

God's Retableau

Act I

Scene 1

A chamber in the Municipal Corpses Cremation Centre. Felician – The Young One and an old man begin their first day of work at the cremation centre. The old man is old indeed, he can barely see anything. He himself claims that he doesn't see virtually anything. The Young One has just come back from a special training course in incinerating human corpses in state-of-art gas-electric kilns with ecological attestation. The chamber resembles a modern bakery. The audience are seated, in fact, in a salon in a mourning house: a lot of purple, black and callas. It is a night from the 5th to the 6th December.

The Young One

In every place the first day is the hardest, isn't it? You just don't know what to start with. You would want to do everything best and with dedication, so to say 'work burns your hands' ...

The Old One

Well, well, everything but burns ... You know, when I operated the kilns in the camp, they brought a Russian who had drunk himself almost to death. He had sneaked into one of the German storehouses with food and alcohol and ate and drank up to the brim as he had never done in his life. And he paid for that with his life as the Germans ordered him to get burnt.

The Young One

You should rather say 'cremate' and not 'German' but the Nazi.

The Old One

Suit yourself: 'cremate'. So, we put him into the oven and this bastard bursts with flames as something flows out of him. It was vodka that caught fire and streaks of burning liquid were flowing across the floor. But it can't have been vodka. As there were a lot of fresh bodies around I call a Jew to help me put the fire down. Can you imagine, he throws some water over it and the flame gets bigger!

At this moment there is heard ringing of an industrial buzzer.

The Young One

Oh, they have brought us something at last.

A metal door opens. It resembles, in its shape, a prison gate through which a little man – The Old-but-Little One – comes dressed like a waiter: a black bowtie, black waistcoat, black trousers. With a meaningful gesture he points towards a coffin placed on a special trolley, best if an automatic one. The little man hands out some documents, The Old One takes the plate with the number and fixes it onto the trolley.

The Old One

This is our first client.

The Young One

Maybe it is a she-client? You never know who you cremate. We've got only numbers and digits. There is no room for the name in the documents as it is the number that matters.

The Old One

I know it well, I have gone through this system before.

The Young One

The first number is the client's number, we need the second one. The year of birth for registration purposes, and the others are for God.

(He laughs in a silly way saying this.)

As our instructor used to say in Lozanne: UND DER ZUM GOTT ...

The Old One

What if he or she is not a believer?

The Young One

Well, if they don't believe then ... I don't know. The Swiss also said "For God".

The Old One

Maybe we should try it 'dry', without the fire first? We could practice the sequence of movements of the procedure...?

The Young One

Go to hell with that. Wasn't I learning for six months day after day to try it now for real? Place the trolley on the lift! Do it!

They place the trolley on the lift or hoist. In the background the kiln is visible, looking like a gigantic microwave oven but producing an air of a 'hellish cave' from the world of the fable. The interior is very modern, looking like a bakery or research laboratory.

The Young One

The temperature is over 1,000 degrees. The coffin will go first.

The Old One

See Felicjan, you could buy so many necessary things with the money they spend on the coffin, a lot of stuff for the living ones, for example candies for kids.

The Young One

It is not our business, though. You'd better control the technological process. Look, the temperature goes up. In fifty minutes it will be over.

The Old One and The Young One are glued to the screen, a strange computer screen that looks modern, but ...

The Young One

The kiln will cool itself. Now get ready with the hoes, we'll need them to get the stuff that has fallen over the grate.

The Old One

And you said that everything was automatic.

The Young One

I said so, so what? See, the electromagnet will attract all the metal remnants, even surgical nails and screws. Once we even found a splinter. None of the deceased man's family knew that he had lived with it till his death. On the average there is four to five kilograms of ash left over after man's cremation. We put everything we collect from the kiln into a ball grinder.

The Old One

With all that metal?

The Young One

Yeah. It will separate the ash from all the metal pieces which will stay in the tank below. This is a Japanese kiln, you know, 'Made in Japan', 'Made in Japan'
(He pronounces this phrase with a pretended Japanese accent.)

A very modern one – operated automatically. It is ten minutes more to go and when it gets burnt down completely this green light at the side will flash. Then, cooling air will start blowing, and in the end – look here – 'End' will flash. You will know it is over. The chamber for the mourners is air-conditioned – original THERMO KING – and specially perfumed. You have to be careful to precisely put the collected ash into the urn. Then you fix this number which is on the coffin with a heat sealer.

The sound of the buzzer is heard again.

The Old One

Here comes another one.

The Young One

You don't say just like that. We need to follow the funeral ritual.

The Old One

I wonder if it is me ... You know what I mean ... will you do it for me as a buddy and in a light way? It could be like in our commercial 'It has gone with the wind'.

The Young One

Go to hell – the other day in Lozanne, one of them woke up in the cremation centre. You will never imagine what, the fuck, followed then ...

The Old One

Did you see that with your own eyes?

The Young One

Yeah, I was on duty then and I was completely alone. The guy woke up and ran home. The police had to look into that. He told his wife that he had 'resurrected' and they brought him again after a few days.

The Old One

How did he keep during the cremation?

The Young One

Hell with it! He was getting burnt like an asbestos blanket. A storm broke out to that and there was a blackout, and I had to ring the boss 'cause I couldn't switch on the generators. But then it went on smoothly. In the morning the cleaning women came and got surprised to find me asleep. I poured the ash into the urn and some of it into a sack as there was too much of it. OK, I will tell you about this guy some other time.

The Old One

Oh, it's very interesting about the sack.

It would be good for the actor playing The Old One to be burning some hair, nails or animal bones since the natural smell of casein is desirable.

The Young One

Have you ever pondered over the words from the Bible: 'You arise from ash and you will turn into ash', 'cause since I started dealing with cremating others I have developed quite a different approach to this saying ...

The Old One

Primitive people also used to burn their deceased so our civilisation completes a circle. Can you hear the kiln hiss? He must have been a fat man and the fat is burning.

The Young One

It's absurd! The kiln is hermetic and sound-proofed. The other day we were cremating a well-known violinist and they had put his favourite violin into the coffin. Then, actually, you could hear the sound of the violin, but it could have been strings that were breaking because of the heat. We did want to believe, though, that it was some music flowing out of the kiln.

The Old One

And how do suiciders get burnt?

The Young One

Well enough, too.

The Old One

But those after vivisection make the temperature go up tremendously, don't they?

The Young One

You are right as they are filled up with old newspapers or packaging paper. No one wants to bother with sewing them up after the examination and paper is ideal to form the belly and chest. There is so much paper, newspapers or cloth necessary to put instead of the bowels to fill the inside properly. You won't believe. I hate the silicon stains on the grate – you know the ones that come from this stuff that women fill their tits with. It is so troublesome and won't turn into ash.

The Old One

Have you ever cremated a child?

The Young One

Why?

The Old One

It is quite a different thing.

The Young One

Not at all. You get less ash, about two and a half kilograms. I will call you Anselm cause you remind me of a guy from a theatre play. He burnt his philosophical notes. His name was Anselm. The war ended and he burnt the treatises he had saved and worried more than about his own life on the very first day of liberation. He burnt them in an iron stove. You know an iron stove?

The Old One

Surely, I know what it looks like: a small iron stove with a lid and pipe.

The Young One

That philosopher came to the conclusion that during peacetime his philosophical treatises would be good for nothing. You could as well shit on them. He said that himself.

The Old One

I wonder how you would feel when one day they bring my own corpse ...?

The Young One

I have no time for feelings at work. Anyway ...

The sound of the buzzer is heard again. The Old-but-Little One enters.

The Old-but-Little One

Gentlemen, you have to stay overtime today. We have got unexpected guests.

(He takes out specification plaques and reads them to himself.)

These are corpses of actors from a theatre troupe. Their coach broke down right on an unattended level crossing. The fourth group of violation of corpses.

The Young One

This must be some cannon-fodder – scraps. Corpses of a troupe!

The Old-but-Little One

Before morning the urns must be at the airport. The funeral will be held in the capital in a few days. This is a matter of importance to the state.

(He bows like a waiter and exits. In a moment a knocking is heard on the door and again the voice of the dwarf.)

Open the door! I want to tell you something.

The door opens a little. The Old-but-Little One puts his head through the gap and speaks.

We are going to have some guests. Actors will come to say goodbye to their colleagues. They are actors from our theatre – a dream factory: men in disguise, jugglers and pretenders hiding behind costumes, decoration and lipstick, idlers with complexes who expect applause when everything is over.

It gets dark. From a-far there is heard men's choir singing a capella. They soon appear on the stage. The actors are dressed in monks' frocks, they hold burning candles in their hands. The crematory changes into a medieval vault. The choir sing a Lenten song 'Bitter grief do come, pierce our hearts through'. The cortege passes through the cremation chamber and

disappears. The Young One and Anselm sit at the table glued to the screen and listen to the radio. The time jingle is heard and a speaker's voice.

Speaker

Midnight has just passed. We are having Monday 6th December, the day of Santa Claus.

The Young One turns the volume down.

The Young One

What Santa Claus they are having!

The Old One

For me, the adult life started just when I stopped believing in Santa Claus.

The Young One

This must have been a long time ago and you can't remember that.

The Old One

Well, I do, I do ...

In the distance the melody of 'Jingle Bells' is played. Suddenly the kiln door opens and there appears Santa Claus – blackened with soot all over. The figure is in 'American style' – an actor with a big belly, dressed in a lay costume, not like a bishop.

Santa Claus

Why are you staring at me? It's my holiday today. I am distributing presents to all people. What do you fancy? Don't be too shy to tell me!

Santa Claus rings a bell. There comes Reindeer out of the chimney, that is an actor dressed in reindeer's costume, and bleats terrifyingly. The Young One opens a closet – a first aid closet and takes a bottle and a few glasses out of it.

The Young One

We welcome our dear guests with open arms!

He passes a glass to Santa Claus. The Reindeer also puts his hand out to get a glass.

The Old One

So let's take it!

All drink several rounds.

The Young One

And now to the second leg ...

They drink.

Reindeer

How about the third and fourth?

