

**Lukas Bärfuss**

**THE BUS  
(The Makings of a Saint)**

**DER BUS  
(DAS ZEUG EINER HEILIGEN)**

Englisch von Dr. Marlene J. Norst,  
Sydney 2005

Alle Rechte vorbehalten, insbesondere das der Aufführung durch Berufs- und Laienbühnen, des öffentlichen Vortrags, der Verfilmung und Übertragung durch Rundfunk und Fernsehen. Das Recht der Aufführung ist rechtmäßig zu erwerben vom:

*All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved. No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained. Application for performance etc., must be made before rehearsals begin, to:*

**Hartmann & Stauffacher Verlag  
Bismarckstr. 36  
D 50672 Köln  
Tel. +49 221 485386, Fax +49 221 515402, [info@hsverlag.com](mailto:info@hsverlag.com)**

Die Rechte an der Übersetzung liegen bei:  
Name, Adresse des Übersetzers oder seines Verlags, bei dem die Übersetzung liegt.

Dr. Marlene J. Norst, 63/3 Wylde St, Potts Point, NSW 2011, Phone: 02 9357 3720  
E-mail: [marlenenorst@bigpond.com](mailto:marlenenorst@bigpond.com)

Förderung der Übersetzung durch: / *This Translation was sponsored by:*



**LUKAS BAERFUSS**

# **THE BUS**

## **(THE MAKINGS OF A SAINT)**

**PLAY**

translated by Dr. Marlene J. Norst for the Goethe-Institut (Sydney)

30.09.2005

**Caution:**

All rights whatsoever in this play are strictly reserved. Application for performance etc, must be made before rehearsals begin to:

**Publisher:**

Hartmann & Stauffacher GmbH  
Bismarckstraße 36  
50672 Köln

Tel: ++49 (0)221 – 485 386

Fax: ++49 (0)221 – 515 402

Email: [schaefers@hsverlag.com](mailto:schaefers@hsverlag.com)

[www.hsverlag.com](http://www.hsverlag.com)

**Translator contact:**

Dr. Marlene J. Norst

63/3 Wylde St

Potts Point, NSW 2011

Phone: 02 9357 3720

E-mail: [marlenenorst@bigpond.com](mailto:marlenenorst@bigpond.com)

No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained!

This translation was sponsored by Goethe-Institut

2

## **CAST**

**Erika, a pilgrim on her way to Tschenstochau**

**Hermann, the driver**

**Jasmin**

**The Fat Woman**

**Karl**

**Anton, the petrol station attendant**

**Mr Kramer, a voice**

**An Old Female Pilgrim**

**An Old Male Pilgrim**

## **SCENE**

In a wood in the mountains, on a road, later at Anton's petrol station  
after that on a plateau, finally in a place that resembles the  
transit hostel on Glowny Rynek in Tschenstochau, Poland.

3

**And now I am learning bit by bit**

**about the make and model shit**

**the muddy bowl I live in it**

**and all the mucks that tire us**

And I am feared if I don't have  
a piglet, lamb or little calf  
I'll chop my human-ness in half  
and be as worm or virus  
Will Oldam

4

for kaa, always

5

## FIRSTLY

*On a road. In a wood. In the middle of the night. A tourist bus is standing at the side of the road. The sign says: "Hermann Travel". There's light shining through the windows. The headlights project cones of light into the darkness. Erika, a young woman stands, there in the wind, pale, drowsy, her hair ruffled, her face all screwed up, and Herman, the driver, stands beside her, large, coarse, his shirt hanging over his creased trousers, eyeing the woman warily and in a rage.*

Erika So the bus isn't going to Tschenstochau at all.

Hermann You've said it.

Erika But...In that case, I'm sitting in the wrong bus.

Hermann Totally the wrong bus.

Erika For heaven's sake.

Hermann Now don't you go playing the holy innocent. You know exactly what bus you're sitting in.

Erika That's not true.

Hermann Do you take me for a fool. We've been going for eight hours. We've driven half way through the continent. You saw the direction we were driving in. Want me to take you for a fool.

Erika I was sleeping.

Hermann You're wide awake now. Good morning. You're amongst the living again. So you were asleep. For the whole eight hours. And you seriously expect me to believe that.

Erika Please.

Hermann We were stuck in a traffic jam and I was singing like this:

6

*He sings loudly.*

"If only I could just see your face once more, Rosalin."

You didn't hear that.

Erika Honestly, I didn't.

Hermann We had to listen to that damned music, those hideous violins. And to Mr Kramer who was screaming the whole time, altogether it would have been for at least three hours, three out of the eight hours, and the child claims to have slept and heard nothing.

Erika I didn't close my eyes last night. That's why.

Hermann Last night. Really. That was a beautiful night.

Erika Not for me.

Hermann We shouldn't think about that. This is quite a different

night. A bad night. Very bad.

Erika Why.

Hermann I don't know why either. It's bad because it's bad and that's all there is to it.

Erika Where are we.

Hermann Where are we. Where are we. Let's see. The damp is rising from the earth. The air is fresh and: We can't see any lights. If it weren't for the light coming from the bus, we wouldn't be able to see a hand in front of our face. That over there, I think, is a fir tree. And over there. That's another one. And over there. What's that. Why another fir tree, as far as I can tell.

Well then.

Erika Well what.

Hermann One can assume, we're standing in a wood.

Erika In a wood.

Hermann My assumptions are tending that way.

7

...

Erika Well, were we at least going in the direction of Tschenstochau for those eight hours.

Hermann How should I know. I've no idea where your Tschenstochau is situated.

Erika In Poland.

Hermann Who wants to go to Poland. Nobody here wants to go to Poland. We're in trouble. Because of you. We'll be late and I'm a stickler for punctuality.

Erika Is this here the east.

Hermann Those are the mountains. The ladies and gentlemen are going to take the medicinal waters, they're travelling for their health.

Erika That can't be true.

Hermann Let's have a look at you. You've got a bad colour, that can't be just the moonlight. To be sure, the cure is pure torture, I can tell that by the look of the people when I pick them up again a week later. But when all's said and done, they end up healthy. That would be something for you, considering the terrible way you look right now - basins of ice cold water, mud caves, sulphur immersions.

Erika If I'm not in Tschenstochau by tomorrow morning, There'll be a disaster.

Hermann At the Spa Resort, they'll give you a thorough kneading to soften you up, they'll lay you in mud baths, you'll be stuck in steam baths and boiled till you're done and then you'll have to guzzle down sulphuric water. It's all very healthy. You can smell the people a mile off. You know what it's like. Like rotten eggs. What do you say to that. Sulphuric water. That would be something for you. After all,

you're taking drugs, aren't you.

Erika No way.

8

Hermann But one can tell.

Erika I'm just very tired.

Hermann You're in a withdrawal phase. Go on, admit it.

It's no great deal.

Erika I don't take drugs.

Hermann You can't fool me. Not old Hermann, you can't.

You buy your stuff in Poland. Because it's cheaper

there. You sneak into my bus and play possum.

What's that called. Go on, tell me what that's called.

Erika What.

Hermann Spit it out. What's that called.

Erika I'm not a fare evader.

Hermann A fare evader. That's exactly what you are.

Travelling for nothing – that's the first thing, and

secondly, quietly sneaking past the customs, so they

don't get to frisk you . I wasn't born yesterday. I see

your lot at the bus station. You're out of luck, my girl,

This isn't a trip to Poland. We're on our way to the

mountains. No drugs to be had here.

-----

Hermann But I'm not like that.

Erika Like what.

Hermann I'm not bad, I'm not an evil human being. I just

don't like it if someone cheats on me.

Erika I'm sorry.

Hermann Of course. I know that. I'll help you.

Erika Really.

9

Hermann Am I bad. Perhaps, perhaps I'm bad. Who can

really tell. But just because I'm bad doesn't mean

that I'm not going to help you. People are innocent

as long as they're asleep. And you were asleep,

weren't you.

Erika I told you so.

Hermann But just you watch it. If you cheat on me, you'll

live to regret it.

Erika I was asleep.

-----

Hermann What's your name.

Erika Erika.

Hermann You remind me of my Emmy. I loved her but she

didn't love me although the slut insisted that she

did. I love you. I love you. She sucked me dry.

She was a lot younger than me. That's how it goes.

Then she snuffed it. I never wished that on her,

but when you get down to it, she did deserve it.

Stripping me bare, like that.

Erika I'm sorry about her.

Hermann You didn't even know her, why are you defending her.

Erika I mean I'm sorry because of you.

Hermann No need for that. After all I didn't snuff it. I'm still alive.

-----  
Hermann Now, what was the name of that place again.

Erika Tschenstochau

Hermann In Poland.

10

Erika Exactly.

Hermann And you really want to go there.

Erika Please.

Hermann It'll be a pleasure. I've always liked helping. I get something out of it. That's why I'm so often left the loser.

Erika It wasn't intentional.

Hermann I was young myself once. But I never took drugs.

-----  
Hermann What makes me sick, are those damned lies. A person can make mistakes. I've made mistakes, I'll admit to that. Quite frankly. A person can ask me for anything but when I notice that they're lying, then my brain goes click and I become a different kind of person. What follows then isn't a pretty sight.

Erika I didn't lie to you.

Hermann What do you actually want to do in Poland.

Erika I've got to get to the Black Madonna.

Hermann Aha. Don't know that. What is it.

Erika The Mother of God, the Mother of Our Saviour.

Hermann And she's a black woman.

Erika I think so.

Hermann So our Saviour was a black man. I didn't know that.

Erika He wasn't a black man.

Hermann But his mother was. I haven't got anything against black people but something doesn't

11

quite add up here.

Erika Well, you see that's artistic licence.

Hermann And what's this negro Madonna made of.

Erika Wood.

Hermann Carved.

Erika Painted.

Hermann I do carving too.

*He pulls a knife out of his pocket.*

It's not a proper carver's knife. It's a hunting knife.

When the hunter's only wounded the stag, he sticks the knife into its neck.

*He shows Erika the place on her neck.*

Here's the exact place you stick the knife into  
the poor stag's neck.

Erika Don't.

Hermann Hand me a piece of wood, here this branch'll  
do. Hurry up.

Erika *does as she's told.*

Herman Right. Now watch closely. It's a trick. First, a  
cut like this, those are the eyes, then here's the  
nose, here the chin and there, last of all, the  
hair, and it's all finished. Come on, let's have a  
couple of your hairs.

Erika What do you want with them.

Hermann You'll see in a minute.

Erika But.

Hermann I suppose you'd be able to spare just a couple  
of your hairs.

12

Erika *pulls out a few hairs*

Hermann I'll just wind them round his head. A person  
does need hair, after all, to give him dignity.

Hermann What do you think of it.

*He hands her the carving.*

Erika It's pretty. Really.

Hermann And who does it look like.

Erika I couldn't really say.

Hermann Are you stupid or something. Anyone can see that.

Erika Well...

Hermann You said you knew something about art.

Erika Not really.

Hermann You claimed you did.

Erika A bit.

Hermann Well then. Those faithful eyes. That friendly  
laugh.

Erika. I can't guess.

Hermann When I first began carving, I wanted to make  
an animal. A goat. I like the creatures, the  
horns, the little beard. So, I carved a goat,  
that happened, I think, somewhere along the Rhine  
on a Sunday excursion to the Loreley. The passengers  
are up in the castle on the hill, I'm having to wait for  
them and I begin carving a goat, the horns, the little  
beard, but when I'm finished, it isn't a goat that  
is looking at me, but actually me myself. Since then I  
keep trying, again and again, to get that goat back but  
what grins up at me. Is me. It's Hermann.

Hermann Hermann, say Good Day to Erika.

13

*in a false voice:*

Good Day, Erika.

Erika *remains silent*

Hermann *in a false voice*:

Erika. Hello. Can you hear me. Hello.

Erika I can hear you, Mr. Hermann.

Hermann *in a false voice*:

I'm Hermann. And you're stupid Erica, who gets into the wrong bus on purpose. But aren't you the lucky one. Hermann's going to help you. You see, this isn't just any old Hermann, this is the dearest and best and sweetest Hermann in the whole wide world.

Erika Pleased to meet you.

-----

Hermann Are you crazy. Why are you answering a piece of wood.

Erika I thought.

Hermann There the girl goes answering a dead piece of wood. Are you stupid or something.

Erika But I was just pretending

Hermann Don't try and kid me. You thought the branch was alive.

Erika No, I didn't.

Hermann Don't lie.

Erika I'm not lying.

Hermann I told you. If you lie to me, I'm apt to turn

14

nasty. I turn into somebody else. My voice

changes, becomes deeper. And very soft.

He speaks in a voice that is deep and soft.

Why are you lying to me Erika.

Erika Honestly, I'm not lying.

Hermann What harm have I done you.

Erika Calm down.

Hermann *laughs*.

Heavens, you're stupid. That was just pretending. I know that you weren't lying. I told you so. You almost shit yourself with fear.

Erika Well, I must say, you do have a weird sense of humour,

Hermann Now, if only we had a shoe-lace. Do me a favour, let me have yours.

Erika Well, I must say.

Hermann After all, you've got two. And I haven't got any. As you can see. These are Velcro fasteners.

Erika How am I going to get on without a shoe-lace.

Hermann Now don't be so greedy. Let him who has two, give unto him who has none. There's no two ways about it. After all, you'll get it back.

Erika Are you sure.

Hermann But of course.

Erika *She removes the shoe-lace from her*



*right shoe.*

Here you are.

Hermann OK. We'll tie that round Hermann's chest. Here you are.

15

*He goes to hand Erika the wood-carving of Hermann.*

Erika What am I supposed to do with that.

Hermann You can hang it round your neck. Like a talisman.

Erika I can't do that.

Hermann It's a present. You've got to.

Erika No, thanks.

Hermann Hermann will bring you luck. And you're going to need luck, I can tell you that.

Erika I'm not allowed to wear a talisman.

Hermann Who told you that.

Erika The Bible says so.

Hermann Where does it say that.

Erika Somewhere. Where it talks about the golden calf.

Hermann So you don't want my Hermann But you're going to Poland to that Black Madonna.

Erika That's not the same thing.

Hermann Anyway, you're ungrateful. So Hermann stays with me.

*He hangs the wood-carving of Hermann around his neck .*

I promise you that you'll live to regret having rejected something that could have brought you luck.

Erika And what's going to happen to my shoe –lace.

