's life is dependent on ...

BRINA: I like to go to school as well, more and more each year, make way for us here ...

15.2

Fourteen years ago and now.

Everything remains as it was. Boris is in the armchair with some sheets of paper. Brina—as a child up a tree upstage. Brina-grown up enters from the kitchen and stops next to Boris, who does not look round. She then moves away to the front door and takes hold of the doorknob. She looks round in the direction of the tree, from which can be heard:

BRINA: Where are you going? Can you hear me? You have to stay here. With me! You're not going anywhere!

Brina exits, leaving the flat.

BORIS: What are you shouting about?

BRINA: Nothing.

BORIS: Who are you yelling at?

BRINA: Her!

BORIS: There's no-one here though.

BRINA: 'Cos she left.

BORIS: Who? Nobody is here.

BRINA: She is. You are not.

16.1

Today – a few hours ago.

KATARINA *calling from the next room:* Come and help me. Brina? We'll set up the table. Brina?

Katarina enters. She is surprised that Brina isn't there. She starts to pull the table out onto the stage herself. She suddenly remembers, exclaiming. She laughs.

You'd better have found a good hiding place, because I'm coming to find you, coming!

She runs off the stage. She soon returns.

Where have you got to, then? You're not little any more after all. Brina! I'm going to find you though, hide yourself even better or Mummy will find you straight away. I will, right now! I'm going to find your hiding place too soon. I know where you are anyway. I know. Look out, I'm coming, I'm coming.

Katarina runs off the stage. She soon returns again.

Where are you then? Brina, it's no longer a joke! Brina? If you can hear me, come on out. Though I don't know where else you could be hiding.

She goes over to the front door. She opens it, looks outside and calls out.

Brina?

She shuts the door. She wanders sadly over to a chair.

16.2

Today – a few hours ago.

Katarina is sitting in the armchair. Next to her is a bottle which is practically empty. Silence. The front door opens. Brina enters slowly. She remains by the door. She looks at her mother, who does not turn round. Katarina hides the bottle; during the following, she tries hard to hide her drunken state. Brina tries not to appear to notice it too much. Although she is not acting that sober herself.

BRINA *after a while:* Sorry.

KATARINA: It's O.K. You were only gone for an hour, after all.

BRINA: Half.

KATARINA: I suppose you needed a fix.

BRINA: No, I didn't.

KATARINA: I find that hard to believe.

BRINA: You don't have to. What's the table doing in here?

KATARINA: I thought we'd both prefer to eat in here.

BRINA: Let's go for it.

KATARINA: What, eat?

BRINA: Yes, I'm starving.

KATARINA: Really?

They place the table in the centre of the room in silence.

BRINA: It is nicer in here.

KATARINA: The dinner's cold. First I burned it, and now it's cold as well.

BRINA: Warm it up then. So what have you made?

KATARINA: You'll see. Set the table.

Katarina exits. Brina follows. She comes back with a tablecloth.

BRINA: And I'll put some music on.

KATARINA: O.K.

BRINA *to herself:* The silence is deadly.

Katarina returns. Then they go in and out for a while.

KATARINA: What did you say?

BRINA: Nothing.

KATARINA: You never tell me anything about school. You do go to school now?

BRINA: Yes.

KATARINA: So what's it like?

BRINA: Boring, what else. You're not working yet then?

KATARINA: Not yet, I did find something but ...

BRINA: It's no good.

KATARINA: No.

Katarina quickly exits.

BRINA: Where do you keep ...? *To herself.* So you haven't got a radio any more either?

Brina catches sight of the bottle. She puts it on the table. The bottle is almost empty. Katarina enters with the food. She notices the bottle, but acts as though there is nothing wrong. She puts the food onto the table.

KATARINA: I don't really know if you'll like it.

BRINA: Dumplings?

KATARINA: No, it's Chinese today.

BRINA *with uncertainty:* Brilliant!

KATARINA: I don't know, it's the first time I've ... So have you got any school friends again now?

BRINA: Yes.

KATARINA: And?

BRINA: Nothing. It's O.K.

They eat in silence. After a while.

KATARINA: Lovely music.

BRINA: Music?

KATARINA: Like some kind of bells. It is bells, isn't it?

BRINA: There isn't any music.

