

rokgre

Garbage on the Moon

A Play

Jury's statement on the Slovene National Grum Award for Best Play in 2008:

A child and a dreamer, by definition another kind of child, are the main characters in this play. The little girl Vasilka and the astronomer Lawrence encounter the difficulties of human relations as early as their first meeting when a gesture of trust is no longer interpreted as innocent or with honest intent but instead arouses suspicion of abuse. And thus the suspected pedophile and the curious little girl strike up a friendship: he provides answers to her childish questions and she becomes a companion during his solitary observation of the Moon and his ongoing measurements of its slow retreat from our planet. But life, of course, does not stand still and the story is influenced by other moons, ones from the constellation of Vasilka's everyday life, that end up determining the fate of the characters. It sometimes seems that the smooth, almost cinematic progress of the story may actually lead to a happy ending but the playwright, despite his conciliatory approach, does not peddle such easy illusions. The story ends, if we may use such an expression, with the 'tragically beautiful'. Or even the 'sadly beautiful'. The retreating moon is a symbol of love and longing. The only remainder of man's visit there is the first garbage on the moon, a metaphor for the retreat of everything that carries a trace of lost authenticity. The particular value of *Garbage on the Moon* resides in the complexity of events and meaning, the wealth of allusions, its clarity and empathy, and the persistent flow of the story through its many reversals. The reading of this play excites an ongoing series of small exclamations of surprise and approval.

Garbage on the Moon

Translated from the Slovenian by Erica Johnson Debeljak

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Uporaba in reprodukcija besedila brez pisnega dovoljenja avtorja je prepovedana.

Cast of characters:

LAWRENCE

A middle-aged man, an astronomer

MARTHA

A beautiful, middle-aged psychologist

VASILKA

Martha's curious daughter

PAUL

Martha's husband, an engineer

FILM OPERATOR

An older man with a simple nature

Dedicated to Paša, my little moon.

SCENE ONE

LAWRENCE

It is night. The sky is clear, without a single cloud, and densely scattered with stars. A nearly full moon rules over the sky.

A man drives his motorcycle to the top of a place called Rose Hill. There is a small trailer hitched to the back of the motorcycle. He turns off the engine, gets off the bike, and pulls off his leather gloves and cap with goggles attached. This is Lawrence. He places both on the seat. The long, somehow too large coat that he is wearing is also leather. All in all, he looks pretty shabby. Though he is unshaved, he is nevertheless full of energy and a sort of expectation. He takes off his coat and quickly rolls up his sleeves. He whistles a melody to himself as he unhitches the trailer, pulls the canvas from it, and sets up a portable observatory, a small hand-held telescope from which a long tube reaches far into the sky when extended. He sits on the trailer, somewhat lower than the telescope which is fixed on a nest of wires and machinery. He throws a couple of switches that turn on a light and illuminate a small screen. He begins to observe the sky. He turns the telescope this way and that. He looks, observes... He directs the telescope toward the moon. He picks up a pad on a clipboard with a pen attached to a string. He writes something down and types something into the keyboard. He looks at the moon again. In between looks, he records, types, mutters 'hmm' now and again, and scratches his chin. Then he steps toward the motorcycle. He pulls a bottle of wine from the side bag. He gestures toward the moon with the bottle, as if toasting it. Then he opens the bottle and pours wine into a glass which he has also pulled from the bag.

LAWRENCE Cheers.

He lifts his glass to the moon.

We've gotten a little closer these last ten years, isn't that so? He drinks. Yes...

He wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

He sits down again behind the telescope and observes. Piano music.

SCENE TWO

FILM OPERATOR,

VASILKA, LAWRENCE, MARTHA

The darkness of a movie theatre. Rows of chairs turned toward the audience. On the back wall of the theatre is the projection window—the operator's booth. The entry into the theatre is from the right side, in the corner, where the back and right walls meet. This is also the way from the theatre and left into the booth.

The film operator is cleaning the chairs with a whisk broom. He is picking up cardboard boxes and sweeping up popcorn.

