

Tjaša Mislej

OUR WAREHOUSE

(Translated by Barbara Skubic)

CHARACTERS

Four workers in the warehouse of a hypermarket :

EVELYN, 27

MARIA, 28

SUZY, 34

VERA, 59

Other characters:

GREBOVIČ a.k.a. GREBA, the Manager, 50

LOST CUSTOMER

B. G., the new shipping clerk

DIRECTOR

JOURNALIST

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When pigs fly

Evelyn alone in the warehouse.

EVELYN: My darlings, I am so glad that you've come! I love you. Ich liebe dich. I'll sing you a song about love. A song about love. That old, relentless love that you can't forget no matter how hard you try ... The love etched into all the cells of your body. (*sings*) "When the stars were shining bright you held me tight ..."

Suzy hollers from the locker room.

SUZY: Evelyn!

EVELYN: What?!

SUZY: You promised you wouldn't!

EVELYN (*sings*): "I was happy, happy, happy in your arms ..."

Suzy comes from the locker room.

SUZY: You said you're done with this song! You know it reminds me of him.

EVELYN: So?

SUZY: You promised!

EVELYN: Stop whimpering. Be glad that he's gone. (*sings*) "Speaking the words of love ..."

SUZY: Stop, stop!

EVELYN (*sings*): "You betrayed my heart, my naïve heart ..."

SUZY: Can you shut up?!

EVELYN: Haha, sorry, won't do it again!

Vera exits the locker room. Behind her, Maria walks slowly and sadly. Vera tosses Evelyn and Suzy their work coats.

VERA: What are you two doing again? Put on these and silence, both of you. I don't want to hear from you again.

Evelyn and Suzy begrudgingly put on the coats. Then all four workers drag the boxes with merchandise up and down, wheel massive metal racks back and forth and stack tins of different sizes up and down. Evelyn stops stacking.

VERA: What is it?

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EVELYN: I have to say something.

VERA: Oh, really?

SUZY: Why is it always you who has to start talking ...

EVELYN: Because I'm the first one to volunteer. I'm Evelyn. My name is Evelyn, and I'm a singer. (*Vera sneers.*) Yes, I'm a singer, okay? I'm also a dancer, and I can act. (*Vera sneers louder.*) Yes, fine! Right now, I'm working in a warehouse! But this is just temporary until I find something better!

VERA: Dream on, baby. You know when ... when pigs fly! Haha.

EVELYN: Insolent tarts. They won't let me say... Yes, okay. I'm working in a shop warehouse. But this is not just your ordinary store. This is a massive store. A truly, truly huge store!

SUZY: Massive!

EVELYN: Don't interrupt! Where was I? This store is so massive that you can't walk from one end to another in a week. It's so huge that you have to buy a map at the entrance, or you won't find your way out.

SUZY: Supermegastore!

EVELYN: It is so immense that women deliver babies while waiting for bread, men have to shave their stubble, and seniors take leave and depart to the other world ...

SUZY: No, that other word ... What is it? That word ...

MARIA: Hypermegamarket?

SUZY: That one, yes!

EVELYN: I'm Evelyn and I work in a warehouse. But not for much longer. I won't get stuck here, like some, right?

VERA: Are you done? Start stacking! These tins won't get on the shelves by themselves.

SUZY: Fifty boxes of red beans to stack!

MARIA: Imported from: Chile.

SUZY: These beans have seen more of the world than I have.

EVELYN: Every pip has seen more of the world than you have.

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SUZY: Once I open my own florist shop, I'll go to flower shows.

VERA: Yes, yes. Of course, you will. This is Suzy, and she's been working in the store warehouse for eight years.

EVELYN, MARIA, SUZY: Hypermegamarket!

EVELYN: Suzy is saving up to open a florist shop. I hate gardens, soil and slugs.

VERA: I'm Vera. A few years short of retirement, and I have to haul these bloody boxes around. My lower back is doing me in!

SUZY: The board refused her application for disability.

EVELYN: There's nothing wrong with her.

VERA: I'm going to appeal. I've been paying insurance all my life, and now in my old days, I'm struggling with these boxes ...

EVELYN: Eh, she's the oldest and the liveliest. And the loudest.

VERA: You don't say.

MARIA: Every day, the same. Stack, pack, label. Open, cut, shift the boxes up and down, up and down, upppp and downnn. Never-ending. Once you think that everything's been stacked and when you almost sigh a sigh of relief – bam! They bring in new ones. Boxes and boxes.

EVELYN: This one here is the sophisticated one! Do tell yourself.

MARIA: Tell what? That in reality, I have no clue who I am, what I want and what I'll be doing in five years?

VERA: You'll be doing the same as now, darling. What do you think? Maria is a student.

EVELYN: Oh, no. She's already graduated.

SUZY: Advanced degree ... What is it? Master of prose and literature?

EVELYN: Cow! Comparative literature and literary theory!

SUZY: Sorry.

MARIA: I want to write. I'd like to write.

SUZY: A writer! Sounds posh.

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EVELYN: I don't need a degree to work here. I don't need a piece of paper to know how to pick rotten tomatoes out of the pile. And label each piece – plop, plop, plop! And nod to the boss when she comes in to annoy us.

MARIA: I want to write. I have to write. I'd like to write about people who live extraordinary lives

VERA: As far as I'm concerned, you can write the inventory. Greba will be pleased.

SUZY: Evelyn really knows how to suck up to the boss.

EVELYN: You're just jealous. She promised me a promotion!

VERA: Promotion?! I was here when she and her classmates were still shoplifting chewing gum. I'm the shift supervisor. What kind of promotion has she promised to you?

EVELYN: Don't worry, my old bat. I'll be out of this hole soon. I have no plans to get old here and turn into a piece of inventory. Thanks, but no thanks.

SUZY: A rack or a code reader?

MARIA: This could be a short story: "How I Became a Code Reader".

VERA: How about you nattered less and worked more, eh?! Pipe down and get to work!

EVELYN: The old bat is cranky again.

SUZY: It's gonna be another long one.

The workers stack merchandise. A shopper enters the warehouse.

CUSTOMER: I beg your pardon ...

EVELYN: What does this one want ...

SUZY: How many times do we have to tell you?

CUSTOMER: I would just like to ask.

EVELYN: Not now, not here.

VERA: This gentleman doesn't even work in the warehouse.

SUZY: Sir, you don't work here.

VERA: Every now and then he wanders in. By mistake.

EVELYN: Entry is forbidden to anyone not employed here!

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CUSTOMER: Just one question, please.

SUZY: Sir, you can't be here.

CUSTOMER: Where do you keep ...

VERA: We can't help you.

CUSTOMER: ... Japanese Satsuma flavoured Greek yoghurt ...

EVELYN: Sayonara!

CUSTOMER: ... with the Swedish goji berry jam ...

SUZY: Ask the shop assistants.

CUSTOMER: ... with the seeds of Spanish sesame from Andalusia? No shop assistant anywhere! None! I am all alone, lost!

Vera, Suzy and Evelyn are pushing the shopper out.

VERA: Talk to Information.

SUZY: Everything will be just fine, Sir. Here, you can get everything you want, what you might want and what you'd better not want.

EVELYN: High quality at reasonable prices and all that other stuff that sounds nice.

VERA: Because we care!

They push the shopper through the door.

EVELYN: Damn, he's heavy. He consumes too much yoghurt.

SUZY: Thank God we got rid of him.

VERA: Every customer would like to browse through the warehouse now or what. Not while I'm the shift supervisor!

EVELYN: That won't be long then. I'll get my promotion.

MARIA: *The height made her dream crazy dreams at night again. It's hard to sleep at 5,000 metres. Strong gusts of wind battered the tent all night long. She drank her tea and ate a hardboiled egg. She didn't know when and where her next meal would be. As she left the base camp, thousands of stars were twinkling in the sky.*

VERA: Maria?

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MARIA: *The clouds from the previous night were blown away. It was a clear night. In the distance, she could see the mountain top that rose proudly towards the stars.*

VERA: Maria?! Have you, by any chance, stacked everything?

MARIA: What? Not yet.

VERA (*passes her a box*): Then stack! The nerve of this one ... They'd daydream and stargaze, who'll put in an honest day of work?!

The workers are stacking products.

EVELYN: Shouldn't the bell for lunch ring already?

SUZY: Yeah, the time is right.

VERA: And they'd want lunch immediately. When I started work, there was no lunch. I filled up on porridge in the morning to last me through the day.

EVELYN: Why is there no bell?

SUZY: Where's the bell?!

EVELYN: We want the bell!

VERA: Be quiet!

The lunch bell rings.

Lunch break and the big news

MARIA: The bell that breaks that working spell.

SUZY: Finally!

MARIA: If only the right to a lunch break stirred us away from thinking about our miserable existence. Cheers.

EVELYN: Lunch, girls! Yes!

SUZY: Smoke break!

Vera unwraps her sandwich. Suzy lights up. Evelyn wolfs down a choco bar. Maria is making notes in her notebook and bites into an apple.

VERA: Hey! Have you paid for this apple?

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MARIA: Hello? Of course, I have.

VERA: Just asking.

EVELYN: The old bat always eats a sandwich. The same sandwich. For 30 years.

VERA: What do you know? You weren't even born.

EVELYN: Luncheon meat, mayo, gherkins. Correct? And yesterday's bun.

VERA: What's it to you!

SUZY: We get them at a reduced price. Bon appétit, Veri. Enjoy!

VERA: Won't you be eating?

SUZY: Not now.

EVELYN: Suze! Are you done? Come on, let's play.

SUZY: I just want to finish the ciggie.

EVELYN: We're not allowed to smoke anymore anyways. Come.

SUZY: No, please. I don't feel like it.

EVELYN: Just throw this shit away. Come on, let's play. Please, Please, Suzy!

MARIA: The woman can't have any peace.

EVELYN: Pleeeeease, Suze!

SUZY: Okay, then! What do you want?

EVELYN: Let's play the same thing as before.

SUZY: A talk show?

EVELYN: Yes. That is the best. You start.

SUZY: Me? How?

VERA: Poor Suzy. As per usual, she does not know what to do.

EVELYN: You know how to do it.

SUZY: I don't know ...

EVELYN: Begin, begin, begin!

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SUZY: Okay, then. Let's sit down here. What do you say? Dear spectators, dear audience ... I am honoured to have a special guest with me here today. Is that alright?

EVELYN: Go on!

SUZY: ... today we have with us ... a very famous person. Very, very famous.

EVELYN: Yes, thank you, thank you.

SUZY: Thank you for coming here. Really, thank you. Thank you for the –

EVELYN: go on! Tell the people who I am.

SUZY: Of course ... She is ... You are ... A very famous – singer?

EVELYN: No!