KATARINA: I thought you'd brought some.

BRINA: No.

KATARINA *laughs:* Oh, then my ears must be ringing again.

BRINA: Yes.

KATARINA: You get all kinds of things as you get older.

After a while.

BRINA: Why don't you make more of an effort?

KATARINA: It wasn't me who drank that.

BRINA: No, I'm not talking about that. I mean work. If you tried a bit harder, you'd be bound to get something.

KATARINA: Don't you think you should be concentrating on sorting yourself out?!

BRINA: We're having a chat. You asked me about school, and I ...

KATARINA: Yes, but I'm your mother and you're ... you can't teach me what to do, what I can and can't do.

BRINA: I'm not trying to teach you! I just wish you'd stop drinking.

KATARINA: I don't drink any more though!

BRINA: What you mean you don't? So who's ...?

Brina shows her the bottle on the table.

KATARINA: Poured it away, yes, I'd like to know as well. Who poured this away?

BRINA: Poured it away? You drank it!

KATARINA: I'm sorry, but I'm still perfectly aware of what I'm doing. Although everyone's trying, you're all trying to convince me I'm ...

BRINA: No, now you're trying to prove to me that it's me who poured this shit away so I could accuse you of ... Hello!?

KATARINA: Let's just leave it. Better not talk about it any more. Want any more rice? The vegetables are really good, aren't they?

BRINA: No, I want to clear this up!

KATARINA: Stop it. You can't. Leave it alone, just leave it.

BRINA: No, I've got to ...

KATARINA: You can't clear anything up in life, darling. You can't ...

BRINA: Speak for yourself!

KATARINA: I am though. Who do you think I'm talking about?

BRINA: So you admit you made a mistake then, that it wasn't me who poured out that bottle or drank it but it ...

KATARINA: You brought it, didn't you?

BRINA: Yes, but full.

KATARINA: Yes, I think it was full. I think, I remember it was, but it might not have been.

BRINA: It was, it was me who bought it!

KATARINA: Quieten down, there's no need to shout like that, is there. Those neighbours of mine are just waiting for someone to raise their voice. You have to practically whisper here.

BRINA: Mum, I thought you'd really stopped drinking!

KATARINA: I have stopped though. Of course I've stopped. Don't worry darling, I won't be doing that any more, never again. You can be sure of that.

BRINA: So who was it drank this then?

KATARINA: Well, I don't know. I thought you'd poured it away.

BRINA: So I poured it away, so I could accuse you of having drunk it, even though you hadn't.

KATARINA: Oh, no, that's not what I said. That's way too complicated for me.

BRINA: So you tell me then.

KATARINA: What?

BRINA: What I asked you.

KATARINA: What again?

BRINA: That ... see, now I don't know either.

KATARINA: There you are, there's no point. It's pointless. What's important is that we get on with each other. And that you're not doing drugs any more, that's even more important. It's really important.

Silence.

BRINA: Yes. But I never did it for real. Not properly ..., I mean ... You know what I mean, don't you? When you're ..., anyway, you get it.

KATARINA: Yes. And yes, this is important. But the most important thing of all is that you're attending school, you're ... Isn't it? You're going to school, yes, oh yes, this is definitely the most important thing.

BRINA: Yes, I do go. I go and I've got school-friends. I've got great school-friends. I have.

KATARINA: There you are, it's important, it really is important. Isn't it? It is.

BRINA: It is.

A long silence.

KATARINA: Take some more meat why don't you.

BRINA: Thanks.

A long silence. They both chase their food around their plates. The whole time Katarina gazes lovingly at the bottle. She mentions as if incidentally:

KATARINA: So you won't worry. I poured that wine away. I've remembered now. You said to pour it away, didn't you, if ... But I didn't quite finish, because that's when you arrived. So, I'll do it now. I'll finish it off this time. I mean ... pour it away.

She is about to pick up the bottle when Brina stops her.

BRINA: No, no, just leave it here. It's not bothering me at all.

KATARINA: No, well I didn't think it was bothering you, but ...

BRINA: I might just drink it.

KATARINA: Oh no, not you. You mustn't, you're still a child!

BRINA: When did you start, then? Go on, how old were you? Can you even remember?

Katarina stares somewhere off into space.

KATARINA: There is music though. Listen, it's really lovely.