Hermann You should have thought of that earlier.

Erika I'll lose my shoe.

16

Hermann Look at that. Your luck's already running out.

Erika Would you be kind enough to tell me how you intend to help me.

Hermann I was wanting to help you just now. I wanted to give you a talisman. But you think you're so high and mighty. You don't want my Hermann.

Erika You wanted to help me get to Tschenstochau.

Hermann With my Hermann, you'd be half way there already.

-----

Hermann If I were you, I'd get hold of a knife too. Then when you're bored you can at least whittle away the time. That way you won't need drugs.

Addiction comes from boredom.

Erika I don't get bored. I have my faith.

Hermann And what sort of faith is that faith you've got.

Erika That the Lord sent His Son on earth and that this Son, Jesus Christ, died for our sins.

Hermann *drops to his knees, folds his hand in prayer and murmurs unintelligibly.*

Erika What are you doing. Don't do that. Stand up.  
Stop doing that, please.  
Hermann laughs.  
That was a parody. That's what it looks like  
when you fall on your knees before the Black  
Mama. I was trying to imagine it. Now you've got a stupid  
look on your face.

-----

Hermann Are you a saint.

17

Erika No.

Hermann Then take that stupid look off your face.

Erika prepares to leave

Hermann Where are you going.

Erika Back into the bus.

Hermann Stay here.

Erika I'm feeling cold.

Hermann You're staying right here. You heard me.

He holds her back

Erika Let me go That hurts.

*She pulls away.*

Hermann Patience, little bird, just you stay in your cage

*He catches hold of her again and when she resists and tries  
to get free, Hermann hits her.*

I'm sorry. I didn't want to do that.

Erika Right in the middle of my face.

Hermann Just a slap. It's not that bad.

Erika You could just talk to me.

Hermann That's just the way I am. I'm not a bad fellow.

Erika I'm not afraid of you. I'm now going to get into  
that bus. Please step aside.

Hermann *hits Erika again*

Now just look at that. Girliegirliegirlie

What use is it, not being afraid. Now you're  
bawling your eyes out just the same. Show me  
your ticket, and everything will be alright.

18

Erika What ticket.

Hermann The ticket for my bus.

Erika But I haven't got one.

Hermann How's that again. You haven't got a ticket.

Erika Just one to Tschenstochau.

Hermann Just a moment. First let me get that straight.

You haven't got a ticket and yet you're going  
to get into my bus. What do you call that.

Erika What do you mean.

Hermann I'm asking you what you call it when you get  
into a bus without a ticket.

Erika Fare evasion.

Hermann Fare evasion. Is that your religion. Cheating.

Is that religious.

Erika It wasn't done on purpose.

Hermann Believing in a redeemer who died for our sins and at the same time cheating one's fellow human beings. How does that match up. Is that the religion of your black mother.

Erika You wanted to help me.

Hermann I'm really trying but you're not making it easy. You women won't let us help you.

Erika Certainly not with blows.

Hermann My goodness. How you do bear grudges. No sense of humour and bearing grudges too. Not exactly what one might call appealing.

-----  
Hermann This is my only bus. Fifty-four seats. I haven't got anybody working for me. I'm

19

not a capitalist. Why don't you shit on one of the big bus companies. Why don't you shit on one of my competitors. Why don't you pick on Gafner. He's got eighteen buses. Eight-teen. Pays his drivers starvation rates, Erika, at best starvation rates. Forces his drivers, to work through their breaks, to drive fifteen hours straight, so that he can reduce the fares. I don't know how long I can keep this up. I'm driving six days a week. I don't allow myself any treats, Erika, not one. But I'm not complaining about that. What I am complaining about is the fact that a young thing comes along, pretty, well educated, claims to believe in God and wrecks everything. Wants to shit on me. And then I let you have one right in the middle of your well-educated face, quite unjustly, I'll admit, and suddenly they're all saying Hermann's bad. Everybody knows. It's common knowledge. He beats women. And does anybody ever ask Why. God knows, I'd rather not have hit you. I always cop the blame. That much is certain. We live in an unjust world.

Erika Stop that whingeing. A man of your age, complaining about the evils of the world. It's embarrassing. Sometimes things that one hasn't planned simply happen. Look at me. I've got to get to Tschenstochau and I'm sitting in a wood somewhere or other. Do you hear me complaining. Am I holding someone else responsible. You shouldn't look for the

fault in other people. If you want to change something, change it

Hermann Where did you learn that.

Erika Where did I learn what.

Hermann To make such inspiring speeches. Very convincing. I do whinge a lot, that's true. But what can I do. That's just how things are.

-----  
20

Erika pulls out her purse.

Hermann I don't want your money.

Erika I don't want to owe you anything. I'll pay for the trip and get out at the next stop.

Hermann You're not getting into my bus again.

Erika And why not.

Hermann Why. Why. There's no why about it. I've told you already.

Erika You wanted to help me.

Hermann Things change. One lot bought a ticket, paid up, have been honest, the others cheated, gave a lot of shit, told lies. Just as it suited them. They're the ones I won't help. There may be injustice in the world. But certainly not on my bus.

Erika And what's to be done now.

Hermann This isn't a bad sort of wood. Choose a fir tree. This one here looks exactly like a fir tree we've got at our place. I'd take shelter under that one, if I were you.. And don't make a sound if you hear people coming

Erika You're not going to leave me in this wilderness.

Hermann This isn't a wilderness. There are no wild animals here.

Erika It's the middle of the night.

Hermann So what. You've had your sleep. You won't find it hard to stay awake. And it won't get any darker. I'll get your luggage. You wait here.

*He prepares to exit.*

21

*Erika folds her hands in prayer*

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name  
thy kingdom come thy will be done.

Hermann Stop that. I can't stand that. That's so awful. Be quiet. I'm telling you to shut up.

*He attempts to unclasp Erika's folded hands.*

Do as I tell you. Pull your hands apart. I'll show you.

Alright then. I'll count till three, then I'll break your fingers. One.

Erika On earth as it is in heaven.

Hermann Two.

Erika And forgive us our trespasses as we  
forgive them who trespass against us.

Hermann Three.

*He breaks Erika's fingers.*

Erika screams.

Hermann You scumbag. Screaming here at the  
top of your voice. Now the passengers  
are going to get out, if one gets out, they  
all get out and when they've once got  
out, there'll be no getting them back into the bus  
again. What'll happen then. We'll be late.

You Scumbag.

Erika *whimpers*.

My hand. You've broken my hand.

Hermann Your not going to do any whimpering here.  
A woman of your age. Embarrassing. I warned you  
Everybody knew that. Now they're coming. Shit  
There already here.

22

The Fat Woman *and*

Jasmin *get out of the bus*.

Hermann Don't get out. This isn't a regular stop.  
the journey will resume immediately.

Jasmin Did you just scream, Hermann.

Hermann Why should I suddenly take it into my  
head to scream.

Jasmin There was a scream. Loud and clear.

Hermann Really.

Jasmin Who is that, Hermann.

Hermann That. That's nobody. Piece of shit. A fare-evader.  
Doesn't really exist. I'll deal with that.

Erika He broke my hand.

Hermann Stay away from her. Don't get any closer. She's  
dangerous

Jasmin Dangerous.

Hermann She's a drug addict. Wants to buy her  
stuff in Poland.

The Fat Woman Are we going to Poland. But we're not  
supposed to be going to Poland

-----

Jasmin Hermann, explain yourself.

Hermann There's nothing to explain. The little bird picked  
the wrong bus.

Jasmin And how did she come to break her hand.

Hermann You've got to understand , Jasmin,  
these are simply the laws of the road. They may  
appear cruel, but if I don't take drastic measures,

23

there'll be a complete collapse of the moral order.

The Fat Woman Don't you check who gets on the bus.

Hermann If that object there isn't sitting in the bus in three minutes, I'm going to throttle her.

Jasmin Did you check. Answer me.

Hermann Of course, I checked. But what am I supposed to do. She sneaked in when no one was looking.

The Fat Woman There's a Junkie sitting in the bus for the entire journey and our driver doesn't know a thing about it.

Hermann At last she's got it.

The Fat Woman That's really the end, Hermann, once and for all.

Hermann I was used and I was deceived.

The Fat Lady He's always got an excuse.

Jasmin She's right, Hermann. It is your responsibility.

Hermann You're all picking on me.

-----

Hermann A bit of music should do the trick. Violins should calm things down. Don't you worry we'll handle this. Go and put the music on. If you wouldn't mind.

Jasmin I thought, you didn't like music.

Hermann It's all a question of time.

The Fat Woman *exits while Jasmin inspects Erika's hand.*

Jasmin That looks bad.

Hermann Just chicken-bones, It happened so easily

24

What's it called. Osteoporosis. Comes from taking drugs.

Erika I prayed to the Lord as he taught us to do in the Gospel.

Hermann Wasn't the genuine article. Anybody can do that, pretend to pray.

Erika It was genuine.

Hermann Don't believe you.

Jasmin I know her. I had her in the flat once. I wasn't feeling well at the time. Those people can smell that. She stood at the door and smiled. She took the situation in immediately, no question about it. Not my cup of tea. Yet one second later she's sitting in the kitchen and drinking the coffee, I'd made for myself.

Hermann I'm disappointed in you, Jasmine.

Jasmin She's good at it, Hermann, really good. In the space of two hours she knew my most intimate secrets, I'd given her an account of my whole life with all its calamities. And do you know what She had the solution.

Hermann What solution.

Jasmin The solution to my problems.  
Hermann Well, after two hours I'd have had it too.  
Jasmin She knew the solution beforehand.  
Hermann What do you mean, beforehand.  
Jasmin I wouldn't have needed to tell her anything. There is just one solution for every problem.  
Hermann Aha. And what is this solution.  
Erika You know the solution.  
Hermann None of your cheek, girl, give me the  
25

answer.  
Erika Confess your sins and choose Jesus Christ as you Lord and Shepherd, because it was for your sins that he died on the cross.  
Jasmin She is not afraid. I'd do anything to forget my fear. But it didn't work. Not for me.  
Hermann You're wrong, Jasmin. At the very present moment, she's shitting herself pretty thoroughly.  
Jasmin She's not afraid. Of anything. Not even of death.

Erika Why should I be. This isn't the end. Not even the beginning.  
*Now the violin music from inside the bus becomes audible.*  
Hermann Terrible, this fiddling makes me sick. Do I really have to put up with it.  
Jasmin It was your idea.  
Hermann Just a little trick. I wanted to get rid of the sea-cow. When she's standing near me, I can't think. She smells, or didn't you notice.  
Jasmin What's the name of the place, you want to get to.  
Erika Tschenstochau  
Jasmin Have we ever been there.  
Hermann *is keeping time with the music.*  
Jasmin Hermann. Have we ever been in Tschenstochau.  
Hermann Don't know about the others but I know I've never been there. Poland doesn't appeal to me.  
Erika I need a doctor.

26  
Jasmin You'll have to be a bit patient.  
Hermann I've told her that, but she doesn't listen.  
Jasmin This is a private tour. You're putting us in rather a difficult situation.  
The Fat Woman *returns*  
Is that OK, Hermann.  
Hermann Is what OK, Hermann  
The Fat Woman The violin music.  
Hermann What's supposed to be OK about it. It's driving me crazy. Sounds like a saw-mill. Enough to

put the fear of God into the trees. But it fits you like a glove.

The Fat Woman What harm have I ever done you.

Hermann I don't like you. I can't stand your face. And the way you speak. You're a bird brain.

The Fat Lady You have no right to insult me.

Hermann Do you really think the day will ever come when I'll have to show respect to a shrivelled up gherkin like you.

The Fat Woman I'm sorry for you.

Hermann You can always get off, if it doesn't suit you.

The Fat Woman I've paid for the trip like all the others.

Hermann I've paid for the trip like all the others. If you could just listen to yourself.

-----  
Erika It wasn't intentional. I've explained that already. Why should I get in the wrong bus on purpose. That isn't really possible.

27

Getting into the wrong bus on purpose, I was working last night. Till four in the morning. Clearing the glasses, cleaning the tables, emptying the ash trays. Have to earn my keep somehow. I had my suitcase with me. And then I went directly to the Bus station at the Railway. Somebody gave me a strange look and yelled out something but I didn't pay any attention and got in the bus. There was no one else there. No one behind the wheel. I sat down in the last row. That's what everybody does. The driver comes and checks the tickets. But nobody came. And so I fell asleep.

Hermann And whose fault is that, may I ask .

Erika By now I should have been in Tschenstochau.

Hermann What does the sign on my bus say.

Erika It was too dark.

Hermann Does any regular touring bus carry a sign saying Hermann. . Is Hermann a place name or is there perhaps a tourist spot called Hermann.

Erika I wanted to take a Pilgrimage bus to Tschenstochau.

The Fat Woman Why a Pilgrimage bus.

Erika Because I'm a pilgrim.

The Fat Woman A pilgrim.

A Christian.

Erika Yes.

The Fat Woman Did you know that, Hermann.



Hermann It's a trick. To soften our hearts. And to use us. So that we won't throw her out in a wood and sit her down under a fir tree.

28

The Fat Woman But. That is. That's really nice, to have a Christian here. With us. In our midst. That's nice, Hermann, you clot, do you understand me, nice. We want that. And still so young. That's a sign for us. Let us pray together.

Erika Gladly. But I'm getting out at the next place.

Hermann Good idea. But there is no next place.

-----  
Hermann There's a long stretch of wood, lots of trees and then there's the cable car station. And Anton's petrol station.

Erika And then.

Hermann Then there's the Spa Resort hotel.

Jasmin Let's leave her at the cable car station. There's sure to be a bus tomorrow morning.

Hermann Sorry, but tomorrow there certainly won't be a bus. Look at the day of the week. You see. Sunday, the bus doesn't go till mid-day. We'd better leave her here.

Erika In the middle of the wood.

Hermann It's nice here.

*He hums the violin melody*

Hermann Here's a little trick for you. Give the trees names, that way you'll be able to talk to them.

. that's how it works with everything. Then you're not frightened any more. My bus is called Hermann, like me. I'm not frightened of him.

-----  
The Fat Woman I don't like that idea. We'd miss her company. Such a sweet, delicate Christian child will be a comfort to Mr. Kramer.

29

*to Erika*

Didn't you notice. We've got a very sick person with us. He nearly died on us during the trip, because this driver goes like the devil.

