

HURRAH, NOSFERATU

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OSEBE:

ALEŠ – around 40

NATAŠA – in her thirties

VIDA – their daughter; her role changes between a CHILD WITH SEVERE EPILEPSY, around 6, with moderate developmental delays, ataxic and hypermotoric, and a LAWYER, around 30, healthy; both roles are played by the same, adult actress

LUKA – their son, 12

Aleš's MOTHER MARIJA – around 60

The set is divided into two sections, but a physical partition is not required, it can be implied. One section (kitchen) contains a cooker and a small dining table, the other (living room/office) a couch and a small desk (on wheels, so it can serve as an examination table in Scene 13). Both parts have exits to a presumed corridor.

3 – 15 October 2007, Krems an der Donau

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1. THE WORST DAY IN OUR LIVES

VIDA sitting on the couch, staring defiantly at her exercise book. ALEŠ next to her, but apparently unaware, staring at his laptop

NATAŠA making coffee in the kitchen. LUKA enters in his pyjamas.

LUKA

Good morning.

NATAŠA

Oh! You're early.

LUKA

How am I early? The sun is up.

NATAŠA

It's Sunday, dear! When I was your age, I could sleep till noon on a Sunday, if needed.

LUKA

How come it was needed?

NATAŠA

It wasn't needed, but it's a good sign. If you have a clear conscience, you sleep well and long.

LUKA

So were you naughty yesterday?

NATAŠA

(Pours herself coffee, then gently:)

You have talent to be a cop. – Is Vida alright?

LUKA

She breathes well, I listened. She's asleep.

(Pause.)

Is Dad away?

NATAŠA

Dad would LOVE to sleep, but his conscience is not clear.

LUKA

I didn't hear any yelling.

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NATAŠA

(Looks at him carefully.)

Can't I make a joke? He must be somewhere near Villach by now ...

(Looks out the window.)

Look at the clouds

LUKA

Is it going to piss down?

NATAŠA

Don't say piss down ... Because we're all refined people here. Only three of us left now, the fourth is away, but we can just as well have a good time. Shall we go shopping for the furniture for your room later on?

LUKA

(Shrugs.)

We can go. – Mum, when I have my own room, will Vida still be sleeping with me?

NATAŠA

What do you mean? – Wouldn't that somehow defeat the *purpose* of having your own room? – Luka, you need some quiet. Everybody needs some peace and quiet.

LUKA

Vida is quiet. She'll be scared alone.

NATAŠA

Scared? When did you last see her scared? She would jump off the cliff, because she's never scared. Will *you* be scared?

LUKA

What, you think I'm a kid?

NATAŠA

A kid? God forbid. In some cultures, twelve-year-olds already have kids of their own. They feed their families ...

LUKA

(annoyed)

You can never talk seriously.

NATAŠA

Come on, Luka, stop it. You don't get enough sleep. And we know why. It's not fair of Dad and me to make you sleep with Vida! At your age you need a lot of sleep.

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LUKA

But I like sleeping with Vida!

NATAŠA

You like to sleep, but you don't! Why are you here now?

LUKA

This has nothing to do with it! I could sleep if I wanted to.

Nataša gives him a meaningful look.

LUKA

If I sleep till eleven, can Vida still sleep with me?

NATAŠA

I can't believe my ears. – Are you the pillar of this family? – I can't believe it! Who's ever alone in this house? We all listen to her all the time. If I was in her place, I'd actually want to have some time alone; someone's watching her every second. – Dad can paint you Vida on the wall, he's an artist. Would that do the trick?

LUKA

Dad's not a painter. – But are you serious, can you paint on the wall? Because I would if you let me.

NATAŠA

Oh, yeah? And what would you paint?

LUKA

I'd paint Sedna.

NATAŠA

Sedna.

LUKA

Yeah. It's ... like a planet, only it's not. It's way farther than Pluto. Comes almost as close than Pluto, then goes way out, towards the Oort Cloud ... takes twelve thousand years to get around the Sun. It circles out in the dark, the Sun is just a tiny speck for it.

NATAŠA

So you're into outer space now?

LUKA

Sedna drifts in the dark and cold, so they named her after the Eskimo goddess of the sea. She was the daughter of the god Anguta but she had such hunger that she ate everything, even started gnawing at her father when he slept.

NATAŠA

Not at her mother though?

LUKA

Then her father got angry and threw her out of his boat. When she clung to the side he chopped off her fingers. Her fingers became whales and seals and walruses, and she turned into the goddess of the sea. – It's wild.

NATAŠA

Is this from the books Dad gives you to read?

LUKA

It's all on the net!

NATAŠA

It is? They block sex for you, but chopped-off fingers are no biggie. – Go on, paint outer space if Dad lets you. I'm sure he'll approve. – If worry about Vida, she is alone NOW. Go see if she's awake. I'll make breakfast.

LUKA

Shall we have pancakes?

NATAŠA

We could have pancakes, it's a special occasion. I'll prepare the meds. Take care you don't ...

LUKA

... wake her up. Come on, who are you taking me for.

NATAŠA

Just so you know!

LUKA

Yea, Mum, what happens if we wake her up suddenly? – Like I'm not from these parts.

(Luka exits. Nataša starts taking three different kinds of pills from a box on top of the fridge, putting them in the pill crusher. Interjects:)

Sedna.

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Off: hysterical child cries.

LUKA

Mum! Muuum! She's dead! She's dead, Vida! Mum, Vida's dead!!!

Nataša runs out of the room, noise on the staircase. At his laptop, ALEŠ starts moving nervously, then reads, stupefied.

ALEŠ

I ran down the corridor past Luka who was frozen to the wall outside the bedroom saying: I didn't do anything, Mum, honest. I thought Vida was having a huge seizure but no: it was worse than anything I could have imagined. She lay on her bed with blood all around her mouth, she was cold, blue, swollen. I thought I'd vomit but I had to stay calm. I started to resuscitate her, screaming all the time.

NATAŠA

(off)

No, you can't do this. You can't do this to me.

ALEŠ

I couldn't make her breathe again, I knew she was gone, but I couldn't give up. I grabbed the phone.

Nataša runs into the kitchen with traces of blood around her mouth. She phones, but her speaking is silent.

ALEŠ

I called your mother, just screaming come quick, she is dead, help me. I gave Vida another few breaths, then Marija came in asking if I had called the ambulance. I hadn't. – I knew Vida was dead. I couldn't get her back to her body. – She called 112. After a few minutes I stopped working on her but she yelled: No, keep going!

MOTHER MARIJA enters the kitchen.

ALEŠ

I had the taste of her blood in my mouth. It was cold, it was awful. Marija just said:

MOTHER

Oh, no, Nataša.

Hugs Nataša and keeps hugging her until the end of the scene, although Nataša tries to tear herself away.

ALEŠ

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I just told Marija that she's gone and that she should pick her up and cuddle her, I couldn't handle it anymore. She did, somewhat reserved, and then the ambulance arrived.

Now I'm considering ordering a horse drawn carriage to take her to her final resting place. They are pretty costly, but she'd love it.

Please return my calls. Please come home.

He stares at the laptop screen.

ALEŠ

Fucking shit.

2. MATHS

ALEŠ turns to VIDA, who stares at the exercise book.

ALEŠ

OK, Vida, now you had a little rest. Shall we do it now?

(Vida is defiantly silent, prefers to look anywhere else.)

Look. You know that if you don't learn, you can't go to the second grade. You know that, don't you? – Look, we only have to finish this lesson and we're done. We have loads of plans. We can play nursery. We can play birthday. We can go outside, do some shopping, get some stickers.

VIDA

Daddy, I want to tell you something.

ALEŠ

Vida, you can tell me later. Now we have to finish homework.

(Pause.)

Look, Vida! You can count the flowers in this circle. Come on, how many are there? – Oooone, twoooo, three. Three flowers. How many do we have here? – Oooone, two. How much is three plus two? Ha? What is three plus two? Come on, Vide, count them together. What is three plus two?

The silence is painfully long. Finally Vida looks sideways at Aleš and stabs the back of his hand with the pencil. Ales jumps up, grabs his hand.

ALEŠ

Fuck, you little psycho.

(Stands, glares at her, then walks towards the kitchen.)

OK, so you sit there. *Could you* behave normally for a change, for a second? I mean, could you? – You'll be sitting here till Mum comes home! – At your Daddy, with a pencil! – Think it over, think why we're not playing, why there's no playground today. We'll see how it goes. You little brat.

Leaves the living room.

3. CHIT – CHAT/FACTI BRUTI

ALEŠ at the desk, VIDA on the couch as before. The pot on the stove is bubbling away. Silence.

VIDA

So, let's see your case.

NATAŠA and MOTHER enter, Nataša stirs the boiling pot, Mother is watching.

NATAŠA

I hope Aleš will be back in time to put Vida to sleep. Can't guarantee though. It's the artists' business. – Serve yourself and Vida, we'll have what's left tomorrow.

MOTHER

You're in no hurry. I'm just glad I can help.

NATAŠA

It's just —

MOTHER

You hardly ever let me.

NATAŠA

— I also need to have a life now and then.

MOTHER

(sighs)

Sure you do. – It's not easy for you.

NATAŠA

It isn't?

MOTHER

Yes, I know it's not. And I know Aleš is not always there for you.

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NATAŠA

Who says he's not?

Pause.

MOTHER

I don't know why he makes drama out of it instead of being more engaged. – Because I feel he's not OK. Have you read the short story he wrote, about those vagrants? Was that fit for the Summer Story page in a newspaper?

NATAŠA

You're still not used to his style?

MOTHER

Nah, I can't get used to it. Why can't he ever look on the brighter side? I keep asking him, when are you going to write something for me. For my soul. He's getting awards, but he's lost in some ...

NATAŠA

Life is life, Marija.

MOTHER

I'm not sure it's life. It's self-torture, not life.

NATAŠA

Does he look miserable to you? – He's not miserable. Look, in three weeks he's going away to Austria to a writers' residence for a month. – He's got his little getaways.