BRINA: There isn't.

KATARINA: There is.

BRINA: You're going crazy.

17.

Twenty years ago and today – unreal.

Boris enters from outside. Still in his coat, he goes over to the table. He looks towards the kitchen. He does not notice Brina, who is sitting behind the table, stuffing herself with cherries, so that their juice runs down her chin. When Katarina enters later, she also does not notice Brina. Brina, on the contrary, listens very carefully as she eats.

BORIS: Katarina? Sorry, I couldn't phone.

Silence.

What's up? What are you doing?

Katarina enters with her coat on.

BORIS: I did tell you I'd be gone for a while. Were you looking for me again?

KATARINA: No.

BORIS: So why have you got your coat on?

KATARINA: I don't know.

BORIS: Are you feeling unwell?

KATARINA: No.

Boris sits down in the armchair.

BORIS: Come here.

Katarina stops next to the table.

BORIS *after a while:* You must say something, Katarina. Otherwise I won't know what's wrong.

Katarina merely shrugs her shoulders.

I don't know how to help you either, if I don't know ...

KATARINA *after a while:* I'm sad.

BORIS: And? *After a while.* Why, I mean?

KATARINA: I don't know. *After a while.* Because of everything.

BORIS: You're going to have to be a bit more exact.

KATARINA *pointing at her chest*: It hurts here.

BORIS: Why's that? There must be a reason.

KATARINA: I don't know.

BORIS: Think about it, I'll go get us a drink.

Boris disappears into the kitchen.

KATARINA: Think about it. You.

Boris comes back with a bottle and two glasses.

BORIS: I've told you there's no need to cook me goodness knows what kind of lunch, or dinner rather. Well you burned it anyway. Never mind, don't think that ... No. I'm not at all surprised, after all, you've got nowhere to cook. You haven't even got a proper stove. Have you done any studying today?

KATARINA: No.

BORIS: Do you ever intend to graduate?

KATARINA: Yes.

BORIS: When?

KATARINA: I don't know.

BORIS: You're not much fun are you.

KATARINA: No.

BORIS: But you've got to do something. *After a pause.* I've thought it over. We'll move to my mother's. It's a huge house and it's got a garden. It's cramped here for the two of us. I know you think she doesn't like you. But it's not true. She really likes you. And she won't be alone any more. What do you think, Katarina?

KATARINA: That you've thought it over.

18.1

Today – a few hours ago.

Brina is clearing the table. Katarina is watching her.

KATARINA: Where did you ...? Don't you know how to eat properly yet?

BRINA: What?

KATARINA *throwing her a cloth:* Here you are, wipe your mouth.

Brina wipes her mouth with her hand first. She discovers that it is red.

BRINA: How on earth ...

KATARINA: God knows.

BRINA *after a while:* Shall I tell you what I dreamed?

KATARINA: If you really have to.

BRINA: I do. I was a beautiful woman. I had a ladies' maid. I gave birth to a child and carried it out into the sunshine. The house was on a little hill, as if on an island in the middle of a lake. Dad was sitting on the roof laughing, it didn't bother me. Everything was lovely. I was so very happy. Two incredibly beautiful horses came out of the lake. I held my child out in front of me. She opened her jaws and grabbed it. She kept doing it. I was giving birth to children and she ate them, one after another. Her – the mare.

KATARINA: Maybe it was a he – a stallion?

BRINA: No. Then I got angry. I couldn't give birth any more. I shut myself in the house and took out a gun, it was a big weapon. The horses kept on coming. I shot them one after another. Interesting, wasn't it?

KATARINA: And who was the father of your children?

BRINA: Dad was riding the roof and laughing.

KATARINA: I know. I asked you who the father was? Have you taken anything, Brina?

BRINA: No.

KATARINA: You have.

BRINA: Better ask yourself that.

KATARINA: Where were you before this?

BRINA: I felt like going away. Then I came back.

KATARINA: I'm glad you came.

BRINA *with uncertainty:* Me too.

KATARINA: Put the dress on, so I can see if it suits you.

BRINA: No.

KATARINA: I'd so love to see you in it.

BRINA: You're a nuisance, you know that?

Katarina is already opening up the package and taking out the dress. Brina puts it on.

KATARINA: Yes. You're beautiful. You're really beautiful, you know that?