FILM OPERATOR. Muttering to himself. These guys – they don't know how to clean up after themselves. Darn popcorn! How can one fatso make such a mess?! He leans down and sweeps. He straightens up. He stops. He sighs heavily. Two more movies to go... He heads toward the exit. He tosses the garbage into the trash can next to the wall. He is walking when he bumps into Vasilka who has just come in.

VASILKA Hi. She waves her entry ticket at him and happily walks by him.

FILM OPERATOR Hey!

VASILKA I have a ticket! The lady sold it to me...

FILM OPERATOR Hey little girl! Why are you here alone?!

VASILKA My name is Vasilka!

FILM OPERATOR That's fine, yes. But where's your mother? You're too young to go the movies alone.

VASILKA *Not very convincingly.* She's coming.

FILM OPERATOR Really? *He doesn't believe her.*

VASILKA Really, really! *She nods vigorously.*

FILM OPERATOR She didn't come last time. You watched the whole movie alone.

VASILKA It wasn't scary.

FILM OPERATOR That's not the point...

VASILKA Today she's really coming, this time for sure. She's working overtime...

FILM OPERATOR Yeah, sure, the whole company is working overtime.

VASILKA It's true, it's true – this time she's really coming.

FILM OPERATOR Well, alright then. *He turns and goes. He mutters to himself...* You're too little to go the movies alone.

Vasilka goes to sit down, when the operator suddenly turns.

FILM OPERATOR Hey, little girl.

VASILKA My name's Vasilka.

FILM OPERATOR Yeah, well... *He shuffles. He's a little uncomfortable.* If you want, you can come up with me and watch how the film is projected.

They look at each other.

Up to the booth.

VASILKA I'd like that very much.

Without a word, the film operator turns on his heel. Vasilka stands up and hurries after him.

VASILKA What's your favourite movie?

FILM OPERATOR None.

VASILKA None?

FILM OPERATOR I like television better.

They exit.

An empty theatre.

After a while the lights go out. A beam of light comes through the window from the booth. We hear Vasilka's laughter. Now Lawrence enters the theatre. He looks around. When the beam of light goes out, he sits in the farthest seat in the darkest corner of the theatre. Vasilka hurries in. She sits in the front row. The film operator appears at the back of the theatre.

FILM OPERATOR Not in the first row! Your neck will hurt!

VASILKA *She turns back toward him. She is kneeling on the seat on her knees, holding the seat back.* So what! I want to be as close as I can! *And then she turns around and leans back.*

FILM OPERATOR *Grumbling to himself and heading back.* Suit yourself. It's your neck. *Silence. After a while, Lawrence gets up and sits more toward the middle of the theatre. The projection light comes from the booth. Vasilka exclaims, stands on her seat, and tries to catch the light with her hands.*

FILM OPERATOR *From the booth. Sternly.* Sit down!

Vasilka plops down and giggles mischievously. Lawrence takes a seat closer to her. The sound of an animated film can be heard. The projection can be seen on the other side of the theatre. The pictures roll. Vasilka watches with excitement. Lawrence takes a seat right behind her. Vasilka senses something and turns.

VASILKA *Not frightened.* Oh!

LAWRENCE Do you want some candy? *He offers it.*

VASILKA Is it real?

LAWRENCE What else would it be?

VASILKA I don't know. It could be a stone wrapped in paper. But I will, yes. Thanks. *She takes the candy and starts to unwrap it.*

LAWRENCE A stone? Why would it be a stone?

VASILKA *With the candy in her mouth.* Paulie, our neighbour, likes to do that.

LAWRENCE Ah. *He nods to show he understands.*

VASILKA Once he made a mistake and ate it himself – the stone. *She looks ahead. Watches the screen.*

LAWRENCE And? Did he get sick?

VASILKA *She doesn't look back. She puts her finger to her lips.* Sssh! I'm watching.

LAWRENCE Oh. Excuse me.

They watch the screen. A short time passes.

VASILKA After two days, he pooped it out.

LAWRENCE Sorry?

VASILKA Paulie. The neighbour. The stone.

LAWRENCE Ah. *He nods again to show he understands.*

VASILKA *She turns back to him.* Can I have another one? They're good.