Hermann Like who, like who does Hermann drive.

The Fat Woman Well, just like the devil. Mr. Kramer has a bad liver, which is poisoning him from the inside. When the bus driver takes a corner too quickly or when he brakes too suddenly, this sore liver is pressed sideways or to the front and then Mr Kramer screams most terribly and believe me, he had to scream a lot. Didn't you hear it. Impossible. You must have heard it. It's not a normal scream, not a scream of fear. nor the way you scream when you burn your hand on a frying pan, it's

a deep scream, you think that the liver itself is screaming.

Erika I'm sorry.

The Fat Woman It's already driven me crazy. Look, how old I am. How old do you reckon I am. I don't want to embarrass you. But I'm ten years younger

-----.

The Fat Woman It isn't a coincidence that you got into our bus.

Erika Isn't it.

The Fat Woman It's Providence.

Erika You believe in God.

The Fat Woman These louts don't know what spirituality means, they have no access to their hearts, they have erected barricades to guard their vulnerability. and if you tug the strings of their souls, you only hear plop, plop, plop, the strings no longer sound. I have tried, they are ruined. One cannot straighten a crooked branch. I'm on your side, my child. The Lord in heaven above looks after his lambs, he will not let a single one of them stray.

30

Erika Whatever made me get into this bus.

The Fat Woman Didn't you listen. It's Providence.

Erika I have my instructions. To be in Tschenstochau, punctually on the Feast Day of St. Sophia. And that day is tomorrow. Or perhaps it's already today. What's the time.

The Fat Woman, Doesn't matter. Now you're here, with me. Go wherever the Lord leads you, isn't that what it says. You must learn not to turn away. not to resist the will of the Lord.

Erika It is the Will of the Lord that I should go Tschenstochau.

The Fat Woman Then why are you here and not there.

Erika Because I got into the wrong bus.

The Fat Woman You're stubborn. You don't have to go to Tschenstochau. It's to me that the Lord has lead you, to me.

Erika What am I supposed to do here.

The Fat woman You can read the Book of Revelations to Mr Kramer. Why are you looking at me like that.

You do know the Book of Revelations, don't you.

Erika Of course.

The Fat Woman Lovely, isn't that lovely. You've never seen such suffering. Mr. Kramer's suffering is pure, quite pure. It's as if he had a mouth full of infected teeth, that's how he described it. The pain knows no rest, often he lies awake for days, till he finally loses consciousness. but

I don't know if unconsciousness counts as sleeping.

Erika Who keeps count.

The Fat Woman The body keeps count..

31

Erika Perhaps he gets some rest that way.

The Fat Woman No, no he doesn't. As soon as he wakes up he wishes he were asleep again. Then he quivers and holds on to me. Digs his nails into my arm till I've got the marks of his bloodied half-moons left in them. Here, take a look,

Erika Surely he can't feel pain all the time.

The Fat Woman Of course he does, all the time, and that's a good thing. When he doesn't feel pain he's overcome by fear, he cries and blubbers then like a small child. Believe me, that's not good to look at. He's better off with the pain.

Erika Why does he cry.

The Fat Woman He doesn't want to die, dear man. He believes that one fine day he's going to be well again. He's got a child-like nature.

Erika Look at my hand, it's getting better.

The Fat Woman You're coming to the Spa Hotel with me They've got very nice rooms, simple, white tiles, no luxuries apart from a sink with cold water. We'll put Mr. Kramer down on the bed and see to it that he doesn't curl up like a horse-shoe. He has the bad habit when the pain takes a hold of curling up in the foetal position, but he's not allowed to do that. He has to lie on his back, anything else is undignified. Yes. And then you'll sit against the wall and read the Book of Revelations, verse after verse and I'll sit on the bed and watch over him. That'll be just lovely. That'll comfort him.

Erika I'd be happy to read the bible to Mr.Kramer if it would be a comfort to him.

The Fat Woman You little angel, you dear little thing.

Erika But I can't come to the Spa Hotel.

32

The Fat Woman Indeed you can, you must come.

Erika I'll read the Gospel to him now, right away.

The Fat Woman Not the Gospel, that is not suitable, it has to be Revelations, he wants to hear about the dragons, and the bowls of wrath that are poured out and about the huge beast with the seven heads , he finds that a powerful, a mighty, a terrifying text.

Erika Sick people need comfort and the Gospel is

full of comfort.

The Fat Woman You're not, by any chance, about to tell me what my Mr.Kramer needs, are you.

Erika He needs neither anger, nor fear but the certainty of divine grace and the joyful tidings of love.

-----  
The Fat Woman Be quiet. Can you hear that.

Erika What is it.

The Fat Woman Be quiet. You can only hear it if you're quiet. That very, very soft wheezing, it's scarcely audible, but that's how the screaming starts. A unique sound. Air streaming out of the lungs without pressure, without power. Just one little second more and he'll start screaming.

Erika I'll read him Revelations if you'll talk to Hermann. He's got to drive me to the next town. I've got to get away from here. Tell him that.

The Fat Woman Are you by any chance trying to bargain with me., You're not going to commercialise your spiritual gifts, are you.

Erika But don't you understand, I've got to get  
33

to Tschenstochau/. And what's more, immediately.

The Fat Woman That's really the end. the bitter end.

*She exits*

The Fat Woman That one's not getting into our bus. That one over there. She's a rotten liar. I don't want her.

Hermann You're quite right. That's how it is. Now just you get back in the bus. Everything happens as it must. And I take care that it works out as it should. We'll leave the little bird with Anton. With Anton at the petrol station.

The Fat Woman I'm not going to let that one anywhere near Mr. Kramer.

Hermann Yes. It's only eight kilometres.

The Fat Woman Not even eight kilometres. Who's paid their fare for this trip.

Hermann I can understand your anger. Some dirty tricks are being played here. Sneaking in like a thief and then making out you're the victim. We'll leave her with Anton.

The Fat Woman She could go on foot. There's nothing wrong with her legs. I'm not getting on the same bus with her.

Hermann *Hits The Fat Woman in the face.*

Right. You're quite right. You're a very smart

woman, that's what you are. But you've got no say in the matter here. No say at all. I could gouge out your eyeballs and tie a knot in your tongue if I wanted to. I'm the driver. I make the decisions. That's what's so good about it. Get in. We're leaving her with Anton.

34

You're lucky. We're taking you to Anton. A lovely man. He'll look after you.

-----  
*Karl gets out of the bus.*

Hermann Get in. We're continuing the journey. Get in.

*He exits with Jasmin and The Fat Woman.*

Erika Karl. Is it you Karl.

Karl Have we met before.

Erika But Karl, it's me, Erika.

Karl Aha. And that's supposed to ring a bell with me.

Erika You're not being serious, are you.

Karl No. I'm not. Good evening, Erika. You've changed. You've grown tall. A real woman.

*He moves aside and relieves himself at the edge of the road.*

It's odd. You can be in a totally hopeless situation but peeing still gives you pleasure. The body can certainly be a bother but there's no doubt about it, it does give me pleasure.

Erika I'm in a totally hopeless situation.

Karl I do hope you are. It suits this darkness, this altitude. Ghastly. Fortunately we can get back into our bus.

*The horn sounds. Karl gathers his things*

Erika I'm not getting back into this bus.

Karl Farewell, Erika. You can give your mother a message from me. Tell her, that at the time.

What shall I say. I knew exactly what I was what I was doing

35

*He is talking, but the horn sounds and he can't be understood.*

Erika I didn't understand the last bit.

Karl Doesn't matter. It's not important. Good night.

*Erika talks over the sound of the horn but can't be understood.*

Karl What did you say.

*Erika talks over the sound of the horn but can't be understood.*

Karl shakes his head.

Erika screams

Help me, Karl, please help me.

-----

Karl I recognised you when Hermann pulled you out of the bus by your hair. Not by your face I didn't see that, but then no one recognises you by your face anyway.

Erika What do you mean by that.

Karl And I said to myself. If that's the Erika, you know then she's bound to be sitting in the wrong bus.

Erika Please, have a look at my hand.

Karl And if she's sitting in the wrong bus, then Hermann will take her behind the nearest fir tree and wring her neck.

Erika Hermann broke my hand, Karl. He broke it.

Karl Help her, I thought to myself. After all, you do like her. You wouldn't want this man to do her any harm. And when all's said

36

and done, you were like a father to her for a time. It was on account of Erika that you stayed with her mother longer than you really wanted to.

Erika I didn't know that.

Karl Well, I didn't tell anyone. Because I'm too much of a coward. I'm altogether very cowardly. It's deep rooted in my character and if I were to dig it out, my whole personality would collapse like a house of cards. I was already sick to death of your Mum. She was too old for me. To begin with. I found that quite attractive. She didn't age badly, she really didn't.

Erika I don't want to hear about that.

Karl Her golden age would have been grey, if you hadn't been blooming beside her. You were were into everything. Once you were so drunk, you made the whole toilet filthy at three in the morning. You didn't care. I cleaned it up the same night, quicky and quietly, so that your mother wouldn't notice anything. I wanted to share a secret with you. But you didn't care. You made fun of me because I thought you might feel ashamed in front of your mother. You and feeling ashamed. That's a good one.

Erika I didn't want to hurt you.

Karl Don't make excuses. It doesn't suit you. I quite enjoyed the sense of paternal responsibility gnawing away at me. Gives a man a good feeling. I was allowed to be strict with you without having to fear that it would be the slightest use. I really worried about you. Funny that. You didn't exactly have, what one might call a responsible attitude to drug taking.

Erika That's over and done with a long time ago.

Karl Haven't you got anything on you. Kramer could use some. I'm prepared to pay, if that's what it takes, I can't listen to the man any more. You're quite plump. Well nourished. A bit dull. What 37

you're wearing there. Very dull, to be honest. I mean in contrast to the Erika, I once knew.

Erika I've changed.

Karl You're a different person.

Erika Actually a person for the first time. Why did you keep quiet before.

Karl I didn't keep quiet. I yelled at myself inside. Get out of your soft seat, confront him. Erika needs your help once again. I yelled as loudly as I could. But nothing helped. All I actually did was to click open the ash-tray in the arm rest, click it shut and click it open again. And listen to Kramer's death rattle. Every time he takes a breath you think: that's the last one. Like the tap in the kitchen, that drips and that one listens to half the night. I knew he was going to kill you. But in spite of that I didn't get out.

Erika But in the end , you did.

Karl Because I had to piss, not because of you.

-----  
Karl Is your hand hurting.

Erika A bit. It looks funny, doesn't it.

Karl The pain will come. Later.

Erika Are you going to help me.

Karl I'd rather not.

Erika It would be a good chance to be brave.

Karl You misunderstand me. It's not the time for charity or neighbourly love. That doesn't fit in. I like being a coward.

*The horn sounds*

38

Good night.

Erika Karl.

Karl Why don't you just push off.

Erika I can't do that.

Karl Pushing off is always possible. Believe me, I've had experience.

Erika I can't run away from God.

Karl Don't tell me.

Erika Don't tell you what.

Karl You haven't by any chance.

Erika Yes.

Karl What do you call it.

Erika Had a conversion. I have found God. Or God has found me.

Karl That isn't true. Have they caught up with you. Impossible. Not you, Erika.

*The horn sounds for a long time.*

Erika I want to explain it to Hermann. The Lord has instructed me to go to Tschenstochau, to the Black Madonna , on the Feast of St. Sophie

.

Karl And then.

Erika I don't know any more than that.

Karl What are you supposed to do there.

Erika I don't know.

Karl And how did He let you know that.

Erika An angel appeared, he announced it loud and  
39

clear. The Lord has spoken: Go to Tschenstochau, to the Black Madonna on the Feast of St. Sophia or a disaster will occur.

Karl An angel.

Erika An angel.

Karl With wings.

Erika I didn't look. I was afraid. His voice was like.

Karl Let me guess. His voice was like thunder.

Erika Like a whisper. A whisper so delicate it crept through every crevice in my skin, under my nails, through my eyes, my teeth, through my bottom, the voice was in me, Karl, in me.

Karl Was he at least white, this angel of yours.

Erika He didn't have a colour.

Karl No colour.

Erika No, no colour.

Karl Everything's got a colour.

Erika Not this angel.

Karl They've caught you, Erika, they've caught you badly.

Erika Help me. I want to explain it to the driver.

Karl What. That an angel without any colour appeared and whispered to you that you had to go to Tschenstochau on the Feast of St. Sophia but unfortunately you got into the wrong bus which is why we've now got God against us. Is that more or less what you want to convey to Hermann.

Erika He thinks I want to buy drugs in Poland.

Karl Smart lad, our Hermann.

40

Erika You'd better keep it quiet. I mean, about what happened before.

Karl What do I get if I do.

Erika Do it for your own sake.

Karl He'll throttle you, Erika.

Erika He'll understand me. God only knows



how long I'd have to wait at the petrol station.  
Karl My dear Erika. Hermann's a bad man. Except  
when he's sitting behind the wheel, then he's  
a lamb, docile and patient. An excellent driver,  
you're better off in his bus than in your  
mother's lap. But as soon as he gets out. A  
bad man. Through and through.

Erika No one's bad through and through.

Karl *opens his wallet*

Take that. And now beat it.

Erika *Doesn't move.*

Karl Make yourself scarce. Be off, I'm telling you.

*He picks up a pebble, throws it and misses.*

Erika I want to talk to Hermann. Go and tell him

Karl *bends down to pick up a bigger stone. Throws  
it and misses.*

Erika Stop doing that, Karl. It won't do any good.

Karl *picks up a handful of pebbles, throws and  
misses, throws and misses, throws and misses.*

Erika Now go.

Karl He'll break your neck like he broke your  
hand. But I'll go and get him and then I'll

41

watch how he breaks your neck.

*Exits*

-----  
Hermann *appears, he's grabbed Karl by the collar*

What have we here. A negotiator, that's what we've  
got. What do we need a negotiator for. Has war  
broken out. Or is this. What do we call it. An  
intrigue. Is this an intrigue. Why don't you come  
straight to me. What do you need him for. Who is  
that. Do I know him. Does this comic character, this  
jumping jack, this sausage face, have any kind of role  
to play here.

Karl I know her. She's called Erika.