The Old One

Can we ask you to give us our presents, Santa Claus?

Santa Claus

Naturally, everybody will get something today.

The Old One turns to The Young One

The Old One

I am not sure what you are going to say but I feel like eating something ...

The Young One

Yeah, we haven't had our lunch today yet.

Santa Claus

So take Number Two from MacDonald's. Do you go for fast food?

He reaches into the sack and offers food to The Young One and The Old One.

Reindeer

And me?

Santa Claus

Hot hamburgers are the tastiest.

The Young One

No problem, we've got ovens. Anselm fetch a clean tray and set the temperature to 250 degrees Celsius.

He puts the rolls on the tray and draws them into the oven.

Santa Claus

So tell me, how are you doing here?

The Young One brings the tray from the oven and they eat hamburgers. There appears a woman riding on a bike on the stage. She is old and skinny. Best if she could be dressed in a transparent white dress, made up like a prostitute. After doing a round on the stage, she goes towards the audience and brands (with a piece of chalk or with spray) the first clients of the Municipal Centre of Cremation.

The Young One

We've got plenty of work today as we've got to cremate corpses of a theatre troupe. They all got killed at a level crossing.

Santa Claus

Yes, I have heard about it from my boss. Well, I'm off. I don't want to disturb you. As I came so I shall leave – farewell Gentlemen...

(He climbs back into the kiln and disappears, followed by the Reindeer. His voice can be heard in the stack shaft.)

I will make you a few surprises soon. When I am finished with my own work I will come to see you again.

The voice fades, the sounds of bells and melody can be heard weakly from the distance.

The Old One

What a Santa Claus evening it is going to be! Meanwhile, pardon me, I've got to drop into the loo. It's such a pressing business...

The Young One

But I can't let you do that. We've got to work hard.

The Old One

I know but I will not hold it any longer, I feel the pressure ...

The Young One

So piss into that can.

The Old One comes closer to a can and urinates, the stream of the urine makes a ringing sound banging against the bottom of the can with a frequency of 120 drops per minute. From time to time the men drink a glass of vodka.

The Old One

Ugh, I'm much better now. In such situations you have to be very careful. I know a guy who was just to make off to his wedding and suddenly had such a terrible belly-ache that they had to use enema with grey soap to ease the pain. He surely got late to his wedding ceremony, but the bride had been waiting patiently for him.

The Young One

You see what love means!

The buzzer goes off again, the gate opens and The Old-but-Little One enters.

The Old-but-Little One

How far are you gone with the actors? Gentlemen, do treat them seriously, they are outstanding artists who were coming back from the first night of 'They Ruled the World'!

The choir appears again singing 'Bitter grief do come, pierce our hearts through'. The procession resembles one made up of beggars and monks, some of them hold rattles. There are also some blind among them. Darkness comes over the stage, the smell of incense spreads in the air, the gate is heard closing, and then silence falls. The Young One and The Old One place a coffin inside the kiln.

The Young One

We've got a minute of rest. This must've been a small man as the coffin is short and relatively light.

Inside the kiln, out of which Santa Claus came before, some noise is heard. There appears a soldier from Napoleon's times.

Soldier
Who are you?

The Old One
My name is Kwieciński – an assistant here.

Soldier
De domo – Mordechaj Zeicmann.

The Old One
Mordechaj Zeicmann, it's true – how do you know?

Soldier
So you are a Jew! I have nothing against Jews..., although, in the past, you were not good soldiers or farmers. I have talked to Golda Meir recently. She told me about your contemporary army. I know it is excellent. But you must get ready for the hard time with Arabs. The day before yesterday it was Hitler who really got on my nerves.

The Young One
So you know Hitler?

Soldier
Know him? I normally sit next to this moustache wearer! He still bears a grudge against me and says that while he was asleep I inspired him with the date of attacking Russia, 22nd June, my date, ha, ha, ha. Kiss my ass, Hitler! If you had collaborated with Poles, as I did, you would have conquered the Bolsheviks. I do regret myself not promising the Poles more. It is enough o promise things to them and they become different people...

The Young One and The Old One have difficulty placing a coffin on the trolley. There are coffin lids and empty black boxes under the wall.

Soldier
Gentlemen, let me help you...

The Old One
With moaning
Centuries are looking at us...

The Young One
More like Centaurs rather... careful, Gentlemen, my hands!

Soldier
Mr Jew, recently they brought one who had been killed by a compatriot, a Rabi, a decent man. He had watched Marx boiling in tar. He waved his fist angrily at him and made a gesture like this one.

He demonstrates the gesture by putting his fist close under his chin. He pours out vodka.

The Young One
And do you know Senna?

Soldier

Is he a general?

The Young One

No, no. I was just asking?

Some voices are heard. An elderly man comes down the stack.

Wilhelm Marr

Good day to you Gentlemen. I have been sent here by Santa Claus.

The Old One

Would you take your seat, please.

The Young One brings spirit in a big jar and mixes it with Coca-Cola from a big bottle which bears the name MacDonalds, which he got from Santa Claus. He then hands the glass, that is MacDonalds mug to the elderly man.

Wilhelm Marr

My name is Wilhelm Marr. It was me who made up this term. It was also me who established the Anti-Semitic League. Let me, gentlemen, quote the thoughts of my life...

(He makes a kind of platform out of a small child's coffin to deliver a speech and starts shouting like while delivering a speech.)

All the problems of our times will not be solved by means of resolutions and electing, but with blood and iron. Yes, Gentlemen, officers!

The Old One

I'm surprised with your good mood. It is thanks to you, you scoundrel, that so many Jews were duped!

Wilhelm Marr

My friend, as far as the 'duped' goes, I quarrelled a lot with Marx, a lot indeed. But he claims that he does not take responsibility for the Jewish and communists. And then tells me about Einstein to balance that.

The buzz sounds again. The Old One and the Young One transfer the incinerated remains to the separator. The others help bring the coffin into the kiln.

Soldier

All together gentlemen! Let's do it. You see, it has gone smoothly ...

The Old One

I like the words by a German writer who claims that the evolution of the civilisation ends at concentration camps.

The Young One

It's a pity he didn't add: German concentration camps!

The Old One

It goes without saying that it means the Nazi-run ones. What a man this Adorno is!

Soldier

So the Nazi are not Germans. You can see yourselves that history is a pimp!

Some voices are heard coming from the stack: laughter, calling. Wilhelm Marr jumps on to the table and, with a presenter's mannerism, starts to introduce the newcomers.

Wilhelm Marr

Blessed Edith Stein.

(Loud applause, everybody claps hands.)

The first woman in our company. Retableau will soon begin to act its programme. We still lack a few persons. And maybe one of you sitting in the audience has got a proposition? And meanwhile our blessed woman, our Edith Stein – ours since she is Jewish, too.

A woman appears and makes a gesture with her hand – a symbol of the cross.

The Young One

Do take a seat, please.

All the persons, when they do not utter their lines, freeze in the place they stand, like figures in a mechanical puppet box – a retableau.

Wilhelm Marr

Blessed Edith will remain merely a blessed one as Jews do not wish to have her made saint only because she was killed in Auschwitz, the place of holocaust of the world's Jewish nation.

The Young One

But look, in America Jews were the greatest gangsters, too ...

Wilhelm Marr

See what the Diaspora of the chosen nation leads to? Gangsters, Nobel award winners, scientists, thinkers.

Soldier

Outstanding soldiers and commanders. I admired the six-day war, excellent. Arabs fled so fast that they lost their boots in the desert.

The Young One

Those were Polish sports-shoes ... Or suede shoes from "Otmęť" factory.

Voices are heard behind the gate. The Old-but-Little One enters and bows.

The Old-but-Little One

Has the corpse of the director been incinerated yet?

The Young One

Ay, Ay Sir, General! Bien sur, mon general!

The Young One salutes. From a-far the choir is heard singing 'Bitter grief do come, make our hearts miserable'. A group of monks crosses the stage. One of them, very slim, wearing wire-rimmed glasses stays on the spot, the others go away.

Monk

Me, it's me ...

(He nods his head like a boxer.)

Though my earthly life, bodily one, was continued by another man.

The Young One

Man, speak clearly, I don't get it!

Monk

You see, we are all in the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'.

The Young One

In the 'Kingdom of Remembrance' you say... How to understand this?

Monk

Whoever has got ears, let him listen... You think we are from heaven, but it's untrue. We are from the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'. This is neither paradise nor hell. It's not even purgatory. The bodies turned into ash a long time ago, the good souls went to heaven, to Eden, others got burnt in the fire of damnation. Therefore your thoughts about us are erroneous: we are not envoys from either heaven or space. Look! I've got no star dust on my hands ...

(From the side of the stack a stentorian voice is heard, a bit too resounding.)

Danton is coming. We are going to have a heated discussion, another dispute. I'm back to the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'. It is the biggest, surely bigger than the garden of Eden, heaven, the whole heaven. In the 'Kingdom of Remembrance' there are those who used to live...

Through a gap in the sliding gate The Old-but-Little One peeps, thrusting his head, and adds:

The Old-but-Little One

On Earth!

Monk

You see... Not only!

The Young One

How shall I understand this, Sir?

Monk

Oh, this is quite easy: whoever has got ears, let him listen... Our 'Kingdom of Remembrance' is also lived by such as Raskolnikov, Father Goriot...

A person is clearly seen getting closer – a squatty man gets out of the kiln. His face is pock-marked and dirty with soot.

Danton

My name is... It's not important anyway... Everybody knows me in the 'Kingdom' as Danton. I devoted my whole life to the problems of revolution, I mean the life in the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'. I refuted all the charges put forward by Saint-Just. My reasoning convinced this rascal who accused me of gasconade and vanity. But people of Paris loved their Tribune.

Edith Stein
Yet did not respect him as a man...

Danton
And what can you, a Catholic Jew, say about Danton, an activist of the District of Cordilliers! I sentenced people like you to death with one gesture of my finger!

The Old One
Impossible! It was Nero who did that with his finger!

Edith Stein
The Nazi likewise.