LAWRENCE Of course. Help yourself. *He gives her another candy.*

VASILKA Thanks. *She turns toward the screen, unwraps it, and pops it into her mouth.*

LAWRENCE Can I sit next to you?

VASILKA Why not?

Lawrence comes around and sits next to her.

What's your name?

LAWRENCE Lawrence.

VASILKA Is that a first name?

LAWRENCE *He laughs.* Yeah, I guess.

VASILKA It sounds more like a last name.

LAWRENCE What about you? What's your name?

VASILKA Vasilka.

LAWRENCE Vasilka. Pretty.

VASILKA I'm quite happy with it. *Suddenly she yells toward the screen.* No, don't go inside!

LAWRENCE He's going to go.

VASILKA *She sighs as if there's nothing she can do about it.* I know. He always does the same thing.

LAWRENCE *He laughs.* You're a little pumpkin!

VASILKA *The expression changes on her face. To something serious and interested.* You laughed at me.

LAWRENCE I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

VASILKA Why did you laugh at me?

LAWRENCE Because you said that the mouse always does the same thing – that he always goes inside. I thought it was funny, because it's a cartoon and, of course, it's logical that the same thing always happens and the characters always do the exact same thing. It's probably only funny to a grown-up if someone thinks that in the same cartoon something different could happen.

VASILKA Yeah, the mouse always goes into the hole even though he knows that the witch's cat is waiting there for him. Maybe one day it will be different.

LAWRENCE How do you mean?

VASILKA I'm waiting.

LAWRENCE *He laughs again.* You're really something! You're waiting?!

VASILKA *Again the same serious, inquisitive expression.* You laughed at me again.

LAWRENCE Oh, I'm sorry. If it bothers you, I won't laugh anymore. But it is funny.

VASILKA You think I'm funny?

LAWRENCE I think you're wonderful!

VASILKA I'm funny to you?

LAWRENCE Not you – just what you say. But it's no big deal... I won't do it anymore.

VASILKA *Moved and gentle.* You really laughed at me? Me, just me?

Lawrence feels that the girl is pleased, that she is not troubled by his laughter.

LAWRENCE *Seriously.* Just you.

Vasilka hugs him suddenly, enthusiastically, warmly. Lawrence is surprised. But Vasilka is already in her seat again, looking at the cartoon.

LAWRENCE Why did you do that?

VASILKA *She looks at him, thinking, and then...* Can I pull on your moustache?

LAWRENCE If you want...

She pulls it. And then seriously...

VASILKA It's real.

LAWRENCE Why wouldn't it be?

VASILKA My daddy doesn't have a real one.

LAWRENCE He wears a fake moustache?

VASILKA For Halloween.

Lawrence smiles.

VASILKA *She notices.* I like it when you smile.

LAWRENCE Really?

VASILKA How many times have you seen this cartoon?

LAWRENCE I think this is the third time.

VASILKA *Admiringly.* Wow. One more time than me. Do me a favour.

LAWRENCE Just say...

VASILKA Don't look now and then we'll be tied. Look away now.

LAWRENCE *He laughs.* Okay. *And he turns away.* I'm looking away.

VASILKA *Seriously.* Thanks.

Vasilka watches, Lawrence is turned away. A little while passes...

VASILKA *More to herself.* And you laughed at me...

Lawrence looks at her for a second.

Look away!

He obeys her. A few more seconds pass in that way.

LAWRENCE Vasilka.

VASILKA Hmm?

LAWRENCE May I hug you now?

VASILKA *She looks straight ahead.* If you like I can sit on your lap, like I do with my daddy.

LAWRENCE That would be nice.

Vasilka stands and then sits on his lap. Lawrence puts his arms around her waist. He leans his head on her back. Vasilka watches the cartoon.

LAWRENCE How nice you smell...

VASILKA It's mommy's perfume.

Suddenly the projection is interrupted. The lights go on in the theatre, sharp and so intrusive that they pierce the eyes. Vasilka and Lawrence jump apart, more from shock at the sudden change.

Martha appears at the door in back.