Hermann I know Erika too. As a matter of fact, I know  
her very well. I know who she is. A pious girl  
and she needs to get to Tschenstochau  
urgently, otherwise a disaster will befall the  
world. That's it. But that won't work. For a  
number of reasons. It's true she's pious but a  
bit weak in the head. So there you are. I know Erika  
too.

So why are you giving yourself airs.

Erika Let go of Karl, Mr Hermann. I asked Karl to talk to  
you.

Hermann Mr Hermann. Why this Mister. Do I look like  
a boss. Nobody calls me Mister. Anybody who  
gets into my bus calls me Hermann. What

does the sign on my bus say. What does it say.

Erika Hermann.

Hermann Hermann. I'm Hermann. And you.

Erika My name's Erika.

Hermann Pleased to meet you. Good evening, Erika.

I'm Hermann, the driver. And this is my bus. If you've got a problem, just tell me. You don't need this bloke.

42

We don't need any go-betweens. Away with you. Go away.

Karl *exits into bus*.

Hermann We'll talk directly with each. Person to

Person. Is that OK.

Erika That's OK by me.

Hermann Eyeball to eyeball Agreed.

Erika Agreed.

Hermann Because I don't harm anyone. Well then.

What's this all about. Out with it. I won't bite you.

Erika I can't get back into your bus.

Hermann Aha. There's a piece of news. Five minutes ago you insisted on getting into this bus. Or am I mistaken.

Erika I'll be stranded at that petrol station.

Hermann That doesn't matter. Anton is a wonderful man. Are you married.

Erika No, no, I'm.

Hermann Not engaged either.

Erika *shakes her head*.

Hermann Anton is a fine human being, a real gentleman,

and, by the way, a great drinker. You'll see,

It's your private affair but something could come of that. After all, you like a bit of a drink too. And it's so much nicer in company.

Erika For goodness sake, I've got to get to Tschenstochau.

Hermann Exactly. But why.

Erika I'm expected.

43

Hermann Aha. By whom.

Erika By the Lord, our God.

Hermann And that's why you're excited.

Erika I must be there. I must.

Hermann When exactly.

Erika On the Feast of St. Sophia, I have to be

in front of the Convent of Jasna Gora.

Hermann And what happens, if you're not.

Erika There'll be a disaster.

Hermann A disaster. You haven't deserved that.

Erika Turn the bus around. Please bring me to the nearest town.

Hermann I'd love to. I really would. But you must

understand, Erika, I do have a problem, I'm a believer too, if you want to put it that way. I believe in the here and now. In my stomach, in my bowels. And my bowels tell me that you are a bad person. You bring bad luck. You take drugs, stand at street corners, you seem decent and able, but you're actually corrupt. I've had my experiences with that. I don't have any problem with you personally. It's true that you sneaked into my bus, but I don't bear grudges. However, unfortunately you tell lies. Those are my facts.

Erika I don't tell lies.

Hermann You're a pathological liar. You're not aware of it yourself, and believe that your lies are the truth and that's why you're actually innocent.

-----

Hermann Let's take the business with the drugs. You insist that you're not taking drugs.

Erika And I'm not taking them.

44

Hermann I've seen you. From the bus station you have an unobstructed view of the railway station and I often saw you there. Isn't that so.

Erika Possibly.

Hermann Yes or no.

Erika I sometime talk to people there.

Hermann Not to get money from them. Or are you a prostitute.

Erika I want to bring the gospel to those who are unfortunate. So that they can laugh again.

Hermann So you're not taking drugs.

Erika No.

Hermann And have never taken any.

Erika Well I must say.

Hermann And have never taken any.

Erika That's none of your business.

Hermann Now we have it. Lies, lies, lies. You can't bear the truth.

Kramer *screams from inside the bus.*

HERMANN. HERMANN. A SEARING HOT WIRE IS CUTTING MY BRAIN INTO BITE-SIZED SLICES. MY FEET ARE IMMERSSED IN ACID. I CAN FEEL EVERY ONE OF MY BONES SINGLY. THAT ISN'T GOOD. SOMEONE IS DRAGGING OUT MY LIVER THROUGH MY TEETH. MY DRIVER. HOW I LOVE YOU, MY DRIVER. HOW MUCH I DEPEND ON YOU. WITH EVERY BEAT MY HEART CRIES OUT FOR YOU. I AM CONSUMED BY MY LONGING FOR YOU. WHEN, MY DRIVER, WILL THIS JOURNEY CONTINUE.

Hermann THIS MINUTE. MR KRAMER, THIS MINUTE.

45

Kramer THAT'S GOOD, GOOD.

Hermann Mr Kramer owned the Gentlemen's Outfitters Business in the inner city, always elegant, he was, starched shirt, lambskin shoes, smart trousers, clean shaven. In his youth he was the state champion in swimming. He had it all, did Kramer.

And now. Now he's sweating his own piss, because his organs are all eaten away. Hopeless, Erika, hopeless.

Erika There's always hope.

Hermann Aha. Tell me how.

Erika Through the Gospel of Love..

Hermann The gospel of love. Do I know that.

Erika We should envy Mr. Kramer. The Lord is testing him . He's putting him to the test. If he lets Christ into his heart, he will rejoice.

Hermann Rejoice.

Erika Then a whole ocean of blood will stream through his head a thousand times and every sewer filled with baseness will be washed away and he will rejoice, rejoice like the lark in spring.

Hermann And that works.

Erika The human being is a dry sponge.

Hermann Yes or no.

Erika It works.

Hermann And if I want that too.

Erika What do you mean.

Hermann If I want to rejoice too like the lark in spring.

Erika Open your heart to God and everything is

46

possible.

Hermann And then there's an end to this vale of tears.

Erika Surely.

Hermann *shouts*

Jasmin. Jasmin. Please get out for a minute.

*To Erika:*

Hermann I'll give you ten minutes. If you can get Mr Kramer to rejoice , I'll drive you to Tschenstochau. Immediately. If you can't, I'll dig you a hole.

Erika Mr Kramer has to sink to his knees, bow his head and confess that he is a sinner. His heart will become the dwelling of the Lord and he will rejoice.

Jasmin *appears*

Hermann The girl knows a trick with which she can get M. Kramer to rejoice. And the rest of us too.

Jasmin I don't want to rejoice.

Hermann A frank word with you. We're suffering. We're

poor creatures that's obvious. Look at us.

Standing here. You. And me. You've got to admit, Jasmin, that we're not doing too well. When was the last time you laughed.

Jasmin I laughed just now.

Hermann Yes, when I was stowing away the suitcases and my finger got in the way. You laughed

maliciously at my misfortune. I noticed what a hard time your face had getting a laugh going.

Your muscles are out of practice, Jasmin, and your eyes are bleak. Don't try and pretend.

Jasmin Hermann.

47

Hermann Don't try and pretend, Jasmin.

*To Erika*

Fire away. Tell us your trick.

Erika There is no trick.

Hermann You're driving me crazy.

Erika There is no trick. You must let Jesus Christ into your heart.

Hermann Doesn't sound all that difficult, does it.

Jasmin Hermann. That's just nonsense. It doesn't work.

Hermann Then why does she insist it does. She doesn't get anything out of it. After all she's got to prove it straight away. If it doesn't work, she's dead meat.

Jasmin They've brain -washed her. These sects remove your brain from your head and substitute another one for it.

Hermann Today's medicine can do that. I didn't know.

Jasmin They don't have to do any surgery. They can do it with words. She isn't herself.

Erika Why do you see the mote in your neighbour's eye but not the beam in your own.

Hermann What was that. Say that again.

Jasmin Phrases, learnt phrases.

Hermann Keep quiet. I want to hear that again.

Jasmin But it's pointless.

Hermann Silence, please.

Jasmin Hermann. Let's finally get going again.

48

Hermann If you don't shut your fucking, filthy gob this instance, I'll stuff this pine tree right down into it, Jasmin. Is that clear. Ok. Now you, girl. Say that again. .

Erika Why do you see the mote in your neighbour's eye but not the beam in your own.

Hermann Is that supposed to be a joke. It sounds a bit like a modern joke.

Erika It's not a joke. More of an image. And the truth.  
Hermann I like it. I like these modern jokes. With no point  
to them. Do you know any more.  
Erika Quite a lot.  
Hermann I've got an ear for things like that, but I don't  
know whether Mr. Kramer will understand your  
jokes. Remains to be seen.  
Erika My hand's hurting.  
Hermann God is testing you.

-----  
Hermann Tell me another one.  
Erika My father's house has many rooms.  
Hermann And. How does it go on.  
Erika There's no more.  
Hermann My father's house.  
Erika Has many rooms.  
Hermann Isn't funny at all. The next one.  
Erika I. I can't. My hand. Now. Now the pain is  
starting.  
Hermann Who cares. Let's hear another joke.

49

Erika. No. Yes. And the Lord spoke to Abraham:  
Go up into the mountain and bring your son,  
Isaac to me as an offering. And Abraham said.  
*She falls to the ground in a faint and doesn't move.*  
Hermann Now, what's up. Is that a part of it. Part of the  
joke.  
Karl *appears.*  
The Fat Woman *appears. They encircle Erika, but no one moves.*  
*It gets dark.*

50

## SECONDLY

*The same night. In the same wood, In the same mountains.  
At a petrol station and it's not one of the big oil companies. A  
signboard says: Only rapeseed diesel is sold here. Another says:  
Unfortunately Closed. A satellite dish is mounted on the external  
wall. Chaos reigns, and Hermann's bus is parked in the only bay.  
Anton, the petrol station attendant, is standing there, in his blue  
overalls, fairly drunk, swaying from left to right and holding on to  
the petrol pump. Hermann and Karl stand beside him.*  
Anton What sort of woman is that supposed to be.  
Karl She got into the wrong bus.  
Anton And I'm supposed to pay for that or what.  
Karl She just needs a bed.  
Anton I haven't got a bed. Just my own. And I presume she  
doesn't want to get into that.  
Hermann You'll have to ask her.  
Karl It's a narrow mattress, it's scarcely possible even if you  
know each other. And I don't know her.  
Karl You don't happen to have a sofa.

Anton Yes, I do. But it hasn't been tidied up.

Karl She won't look to closely.

Anton But I will. It may not be fashionable. But I have a sense of shame.

Hermann Isn't there a bed in the garage.

Anton That's where the winter tyres are stacked.

Karl You could store them in the loft.

Anton No I couldn't. They'd get ruined in the loft.

Karl It's just for one night.

51

Anton What am I supposed to do with her. What am I supposed to do with a woman. I don't know what to do with a woman. Nothing ever happens here There are no women here. I'd blame myself if she left, why she left, I'd feel responsible.

Karl She wants to go to Tschenstochau.

-----

Anton I just know, I won't like her.

Karl You don't have to like her. She just wants a bed.

Anton If I don't like her I can't be nice to her. I know it's a character weakness but it's just the way I am.

Hermann She's stupid but she's not bad-looking.

Anton How stupid.

Hermann Very stupid. She believes in God.

Anton In which God.

Hermann No idea. Just God.

Anton And you say, she's good-looking.

Hermann Average.

Anton I fall in love incredibly quickly. I fall in love with women who just stop for petrol. Why do you think I moved here.

I'm a city person. I don't belong here at all, in this wilderness. But I fall in love too rapidly. And that wasn't possible any more in the city, with its gangs of bewitching female beings.

Hermann Well then, go ahead , fall in love. There's no harm in that.

Anton And tomorrow morning she'll go and I'll stay here and then have to go through hell for half a year. I don't want that. I've left that behind me.

-----

52

Anton I want to see her.

Karl Why does he want to see her.

Anton I said, I wanted to see her.

Karl But it's not necessary. Just say yes.

Anton Not before I see her.

Hermann Fetch her. Off you go. Why shouldn't he see her if he wants to. Doesn't matter.

Karl *exit*

-----

Anton A lovely bus. What does it guzzle. Forty, fifty litres.

Hermann About that.

Anton Not what you'd call economical..

Hermann It's got a high idling speed.

Anton When are you buying a new one.

Hermann What new one

Anton A new bus.

Herman What would I do with a new bus.

Anton You can't drive this one much longer. It's falling apart.

Hermann I always looked after Hermann well.

Anton This bus is a filfth flinger

Hermann Don't get cheeky.

Anton I'm not cheeky. It's a fact.

Hermann Why does it bother you.

53

Anton It bothers me when you come driving past and your smoke envelops my petrol station in fog and I can't see five metres ahead of me the whole day.

Hermann Now don't exaggerate.

Anton Modern buses guzzle ten times less.

Hermann It would be better if you guzzled ten times less.

Anton Now you're getting personal.

Hermann As a Petrol station attendant you can't be pleased if the buses guzzle less.

Anton I don't just think about the profit.

Hermann That's pretty obvious.

Anton You've never tanked here before. Wrapping my petrol station in fog, is OK, arriving with your problems, is

OK, but tanking here, no, that's not for you.

Hermann My passengers wouldn't like that.

Anton Environmentally friendly rape-seed oil might be a sales pitch.

Hermann It smells. Your diesel smells like a fish and chips deep fryer.

Anton You can't see the big picture. You don't see the connections. Just the short-term profit.

Hermann I'd fill up with your diesel but the passengers would object.

Anton Then you need different passengers.

Hermann Aha. And I'd get those from you too.

Anton If you'd explain to the people that by using this wonderful fuel they could save our planet, you'd soon have different passengers.

54

Hermann What planet.

Anton We're caught in an energy-trap, Hermann, in a spiral, which twists and what's more downwards, always downwards, swirling down like it does in the bath tub when you pull the plug. But instead of water, it's we



human beings who disappear into the drain.

Hermann Don't frighten me.

Anton We're living on a dying planet. That's a fact. If we go on burning oil at the rate we have been, in fifty years the oceans will have risen by eight metres. Half of humanity will drown and the other half will flee to me in the mountains.

Before that the polar caps will melt, the gulf stream will freeze, and the galactic winter will set in./ And that will last for several million years. With your fifth flinger we're driving directly into the catastrophe without applying the brakes in the whirlpool.

Hermann And what will your rape seed diesel do to change that.

Anton It's the solution, Hermann, the solution. Rape-methylester is reduced by ninety-eight percent in the atmosphere within twenty-one days. Carbon-dioxide expulsion is eighty percent less than with normal diesel. What do you say to that.

Hermann I didn't know that. Nobody told me.

Anton I'm telling you now.

Hermann You should write that on a sign-board and put it up in the road.

Anton That wouldn't do any good.