BRINA: And you're like a ladies' maid.

KATARINA: What?

BRINA: I think I was wearing a dress just like this in my dreams. Exactly like this.

KATARINA: O.K., I've seen you in it now. You can take it off.

BRINA: No, it's not bad at all. I really like it.

KATARINA: That's good, but take it off anyway.

Brina twirls around in her long white muslin dress.

BRINA: Do you ever get the urge to go away and never come back?

KATARINA: No. I'm going to get you something else for your birthday instead. I'm sorry.

Katarina pulls at her dress.

BRINA: Let go, will you. They're only dreams anyway. It's interesting though, when you get down to it. Well, I feel like such a lady. Really grown up.

KATARINA: You're still a child, Brina. Take this off please. Take the dress off if I tell you to!

BRINA *laughing*: Mummy, mummy. Was I ever a child to you?

KATARINA: You're high on drugs!

BRINA: I'm not!

KATARINA: You are!

Brina stands still.

BRINA: I'm not! But you are. You're drunk again.

Katarina slaps her on the cheek. A pause.

BRINA: I have to go.

KATARINA: No, wait. Wait, I said!

BRINA: Do you want to get on my nerves some more?

KATARINA: No. Just ... sit down a bit longer.

BRINA: I promised Dad I wouldn't stay too long.

KATARINA: So you've turned into a good girl now?

BRINA: Don't take the piss!

After a while.

KATARINA: What's the latest one like?

BRINA: That bothers you?! You should have asked straight away, not ... About my age. Now are you satisfied?

KATARINA: No, I only hope you've been left in peace now.

BRINA: I don't know what you mean.

KATARINA: Because you don't want to. Shall we change the subject?

BRINA: I don't know what you mean!

KATARINA: You can stay here for the night.

BRINA: No.

KATARINA: Call him and tell him, that ...

BRINA: No! Was there anything else? *After a pause.* What do you want?

KATARINA: I don't know, I know I did everything wrong, but ..., but I'm so happy you're all right. You are all right, aren't you?

BRINA: Yes. I am. I'm all right. Very all right.

KATARINA: What about those dreams?

BRINA: Oh, just dreams.

KATARINA: Brina?

BRINA: Yes, what is it? Just tell me!

KATARINA: It's difficult.

BRINA: Don't then.

Silence.

KATARINA: Does he still come into your room?

BRINA: Who?

KATARINA: Dad. Does he still come at night ...

BRINA: What? Where did you get that from?

KATARINA: I know.

BRINA: Sometimes he comes and puts the covers over me, yes.

KATARINA: And touches you.

BRINA: What are you talking about?! And where did you get that from?

KATARINA: I know. Why haven't you got a boyfriend then?

BRINA: What's it to do with you! I did have one, and now I don't any more. But it's nothing to do with you! And stop getting on my nerves!

KATARINA: It's important to talk about these things. I mean, you're going to have to talk openly about it sooner or later.

BRINA: I don't know what about, but today's my birthday, in case you'd forgotten.

KATARINA: Sorry, yes, perhaps today really isn't the best time.

BRINA: No, it isn't! And anyway, I've no idea what you're talking about. But I don't like it. I know that much! Dad, I mean ..., he's my father and you can't talk about him like that. You mustn't! Because he's my father! Get it! My ...! I know you don't like him, I mean, I know you hate each other, but ... What am I supposed to do about that? What am I supposed to do with all the shit that's been coming from the two of you since ... That you've been sticking on me my whole life? Do you dare say that to him, what you've just dumped on me, that he ..., I mean, that he – fucks me!?

Laughs. Is that what you want to say? Can you imagine what it is you're saying? No, it's better if I tell myself you're so drunk you don't have a clue.

KATARINA: Of course I know, and how. I can't forget it for a moment! Even if I'm drunk I can't. I have to be really plastered to ... But at the moment I've got such a

grip on myself, that's how I know what I'm saying, and don't tell me I don't know what I do know!

BRINA: Right. Then you must be mad. No, because this is really, this is ...

KATARINA: What?!

BRINA: Mad! This is mad.

KATARINA: I know he ..., when you were little, he ... I tried to prevent it, but it didn't work.

BRINA: But you should have turned him in, not be bothering me with it here! Why didn't you report him?