SUZY: Actress!?

EVELYN: Yes, yes. Now ask me something.

SUZY: Okay, okay ... Umm ...

EVELYN: Ask me something that will move people, you know. Something that will make me open up.

SUZY: Erm ... I don't know what to ask. All this feels so weird. I'm sorry.

EVELYN: Do you have to spoil everything?

VERA: Girls, the break is about to be over ...

EVELYN: No, it's not over yet! Let's play something else! Vera, what did we watch last night?

VERA: We were in the doghouse because of – you know who. (*points at Maria*)

EVELYN: Fuck, true! A whole fucking evening without television.

MARIA: It wasn't my fault.

VERA: Blah, blah, blah.

EVELYN: Well, what did we watch the day before yesterday?

SUZY: I know, but won't tell you.

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EVELYN: So now you'll play that you're offended. As if I didn't remember. Some stupid romantic film it was. "We're in the world to find our other half, our soul mate that was our fate!" I saw you sob.

SUZY: Shut up!

MARIA: *During the ascent, her thoughts were fixated on the mountain, as if pressed against it with lead. When she was standing atop the 8,000-metre high mountain, the highest altitude a woman has ever reached, for a moment she felt a part of the immortal beauty of the mountain, as something complete and perfect. The female record was not enough for her. She soon started dreaming about climbing higher, higher than anyone else in the world. The heights calmed her. They gave her the sense of being untouchable, invulnerable, as if she drank the cup of immortality.*

EVELYN: Our Maria is explaining things she has never experienced herself, and she doesn't actually know and which, in reality, are of interest to nobody, really.

MARIA: I'm ignoring that.

VERA: Let her be.

EVELYN: I apologise. Isn't it a waste of time?

VERA: I agree with that. She could, for example, use it to clean up.

SUZY: You don't understand. She's writing an important book about important women.

EVELYN: As if we didn't hear about it a hundred times. Female heroes. It's trendy nowadays.

MARIA: What do you know!? Turn on the TV!

VERA: Television is scheduled for the evening, after we're done with everything. If we're done with everything.

EVELYN: After the shower. First, queue for the shower, then television!

SUZY: I'm the first one for the shower today.

EVELYN: Isn't today my turn?

SUZY: No, mine. Look, it's written here. (*points at the columns on the wall*)

EVELYN: Okay. I'm the first one for the remote. Look there. (*points at the second column on the wall*) It's Talents tonight. I'm not showering, so I don't miss them.

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VERA: You little slattern!

EVELYN: What are we playing, come on?!

SUZY: What about top model?

EVELYN: Top model? How are we going to compete for a top model in these disgusting work coats and cheap plastic clogs?! Are you fucking kidding me?

VERA: You're so vulgar!

SUZY: No, Evelyn. I'm sorry, I thought ...

VERA: Such a pretty girl, but so vulgar. In my time, girls were different.

EVELYN: Chillax, my old bat.

The manager, Mrs GREBOVIČ, enters the warehouse.

EVELYN: Khm, Greba.

SUZY: Greba.

MARIA: Greba.

VERA: Good morning, Mrs Grebovič. How is it going in the office?

GREBOVIČ: Don't even ask. What about you – eating again?

VERA: It's lunch break. The girls will be done any moment now.

GREBOVIČ: Has the merchandise arrived?

VERA: Not yet.

GREBOVIČ: When they deliver it, you'll have to shelve it all. Today. I don't want any piles anywhere. The Director is coming for a visit tomorrow.

VERA: Aha.

GREBOVIČ: A very important person. The Director of our entire region!

EVELYN: Really? What an honour. We'll make a special effort.

GREBOVIČ: He'll check the entire store. Including the warehouse. Have I already told you that he's the Director of the entire region?

EVELYN: Super.

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VERA: Aha, aha.

GREBOVIČ: Look at the state of this place. Everything has to be stacked neatly. By tomorrow!

VERA: And it will be.

MARIA: No questions about it.

GREBOVIČ: Better for you. I got an email that they're planning to optimise the work process.

EVELYN: Oh, really? Great.

GREBOVIČ: This means downsizing. There're too many of you.

EVELYN: Oh.

GREBOVIČ: I'll come and check.

Manager Grebovič leaves.

EVELYN: Yuck! Bloody nasty pig.

SUZY: Have you heard? Downsizing. I'm sure I'll get the sack. I'm sure it will be me. Oh, fuck, oh, fuck!

VERA: Suze, calm down.

EVELYN: Greba the Pig always says that.

MARIA: Classic. Intimidation to keep us in check. This is their tactic. They want us to be frightened. We can't let them.

EVELYN: And she's always the smart one. Why do you have to dispense your wisdom, eh?

MARIA: They also want us to fight amongst ourselves.

The bell announces the end of the lunch break.

VERA: End of fun. Go back to work! We're not going to bed until we've sorted everything out.

SUZY: No work, no money.

VERA: No bees, no honey! Even the minister says so.

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EVELYN: Damn, we'll never finish. I'll miss Talents.

MARIA: Eh, sometimes, my colleagues are so ...

The workers stack merchandise, stick labels, clean around the warehouse.

The merchandise arrives

The workers tidy and clean the warehouse.

SUZY: Vera, what will you cook on Sunday if you're free?

VERA: Depends on whether my old man feels like rice or potatoes. My old man is a sensitive one.

EVELYN: Mhm. Yeah, yeah.

SUZY: I've been thinking about making stuffed peppers. Seeing that we have them on special offer.

VERA: It's not the season. They're no good now.

SUZY: They're on special.

EVELYN: Not again.

VERA: Make Szegedin goulash. Cabbage is also on offer. I'll tell you how to make the Szegedin. First, you sauté the onions, then you throw in some finely chopped carrots, but careful, they must be very finely ...

EVELYN: They're constantly talking about food. What they'll cook on Sunday, what they'll eat, and when they'll shit ... Who cares!

SUZY: I'm sorry, Evelyn.

MARIA: It reminds me of a performance. There were seven cooks. They kept peeling potatoes throughout. Nothing else.

VERA: You know what?! Don't listen if it bothers you!

EVELYN: And how should I do that? How can I not hear you – in here?

VERA: Your problem, sugar.

MARIA: In theory, a person can switch off certain senses if she practises. If you practised every day, you could neutralise the sounds ...

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EVELYN: Here we go.

MARIA: You could selectively receive environmental triggers.

EVELYN: Being a smartass again. Vera?!

VERA: The boxes are standing there, and you are fantasising like there's no tomorrow. We must hurry if we want to get some use of that television. The Director is coming. Have you heard? The Director of the entire region!

SUZY: The Director of the entire region?!

EVELYN: Apparently, he was supposed to come last week and the week before last. But he never did. Where can he find time for such things? He has to have lunches and dinners with other directors.

MARIA: The gentry has a lot, but never enough.

EVELYN: The ways of the Lord are hard. Amen!

VERA: But tomorrow he is coming for real.

SUZY: And so much merch ... Perhaps they'll buy it all at some point. Can you imagine? You come to a shop, and it's all empty. Nothing.

EVELYN: Don't be stupid. They'll never be able to buy it all!

MARIA: Yet, it would be nice. A silent, empty white hall. Nice indeed.

VERA: You're talking nonsense. Shops were empty when there was war.

EVELYN: The merch will always be here. Even if all four of us turn upside down.

VERA: How about you chitchat less and work more? I want to watch my series in the evening. You have no idea how beautiful it is! It takes place by the sea. Somewhere south, Turkey, or Greece, I don't know. I like watching villas by the sea, nice boats and palms and restaurants and ...

SUZY: Oh, and seaside sunsets! Don't forget to mention those.

VERA. Yes! I love watching seaside sunsets so much! I never used to go to the sea. My old man hates travelling. Says there's nothing there. Only heat and rocks.

EVELYN: You can go now that you're alone.

SUZY: Evelyn! Leave her.

VERA: What did you say?

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EVELYN: Nothing. Forget it.

VERA: How can I go anywhere? He can't even boil eggs, poor man.

SUZY: He likes the service; of course, he does.

EVELYN: Did.

SUZY: Shhhh.

VERA: I'll go when my old man is not so sick anymore.

EVELYN: Vera has been a widow for several years. Her husband died of cancer. But she still talks about him as if he were alive. I don't get it.

SUZY: Come on, leave her.

EVELYN: She irritates me.

VERA: You know girls. I used to go abroad a lot. Every month to Trieste to get stuff.

MARIA: Contrabanding doesn't count as travelling, Vera.

VERA: Shut up and stack! Stagnant water smells foul!

The workers focus on their work. B. G., a shipping clerk, enters the warehouse.

B. G.: Emm ... I beg your pardon. (*No response.*) Excuse me, can I have some attention?

SUZY: Try, hee hee.

VERA: What does he want?

EVELYN: Attention, he said as much.

B. G.: Is this the warehouse?

SUZY: Heehee.

EVELYN: Can't he see that we've got our hands full?

VERA: What is it, boy?

B. G.: I'll need a signature on this. Which one of you will sign?

EVELYN: Oh, fuck, the merch!

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SUZY: Merchandise, girls!

EVELYN: Merch, merch, merch!

MARIA: And here we go again. Always the same story. We sort everything out, and new merch arrives. You sort, you stack, you sell, sort, stack, sell ... Into eternity.

VERA: Oh, merchandise? Why didn't you say so? Say, where's the other guy? What was his name – Dominic? David? Started with D, anyways ...

EVELYN: It was Dennis! My Dennis! Where is he?

SUZY: Your Dennis?!

B. G.: Who?

EVELYN: Dennis, my Dennis! You took his place!

B. G.: I need a signature on this ...

SUZY: I can't believe this. Where's Dennis? Everything is going to hell.

B. G.: A simple signature. Perhaps could ...

SUZY: Perhaps he's sick. What if the shelves collapsed on top of him?! Perhaps he's lying in some hospital. Or ... in a coffin!

EVELYN: Do you have to?

VERA: They change them like towels. None of the poor things can take it. They're not as tough as we are.

EVELYN: Hey, what's your name?

B. G.: Benjamin. They call me B. G..

EVELYN: B. G.? Isn't Benji better? I'll call you Benji.

SUZY: Are you subbing for Dennis?

B. G.: Who is he?

EVELYN: Beno, are you permanent or temporary?

B. G.: I'm not exactly sure.

EVELYN: Are you from a temping agency? I hope not. That really sucks.

B. G.: No, via student services.

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VERA: Are you a student?

B. G.: No, no. I used my friend's student ID.

VERA: Bravo. If I had a son, he also wouldn't go to college. What's the use of a bachelor's degree these days?

B. G.: I'm going to go to college. Perhaps next year. If there's money.

VERA: Well, if I had a son and he insisted on going to college, he'd definitely study to be a lawyer. This is a good investment today. Or a doctor!