MARTHA Vasilka!

Vasilka sees her and runs to her.

VASILKA Mommy! Mommy! You finished early!

She jumps into her mother's arms. The film operator pushes in right behind them. They are standing in such a way that they partially block the entrance. Agitated, he rushes toward Lawrence who is standing and observing mother and daughter.

FILM OPERATOR You pig! You disgusting dog!

LAWRENCE Sorry?

FILM OPERATOR I'll give you sorry! *He can hardly contain his disgust and anger.* I'll give you sorry! *The situation draws in Martha and Vasilka.* Are you not ashamed at all? Is there no pity in your black heart?!!

LAWRENCE I don't know...

FILM OPERATOR Shut up. Shut your mouth before I shut it for you. Molesting that poor little girl like that!!

Martha looks at Vasilka and then at the theatre, and suddenly realizes what is happening. She holds the child by the hand and steps forward

MARTHA What happened here?

FILM OPERATOR That one was molesting your daughter.

VASILKA That's not true.

Martha looks at her daughter and then at the film operator.

FILM OPERATOR What can she know! She was sitting on his lap.

MARTHA *Horrified.* Vasilka!

VASILKA Mommy! *She wants to say something but her mother cuts her off.*

MARTHA You be completely quiet! *She pulls her roughly by the hand.* You should be at home.

FILM OPERATOR Don't you worry. I've already called the police. We've already had some business with this one.

Lawrence is silent, somehow resigned to what is happening. He hardly makes any attempt to defend himself.

LAWRENCE I didn't...

FILM OPERATOR Don't lie! I see what you're up to every day!

MARTHA *Slightly sceptical.* Every day?

FILM OPERATOR *He thrusts his hand into the pocket of Lawrence's overcoat and pulls out a handful of candy.* There it is! You see?! You see?! *He pushes them under Martha's nose as proof.* He lures them with this!

MARTHA Vasilka – did the man give you candy?

VASILKA Yes. Of course. Why? Is it poison?

FILM OPERATOR *Addressing the little girl with a gentle voice.* No, you dear innocent thing, it's not poison. The man gave you candy because he wants something else.

VASILKA Really? What does he want?

Martha kneels beside Vasilka, deadly serious, and looks into her eyes.

MARTHA Vasilka, now you must tell me, did the man touch you at all? *She points to Lawrence.*

FILM OPERATOR *Impatiently.* Did he stroke you, your legs, your thighs...?

Martha stops him with her hand. The film operator is silent.

VASILKA He didn't touch me at all. I touched him!

FILM OPERATOR *Beside himself.* Did he make you do it?! Did he?! *All of a sudden, he hits Lawrence in the face with his fist. Lawrence staggers.* I knew it... *The little girl starts to cry.*

VASILKA *Sobbing.* His moustache, I pulled on his moustache!! I asked him if I could!!

MARTHA *To the film operator.* Are you crazy?!

He only shrugs his shoulders.

VASILKA It's all my fault, my fault, mine... *The words pour out of her.*

MARTHA *Holding her close, comforting her.* It's not your fault, sweetheart. You did nothing wrong. It's we grown-ups who are guilty, since we don't know how to work things out.

Lawrence holds his swelling cheek.

LAWRENCE *Coldly.* May I go now?

FILM OPERATOR Oh, there's no chance of that! You just wait for the police. They'll know what to do with the likes of you.

MARTHA He didn't do anything.

FILM OPERATOR Come now. Don't be so naive. Alone in an empty theatre, he sits beside a child. His pockets are full of candy and he tells her sweet things. Come on. You know what these kind of men do. It makes me sick just to think about it. These are the worst kind! The way they go after children?!

VASILKA He didn't do anything to me!

FILM OPERATOR You should go home and teach her a little bit about such things so she won't be taking candy from strangers anymore. And don't allow her to go to the movies alone.

MARTHA And you should mind your own business! Come on, Vasilka. Let's go. *She pulls her daughter after her.*

FILM OPERATOR *More to himself.* I wouldn't let mine go. But you know what kind of spoiled brats hang around here. I've seen quite a few things through my little window... *He calls after them.* Quite a few things! It makes me blush to talk about it... *Again to himself.* Better that I don't even think about it.