Danton
Since we were the kings of life and death even God could not win against us. We chased a mule in a bishop's tiara on its head throughout Paris. We also tied a monstrance to its tail, and what? I talked about this with Stalin who only laughed at that... He boasted that he had pulled down the biggest Orthodox church.

Edith Stein
And what comes out of it? After seventy years they are rebuilding it, rebuilding it you see, and it will be equally magnificent and will prove that destroying sacred temples is an act of sacrilege and barbarity and fighting against Christ is aimed against man.

The Old One
What Stalin did can be equalled to national cannibalism. A bloodthirsty skunk!

Noises come from the stack – a girl's laughter. There appears a girl.

Death
I can sell you a life. Not the second one, not the second one, the first one... You can live it once again, anew, completely differently. I have got an excellent idea how to: we will build a new retableau without God.

The Old One
Without God?

Death
My moving puppet box will be operated in a completely different way – my retableau is not a small spring which they screwed into your little asses, but something genially great – a machine of future, modern driving force of 'Man'.

Edith Stein

The greatest mechanical puppet boxes resembling the world of the living, though based on the laws of mechanics, have always been subjected to the God's law. The figures were created by reasoning human being who invested them with spirit. Like our Lord who gave it to Man. I still recall a Lent picture made up of moving figures. Somewhere in the south of France, Jesus crying with blood tears, closing his eyelids.

The Young One

And I know how they do it. There are special channels reaching the eyes at the back of the head... In the head there is a small tank with blood, best if it cow's blood, and when you pour in blood there it will flow from the eyes in a while. I will show you this.

He takes out a plastic bag out of a drawer of the cremation table, pours some red paint into it, hangs it on the neck, hiding it behind the clothes, and after a while – 'commits suicide' by thrusting a knife into the bag. He bleeds...

Edith Stein

Jesus wept and sweated with blood.

The Old One

That is why so many people hate Jews.

The Young One

But sometimes those who hate them are good motherfuckers themselves. They would want to crucify Jews with Jackobins' consistence. After all both Hitler and Stalin...

The Old One

Kobo-Stalin, he gave them a hell... Jews got an idea into their heads that when socialism gets stronger and covers the whole world, then anti-Semitism will get lost. Obviously, the Jewish quickly believed in it and eagerly joined the movement of building socialism all around the world.

The Young One

Real communism.

Monk

There you have the Jewish-communism and the naivety of the Russian Jews that the revolution could provide them with Leviathan-fish they had dreamed of for centuries, a tasty bit to get refreshment at the cost of the Christian-based middle-class.

The Young One

Capitalist-based.

Soldier

And then Stalin and Hitler played them music and they danced their death Carmagnola like our people did after the fall of the Bastille. And go to hell with this history...

The Young One

And how about Lenin? He also had a Jewish mother. The whole Revolution was in the hands of Jews?

(He shouts at the Old One who 'tinkers' at the kilns.)

Shut the smoke-flute in the stack 'cause the wind gets stronger at night. Some 'revolutionary shit' might enter through it with the wind!
(Laughs like a devil.)

Death
Weren't Jesus and Mary Israelites?

The door opens and The Old-but-Little One enters.

The Old-but-Little One
Gentlemen, are the actors cremated yet?

The Old One
I am just milling them. Can you hear the stones working hard? What personalities! An itinerant troupe but what characters...

The Young One
(Comes towards the audience as close as possible)
Anselm, look! Come here at once! Holly shit! They are spying on us! Shameless rabble! Draw the blinds!
Instantly the curtain goes down. It shuts the window of the stage, or the actors set a screen if the play is performed among the audience.

Monk
Gentlemen, you can't do that! There are mourners there. They want to take part in the last service. What are you doing! It's barbarian, cannibalism. It's not like the European fashion!

The Old-but-Little One creeps from under the curtain, makes a threatening gesture with his finger and says:

The Old-but-Little One
Not like the European fashion, not like the European fashion...

In a moment Death peeps from behind the curtain in the same way.

Death
Oh, they are still sitting there!

An actor sitting in the audience starts shouting.

Actor
We want Santa Claus! We want presents!

Voices from behind the curtain
Santa Claus is not here, he is giving away packets...

Once again The Old-but-Little One appears in front of the curtain.

The Old-but-Little One
So, in this case, Ladies and Gentlemen, I will sing a song 'Mama sono tanto felice...'

He sings in Italian in the manner of bel canto. After finishing the song the curtain goes up, all the persons sit on chairs facing the audience in one row like 'convicts'. The Old One – Anselm – stands on a coffin like on a plinth and speaks:

The Old One

A revolution is being born inside me! The time of old truths has come now. I am summoning you heroes of the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'. Today is nothingness, tomorrow is everything, we... My private revolution, there is a call for blood...

Danton

Aha, the spirit of revolutions has re-awoken! Didn't I tell you? A revolution can't be done without a revolution. How many times have I said that but no one wanted to listen to me then. The want of changes was so overwhelming, the arguments so powerful and true...

The Old One

Like in this papyrus they found in the Pyramid of Mekerinosos. A revolution? Revolution! Put it into your ass, deep! "The poor became rich and the rich – poor". I want to instigate the greatest, the most gigantic revolution – can you understand me?

(He pours vodka into a glass and drinks.)

I am summoning everybody, from Spartacus, Robespierre, Hus, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin... Oh, no, I have been speaking with a language of newspapers all the time, a medial shit. The drama critics will surely nail me for this newspaper-like character. My poor Witkacy – his was a gibbering kind of speech. 'Pure pure form' – and a shitty pronunciation. My poor Hemingway fucked his brain for that.

(Aside)

I have said too much. Nothing is happening and the vulgar words only add spice to it.

(Again addresses the persons on stage)

But real people speak in this way in a real life. I offend you and myself, yet I can't do anything else... This is my true rebellion. I don't sculpt the word. I cripple words. The vowels, consonants and syllables are crying. Where is my small mother country of thoughts transformed into words?

The Reindeer and Santa Claus have already entered the stage.

Reindeer

Hey Old Man! Why all that bullshit? If you want to, Santa will bring you all this revolutionary-war-beasty and what not stuff, just ask him about it 'cause tonight he is making all dreams come true. You freemasons, post-modernists, permissivists...

The Young One

Will he make every whim come true, really?

A musical motif of Santa Claus is heard – bells jingling. The Old-but-Little One struggles with somebody at the gate. Some voices are heard like 'Let us in!', 'We belong in here!'.

The Old-but-Little One

Gentlemen, those who entered through the stack are banging hell out of the front door. What shall I do?

A choir of medieval monks enters singing 'Bitter grief do come, fill our hearts with misery'. They cross the stage like creatures from another planet. The group walk like hypnotised, the more extras, the better.

Santa Claus

They have passed. How quiet. We'd do with something to bite.

(He takes out hard boiled eggs from the sack, breaks the shell of one. He speaks and eats the egg.)

Yum, I like hen's eggs, fresh, tasty! They don't have such eggs even in Heaven.

The Young One

Do they keep any hens in Heaven?

Santa Claus

Leave the heavenly hens alone... I don't want to bother about them at the moment. I want to give you some cute present as I promised earlier. You are such a lovely bunch. It's so nice to look at you!

The Young One

We would like to see all the fathers of the revolution sitting at one table, if you please...

The Old One

Surely. Those who we know but we don't know if they all are in the 'Kingdom of Remembrance', for instance Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Hannibal?

The Old-but-Little One appears and speaks to the Old One

The Old-but-Little One

Do you know, Sir, that this – as you call him – Mussolini was hanged upside down and had a penis put into his mouth?

The Young One

His own or someone else's?

The Old-but-Little One

I've heard that it was his own.

The Young One

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! And who said you can't make a revolution without a revolution? Well, well, who knows? Maybe... someone from the respected audience can tell us...?

(Even if there are voices from the audience, the Young One ignores them).

I don't give a damn! It's immaterial.

Santa Claus

I can invite anybody you want to appear here: Gaius Ceasar and Brutus...

The Old One

And how about Fania Chaplain? The woman, to hell with her, who shot at Lenin but missed.

The Young One

See man: he fought against clergy and would've got killed from the hands of a Madam Chaplain, Fania Chaplain...

Edith Stein

You get the woman's name wrong. For destroying the Orthodox Churches of Christ the Saviour and Paraskieva. Stalin also had a surprise ready.

The Old One

But he lived till his natural death... They say he died lying in his own excrements and urine... even though they say officially that only in his urine.

The Old Man

See man, they cremated everybody and themselves were 'forever alive'. But they are stuffed mummies!

(Addresses the audience)

Who's for cremating, raise your hand. Don't be afraid! Maybe there is someone amongst you who wants to try, a volunteer?

An actor from the audience volunteers and steps out, a 'pener' from a big city, or – as they say in the States – a 'boom' (not to be mistaken for 'clochard'). The Pener looks like a 'pener': they look the same all over the world – 'kings of life'. He is a type of a frightened man, not an alcoholic, rather homeless, a lymphatic man, the so-called 'quiet'. He takes his place on the stage, puts a small transistor radio up to his ear and starts listening to it. The radio is of Soviet make – brand name 'Lastoshka'.

Pener

This is my radio. The only thing I listen to in my life. It is operated by four batteries cells. Even if they cut out power, it can still play...

Santa Claus

So what about this revolution from the 'Kingdom of Remembrance'? Who do you want? Tell me really as long as I'm willing. Wow, I'm speaking verse!

Death

I understand there can be only my clients. My Lord! How many did I make friends with!

(Death is a man who became a woman – a typical transvestite. He speaks with a characteristic manner.)

I am a sexual easy lay! What? Can't I be that? I am tolerant of deviants! Death – a democrat!

(Turns to the audience)

I like you too. We shall meet one day, for sure... My Lord, pardon me... What nonsense I am talking!

(Speaks to Pener)

Stop listening to this radio! Take it easy, man!

Pener

It's because... I don't want to listen to your vanity. I am a free man, I've got a demon's might in myself. I can be a demiurg of the new reality of your revolution. There's a flame burning in me. I want changes, I am able to shake the world, and I spit with rotten philosophy and that's

why my breath is always bad... This is the fetor of the revolution. I am speaking rightly, aren't I?