B. G.: I need a signature.

VERA: What a good boy you are! If I had a son, he'd be good like you. My old man has always wanted a son. He's a southerner, and you know how they feel about sons down there. But it didn't work, God help me. I was scared when I was in labour. I was afraid to ask about the gender. And they said, *Congratulations, ma'am. It's a girl!* It all went dark. And then to tell this to my old man ... It was harder than to bury my mother. I told him on the phone. And my old man was all silent. He was quiet and hung up. And when I got home from the hospital, I saw that he punched a hole in the wall by the phone with his fist. We didn't have it fixed. You can still see it now. A daily reminder for me. And I didn't get pregnant after that, either. Yeah, that's how it was. I have a daughter instead of a son. She moved out years ago. Far away from home and she only rarely visits.

EVELYN: Now why would that be?!

VERA: I don't have it easy, boy. I don't have it easy.

B. G.: It's not your fault you didn't have a boy. And it's not the child's fault, either.

VERA: Then whose fault is it that it's like this? Tell me, boy.

SUZY: His name's Benjamin.

B. G.: I go by B. G. I brought the merchandise.

EVELYN: Well, will you be my guy instead of Dennis?

SUZY: Dennis wasn't even yours!

EVELYN: What do you know? Were you there?

SUZY: He was too old for you.

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EVELYN: Doesn't matter. They're all the same and, at the end of the day, they're all after the same thing!

B. G.: Hey, no need to generalise.

SUZY: Dennis was ... such a real man. He had strong arms and spoke little.

EVELYN: And swore a lot.

MARIA: Really, he was your basic chauvinist swine. It's great that he's gone. I don't know how any woman can fancy a jerk like him.

EVELYN: Just admit that he turned you on. If he grabbed you with those arms of his, you'd get all wet.

VERA: Scamp, mind your manners!

MARIA: My co-workers are ...

EVELYN (*to B. G.*): You're alright, though. A bit shorter than Dennis, but no problem. I hope you're not shy. If we go behind those boxes, will that be okay?

VERA: You little trollop, go count merchandise! Go!

EVELYN: Do you hear how impertinent they are? Stuff I have to put up with.

B. G.: I apologise, I'm in a bit of a hurry.

EVELYN: Do you prefer Suze? She'd take you in a heartbeat. She's pretty desperate. She has two brats at home. Ever since her ex ran away with someone else, she's been on her own, wretched thing.

B. G.: My condolences, Ma'am.

SUZY: Ma'am?

EVELYN: He's not dead. Fortunately, or unfortunately. The truth is, it's damn lucky that he ran off. He drank a lot; it was downhill to the tavern, then slalom home. And he was heavy-handed.

SUZY: Yes, I know. He wasn't perfect, but ...

EVELYN: Far from it.

SUZY: But he was mine! Mine, mine alone.

MARIA: I'm sorry, my co-workers are sometimes ...

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EVELYN: What?

MARIA: Eh, nothing. Forget it.

EVELYN: Well, we are what? Would you, for once, finish? Dumb, ignorant, simple?!
You're no better than we are ... You're in the same shit, same loser!

MARIA: If you think I consider anyone here a loser, you are mistaken! The ones
responsible for all this shit are those who profit from it!

EVELYN: Playing smart once more.

MARIA: Just telling it like it is.

EVELYN: Blah, blah, blah!

B. G.: I apologise, I'd just ask for one signature ... I'm in a hurry to get going.

VERA: Yes, of course. I'm sorry it took so long. Next time, come straight to me so you
can avoid these hyenas. (*signs*) There.

B. G.: Thanks. Bye! (*leaves*)

VERA: Oh, if I had a son like that ...

EVELYN: If I had a man like that. Haha!

VERA: Scamp!

EVELYN: Just kidding.

SUZY: And he's gone.

EVELYN: Well, he wasn't much use.

VERA: Darned merchandise.

EVELYN: I swear, I'll strangle the next one who brings this much.

VERA: Go, girls. Stop yammering. It's not the flour that makes the bread ...

ALL: ... it's the hand!

The workers carry boxes, open, stack, sort out the items.

An evening in front of the telly

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Evening in the warehouse. A big TV screen is turned on. The workers sit in front of the screen and watch a series. Maria is already asleep. The series ends, it's time for commercials.

EVELYN: Oh, come on, no!

SUZY: They always end like this.

VERA: Have you seen how she lies, that snake. She's not the birth mother; this child isn't hers!

SUZY: Whose is it, then? Not Fernanda's, that much is certain.

EVELYN: They end so that you have to continue watching. What about this one? (*points at Maria*)

VERA: She fell asleep, poor thing.

SUZY: No wonder, we had so much to stack.

EVELYN: She's too sublime for our series.

VERA: Heck, my lower back will do me in.

SUZY: I'm finished.

EVELYN: And I bet you that the highly esteemed Director won't show up tomorrow – again.

VERA: Of course, he will. Pass the remote.

EVELYN: Wait, it's not your turn yet.

VERA: Pass it, scamp.

EVELYN: Nope. The replay of Talents is coming up.

VERA: Replays are stupid anyways! Pass it to me!

EVELYN: Stop!

SUZY: Shhh, you'll wake up Maria.

The television switches itself off. The time for telly is up.

EVELYN: Oh, shoot! Already?!

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VERA: Let's go, ladies. End of fun.

SUZY: Good night.

VERA: Have you brushed your teeth? The dentist is expensive.

SUZY: We have, we have.

EVELYN: He's not expensive if you blow him. Just kidding! Vera, don't be so stuck up.

VERA: Bedtime, scamp. We start early tomorrow.

EVELYN: A girl can't even crack a joke. Goodnight.

SUZY: Maria, go to sleep.

MARIA: Mmm?

SUZY: Let's go to bed.

VERA: Good night!

The workers lie on folding cots set up in the warehouse.

The big day

Morning in the warehouse. Vera, in uniform, walks around the warehouse, checking the merchandise.

VERA: Hello, girls! It's morning! Let's go! Up! Where are you?!

SUZY: Just a bit longer, Vera ...

EVELYN: We can't even change in peace, stupid tart.

VERA: It's time, where are you?!

Suzy, Evelyn and Maria come out of the locker room.

VERA: Good morning. You're late.

EVELYN: Come on, Vera.

VERA: Drink up your coffee, and let's go. *(to Maria)* What's the matter with you? Are you still sleeping?

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MARIA: Yes. I mean, no.

VERA: You'll wake up, don't worry.

SUZY: How long did we sleep? It seems like nothing.

VERA: Enough! What about the old days, when we had to milk the cows before work?!
As you know, the Director is coming today, and everything must be ...

EVELYN: The Director of our entire region – you forgot to say.

VERA: Everything has to be shipshape! The declarations on the vegan pâtés are wrong.
One of you used the wrong ones – for meat pâtés.

EVELYN: Wasn't me!

MARIA: Not me.

VERA: Quiet! Doesn't matter. Needs fixing.

EVELYN: Fucking vegan pâtés.

VERA: Scamp!

MARIA: So now it's the pâtés' fault for not containing animal corpses?

VERA: I don't care what kind of pâtés they are as long as they have the correct labels
and are on the correct shelf, is that clear? Label – tin – shelf!

ALL: Label – tin – shelf!

VERA: Is it that difficult?! What, would you prefer to work the till?

SUZY: No, no. Just not the till.

MARIA: We'll stack everything, no problem.

EVELYN: Exactly. Grit teeth and toil. This is fitting for ordinary low-class workers, right?
We should have studied. Oh, snap. Masha here studied ... Studied a lot. But life
is not a piece of cake, what can you do!

VERA: The till is pure hell.

SUZY: There's nothing worse than the till! You have no idea what it's like to be sitting at
the till all day long.

MARIA: Ohhh, I can hear it already. The speech is a-coming.

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EVELYN: Speech! We want a speech!

VERA: Suzy, speech!

MARIA: Speech, speech!

EVELYN: We all want to hear it!

SUZY: Do you really want to hear what it's like to be working at the check-out?

ALL: Speech, speech, speech!

SUZY: Here's a till for you! Your ass is stuck on a chair all day while you stare at a screen. If the customers don't bag away their stuff fast enough, your rhythm is fucked. Grannies come, and they are slow. And you go *beep, beep, beep, thank you, goodbye, hello!* And stuff piles on the counter. There's no more space. And you stop doing *beep, beep, beep*. And you wait for them to put all those bags of pearl barley and polenta into their baskets. And your numbers fall. And customers are cranky. And then they come to exchange items. Because the yoghurt was open when they came home. Even though they punched a hole in it themselves when they were tossing the bags into the car. And fine ladies come to exchange underpants for their husbands because they're too big. They always buy them too big. And you tell them that you can't exchange them without the receipt. They won't listen. They just stand there and stick those underpants into your face. And the queue is all the way to the refrigerators. And the customers get even crankier. And then, then you run out of cigs! Boss soft pack, what else. They buy them by cartons. You leave your station, run to your co-worker. The co-worker rolls her eyes, like, *You should have stocked up on those earlier*, blah, blah, blah! The queue to the refrigerators, dirty looks. Then some guy buys half a loaf of bread, a pâté and three bottles of cheap plonk. And is 50 cents short. You ask him what he'll give back. He doesn't want to give anything back. He looks around, if anyone will give him something. He looks at me – what, I'm supposed to cover for him? I, making minimum wage? And I wouldn't give it to him anyway, the drunk. God help me, he reminds me of my ex! And the bloke just stands there and stares. Customers give me nasty looks, roll their eyes. *Can you open another register?!* And I say, *It's okay, Sir*. And I pay the lousy 50 cents. I pay, even though my kids haven't seen the sea for three years. To this day I'm sorry that I paid, God is my witness! But I will say one thing: Hallelujah, I'm not working the till anymore!

ALL: Hallelujah! Bravo, Suze! Bravo!

EVELYN: Vera! Now Vera!

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MARIA: Yes, Vera, speech!

SUZY: Speech, speech!

VERA: Eh, nobody's interested.

MARIA: Of course, they're interested. Go on, Vera.

EVELYN: Everyone's interested! Speech!

ALL: Speech, speech, speech!

VERA: Fine, I'll say my bit. I wasn't even 20 and I was already working as a shop assistant. I started in a small shop. Busy Bee it was called. And I'm telling you, it was all completely different there! Every Saturday, I sliced homemade salami and prosciutto. I displayed it on the deli counter so the aroma was nice. Homemade sausages on the side. Some fine gentleman, he was a salesman, bought them every Saturday. He brought me gifts. For you, Veri, and gave me a pack of fine nylons or Italian coffee. Oh, Saturdays at the Busy Bee! Children took lollipops from glasses. Mums bought ingredients for biscuits, ordered fresh bread and buns, chose jams and compotes. They took their time, and I brought them everything on the counter. In the meantime, I learnt all sorts. Who's getting married, who's getting divorced, who's pregnant and which neighbours are fighting. On Saturdays, we closed at noon, and Sundays were always off. No idiot wanted to go shopping on Sunday – as if! That was still in our old Yugoslavia!