Hermann Make it known, Anton, it's your duty. If you know the solution, you must let the people know.

Anton The people don't want to be saved. That's the other fact. It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter at all. We're living on a dying planet/. Whichever way it goes. In three billion years it will all end anyway. The sun will expand to the edge of our cosmic system. We will all burn up. With or without rape-seed diesel

55

-----  
*Karl comes with Erika*

Erika Let go of me, you animal, I don't want to get out here, no, stop that. Be careful of my hand.

Karl screams.

She's bitten me. In the arm.

Anton Just take a look at her. I don't want that. I don't want her in my service station.

Erika I'm not getting out here. Certainly not.

Hermann What's that standing over there in the garage beside the car. What does one call that.

A bed . For you.

Erika You've got a car.

Anton It all depends.

Erika I've got to get down to the valley. Immediately.

Anton I'm certainly not lending you my car.

Erika You'll do the driving.

Anton Under no circumstances.

Erika I'll pay you.

Anton I'm drunk. And I mean. Seriously drunk. Not

tipsy or tiddly. Absolutely pickled. It just happened like that. Even if you can't tell by looking at me. I find it difficult to let go, it's a character problem of mine, and I've also got too great a sense of responsibility.  
Erika We'll risk it. You'll drive and I'll take care.  
Anton Before tomorrow morning, I'm not getting behind the wheel. Because of what happens to  
56

other people.

Erika At this time there's hardly any traffic.

Anton But plenty of wild game crossing the road.

I don't want to run over a family of wild deer.

-----  
Hermann Everything OK. Then let's go.

Anton Let's go where.

Hermann To put away the summer tyres.

Anton Did I say, yes. Did anybody hear me say ,yes.

My service station is no place for a young lady.

Particularly in the middle of the night. Take her

with you to the Spa Hotel. They've got a doctor up there. Very popular with the ladies, I'm told.

And so are his cures. Now that's something for the ladies. Not my service station. Take the lady with you. She's spoilt. She requires a French breakfast, fruit, white bread rolls, a buffet, not a service station.

Hermann Make her a coffee, for God's sake.

Anton No.

Karl Say something, Hermann.

Hermann Anton, pull yourself together.

Anton It's lonely up here and a person gets to thinking strange thoughts. I've got brandy here, dangerous stuff, poisonous stuff, blessed stuff. I enjoy drinking a little bottle or two and then I watch TV. I'm ruining myself. And there's my private business. Do you see these keys. That's my evening's entertainment. Nobody can travel as far as I travel in an evening. I like sitting outside. I know the weather, just now there's a west wind. Tomorrow morning the sky will be red as blood, and on the horizon there'll appear a sky striped blue, pale blue, almost silver. Best not to look at it when the light plunges down  
57

from the mountains and more particularly when one's sober. I don't want her. I'd find myself getting too many ideas about her. Good night.

Karl You can't be serious.

Anton What's written on this sign. Can't you read.

Cl. Osed. Why am I being disturbed by a collection

of idiots. At night.

Hermann Idiots. Who's the idiot here. Are you a king or a little porcelain dolly. Why so touchy. I bet you haven't had a bath for a month. Are you a service station attendant or what. Closed.

What do I care. Scumbag. Making long speeches.

My tank is empty. Fill her up.

Anton You want some of my rape-seed diesel.

Hermann Is this a service station or not.

Anton *exit*

Hermann Right. That's what you get out of it. Anton doesn't want you. And do you know what.

I can understand him . You don't know how to behave. People who want something have to behave nicely, a little bit. I mean, Anton is a couch potato but we want something from the lazy spud.

Erika I don't want to stay here

Hermann And what, if I may ask, do you want.

Erika To get away from here. Into the valley. And a doctor.

Hermann There's a very good doctor in the Spa Hotel.

Erika Not the Spa Hotel. Under no circumstances. I'd be left stranded there.

Hermann I'm driving back on Monday night.

58

Erika You could unload the people and then drive me down to the valley.

Hermann I've got to observe the rest periods

Erika No exceptions.

Hermann No exceptions.

Erika I'll pay you.

Hermann You want to fix everything with money, always with money. That's sick.

Erika I'll hire your bus and put you on as driver.

Hermann You can put that right out of your head.

Erika You must. You must. You must.

Hermann I won't. I won't. I won't.

Erika If I'm not in Tschenstochau within twenty four hours, I'll be destroyed/

Hermann What will a bit of a delay matter. It's not so bad.

Erika The Lord , our God, has sent an angel to me with a mission. do you really think he'll say: It's not so bad, Erika, I'm not so particular, come when it suits you.

Hermann That would be nice of him.

Erika Brainless ignoramus.

Hermann You'd better watch yourself.

Erika Brainless, narrow-minded ignoramus.

-----  
59

Hermann The Spa Hotel is another world. Everything's bright and very quiet, you can scarcely hear your own steps.

You won't have any pain. That's a promise. Even Mr Kramer will be redeemed, and you and I, we'll get to know each other a bit better. Our relationship is a bit. How shall I put it. Strained.

Erika I'm not sick and I don't need a Spa Resort.

Hermann We're all sick You too,

Erika What sort of a group is that. What sort of people are you. You've got something in mind. What have I got myself into. Are you one of those sects.

Hermann A sect.

Erika You're not really going to a Spa Hotel at all.

Hermann We're not.

Erika You want to drive the bus into the gorge. That's it, isn't it. That's the redemption Mr Kramer talked about. And Karl with his hopeless situation. You want to kill yourselves, And that's why you didn't want to have me along. But now.

Hermann *shouts*

Jasmin. Jasmin. Come here. I beg of you.

Jasmin *comes*.

How much longer, Hermann.

Hermann Here's something really funny. You've got to hear it. She thinks we're a sect.

Jasmin. A sect. Who.

Hermann Us. You and me and Pigface and Kramer and The Fat Woman. And that we're not going to the Spa Hotel.

Jasmin But instead.

Hermann But instead driving down the Gorge in my Hermann.

60

Jasmin What for.

Hermann So that we'll be dead.

Jasmin Very funny.

Hermann But you're not laughing.

Jasmin I'm laughing, really I am laughing

-----  
Hermann At the turn-off to the Spa Hotel there's a beautiful spot. I've often thought. If I were to turn the wheel a bit too late there, ha, my Hermann would first break through that rusty old guard-rail and then we'd sail merrily down the whole precipice, right down at least three hundred metres free fall, down over the fir trees, the tree tops, past the old mountain pass road, keep going down till we landed right in the river bed.

Zap. Direct hit.

Erika For God's sake.

Jasmin What's up with her. Why's she gone so pale.  
Hermann So she has. Really pasty.  
Jasmin She believes you. She doesn't want to die.  
Hermann I told you , Jasmin. Every cur is afraid of dying.  
Whether it's a Christian or not.  
Erika I don't want anything to do with your business.  
Let me go.  
Jasmin You're up to your neck in it.  
Erika My time isn't up.  
Jasmin How can you know that.  
Erika I feel it.

61

Jasmin She's frightened. It's a fact. I can see it.  
Hermann Now you're laughing.  
Jasmin What she told us about the Hereafter and  
Eternity awaiting us. That we're only here in  
transit and we must preserve ourselves for  
the kingdom of heaven. I believed all that.  
I believed it for half a day. Fear of death is  
just vanity. It's better to prepare oneself for  
eternity. A judgment will be held over mankind  
and only the just will sit in the lap of the  
Lord. That nonsense obviously stops her from  
being afraid of death. I thought. My teeth begin  
to rattle when I think of that box. When I  
imagine lying in a coffin in a shroud. Horrible.  
Simply messy. All that decay. You spend your  
whole life, trying not to let yourself go and then  
you end up liquefying into grey slime.  
Hermann And what happens to the unjust.  
Erika They will be separated from the herd and they  
will be without love and without trust, and without  
hope through all eternity and their suffering will  
know no end.  
Hermann To which lot do you belong., Jasmin.  
Jasmin To the just

Hermann Certainl not. I like you but you're cunning,  
deceitful, always thinking of your own  
advantage, rather stingy.

-----  
Kramer *screams from inside the bus.*  
HERMANN. MY MOUTH IS FILLED WITH  
SALT. MY EYES HAVE DRIED UP. I CAN SEE  
MY SKIN TURNING BLACK. GIVE ME A  
DRINK. TEA WOULD BE NICE. GIVE ME A  
DRINK.  
-----

62

Hermann Eureka, Got it. Click. The solution is in front of

my nose. Nobody knows that you got into my bus,  
do they.

Erika I don't think so.

Hermann They think you're in Tchenstochau.

Erika Yes.

Hermann And nobody saw you.

Erika I don't know.

Hermann You were given to us as a present. A gifted soul  
as it were. Nobody will ever get the idea, that  
you're here. They won't look for you with us.

Erika Anton knows.

Hermann That's right. Anton knows. But Anton isn't a  
human being. He's a drunk. He has visions/  
And he's certainly not a witness.

You must realise that under these circumstances  
I'm playing with the idea of putting an end to  
this matter and going behind a fir tree with you  
and with a piece of wood from a tree root. How  
shall I put it. Beating you to death. One can  
understand that I'd be playing with this idea.  
Can't one.

Jasmin Of course, one can understand that.

Erika You're joking.

Hermann I like making jokes. You see I like laughing.

Erika You can't just kill me.

Hermann Yes we can. Because we don't have to be  
afraid of any punishment. We human beings  
are good because we are afraid of punishment.  
And now there's no punishment in sight. So  
we're going to finish you off.. Isn't that logical,  
63

Jasmin.

Jasmin I can follow the logic.

Hermann Kramer for instance, that ruin, that stinking  
semi corpse, I'd have throttled him ages ago.  
But we picked him up from the Old Age Home  
and half a dozen sisters saw me. And the  
doctor. That's why I can't throw that piece of  
waste produce out of my bus. But in your case  
it's quite different.

Erika Your conscience will stop you.

Hermann I don't think so.

Erika You've got a conscience.

Hermann Well then, I'll go and get my calf's halter-rope. And  
then we'll drive up the mountain and then I'll dig a  
hole for you. A lovely hole. One mustn't get in the  
way of nature.

-----

Anton *enters*.

That made twenty-four litres. My sincerest thanks.

Excellent. If I only had more customers like you.  
Hermann One doesn't want anything to do with people like you. The way you sit in this service station. Like a toad in its hole. Nobody's game to come here. People drive past. And do you know why.  
Anton Tell me.  
Hermann They have a bad conscience because they haven't tanked here before. They blame themselves for the miserable state you're in.  
Anton But I'm the only one responsible for my state.  
Hermann Now just stop whingeing. A man your age. That's embarrassing. Make something of yourself. Get the show on the road. Take your garage, for  
64  
example. Now wouldn't a cafeteria be something. Where you'd get a decent coffee to drink, a piece of cake, a ham sandwich. And above all: A pretty, smiling face. I'd stop there and tank. Rapeseed diesel, pigs-swill, whatever.  
Anton And where am I supposed to get a pretty face.  
Hermann Smile, Anton, you must smile.  
Anton I've got bad teeth.  
Hermann Use your head, there's a brain in there for thinking with, not just a mouth for boozing.  
Do I have to chew everything into little pieces for you.  
*He pays Anton for the Rapeseed diesel.*  
Will that do.  
Anton It's enough for the diesel. But./  
Hermann What.  
Anton Make it a bit more,  
Hermann Why.  
Anton I'm a bit short at the moment. Do me a favour.  
Hermann You're shit, Anton, you're never going to amount to anything. But I will give you some money. Look after the little girl for a minute. I don't want her to run away but watch out. She bites.  
-----  
Anton Calm down. Nobody's going to hurt you.  
Erika Please. You've got to help me.  
Anton We've discussed that.  
Erika They want to kill me.  
65  
Anton Who wants to kill you.  
Erika Hermann and Jasmin.  
Anton And why.  
Erika For fun. He's bad.  
Anton You're being unjust to him. He's a bit gruff, but he's got a good heart.

Erika Nobody knows where I am. Nobody's seen me.

They're going to kill me and nobody will know.

Anton I'll know.

Erika By tomorrow morning you won't remember anything.

Anton Aha.

Erika Drunk-rotten as you are.

Anton Stupid goose.

-----  
*Hermann Returns with the calf's halter*

Anton Such a crazy chuck. She says you want to bury her in the wood. That I won't remember anything because I've had a nip of brandy. Such a crazy chuck.

Hermann We drivers know her. She sneaks into some bus or other and makes trouble. I want to tie her up, otherwise she'll grab hold of the wheel.

*He ties Erika up.*

Erika No. Let me go. Let me go.

Anton You owe me for twenty-four litres.

Hermann I just paid you for them.

66

Anton That's not true.

Hermann The money's in your breast pocket.

Anton So it is. I'm sorry. Not intentional. My memory is sometimes , well, a bit.

Hermann Then, we'll be off.

Anton And thanks, Hermann. Thanks a lot.

Hermann *drags Erika into the bus.*

Erika *screams.*

*As it gets dark.*

67

THIRDLY

*High up in the mountains. On a plateau. The juniper is flowering and so is broom. In the background, beside the road, stands Hermann's bus. The head-lights are off, only through the windows does some light fall on the surroundings. Hermann is digging a grave while Jasmin is talking at him. The Fat Woman is standing beside the bus, so is Karl who's moving from one foot to the other.*

Jasmin Dignity, Hermann. What does dignity demand of us. First of all, that we keep a certain distance to everything.

If we come too close, we lose dignity. That applies, most of all, to us. To achieve dignity we must distance ourselves from ourselves.

Hermann Distance ourselves from ourselves. Aha.

Jasmin The self tries to entangle us in contradictions, to force itself on us, like human beings, who seize on us because they can't bear to be alone by themselves. But dignity is charm mediated through indifference, The



undignified human beings are those who stumble over themselves. They move clumsily. In every movement they can be recognized, their weaknesses, their imperfections, never the idea of their ideal being. The dignified human being is by no means the faultless one, on the contrary. The immaculate human being will never be regarded as dignified. The dignified human being distances himself from his faults as much as he does from his strengths. He is the neutral diplomat who mediates between the opponents in himself.

Hermann It's difficult to dig a grave in this soil.

*He keeps digging and then suddenly stops.*

You said an immaculate human being will never be regarded as dignified.

Jasmin Exactly.

Hermann I don't understand that.