MOTHER

(confidentially)

What about you?

NATAŠA

What about me? I'm going out as we speak.

Mother looks at her distrustfully, but decides to continue in the same vein.

MOTHER

I'm sorry he's like that. That he doesn't drive. That it's all on you.

NATAŠA

He brings money. He cooks all the time. He does the shopping. And ...

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MOTHER

I'm just so afraid the two of you are not happy. Or Luka.

Pause, Nataša looking at her.

NATAŠA

Let's leave happiness alone. Can you stir for a while? I have to get dressed.

Handles her the spatula, goes to the other room where Aleš and Vida stay motionless. Changes clothes.

MOTHER

(stirring)

I just want all of you to be happy.

NATAŠA

Happiness is a subjective thing. Don't you know that? There's no objective happiness.

MOTHER

What? – Look: you two are great parents.

NATAŠA

How can we be so great if Luka's not happy? You've just said that.

MOTHER

Vida practically —

NATAŠA

Vida is happy. Almost all the time.

MOTHER

— couldn't have desired anyone better. It's *the two of you* who reject this world. That's what I feel.

NATAŠA

But she'll never have a clue about the world. – Do you have an impression that Aleš is rejecting the world at this very moment? You think he feels depressed right now, after the press conference? You got any idea what they're doing right now?

MOTHER

No, I'm talking the big picture! You say she'll never have a clue about the world on. How can you be so negative? And expect to be happy?

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They talk over each other.

NATAŠA

It's not negative —

MOTHER

You reject the normality of this world.

NATAŠA

— it's just reality. — Marija, normality is even more relative. If Vida didn't have seizures and wasn't retarded, would we be more normal?

MOTHER

The world is not just the seizures! — Or the bizarre stuff Aleš writes about.

NATAŠA

Look, you can't be happy if you live in a lie, you can be happy if you see the reality and take care you can handle it.

MOTHER

The world is also a stroll by the Mali Graben on shiny day. The flowers in the garden. The birds chirping away. The smell of coffee.

NATAŠA

(Returns, dressed.)

The birds chirping away.

MOTHER

I just feel — and I hope I'm wrong — that the two of you torture yourselves because you want to. Which is wrong!

NATAŠA

(Goes to the other room, puts on her makeup.)

Yes, Marija, that's very wrong.

MOTHER

It will get better! You've got to believe that. — Do I have to tell you how clever and what a handful Vida is? Anyone could only hope for a kid so full of life! But you're into genetics analyses, and trauma and bizarreness. It's normal to have your claim for normality.

NATAŠA

I have my claim for normality. You know that everyone thinks they would be more normal in our place? With you on top of the list. We *are* normal, there are just rules

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to follow. The situation is not at its most favourable at the moment, but if I ask you to babysit while I go out for a business dinner, where is the bizarre? – Talk to your son about the bizarre, I need practicalities.

MOTHER

I never said I would be more normal. It's just that normality is something we should always strive for. Because it's elusive.

NATAŠA

(Returns, now fully dressed to go out.)
That's deep, Marija. I have to go now.

MOTHER

Vida'll be healthy. She *is* healthy, really. That's how you've got to think of it. And everything will be fine. If Aleš escapes into some sort of bohemianism ...

NATAŠA

She's healthy, no coughs or sore throats. – Aleš is not escaping.

MOTHER

But you said he's not here.

NATAŠA

Is it so hard for you to come babysit? We don't ask you often. Only when really necessary.

MOTHER

Nataša! Don't you ever say that again!

NATAŠA

Right now it is. Bye, Marija, try to get Vida off the computer, time to awaken her brain. It's time she went to pee too.

(Leaves, off:)
Bye.

MOTHER

I only love him! I love all of you.
(stirring the food on the stove)
Vida! – Vidaa!

Puts down the spatula, leaves. The kettle is boiling away.

In the living room, Vida stirs.

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VIDA

Good afternoon.

Aleš is motionless. Silence.

VIDA

I'm Vida Petrač, your attorney.

(Pause.)

Since you don't have the means for an attorney of your own choice, you have the right to ... me, actually. Which is not bad at all. Because I'm not a bad attorney. Do you think we'll get along?

(Pause.)

I suppose we will. If that's alright with you, I'd skim over a few facts ... Please let me know if you disagree with anything.

(Reads.)

You're on trial for the murder of 42-year-old Vid Petrič. On June 29 in Lepodvorska Street in Ljubljana, neighbour Marjeta Prijatelj wanted to deliver to Vid Petrič lunch, as she had an occasional habit of doing. She found him in a pool of blood on the kitchen floor with several injuries, predominantly on the head. The autopsy indicated that he died because of brain haemorrhage caused by several blunt hits to the head, probably against the floor, between 5 and 10 PM. The suspicion fell on 32-year-old Ivanka Poredoš, a homeless person who occasionally stayed with him, but her statement, also corroborated by other witnesses, was that on June 28 the last person in Vid Petrič's flat ... was you. She left when she heard the two of you screaming, because "she wanted to have nothing to do with it".

(Looks at him.)

Is that true? – Were you with Vid Petrič at his flat that evening? What happened?

(Pause.)

Mr. Petrač, I'm here to help you. Not to give you hard time. – But it's difficult if you don't cooperate. – Was there anyone else there?

(Pause.)

Mr. Petrač, legal procedures are complicated, they have rules that you know nothing about. You haven't been trained for that. That's why I'm here, to represent your interests, so we can achieve something.

(Pause, then softer, in confidence:)

Mr. Petrač, would you like to get in touch with anyone? A relative?

(Pause, then surrealistically:)

You know that the fields out there are in full bloom? Primroses and violets and kidney vetch, the daisies never even stopped blooming because the winter is so mild. Nobody can ignore that. Would you like to see it? – Would you take a walk with me? – Would you have a beer with me? Would you have two? – Mr. Petrač?

Aleš stares. Blackout.

4. MORNING

ALEŠ in the kitchen. VIDA in the living room as before, NATAŠA dresses her. Vida is clearly infantile, hyperactive, her movements spastic. When mother puts on her socks and casuals, she wriggles and keeps touching this or that article.

NATAŠA

(shouting)

Vida, stop it! Could you stand still for a second?

Vida grabs a hand mirror and stares at it. When she puts it back, it falls over and almost crashes on the floor, Nataša catches it.

NATAŠA

No, you can't do this. Vida, you'll be punished!

ALEŠ

(tired)

Come on, you don't have to shout like this.

NATAŠA

Just you be quiet! Can I fix my own kid or what?

ALEŠ turns to the stove, makes himself a coffee (Nataša's is steaming next to it), listens to what is going on in the living room.

NATAŠA

Could you stop for a second? Would that be too complex? Which six years old is getting dressed like this? Look what we're doing. It's like dressing an octopus. Are you an octopus?

VIDA

I'm not an octopus!

NATAŠA

Sure you are! You are an octopus. You're Mummy's octopus.

VIDA

I'm not Mummy's octopus!

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NATAŠA

Are the feetsies in the sockies now? Come on, chop chop to the table. Who'll be first?

*Vida runs to the dining table in the kitchen, starts gulping it down.
Nataša follows, Aleš watching.*

ALEŠ

You know that if you yell she only gets more nervous. Then she shuts down and stops listening completely. You know she can't help it.

NATAŠA

I know, I know it all, my dear. There's nothing new you can tell me. I'm a bad mother.

ALEŠ

You're not a bad mother ...

NATAŠA

Just don't interfere. We have our own system.

ALEŠ

Like it's the first time, each morning.

NATAŠA

(Stares at him.)

OK. So I'm nervous every morning. At least I feel guilty later. But how come you're so cool when you're up? – Cause by then you can drink coffee and read newspapers in an empty flat. How come you're up now? It's hardly past seven!

ALEŠ

Cool? Do you know what it's like, in bed, listening to this screaming each morning?

NATAŠA

What d'you mean, each morning? We've been fine lately. It's the first time this week.

(Aleš stays meaningfully silent.)

But if yelling is the problem, it's easily fixed. There'd be less of it if you weren't in bed! If you gave her the morning maintenance!

ALEŠ

Yeah, precisely.

NATAŠA

I wonder if your own yelling would get on your nerves.

ALEŠ

Yeah! I'll drive her to the nursery in the morning! Driving licence, right now! We'll have one more! Nowhere near enough wheels in the yard!

NATAŠA

Who said anything about another car?

(They glare at each other, pause.)

Come on, think. What does Vida need in the next few minutes? What could you do? Without me telling you?

They keep glaring. Finally Aleš moves, takes a tray full of pill boxes off the shelf. He starts throwing various pills in the pill crusher, crushes them, pours them in a spoon, prepares a glass of water. Vida eats, wriggling all the time, her mouth messy. Nataša sighs, goes to the radio, turns it on. Soothing music.

NATAŠA

Thank you.

ALEŠ

Come on, Vida, eat nicely, no wriggling. It's sports day today. You'll wriggle at school. – And tell them Mum and Dad say it's OK to climb the wall bars!

(They both watch her eating.)

So you'll be late for lunch, the two of you?

NATAŠA

Yes, it's music therapy after school. I'll give you a call. It's the last trial session today, next week we'll talk about the individual programme.

ALEŠ

So you reckon it's worth it?

NATAŠA

I've no idea, but she sure enjoys it. The boss doesn't let me in. Vida has to express herself emotionally on her own. Like anyone could ever stop her.

ALEŠ

(Gives her a meaningful look.)

And what does she say?

NATAŠA

Nothing much so far. But the sounds are wild, she keeps banging on stuff.

Something between Einsturzende Neubauten and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. –

Really, it's worth hearing it.

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ALEŠ

(Laughs.)
I'll have to come along once.

Pause.

NATAŠA

I'll be exhausted. I could use a massage tonight.

ALEŠ

I have an option for tonight ...

NATAŠA

Oh yeah?

ALEŠ

Primož called, we could get together with the Primož gang.

(Nataša is silent. Aleš carefully:)
But I don't care for it much.