SUZA: Yes, that's what it was like, and it will never be again!

MARIA: The first female mountaineering expedition in Yugoslavia was lead by 26-year-old Marija Frantar from Kranj. Younger than me. It was in the early 1980s, Communism Peak in Tajikistan, 7500 metres! Seven women reached the summit together and attained the Yugoslav female record. More than 20kg on their backs. The shorter ones sunk into the new snow up to their waist. When they returned, the media were most interested in how they managed to pee in that terrible cold and if they fought a lot. But they didn't fight, because they had a common goal and wanted to prove to all those male sceptics that women, too, can succeed in elite mountain climbing!

VERA: Oh, my Busy Bee! Where are you now? More than 15 years! The boss had to close down because there were no people. They went elsewhere, to bigger stores. Cheaper stores. Open all day. Yes, this is how it used to be. And will never be again.

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SUZY: Never again affordable family cars, never again the days when everybody could build themselves a house, never again half-free union campers, never again smuggling stuff from Italy, nor the pioneers or Tito's youth!

VERA: Tito, you stole, but you also gave it to us all.

EVELYN: They're so dull, these *How wonderful life was under socialism* stories of yours. As if the people believe that. We know it wasn't as ideal as you're yapping here now.

VERA: What do you know what it was like? She wasn't even born then.

EVELYN: So what? I know all your pathetic stories by heart. It's a good thing I wasn't around back then. Equal among equals, average among averages. Thanks, but no thanks.

VERA: And what are you now?

EVELYN: It doesn't matter what I am. What matters is what I can become. I can become everything I want. If I really want and work hard.

MARIA: How naïve.

VERA: Yes, this is what they spoon-feed you. I feel sorry for you young ones. Every single one of you thinks that they have to be something special, that they have to become I don't know what.

EVELYN: You'll see. One day, everybody will know Evelyn.

MARIA: Sure.

SUZY: We know you, doesn't that count for something?

EVELYN: Stop taking a piss.

SUZY: I'm not.

VERA: You know what, you better start stacking pâtés, now! Once again, you tricked me, so you don't have to work. Oy, let's go! The Director is coming today!

ALL: The Director of our entire region!

VERA: That's right. Everything has to be shipshape. Resting is for the dead!

EVELYN: Let the old bat yell. She won't be doing it much longer. The supervisor promised me a promotion.

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MARIA: What will you do with a promotion?

EVELYN: You're jealous!

SUZY: Evelyn? Will you sort me out with the flower department when you get your promotion?

VERA: Suzy has always wanted to be a florist.

SUZY: I wanted to go to a vocational school, but everybody told me I was too clumsy. That I wouldn't know how to wrap gifts. That I'd break everything. So I went and trained as a shop assistant. Evelyn will sort me out with a flower department once she's a boss!

EVELYN: Of course, I will.

VERA: Super, before that, sort out these pâtés, so I don't have to tell you ten more times. For now, I'm the shift supervisor!

EVELYN: Cackle, cackle.

VERA: Quiet and work!

A pig made of cracklings

A customer wanders into the warehouse by mistake.

CUSTOMER: Excuse me, can I ask you something?

VERA: What does this one want now ...

SUZY: And this early.

MARIA: Poor pet, he woke up among the shelves in the ironing department.

EVELYN: Which one will yell at him?

VERA: I'll do it. Employees only!

CUSTOMER: Pardon ...

EVELYN: You could have tried harder.

VERA: Gosh, darn it, what in heaven's name are you doing here!?

EVELYN: Eh, that's nothing.

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VERA: Stop, ferfuckssake! Entry is forbidden!

CUSTOMER: Excuse me, I'd like to ask a question. Please!

EVELYN: Go to the Information Desk.

CUSTOMER: I can't find the Information Desk. I don't know how many days it's been. I don't even know what day it is.

MARIA: Poor pet.

SUZY: What are you looking for now, Sir?

CUSTOMER: That's exactly the problem! I can't recall what I need. And it's driving me crazy. Just before, I thought that I saw a tiny elf with a harmonica in the aisle. I'm hallucinating!

VERA: When my old man still used to go to the shop, before the poor man got so sick, I always wrote him a list. Otherwise, he forgot half of the things.

SUZY: Do you perhaps have a list, Sir?

CUSTOMER: A list, a list? No, no. Not at all. I don't even know. Only once I see the thing, I'll know it's the right one. It has to be something special. Top-quality. Does anyone else hear a harmonica playing?

VERA: Fool.

EVELYN: Are you perhaps looking for a set of ceramic knives? They're discounted today!

CUSTOMER: No, it's not that.

SUZY: What about a cage for a hamster? If you buy two cages, you get a hamster for free!

CUSTOMER: No, no, no.

SUZY: Hmm, perhaps you're looking for a pregnant Barbie? Unfortunately, we're all sold out.

CUSTOMER: No, no, please!

EVELYN: What do you want?! A toilet-shaped coffee mug? Toothpaste that opens on both sides? Special mini umbrellas for your shoes? A singing boogie fish? Or what?

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CUSTOMER: No, no, no, none of these! I'll go crazy! Who can help me, please? Will you help me? Will you help me? Ma'am, Sir?

VERA: Oh, dear, oh, dear, a madhouse.

CUSTOMER: I'd just like to rest my feet a little. I'm so tired, and everything is wrong.

SUZY: Can we offer you a coupon for next week's discounts?

CUSTOMER: I'm not going anywhere until I find it.

VERA: Wait a minute! That's not possible.

SUZY: What about ... a pig made of cracklings?

EVELYN: Eh, cow! That one's not for sale.

CUSTOMER: What?

EVELYN: The pig is unfortunately not for sale, it's for decoration only.

SUZY: Right, sorry.

VERA: Oh, the one on the deli counter ... No, that one's not for sale.

CUSTOMER: What do you mean, not for sale?

EVELYN: Not for sale.

VERA: No, it's not.

CUSTOMER: How much does it cost?

VERA: It doesn't cost anything, because you can't buy it.

CUSTOMER: What if I pay triple the price?

EVELYN: How will you pay triple when it has no price? Pity, though, it is a fine pig.

CUSTOMER: Everything has its price! Just name it.

EVELYN: Well,... Perhaps we could reach an agreement. What do you think, Vera? We could sell the pig for, hmm ... a hundred euros!

CUSTOMER: A hundred?! Well ... 100 euros ... Isn't that a bit steep?

EVELYN: Look, this is a very precious pig. Handmade from local organic cracklings. This is a special offer, just for you. What do you say?

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VERA: A crackling pig will feed your soul!

EVELYN: Sir, you give me a hundred euros, and the pig is yours.

CUSTOMER: Yes, well ...

Manager Grebovič enters the warehouse.

EVELYN: Khm, Greba.

SUZY: Greba.

MARIA: Greba.

VERA: Get him out.

SUZY (*to the customer*): Let's go, Sir. You have to get out now.

CUSTOMER: What about the pig?

EVELYN: Go to the Information Desk.

VERA: Good morning, Mrs Grebovič? How are things in the office?

GREBOVIČ: Don't ask. (*sees the customer*) What is this?

VERA: Just a customer, he's just leaving.

Evelyn, Maria and Suzy push the customer out.

VERA: Thank you, and come again!!

GREBOVIČ: Vera!

VERA: Yes, please?

GREBOVIČ: Was that whoring?

VERA: No, of course not. Just a mistake, ma'am.

GREBOVIČ: I won't have you turn this warehouse into a whorehouse!

VERA: Mhm, of course not. God forbid.

GREBOVIČ: The Director of our entire region is already on the way. He'll come for a visit soon. The warehouse must be shipshape, is that clear?!

VERA: Clear, absolutely.

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GREBOVIČ: Would you like to know why he's coming? To discover the weakest link!
And what do they do with the weakest link? What?

EVELYN: Cut? Abort? Downsize?

GREBOVIČ: Yes. Smart girl. Make it shipshape! For your own good.

Manager Grebovič leaves.

EVELYN: Fuck off, that fool already had cash in hand, and that old swine Greba goes
and spoils it all.

SUZY: Have you heard? Downsizing. What are we going to do?!

VERA: Nothing, girl. We'll toil again.

SUZY: I'll be let go, for sure they'll fire me ...

MARIA: Empty threats.

SUZY: And what if this Director really comes and closes us all down?!

MARIA: Then what? No harm done.

EVELYN: Says a spoiled city girl.

SUZY: I need a job! I've got two kids, in case you've forgotten?

VERA: Stop fighting, women. Let's go, no Devil will stack instead of us.

EVELYN: Apologies, but lunch is coming up.

SUZY: Where's the bell?

EVELYN: The bell!

VERA: How is it lunch? We haven't yet ...

The bell for lunch break rings.

Lunch break and hidden talents

EVELYN: Lunchtime, babes.

SUZY: Lunchtime, yippie! Time to smoke.

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MARIA: Time to write.

VERA: One bun each, then go on. We've so much to do still, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
(*Vera unwraps her sandwich.*)

EVELYN: What are we playing, what are we playing?

MARIA: *In the evenings, when things went all quiet, she picked up her pen to continue writing. Just like her superb alpinism, her writing was not received well in public.*

EVELYN: The fine one is ignoring us, as per usual.

MARIA: *It wasn't appropriate at that time. She was already used to hearing "no, you're not able to do this, you're not allowed to do that". When she was a little girl, her three brothers were not allowed to play with her, and her parents wouldn't educate her until she, with her resolve and talent, convinced them and became the first female student at her chosen college. Although she was brilliant, some of her professors didn't take her seriously. It's nice when half of the population is naturally lower than you – to paraphrase her, the Virginia Woolf. She wrote in secret and covered her manuscript with a napkin adorned with unfinished embroidery.*

EVELYN: She believes she'll have her book published. As if the world needed another novel. I heard it on the radio the other day that in this country more people write a novel per year than read one.

SUZY: To have her own book! That would be very posh! Even I'd read that.

VERA: Let her scribble if she feels like it. But I agree that she could be doing something more useful. Like putting these empty boxes away.

SUZY: Veri, will you pickle the gherkins this year?

VERA: I won't.

SUZY: What about peppers?

VERA: Can't be fussed anymore. Too much work and the entire house smells of vinegar.

EVELYN: No, no, no, girls. We're not talking about cooking again. We have more interesting topics for discussions during the break. Television! Let's play Talents!