KATARINA: Because he would have destroyed me!

BRINA: But me he could?!

KATARINA *weeping:* No, no. I'm sorry, Brina, I'll explain it all.

BRINA: I mean, not that he did, but he could have! And you wouldn't have cared less!

KATARINA: No, wait.

BRINA: Yes, you didn't care, although you would never have allowed it. But you did. You allowed it!

KATARINA: I didn't, I didn't. I fought it the whole time. I'm sorry.

BRINA: Come on, shut that gob of yours once and for all!

Brina picks up a knife from the table.

KATARINA: Put that down. I want to explain it all to you. You mustn't. Listen, no.

BRINA: You bitch. You knew! All those years you were looking at me and you knew all the time! And now you're going to make out you're innocent. You were shitting yourself with fear, and you used to hit me, hit me hard, instead of helping me.

KATARINA: Yes. But ... I'm sorry, forgive me, Brina. I ..., put that knife down. Sit down. Sit down and let's talk it over nice and calmly ...

BRINA: You fucking shit, you rotten bitch, you couldn't have cared less and now you're in sackcloth and ashes!

KATARINA: You don't know everything that went on. Come on, so you ... You mustn't hurt your own ...

Katarina backs away from her.

BRINA: I hate you. Do you realise how much I hate you?

KATARINA: No, no. Please.

BRINA: With all my heart. Both of you. You can both fuck yourselves, but leave me in peace once and for all. I don't need either of you. I don't. I don't need anyone.

KATARINA: No! Brina I'm sorry. Brina, my –

Brina stabs Katarina in the chest.

BRINA: You let him screw me and now you even dare to talk about it.

Brina does not stop stabbing.

BRINA: You traitor! You bloody fucked up traitor! Lousy cunt! You should at least keep quiet, you bitch! You could at least keep quiet. Well now you're going to. Now you're going to. Quiet! You'll be quiet.

Katarina slides to the floor.

Get up, you fucking cunt! So now you want to shit on me here? Don't you get it, I've never had a single minute of normality in my whole life? One fucking hour of peace? Do you get it? Do you get it, you cunt, I never was a child at all. Fuck it, to have to let him thrust it onto me, shove it into me! And not knowing if anyone knew or not! I didn't know you knew. Why didn't you help me? You should have helped me! Do you get it, you lousy cunt, do you get it, I've always been alone. Do you realise that?!

Brina bends over her mother. She touches her, embraces her. Katarina's body is limp. She is bleeding.

Don't die on me. Please. God.

Silence.

18.2

Today – after the above.

Brina drags her mother's body into the kitchen. Then she clears the table. The bottle falls. Brina drags away the table, comes back and picks up some of the pieces. She stands still. She looks round. Brina's legs are dangling from the tree upstage.

18.3

Today – after the above.

A feeling of unreality. A beam of light. Katarina follows it, her back towards the audience. Music.

Brina sits down on the floor amongst the shards of glass and cuts herself with a piece right above her wrist. Blood flows. The same with the other arm. Brina's legs are dangling in the background. The child Brina sings:

BRINA: Make way for us here
For our young ladies
So the sun can shine
On our young little hearts.

The downstage Brina completes the verse.

BRINA: You are pretty,
But you are the prettiest.

Katarina's silhouette disappears.

19.

Today – somewhat earlier.

Brina's corpse is lying on the floor, as in scenes 7 and 8.2. The Inspector is taking photographs of it. The Policeman is taking fingerprints from the objects in the room. They are both wearing gloves.

Upstage the branches of the tree are swaying. Leaves fall. Blossoms fall with them.

POLICEMAN: Aren't you sick of looking at that yet?

INSPECTOR: Maybe we get sick of life before we get sick of death.

POLICEMAN: Because we don't know anything about it?

INSPECTOR: That seems to be a good enough reason.

POLICEMAN *after a while:* I reckon it's easier to kill a stranger than someone close to you.

INSPECTOR: The hardest is killing your grandmother. Especially if she makes brilliant cakes.

POLICEMAN: A dog or a cat's not difficult.

INSPECTOR: A dog that looks at you with big soulful eyes and waits for you all day long?

POLICEMAN: I couldn't kill a parrot. I could a turtle. One day I'm going to make them into a soup. They grow too quickly.