NATAŠA

Why not? You can't stay in the whole time.

ALEŠ

Ah, doesn't matter ... We could all be together.

NATAŠA

Well, it's up to you.

ALEŠ

So what, I said we can all be together! – You said you could use a massage? And we have a few bottles at home, no need to go to Primož for debauchery ...

NATAŠA

Come on, you won't down bottles here, go out with the crowd. You're stuck at home anyway like a social retard ...

LUKA enters.

LUKA

Morning!

ALEŠ

Oh, good morning, young man!

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NATAŠA

Luka, have a bite, we're late.

Pause, Luka takes food out of the fridge.

ALEŠ

Luka, your sister will be a musician, apparently.

LUKA

What will she play?

ALEŠ

Vida, what will you play?

VIDA

I'll play it all.

ALEŠ

Vida will be Mike Oldfield.

VIDA

Not an old field. I'll have my own music.

ALEŠ

Sure you'll have your own music. Screw those copycats!

LUKA

Come on, watch what you say in front of her.

NATAŠA

That's the attitude, Vida.

LUKA

I'd like to play electric guitar. – But really.

NATAŠA

Wow, Vida!

VIDA

No, I'll play the guitar. I'll play the Avseniki.

ALEŠ

The Avseniki? No need to be so retro. Folk tradition is cool, but ...
(Catches Nataša's look.)

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No, I'm kidding. Sure, tradition first. OK, so the physically disabled will have their own dance show in Hello From Slovenia! That's avant-garde!

NATAŠA

You'd really like to play, Luka? That's new.

LUKA

Yeah. Mare's shown me some licks. He's starting a band with his brother. They're wicked.

ALEŠ

But *electric* guitar? Wouldn't you start off with something softer, just in case? Something without an amplifier, or not producing ninety decibels on its own?

NATAŠA

Yeah, as long as you have your peace and quiet.

ALEŠ

No, I'm fine.

LUKA

Come on, I've just ...

ALEŠ

It's alright! – You play! It's not your fault! Just a tiny piece of my mind thought for a second about the general sanity of everyone in the house, and I phrased it as a joke.

(Nataša is nervous, but rather stays quiet.)

What did I say? Wasn't it a joke? No, I'm keeping mum!

VIDA

Mummy! Daddy!

ALEŠ

What is it, dear?

VIDA

(She obviously just wanted to draw attention at herself, does not know what to say.)

Ah ...

ALEŠ

I'll start music therapy. I'll play fucking accordion, and the blade and the club.

NATAŠA

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Sure you'll play. Bravo. That'll be the day.

LUKA

I won't play.

Exits. Pause, Vida gobbles down her food.

ALEŠ

Just so you know: if I only thought about my peace and quiet, it would all look a bit different.

NATAŠA

(Looks at him, then leaves; from the corridor:)

Yeah, really? How would it look?

ALEŠ

(after a pause)

Different, don't you worry.

Exits through the other door. Vida remains alone, eating, making a tremendous mess out of it. Gradual blackout, while we hear loud Nataša's voice from the outside.

NATAŠA

You're just escaping into those stories of yours. Stories? They're cheap tricks, horror shows, sheer violence. While you sit at home like a pussy. Like you're punished. And when you go out, you drink yourself to fuck. You cut out clips from the media, 'linguistic artefacts' you call them. You put down Vida's sentences, you call it 'montage'! The way I see it, you haven't written anything of your own for years. – Screw those copycats? Who do you screw? Not me! Neither with your texts nor with anything else! Who exactly are you screwing?

5. HARD TRIALS

VIDA drinks coffee with NATAŠA and MOTHER who respond in turns, like the same person.

VIDA

I don't get it. – He never uttered a word. Can you imagine?

NATAŠA

Oh, I know these comedians! – But that's who you've chosen when you had to decide what to do in life.

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VIDA

I'm not sure I've chosen such people exactly.

MOTHER

But such crowd is bestial, don't you forget it.

VIDA

He didn't look bestial to me. Just very quiet.

NATAŠA

Do you know he's an ex-artist?

VIDA

Ex-artist? No kidding?

NATAŠA

A writer.

VIDA

So you know more about him than I do. And he's supposed to be mine.

NATAŠA

O – o – oh, hon, he's mine. You're defending him alright, but I'm accusing. He's mine. – But really, an ex-writer. Award-winning too – you'd know if you had a reading habit. *Sic transit gloria mundi*. It's strange nobody accused us of infringing artistic freedom for keeping him here.

VIDA

An ex-writer. No kidding. – I'll have to look him up at the library.

MOTHER

You'd read books? I told you that as a joke! He's not in prison for his books, though he could also be, perhaps. Because those stories are wild.

VIDA

No, I just mean ...

MOTHER

You have greater problems than that, if you're after character defence. The guy divorced, fifteen years ago, drove his wife mad, what can I tell you, she made excuses for him in front of others for ages, until there was finally a time for ... irreconcilable differences.

VIDA

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No, I just mean, it's good to crawl under someone's skin when you're defending them. To sniff their souls, if you will. Added emotional value.

NATAŠA

To sniff their souls! His soul?

VIDA

Well, he's who I've got! What, you think I'm new age? – If you think like him, other tricks become clear to you than just the old ones. You can see things that even he doesn't. It's an advantage. Only you prosecutors fall for the old tricks, not even the judges, that's why you lose so many cases.

NATAŠA

(Scoffs.)

Only us prosecutors. – The guy is fucked up, don't you get it? In a trivial way, not in a cool way. But not fucked up enough to be unable to fuck up someone else even worse, and someone he did. One hundred percent. There are witnesses, one from the scene, and new ones are turning up every day regarding the motive. You'll have a DNA analysis if you want one. He's finished, that's your starting point.

VIDA

Or he isn't? He never told me his version. First of all: why? And I can discredit every one of your character witnesses in two moves.

MOTHER

What do you mean, why? Does it matter to Petrič? He's dead!

VIDA

You and your Petrič ... What if he deserved it? Was an angel hit on the head?

MOTHER

Someone *is* at fault. And I don't think it's the one with the broken skull! You want to know what kind of person Petrač is? – As a kid he tortured animals. Shall we start here? With a schoolmate – of much lower intelligence, I should say – he hunted down slowworms under the stones at the schoolyard, they used them as a target for throwing pocket knives, competing who'll nail the buggers better to the ground. Until they stopped wriggling. You know he used to win? When the schoolmates caught them ... You know the carpeting they got? In the end he said to one of them, to his best friend, who blasted him: "It's something you can't understand."

VIDA

(in disbelief)

Where do you get all this from?

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NATAŠA

Are you kidding? Who in this country doesn't know everything about everyone ...

VIDA

Except me, you mean?

NATAŠA

Oh, you know if you try. – Anyway, keep sniffing. Does it smell of cake? Of a freshly drenched flowerbed? Of a sunset on a Friday evening? You want to read his books! Go on, read! Books will enrich your heart!

(Rises.)

Look at the characters! At the form! At the typical Petrač style!

VIDA

Not the style!

MOTHER

Or would you prefer abbreviated versions?

VIDA

Why do you belittle me?

NATAŠA

(shocked)

Me – you?

VIDA

You said I know it too.

MOTHER

Sure you do. That's the point.

NATAŠA

Do you really need some freaky stories to remind you? The stories he made up? Look at the facts.

VIDA

But every fact is a story. How do you ...

NATAŠA

Yes. You fall for that: he's a heavy fuck-up, but he had tough childhood, his father beat him, his dog was run over by a car ...

VIDA

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So you think this could never have been you.

MOTHER

Me! That's the last thing I need!

Pause.

VIDA

You do belittle me. – A lot of things happen in life!

MOTHER

There's no doubt about that.

Rises and stands beside Nataša.

NATAŠA

I've got to go. I have someone who happened to have shot his father. Just how many interesting people you meet in this profession!

VIDA

Why?

MOTHER

If I got it right, he was fed up arguing with him. Also, there was some money involved, but that's only interesting for the jury. Yes, Madam Attorney, a lot of things happen in life, and we are here to process them. Not an easy job.

NATAŠA

You read your dossier, maybe there's something there, I don't know what you're looking for. Did his mother love him, once upon a time? At some moment?

MOTHER

If that's not even worse. – See you!

NATAŠA

See you!

They leave.

VIDA

See you!

Blackout.

6. A PICNIC

ALEŠ, NATAŠA, VIDA, LUKA and MOTHER sitting on the ground, a bag, sandwiches, juice, beer; a picnic, they eat and drink. Aleš is a little tipsy.

VIDA

(suddenly)
Yibbee!

NATAŠA

Vida, it's "yippee", not "yibbee."

Aleš wipes Vida's messy lips, gives her a playful kiss on the forehead.

MOTHER

It's nice here, isn't it, Vida?

Vida turns towards her, stares at her pullover. The pullover has a fine pattern with a strong contrast (eg. yellow/white and black). Vida's eyelids flutter.

NATAŠA

(Screams.)
Vida! Don't watch! Look away!

Aleš shelters Vida's eyes, she is startled, looks away.

VIDA

I didn't watch.

ALEŠ

And you just can't think ahead, Mum.

MOTHER

(Looks at her pullover.)
This? But it's OK ...

ALEŠ

It's OK, bullshit.

MOTHER

(offended)
Let's keep an eye on form.

ALEŠ

I keep an eye on form. Because the form shouldn't have meshy contrast patterns, because Vida then stares at them and her brain goes bzzz, bzzz, and she's knocked out in ten fucking seconds! That's why mesh forms aren't OK!

Nataša clearly enjoys the conflict. Mother takes off the pullover and puts it away, puts on a sports jacket.

MOTHER

You shouldn't talk like that, especially not in front of her.

ALEŠ

Especially not like *that*.

MOTHER

What, is she more sensitive again?

NATAŠA

Marija, she's never been less sensitive than that. If she stares at the pavement, she can have a seizure before you know it.

MOTHER

But you said she's not ...