Vasilka follows her mother. She wipes her tears with her sleeve. Lawrence also makes to leave.

Hey! Where do you think you're going?! Come on. I'll take you out the back. They're already here.

The two exit stage left.

VASILKA Mommy! He didn't do anything to me!

MARTHA Come on, sweetheart. *She pulls her along.*

VASILKA *Crying again.* He was nice.

MARTHA I know, I know darling. We'll talk about it at home.

Vasilka resists her mother's pulling.

VASILKA Where are they taking him?

MARTHA To the police station. They're going to ask him some questions.

VASILKA Are they going to put him in jail?!

MARTHA *Nervously. She is losing her patience.* I don't know, Vasilka. This doesn't have anything to do with us anymore. Come on! *She pulls on her hand again.* You're not going to the movies alone again, I'll tell you that.

VASILKA *Crying harder.* Why not?! What am I supposed to do at home alone?!

Martha stops and stares into the girl's eyes and reprimands her.

MARTHA Never again – never!! Do you understand me?!!

There they stand. The girl sulks at her mother. She is about to cry but doesn't out of defiance. Then she speaks in a somewhat more adult manner.

VASILKA Alright mommy. I'll wait at home.

Her mother hesitates as if the voice of the girl has pulled her out of her agitation. Now we see that she is sorry. She looks in the direction where Lawrence ought to be. Vasilka follows her gaze.

He likes cartoons and he thinks I'm funny.

MARTHA *Almost gently.* Come on now. Your father said he'd stop by.

VASILKA *Immediately joyful.* Daddy?!

MARTHA He's coming for his things.

They exit.

SCENE THREE

LAWRENCE, VASILKA

Evening on Rose Hill. The sky is covered with greyish white clouds. The moon shines between the clouds.

Lawrence, as before, drives up on his motorcycle and trailer. He parks in the same place, stretches, and waits awhile. Then he pulls a rolled-up sleeping bag from the trailer, unrolls it, and spreads it out on the grass. He stretches again, though differently this time, as if he is doing some kind of exercise to relax his spine. He sits on the sleeping bag, bends his legs in toward his chest, and puts his arms around them. For some time, he sits like that. Then he plucks a little flower at the edge of the sleeping bag and lies on his back, turning his legs toward the audience. He stares thoughtfully up at the sky. His left leg is bent at the knee and his right carelessly dangles across it.

Now something shifts in the trailer behind him. The canvas rises and the face of Vasilka appears from beneath it. She evaluates the situation with her gaze. Then she slowly climbs out, quietly slipping from the trailer. She stands and looks at the oblivious Lawrence. Then

she makes up her mind and steps toward him. His eyes are closed as she stands directly behind his head. She leans forward and looks at him. Lawrence's eyes are still closed and he does not react. Vasilka looks at him. Then she quietly speaks...

VASILKA Mr. Lawrence...

Lawrence opens his eyes and freezes for a second as if he is wondering if what he is seeing can possibly be real. In an instant, he is on his feet, alarmed.

LAWRENCE Vasilka!!

Embarrassed, she shrugs her shoulders and awkwardly smiles.

LAWRENCE *Completely baffled. What?!! What?!!! He takes a step toward her. He can't believe his eyes. What arelllou?! What?! He looks around to see if maybe this is some sort of practical joke.*

VASILKA *Quietly. Hello Lawrence.*

LAWRENCE *Still quite confused. W-w-what – how??*

VASILKA *I hid underneath. She points at the trailer.*

LAWRENCE *But where did you come from? Where's your mother?*

VASILKA *At work.*

LAWRENCE *To himself. What... I don't understand... How did you find me?*

VASILKA *The police came to our house.*

LAWRENCE *And?*

VASILKA *They asked about you. They told us that I should watch out for you.*

LAWRENCE *They told you right.*

VASILKA *She hurries her words. I eavesdropped. They said you were a scientist and that you often gave children candies at the movies – some kind of astro...*