The Young One

You are saying rightly – it's from your mouth as you've got a mouth! Ore rotondo.

Santa Claus

Someone should play a trick on him.

(Someone is banging hard on the metal door.)

The Young One

It's open!

A procession of mourners enters again, singing the Lenten song 'Bitter grief do come, penetrate our hearts'. A gloomy scene, the Middle Ages, burning candles, smell of incense. A tableau, worked out precisely by the actors – a figure-movement composition (modelled on The Blind by Breughel).

Soldier

Shut him,

(Points at the Pener)

into a glass tub!

Death

It's a good idea! We will keep an artist of revolution under a lamp-shade. You will stay with your colleagues: Vachtangov, Tairov, Majakovskij, and this old jerk, Maxim Gorky.

The Old-but-Little One leads two 'grave-diggers' who cover the Pener with a 'lamp-shade'. The Pener keeps listening to the transistor radio made in the Soviet Union, brand name 'Lastoshka'. There are some voices heard inside the stack.

Santa Claus

Be quiet over there! Get back!

The Man-Reindeer comes up to the stack and starts shaking its hoof ominously (instead of the fist) at the unwelcome guests.

Reindeer

Quiet over there, you horny brutes! You know who I saw there? Robespierre arm in arm with Trotsky! They saw me and one of them farted with di-cabbage-peas gas and then retreated. What responsibility in the eyes of history, the whole civilized world! I like contemporary world a lot.

(The actor who plays the Reindeer shows his head from under the mask, smiles sensuously, and with his back moves as if copulating and sighs like in a sexual ecstasy.)

Alas wretched me! Alas silly me!

Santa Claus

(Addressing the audience in an intimate way)

I had him castrated before coming down here...

Edith Stein

Good for him – a crude stud! A beast in the human skin.

Reindeer

I am a ‘human being’ in a beast’s skin. I was a revolutionist, too! I mean I took part in a revolution... Santa, close your ears! It was me who finished Galileo on behalf of the Fathers of the Church...

(The Pener sits under the shade. In fact it is a large box bearing the name ‘SONY KV70’ and an advertising slogan: ‘With a SONY ZKV the whole world is yours’. The Pener strikes his fist against the box and cries)

Pener

... and Giordano Bruno. Why did you do that? You never understood the Holy Inquisition at all! You never read Descartes. – Poor Savonarola!

Edith Stein

The Church has forgiven you all!

The Young One

Let’s not quarrel! We’d better drink something... What filthy times, anyway, have they ever been less filthy?

The Young One pours drinks. Grave-diggers-waiters appear and Master of Ceremony: the Old-but-Little One. Death passes the glasses round.

Edith Stein

No, thank you. I will not. Even when alive I was, I drank not either...

Pener

This woman has got a poet’s talent! I have always wanted to be a poet... an engineer of people’s souls...

Suddenly, a cracking noise is heard. The top of one coffin falls off and a pale man dressed in a black suit gets out of it. The deceased one is ‘decorated’ with flowers that got stuck to his clothes. Cleaning himself, he says

The Deceased One

Who imprisoned me here? I am alive!

(He bites his hand with his teeth to check if he is alive)

Ahh, it hurts. How it hurts! I am alive!

The Young One

So you’re alive because it hurts.

Pener

Didn’t I say that pain and sufferance,

Even on the stage,

Are our ordinance?

This damn poetry
To me is immortality!

The Deceased One

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am a prestidigitator by profession. I am 32 years old and come from Warsaw. My hobby and profession, at the same time, is doing magical tricks with my hands, mind, naked hands. "I don't have any strings or elastics."

The Young One

And what tricks can you show?

The Deceased One

All sorts of them. Want magic, you shall have magic. I'm a disciple of a wizard!

Pener

(Sticks his head out of the box)

... that pissed on a lizard! You are bragging about yourself so much, my friend, another smart aleck.

The Deceased One

I know what I should know. I am a tricks master but I did begin my career as an acrobat on wire. I can still show you a few numbers... Have you got any line here?

The Old One enters. He carries some ropes.

Pener

Go ahead, the Deceased One, jump onto the wire. I once in my childhood saw an acrobat showing the death of a spider.

The Deceased One

It may have been me, it is my best number. It must have been me...

(They tie the rope to the ceiling)

Is there anybody here that has some resin with yourself? I must rub my hands with it so that they shouldn't slip.

He holds the rope with one hand and the Death spins its end. It looks comic and awkward.

The Deceased One can hardly hold to the rope. Meanwhile the choir enters again with their Lenten song "Bitter grief do come, penetrate our hearts".

The Deceased One

(Calling out to the pilgrims)

Piss off my number! Don't disturb me! Get out at once!

(The Choir do not react at first, but in the end leave the stage. The Deceased One jumps down grotesquely, bows, everybody claps hands.)

Santa Claus

It is going to dawn soon! Decide who you want to invite in here!

Pener

Be quick! Make haste misses!

Let the pale light of the Moon
Not reach us through the crevices.
I wonder if we could invite...? But I'm afraid to say his name aloud.

Santa Claus
You'd better shut up – I know who you mean!

The Deceased One
I'm not in for 'great men'. That is why, I would like, if it were possible, to...

Death
I must cut in your considerations. I don't recognise great, wise or rich people. I am the absolute of democracy. Everybody is equal in our 'Land of Remembrance'. But keep on talking, I think you wanted to invite somebody.

The Deceased One
I meant a man, a certain Georgian, who – while urinating – used to point to his cock and say that he had just begotten great Stalin with it. Yet petty drunkards didn't believe him and sneered at him as he was very old and could barely piss.

Death
It's not because he couldn't piss – he could barely live. They were laughing at that! I can recall that perfectly, he drank himself to death. Oh, it was then that I had a row with Life, me, the Queen Immortal, Mistress of 'The Land of Remembrance', yes with Life...

The Deceased One
You want to say a being, life that means a being, thus?

The Old One
Don't mistake it for anus...

(The lid of the SONY box opens)

Pener
How I love philosophical disputes, those rationales and deliberations...
(Starts reciting a poem by the Reverend Baka)
"O, noble youth, a little almond tooth... a robust potato, a blind-spectator..."

Sound of the buzzer. The Old One and the Young One carry urns with ashes of the theatre troupe.

The Young One
I forgot to tell you that it is a tradition in each cremation house (a sort of folklore of the profession, if you like) that you should take a little ash from each urn and mix it with a little of other taken from the other urns. There is a belief that maybe it will be possible to ... you know what I mean?

Santa Claus
What is it Gentlemen? What have I heard? You want to create some Golem, a superman? I am not so sure if this is going to be accepted by...

Pener

No! Don't say his name aloud! I'm slowly finding out about your plans, but do you know you have come to deal with demi-urg of Krzychov?

Yes, it is me myself.

And this is not a game.

I am the actor who plays with people like with dolls

Talks to nature, talks to puppets

Enlivens birds of paper and wood, and this white lady – death, the queen...

(With a normal voice)

Would you excuse me, I must listen to the radio now. It has got 17 transistors and its brandname is 'Lastoshka' made in the USSR, such a simpleton on a belt with a case. Yet it uses four cells. They can shut down power, and it will still be playing.

Santa Claus

Aren't your dreams too vain? To make a Golem, and what next? What end can you see to the development of the civilization of pride cherished by the mortals? It's true they were created to resemble God, but they do want to beat the very Creator Himself. How much vanity in this, and haughtiness, blind belief in wisdom and accomplishments of science. Beware Gentlemen! Fires of punishing flames can start burning again to sweep away the pride of individuals, like it happened before ...But it is not weeds and chaff that will perish in the fire of damnation.

The Old One

I know what you mean. This terrifying word of ancient philosophers – HEKPIROZA. The fire will destroy everything, a fire, infernal fire! Oh, my Giordano Bruno, a Dominican monk, you were branded a heretic and burnt on Campo di Fiori. The mob felt the smell of your body, which – as the eye witnesses claimed – wouldn't burn at all.

The Young One

You see, incineration has got a great past behind and future ahead!

The Old One

That was a fire of hatred! On the other hand, pride and vanity expressed by certainty of rationale and views, unfortunately, of both sides, only one of them was right. But why, then, Athropos ate the thread of life in flames... His life? You see "God is an incognizable being and man can merely get closer to Him like a shadow gets near the light" – the absolute and truth.

Edith Stein

The Vatican has already made its journey to Canossa. The Slavic Pope recognized the error of the Church, the error of pride and belief in the infallibility of man, not God's.

The Young One

Can you speak clearer Madam? We're at a loss.

The Old One

Whoever has got ears, let them listen.

The Old-but-Little One enters the stage.

The Old-but-Little One

So I shall sing for you now...

“Bernatka, a lassie went into a forest to get some wood

The Angel led her in there, God had chosen the time Himself good

Ave, Ave, Ave Maria, Hail, Hail, Hail Santa Maria.”

The Old One

Not many people know that by some miraculous might the Russian God’s Mother of an icon helped Stalin to defend Moscow. It’s not a joke, what about Lourdes?

The Soldier, standing frozen like in a retableau – a mechanical puppet box, in which the mechanism suddenly stopped working, raises his hand, he shows that he wants to say something.

Soldier

I am terrified with your academic fideism. What reasoning my dear lord! I wonder what the German God would say to that.

The Old One

There are no national gods, there is only one God for all!

The Young One

Yet under three forms.

The Old One

No, you don’t see my point at all. Thou art who art...

Santa Claus

God is one. Fire of damnation is one. Nothing has changed. Man is the same. The world has grown older a bit, and the civilization...

The Young One takes a break, eats a hamburger and says:

The Young One

It is just what I meant. Development of technology, artificial heart, well, this, how do you call it, ‘cloning’? Science. That’s why I believe in man.

The Old One

Can’t you see that all that... this development must, one day, become destruction, self-annihilation. Science has always been Egeria to me... has led me through my life, but...