ALEŠ

It's not complicated, nothing to fuss about, you just have to remember. And yes, Mum, it's like when we say after an EEG that the results were nothing special. You take this to mean that they were normal. What we meant to say is that they were like always, no changes. Her EEG is slow, with hiccups.
(clearly)

No more fucked up than any other time.

VIDA

EEG hiccups?

ALEŠ

It's just a manner of speaking, dear. It doesn't really hiccup.

VIDA

What manner is that?

MOTHER

Woow, it's a wonderful day.

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NATAŠA

Isn't it? It's a warm autumn.

ALEŠ

(To Vida:)

It's some kind of manner, dear. Either that, or we could just as well stay quiet. – Except there's a pullover that sends out lighting ...

MOTHER

(softly)

Fatalistic you are ...

NATAŠA

We're not fatalistic. But you have to adjust.

MOTHER

I just know what you tell me. But what I tell you – that you should try all the options ... That's something you just skip.

ALEŠ

What do you mean, we just skip? Mum ... we tried two of your oddball options.

NATAŠA

Can't we just leave this behind?

ALEŠ

And they worked wonders. I said to the guy: here we have a hardware fault, a faulty structure of the neuron, could you compensate for this with your unorthodox knowledge, by now I'm open for everything. He goes: oh yeah, we'll add the good energy ... He'd like to add energy to a system in which switches leak at every synapse ... Where's the logic?

MOTHER

You've come a long way with this logic of yours ...

ALEŠ

I'm not complaining, he just asked for voluntary contributions, making winds around her with his arms. But how about that homeopath? "My medicines cost practically nil, you just pay 80 euros because I'm being screwed so hard by the scientific regime." Well, which regime is Vida then? Screw the bugger. Put a drop of useless magic in the bottle and topped it up with tap water.

MOTHER

I'm just saying ...

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ALEŠ

I'm just saying; let's take care what we do and what we wear, nothing more. Bloody simple. Then we can enjoy our picnic!

NATAŠA

(To Luka and Vida, encouragingly:)

We're having fun! Arent' we?

LUKA

Sure, Mum.

MOTHER

Let's leave this aside for now. OK? Isn't this a beautiful day?

(Pause, Aleš looks away.)

What about you guitar, Luka? Can you play a song?

LUKA

I'm still learning ... But we're pushing ahead. We make our own songs ...

NATAŠA

Luka pushes ahead, don't you, Luka? Luka doesn't lay down his arms.

VIDA

Luka is armed, Mum!

NATAŠA

No, Luka is not armed, dear. Have you finished eating? Give your mouth a good wipe.

VIDA

Cause Luka is a warrior!

Wipes her mouth.

ALEŠ

Luka's not armed, dear, thank god. The last thing we need in our flat is live ammo. – He just has a guitar. And he rocks on it ... Like Hendrix.

VIDA

What's a hendricks?

LUKA

You've got to rock. You had a band, what else did you do? How do you like it?

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NATAŠA

Hendrix is a musician, dear.

ALEŠ

Luka, you rock like a cock. If anyone says anything less, I'll do him in. I'm proud of you. My son's a punk rocker.

MOTHER

A punk rocker?

NATAŠA

Didn't we tell you? Luka is in a band. With a schoolmate and his brother.

ALEŠ

They'll be punks. Why didn't you bring your guitar?

(Yells ironically:)

"I used to be normal ,I was good at school,
Now I'm a rocker, my Mum thinks I'm a fool!"

NATAŠA

Grandma could have a few good old twists and turns with her son here in the meadows.

MOTHER

I have an impression I'm being had here. But I don't mind. Because my grandkids are here.

(To Aleš:)

And you could mind your drinking.

(Aleš looks at her in shock. Everyone finished eating, Mother gets up, carelessly:)

OK. Who said they're going mushroom-picking with Grandma? Who'll find a mushroom?

VIDA

Yibbee!

MOTHER

If something's wrong, Luka can run to you, can't he? We'll be just behind those trees. We're not going far.

NATAŠA

No, off you go. We'll be right here, we're not going dancing.

VIDA, LUKA and MOTHER leave. Pause.

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NATAŠA

We're doing fine. Don't you see? We're doing fine. Look, we spent a whole afternoon in the sun.

ALEŠ

Yeah, you're right, sometimes I plain forget.

NATAŠA

And finally you gave her a telling-off ...

ALEŠ

You think I did?

NATAŠA

(passionately)

You have no idea how sexy this is to me. For you to stand up for your family. – You know, there's no reason why we shouldn't start relying on babysitters. Go out, see the crowd. Grandma can handle her with a few instructions. And Vida likes a change.

ALEŠ

With a few instructions. Without them, she forgets everything and it's all swell. – Jeez! There's no end to it! It's been five years, and those delusions of bliss! And worse: how cruel you are to the baby, you should cuddle her, allow her to be different ... Sermonizing does her good.

ŠA

Like to you it doesn't.

ALEŠ

And such a small thing, I mean! A pullover! She can't keep it in mind ...

NATAŠA

OK, I no longer expect her to understand, but it's true she wants to help. She does.

ALEŠ

Oh yeah? Wasn't it you who said she was just bluffing?

NATAŠA

She is bluffing, but let's push her. She would help, but she wouldn't. What do you care? She half would.

ALEŠ

And she's depressed by every routine seizure. Oh, our dear precious, her lips went blue ...

NATAŠA

Come on, stop it. Be quiet for a second.

(Pause.)

Put your hand here.

(Aleš puts his hand on her stomach.)

You know what she said to me the other day? She said she'll eat plenty, and then she'll grow a belly and have a baby. I told her that babies don't come of a lot of eating. And she said: do they come of little eating? Then she'll eat little.

ALEŠ

So we'll have grandkids!

NATAŠA

Yeah. – We'll have little Dravet syndrome persons! A small gang.

ALEŠ

Retired, grandma and grandpa, we'll have a little idyllic self-help group in the beautiful countryside, grow pears and peaches ...

NATAŠA

And brew our own free-range Topamax and stiripentol.

ALEŠ

In a big still! And our own home-made herb brandy, to sell to the tourists. Tonic-clonic!

NATAŠA

Yeah, always some alcohol for you. – Pass me my glass! – You know how handsome you guys looked the other day, at that party at Primož's. I never told you.

ALEŠ

Oh, yeah?

NATAŠA

You stood there in the kitchen, stirred the pot and went on about some cinnamon and coriander or whatever, with glasses in your hands. You had that new jumper on, the green one ...

ALEŠ

Wow! Step back, you're driving home.

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NATAŠA

(coquettish)

I don't have to be drunk to give you a compliment. You looked great. We girls sat in the living room by the table and wondered what handsome guys we've got ourselves.

ALEŠ

Great cooks.

NATAŠA

Yeah, hot cooks. I'm not sure how much the Primož gang actually cook, but they looked the part.

ALEŠ

Well, at least I feed you properly, if I'm not there for other things.

NATAŠA

What do you mean, you're not there? Sure you're there.

ALEŠ

Oh, come one ...

NATAŠA

Why does Vida like you better than me? You're there enough for her to notice.

ALEŠ

Yeah, OK.

NATAŠA

And me too, you know, I'm a simple woman, my sexual needs must be met, and I'm grinning.

ALEŠ

Yeah, you women are simple creatures, but us guys are quite complex.

Slides his hand under her T-shirt.

NATAŠA

Ooops! Not now.

They laugh. Yells from off.

VIDA

Mushrooom! Mushrooom!

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MOTHER

Vida found a mushroom!

VIDA

Mushrooom!

LUKA

Which mushroom is it, Vida., do you know?

VIDA

A chaantereeelle!

NATAŠA

(Rises, grabs his face, kisses him.)

You're so mine. Your're so mine! Do you know that?

She coquettishly runs to the forest. Aleš sits, suddenly looking extremely tired.

7. IVANKA

ALEŠ as before. VIDA enters with a folder full of papers, sits down in the other section – if Aleš is in the "living room", she is at the dining table in the kitchen. She examines the papers.

VIDA

There is a single statement by Mrs Poredoš in the investigation ... Apparently, that day the two of you got up at seven, had a coffee and a litre of wine. Then you cadged enough change for one more bottle, later lunched on bread and tinned sardines. Reportedly you looked absent-minded and didn't talk much. – Huh! Just like now. – Then you had a nap, while she went out to buy cigarettes. On the way, she met ... Petrič.

(Pause.)

Mr Petrač, you are free to jump in at any time if you have anything to add, no matter how trivial it may seem to you. – Petrič invited her over for a bottle of vodka. Mrs Poredoš didn't want to go on her own, so they agreed to meet later. She returned home and told you about the invitation. You went over to his place, and after an hour of drinking a quarrel ensued. Mrs Poredoš was in the bathroom, so she couldn't tell what it was about, but she heard screaming and hits. Instead of returning to the kitchen, she went home ... You came half an hour later and reportedly stayed silent. Mrs Poredoš had no knowledge that Petrič was dead, she learnt that the following day when she was intercepted by the police at his doorstep ... – Would that roughly be it?

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(Pause.)

OK, you're being mysterious ... It is an option. – Although not a very good one, if I may say so, since her statement was corroborated by a neighbour who saw you and heard the screaming, though he didn't pay much heed since it was nothing out of the ordinary in your circles. He also opined that it was all essentially Mrs Poredoš's fault, since she spent nights with Mr Petrič as well as you. The opinion is shared by Mrs Prijatelj, who considered Mrs Poredoš to be "a bad person who has abandoned her children, who now live with her mother in Murska Sobota", and is generally in a habit of abandoning people.

(Aleš is startled, but Vida does not notice.)

But she described you as a person of reserved behaviour even when severely drunk, except occasionally when you can also ... go into paroxysms of mirth. But sadly this doesn't change the facts ...

(Aleš rises.)

Mr Petrač? Do you have anything to say?

ALEŠ

Where is Ivanka?

Pause.

VIDA

Oh, now we're getting somewhere! I've read you an incriminating statement, and you ask about a person you feel close to! – This seems to reveal a ... not necessarily bad character.