SUZY: Please, no.

EVELYN: Let's play talents, each one will have one appearance, and I'll be the judge.

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SUZY: Why you, exactly?

EVELYN: Babes, I've just got this great idea. OMG, how have I not thought about it before!

SUZY: What?

EVELYN: Epic, I'll get us all out. It'll be great!

SUZY: What?!

EVELYN: A crazy good idea! Yahoo!

VERA: Calm down, scamp.

SUZY: What idea?

EVELYN: I'll sign us up for the audition for Talents!! All four of us!

SUZY: What?!

VERA: Get out of here.

EVELYN: This will be so rad, everybody will feel sorry for us!

SUZY: You're kidding.

EVELYN: I'm so serious. I'll sign us up as a girl band. We'll be on television!!

SUZY: What?! On television?! Aaaaa!

VERA: You're not serious, scamp.

SUZY: One Sunday when we had off, my kid asked me, *Mum, why don't you know any songs? Didn't you learn at school?* I never sang to him, when did I have the time?

EVELYN: This is genius! Everybody will root for us – four poor workers with angelic voices.

VERA: You don't really think that I'll be jumping up and down the stage at my age?

EVELYN: If Madonna can, you can. Come on, my old bat. We'll rehearse during breaks, and, in a month, we'll audition!

MARIA: You don't even know what kind of voices we have.

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VERA: I always sang at school recitals.

SUZY: I didn't. The music teacher couldn't stand me.

VERA: Always the victim.

EVELYN: It doesn't matter. What matters is the presentation, our appearance! We'll tell them we're sisters!

VERA: But we don't look alike at all.

MARIA: Oh, my God.

EVELYN: So what. It's the story that matters! Listen, we'll be four sisters. I'm the youngest. Our mother had me when she was really old. Father died when I was still little. Mother followed soon after, so you, Vera, raised me. For this, I'll be eternally grateful to you. You were like a mother to me. If it weren't for you, I'd have to go into foster care.

VERA: You don't have to thank me. I did what I had to. Anybody would. Wait, nobody will believe that ...

EVELYN: If we believe it, everybody will!

SUZY: Yippie, we get to be sisters!

MARIA: I'm not playing this.

EVELYN: Only God knows what we can make out of this girl band. By the way – start thinking about a name.

SUZY: Violets!

VERA: Motherwort!

MARIA: I think this is all so unrealistic, impossible ... and, and childish.

VERA (*to Maria*): Let her dream.

EVELYN: Let me hear you. Let's go. The first one is Suzy.

SUZY: Me? What am I supposed to do?

EVELYN: Well, sing something, okay.

SUZY: I would, but I don't know what.

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EVELYN: Don't mess with me, we've no time for this shit. In a month, we'll be on television!

SUZY: I know a lullaby.

EVELYN: Go on.

SUZY: I'd sing this to the little one tonight if I were home. But I won't be, and he won't have a lullaby again and ...

EVELYN: Can you start?

SUZY: Okay ...

*Sleep, little one, go to sleep,
So peaceful birds and the sheep,
Quiet are meadow and trees,
Even the buzz of the bees.
The silvery moonbeams so bright,
down through the window give light.
O'er you the moonbeams will creep,
Sleep little one...
I can't.*

EVELYN: Suzy, pull yourself together. You're auditioning. You can't cry now.

SUZY (*about to cry*): I'm sorry, it's just ...

EVELYN: Show business doesn't work that way. Pull yourself together and go on.

SUZY: *O'er you the moonbeams will creep,
Sleep little one...*

SUZY: I can't. My mother-in-law never sings lullabies. She's too above that. And she stinks of mothballs and cheap perfume. And her hands are always cold. I wanted to tuck him in tonight and sing him a lullaby. My son deserves a lullaby!

VERA: It's not the end of the world. I never sang lullabies. We didn't make such fuss back in my day, and they all grew up.

EVELYN: If you want to be on television, you'll have to try harder. Okay, Vera is next!

VERA: Yes? What?

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EVELYN: Do I have to repeat myself. You are auditioning! This is your chance to make something out of yourself! Prove that you can also be something special. They will all applaud, they will all love you! Our Vera from the shop.

VERA: Who? Me? Oh, such an honour! Oh, and in front of so many people! What would I sing ... I'll do this one, my mother sang it, I know it ... Oh, that woman was good as gold. She should have gone to heaven alive – if heaven existed, that is ...

EVELYN: Just do it!

VERA: Fine, it goes like this ...

*Una mattina mi son svegliato,
o bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao!
Una mattina mi son svegliato
e ho trovato l'invasor.*

*O partigiano portami via,
o bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao
o partigiano portami via
che mi sento di morir.*

*E se io muoio da partigiano,
...*

EVELYN: Okay, enough! You'll just bring everyone down! Do you think people want to hear this, remember these horrible things? Folks just want to have fun, turn their brain off! They come home cranky and tired.

SUZY: I love that song.

EVELYN: This is not suitable for an entertainment programme, end of story. Do you know another one?

VERA: *We'll meet again, don't know where ...*

EVELYN: No! A different one!

VERA: *Tito, our battle cry and glory ...*

EVELYN: No, stop. Seriously? Fine, I've heard enough. Hmmm, I don't know how this will play out ... Okay, now Maria. Masha, your turn!

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MARIA: I don't have time.

EVELYN: Maria, please, don't play a lady now.

MARIA: *The longing for freedom pushed her back. At an altitude of 8,000 metres time runs differently. Your view of life changes.*

EVELYN: Maria?!

VERA: Leave her if she doesn't want to.

EVELYN: We need her for our girl band.

MARIA: *The desire to survive pushes blood through the veins when every cell in the body wants more oxygen. She knew that every climb could be her last. She knew she had a small child at home. She had to return to the mountains; without that, she would just be a cog in the wheels of society.*

EVELYN: Although Maria is usually quite boring and doesn't have a sparkling personality like I do – isn't it a cool expression? – I'll still give her a chance. Maria, your turn. Sing.

MARIA: No, thanks. I don't want to sing.

SUZY: Come on, we'll be on television!

VERA: I'll bet you she won't open her mouth.

EVELYN: The old bat thinks she knows everything that'll happen. But she's wrong, ... Maria, please? All the good girl bands have at least four members. Three's not enough. Come on, Masha, will you?! Please?!

MARIA: No, sorry.

EVELYN: Come on. I've thought it all through. We'll be four sisters from a broken home. We're united in our joy of singing, and we're also poor and waiting for a miracle!

MARIA: I can't believe we're still talking about it. I said, no!

VERA: See?

EVELYN, SUZY: Maria, please! Maria! Pleeeeeease!

MARIA: No and no. I don't want to be on television. I don't give a damn about these stupid shows and stupid people who watch them. And even stupider folks who believe that a single performance will change their life and that all of a sudden everybody will love them. No, Evelyn! You'll still be the same bitter bitch who

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doesn't know how to have friends! Suzy will go on being a depressed wreck, and Vera will be a lonely old woman who has achieved nothing in life. You can take this idiotic girl band and stick it somewhere!

VERA: When Maria said it all, shouted it all, she was, of course, immediately sorry. It wasn't her intent to insult us. But you know what, I don't care if she regretted it or not. She shouldn't have done it. Maria, you shouldn't have done it! Look, you've even hurt Evelyn. I've never seen it before, damnit.

SUZY (*Evelyn*): Don't you cry now.

EVELYN: I'm not crying. I don't give a toss what she thinks! I don't know why I've even invited her, the bitch that I am ...

MARIA: Look, I didn't mean it like that. Sorry. Really ... You cornered me. I'm sorry ... for all of this.

The bell announces the end of the lunch break.

VERA: The bell!

SUZY: The bell breaks every spell.

VERA: End of fun, ladies. The work is calling, *arbeiten!* The stuff we still need to sort out ...

SUZY: Let's go, girls, so we get the TV turned on as soon as possible. I'm the first one for the remote. Vera, you know what I wanted to ask you – how do you make stuffed peppers?

VERA: Look, it's really simple. You take a bell pepper and cut a circle at the top – but you have to be careful when you choose the knife. They're not all good.

EVELYN: One day they'll see ... One day you'll all know who Evelyn is!

Warehouse heroes

Suzy, Evelyn, Maria and Vera are cleaning the warehouse.

SUZY: Will these tins ever end?

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EVELYN: Never.

SUZY: When will we be able to go home?

EVELYN: It's not worth it.

VERA: We signed up for a year non-stop, with only Sundays off. We get food and lodging on top. An exclusive contract.

MARIA: A contract with the Devil.

VERA: The refined one is complaining again. If there's something you don't like, you know where the door is. How many are waiting for your post.

EVELYN: They're making fun of us. The Director won't come, like usually.

VERA: All I know is what they asked us and what there is to do. When we're working, we're working.

MARIA: As soon as I've saved up to publish a book, I'm out of here.

EVELYN: She's saving up for a book? If I saved up, I'd buy myself ... I don't know ... If I saved up, like, really a lot, if I won the lottery, for example, I could at least buy myself a studio.

MARIA: I don't know if we have lottery jackpots that high. We'll never have our own flats.

VERA: What do you need it for?

SUZY: Mother-in-law's house, mother-in-law's furniture, mother-in-law's plates and napkins and stupid porcelain trinkets, mother-in-law's lunch and mother-in-law's final word on everything.

VERA: Oh, girls, if I saved up, I'd go on a cruise! With the big ship! 4D cinema and 20 different wellness centres and 1000 shops, and a skating rink, and gorgeous cars and gorgeous restaurants! And before that, I'd buy myself my own television to use here.

MARIA: Figures.

SUZY: If I saved up some money, I'd take my kids to Disneyland. To Paris! They want that so badly. And I'd buy the younger one a tablet and the older one a new computer. To play games.

EVELYN: I knew you'd say that. Everything for the kids. What about you?

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SUZY: I don't need anything. Kids constantly need something. Others at school have, and then ...

EVELYN: Even if you buy them I don't know what, it's still your mother-in-law who raises them! When did you last see them, eh? Yesterday, the day before? Do they still know you're their mother?

MARIA: Don't be rude.

EVELYN: You're telling me?

MARIA: Don't mention the children.

SUZY: No, she's right ... Totally right, I'm awful. I haven't told you this. They no longer call me Mummy ... just like that ... by my first name – Suzy, have you brought any sweets? Suzy, can I watch TV? But they can call my mother-in-law Grandma!

VERA: Yet another confession of a poor single mother.

SUZY: Even my own children don't like me. And they're right – I have nothing ... I am nothing. Best if I finish myself off!

MARIA: During the holidays you can take them to the pool again, and you'll have a great time.

SUZY: The pool, always just the pool! And even that in the afternoons only, because it's cheaper. And I drag a cooler with me, so I don't have to buy chips and drinks.