Jasmin Dignity is a characteristic of the external self. It is audible, visible, one can even smell dignity. At the

68

same time you cannot pin it down. It is fleeting The

The assertion, for example, that a human being should

not rush but should stride ahead in order to appear

dignified, is absurd. Although a quiet gait can

certainly appear dignified. But in the same way as one

person dressed in white can appear wise so also

another produces the effect of a rogue. It's the same

with dignity. A jolly person can become dignified

through seriousness, a serious person through humour,

a sad woman will attain dignity if she shows herself as

joyful and one who is full of the joy of living will only

gain dignity through signs of sadness.

Hermann But to do that a person first has to know what state he's in.

Jasmin That is a presupposition.

Hermann Do you think she's free.

Jasmin Who.

Hermann The little bird.

Jasmin What made you think of that.

Hermann She knows where she's driving, where she's going

to. She knows her place. You said recently, freedom

means knowing one's place.

Jasmin She's a weak human being. She doesn't think for herself.

Hermann Does one have to.

Jasmin If one wants to be a human being, then yes.

Hermann I'm not clever enough to think up something of my own. Whatever I think of has certainly been thought

up by someone else before me. And written down.

Jasmin You're facing a great deed and the greatest deed represents the greatest freedom.

Hermann My hunger is important to me. And that I'm thirsty.

And that I can't stand it if someone makes fun of

69

politicians, Because , now and again, for example, they use the state-owned helicopter over the weekend. So what. They're allowed to. Politicians deserve our respect.

Jasmin It's the idea that matters. The idea, that one has of oneself. How one could be. Nothing else counts.

Hermann She is afraid of her God. Because he determined that she should be at that very place at that very time. She is being disobedient, Now she can only hope that he'll close one eye.

Jasmin She only wants to save her miserable existence.

Hermann The poor worm has tried that too.

-----  
Hermann Now for something quite different. Do you think the hole is long enough.

Jasmin Hard to say. How tall is she. Taller than I am.

Hermann That's too short.

Jasmin Above all, be sure to make it deep enough.

Hermann I don't want to fold her up. She hasn't deserved that. Lie down in it. If you'd be kind enough.

Jasmin What do you mean. In this pit.

Hermann It would be a great help to me.

Jasmin It'll be big enough. Go and fetch the girl.

Hermann *does so.*

-----  
The Fat Woman It may not be a coincidence. It could be a sign/ I'd go with her. If she's the one. If she is , what she claims to be, I'd be something special too, because I'm traveling with her. I wouldn't be this dreary dead person. I'd be following purity. The  
70

immaculate. That which no hand has touched.

Jasmin I bet she's had men.

The Fat Woman Karl should know.

Karl Leave me in peace.

Jasmin Karl.

Karl I don't know. No. Yes. Possibly. Why are you asking me.

Hermann *appears with Erika who is tied up She has lost her shoe.*

Erika What are you thinking of. Do any of you think your show of force impresses me. You don't know God's omnipotence. Hallelujah He will drive into the ranks of his enemies, like the storm that drives through the woods.

Jasmin Are you a saint. Were you sent to save us.

Erika You cannot be saved.

Jasmin The Lord instructed you to go to Tschenstochau.  
You set out. No sooner have you left the building  
than you get in the wrong bus. Into ours. How does  
that match up.

Erika Who are you that you dare to question God's plan.

The Fat Woman How was it that you came to choose our bus. Who  
decided that.

Erika It's a mistake. My mistake. I was careless.

The Fat Woman He lead you to us. We play an important role in his  
plan

Erika You are of no importance.

Jasmin We stand between you and your God.

If you want to get to him, you must get past us  
first.

71

Erika I can't bear the sight of you. Kill me at last.

The Fat Woman Save us

Erika You cannot be saved.

The Fat Woman We are empty. Fill us with your faith.

Erika Nobody can fill a leaky barrel. There's a  
gaping hole in your hearts, everything human,  
runs out at the bottom.

Jasmin Perform a miracle and then we'll believe in  
you.

Erika No miracles can help here. You crawl through  
life. You have children, You once had a husband  
too, I'm sure you've lost somebody at one time  
and have wept. You like going out. You love your  
vacation, beautiful cities, have a taste for art,  
violin music, that's all well and good. But it  
doesn't go anywhere near to making you human.  
You push your life before you like a sack of  
potatoes.

The Fat Woman She's not the one. Good night.

*Exits.*

Erika You miserable wretch, you cockroach, you abscess,  
you pustule, piece of shit,, you're all stinking  
donkeys, rotten garbage. I'm ashamed to be  
wasting my life for you. There are so few of you. I  
could be leading great mass of humanity to God.  
You are lost, whether with me or without me.  
I don't want to save you. I must save human  
beings, human beings not monsters. men, women  
with a heart.

Jasmin She is afraid. And yet she is only about to face  
her creator.

-----

Jasmin Herman, you'll manage on your own. Goodevening.

72

*She exits in the direction of the bus.*

Erika Karl, where are you going. You wanted to help me.

Karl Sorry, Erika. We'll meet again.

Erika Stay here. Don't go away. Don't leave me alone with this monster.

Karl *exits*

Hermann As soon as there's work, the fine ladies and gentlemen disappear. And Hermann's left to finish it. It's too short. I knew it.

*He digs the spade into the soil.*

Erika What are you doing there, what are you digging.

Hermann I'm making your grave a bit longer. Otherwise you'd have to draw up your knees. Like a baby in its mother's womb. I don't want that. The South Sea Islanders do that and earlier the Cave Dwellers did too. We're not Cave Dwellers. But I've only got this spade .With which I'm going to kill you. Click.

Zap. The perfect clout. That's it.

Erika You're not going to do that.

Hermann My word, I am.

Erika But why.

Herman You with your Why. Because. For the fun of the pleasure.

Erika That'll give you no pleasure

Hermann We didn't know how bad we were till we met you. Now we're getting to know ourselves, we're coming closer, I think the good Lord sent you to us so that we could finally be what we always were. It isn't good just to be something, one should also act accordingly.

73

Erika You aren't bad.

Hermann Perhaps I'm not but did you see the gob on that Karl. Has he got a shit gob.

Erika Karl never did me any harm.

Hermann He didn't help you. And the other one with her violins. She stinks, didn't you notice. Like the pest Such a sour smell. Who can enjoy that. It's simply bad to stink.

Erik I don't want to die.

Herma And Jasmin. What is she. Not a human being, in any case. She doesn't do a thing all day. As you said yourself. Doesn't work, just sits around.

Doesn't help anyone. Reads her clever books. Just looks after herself. She just consumes, eats and boozes, eats the food that belongs to a good person. That's bad.

Erika What you're doing is bad.

Hermann Yes, of course, it isn't nice.

Erika You're looking for a way out, I know.

Hermann No, I'm not looking. That would be pointless. There is no way out of wickedness.

Erika I know one.

Hermann Really. You. Be careful. I broke your hand.

Erika I know a way out.

Hermann But I don't believe in it.

Erika You just have to kneel down.

Or, perhaps, you don't dare.

-----  
Erika *whispers*.

74

Just kneel down. That's all. You have nothing to be afraid of.

Hermann I'm not afraid.

Erika Release me, Hermann and I'll release you.

Hermann If you run away. I'll run after you.

Erika On your knees.

Like this.

*She kneels down.*

Hermann *Kneels down.*

Is that all.

Child's play.

Doesn't bother me.

Erika Put your heart in God's hands. Ask Jesus Christ to forgive your sins.

Hermann What sins.

Erika All your sins, Hermann. All of them.

Hermann But that's more than two or three.

Erika Just repeat after me.

Hermann And then.

Erika Just repeat after me.

My Lord Jesus Christ.

Hermann My Lord Jesus Christ.

Erika Into your hands.

Hermann Into your hands.

Erika I place my life, my trust.

Hermann My life, my trust.

75

Erika I know I have sinned.

Hermann I know I have sinned.

Erika And been found wanting, sinned and been found wanting.

Hermann And been found wanting, sinned and been found wanting.

Erika But I beg you, enter now into Hermann's heart.

Hermann Heart.

Erika Into Hermann's heart, he is a human being, fill it with grace,

Hermann Grace.

Erika And turn it into an instrument of your faith.

Erika *falls silent.*

Hermann *also falls silent*

Erika Amen.

Hermann Amen.

Erika *she kisses him on the forehead.*

-----  
Hermann Beautiful. How bright everything suddenly is. There in the heavens, beautiful, isn't it. Look at that. It's getting brighter and brighter. What a sight.

Wonderful. Have you ever seen that before. And those colours, how's that possible.

Kramer WHAT IS THAT, HERMANN, THAT SAUCE OVER THERE.

Hermann There's a light in the heavens, Kramer, if you could only see that. Wonderful.

76

Kramer THAT'S JUST SUNDAY MORNING. NOTHING BUT SUNDAY MORNING. YOU PROMISED ME I WOULDN'T HAVE TO SEE THE NEW DAY. DIDN'T YOU PROMISE ME THAT.

Hermann *digs the spade into the soil again,*  
I'm hurrying. I'm hurrying.

*He digs briskly.*

The soil's tough. Full of stones. And these roots.

Erika Stop digging.

Hermann I have to dig.

Erika And the light.

Hermann It's just the morning.

Erika We'll go to Tschenstochau together. You and I.

Hermann You're not to blame. You'll get to Jesus Christ.

-----  
Hermann These roots. Juniper. What a smell. Really good. What would you say. Like gin. But I can't get through the brambles with the spade  
Just run over to the bus and bring me the rod.  
It's in the spare wheel case under the driver's seat.

*Erika doesn't move.*

It's got to be a proper grave not just a trough.

*Erika doesn't move.*

There's a tool lying in there with a leather grip, the hoe is so well oiled and sharpened you could use it as a razor. My goodness, girl, you're shivering, run and you'll get warm.. But don't you run away. If you're not back by the time

77

I've lifted out ten shovel loads, I'll come and get you. That's a promise. Ten shovel loads.

*Erika exits and Hermann goes on digging without*

*waiting for her return.*

Must be juniper rootlets , they're so tough and the soil's stony too. Nobody will believe that a small human lies buried there. You can rest in peace . Up here. And how beautiful that is. Was that the fourth or the fifth. No matter.

*He shouts in the direction of the bus.*

Four. I'm up to four. I wouldn't want anyone to have to lie in this soil. That juniper. Roots as fine as hairs ,creep and press their way through everything. you're more likely to be overgrown than eaten by worms. Merciful heavens, that's a tough job, what's become of that girl.

*He shouts.*

I'm up to ten. Ten. Now I'm coming

*Hermann digs more vigorously than before.*

But if I dig there perhaps with the spade, like that, yes, that's the way, you just have to know how, then it's easy. Under the stones, the soil is sandy, that's pleasant, I'm sure lying there wouldn't be bad. Just like the sea. And in the sand there are no worms, you can sleep there like you would on the beach, hahaha, just listen to the wind in the juniper, sounds like the surf. Close your eyes.

*He closes his eyes.*

How it roars. The wind brings rain. It would be best if the grave stayed open, you could lie in it and look up at the sky. Look into the pit. Go on look down. What do you think. Deep enough.

78

*He unties the wooden self-image round his neck. Looks at it, kisses it and finally throws his image into the grave.*

Rest in peace, Hermann. You did well. The Lord Jesus Christ is in your heart.

*He covers the grave with soil.*

*It gets dark.*

79

FOURTHLY

*Dawn. At Anton's service station. Erika is standing there with Hermann's measuring rod in her hand grimly determined. She has lost her shoe. There's a TV standing in a bay. Anton has got up from his camping stool. There's a dirty bandage round his thumb.*

Anton What are you doing here. Keep going. Straight along this road. What have you got in your hand.

Erika This. It's a measuring rod

Anton You'll get nothing here. I want to make that quite clear.

Erika I'm looking for my shoe.

Anton Haven't seen it.

Erika And I need something for my hand.

Anton Where are the others.

Erika They drove on.

Anton There's something wrong here. What did you do with Hermann. And with the others. You've murdered them all. Haven't you. You murdered the whole bus. You crazy chuck. Admit it. They're dead.

Erika Let me have a bandage. And some ointment.

Anton I don't have any.

Erika And that. On your hand. What's that.

Anton That. That was my last and only bandage.

Half my thumb's gone. As if it had been bitten off. Can't remember how it happened. Or when.

Just recently. Just now. A week ago. Longer. Last month. Five minutes ago. It's so painful. Uuup heeere tiiime paaasses sooo slooowly. And. Then.

One. Doesn't .Know. Why. It. Suddenly.

Races. Again. Makes you quite dizzy.

80

Erika I want the sling.

Anton I haven't got a sling.

Erika Yours. There on your arm. Let's have it.

Anton This one. Are you crazy.

Erika Let's have it.

Anton Half my thumb's gone. Nearer three quarters.

Erika Off with it.

Anton I'll bleed to death.

Erika The wound healed ages ago.

-----

Anton You'll catch an illness.

Erika What illness.

Anton My illness.

Erika You aren't ill.

Anton Of course, I'm ill. Very ill indeed. Why would I be living in this wilderness otherwise.

I'm a city-dweller. I don't belong here at all. Service station attendant. Not my thing. Anyone can see that. I'm in quarantine. Self-imposed quarantine.

Erika You look healthy enough.

Anton Do you think. Really. That's nice of you.

Erika Now let me finally have that damned bandage.

Anton No worries. No worries. You can have it. Let me just bleed to death. It doesn't matter.

*He unwinds the bandage from his arm and hands it to Erika.*



81

Who's going to miss a service station attendant.

*Erika has difficulty putting the bandage on.*

Anton Use your teeth to hold one end. And put the hand on your knee. That way, you'll gain some resistance and can tie a knot.

-----  
Anton You learn that, if you're by yourself the whole time.

The things I can manage to do on my own. You have no idea. I can massage my own back. I can frighten myself. Like that. Suddenly. Snap . Then I'm startled go pale and swear and afterwards I'm pleased at my little joke. After all you do want to have your little bit of fun now and again. On my birthday I surprise myself with a cake. And give myself a kiss to say "thank you." On the lips.

Taught myself to do that.

Erika There's ointment on the bandage.

Anton. Prepared it myself. Made of zinc paste and chamomile. Can't hurt you, contains no chemicals, completely harmless, take my word for it.

Erika Help me.

Anton Put down the rod first.