ALEŠ

Where is Ivanka?

VIDA

Currently unavailable, I am afraid. Weirdly enough, mail from her permanent residence address in Murska Sobota returns marked "addressee unknown", and the police can't find her either at your flat or in front of the Celovška supermarket. – Essentially, there is no Ivanka.

ALEŠ

Aha. There is no Ivanka.

Blackout.

8. THE FALL

*ALEŠ is now in the kitchen, cooking – pasta in the pot, sauce in the wok.
VIDA stands beside him, infantile, interferes.*

VIDA
I'll cook too.

ALEŠ
No, no, Vida, you can't cook now. I'm cooking now. You'll cook later.

VIDA
What are you cooking?

ALEŠ
It's still pasta, Vida. It hasn't turned to salad in the meantime.

VIDA
(shocked)
Not salad!

ALEŠ
Will it be OK, pasta?

VIDA
OK. – I stir.

Grabs the spatula, starts stirring the sauce.

ALEŠ
No, come on, stop ... Or whatever, well, go on.

*Lets her stir, keeps a close watch. She stirs, then grabs a plate with
grated Parmesan and throws the cheese in the wok before Aleš can
react. Aleš pulls the plate and the spatula out of her hands, stirs quickly.*

ALEŠ
What the hell are you doing, Vida?!
(He explodes disproportionately, Vida moves away, startled.)
Why are you being naughty all the time? Can't you ever just listen? – Can't you just
think for a second before you screw up? For a second?

VIDA
I just wanted ...

ALEŠ

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No, listen to me. Do you know what I'm saying?

VIDA

Yeah, I know.

ALEŠ

(puts pressure on her)

Do you know what I'm saying at all?

VIDA

I'm cooking my way.

ALEŠ

What did I tell you? Cook your way somewhere else! Your cooker's on the balcony – What is this now? How can I get the cheese out? It's all messed up! – Go to the living room and watch TV for a while. But don't stand too close! I have to fix this!

(Calms down with determination.)

OK, we'll take care of this somehow.

Vida goes to the living room, switches on the TV, sits down.

ALEŠ

This shall be fit for the plate any time now. – OK, doesn't matter. We'll have a different pasta. Spaghetti tuna á la ruffians! Little secrets of great epileptics!

(Pause.)

Sorry, Vida, I was a tad angry. I know, Grandma lets you help with cooking, but me and Mum are in no mood to hose down the kitchen every time after lunch. – You know what? If you're a good kid, you and Mum could bake some cookies tonight. Ha? Would that be OK?

VIDA

Not with Mum! With you!

ALEŠ

Vida, I'm not much use when it comes to baking. In this house, everyone has their specialty. You know? Mum is handy for such things. Mum is nice too.

VIDA

No, she's not.

ALEŠ

Sure she is. Mum knows a lot of things. Mum bakes. Mum bathes you and washes your hair. Mum drives the car. Mum buys you clothes. Mum knows a hell of a lot of things!

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VIDA

No, she doesn't know hell.

ALEŠ

Oh, she does. – If she knew how much I appreciate her for the things she knows, she'd grow all conceited. Though she's conceited already.

VIDA

No, she's not.

ALEŠ

(considers this for a while)

Yeah, you're right, Vida, Mum's not conceited. She'd only want me to give her compliments. Because she lacks self-confidence. She knows everything, but lacks self-confidence. And you know what she does then? She resents Daddy. – She's not conceited. What is she then? – She's pretty. She's smart. Daddy loves Mummy, you know; he loves you, but loves her too. You're both so mine. But why don't I give her compliments? I mean, spontaneously?

Vida gets up, walks to the DVD player, ejects the disc. Want to take another DVD from the shelf, but starts staring at the TV screen from up close. She looks charmed.

ALEŠ

You don't know either? – OK, it's time to fill up the plates. Mum will eat later. And Luka is coming home any minute now. We might give him a bite. Shall we give him a bite?

VIDA

No.

Stares at the TV screen fixedly.

ALEŠ

No? – You know, that's not nice. Luka would do anything for you. – Me and Mum always save some out meals so you can have a bite. It's a wonder you allow the two us to eat!

(Vida's eyelashes flutter, she's completely immobile.)

But if you had to give Haris at school a macaroni, you wouldn't mind that, would you?

VIDA

(hardly able to speak)

No.

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Aleš smiles, Vida stands charmed.

ALEŠ

Are you alright?

VIDA

(with difficulty)

Yes.

Aleš is alarmed, puts down the spatula and heads for the living room. When he catches sight of her, Vida is collapsing; he jumps ahead to catch her. Vida snuggles up to him; during the seizure she does not lose consciousness and does not convulse, she is just utterly confused and helpless.

VIDA

Dad, I'm having a seizure.

ALEŠ

(lifts her up, carries her to the couch, sits down)

Pshhhhh ... you're not having a seizure ... it's a tiny seizure.

VIDA

No, it's a huge seizure!

ALEŠ

Vida, but what's wrong with you today, this is the second one ... Pshhhhh ... It's alright ... No seizure ... No, no ... I can't be with you every second, you know? ... It doesn't work that way ...

(Vida hugs him. He sobs:)

Come on, Vida, I'm sorry ... You know, how funny we are ... We just step away ... I can't stand by you every second, I just can't ... Pshhhh, Vida ... If anything happens to you ... Vida, I couldn't live without you.

VIDA

I know, Daddy. You'd die.

ALEŠ

Daddy will always be there for you.

The living room grows dark, Aleš consoles and strokes Vida who gradually falls asleep. Blackout.

9. THE FIRST CONVERSATION

ALEŠ and VIDA as before, they sit together on the couch. Aleš speaks as though he has not been speaking for a long time.

VIDA

Now you see, Mr Aleš, you can do it! In a while we may actually get somewhere.

ALEŠ

Yeah, I'm doing my best ... Vida.

VIDA

There are just a few things I must bring to your attention. – When the trial starts, all sorts of things may be suggested. I'll try to present your case in the most favourable light, the prosecutor in the worst. Then a third party must decide which is true. Nothing personal, it's just the way it goes.

ALEŠ

I understand.

VIDA

There could be insinuations as to the motives for what happened. Which you don't deny, as far as I can understand.

ALEŠ

Oh, really?

VIDA

The witnesses said that Ivanka occasionally spent nights with Mr Petrič, although she mostly lived with you. The prosecutor may see a motive here, one that is not necessarily favourable for you. In court, I mean.

ALEŠ

What kind of insinuations?

VIDA

Disingenuous motives. Premeditation. They may say that the conflict between you and Petrič was one of a business nature.

ALEŠ

A business nature.

VIDA

Yes. They may say that Petrič refused to pay what the two of you expected of him.

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ALEŠ

I see! You mean that I pimped her out? For money?

VIDA

I didn't say that ...

ALEŠ

What kind of money did he ever have?

VIDA

I mean, it could be suggested that you organised their meetings, and the situation got out of hand ...

ALEŠ

Yeah, yeah, yeah. – OK, firstly. – Vid was the one who actually introduced Ivanka to me. He knew her before me. And secondly, for what little Vid collected begging, it wouldn't be worth for Ivanka to walk the three hundred metres to his place. It wouldn't pay for the shoes.

Pause.

VIDA

So how would you describe your relationship?

ALEŠ

So you can slow your horses, really. – She went over to him ... because I can't get it up anymore. Not because she was a whore, if that's what you think. If that's what the neighbours think. The neighbours have no clue.

VIDA

(shocked)

You are ... impotent.

ALEŠ

If someone drinks heavily for ten years, I'm neither the first nor the last, am I? – And don't blame her, she's a good girl, Ivanka. – But ... she's a girl. Girls have their needs. – The neighbour would've preferred if she came over to him.

Pause.

VIDA

I heard you were married.

ALEŠ

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Oh, really?

VIDA

Was there a similar problem with your wife? I mean, for the two of you to break up?

ALEŠ

It's a good euphemism: that we broke up.

Pause.

VIDA

Euphemism.

ALEŠ

Isn't it the word? It's Greek. I also know words from other languages, if you're into education. I went to a few schools, I'm not kidding you! *Eintrete ohne zu klopfen! Bitte! Ja!*

VIDA

I didn't mean to look down on you, I just don't know what you mean by euphemism if ...

ALEŠ

Breaking up, saying that for someone who was crushed to death by a car!

VIDA

Car ... who? You ... wife? In an accident? I had no idea ... It's not it the files! Wow, I'm so sorry ...

ALEŠ

Don't be sorry! I just mean, I didn't do it, you can't blame that on me. It was a car. I never hit anyone. Never. Not even Ivanka.

Pause.

VIDA

Did *he*?

ALEŠ

Who? Vid? Hit her? – Now and then. That's why she didn't want to go there too often. Not on her own.

Pause.

ALEŠ

No hard feelings from my side, in case you wonder. About him hitting hit her. She kept coming back to him. – People have their needs.

VIDA

And you kept watch in the kitchen, in case he starts hitting her?

(Pause.)

She couldn't find someone more friendly?

ALEŠ

Well ... she had me. The best in all possible worlds ...

(Chuckles.)

It's hard to be picky in a person: you like that, you don't like that ... People come in packages. It's all one package of DNA. He is, or he isn't. Sure you can try ... But if you take one thing away, he's not himself anymore, is he? Collapses like a house of cards.

(Pause.)

That's how it goes: take him if you want. Or you pass.

VIDA

Now, come one. I expected better from you, with your education.

ALEŠ

What?

VIDA

Such clichés! Such male excuses! Is that why you're rough in the streets? Because of your nature? Your DNA?

ALEŠ

I'm not rough in the streets. My electricity's been disconnected, but I own a flat.

VIDA

Firstly, people can adapt. Because we are social creatures. We adapt to be accepted; others change us. If we want to be accepted.

ALEŠ

Yeah. But he didn't care much for that.

VIDA

I'm talking about you. Secondly, and more importantly, we choose people in which no trait is absolutely unacceptable ... Such that we couldn't stand it.

ALEŠ

Or we can't choose.