EVELYN: Suzy, stop whining. If you're obedient and keep your mouth nicely shut, you'll someday go to a department of your own.

SUZY: I'm afraid that they're ashamed of me. Sometimes, the younger one looks into my eyes, and he has such a strange look. A look that pities me and at the same time forgives, so that all I want to do is run to the bathroom and cry. Why should a child love his parents just because they brought him into this world? Who am I? Nobody. I'm a nobody. I have nothing.

VERA: Oh, stop it. What would you like to be?

SUZY: I don't know, something. Or someone. To do something important for once in my life.

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VERA: Blah, blah, blah! Let me tell you a story of a real hero: Zinka was born a century ago in a sharecropper's shack and had to go and work as a nanny at the age of seven, and later as a maid. Her husband was a small farmer, after the war, he went into industry and he succumbed to drink, like so many others. When drunk, he became horny, and in those days, the wife had to always obey. So children were born one after another. Zinka took care of her home and her 12 children! To this day, I don't know how she managed. Papa drank most of his money, or wasted it, God forgive him. I was born last, when mama was well over forty, and I didn't have the chance to know her for long. And she was so worn out, poor thing. I can tell you that I never saw her sit down, have a cup of tea or coffee. May she rest in peace, she didn't know what life was.

EVELYN: God, Vera, you're such a downer. Not all mothers are the same. Mine liked me as long as I remained a little girl with braids. Once I became too much, she simply cut me off. She doesn't give a fuck about me. And I never knew my father, he never gave me this honour.

MARIA: Look, everyone, this is Evelyn, a superwoman and a hero! Her father abandoned her before she was born, he couldn't give a fuck. Her mother had her young, too young, for which she has been resenting her ever since, even today she has to repay her for her lost youth – and in what a cruel way –, she denies her mother's love! But our hero Evelyn is strong, she takes no shit from anyone. Here is super Evelyn!

VERA: Bravo, bravo! Let's not forget our superhero Suzana! Left alone with two children, she lives with her mother-in-law and has to keep her mouth shut, because it's her mother-in-law's house, her mother-in-law's bathroom and water and electricity and strudel and all. Suzana hates her job but works overtime so that her sons lack nothing, so that they can play football, take hip-hop and music lessons. And that they can get each their own mobile, computer and expensive trainers, as is appropriate for a respectable family!

EVELYN: Bravo, Suzy! Here, today, is also superhero Vera! She's the old guard, a woman who knows how to take care of a home. A woman who supports all four corners of her house, all while working in a low-wage job. A woman who has serviced her man front and back and had him under control, like a small child. A woman who can prepare the best organic stuffed peppers that grew in her own garden!

SUZY: Bravo, Vera! Hurrah for Vera! Meet superhero Maria! Maria is highly educated. She worked for peanuts for an online paper, but then her rubric was eliminated. The job centre suggested she learn to develop mobile apps because her

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education makes her unemployable. Her parents supported her for a while, but then they had her face reality. She had to take the first available job. Now everybody carries the consequences. The shame, when acquaintances ask her father about his daughter. He has nothing to brag about! Our heroine Maria is a warehouse labourer. Will all the extras, she just about makes a minimum wage. But she hasn't given up. In the warehouse, during the breaks, surrounded by tins of fish pâté and Chinese beans, she's writing a book! Maria the hero, ladies and gentlemen!

VERA: One crazier than the other! And the work is at a standstill. Haven't I told you that it's not the flour that makes the bread ...

ALL: IT'S THE HAND! Haha!

SUZY: You've told us, yes. But only about ten thousand times.

VERA: Well, it is what it is.

Vera starts cleaning the warehouse; the others follow suit.

A pig made of cracklings, second (and last) take

Workers clean, Vera is explaining the merchandise.

VERA: Here are the declarations for Chinese beans. You know the drill. Check the expiry date on each tin. Here are ten thousand labels. If we run out, they'll give us more. And don't mix it up with Russian beans – they do look similar at a glance. Although the best for pastasciutta are Polish beans – who'd have thought.

SUZY: You put beans in pastasciutta?!

VERA: Of course, my old man likes it best this way.

EVELYN: Liked!

SUZY: Come on, leave her.

The customer walks into the warehouse. He's holding a large tray with a pig made of cracklings on it.

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SUZY: Oh, not again. Vera!

VERA: What? Oh, you again. Sir, how many times do we have to ...

EVELYN: The pig! The pig made of cracklings! No fucking way!

SUZY: And directly into the warehouse ...

VERA: Oh my god.

CUSTOMER: I bought it!

MARIA: Yes, we can see that.

CUSTOMER: Isn't it beautiful?

EVELYN: A proper swine.

CUSTOMER: I want to share it with you. Because you saved me.

EVELYN: Yahoo, a pig made of cracklings for all!

SUZY: Yippie, lunch, a lunch without the bell!

VERA: Not a chance. A pig doesn't belong in the warehouse. Have you gone mad?
What if Greba comes?

CUSTOMER: Please, just a couple of minutes. So we can start on it together.

VERA: Take this home to your wife.

CUSTOMER: I don't have a wife.

VERA: Invite your friends, then.

CUSTOMER: I don't have any of them, either.

VERA: Neighbours?

CUSTOMER: Also, none. Sorry.

The customer puts down the tray and removes the foil from the pig.

VERA: No, no, no. Put this somewhere else.

EVELYN: Come on, Vera. Can we try? Quickly?

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CUSTOMER: I even brought bread.

EVELYN: Mmm, it smells so nice.

VERA: Mmm, it does.

CUSTOMER: Try it, Mrs Vera.

The customer offers Vera a piece of bread.

VERA: I am actually quite hungry.

Vera takes the bread and dips it into the greaves lard.

VERA: It's so good!

Vera takes more bread and dips again. Suzy, Evelyn, Maria and the customer dip bread into lard and eat enthusiastically.

SUZY: It's good.

EVELYN: A pig of quality.

MARIA: Mmmm.

CUSTOMER: You know what, that was a smart buy!

VERA: Here, you get what you want, what you might want and ...

The customer begins to choke. The customer turns red, can't breathe. The customer falls on the ground, goes into anaphylactic shock and dies.

SUZY: Vera?

EVELYN: Oh, fuck.

VERA: Why are you standing there? First aid, CPR!

Maria is the first one to react, she tries to give CPR, but it's too late.

MARIA: He's not breathing.

VERA: Again, try again.

SUZY: Oh, no. Oh my god.

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EVELYN: He just fell. What if the pig is poisonous?

VERA: It's not poisonous if it was on the deli counter.

SUZY: Oh, no! What are we going to do?!

MARIA: He was probably allergic to cracklings.

VERA: Greba will be here any minute now. And the Director!

SUZY: The Director! The Director of the entire region! Oh, my God!

EVELYN: Let's hide him.

VERA: Where?! There's no time.

MARIA: I know. Do we have an extra coat? Let's dress him up.

VERA: We have all sorts.

SUZY: I'll get a men's one.

VERA: Hurry! Let's undress him.

Evelyn, Maria and Vera undress the customer. Suzy brings a men's coat. They dress him and put a hat on his head.

VERA: This is our new loader ... mister ...

EVELYN: Mister Greaves.

VERA: Okay, great. Let's put him here, next to the boxes. Hold him.

EVELYN: Damn, he's heavy.

SUZY: As a corpse, he's even heavier.

The workers place the corpse upright. They hide the pig made of cracklings. Just as they finish, the general Director of the region enters the warehouse, in the company of the manager Grebovič.

GREBOVIČ: After you, and much respect, dear Director of the entire region. I'd like to show you the operation of our main warehouse ...

EVELYN: Greba.

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SUZY: Greba.

MARIA: And the Director.

VERA: And the Director.

GREBOVIČ: Sir, our warehouse operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We work around the clock, in out, in out, merchandise flow, capital flow, hehe.

DIRECTOR: Mhm, mhm.

GREBOVIČ: Vera!

VERA: Yes, Ma'am?!

GREBOVIČ: Mrs Vera is the warehouse shift supervisor.

VERA: Yes, that's me.

GREBOVIČ: Vera, tell the Director of our entire region how big the warehouse is?

VERA: It's huge, Ma'am, Sir.

GREBOVIČ: Capacity?

VERA: 6,000 m2, built in 2002, renovated in 2015, on an exceptional location, with easy access to the ring road and 5,000 parking spaces available.

Manager Grebovič notices the customer's corpse.

GREBOVIČ: Oh, my god.

Pause.

GREBOVIČ: Sir, I'm so pleased that you toured the warehouse, perhaps now it's time for you to see our other business premises, perhaps ... the coffee roaster ...

DIRECTOR: Mhm, mhm. Where do you have ...

DIRECTOR walks up and down the warehouse, looking around.

GREBOVIČ (to Vera): Why do you have a dead man in here?!

VERA: What? No. I don't know.

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GREBOVIČ (*follows the Director*): Sir, you must be tired of all these shelves and items and endless rows of shelves. As you can see, all our workers are in great shape – they care that the warehouse is always organised and all our items labelled.

The Director approaches the corpse standing upright.

DIRECTOR: Mhm, mhm.

VERA: Now we're screwed.

GREBOVIČ: A new worker. He's just started. He doesn't speak. I mean ... He doesn't understand Slovenian ... He's come ... He's come ... from Kazakhstan. On foot. It's a long way; he's still a little tired.

VERA: A good worker.

DIRECTOR: Mhm, mhm.

Director passes the corpse and doesn't look at it. Continues towards the exit.

VERA: Uh, lucky us.

DIRECTOR: Where the hell do you have a toilet? My guts are killing me.

GREBOVIČ: Aha, yes. Straight on. Follow me.

DIRECTOR: I'm not going back to that restaurant, ever. I knew immediately that the *petit* sauce was too tart and the dumplings were *un petit peu* overcooked ... And ... *trop de farine*, right, right.

GREBOVIČ: Oh, drats.

DIRECTOR (*on the way out*): You know, I have sensitive digestion. My wife said I should give up gluten. How, if you please? Who, rats ass, has time to figure that one out?

Director and manager Grebovič leave.

VERA: Thank God!

EVELYN: From Kazakhstan?!

SUZY: I was so afraid I didn't even dare to breathe.

MARIA: He didn't even look at it. He looked at none of us.

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EVELYN: When he needed to shit, poor thing. What can you do, happens to everyone.

VERA (*pats the body*): Mr Greaves from Kazakhstan, you did a great job!

SUZY: Do we still have some pig left? I'm hungry.

VERA: Leave the pig. Greba will be back any second.

GREBOVIČ runs back into the warehouse.

VERA: What have I told you?

GREBOVIČ: I don't want to know anything, just get rid of him! Now!