Pener

You can also say it has been your Cicerone. Hey... and what do you say to an explosion of a Soviet nuclear power plant? I can read your intentions well enough, can’t I? About this final destruction! Now I have to knock off, here’s the news on my radio.

(Closes the lid of his cardboard box and disappears.

The Deceased One

But I'm looking at your puppet box and I don't like anything in it. You have to spin the bag faster, it needs more guts. After all, nothing has been happening here. No sex, no chicks, no brawls, drugs, homosexuals, anarchists, or freemasons.

(Edith Stein and the Monk close their ears)

Wilhelm Marr

Firstly, do tell us what to do. Secondly, what does it mean "nothing's been happening here"?

The Deceased One

I am the demon of Krzychovo. I shall do it, I can do it, something must happen. I am a master of magic and prestidigitation, and 'I don't have any cords or elastics'. Ladies and Gentlemen, for eight years I studied political-theatre directorship. I am an actor, a director and a politician, a little bit of everything.

All

We need somebody like him! Up with him! Let him be our king!

The Old One

And what about manna?

The Deceased One

I will manage it too. I will. This trick will work, though 'I don't have any cords or elastics'.

The Young One

And how about the trade unions, obviously the free and self-governing ones? Because we have to establish trade unions together with the boys from the dissecting-room, simply – Independent Trade Unions of Dissectors, Gravediggers and Cremationists.

Reindeer

This is a good idea, I support it with all my heart. You must attract some women to be union activists. How I like women...

Makes a movement imitating a sexual intercourse, and moreover pulls a red baton out and in from between the hind hoofs.

Santa Claus

Calm down you ogre!

Danton

But he speaks rightly. The role of women in all sorts of plotting and rebellions has always been considerable, though unnoticed by men who like to attribute success only to themselves. They forget about the so-called hopeless situations. Talking about a hopeless situation, you know, I talked – because I had pained for this talk for my whole life – to Dismus the Thief, the one that Christ forgave on the cross: "Indeed, indeed I am telling you, it is this same day you shall be with me at my Father's Home". He told me he had seen all his life and understood its senselessness, he had lived like a beast, he ate, digested, shitted... and at that short moment he wished to be a man. He told me himself, "I wanted to make myself different from a dying animal and I died as a man, with a feeling of hope."

The Old One

Does that mean that Marxists die with no faith in a better life?

Death

Remember: hope is our nicest sister, we always walk together; you, the living ones on earth don't perceive this, yet in the 'Land of Remembrance'...

Knocking at the door is heard. The Old-but-Little One enters, he carries a cross like an acolyte at a funeral. Behind him the choir in monk's frocks singing the Lenten song "Bitter grief do come, do sadden our hearts...". The choir passes, singing the song a few times. The Old but Little One stays on the stage and speaks in a very confident manner to the audience.

The Old-but-Little One

Marxists die with hope, but they can't admit to this.

Danton nods his head. Meanwhile Death marks Anselm with the white spray.

Danton

I have already talked to Marx. He's a jovial elderly man, he didn't say anything, but had tears in his eyes...

The Old One

Was he crying?

Danton

You can't say that exactly. He made close friends with Einstein. I saw them both in the company of Kant. They were arguing which of them had contributed more to the destruction of the civilization.

The Old One

It's worth dying even today...

Death

I see no problem here!

Santa Claus

Wait a minute! You must deserve the 'Land of Remembrance', my friend when you are still alive. O my God...

(he checks himself)

...what I am talking about! Gentlemen, how many personages are waiting there for Castro, Walesa, Kadafi, Theresa of Calcutta. I will say no more since I will upset the living ones. Our Land is built from chunks of history, people are a part of them, it is they who are this evangelical stone rejected by the builders.

The Young One

Sir, can you speak more clearly?

The Old One

Who has ears, let them listen. Your Excellency, if I may, because I have a conviction that I will not be granted the privilege to stay in this Land. I am more than sure about it.

Santa Claus

How do you know? You will be a chunk of history of your times; you're performing in a play, an almost principal role. And your life has been quite interesting. You never know, don't despair, Erebus is still in front of you. Remember about Dismas who was hanging on Christ's right side.

The Old One

Do atheists have a chance as well?

Danton

This does not matter in the least.

The Old One

And those cremated here can find their way there, too?

Santa Claus

Certainly! Only Egyptian mummies have certain difficulty getting there, you know, the little ones stuffed with sand and embalmed. Like Lenin for instance...

(Aside)

Therefore he is invisible! Stalin, but he is decaying little by little, so we're going to see him soon. What else to say... Yesterday I saw John Lennon playing the guitar to Ghandi. He may have been flying high.

The Penser creeps out of the box.

Penser

Anselm, ask His Excellency to bring some guests, let things be happening! Let somebody come here from the 'Land of Remembrance' and visit us. You have only been talking on ends, like in a modern theatre. Action – something happening in time and space! Or else I will have that one do a trick.

He points at the Deceased One.

The Deceased One

But 'I don't have any cords, or elastics'.

The Old One

I have difficulty choosing the person. Marx is crying, Lenin is invisible, Stalin has got smelly.

Santa Claus

He hasn't got smelly but is getting rotten.

The Old One

He does stink for sure! But who shall we ask to appear? So as not to make it pretentious as the theatre criticism will pick me to pieces. Indeed, Ladies and Gentlemen I can shit on criticism but now I say let's take a break of fifteen minutes, shall we?

Act II

Without dropping the curtain the stagehands pull down the decorations in the presence of the audience. This dismantling can be part of the spectacle. The scene-shifters-gravediggers, the overseer of the stage management, dwarf-the Old-but-Little One and the helpers are in fact the choir. Just one of the choir whistles the song 'Bitter grief do come, pierce through our hearts'. Danton's stentorian voice is clearly heard from the backstage "My friend, we don't whistle inside the theatre!"

Scene 1

The Old-but-Little One enters the stage, dressed up as a priest this time (surplice, an autumn coat, a biretta on the head). He carries a funeral crucifix on a long stake, the crucifix being wrapped around by a stole. He is followed by the choir, obviously singing the Eastern song 'Bitter grief do come, sadden our hearts'. The choir sings the song several times. The smell of incense is felt, a musical motif of the song is heard (instrumental) played on the organ or harmonium, possibly, live. The dwarf unveils the other curtain, which shows a market-stall that resembles an enlarged stage of the puppet theatre, that is a screen and horizon, and the upper paldament (red) bearing the words "Welcome to Kingdom of Remembrance" (like on a banner). To one of the sides of the stage there sit musicians who are a street band (accordion, guitar, banjo, fiddles, trumpet, necessarily – tambourine). The band play 'The March of Toreadors'.

The Old-but-Little One

Hearty welcome to all the actors who take part in the stage production under the title God's Retableau.

A street band or railwaymen's or firefighters' brass band plays.

The Old-but-Little One

Santa Claus

Edith Stein

Danton

Reindeer

Wilhelm Marr

'Cords and elastics I have not'

The actor reads stage directions. A classical presentation of the performing troupe is in progress like in a circus show. The dwarf - The Old-but-Little One – strikes the cymbals, Danton pulls chains apart, Marr, dressed in striped tights performs as a weight-lifter. The Young One and The Old One-Anselm applaud, the actors wave at the audience with theatrical gestures. The music fades, the actors disappear in the depth of the stage.

The Young One

(Sings a couplet set to a folk song 'Close to my little garden')

And our Willy, a culturist,

And our Willy, a culturist,

A weight-lifting champ,

A weight-lifting champ.

Suddenly, a man in a large black cloak springs onto the stage.

The Cloak-Man
Gentlemen, where did they go?

The Young One
What ‘they’?”

The Cloak-Man
Well, those...
(Makes a meaningful gesture of knocking at his forehead.)

The Old One
They have gone to the Land of ‘Remembrance’. They are back to where they came from.

The Young One
(Addresses the Cloak-Man)
And who are you?

The Cloak-Man
Me, Sir, I am a municipal Cloak-Man. I am responsible, in a sense, for the cleanliness of our streets... You know, Sir, if somebody comes to our town on the market day, and has an urgent need to shit, you see, I’ve got a little pot under my cloak which can be used to do so. I screen the poor thing with my cloak so that he or she could use my services without feeling embarrassed. Would you like to try?

The Old One
No, I’d rather not...

The Cloak-Man
But do try, I insist. I beseech you!

The Old One
Sir, don’t make me do things I don’t feel like doing! Go to hell! But, on the other hand, I wish my professor could see that, a great expert in the Middle Ages and the medieval life in towns. A cloak-man – what a beautiful profession! What a job, and how... romantic!

Bleating is heard and the actor playing the Reindeer appears without the reindeer’s head, he murmurs something like a drunk man.

Reindeer
We are changing everything! Today means nothing, we are the tomorrow... My private revolution is ripening. My rebellion of a man who fears God not.

Choir
Sings the (initial) fragment of the chorus of “The International” (“This is our last battle”). If possible, the tune could be played by a brass band who might march to the rhythm through the stage, like during a parade.

Reindeer
(Points at Peneer)
You are to be our Tyrtus to encourage us to fight with your words and song!

Pener

Bugger off me! Never in my life!

(Supports the utterance with a meaningful gesture.)

The Young One

We have to call Santa Claus in here.

The Old One

He will be here instantly, that's for sure.

The Reindeer belches like drunk and bleats every now and then.

The Young One

Look! The Reindeer' got stoned... We may have a hullabaloo. Santa does not like such a behaviour. Hey, you...

(turns to the Reindeer)

Lie down in this coffin, will you?

Reindeer

Yeah, and you will ship me into the oven. I'm wiser than that, screw you!

The Old-but-Little One appears and whispers something into the Old One's ear.

The Young One

Aha, something important is going to happen if we are whispering into our little ears...

The Old One

Not only into our ears... We are going to have some guests, the one from the stud farm 'Apocalypse', they are coming on horseback and will be here within less than an hour.

Pener

Besides, what time is it?

Danton

The last one of yours!

The Old One

What do you mean by 'the last one'? The ones who believe do not see the last hour. Each one during your life is the last but one. And then you've got mathematical eternity, limitlessness, universe, the whole of the Cosmos.