VIDA

You can always choose.

ALEŠ

(ironically)

Is that so.

Pause.

VIDA

So you're saying that ... such arrangement was OK with you?

ALEŠ

(looks at her for a while)

Ivanka is ... another person. – This *is* something, not to be thrown away.

VIDA

It is something. But ...

ALEŠ

No, you know what I'm saying.

VIDA

I know. It's just ...

ALEŠ

No, you know what I'm saying.

VIDA

(irritated)

I know what you're saying.

ALEŠ

(suddenly)

Jeez, no, sorry, not again. No, Vida, excuse me.

VIDA

I don't like to be interrupted when I speak.

ALEŠ

I didn't mean it like that. I haven't always been like that.

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(Pause.)

Actually I've been like that. Fuck, I've no idea know why. I never yelled, never hit, but I could drive people up the wall. I could return their service in double measure.

(Pause.)

Can I be forgiven?

Vida lies down on the couch.

VIDA

In my opinion things can be forgiven.

ALEŠ

Does Vida forgive?

VIDA

Vida forgives.

Blackout.

10. HURRAH NOSFERATU

VIDA sleeps, feverish. NATAŠA and LUKA watch.

NATAŠA

It's still not right. She breathes too quickly. – It takes some time.

LUKA

But it's been twenty minutes since she got it.

NATAŠA

It'll take at least half an hour before the temperature really drops.

(Pause.))

Come on, go to sleep, Luka.

LUKA

I'm not sleepy. I'll stay with you.

NATAŠA

(Unsure, then doesn't insist.)

You don't have to. He knows perfectly well she's in fever, she'll have seizures, but to cancel it, well, that

LUKA

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It's a reading. It's his job.

NATAŠA

His job? It's not even his reading! He went to listen to some jerk that even he himself can't stand, without the presence of ten crates of

(Stops.)

Your Dad can be funny, you know that? Sometimes he's a bit funny.

Pause.

LUKA

Mum, how's that for a name of the band: Hurrah Nosferatu?

NATAŠA

Nosferatu ... Where did you get this from?

LUKA

It was a graffiti, near our school. We all fell for it – it's hilarious. Hurrah Nosferatu, exactly.

NATAŠA

You know what it means, Nosferatu? Why "Hurrah"?

LUKA

Nosferatu ... is like a dead guy, just not really dead. A vampire, like. And Hurrah ... just means someone's glad that Nosferatu.

NATAŠA

Someone's glad. – Hurrah Nosferatu is a metal name, not a punk name.

LUKA

What do you know.

NATAŠA

I know a little.

LUKA

You remember my painting that used to be exhibited at school? Two years ago?

NATAŠA

Vida Showing the Moon?

LUKA

Yeah, well, you thought it was a funny title, but the two of you looked so beautiful then at the playground that it stuck in me. Vide pointed out the moon, and you both looked so white.

NATAŠA

Yeah, it was a good painting.

LUKA

Could be used as a poster.

NATAŠA

I'm not quite following you.

LUKA

I mean, for the band. For gigs. For covers.

NATAŠA

Vida Showing the Moon?

LUKA

You know what I thought at the moment? – It's weird. But in a way it's nice that Vida has Dravet syndrome. She's so beautiful and white, and so cuddly. She's special.

NATAŠA

Now how did this come into your head?

LUKA

Isn't it true?

NATAŠA

Vida is sick. In her own way. It's not a biggie, not her fault. But not a nice thing either, not even for her. You remember you had chickenpox when you were ten? When we almost had to go to the hospital?

LUKA

She's not sick, she's her!

NATAŠA

She's Nosferatu?

LUKA

Screw metal! The chicks at school put on makeup to look goth and metal. Vida is a punk! The girls are stupid. She's for real!

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(Pause, Nataša touches Vida's forehead.)

NATAŠA

Luka, I'm a chick. Am I stupid too?

LUKA

You're not a chick, stop that shite.

NATAŠA

Really, I'm not? Perhaps you spend too much time with Dad.

(Luka is silent.)

Am I Nosferatu? Since me and Vida are both white. – Or is Dad Nosferatu? He's more of a master of the grotesque

LUKA

OK, Mum, it's a joke, we all said ...

NATAŠA

Sure, it's a joke. But it's not like that. Look: listen to her breathing ... It's not right. It means she's feverish. Her body is fighting the bugs. – That what you've got to do. To fight. To take sides. Do we like the bugs?

LUKA

We don't like the bugs ...

NATAŠA

Are we going to paint the bugs? Are we going to write about them? No, we'll fight the bugs! Attack!

Vida twitches, goes into a convulsive febrile seizure. Nataša holds her head and talks to her softly, looks at her watch. Luka watches.

NATAŠA

Come on, Vida, come on, it will go away, Vida, dear ...

LUKA

Mum, am I going to school tomorrow?

NATAŠA

Why shouldn't you?

The seizure is over, Vida breathes heavily, then sleeps on.

LUKA

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Cause I could get sick leave to help you. Vida is sure to have fever tomorrow too. Dad has to work and he has no sick leave, he's self-employed.

NATAŠA

(Looks at her watch, then at Luka.)

Forty seconds ... Sick leave? Sure, you could be of more help than certain people. – Don't even think of it! I'm on sick leave, you have school!

LUKA

On your own?

NATAŠA

When I can't handle it on my own, I can just as well throw myself in the dustbin! – Holy shit, it's quarter past eleven! – You've got to sleep! Chop chop! Have you brushed your teeth? You have? Come on, chop chop! Off you go! Off to bed!

LUKA

Goodnight, Mum. I'll check on you later.

Leaves.

NATAŠA

Don't you dare! Sleep! You have school to go to!

(When she's alone, she picks up the cell phone, dials, waits.

Then slowly, clearly:)

I'm fucking fed up with your fucking egoism!

Disconnects, turns the cell phone off. Goes to the landline, lifts the receiver and leaves it lying by the phone. Lies down in Vida's bed, switches off the light. Silence.

11. IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

VIDA drinks coffee with NATAŠA and MOTHER who respond in turns, like the same person.

VIDA

You didn't tell me the whole story ... You just said they were separated. You never told me she died. That she was – run over by a car?

MOTHER

Is that what he told you?

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VIDA

Yeah, he told me. Was that after the divorce?

NATAŠA

He says thing like that? That's great.

MOTHER

It's not exactly true. I mean, Mrs Petrač is not quite dead. Far from it!

VIDA

Not dead?

MOTHER

She's very much alive. Works at the Ministry of Labour, which is meta-labor, not just ordinary labour. Works in charities, with special-needs kids, writes articles ...

VIDA

Did they have kids?

NATAŠA

Is that what he says? He may actually be more clever than he looks ... He's after insanity? It's unfair to those of us who eat bread by the sweat of our face.

MOTHER

Never mind the kids, it's irrelevant, because other things are interesting. Why does he say his wife is dead? A wife like that? Let's focus on that.

VIDA

So why did they break up?

MOTHER

Well, we talked about irreconcilable differences, didn't we? He'd always been prone to drinking. Stagnation. Creating, like. While she was active. Added value, in many areas. I'm telling you! What kind of match is that?

VIDA

It could be, if he showed any initiative.

NATAŠA

Huh! That's an idea.

VIDA

Or she could have adapted, in her own way.

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NATAŠA

OK, elaborate. Why should she adapt to an immature person?

VIDA

Well. It's another person, after all. Not to be thrown away.

MOTHER

Vida, I must say I'm not quite following you. Another person? Sure it's not to be thrown away, that's why you don't kill them. This is what it all boils down to. We have someone dead here, and he shouldn't be. Aren't we all here to talk about that, more or less? – It's not a good crowd, Vida, in which people die like that; people shouldn't just die. – If they don't have to.

VIDA

And they don't have to?

MOTHER

Not if you can prevent it! It's not in agreement with our instincts, with social cohesion, nor with the law. Not to mention it's not proper!

VIDA

(Deep in thought: as if starting a new topic:)
Can you imagine a world in which you can't choose?

NATAŠA

So it's all just instincts?

VIDA

That's a possibility. But worse: that there are just coincidences. You do something, and you don't even know what you did.

NATAŠA

That's not coincidence, it's neglect. Coincidence has a whole different definition.

MOTHER

What are you talking about? It's murder! Death! Where's the coincidence?

VIDA

Is it possible that there are different coincidences in different worlds?

NATAŠA

Which worlds?

VIDA

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We're just talking, no strings attached. Why are you so nervous? Tell what your instinct says. We're contemplating together.

NATAŠA

Petrič is dead, dead for real, and this guy's wife is dead in his words! Is that the way you see it? It's the way I see it! One is, the other isn't, but where's credibility? Do I have to explain you your job? How many cues do you need? Don't turn into him, please. What do you want to know?

VIDA

Why.

MOTHER

Why.

(They both stare intently at Vida, who thinks hard and says nothing.)

Under no circumstances can you expect of me, representing the people here, to want to know that.

NATAŠA

I understand you want to use everything that comes to his mind. But watch how far you go. Because he's not insane, I'll never believe that. He's guilty, but not insane.

VIDA

Why did you say the question of kids was irrelevant?

MOTHER

Because he never cared for them much! That's why! What happened to them matters to his wife. You shouldn't forget that. He wasn't there.

Pause. Nataša and Mother rise.

VIDA

I don't like it when you talk to me like I don't know what's important.

MOTHER

Perhaps you don't have much choice.

NATAŠA

I won't bug you anymore. But the next time you see me, the fun is over.

VIDA

You feel you must threaten me?

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MOTHER

Who's threatening you? The clock is ticking. You have to arrive at something in a foreseeable future. I'm helping, but there's the clock, I can't do it for you.

VIDA

Who's asking you? We're talking as friends.

NATAŠA

Sure we're friends, that's why I'm telling you. – Do you eat fruit? You don't look to well.

VIDA

I take vitamins.

MOTHER

Never mind the pills. You have to eat natural nutrients. It's time for citruses, marvellous pineapple is to be had. Winter apples. Never allow your natural resistance to collapse. Not in these times.