VERA: Understood, Ma'am.

GREBOVIČ leaves.

VERA: Mary, mother of God. Where shall we put it? He's not a tin.

EVELYN: Let's put him in a box.

SUZY: Do we have boxes this big?

VERA: We do. Those from sectionals.

MARIA: Poor customer ... He wanted his day to finally be something special.

EVELYN: And it was!

VERA: What can you do? God doesn't ask. One minute you're here, and the next you're gone.

MARIA: What lives, dies, so that it can flow from transience to eternity.

Suzy pulls in a huge box. The workers try to stuff the customer in. He's very heavy. They barely manage to fit him inside.

SUZY: Now what?

EVELYN: Let's put something over it.

VERA: Right! Let's cover him.

SUZY: With what?!

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VERA: How should I know with what? Find something and cover him. Quickly!

EVELYN: I need to pee, Vera! I'll wet myself.

VERA: Again? It's forbidden to go more often than once every two hours!

EVELYN: But I really need to go. Don't tell me you're going to count my toilet visits.

VERA: Okay. Go if it's necessary.

EVELYN: Once one can't even pee in peace, we've come a long way ...

Evelyn leaves.

VERA: And don't think about staying there for twenty minutes again!

A journalist with a microphone enters the warehouse.

A journalistic question

JOURNALIST: We're entering the space. A gigantic hall, with no natural light. We can see a couple of individuals. I presume these are the warehouse workers. We go over to them.

SUZY: Oh, my God.

VERA: Mary, Mother of God, help us.

Maria grabs a crate of avocados and dumps them all into the box containing the customer's corpse. She closes the lid.

JOURNALIST: Good afternoon. I'm a professional journalist, and I'm here for the programme "Our Time". Yes, they must be warehouse workers, we can tell by their uniforms. Of course, you all know our programme – in it, you can see little people, living their miserable lives in the vice of the contemporary wild capitalism. It's quite a popular programme. Unfortunately, or fortunately, what can I say.

VERA: What does this one want?

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JOURNALIST: Dear ladies, I understand that they're pressuring you, that you are under the pressure of the quotas, but I'd still ask you for a couple of minutes. I have some questions ...

SUZY: I don't know if we can do something for your show.

JOURNALIST: I'm looking for a new tragic story with a clear moralistic point about the exploitation of little people. *(to Vera)* Ma'am, would you tell me your name?

VERA: I'm Vera. Why does this matter?

JOURNALIST: Mrs Vera! What a beautiful popular name! How long have you been working in this hole? In this warehouse?

VERA: It'll be about 15 years now.

JOURNALIST: 15 years! Crazy.

VERA: They renovated it three times in the meantime. Every time, a bigger warehouse. Every time, more merchandise to put away.

JOURNALIST: Mrs Vera, can you tell our viewers what your position at work entails? How do you feel working here? Tell us openly. That's why we're here. Go on, Mrs Vera.

VERA: What am I to say? We work ... and it works, somehow.

SUZY: Will this be on television?

JOURNALIST: The programme "Our Time" – where you can watch the people doing badly, perhaps even worse than you. Together, we're stronger. Mrs Vera, what's your job? Are you content, do you feel ... fulfilled?

VERA: Everything super, wonderful. Shipshape.

JOURNALIST: The warehouse worker is obviously afraid for her position. I understand you, Mrs Vera. *(to Suzy)* What about you, Ma'am? Do you have any courage?

SUZY: Me?

JOURNALIST: Can you tell our viewers if they exploit you here and how badly? Confess. You have the mike.

SUZY: What? I don't know ...

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JOURNALIST: A little more patience. Perhaps we'll get a new tragic story of a cheated worker with whom we can empathise, be angry at dirty capitalists, all while feeling good. *(to Suzy)* Do you feel like a human or like a machine here?

SUZY: I don't know. *(to Vera)* I'm human, aren't I?

VERA: God, Suze, you know you're human, hello.

JOURNALIST: It's okay, ma'am. I totally understand. The situation here is worse than I expected. The warehouse workers are terrorised and refuse to speak.

MARIA: Our customers, your viewers, know very well what the circumstances are. They need the merchandise. And we need the money. Here, they pay us regularly. Unfortunately, we don't have time for your questions. Thank you very much, and goodbye.

SUZY: I'm sorry that you didn't get any tragic stories.

JOURNALIST: No problem, ma'am. I'll go try with the cleaners.

VERA: They let them all go years ago. Now, shop assistants clean themselves. After they close the shop.

JOURNALIST *(leaving)*: Aha, aha. I understand. If you change your mind, call me. We didn't get any information. We're leaving the space. We're going to the shop assistants.

SUZY: Go to the check-out!

The journalist leaves. Vera and Suzy rush to the box.

VERA: He didn't notice anything.

SUZY: Thank God.

MARIA: A parable of a cooked frog. In the kitchen, there is a pot of water. The water bubbles, boils, the lid is jumping back and forth. Let's take one frog – let's say that it wandered into the kitchen by accident – and toss it into the pot. The unbearable circumstances will make the frog leap out of the pot immediately. If we toss the frog into a pot of cold water, it will splash around happily. It likes cool water. Only then do we turn on the heating and slowly heat the water until it boils. The frog won't notice that the disaster is imminent. It will remain in the water until its tragic end. Fascinating, isn't it?

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VERA: Can you please look at this one? We have a corpse in the warehouse, and she's going on about frogs.

Evelyn returns from the toilet.

EVELYN: Have you missed me?

SUZY: Evelyn!

VERA: You took your own sweet time. And we're working.

EVELYN: I can see that, yes.

SUZY: They came from the television, they came from the television! A real television!

EVELYN: Yeah, right.

VERA: It's true. They took footage of us, you know. You missed it! Serves you right for spending all that time in the toilet!

EVELYN: You're lying, I know.

VERA: Ask Maria.

MARIA: Yes, it happened. Some journalist wanted us to tell him how awful it was to work here. But we didn't want to tell him anything, because we're cowards. In short, you haven't missed a thing.

EVELYN: What?! They came from television?! And none of you came to get me. I can't believe it ...

MARIA: Meh, it really wasn't such a big thing.

EVELYN: You're such bitches! How could you have left me in the toilet, and they were shooting TV here?! Suze?!

SUZY: I'm sorry. I didn't know ...

EVELYN: I could have been on TV, too, if you came to get me. Suze?!

VERA: Is it her fault that you sat on the loo all that time?!

EVELYN: She could've come to get me! But she's too dumb! (*to Suzy*). Just don't think that you'd ever be able to work in your own department. All the plants would die within the first month!

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SUZY: Don't say that.

EVELYN: You're clumsy and stupid, just like they've always told you!

SUZY: Stop it, Evelyn.

EVELYN: You'll stay in this fucking warehouse forever, forever! You're no good for anything else!

SUZY: Evelyn, enough.

EVELYN: You'll never go to your own department, never! Never, Never!

SUZY: I told you to stop!

Suzy jumps to Evelyn and pushes her hard. Evelyn falls into the box that contains the corpse.

EVELYN: Aaaa!

VERA: Are you crazy?! Calm down.

EVELYN: Yuck, yuck! Pull me out.

SUZY: Sorry, Evelyn.

Suzy holds out her hand for Evelyn and pulls her out of the box.

SUZY: I didn't mean to ...

EVELYN: Yuck, disgusting.

VERA: Enough arguing. What the hell are we going to do with this thing now?

EVELYN: Duct tape it, for starters.

VERA: Suze, pass the tape.

Suzy passes the tape to Vera. Vera tapes the lid to the box. Pushes the box under the shelves.

VERA: There. Erased.

EVELYN: What shall we play? Suze, let's play talk show.

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VERA: Imma smack you. You know how much we still have to stack! Do they perhaps pay you for yapping?! I don't want to hear a peep. Move your lazy bums and finally start working. We all know you'd rather stay home lazing about and sponging social benefits from the state. Lazy bums! Bloody vermin!

MARIA: Every now and then, Vera suffers from authoritarian right-wing-conservative episodes.

VERA: I'm the shift supervisor here, me!

MARIA: But she doesn't mean it.

VERA: From now on, you'll whirl about the warehouse swiftly. Do you know how many are waiting just outside that door to replace you? You can be out in the street tomorrow. Go work! Faster! Stack! What is this? The items have to touch each other. And the labels in the front. So that the date can be seen! Is that clear?

ALL: Yes, Vera.

VERA: Have you understood?!

ALL: We've understood.

VERA: The correct labels on the correct items ...

ALL: ... and the correct items to the correct shelves!

VERA: There. Don't forget. And now a smoke break.

SUZY: Yippie, a smoke break.

EVELYN: What are we playing?

VERA: Girls, I can't do this anymore. I just can't! I'm fed up.

SUZY: Tomorrow is Sunday! Girls, we're going home tomorrow.

VERA: We don't know that for sure.

MARIA: On Sundays, they sometimes let us go home. Unless it's a holiday or some special event, like autumn sales or Black Friday.

SUZY: Tomorrow's nothing special. Tomorrow we're going home.

EVELYN: They can always come up with something.

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VERA: Tomorrow I have to make stew for the entire week. My old man adores stew. I wonder what state I'll find the house in. I'm sure he hasn't cleaned a thing.

EVELYN: And she's off again.

SUZY: Evelyn, leave her.

EVELYN: It gets on my nerves that she talks about him like this. Vera, your husband died five years ago. He had cancer and died!

VERA: You're lying you liar. Liar, liar, pants on fire.

EVELYN: Then, I'm crazy.

VERA: Four years and 253 days, not five years! Four years and 253 days. I'll go home tomorrow and make him stew.

SUZY: You will, of course, you will.

EVELYN: Eh, cows.

New merchandise arrives

Maria, Evelyn, Suzy and Vera clean the warehouse. B. G. Arrives.

B. G.: Excuse me, a signature?

SUZY: More merch!

EVELYN: Fuck.

VERA: Hello, boy! Are you still driving? You're such a good boy. If I had a son ...

EVELYN: Yeah, but you don't. What's your name? It was a sexy one ...

SUZY: Evelyn! Behave. What will he think?

EVELYN: What? He should think that I'm lonely, fed up with work and that I would happily go behind the boxes with him.

VERA: Enough! Go count merchandise, now!

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B. G.: Do you have any complaints?

VERA: No, we don't.

EVELYN: What do you mean? What about that box there? (*points to the box with the corpse*)

VERA: Oh, yes, that box. Of course. Yes, that one is a complaint. Exactly true.

B. G.: Aha, aha.

EVELYN: Avocado. All rotting. Country of origin Israel. Send it back to them.

Evelyn and Suzy pull the box to the centre.

B. G.: Ouch, it's heavy.

EVELYN: Rotten avocado is heavier.