Pener

What a gift of the gab you've got, Mister Anselm! Tell me, please, is anything going to happen in this play: a betrayal, murder, a little bit of blood... And maybe a physical act of violence, a bit of death will not hurt anybody.

The Tricks-Master

I will answer this question, I can do every possible manual trick. And 'cords and elastics I do not have'... I am Harry Houdini!

Each person on the stage, unless performing some actor's task, is an immovable part of a mechanical puppet box – part of a retableau – but when action begins, the audience should have an impression that the puppet has just been 'awakened' and reacts now in a natural way, taking part in the action and dialogues. After finishing the scene, the person comes to his/her place and 'changes' into a figure again.

Pener

What can you know about it? Did you use to be a poet? Would you write poems, talk to birds about the life and death?

The Tricks-Master

Here you are, help yourself to some country bread freshly baked, just yesterday.

Takes a loaf of bread out of his briefcase. The bread is wrapped in a piece of white cloth. He cuts the top of the loaf, the so-called 'heel' and another slice with a knife and offers them to Pener and Anselm.

The Old One

Good God, can you smell it? What a flavour! Grain, nature, fragrance of my childhood! Flour, my granddad Jacob's mill... What a tasty slice it was!

Pener

Jacob was your grandfather? It's a Jewish name... Wait! I can hear some voices. Someone is coming closer. I can see some mysterious riders!

The Old One

It must be the ones from the stud farm. I'll tell you one thing: if I weren't Jewish, I would have stayed a priest, and later – who knows – maybe the head of the Church? Ouch, my heart has ached me at the moment – it's not a metaphysical pain, though – it's the pump.

Pener

I hate those rich men on horses.

The Tricks-Master

And horses are such jolly nice animals, they have been serving man for 5 thousand years. Well, but why should I bother about it? I don't give it a damn...

Pener

I'm turning the little transistor radio on and switching myself off... The reception is fine because it's got new batteries.

(He gets into the 'Sony' cardboard box with the slogan 'Some great world in your home'. Ringing of a bike bell is heard. Santa Claus appears riding an old bicycle, holding the dwarf-The Old-but-Little One on the crossbar.)

The Old-but-Little-One

Silence! Listen, an important item of latest news... I have just had a call from a state institution: a television crew are going to make a commercial spot in our crematorium – an advertisement of cremation...

The Young One

They will surely bring some nice chicks... I like this my friends!

Reindeer

(Without the mask on)

And so do I.

Santa Claus

I can see you have forgotten about the 'great of this world' very quickly indeed. There is only room for sex, curiosities and conquests of the Cosmos in your heads.

The Old One

Don't be surprised, it's the ages-old longing of mankind. Even though we believe in the mission of Christ and his resurrection, we often behave like Alkibiades (poor Socrates)! This is our innocent defect. I may be dying, my heart – where is the little sack, The Young One, where is Death?

The Young One

You would like meeting Death? You shall have it then! My dear, we could do with something to eat. How I like rich food, receptions, meat adorned with fruit, this spiny lobster and oysters, lobster and caviar, lots of caviar...

The Old One

This way or that way, you get stool, crap, excrements in the end.

Pener

Please, say shit, we know one another here well enough so say shit, common shit.

Gravedigger

Shit, of course, shit. Common shit.

Santa Claus

Quiet! Silence please! You have called me to invite here..., you know who you want me to invite.

The Young One

The great ones of this World.

Santa Claus

That's right!

Pener

From the world of remembrance... Kingdom of Remembrance.

(Pauses for a while)

Which closes the eyes of the dead.

The Old One

So that the living should open theirs to death.

Some noise is heard coming from the 'Sony' cardboard box, sounds of the transistor radio 'Lastoshka' made in the USSR, which runs on four batteries. The Old One breathes with difficulty.

Santa Claus

Here, I don't like your attitude to the great ones of this world! Once you want to talk to the figures from the "Kingdom of Remembrance", another time you deride them.

The Old One

But this is criticism with a dose of scientific bias. Don't you fret Santa, do make the Young One give me some ash of life from the little mysterious sack.

Santa Claus

From the one that Death hooked? What a language I have learned from you!

Pener

(Inside the box)

We want to play games, come back to our children's days...

Santa Claus

And do you fancy a puppet theatre?

The Young One

Surely, we do...

Knocking on the door, the little man comes in, The Old-but-Little One – this may be a child wearing a mask.

The Old-but-Little One

My dears, I had a call from my neighbour, an ecologist, who says there is irritatingly stinking smoke getting out of our chimney. He's an elderly man... told me the smoke reminded him of the odour of Auschwitz. Still he's got a cold today and running nose so he doesn't know if the odour is strong, or he is just imagining things.

The Young One

I wonder what happens when he's got rid of his cold?

(Pener sticks his head out of the box and says:)

Pener

The World is vain!

The Old One

And godless!

Santa Claus

Leave God alone, will you? I am leaving the puppets behind, so enjoy yourselves as you please and play what you want. Farewell, see you in a year's time!

He gets into the stack, followed by the Reindeer; they both disappear. Suddenly, with a crash, some puppets sent by Santa Claus fall onto the grate. Everybody is busy building a stage for the puppet theatre, the stage is made from coffins and urns; they also put up a screen.

The Young One

O! we are going to prepare a Nativity play or 'herods'. Anselm, will you play grandfather?

(Points at each person in turn and says)

You will be Death, you – the Devil, you – a Jew, an old wise Jew. And maybe these advertising females will show up soon. I'm so horny today. I feel like having an appetizing sexual contact. Something is expanding inside me...

Knocking is heard on the door.

The Old One

Come in!

In the door appears an elegant woman at an age for procreation.

The Young One

Who are you, lady?

A Film Girl

I'm Leni Rifenstal and... I want to say that they will be here very soon.

The Young One

Who, the females?

Leni

Yes, just them...

The Old One

And what are you, woman?

Leni

I am who I am... In fact it was me who wrote this mechanical theatre. *Theatrum Mundi* is of my creation. I had been doing it for a few days and then I had to take some rest. Say what you want and I will write it and so it will happen.

Gravediggers

It's good, jolly good. We want these women!

A Voice from the Depth of the Stage

Men can be as well.

The Young One

You'd better tell us why you treated those actors in such a way at the level crossing!

Leni

I had nothing to do with that – it was an unattended level crossing; a concurrence of objective phenomena does not concern the author, is independent of me...

The song 'Bitter grief do come, and sadden our hearts' is heard. A group of monks enters the stage like before. The Author makes a very decisive gesture with his hand, tells them to get away. The choir leaves the stage at once.

The Young One

And did you ever happen to employ – in what you write – some totally accidental characters?

Author

Well, of course, odd things happen occasionally. I can be emotionally fatigued, I may lack inspiration for a while... you know.

Pener

(Out of the box)

Let them kiss your anus!

(He opens the box and sticks his head out of it, speaks to himself)

I have kept my word to Edith – it was sharp but not vulgar

Author

I can introduce a new person any time...

A Foolish Youth almost bursts onto the stage (this can be a school of drama student), he sings a song set to the tune of the church song 'Here Comes the True Lord'.

Foolish Youth

... here comes a priest with Our Lord...

The Foolish Youth hides something under his clothes. He crosses the stage and, as if he were a wound-up toy, appears making the same movements a few times.

The old One

Shift him into the other world, Sir. Is this to be a contemporary play? My Friends, get stuffed with that story! We, common people, want a revolution, transformations! Mister, it's so banal and pretentious: Napoleon, Stalin, Danton. Look for sublimation of themes! You are demi-urg, a dramatist.

Author

Mind you, you're wiping your mouth with Fo, Dario Fo! He's been fighting against totalitarian regime, capitalist exploitation of the proletariat, supremacy of the Catholic Church; he even sees Christ as a dictator!

The Author puts some white powder on to his face and turns pale. Again, the Foolish Youth bursts onto the stage with the song "Here comes a priest with Our Lord".

Author

Get lost! Out of my sight!

The Old One

You see, we are preparing people for another life. And a great revolution is being born in ourselves... Do something about us... Look, our clothes have taken in the dirt of civilisation, they are stained with history and stink of formalin. But you can cleanse us, can't you?

The Young One

You've forgotten to add that the ptomaine can do us in for good.

Author

Well, throw your clothes into that electric mill. They need to be ground into dust. Take a bath in the pool yourselves.

The Old-but-Little One

But first we have to get rid of the formalin, and this will take a moment...

The actors take off their clothes and throw them into the mill. The engine is heard working, scraps of clothes fall out of the shaft – the more, the better.

Author

Let them bathe, clean and fast. To do great things, like a revolution, you need to fast and concentrate. Aha! The models for that commercial about the crematorium were supposed to come here... I don't give a shit! I'll make them suffragettes, emancipated liberated women marching under the banner of a global revolution, women-post-modernists. Why there are always have to be fathers of revolution? One of them will be a mother of revolution, with such tits!

He makes a gesture with his hands to show a pair of big-sized woman's breasts, in the air. Meanwhile, the men sit on a bench, like in a sauna. The historical figures were driven away by the Author of the play, there are only dummies of the historical persons lying around. Young gravediggers, dressed like waiters, push a big trolley with attractive women sitting on it across the stage.

Woman 1

We are daughters of the revolution... the latest revolution in the history of mankind. The fact that we are dressed in furs, may it not delude... they are artificial; we are the successors of Eve, the Biblical one. We are on a diet, control unwanted pregnancies, love animals and ecology, and also soft...but only drugs...

The Young One

What cute hookers! We are for a revolution, too. Long live animals and hookers!

All

Long live animals! Long live hookers!

A consternation among the men, somebody asks:

Are you for cloning, that is the humanitarian kind of it?

Woman 2

(Her breast is unveiled; she is called the mother, or even mother-in-law of revolution.

Well, we are not. After all we are still in the time of menacme.

The Young One

Good for us! They are still milch. Long live revolution! Long live sexual intercourses! Can we join you?

Gravediggers

...and connect?