VIDA

Like you care about me immensely.

NATAŠA

Yeah, here I care about you. Where I can look after you. But out there it's a different gig altogether. I'll slice you up. No kidding, if you're not prepared. You have to stay fit.

VIDA

(infantile)
I'll eat citruses.

NATAŠA

Do what you can. I'll do what I can.

Gives her a wink. Nataša and Mother leave. Blackout.

12. THE SECOND CONVERSATION

ALEŠ and VIDA.

VIDA

There are a few more things that I find interesting, because I want to understand ...
Do you mind if I ask you personal questions?

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ALEŠ

I am a person, ask personal questions.

VIDA

It's important that I understand relationships between people.

ALEŠ

It's quite a task.

VIDA

Between particular people in this situation, that's quite enough. Everyone has a task. You don't want to tell me, at all, how Mr Petrič died.

Aleš is silent.

VIDA

I saw police pictures. The scene. It was horrible. Unreasonable. The blood on his mouth, he was all blue. Enough to make your heart stop. I can hardly believe you would be capable of something like that. You wouldn't believe God was capable of that, actually, but that's a different story. – Yet you don't deny it.

ALEŠ

What should I deny? I was there ... or I wasn't. I don't know. Did I want him to die? Not really. I just wanted it all to end. – It just happened. So ... – What can I tell you?

VIDA

Uh-huh! – Well, this is finally a statement, at least I see one, that's what I'm hired for. – You remember nothing!

ALEŠ

I saw him too.

VIDA

Let's make this clear. Does it often happen to you to lose your memory when you drink? That you don't remember? Particularly unpleasant things?

ALEŠ

I'm guilty of that. Is that enough? Isn't half of it forgiven if you confess?

Pause.

VIDA

Mrs Ivanka, she was with you ... how long? Two years?

ALEŠ

(wearily)

One year, eight months, thirteen days ...

VIDA

No need to prank. She had previous relationships, didn't she? Was she married?

ALEŠ

No. But she did have a guy, yes.

VIDA

She has two children. How much did you want to know about her life? Have you met the kids?

ALEŠ

Yeah, she has a son and a daughter.

VIDA

You know them?

ALEŠ

No.

(Quotes Ivanka's manner.)

As healthy as little goats. The big one's a boy, the little one a girl. As lively as crickets.

VIDA

You've never met them?

ALEŠ

I don't know. Maybe I saw one once, but can't be sure.

VIDA

What do you mean, you can't be sure?

ALEŠ

Look, the situation was ... a bit sensitive. Ivanka was ... hit by a car once. She crossed the road ... stepped from the shop, and right in front of a car. She's never careful when she carries her wine. The guy drove slowly, only stepped on it after he saw her rolling on the ground and me running there. She lay there bloodied, she hit the pavement with her jaw ... I took her to a nearby restaurant, so she could wash and we could see what's going on! But they wouldn't let us in. I mean, I can understand them. – When the car hit her she had such a fright that she pissed

herself. Really! Her trousers dripping with piss, and blood all over her face. Can you imagine? And them – a vegan restaurant.

VIDA

So what did you do?

ALEŠ

Their heart is broken when they have to cut an aubergine in half. A woman with blood on her face is more than they can handle.

VIDA

What did you do?

ALEŠ

Well, it was strange. I was just arguing they should call an ambulance ... when there was a pretty little boy standing in front of her, saying: Mum.

VIDA

No!

ALEŠ

Yeah! He looked at her and said: Mum.

VIDA

What did she say?

ALEŠ

She went as white as a ghost, so that blood on her face looked even weirder, but then a guy grabbed the boy and pulled him away, stood in front of me and said: how would you like a punch in the face?

VIDA

Who was that?

ALEŠ

I have no idea. I was in no mood to ask him.

VIDA

What about her?

ALEŠ

Well, there wasn't much we could do. She had a good spitting, then we went home for a wash. From the Old Town to Šiška, on foot. I didn't ask her about the boy, is that's what you want to know.

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Pause.

VIDA

You could have.

ALEŠ

Yeah, that's what I think too. Sometimes you should show more interest in how the other feels, even if you think you know. But there you go, sometimes we fail. – Anyway, I have no idea why I'm telling you this!

VIDA

Alright, so you tell me why you are here! That's why we are beating around the bush here, because you don't tell me what happened and why!

ALEŠ

What happened – what do you mean? – It was suicide, fucking hell, that's what they put in the report!

VIDA

Suicide?

ALEŠ

You think it was me? Look in the report! In what way could her death be in my interest?

VIDA

Whose?

ALEŠ

I have no idea why she did it. I loved her. She was ... the same sort of person as me. You know that? It so rare you can see that. Plus she was of the opposite sex. I've met another one like that before, but he was a guy! – If you ever meet someone like that, stick to him. Have you ever?

VIDA

Well ... I don't know ...

ALEŠ

Everyone should meet someone like that in his lifetime. The same sense of humour too! Actually, she laughed at my jokes more than me at hers, but it still counts as the same kind of humour. Very similar worldviews! If things went tough, we both responded in the same way, rationally and with a certain distance, certain humour ... It's survival. You get it? A will to survive. And then, all of a sudden, she goes and

throws herself off the balcony? From the eleventh floor? Can you understand it?
Because I sure as hell can't!

VIDA
Are you talking about ...

ALEŠ
(Restrains himself.)
Who do you think I'm talking about?

VIDA
About your wife. Is that right?

ALEŠ
About my wife, fucking hell! Who am I talking about?

VIDA
For a while I fretted you were talking about ...

ALEŠ
Who?

VIDA
About Ivanka.

ALEŠ
What Ivanka?

VIDA
Mrs Poredoš. The one the police are looking for, but can't find her.

Aleš stares at her in disbelief, then rises.

ALEŠ
What do you want from me?

VIDA
Nothing. I want nothing from you.

Aleš starts walking around the table.

VIDA
I just want to defend you. That's what I'm here for.

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Aleš slowly walks around the table and Vida in bigger and bigger circles.

ALEŠ

You want to defend me. – You want to defend me.

Circles, then leaves the room. Blackout.

13. STATUS EPILEPTICUS

VIDA lies on the table with her eyes closed, her head markedly turned right, her breathing tense and slow. MOTHER wears the doctor's uniform, taking her temperature, ALEŠ appears nervous.

MOTHER

How did the disease start? What kind of seizures she has?

ALEŠ

All seizures from the textbook, and some of those not in the textbook. We explained that a million times on admission. Dr Balmazović is her neurologist. It's her we want to see.

MOTHER

Yes, I know, but it's hospital admission, I must put down medical history. Dr Balmazović has just finished her night duty, she's going home.

ALEŠ

Doctor, she's in status epilepticus, she doesn't have a cold!

MOTHER

No need to get upset, sir, it's not the first time a see a postictal child.

ALEŠ

(Restrains himself.)

I never said you were not experienced, but it's a first time for everything. Her medical history is Dravet syndrome. And she's not postictal, she's in a non-convulsive status. She needs an IV line to stop it!

MOTHER

(Smiles.)

Non-convulsive?

ALEŠ

(Lifts Vida's eyelid; her eye is rolled far right.)

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In the left hemisphere! Doesn't it count without convulsions? She got 15 ml buccally, I don't dare giving her more on my own! Her brain's been frying for an hour and a half, don't take her temperature, put her on EEG at least!

MOTHER

(Takes out the thermometer, looks at it.)
Thirty-seven.

ALEŠ

Then call another neurologist!

MOTHER

(She grabs Vida's head, which is turned right, and forcefully straightens it up, opens her mouth with a tongue depressor and looks inside.)
Sure you'll see a *neurologist*, I'm not sending her to gastro. Believe me, she's past the worst.

ALEŠ

I've told you: at nursery, she turned her head and eyes right and fell. She got the first dose of midazolam late, they hesitated too because they saw no convulsions. After ten minutes they gave her the second dose and called me. I arrived in fifteen minutes, called the ambulance. We came here. Her eyes are not rolled right because of tonsillitis.

MOTHER

Sir, your daughter is in the safest place for her right now.

ALEŠ

This can't be happening.

Enters NATAŠA in the doctor's uniform, utterly exhausted. Mother glances at her.

MOTHER

Oh, Dr Balmazović, are you still here?

Mother walks over to the desk, starts filling in the documentation.

NATAŠA

They told me Vida was here.

ALEŠ

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She's been seizing for an hour and a half, fifteen minutes of it were spent on throat examination.

Nataša lifts Vida's eyelid; her eyes are still rolled right. Nataša becomes upset.

NATAŠA

Off to EEG, let's go! There's someone's inside right now, it'll be free in ten minutes.
(in disbelief:)
An hour and a half?

MOTHER

I'll send the file right after her.

Nataša pushes the table with Vida out the door. Aleš send Mother a hostile looks, rushes behind her. Mother is filling in the forms. Blackout.

14. ACROSS THE WATER

VIDA alone, singing, dancing

VIDA

There's a cold star over the city
A light goes out in the dark
Someone has closed the window and I know it wasn't you
 This river has no end to empty its waters
 This desert has no ants to eat up my heart
I'm just dreaming, I just wonder
Because I can't reach the other side
What will you, without a paddle, bring me over across the dark.
 This river has no end to empty its waters
 This desert has no ants to eat up my heart
It's quiet here, bring me fire
That will lick my frozen bones
Bring me your lips and the grasses, and untie all of my ropes
 This river has no end to empty its waters
 This desert has no ants to eat up my heart

Blackout

15. THE THIRD CONVERSATION

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ALEŠ and VIDA, open folders in front of her.

VIDA

Only five days to trial, Mr Petrač ... But I'm not about to lose hope. Am I? It's my job. Did you remember anything new? Something you haven't told me?

ALEŠ

Where is Ivanka?

VIDA

Nothing new regarding her ... Do you have any ideas?

ALEŠ

Have you looked for her at work?

VIDA

At work?

ALEŠ

It just crossed my mind.