B. G.: Really?

EVELYN: Here, let us help you.

Evelyn, Maria, Suzy and B. G. drag away the box containing the customer. B. G. leaves.

SUZY: Good luck!

EVELYN: There. Back to Israel!

SUZY: And if they find him?

EVELYN: Eh, a body more or less. What's it to them?

MARIA: God's strength to all those who believe – first the Jew, then the Greek.

VERA: Let's go, girls. Just a bit more and we're done. Tomorrow's Sunday!

ALL: Tomorrow's Sunday.

A strike

Workers stack items and clean the warehouse.

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SUZY: Is it Sunday yet?

VERA: Not yet.

EVELYN: Isn't it time for television already? When will they turn it on?

SUZY: We've been stacking for ages. When is it time for television?

EVELYN: Television, television!

MARIA: What time is it?! Time?? Has any of you got the time?

VERA: Why do you need to know the time?

MARIA: To know when our workday ends, no?!

VERA: It ends when they tell us it's over. That's what we signed up for.

EVELYN: An exclusive contract.

SUZY: I'm not going to make it.

EVELYN: You are, you are.

SUZY: I'll never make it to flowers anyways.

EVELYN: Don't say that! If you stay quiet and do what you're told ...

VERA: They've just abolished the flower department – it's not profitable anymore. Too much competition, low prices, no margins.

EVELYN: Oh, shit.

SUZY: I knew it.

MARIA: And you couldn't have said so before?

VERA: There was never the right moment.

EVELYN: At least you won't have to dig through the dirt! And your fingernails won't be all black.

VERA: Girls, who will have coffee? I'll make some so we can stay awake more easily.

EVELYN: I will.

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SUZY: Me too.

VERA: Maria?

MARIA: Yeah, I'll have some.

EVELYN: Why won't they give us television? Talents will be on soon. I'll sign up for the audition by myself if you don't want to be in a girl band with me. I've been to one audition before. For a film. When I got there, they told me it was for porn. I'd be paid tons. But I was afraid.

SUZY: Yeah, keep on talking.

EVELYN: Eh, Suze, you haven't the faintest.

MARIA: Perhaps someday they'll use you for a supermarket poster – kneading dough for bread.

EVELYN: You know what, don't make fun.

MARIA: They're making fun of people.

EVELYN: As if we didn't know. They're making fun. Of us, of you, of everybody! Where's that coffee now? Vera?!

VERA: Stop yelling. There's no more coffee.

EVELYN: There are like ten racks of coffee in the shop?!

VERA: We're out of gas.

EVELYN: Fucking gas! Pinching pennies again.

MARIA: Let's go out for coffee. Let's leave everything and go.

VERA: Are you crazy?

SUZY: That we'd just go?

MARIA: Yeah, simply ... go. We leave the merchandise and go out. And don't return until they improve our conditions of work.

VERA: Do you realise what you've just said?

MARIA: Yes?

VERA: A strike! Unions! Workers' movement!

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EVELYN: What does that mean?

SUZY: Do these words still exist?

MARIA: Imagine: if nobody stacks the merchandise as it comes in, it'll pile up to the ceiling, and everything will get blocked. Like ... like an old, broken toilet.

EVELYN: Imagine that: the super VIP director of the region comes, sits on a toilet, because just before he's made good use of corporate expenses and filled up in a restaurant, and what happens? The toilet gets backed up on the poor thing!

VERA: Yes, yes, it gets blocked and doesn't move anywhere, neither forward nor backward!

MARIA: Outside, business partners are waiting for him, and in the toilet bowl, water to the rim, and in the middle ... you know what is swimming!

SUZY: What could he do? He can't flush again, and he doesn't want to pull out his own crap, he would very much like to leave the shit as it is ...

EVELYN: But what if somebody uses the toilet straight after him?

MARIA: A major dilemma. And that's not all. Once he and Greba come to see the warehouse, the automatic door will open, and tens of thousands of bean tins will pour over their heads, and there will be nobody in the warehouse to put them away!

EVELYN: Exactly! We're going home even if their own shit pours over their heads.

SUZY: Let's go!

MARIA: Let's go!

VERA: Let's go! Screw them all! We're not robots!

SUZY: I'm not a machine. I'm a human. A mother. A woman. My body belongs to me.

EVELYN: Enough work, we're going home!

MARIA: Enough exploitation! Home!

SUZY: I'm not a machine. I'd like to be ... I don't know ... happy.

EVELYN: Happy. Happy. Everybody would like to be happy. But HOW? That's the fucking question!

VERA: Stop yelling, scamp.

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Manager Greblovič enters the warehouse.

SUZY: Khm, Greba.

MARIA: Greba.

EVELYN: Greba.

VERA: Good afternoon, Mrs Grebovič.

GREBOVIČ: It's been evening for hours.

VERA: Has it? We haven't noticed.

GREBOVIČ: I came to tell you the good news. They won't be downsizing for now. Not this month ... yet. There's enough work.

SUZY: Lucky us!

VERA: Great news.

GREBOVIČ: The trolleys are full; the merchandise goes out. We're starting a new offer on Monday. Items need to be prepared. We need you tomorrow. All of you. You can have the next Sunday off.

VERA: Yes, of course.

EVELYN: The weather will be bad anyway.

SUZY: Well ... I thought I'd see my kids tomorrow.

GREBOVIČ: Your children can be happy and proud that they have a mother who is employed, who works hard and makes sacrifices so that they can have everything they need.

SUZY: Yes, thank you.

GREBOVIČ: Your work is kept in high regards in the company. As a reward, you can have one more hour of television today.

EVELYN: Yahoo!

SUZY: Super.

VERA: Thank you, ma'am.

GREBOVIČ: I'm leaving. Good night, and keep an eye on the shop.

VERA: Of course. Good night, ma'am.

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Manager Grebovič leaves. Lights go out.

VERA: It is what it is.

SUZY: I want to go home ...

VERA: Don't cry now, Suzy, you'll go ... soon.

Vera hugs Suzy.

EVELYN: Nobody else is here anymore. Only us fools.

MARIA: *The night was dark. She couldn't see even 10 centimetres in front of her. Every step into the unknown could be her last. Totally exhausted, she sat in the snow and observed the headlights that were slowly going away. And then a miracle came. The clouds opened, and the moon came out, illuminating the landscape on the mountain with a magical mist of light.*

EVELYN: Maria.

MARIA: Yes?

EVELYN: I'd like to ask you something ... Promise you won't laugh.

MARIA: I won't.

EVELYN: Have you ever felt like you have something inside you... something hidden. Some power or energy that is just waiting to come out? That bubbles quietly and causes some sort of strong longing? Which is forcefully repressed. And it hurts, I mean, this causes some kind of strange pain. In here.

MARIA: Like a songbird with its beak tied that has to stay mute forever.

EVELYN: I know you find it stupid.

MARIA: Stop it.

EVELYN: I've never had music lessons. My mother didn't want to take me. I don't go to concerts; there's no time, no money. I don't like going to the theatre, because it makes me feel miserable. Like I don't belong there, like everybody's looking at me funny.

MARIA: Evelyn, would you sing something for us?

EVELYN: I don't know ...

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MARIA: Please? Come on.

EVELYN (*sings*):

*Make me a bird
a bird that spreads her wings
and flies away, and has no strings
away from the desert with no water
away from the darkness without sun
Make me water
water that floods dry sand
the rain that floods the desert.
Make me the sun.
So I light my own path
when every other light goes out.*

A large TV screen turns on in the background.

SUZY: Television!

VERA: Whose turn is it for the remote?

EVELYN: Mine! Give it to me!

VERA: No, will not!

The next day (one of many)

Maria, Evelyn, Suzy and Vera are cleaning the warehouse in their uniforms.

VERA: Maria, can you move these crates? Put them into that corner.

MARIA: Will do it immediately.

EVELYN: Where do we have declarations for peppermint tea? Or should it be spearmint?

VERA: You'll get them.

SUZY: I know what I'll be doing on Sunday. I'll make cheesecake. My children love it.
With extra cheese. And I'll make a point of adding extra sugar, too. My mother-in-

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law hates it. I never do anything right anyway. She's always telling me how to cook, how to do the laundry, like I'm twelve.

EVELYN: Hey, have you heard that joke? When Mujo and Haso went to pick mushrooms and they met a bear?

SUZY: You can't be telling a joke when I'm explaining how terrible my mother-in-law is.

EVELYN: Why not? You're always repeating the same thing. Everybody already knows everything about your mother-in-law. Be glad that she cooks and does your laundry.

SUZY: And your stupid joke is not even funny.

EVELYN: How do you know if I've not told it yet?

SUZY: You've told it a hundred times!

VERA: Hey, stop it. We've got work for the entire day. If I don't even mention that we've got new merchandise coming.

MARIA: Again? We won't have anywhere to put it.

VERA: There's always room for more merchandise.

SUZY: Have you heard this? Apparently, the Director of our entire region is coming to see our branch.

VERA: Hey, I'm the one who says that every time! I'm the shift supervisor, not you!

SUZY: True. Sorry.

VERA: Apparently, the Director of our entire region is coming for a visit tomorrow. They're so nervous in the offices you'd think we're waiting for the second coming of Christ.

EVELYN: The old bat thinks she's the top cheese. Not for long. I'll get my promotion soon. The boss has promised me.

VERA: Yeah, right! There will be no promotion as long as my legs carry me.

MARIA: *The night on the mountain was quiet. Only a gust of wind could be heard now and then, carrying snowflakes down the slope and gently hitting the tarp of the tent ...*

VERA: Have you seen the nerve of this one? Are we perhaps on a break? Are we?

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MARIA: No, we aren't.

VERA: Stop fantasising and stack! Tomorrow we start with new discounts. Come on, stack quickly! Still water smells foul! It's not the flour that makes the bread, it's ...

ALL: THE HAND!

All four workers push boxes with merchandise up and down, wheel the shelves back and forth and stack same-sized tins. Evelyn stops the stacking.

EVELYN: I'm Evelyn and I work in this warehouse. But not for long. I won't get stuck in here like some people do, right?

VERA: Keep stacking.

SUZY: When I open my own florist shop, I'll travel around to flower shows.

VERA: You will, of course, you will. I've only got a couple of years until retirement, girls.

MARIA: Stacking, packing, labelling. We open, we cut, we shift the boxes up and down, up and down, uppp and downnn. I want to write. I'd like to write.

EVELYN: Shouldn't the lunch bell ring already?

VERA: Not yet!

SUZY: Yeah, it's time.

EVELYN: Why is there no bell?

SUZY: Where's the bell?!

EVELYN: We want the bell!

VERA: Shhh.

ALL: The bell, the bell, the bell!

The lunch bell rings.

The End

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