The Old One

I'm staying here, I'm too old. Anyway, I have never been in favour of such a kind of love...

He moves towards the pool – disappears from the stage. The men run towards a large bed, naked, or almost naked, they shout:

The Men

Long live Bacchus!

Woman 2

Here is our tribune!

(Points at the bed.)

There is a great revolution being born inside us today... Where is my Phrigian cap, my little red cap...?

Author

Maybe I should call Spartacus?

(To himself)

They can't hear me anyway...

(Steps off the stage. On the stage there appear The Old-but-Little One and Foolish Youth.

The Old-but-Little One

Can you hear anything?

Foolish Youth

Yes, this is the radio of the homeless one...

The Old-but-Little One

Some people on horseback are moving closer to us.

Foolish Youth

I can clearly hear hoof-beats... but I can see nothing, everything is like behind some fog, I wish the Author were with us...

The Old-but-Little One

I will call him, but will he hear me?

Runs behind the back stage and calls. The sound of horses' hoofs is growing louder and louder.

Foolish Youth

I can see them, I can see them! Where are those to make a revolution? Where is the Author? I can see them! They are the riders of Apocalypse... I can see them very clearly. There are seven of them on horseback...

The Old-but-Little One

They are drawing Tespis' cart. I can see Felicjan and Anselm. They are coming closer... Look, how Nostradamus is smiling... Edith Stein is greeting us waving her hand... They can see us, they can! Where is the Author?

There is the outline of a big cart visible on the horizon. It disappears deep at the back of the stage.

Foolish Youth

Now there are four of them on horseback... Where is the one who wrote it? What shall we do now?

Death

Don't scream, don't panic!
(Everybody exits except Death.)
How quiet here, Lord, how quiet...

The Young One enters, holds an electric speaking-tube and uses it to say his part:

The Young One

Somebody has hooked the little sack with ashes. People, where are the ashes?

Singing is heard from a-far: 'Bitter grief do come, sadden our hearts', but the choir does not appear on the stage, loud knocking on the door is heard instead. A rickshaw appears on the stage ridden by a woman – Suffragist.

Suffragist

Where are those to burn human remains? I have brought a few things to incinerate...

She opens a side of the rickshaw and pours out different parts of broken dolls. There are quite a lot of them. Black angels of Death enter, they install a hand-operated transmission belt. Death turns the crank around, taking turns with one of the fathers of revolution. The angels of death are the mourners, gravediggers or people in the choir. Their black wings are fixed to long black rubber coats. The parts of the dolls which are thrown onto the transmission belt reach the back of the stage, where a road-sign 'Kingdom of Remembrance' is put up. A little man stands on the stage, he's Nikifor. He holds a picture over his head, like an Orthodox pope holding an icon.

Nikifor

Give his little sack back, whoever took the bag or else I will cook your goose!

The reindeer 'bursts' onto the stage, raises the mask from under which the actor's face is revealed.

Reindeer

Will you paint something pretty? Santa Claus asked to have something...

Nikifor

Go to hell Mister! I am starting a great masterpiece today. This will show God. I'll paint Him on the glass. I have never painted on such large pane.

Two mourners dressed in Napoleonic caps and waiters' clothes bring in an old TV set without its bottom. Death puts his head into it and looks through the screen. There is no picture tube in the set. Death puts a gun close to his head and shoots straight at one of his temples. A loud explosion is heard.

Gravediggers

Death has killed himself – Long live! Long live!

Nikifor

Shut your mouths, will you? It is us who die, not him – he stays on! Oh, Lordie, take those dolls, puppets, figures, marionettes, pudges, and squabs. My name is Nikifor of Krynica. Lord, do not send the chochol, either as I'm scared of it...

(Nikifor mumbles unclearly. There is a large piece of glass (pane) on the stage, the larger, the better. Nikifor paints the figure of God. This is naïve linear type of painting.)

Only in such a way can I thank God for my life, brushes and foreign paints. I must paint fast as I am old and can pass away at any moment...But I'd better not...

An Angel-nurse slides down from the ceiling on a rope.

Angel

It's noon. We have to measure your blood pressure...

(Angel puts the band of a pressure apparatus around Nikifor's arm and takes the measurement).

You have to lie down at once, Sir. We are leaving for a hospital, instantly!

Nikifor appears on the stage again after a short while, but now dressed in pyjamas. He is very unhappy.

Nikifor

There is no God, there is no God of mine. They have destroyed my God and stole this little bag!

The nurses, in fact the service of the funeral house, dressed in black, take Nikifor away in a wheel-chair. Pener-vagabond-tramp enters the empty stage.

Pener

How they littered this place! I must get a broom but I feel so silly like when my mom was so sick, you know when she cleared her bowels into a pot and mixed the contents saying she had cooked soup for me. What a terrible disease. But I have an impression that humankind are cooking such soup for themselves, that they are going to shit through their own mouth...

The Old-but-Little One appears on the stage, he walks Anselm on a lead.

The Old-but-Little One

And now dear Anselm, you will die on a chair or in a chamber. This was to be a revolution...

The technicians bring a dental or gynaecological chair with cords and some clocks attached to it. They tie Anselm to the chair.

Anselm

Let me eat something before I die, I'm hungry!

The Old-but Little one

I can offer you some bread we baked ourselves.

Foolish Youth

They are coming on four horses...

Where is the one who wrote this, where is he now...?

This can't be the end (*despairs*)

At the same time The Young One takes the boxes with the ashes of the actors and others from the 'Kingdom of Remembrance', he is helped by the dwarf, that is a child in an old man's mask.

Death

(turning to the Foolish Youth)

Have you heard that this evening Ernest Hemingway killed himself on the beach in Copa Cabana? I am dead myself too. What am I saying! What am I saying!

He laughs in an insane way. Loud triumphant music is heard and the dwarf appears on the stage with a tube, he shouts through it.

Dwarf

Tespis' cart is getting closer, welcome to Land of Remembrance

On the platform, podium, scene, there move the actor and beside him Mila, sitting on a chair. There is a banner above them 'Laboratory on the other side of the Moon'.

A room, a bedsitter resembling a theatre changing room: the Actor and the make-up woman work together on making the Actor look old. Behind them there is a catafalque, on the floor there are wreaths; there are a lot of flower-pots in the room.

Mila (the dresser)

You look now like the old biblical Jew.

Actor

My mother looked like Jewish: she had to live in hiding during the war. If Jerries had caught her, you know, they would've... and I wouldn't be here now.

Mila

What did the Germans want from the Jews? After all they believed in God too, and Holy Mother was Jewish. Now I must glue the beard on, now, this will be fine. You will look like Doctor Carapkin. Your mother is dead?

Actor

Yes, has been for a few years now. Today, when I was listening to birds singing, I remembered her, it always seems to me that there is a dependence between birds, death and remembrance. In May my mother organized a common rosary meeting in our garden. Ladies from neighbourhood used to come, sing songs devoted to the cult of Virgin Mary. From a distance there were sounds of the Tour de Paix broadcast and I remember I could not wait for the rosary session to end. In Poland even lilac smells different. You know I used to adore rhubarb compot with orange skin and a pinch of cinnamon.

Knocking on the door is heard.

Mila
I'll open it.

The voice from behind the door: "Do you wish a priest to visit you with Christmas blessings?"

Actor
Ah, that's you!

The clergyman is an old but robust man, de facto an army chaplain, wearing a clerical collar and a jacket decorated with military orders.

Chaplain
God speed you!

Actor
Let it be Reverend Peter, I have made everything ready.
(The Actor unveils a screen behind which stands a coffin, he removes the cover and puts it aside.)
I would like everything to look natural. I will do my best to look older thanks to Ms Mila, say, by twenty years, I don't count on more, anyway...

Mila
Reverend, I would like so much to have a photo taken with the Pope, but I don't know how to do it.

Chaplain
(Salutes them and strikes the heels against each other in the officer's salute.)
I am able to arrange that for you. Do you want to make a political career?

Mila
At my age? A political career? No way. I must light candles and arrange the wreaths.

Knocking on the door: 'Telegram!'

Actor
(reading the message aloud)
"Dear Sir, on receipt of your offer, we would like to commence cooperation. Technical details will be settled by our assistant Leni von Riefensthal." Mila! I have been offered a job with a

film company, of course it is a commercial film, but I have got to keep on playing this old man all the time. When the assistant comes I can't look normal.

Chaplain

Mister actor, get into the coffin.

(The Actor, made up to be an old man, clambers awkwardly into the coffin which is placed on a high pedestal. Mila and Chaplain help him to climb up.)

You look great in this coffin, Sir.

(He salutes the Actor and strikes the heels of his boots.)

Actor

I have bought myself this one, not a very expensive one; just as the saying is: you're cramped for space but it's your own.

Mila

But how it suits you!

Actor

As you make your coffin so you shall die!

The priest takes an old camera with bellows out of a big bag, positions the tripod – he will be taking pictures.

Mila

Will you take a picture of us all, please?

(She tires to lie down beside the Actor).

Could you make a little bit more room for me, please? How cramped it is in here!

Actor

Because it is designed to accommodate only one person. My uncle was, for many years, a superior in the guild. No user of a coffin ever complained of the quality of the coffin.

Chaplain

The photo has been taken, I understand I will make two copies. I still have a request to mister artist: would you mind if I borrowed your bicycle? I still have got to go and see a man who's sinusitis.

Mila

Oh, what coincidence! I live in Sin City. Maybe you could drop me there?

Mila seats herself on the crossbar and they leave on the bicycle behind the stage. Again, knocking is heard on the door, the Actor sits in front of the mirror and corrects his make-up to look like a senile old man.

Actor

Come in, please.

(He says it with an old man's voice for the first time)

A beautiful and sexy woman comes in and says:

I am a film director assistant, Leni von Fifen-Stahl.

Actor
Ich bin Old Man.

Assistant
Oh I see you will suit our advertising spot perfectly.

Actor
And what is this commercial to advertise?

Assistant
We have been sent an order from a company manufacturing very modern urns.

Actor
(By mistake with a young man's voice)
Fuck the duck!