Erika Certainly not.

Anton You're not allowed to hurt me. I'm drunk.

Drunks belong to the same category as women, children and old people.

Erika I'm not going to hurt you.

Anton Put it down.

Erika You, help me at once with this bandage, you drunken swine.

82

Anton Calm down,, calm down.

-----  
Erika I didn't kill Hermann. Nor anybody else.

Anton Yes, you didn't.

Erika I really didn't.

Anton No, you didn't.

Erika You've got to believe me.

Anton But I do.

-----  
Anton Why did you get into that bus.

Erika A mistake. I want to get to Poland.

Anton What do you want to do there.

Erika Family reasons.

Anton Really.

Erika None of your business.

Anton Of course not. I was just asking.

Erika My sister's not too well.

Anton. Your sister is Polish.

Erika She's married to a Pole.

Anton And what's wrong with your sister.

Erika Cancer.

Anton Ah. Cancer.

Erika Do you know somebody who could drive me down to the valley.

83

Anton I don't know anybody at all, so I don't know anybody who could drive you either.

-----  
Erika Then I'll be on my way. Thank you for the bandage.

Anton On foot.

Erika I don't have a choice.

Anton It takes hours to get to the next village.

Erika It's better than waiting. Perhaps I'll be lucky and find somebody to give me a lift.

Anton Have something to eat before you go. I've got some cheese.

Erika Farewell. And don't drink too much.

Anton Do my best.

-----  
Anton Perhaps I could.

Erika Yes.

Anton I just thought. Perhaps I could ask old Seelbacher

Erika Old Seelbacher.

Anton He owes me one. And he's got a car. I could give him a ring. Then you'd be on the express way in an hour and a half/. But Seelbacher does stink. Would that bother you.

Erika No.

Anton He stinks to high heaven.

Erika It isn't far.

Anton At least two hours.

84

Erika I can stand that.

Anton I could also ask Anna, who owns the shop, But not till tomorrow morning.

Erika Please ring the man.

Anton *exits*.

-----  
Erika *kneels down*.

And through the pain I can see the face of Christ, because it is pain that lifts us up. And then it pours down grace. Lord forgive me my weakness but perhaps I'll still manage it. And if I don't get there on time, wait for me. It wasn't intentional. It wasn't intentional .

-----  
Erika Well.

Anton Well yes.

Erika Is he coming.

Anton It's a bit more difficult than that.

Erika Yes or no.

Anton Well yes, he's coming.

Erika When.

Anton He's going to set off straight away.

.

Erika That can't be true.

Anton But it is, Of course it's true.

Erika Oh, thank you. Thank you.

-----

85

Erika In the meantime, I could eat something.

Anton My spicy cheese is absolutely indigestible.

Unless you have brandy with it.

Erika Well then I'll take some brandy with it.

Anton Pretty strong, that stuff.

Erika Don't worry I can take quite a bit.

-----

Erika *chewing on the cheese.*

I didn't believe good people existed any more.

Anton Seelenbacher isn't good. He's a swine,

Erika Nevertheless, he is driving me down to the valley.

Anton I had to trick him. You've got to understand that he first refused. He was already in bed. In fact he put down the phone. But I rang him again straight away. I said, Seelbacher, you owe me something. But he, this chap, denied it. Claimed that had been paid back long ago. After all he'd helped me with the tank that time.

Erika *Rinses her mouth with brandy.*

What tank.

Anton Well, it happened ,one Sunday, a few tourists from the city came in a big car. A man got out, head of the family, you get the picture, with a reliable car, in a checked shirt, his hair freshly washed, proper sort of job, capable, machine engineer or underground construction engineer or civil engineering and Mama, petulant but pretty, also gets out, very thin, with a thin neck and the children, two of them, suddenly get out too, and then it happens. They look like their father, with bullet shaped heads, in checked shirts, with

86

scented hair and with toy cars of the same brand in their hands. The brats look like the products of an engineering plant, the whole family looks like the product of an engineering plant . and all of them get out, crawl out of their beautiful car and

stand there staring at me with their protruding button eyes. Like so. As if they'd never ever seen a service station attendant. The best our society has to offer, capable of propagating, with survival skills, despicable. I swear to you, simply despicable. A little more cheese.

Erika I've still got some. But the brandy's finished.

Anton And this person says: Fill her up to me and not another word, just points out the notable sights in the area to the children, and I realize that the beautiful, safe motor car has a petrol engine that would die if it were filled with my rapeseed diesel, perish. But I . Said nothing. The customer is king, if he wants me to fill her up, I'll fill her up. My opinion doesn't count. And when it comes to paying, he's pleased, that my fuel's so cheap, a real steal, he says., it was worth it taking the by-pass. Would I fill the reserve tank as well, I did that and that's when he noticed, but the dirty trick was all done the Family Sunday Outing was up the creek. They were stuck at my service station. They had to get on their knees to me for an hour before I could recall who in our district might have a pump. You see, I'd had a whole bottle of brandy the night before. They waited an hour and a half till Seebacher came with a pump. A pump. It was an aquarium hand pump with a flow rate of a tenth of a deciliter, at the most just about enough to fill a goldfish bowl, but it kept that family and their road cruise stuck fast at Anton's service station for the whole of that lovely family Sunday and everybody got a black thumb from that pump, except me. I didn't touch that pump.

Erika And what's up with Seelbacher

Anton Seelbacher is of the opinion that by lending me the pump, he's paid his debt, but I said: Seelbacher,

87

you didn't do that for me, but for that family of shampooed engineers. I have nothing whatsoever to do with those people. He didn't want to understand that. There's a very tough negotiation process in train here. Each of us knows his social status. Seelbacher, for instance, stands a hand-span above me. He's been here longer and above all he's got eighteen head of cattle. And eighteen head of cattle are worth more than two petrol bowlers. I have to accept that.

Erika So he won't come.

Anton Oh, he'll come alright. However, he'll come of his

own free will, not because he's got to.

Erika A good human being.

Anton The more free-will, the worse. Seelbacher is not a good person. He beats the cows with the milking

pail. And he couldn't care less about their problems.

But he's got a weakness for the opposite sex.

Erika You haven't by any chance.

Anton Haven't what.

Erika Offered Seelbacher anything.

Anton I just exaggerated a wee bit. A girl's got to get into town I say and he goes: What sort of girl. and I say:

Well an about one seventy metres tall kind of girl.

And he goes: How old? And I say: Young,

Seelbacher, pretty young. But that wasn't all.

Erika What else.

Anton I exaggerated some more. Went on to enthuse a bit.

How beautiful your hair is, how red and full you lips are, how radiant your eyes, and graceful your movements and how there is something shining from within you, some kind of light, a glowing , that never in all my born days have I seen a woman like you before and kitsch like that.

Erika You don't like kitsch.

88

Anton No way. I'm a realist.

Erika You're silly.

Anton The fact that you're dirty, I did not mention. Nor anything about your hand. You see that doesn't

bother me. After all, I'm not exactly just out of the shower myself. But then I did add a couple of lies.

Erika You didn't.

Anton It was necessary. I told him we were related. You and I. That you were my cousin.

Family relationships play a certain role up here.

Seelbacher wouldn't drive anybody who's just turned up from nowhere into town. She's either got to be my cousin or have the arse of the century. Now, my apologies, but you really haven't got the arse of the century. But you do have class, depth, personality. I can see that but for Seelbach that means nothing. He judges women like cows according to their milk production.

Erika God forbid.

Anton Indeed.

Erika You'd better come with us.

Anton Seelbacher won't agree to that.

-----

Erika Any cheese left.

Anton All gone. But there's still some brandy.

/

Erika Can't drink that without cheese. Bad for the digestion.

Anton On the contrary.

Erika In that case, I'd like some brandy.

89

Erika When's he coming.

Anton He'll come.

Erika It's already been day for a long time.

Anton You're too impatient. You should learn to wait. And to be silent at the same time. I didn't speak for three months once. The first few days you still talk to yourself. At great speed. As if there were a second person inside you.

Wash the windscreen.

I don't worry about getting tips.

Can't you see how old the fellow is. He can't wash it.

This is a service station. In case you hadn't noticed not a Car Wash. Why are you so cantankerous, try being generous, you'll see how much better it'll make you feel. I've got my pride. I'm a service station attendant. Not a windscreen washer. I'll give him a basin and a scraper. And that'll have to do. And so it goes on to and fro. For a week, it gets worse and worse. Till, eventually, the voices scream at each other.

Don't drink so much.

I'm going to drink as much as I jolly well please.

At least do your drinking in the pub so that you get to be with other people.

What I'm supposed to do with other people.

Just look at you. You're slowly going mad.

You're even talking to yourself.

So what. After all, you're talking to yourself too.

Stubborn old fool

Smart ass.

So it goes on, to and fro, but eventually the voices fall silent. Like an old married couple, who regret quarrelling. Sometimes a few parting shots are fired. So you've spilt something again, you stupid fool. And a few endearments are exchanged. Sleep well, sweet dreams. But then.

After about three weeks on the high seas in the Pacific Ocean, Attention. There is suddenly silence. And I mean silence. I wake up in the morning and don't ask myself, are you going to take a shower or are you going to let it

90

be. Having a coffee for a change or heading

straight for the brandy. No conversation. I simply do it or let it be. No thought before the deed. Every sound, every thought, everything passes right through me. Nothing in me produces an echo.

Erika That must be nice.

Anton Stay here. And I'll show you.

Erika That isn't possible.

Anton True. You've got to get to your sister. I . nearly forgot.

-----  
Erika We've been waiting far too long.

Anton He'll come.

Erika Perhaps he's changed his mind.

Anton Impossible. It's true that Seelbacher's a scoundrel, but he's a reliable scoundrel.

He'll come.

-----  
Erika Why did you move here.

Anton Anywhere else I'm a filthy pig. Except here.

I'm not made for the city. If I'm sitting in the train and like the look of a girl I deliberately don't look at her. I turn away. My thoughts go like this. I bet she knows that I like her and if I look at her, she'll think I'm an idiot. One like all the rest. Because a girl like that appeals to every third bloke. So if I don't look at her she'll be mightily impressed. A tough guy. Something special. Doesn't look at me. Although he'd die for me. I'll have to remember that face. But she doesn't remember a thing. And I get out. And that was it.

And I go in for too much hating. The things I imagine. You don't want to know.

91

Erika Quite true. I don't want to know.

-----  
Erika There are yellow bits of paper hanging all over the wood . They say that hunting deer and stags and badgers is a crime.

Anton Indeed it is a crime.

Erika Wild threats are uttered. The hunters need to watch out. Or they'll become fair game themselves.

Anton That'd be only just. After all the animals can't defend themselves.

Erika Those leaflets are from you.

Anton No comment.

Erika They're full of mistakes. You've spelt gun with two n's but deer with only one e.

Anton It's the message that matters.

Erika No one will take a miss-spelt message seriously.

Anton Can't you see what it's all about. It's about goodness. Your heart's in the wrong place.

Do you think it's perfectly alright to go shooting defenceless animals . You as a Christian can't possibly believe that's good.

Erika How do you know I'm a Christian.

Anton I just know.

Erika I'm having a love affair with God but I don't want it, this love affair. Sometimes I yearn for someone to touch me , that I'll be held by someone who'll simply take hold of me because that's what he wants. And I'd like to believe in the possibility of mortality. That I will disappear. that nothing follows, that this flesh, this one here,

92

will simply turn to dust and with it, what I am and could be. I wouldn't be playing a role, it would simply be a matter of what's here is here and I'd be who I am, Erika at a service station at night with Anton. And that would be enough, it would be enough for me too, and it wouldn't worry me what might happen, all the things I might be, how tall, how grand, how small or how large . But it's not like that. I always see myself as small when I'm big and just now, I see myself as big , although I'm sitting here in the middle of the night, drunk, without luggage, without money, and something is pulling me down , that's gravity and something is pulling me up and that's grace.

-----

Anton It says in the Bible that one shouldn't kill.

Erika That only applies to people.

Anton Is there really a footnote attached to the Sixth Commandment that says: only applies to people. Didn't know that.

Erika Hunting belongs in this area. To these people. It's a part of their culture.

Anton That's what they all say. It's part of their culture to set the dogs on the game, with a hip flask and a packed lunch and settle in the hunter's hide.

Armed with a shotgun and a telescopic sight, for which they've spent a small fortune. For other things they have no money. You just have to look at their wives. Aged twenty they're wearing the floral polyester aprons of the farm labourers' union. At forty they're still wearing them . They're only removed when one puts them in the grave. The people here are underdeveloped.



Politically and morally. They're common and garden bastards who hate living things, wild things and that's why they have to lie down in the woods and shoot at anything that's alive and wild.

Erika I'd very much like to drink some more.

93

You've made me drunk.

Would you find it kitschig if I were to say

I've never been more sober.

Anton I would. Frightfully kitschig.

Erika But it's true.

Anton Then it's authentic kitsch.

Erika Anton, I have to scold you. This brandy has corrupted me morally.

Anton Men find that very attractive. Female moral corruption.

-----  
Erika Seelbacher is definitely not coming.

Anton He's quite definitely coming

Erika You didn't ring anyone.

Anton Of course.

Erika Don't lie.

Anton Don't you talk to me about lying. A sister in Poland. Cancer. I'll start crying any minute.

Erika I thought it was the only way to get you to help me.

Anton Not everything was a lie. How beautiful your hair is, how red and full your lips are, how bright your eyes,, how graceful your movements and how something seems to shine out from inside you, some kind of light, a glowing, and that there must be something very special about you and that I've never ever in all my life seen something like you before. That was no lie. Only I didn't say it to Selenbacher, I said it to myself.

Erika But that's kitsch.

94

Anton But authentic kitsch.

-----  
Erika The day's begun. I'm about to miss out on my fate. I was chosen. At this very moment I was meant to meet God in Tschenstochau. And I'm sitting here and drinking brandy with a service station attendant. The Lord will destroy me. If he hasn't done so already. Perhaps this is hell. It's the most frightful place on earth. The smell of chips deep fried in oil in the middle of the mountains.  
Anton Stop whingeing. It's embarrassing. A woman of your age. Let's get down to work instead.

Erika What sort of work.

Anton You can decide.

Erika What do you mean.

Anton I've got enough literature. Cartmill: A View to a Death in the Morning; Samuelson: Origins of Social Violence; Meinerk: Man and the Gun.