LAWRENCE *Astronomer.*

VASILKA *Astronomer, yes. She giggles as if in apology. That you come up here to look at the sky and the stars. That you keep your motorcycle behind the graveyard and that you live in an aluminium trailer also behind the graveyard! And I said to myself 'why not'? Why not go and visit you! You didn't do anything to me! And you look at the stars. That's the most interesting thing anybody I've ever met does. All the grown-ups I know go to work – my father's an engineer, my mother works at the clinic... And I thought to myself 'this will be interesting' and I ran like crazy past the graveyard. I was so scared and you weren't there and I just climbed under the canvas...!*

Lawrence stops her with a lifted hand.

LAWRENCE It's alright, it's alright.

VASILKA *She's out of breath and her little chest going in and out.* And now I'm here.

LAWRENCE It's alright. Only...

He runs his fingers through his hair as if something worries him.

VASILKA I'm sorry..

LAWRENCE It's alright.

Silence. Lawrence paces back and forth and thinks, his fist resting on his mouth. Vasilka watches him expectantly. Then in an instant, it appears he has decided what to do.

LAWRENCE I'm going to take you home.

VASILKA *She rushes toward him. She stops about a meter in front of him.* Not yet! Not yet...

Please, please! My mother won't be home until midnight and I'm afraid to be alone.

LAWRENCE I can't, Vasilka.

VASILKA Oh, please, please!

LAWRENCE I can't.

VASILKA Why not?

LAWRENCE People will think bad thoughts if I do.

VASILKA They will not. I wanted to come.

LAWRENCE You're just a child...

VASILKA I am, yes. But all the same, I have some rights.

LAWRENCE *He can't help himself. He laughs.* You really are one of the... *He shakes his head, as if to indicate how clever she is.*

VASILKA And nobody knows. You'll take me home and that will be it. Just a half hour, just a little while. So I can look through your binoculars.

LAWRENCE Telescope.

VASILKA Telescope! What an interesting name. I bet it sees really far. It's so big. Oh please! Please!

LAWRENCE Oh, alright. We'll set it up and then I'll take you home.

He walks up to the trailer and pulls off the canvas. He starts to set up the telescope.

VASILKA Cool!

Lawrence extends the telescope.

VASILKA *Amazed.* Wow. Some trick!

LAWRENCE Come here.

VASILKA I'm coming.

Lawrence lifts her up and sets her down in the trailer behind the telescope.

LAWRENCE Look through here. *He shows her. She looks through the telescope. All the while, Lawrence gently holds her shoulders.*

VASILKA Wow. How many stars. Can I go even closer?

LAWRENCE No, that's the closest.

VASILKA I want to know if someone is looking at me.

LAWRENCE Sorry, that's as close as you can get.

VASILKA And what do you do with... with that... with that computer thing? *She points at the machinery around the telescope.*

LAWRENCE I measure the distance to the moon.

VASILKA Why?

LAWRENCE Do you want me to show you?

VASILKA Yes, yes – please, please! *She is very excited. She claps her hands.*

LAWRENCE Okay. You have to help me. Move a little bit over there. *He shows her what to do. Vasilka does it.*

Lawrence leans across her, connecting the computer equipment and instruments on the trailer. Many small lights are illuminated and two computer screens.

VASILKA *Admiring.* Wow! Pretty lights...

Lawrence straightens up. He looks at the sky. Vasilka is impatient.

What now?

LAWRENCE We are going to direct a strong laser, which is part of the telescope, directly at the moon and precisely measure its position in the universe.

VASILKA *Totally impressed.* Wow. We're going to do that?

LAWRENCE Yes. Are you ready?

VASILKA Yes – definitely yes! I only need to know what I have to do.

LAWRENCE Don't worry... Hold this little lever. *He shows her. Vasilka obediently holds it.* Okay. Are we ready to turn on the laser?

Vasilka nods very seriously. She is completely taut from the importance of the event.

Lawrence begins to turn the controls on the telescope and direct it toward the moon.

LAWRENCE Let's just hope the beam will make it to the moon and back again with no interference. What we need to do is measure how long it takes to get there and back.