At this moment a voice is heard coming from the radio:
Attention, here's an important announcement: Due to the approaching thunderstorm and expected statics there will be power cut.

Assistant
My God, what will happen now? Are you insured?

Actor-Old Man
My dear, at my age I fear nothing.
(He lights an oil-lamp; falling of rain and noises of the storm are heard. The Assistant looks out of the widow.)
Do shut it at once, will you?

At the same time stagemen spray some water over the assistant's head and also spurt some of it towards the audience.

Old Man
You're all wet through Miss, do drink a glass of whisky. I insist, now.

Assistant
I feel secure in your presence. You remind me so much of my deceased father.

Old Man
Ach, let us not speak about death, you are shivering with cold! Or maybe it's fear. Do lie down here at once.

The old man draws the curtain apart and leads the girl towards the catafalque, pointing the place of her rest to her.

Assistant
I've got a request to you: will you lie down beside me, please. I fear the night and it has lasted since I turned twenty-three.

Old Man

So I shall lie down beside you.

Assistant

(Sighing sensually)

O! You are not that old.

They begin a sexual play. Suddenly a light is switched on, it reveals the Actor with half hanging beard that came off, he tries to hurriedly blow the flame off the lamp; he looks embarrassingly exposed.

Actor

What are you going to think of me now?

Assistant

You'd better light me a cigarette.

(She looks around the place and seems delighted)

What an original décor in this bedroom! What a sophisticated taste you have!

Actor

I used to study painting years ago and, obviously, philosophy. Now I want to use this in film. My knowledge allows me to tell the value from nothingness and refute the shitty sauce of post-modernism.

Assistant

My Lord, how wise you are, and not that old to that! But how do you want to do in advertising?

Actor

My name's Dismas. Call my by my name, please. I stopped kissing hands in the times of the French Revolution. I must say I am proud to have played Danton once.

Assistant

But they beheaded him with this fucking guillotine.

Actor

Once, during my performance in the theatre something went wrong with this damn machine and I thought I was really going to lose my head. The stagehands had got stoned and screwed the thing up. Being an actor is a hard bite of bread. In fact I am not a man of typical dramatic theatre, I feel much closer to be into entertainment, I love singing, will you happen to know this?

(he hums a piece of tune)

This is the favourite song of Stalin.

He starts singing 'Suliko'. It would be best if it is possible to do it in the original Russian language and in duet, with the accompaniment of a pub band (trumpet, accordion, violin and clarinet).

At once the sound of horn is heard. Enters the invalid neighbour in a wheelchair. He has a computer keyboard and spot light attached to the wheelchair.

Invalid

My dear neighbour, keep quiet, please; it is late at night after a storm, it is a night and we do not want to go to bed. Don't be afraid, I won't hurt you. I will only interrogate you.

(The disabled man directs the light of the spotlight at the Assistant sitting on the Actor-Old Man's knees. He turns to the latter)

Your name! Who are your contacts?

Actor

Man, stop this. Stop this interrogation. Leni, I loved you for your films!

Leni

But I never made any films!

Actor

But I did watch those films. You know, Leni, I must tell you something: the older I am getting, the more I long for my childhood. Imagine a spring morning in the forest, a gypsy camp waking up, neighing of horses, people calling, sounds of birds, the smell of smoke mixed with damp air. It was around the sixties, I think, they forbade us to live in camps, forbade us to wander... They gave us flats and we treated them like prison cells; it was then that everything was over. Do you know how it feels to wash your face in a forest brook, listening to the sounds of forest, the morning cuckooing of a cuckoo?

(Lights a cigarette)

The trees, the smell of a fire... I remember I complained to my mother we didn't have a Christmas tree when we lived in the camp in the winter. It was near a town, but the locals didn't allow us to stay too close to the town. My mum, a simple Gypsy, told me, "Look, you've got so many trees around." But I longed for that special one then. I liked it best to look after horses with my granddad. We took them to water in the morning. I can still smell the horses' sweat and the gear. We used to steal hens with my granddad sometimes. We came close to farmyards and I baited hens with a stick made of hazel tree, which was split like a violin and had a worm stuck at the end. When a bird came close enough I thrust a piece of cloth or a sack over it and caught it. Then you had to run quick. This is an old gypsy method that my granddad taught me, and he was himself taught it by his granddad. In the evenings we used to roast them over the fire. Those starry nights, gypsy dances and songs... I sometimes wake up at night and hear this. It's so amazing like in a dream.

The Invalid snaps his fingers at Leni, she's a member of the film production personnel.

Leni

Bugger off, man! I have come here to do my job. We'll be shooting a commercial, or maybe a modern film. You could earn a few quids.

Invalid

Why not? I'm fit and sporty, I like scenes with brave sex, but I do not love in the new fashion, I'm a traditionalist.

(He demonstrates briefly.)

Mila

Take your seats behind the table. I've prepared a small treat. A good bite is always most welcome.

Invalid
Mandiare, mandiare.

Actor
My dears, I have got a suggestion: we have got to shoot a commercial such that never was before.

Priest
Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Leni
OK, I will tell you what – we are going to advertise kilns to incinerate corpses.

Actor
Ah, this is Monsieur Kadlubek, a sporty man who likes normal sex.

Invalid
But only the oral kind, only the oral kind.

Leni
We'll dress Mila as death.

Priest
Fine, I'll bring the props.

In a moment he comes back with a large cart and takes costumes out of it. Leni and the Actor put a white dress on Mila who a moment earlier was naked – she is an old woman.

Invalid
(Laughs and cries loudly)
What an old pussy you have, and bald to that!

Leni
Silence now, we are shooting. Could you tell him something?

The Priest brings a box with some chalk.

Death
(Speaking with a maniere typical of nativity plays actors)
I am Lady Death, I will screw everybody with my breath,
here's my scythe, here's a piece of chalk,
I'll soon be marking everybody, be it with a pussy or a cock.

Dwarf
(Laughing)
Lady Death with an old pussy!
(The door opens suddenly revealing an old man-dwarf, it can be a child wearing a mask of an adult man.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am a messenger, I sell modern urns which are perfect for storing incinerated human remains.

The dissecting room, The Young One sits here. He is, in fact, the Actor, however without his make-up, without the beard, looks 'normal'.

Actor

It's night, I'm spreading lard over a slice of bread, I can feel the taste, the same taste I remember from my childhood, home-made lard, the cracklings and bits of minced meat smell so appetizing, the bread from a private baker's, just the same as that years ago. It's pleasant to eat in such a way... simple old kind of food like the people who used to eat it: my uncle Marian – a railwayman from Limanowa, with his robust likeable face heavily strewn with a few-day-long beard. He would take grain coffee brand name 'Turek' with him whenever he had his night shift. He had a special bottle closed with such a device made of wire and a porcelain cork. A lineman meant a lot – the duty above anything. A magazine with TV programme on the table. This actress on the cover – fuckingly sweet, and the photo clearly exposes her eyes, how naturally beautiful, only God could create such a thing, how do you say it?, with nature's hands. And someone who is screwing... Bread, lard and ersatz coffee, I don't need anything else, do I? And such a thing must feed on truffles and lobster (*lights a cigarette*), but she will be as good as shit, excrements are democratic.

(Installs an electric stove, fries thin slices of bacon on a pan and starts eating them with some bread which he tears off a loaf, he speaks and keeps eating).

Welcome to the Land of Remembrance. This Leni here was the queen of life. Everybody wanted to live in her pussy? It is said that Goebels himself adored the beautiful artist.

Leni

I can hear everything, I am here. I was shown a new camera yesterday and the engineers of Arriflex called it by my name. I'm going to use this in a new film. You know, I just got a letter from Marica Rek. She is living in the States and is horrified at the lot of Jews in Europe. Newspapers insert dozens of obituaries, the East front is the last of the fronts, I hope.

Woman-Nun

Will a Jewish girl be forgiven the nun's frock of a Catholic nun... I pray to the Holy Virgin for that, I know my mother's orthodox heart aches, but I need strength, what I did must be a link connecting old Jehovah and Christ.

Leni

You will be dead soon too. The Kingdom of Remembrance will write your legend.

Actor

You will be made saint, but look! it's much harder to be an artist.

Leni

Yesterday I was looking at pictures taken underwater. They were pictures of the initial working plans of a star reef. The electronic camera is so small and it's so useful to take photos. During the Olympic Games in Berlin I was using a TV camera for the first time, it was as big as a desk, and obviously working in black and white. To celebrate my eighty-fifth birthday *Life* published my portrait on its cover, 'Old age is a fact', in colour and with the use of soft lens – it's so old...

Nun

I have not had such a moment yet, it's in prayers to Holy Virgin that I look for great power. No it can't be otherwise, Lord is omnipotent, still I've got an impression that the prayers in which I call for Mary's intervention are listened to with a better result. Holy Mother save the poor actors from the provincial theatre, the one who played Santa Claus, Reindeer and those from the Kingdom of Remembrance who had to enter through the stack, I also pity the Death for ever and ever, amen.

Anselm

Another one that was duped by the Death... we are departing and she stays on... will anybody here have anything to light fire with, some matches maybe?

Leni

Do you want to set all this on fire, you wanted to save them more than anything else, more than your own life, after all these are your philosophical treatises.

Anselm

It's not important, nothing is important now, it's too late, whoever has got ears, let them listen, these are treatises on the Kingdom of Remembrance, papyruses, parchments...

Actor

Wait! What if we attached these doctrines to the ash in the urns and built an ark of the Covenant and sent everything somewhere very far...

At that moment Anselm makes a fire inside an old tub and tears sheets of paper into smaller pieces, then he throws them into the fire and watches them burn; sounds of a Viennese waltz come from a distance, Pener appears holding a small portable transistor radio of Soviet make, brand name Lastochka, he opens a large meat can with a bayonet, like a soldier, and starts eating, he speaks at the same time.

Pener

This young stoker mixes sperm with the ash, a mad follower of the theory of 'Big Bang of quantum and quarks'. But in fact nothing can happen now, this old man has burnt everything that was written down so that nobody knows what the ending is like...