I've got a photocopier in the garage. Printing flyers is quite good fun, you can let off steam creatively. .

What do you say to that.

Erika Could I have a drop more.

Anton Are you playing hard to get. Because we seem to be at the end of the world. That's deceptive. We're right in the centre, in the centre of the battle, in the information centre. I can get more than four-hundred channels with my satellite dish.

Hold on. I've got something here for you. A hundredandsixtyfour to a hundredandninetythree They're the evangelist TV stations Every American preacher has his own channel. Your people are very well organized. One can take lessons from you as far as propaganda is concerned. Can you speak other languages

95

Erika I can say: It's really lovely to get drunk in the mountains. In quite a few.

Anton It's a matter of ideas, Erika. Campaigns that are effective. Getting rid of hunting guns, organizing ammunition exchanges, shrinking the Lodenmaterial they use for hunting gear, observing animals in the wild, going on photo shoots. Ideas Erika, those are our weapons.

Erika Our.

Anton Yours and mine.

Erika I've got to get to Tschenstochau. Don't try to to hold me back.

Anton You can do penance here. Live beside me in total abstinence. You'll be known as the Saint

Erika of the Service Station. There's a little chapel down at the crossing, that's been built for the road toll victims, the sharp bends seem to draw the motorcyclists like a magnet. I won't bother you. Anyway, because of my boozing I'm impotent. If you know what that means.

Erika I didn't come down in the last shower.

Anton If, as a Christian, you can't just live with me, I wouldn't even mind getting married.

Merely for appearance sake. No worries.

-----

Erika I feel sick.

Anton It's because of the air up here. As soon as you've got used to it, it'll make you smarter. The blood thickens and so does the brain. And then you suddenly recognise connections and what you previously regarded as incomprehensible suddenly seems self-explanatory.. You're nearer to the universe.

-----

96

Erika I just hope, you've got a big enough supply

*Takes another gulp.*

Anton That's enough boozing.

*He removes the bottle.*

Erika Don't.

Anton Stop that. No more whingeing. Let's get to work.

We'll put an extension on the garage. Make a little Cafeteria. Won't cost much. The holiday makers are keen on garage chic. And we'll change over the old automat to accept Euros. Well then. There ought to be some paint somewhere. You could look after the guests. Would you consider that humiliating.

Erika Only if I had to wear an apron.

Anton What sort of apron.

Erika A service station apron. It goes all the way down over the knees, white with a green border and you have to wear a green cap with it and ,of course, long brown socks.

Anton You wouldn't have to .

Erika Yes, I would. And I'd have to cut my nails short and my hair, pluck my eyebrows and wear white shoes with flat heels. That would be very humiliating. The guests would like that.

Anton I certainly wouldn't. I'd be embarrassed.

Erika Embarrassed. Good.

Anton You can do whatever you like. I'm going to shave.

And then I'm going to put on my blue suit, and then I'm going to propose to you. Officially. And then we'll go to bed . And when we've had a good sleep, we'll get to work. We've wasted enough time.

-----

97

*Hermann enters, haltingly, he's in a terrible state, blood pouring out of his eyes and his stomach, his clothes are hanging in tatters from his body.*

Hermann Erika, Erika, Erika, Erika. Are you here. I can feel you even though I can't see you. Erika, I've got glass in my eyes. Hermann's windscreen shattered. Splinters flew everywhere. Hermann tried to find shelter in my head.

Erika Go away.

Hermann I'm back.

Erika Go away.

Hermann I'll stay with you. We'll go to Tschenstochau together. You and I,

Erika Where did you leave the others.

Anton They're dead, Erika.

Erika Dead.

Anton Suddenly I had a picture in my head. That was you, Erika, you said, keep driving, Hermann, just drive on, nothing will happen to you, have faith. You're inside my head, Erika, you're still in my head.

Suddenly I couldn't hear the motor any more, I just felt a vibration, a very delicate, strong trembling. And this vibration took over everything, first the car body, and then me, I know that about Hermann, he sometimes does that, you don't understand or hear anything else any more, it's as if you were sitting inside a violin or a guitar. Who's singing. Surely there's somebody singing. Now they're suddenly singing, loudly, popular songs. On the North-sea Coast and All the birds are here already, all the birds all. I know that smell, a salty smell, cold sweat, like sitting in one's own sport's shoe after a run in the woods. That's me. And how am I going to get Hermann off the road, he doesn't take to that.

98

Stay on your path, you said to me, even if it doesn't lead anywhere, I heard your voice in my ear, Erika, stay true to yourself, you have to go wherever the Lord carries you, don't question, don't question. Such a good bus. Doesn't make any fuss, simply drives straight on. Through the guard rail. Jasmin comes flying, right from the back, like a sparrow she goes flying into the wind screen, crash and it kicks her head sideways. I've got some of Jasmin here on my shirt.

Erika What's happened to Karl.

Hermann Don't worry, he won't come again.

Erika You killed him.

Hermann Karl wasn't nice to you. Now he's burning. There's a smell down there like a deepfryer full of rape diesel oil.. My Hermann is on fire. He's ablaze.

Erika Why aren't you in the bus. You're supposed to burn to death with them.

Hermann I happened to have my seat belt on.

I want to go to Tschenstochau with you,

Erika, I want to go and serve the Lord, too.

Erika I'm not going to Tschenstochau. I'm staying here.  
Hermann But you have to. The Lord commanded you.  
Erika It's too late. God deserted me.

-----  
Erika I'm staying with Anton.  
Hermann He's a boozier, Erika, he's no good for you. I can smell him, his alpine brandy fumes. Go away, don't touch him.  
Erika There's no one here. Just me.  
Hermann But I can smell him.  
Erika It's me you can smell.

99

Hermann But you don't drink, Erika, not you. Has he made you drink. You don't take drugs. He gave you brandy so you'd stay with him. He's no good for you.

Erika In any case, he didn't break my hand.

Hermann That was in my previous life. That was before I changed.

Erika You haven't changed.

Hermann Don't say that, Erika. Don't say that. I've buried the old Hermann. He was a good driver but a bad human being. He's transformed himself into a good human being and a bad driver.

Erika Still the same horror.

Hermann And what do I feel in my heart.

Erika You haven't got a heart.

Hermann It's the dear Lord. It's sweet Jesus Christ. You'll see. We'll go Tschenstochau. You and I. We'll take Anton's car.

Erika You can't see anything.

Hermann I'd find my way to Tschenstochau blindfolded. The Lord will lead me. We've got no time to lose. Go and get the key. I just want to sit down for a minute. Take a short rest.

You have been chosen, Erika, you are a saint. You will redeem our world. But for that to happen we must go to Tschenstochau. The Lord is there. He's been waiting for bloody ages.

Erika If I were the one, he wouldn't have sent me here.

Hermann Do not doubt his plans. You are the chosen one.

Erika I didn't have a mission. I got into your bus on purpose. I wanted to buy drugs in Poland. I've often done that. Simply got in and hidden myself.

100

The Polish passengers never betrayed me. But this time I got in the wrong bus.

Hermann Let us pray.

My Lord, Jesus Christ. Into your hands I put my life, my trust

Erika Stop that.

Hermann You taught me that.  
I know I have sinned and failed.  
Repeat after me.  
Erika Be quiet.  
Hermann He will give you back your faith as he did me.  
Erika I lost mine a long time ago, Hermann.  
Hermann I know I have sinned and failed . But  
I beg you now enter Erika's heart , she is a  
human being, fill it with grace.  
Erika Be quiet. Be quiet.  
Hermann What's that. Everything is so damp. So wet.  
Is that my blood, Erika. Yes, perhaps you'll  
have to go alone. You've got to go to  
Tschenstochau. Promise me. You must not stay  
here. If you don't go, Erika, I'll pursue you  
through all eternity. I will personally see to it that  
you burn in hell forever. Go to Tschenstochau.  
That's your mission. At once. You must not stay  
here. Give me your promise.  
Erika Anton needs me.  
Hermann Anton is lost, Erika. You can't save him. Go to  
Tschenstochau. Get going. If you go straightaway  
you'll get there in time.  
Erika Please don't ask that of me.  
Hermann The Lord himself asks it of you. Give me your  
promise  
101  
Erika OK  
Hermann You have to say it, little cheat, Say it.  
Erika I promise.  
Hermann Say: I promise to drive to Tschenstochau  
immediately.  
Erika I promise to drive to Tschenstochau immediately.  
Hermann Now everything will be alright. And always pay  
your fare, my little fare-evader. And who's  
that standing there. Why it's my little Emmy,  
my Emmy  
*He dies.*

-----  
*Anton steps out of the house, He's wearing a suit ,and a  
fresh shirt and has shaved.*

Maybe this suit is a bit ordinary. But that doesn't  
matter. We're becoming a bit ordinary, anyway.  
Normal .But just as camouflage. You'll have to  
do without the tie. I'm too drunk to tie a decent  
knot. Erika , Erika, Erika.  
It gets dark.

102

FIFTHLY

*In a place that looks like a dormitory, like the one*

*in the Transit hostel on the Glowny Rynek in Tschenstochau,  
and it could well be an ordinary Monday, in the afternoon,  
the sort of quiet time when ,nobody's awake, nobody's there.  
Persons unknown have left a mess. Crumpled sheets are lying  
on the beds, the garbage bin has been pushed over, a window is  
open, even the crucifix on the wall is crooked. An old woman is  
walking up and down. She looks vaguely like The Fat Woman  
from the bus. One person is in bed trying to sleep. His voice  
reminds one of Hermann's voice. Erika is sitting on a stool,  
she's still wearing her coat*

The Old Woman There were at least a hundred-thousand of us. We  
were standing on the Glowny Ryneck, on the  
Bohaterow Gettain in the narrow alleys, one  
Christian soul beside the other. What a day. The  
Feast of St Sophia . Yesterday. You were here.  
A Man Be quiet. This is a dormitory.

Erika I only got here today.

The Old Woman Wouldn't have missed it for anything. That fire.

That breath. St Sophia was in  
everybody. Unforgettable

Erika I was held up.

The Old Woman The holiest thing I ever saw.

Erika I wonder if there's a bed left for me.

The Old Woman Just pick one. There are sheets at the Reception.

Breakfast is from five o'clock till nine.

Erika There's a lot of confusion in the town. The  
people are sleeping in the streets. There's  
garbage lying around all over the place.

The Old Woman What power there is when so many thousand  
people come together. Some got married. That  
was lovely. About thirty little brides all in a  
row. And you got cups of tea for free. With

103

cinnamon and a slice of lemon. But it didn't  
say who'd prepared it. And so I wouldn't  
touch it.

A Man I'd like some quiet.

The Old Woman I should have had some. By evening I was  
parched. They put me in a hospital ward.

Absolutely beautiful. Beautiful nuns in a  
tent on the alluvial land near a lake.

A hundred-thousand Christians. It's a  
special feeling, just being amongst yourselves.

Erika There's a bad smell. Of garbage. And I saw  
a lot of drunks. Even at the station. I really  
should be going. Where do the buses go  
from. .

The Old Woman What exactly are you. Are you actually a  
Christian.

Erika. What business is that of yours.

A Mann I beg of you. do please be quiet,  
The Old Woman You aren't a Christian. I can tell you one  
thing, girl. Those who don't know that  
Our Lord, Jesus Christ, spilt his blood for  
us, won't get to heaven. Are you Jewish.  
Or do you read the Koran. Shame on you.  
What kind of religion is that, that tells the  
faithful they mustn't eat pigs and at the  
same time sends them into a holy war.  
Erika Those are the extremists, there are others too.  
The Old Woman I don't like you Muslims, I'm firm on that  
but I'll grant them one thing,; the men have  
guts. They have principles, the wrong ones,  
it's true, but nevertheless principles.  
Something for which they'll fight. They fight  
against us Christians, And they won't make  
any difference between you and me. Only  
one thing will help us against these lunatics.  
Deep, unconditional faith. If we aren't firm  
in our faith, we'll lack power and conviction.

104

But the Muslims won't lack them, you can be  
sure of that. They're dying to see their  
Creator.

*Silence.*

Aren't there going to be some long faces if  
Allah doesn't come to meet them and there  
are no forty virgins, but , instead, God the  
Father, Jesus Christ and The Holy Ghost.  
Hallelujah. I'll say a prayer that Jesus puts in  
a good word with God the Father for you,  
because otherwise things won't go well for  
you, I can assure you of that. Our Father  
accepts no excuses, he'll make a clean cut and  
we do have some examples, I need only  
remind you of Jericho, Sodom, and Gomorrha,  
Our God won't put up with everything.

*She kneels down beside a bed,*

God Father, if these false Muslims were to  
come to you in heaven, because they'd blown  
themselves up or committed, heaven only  
knows, what atrocities then please give them  
one more chance and don't chase them off to  
the devil straight away. That's what I, your  
servant, beg of you for they know not what  
they do.

*Silence.*

Look at what I bought. St. Sophia. Made of pure  
gold. Blessed with the holy water from the altar of  
the Black Madonna of Tschenstochau. Extremely



holy.

Do you want to kiss her.

I'd let you.

Then your hand would feel better right away.

Erika Go away.

The Old Woman Oh you of little faith.

Erika What did it cost.

105

The Old Woman That's not important.

Erika Go on, tell me.

The Old Woman The Holy Ghost's in that.

A Man I'd give anything, absolutely anything if you'd just be quiet.

Erika Did you buy that up on the Rynek.

The Old Woman Beside the little chapel.

Erika You shouldn't have. That's run by false monks.

You can read that in any guide book.

The Old Woman It was a Coptic monk from Africa. Very ancient Christian.

Erika A Pole dressed up. That isn't gold. It's ordinary tin.

The Old Woman Liar.

Erika Take a bite. Then you'll see.

The Old Woman Well I'm certainly not going to bite into St. Sophia.

Erika Give it to me.

*She bites into St. Sophia.*

The Old Woman Whatever are you doing, biting into my St. Sophia. You Anti-Christ.

*they come to blows.*

The Man Silence. Silence.

*Erika and The Old Woman fight until they're exhausted ,and only then do they let go of each other. Erika takes her coat and leaves. The Old Woman looks for St. Sophia, whom she's lost in the tussle. She can't find her and cries for a bit.*

*And then sits there quietly without moving.*

106

The Man That's beautiful. Really beautiful.

Such peace. Like Heaven.

Fin de la Bobine