VASILKA I don't know how to do that.

LAWRENCE You don't need to do anything. That's why we have a computer.

Vasilka nods as if to say: of course, that's only logical.

LAWRENCE Our target is some simple equipment that astronauts left on the moon thirty-five years ago.

Vasilka strains, looking upward.

VASILKA *More to herself so as not to be embarrassed by saying the wrong thing.*

Which we can't see from here, right?

LAWRENCE *Not looking at her. Checking something on the screen.*

I'm checking the coordinates of the telescope. Okay. *He turns three knobs.* That's done. *Then addressing Vasilka.* When they landed there – it was the Apollo 14 – they left some glass reflectors on the surface of the moon. They look pretty much like ordinary automobile reflectors.

He rummages through the trailer. He shows her a glass reflector that looks like a transparent precious stone. He explains.

You see, it looks like a piece a glass. It's a corner reflector...

Vasilka opens her mouth in amazement.

VASILKA *Amazed.* It's so beautiful.

LAWRENCE It has three sides. *He turns the reflector in front of her.* That's the front side. Light that enters here goes directly through the centre of the reflector. My telescope collects this light and sends it to the moon. Up there are four reflectors of the same type in four different places and our light bounces off of them. Understand?

Vasilka nods unconvincingly.

They reflect the light and send it back to us. This instrument measures everything and the result is shown here. *He points to the computer screen.*

VASILKA I understand.

LAWRENCE This is the last one. *He means the reflector. He adjusts it. Then he directs his attention to her.*

Ready?

VASILKA Yeah. *Her voice can barely be heard. Her mouth has been open in amazement for so long that it is completely dry.*

LAWRENCE What?!

VASILKA *Louder.* Yeah!!

LAWRENCE Okay, then let's do it. Pull the lever.

Vasilka does it. She turns it down. Lawrence immediately corrects her.

Up, up, it has to go up!

VASILKA Oh, sorry...

Vasilka turns it up. She is completely stiff. She waits... waits... what will happen.

VASILKA *Fearfully.* Did I do something wrong?

LAWRENCE No. *He lifts her out of the trailer.* Now you're going home. *And places her on the ground.*

VASILKA *Tears stream down her face.* Did I break something – I broke it, didn't I?!

Completely beside herself. I always ruin everything! That's why Mommy never lets me touch the stove! *She cries loudly.*

Lawrence holds her by the shoulders to calm her down. He practically has to shake her.

LAWRENCE Hey, Vasilka, Vasilka!!! It's okay, it's okay!

She stops and looks at him unbelievably.

You did everything just right. It just takes some time now.

VASILKA *Suddenly she understands.* Aah...

LAWRENCE Yeah. *He nods.*

VASILKA *A little bit disappointed.* That's all?

LAWRENCE *He shrugs his shoulders.* That's all.

VASILKA Nothing... ? *She tries to figure out what else there might be.*

LAWRENCE *He smiles at her.* No fireworks, no fanfare, nothing.

VASILKA What about the laser?

LAWRENCE It's not the kind of thing you can see.

VASILKA So nothing?

LAWRENCE Nothing. After a while the computer will show a number and I'll enter the number into another computer and every so often run comparisons.

VASILKA Why?

LAWRENCE So I can see if the moon has moved away from the earth again.

VASILKA Moved away?

LAWRENCE Yes.

VASILKA It's leaving?

LAWRENCE Yes.

VASILKA It's leaving. *She looks up and then at Lawrence.* But I'd gotten used to it.

LAWRENCE There's nothing to be afraid of. During our lifetime, it'll still be here. It doesn't move that fast. *His mood suddenly changes.* That's enough now. I'm taking you back.

VASILKA *Disappointed.* Already? *Then she is very downcast and quiet and her head droops.* Yeah. Okay.

LAWRENCE Don't be like that. Wasn't I nice?

The girl doesn't answer.

I let you help.

She pouts. Lawrence shrugs his shoulders as if to say: let her pout. He goes to the motorcycle and unhitches the trailer.