INSPECTOR: This one?

He points. The Policeman nods assent.

Not enough meat. Not even for a soup for your granny.

POLICEMAN: What are you going on about grandmothers for?

INSPECTOR: The dead are a granddaughter and her mother, who isn't the grandmother's daughter but her son's ex-wife.

POLICEMAN: Could you say that a bit more simply? *After a pause.* Hey, you can't think that the grandmother ...

INSPECTOR: You never know.

POLICEMAN: But following that logic the grandfather and great-grandfather could be guilty too and ... *Laughs.*

INSPECTOR: Occasionally it does go back that far. And the criminal is very rarely charged, I suppose you know that. Or am I going to have to teach you absolutely everything?

POLICEMAN: You know who's really guilty? Adam and Eve! Adam and Eve are responsible for everything! *Laughs.*

INSPECTOR: How old are you, lad?

The front doorbell rings. The Inspector looks at the Policeman, who is taking fingerprints.

POLICEMAN: I can't, you get it.

The Inspector goes to open the door. There is no-one there. He steps out into the corridor. After a while he returns and shuts the door.

INSPECTOR: Nobody.

POLICEMAN: How's that?

INSPECTOR: There just isn't.

POLICEMAN: That's not possible.

INSPECTOR: It is.

POLICEMAN: Are they hiding?

INSPECTOR: There isn't anywhere.

POLICEMAN: We heard the bell, didn't we? So someone must have rung it. And they'll probably come back. We've got two corpses, not one. Maybe this isn't such an easy case as it seems.

INSPECTOR: No, it's one corpse more difficult.

POLICEMAN: I'll guard the door.

INSPECTOR: What if it was ...

POLICEMAN: Who?

INSPECTOR: A ghost.

POLICEMAN: You're not serious?

The doorbell rings again.

INSPECTOR: Well, aren't you going to open it?

POLICEMAN: Didn't you do last time?

INSPECTOR: It's a bit windy today, isn't it?

POLICEMAN: Windy? *After a while.* Does it seem windy to you?

The doorbell rings.

INSPECTOR: Yes, and I think I can see someone over there up that tree.

POLICEMAN: Up the tree?

INSPECTOR: Yes. But now they've ... Action!

The Inspector draws a revolver out of his pocket and raises it. He gestures to the Policeman to keep quiet. He opens the door quickly. The Public Prosecutor is standing in the doorway.

PROSECUTOR: Have you gone mad?

INSPECTOR: Sorry, just a little instruction on ...

PROSECUTOR: I don't need any instruction right now. And instead of waving that thing under my nose, you could have been letting me in.

INSPECTOR: Seriously?

PROSECUTOR: And you could have opened the door sooner.

POLICEMAN: We were taking fingerprints.

The Public Prosecutor enters.

PROSECUTOR: Pleased to meet you. Have you both finished?

INSPECTOR: What do you mean?

POLICEMAN: Did you ring the doorbell about five minutes ago too?

PROSECUTOR: And now this!

POLICEMAN: So you didn't ring the doorbell five minutes ago?

PROSECUTOR: No I did not! Have I perhaps arrived at a hearing, or what?

Katarina's silhouette appears to one side. Blackout.

20.

Now.

A feeling of unreality. A beam of white light. Katarina and Brina are standing centre stage. They look at each other, wanting to touch each other, but Brina keeps somehow slipping away. And in a few moments she also turns round and begins gliding towards the horizon. Katarina slowly, slowly moves in the opposite direction towards the audience. Her lines are spoken somewhere during all this.

KATARINA: The sun wasn't only shining, I have seen it on fire. Your knowledge is also mine. What should I take away with me? The answer to only the first question?

All the rest is the sound of a fish,
Flitting high in cosmic space,
You can't remember it.
The breath of ineffable holiness.

I am, what I have been. What should I bring with me?

The sun. I have seen it on fire.

Katarina and Brina look at each other at the same time. Brina disappears. Katarina exits to the kitchen.

21.

Now.

The Inspector zips up the body-bag containing Brina's corpse. The Public Prosecutor is sitting in the armchair writing something down.

POLICEMAN *to the Prosecutor:* Is it windy?

PROSECUTOR: Pardon?

POLICEMAN: Does it seem windy to you?