Pause.

VIDA

Yeah, great.

(Pause.)

Would you mind if a doctor examined you? Just a routine exam, to get a medical opinion before trial. Any opinion. But expert, objective. At least something. I suppose it could be good for us.

(Pause.)

Would you mind? Without your consent there's no point, but it'd be good. Because you don't look too well, I should tell you.

(Aleš smiles, shrugs.)

Alright, I'll take care of that. Don't you worry, you should just ... be yourself. – Let's go back for a while. Remembered anything?

ALEŠ

Everyone has to die. Including you.

VIDA

Is that what you remembered? – But most people don't die of banging their heads against the floor.

ALEŠ

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What do you know, there could be a surprise waiting for you. Take my wife, for example ...

VIDA

Your wife again? – I must apologize, but I'm not sure this will get us anywhere.

Pause, they look at each other.

ALEŠ

Can I tell you about a dream I had? Not last night. I must have been fifteen, sixteen when I had it.

VIDA

Is this now ...

ALEŠ

A crazy dream.

VIDA

... relevant?

(Gives up.)

OK.

ALEŠ

I woke up alone in my room with a terrible feeling, dry mouth and like there's no air in the room. Had no idea why. Had to force myself to remember that I had a dream. – I must've watched a strange film the night before or something, don't know. I dreamt that two men were fighting in the street near our house. With knives, and then suddenly one of them stabbed the other in the stomach. The stabbed one said: Salutes to you, that's quite a knife you have. And he pulled it out and handed it to me, and I realised it was actually me who fought him, and I'd stabbed him and left the knife in the wound. And he lay down and died. I went home, and there was another dead guy lying by the footpath. I also pulled the knife out of his stomach. I came to our house and mother was outside, talking to the neighbours. I hid the knives behind my back and said hi, then slipped inside. In the kitchen I washed them and hid them somewhere up in my room. Then I woke up.

VIDA

Alright ...

ALEŠ

Only it was even worse awake! Worse than the dream. It was like the air had thinned. Had no idea why, perhaps the *internal enemy* attacked us with poison

gases. You know, in the former regime they prepared us for that at school. You couldn't breathe. There was no one. No one to call. What was going to I say ...

VIDA

It's a story about your hard times as a child.

ALEŠ

I had no hard times as a child! I had great parents!

VIDA

But you were a bit weird, it seems.

ALEŠ

(confidentially)

One thing you have to know. The dead are different. You can't talk to them reasonably.

VIDA

I'd say.

ALEŠ

They put a knife in your hand. And you're just there, staring.

VIDA

Aha.

ALEŠ

Which brings me to the aforementioned wife. I wanted to tell you about my wife.

VIDA

Is this really necessary?

ALEŠ

Look, my wife died during childbirth. We expected a girl. It would be nice, having already a son ...

VIDA

A girl.

ALEŠ

It was a medical error. The gynaecologist had told us earlier, the foetus was too big for her pelvis, she'd need Caesarean. But when we arrived at maternity they said: no problem, Mme, we'll have a look, we handle stuff, huh, Caesarean, are you kidding, we'd pulled bigger fish out of the pond, haven't we? Or what did we go to school for?

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VIDA

Mr Petrač ...

ALEŠ

(shouting)

I was there! We pushed! We got nowhere! Pushed hard for four hours! So they said: these contractions are rather weak, we'll add some. Nurse! Oxytocin, please!

VIDA

Petrač ...

ALEŠ

And it went on! For two more hours. I thought' she'd explode like a watermelon, she was all blue. There was no pause between contractions. She was as hard as a plank. Then all of a sudden she went all white, like a sheet, and said: Oh, now I'm going to die. She felt something tearing up inside her. The kid couldn't move. The womb went! Phuff! I just stood there holding her, way before any doctor managed to come by. A burst womb! And you know what's funny?

VIDA

These excesses of yours are just ... serving their own purpose!

ALEŠ

I was there with her. And there was air, I was able to call out, it wasn't like in the dream. I could yell! It was possible to yell! But still, there was no one to call.

Pause.

VIDA

(Takes advantage of the silence.)

I took a certain liberty. I hope you don't mind. I called your wife

(Aleš looks at her.)

I called her. I asked her if she wanted to testify. A character witness. She'd lived with you ... for a while. There is no Mrs Ivanka, and anyway ... she wouldn't be the most reliable of witnesses, you know what I mean.

ALEŠ

Vida?

VIDA

For the target audience in court. – You might be glad to know she said yes. She was intrigued. She had no idea what happened to you at all. Nobody told her. Especially not yourself. Why not?

ALEŠ

Vida?

VIDA

She was surprised. Not to say sympathetic ...

ALEŠ

Vida. You can't. Nataša is as crazy as a peach-orchard sow.

VIDA

What ... is she?

ALEŠ

She's crazy. She has nothing to say that would have anything to do with anything.
(Pause.)

It was impossible to live with a crazy woman. You know she thought you were dead?

VIDA

That – I was dead?

ALEŠ

Yeah. She thought you died. Can you imagine? For a while I kept telling her: yeah, sure, Nataša, OK, just so she wouldn't go mad. But it wasn't easy. Can you imagine?

He rises.

VIDA

Mr Petrač ...

She moves away.

ALEŠ

What came over her? Where did it come from? I always knew that something great would become of you.

VIDA

Mr Petrač ...

ALEŠ

Because there was no chance you could've died. You were – if I'm alive, you were so much more, because you've always been. More alive than me. You've always truly lived. You were you.

VIDA

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(Moves away from him.)
You don't drink in prison? No litres of wine for breakfast?

ALEŠ
Come on, look at you. An attorney ... a wonderful thing.

VIDA
Is your diet well-balanced?

ALEŠ
I've always thought you were into working with people. Because you wanted to talk, even when nobody understood you – you stood in front of a kid in the playground and said: who-are-you? And he fucked off.

VIDA
(Keeps moving away, starts climbing the furniture)
Should we ring up the warder? Just so he could look at us?

ALEŠ
Just how much concern you caused us ... But you were so ... beautiful. So white. So naughty! So *perfect!*

VIDA
Was I perfect?

ALEŠ
I mean, I'd prefer it without the seizures, for your sake if nothing else, but how could I've wanted you to be different? You were alive by me! You were a complete person – always! Who could've ever thought there was anything wrong with you? What moron?

VIDA
(becoming coquettish)
Do you have nightmares? Do you feel tense at night?

ALEŠ
Yes, sometimes; sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night as tense as fuck, my arm is twitching and I'm not breathing ...

VIDA
(speaking over him)
Are your bones sensitive to touch? Do your hands shake? A feeling of pressure in the skull? Do you feel you're about to burst at the next loud noise you hear?

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ALEŠ

... and you sit on my chest and you look at me. You look at me, but such a sweet little, little ... smaller than ... – I'm lonely, fuck! But I'm not going crazy, not like Nataša.

(When she stops:)

Yes! To be completely honest, sleeping is a problem. I can't sleep on my own. I can't if I go fuck myself.

VIDA

(simultaneous with his next line, to the melody of *Mi se imamo radi*.)

Daddy is sleepy, our little Daddy, Daddy is sleepy, our little Daddy!

ALEŠ

And you know, you volatility? Those seizures of yours, your openness, cuddliness ... All from such a tiny, such a minimal coincidence, one tiny swap! Not your fault at all! Neither mine. Do you agree it's not our fault? – It's nobody's fault. No hard feelings?

VIDA

How could I have hard feelings if it's nobody's fault?

ALEŠ

In the SCN1A gene, the one that codes the design for sodium channels in neurons ...

VIDA

Sodium? Come oooooon.

ALEŠ

Right there, at the end of exon 4, one amino acid was swapped for another one, one in three billion pairs!

VIDA

Three billion?!

ALEŠ

Guanine instead of adenine! I swear! And you came by! If we took that away, it wouldn't be it! We'd take away the package!

VIDA

The package?

ALEŠ

You wouldn't be you! All kids with a similar mutation are quite similar in character and seizures. Anywhere on the sodium channel: the meds don't help, ataxia, developmental delays, speech problems, impulsive ...

VIDA

So sodium? It was all sodium?

ALEŠ

... many die, but many more don't ... But I loved you! OK, I'm not saying I loved every one of your seizures, we're not lunatics here, but by every seizure you were mine!

VIDA

So that's all?

ALEŠ

That's all!

VIDA

So how come I'm different now?

ALEŠ

What do you mean different? You're no different. Everything else is different. You're here, and in makes no sense ... There's nothing ... I wanted to make gnocchi for you, and you ... What did you ... Vida! My Vida, for fuck sake. Do you have any idea how much I loved you? Have you any idea how much I loved you! I-was-not ... I was not there, I'm sorry! You were alone, I wasn't there, I wasn't ... You were ... Vida! You little ruffian! My little hooligan!

Vida jumps at him and starts banging his head against the floor. Aleš keeps calling her by her name and nicknames. Enter MOTHER and NATAŠA who tear Vida away from him, put her in a straitjacket. Vida screams and resists.

MOTHER

(To Aleš:)

Didn't I tell you? You always have to have it your way? Are you a human at all? What are you? Who are you, are you normal?

They drag her out. Silence, Aleš looks after them, adjusts his collar, puts Vida's papers back in her file, takes them and leaves.

16. FAREWELL

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ALEŠ, NATAŠA, LUKA and MOTHER; VIDA is bloodied around her mouth, says farewell. Noisy music. Vida leaves, farewell kisses. The music goes on. The remaining four make toasts. Blackout.

17. DEPARTURE

The room is empty, music the same, but much quieter. Enters ALEŠ, takes his coat off the hanger. Waits. After a while, NATAŠA and LUKA appear. Aleš helps Nataša put on her coat. They walk to the door.

As they step out the door, Aleš instinctively wants to turn right. Nataša stops, kisses him, Luka does the same, which obviously confuses Aleš. They turn left and leave. Aleš stands staring after them for a long time.

The music goes silent. Aleš stands in the door, his head bent. Blackout.