PROSECUTOR: Draughty perhaps. *After a while.* In someone's head.

Silence.

POLICEMAN *to the Inspector:* I've remembered now when it was I saw her though. The old woman was completely plastered. And today as well.

INSPECTOR: She wasn't old though.

PROSECUTOR: I can see you two have practically built up a relationship with these two 'ladies'.

POLICEMAN: Only a professional one.

INSPECTOR: You think you have to emphasise that?

The doorbell rings.

PROSECUTOR: Is anyone going to move themselves?

The Policeman goes to open the door.

You don't have to take out your gun.

The Policeman opens the door, Boris is standing there.

BORIS: I'm the father and ...

INSPECTOR: Husband.

BORIS: Ex. Can I see her?

POLICEMAN: Sorry. Not now. After the autopsy tomorrow. Phone first.

BORIS: I only want to see her for a moment.

INSPECTOR: Just your daughter?

PROSECUTOR: Let him in. I've got to question him anyway.

INSPECTOR: At the station.

PROSECUTOR: Wherever.

Boris enters.

INSPECTOR: At the station. He can take a look at her, but then it's best that you both just go there.

PROSECUTOR: You've got your nerve. A bit too much of it.

INSPECTOR: If I were you I'd be a bit more pleasant. We've been waiting for you for nearly three hours.

PROSECUTOR: Don't exaggerate.

INSPECTOR: I won't if you won't either.

Boris kneels down by Brina's corpse. The Policeman stops him.

POLICEMAN: You mustn't touch her.

INSPECTOR: Not any more. Not any more.

POLICEMAN *more quietly to the Inspector:* What?

BORIS: She's bloody.

PROSECUTOR: Well what did you expect?

POLICEMAN: When did you last see her?

BORIS: This morning.

PROSECUTOR: Did she take drugs?

BORIS: No.

INSPECTOR: She did.

BORIS: Yes, but not recently.

PROSECUTOR: So you know that she used to? What about that other one in there? Your ex?

BORIS: I don't know anything about her. It's been a long time since I've seen her.

INSPECTOR: That's not true, the neighbours have seen you very recently. Did you come often?

BORIS: No.

INSPECTOR: But you did.

BORIS: She was blackmailing me.

PROSECUTOR: For money?

PROSECUTOR: Yes.

INSPECTOR: And you gave it to her. Just like that. Out of pity.

BORIS: No! Well, you could say that.

INSPECTOR: Do you go to mass?

PROSECUTOR: What does that matter to you?

INSPECTOR: It doesn't really.

INSPECTOR *to Boris:* Well, you've seen her now. *To the Prosecutor.* The rest down the station.

PROSECUTOR *to the Inspector:* How long have you got left to retirement?

POLICEMAN *to Boris:* I advise you not to look at your wife ..., she's too ... You'll see her tomorrow.

BORIS: Yes.

The Prosecutor closes his briefcase.

PROSECUTOR: It's been a real pleasure.

INSPECTOR: An immense one.

BORIS: Thank you. Good bye.

INSPECTOR *to the Prosecutor:* You look so like ... Have you got a brother?

PROSECUTOR: Not even a sister.

The Prosecutor and Boris exit. The Inspector closes Brina's body bag.

POLICEMAN: He really does look like that vicar though.

INSPECTOR: The devil's had too many children, that's why.

POLICEMAN: If you talk like that you'll go to hell.

INSPECTOR: I've already got my place reserved. Not to worry though, with women like these for company I won't get bored.

They both laugh. The Inspector disappears into the kitchen. The Policeman proceeds around the room. After a while.

POLICEMAN: All done! Come on, let's go.

After a moment the Inspector returns. He is talking on his mobile phone.

INSPECTOR: Send an ambulance, it's urgent. Urgent, do you hear! Yes, she's revived. I'll give you three minutes. She's already lost a lot of blood.

POLICEMAN: You're having me on!

They both disappear into the kitchen.

The legs of both the younger and the older Brina dangle down from the tree. Laughter is heard. The legs play and tease each other.

POLICEMAN *from the kitchen:* But why her? Why not ...?

Silence. Then:

BOTH BRINAS *from offstage:* For our young ladies,
So the sun will shine ...

Then laughter and a sudden blackout.