LAWRENCE We'll leave the trailer here. *He sees how sad the girl is. She is looking at the ground. Lawrence watches her awhile – he cares and his next words get stuck in his throat a bit...*

We'll go down on the motorcycle.

The girl stands, her head still down. She says nothing.

Have you have ever ridden on a motorcycle?

Vasilka nods silently. Lawrence gets on the motorcycle. Invites her on.

Come on. Sit here in front of me.

She stands with her head down.

What is it?

She stands.

Come on, Vasilka. This isn't going to work.

VASILKA *Sulking and stubborn.* Hah! It's just the opposite.

LAWRENCE What's just the opposite?

VASILKA They want to lock you up because you like little children, but it's just the opposite.

Gets off the motorcycle and steps toward her, interested.

LAWRENCE Who wants to lock me up?

VASILKA I don't understand that. Why would they lock someone up because he likes children? Isn't that nice? Isn't that what people are supposed to do?

LAWRENCE *He gently pats her on the head.* Little girl... What do you know about the world?

VASILKA I know, oh, I know. I know we're supposed to love each other otherwise we'll be sad.

LAWRENCE You're right. That should be enough.

Lawrence stands beside her. He thinks. They linger awhile. Vasilka steps toward the motorcycle.

VASILKA All grown-ups are the same. But I thought you were different. Somebody who likes children so much that he's chased by the police can't be bad. That's what I thought.

LAWRENCE They're not chasing me. *He smiles at her.*

VASILKA And you think I'm funny. *She turns toward the motorcycle.* Well. Help me up now. *She lifts her leg up to the pedal.*

LAWRENCE Wait...

The little girl puts her leg down. Lawrence steps toward her and turns her round. He kneels in front of her. They look into each other's eyes.

Okay. Let's stay a little longer. Just a little. *He points at her.* But this has to be our little secret, alright?

VASILKA *She says excitedly.* Alright, Lawrence, alright. It's so boring at home when Mommy's not there. And anyhow...

LAWRENCE Shh! *He stops her and puts a finger to her lips.* Just for a little while, I said. And not a word to anyone.

VASILKA I won't! *She shakes her head.*

LAWRENCE You understand that I would have troubles if you did?

VASILKA I understand. *Twice more, slowly, with lips pressed together, she shakes her head very seriously to show that she understands.*

LAWRENCE *He stands up.* So, what did you want to do?

VASILKA Can I sit there? *She points to the sleeping bag.*

LAWRENCE You may.

She sits.

VASILKA It's really nice. *She smooths out the sleeping bag.* You can even lie down. *She lies on her back and looks at the sky.* I've never slept in a sleeping bag before.

LAWRENCE *He sits next to her.* How can that be?

VASILKA We've been to the seaside, in a hotel, and once in a bunga... bunga...

LAWRENCE *He helps her.* A bungalow.

VASILKA A bungalow. I always say words again if I don't know them. And then I remember them.

LAWRENCE Smart.

VASILKA *Looks up at the sky again.* I've never been in the mountains. And I've never slept in a tent. I have a little one in my room, but it's more of a toy. I don't have a real sleeping bag. Daddy says we're not cut out for the mountains.

LAWRENCE You know, a sleeping bag is used in a different way.

VASILKA I know. You unroll it, unzip it, and then climb inside...

LAWRENCE And you're like some kind of caterpillar.

VASILKA Caterpillar – ha! I can see that.

LAWRENCE It's nice to sleep outside, in the open.

VASILKA Wow, I bet. I'd like to try it once.

LAWRENCE I'm sure you will.

VASILKA Yeah. *As if she were overcome by a sort of melancholy, her eyes become sad and her mouth extends into a single line. She looks at the sky.*

Silence.

Lawrence lies beside her. They both look at the sky.

LAWRENCE You see, that this is my workshop. Every night my eyes bring life far up there.

VASILKA Aha. So there is life in the universe?

LAWRENCE Of course there is. Aren't we in the universe?

VASILKA Hmm... of course... that makes sense.

Silence. The two reflect.

LAWRENCE For millions of years, the image of a star travels toward us so we can see it.

VASILKA I don't understand.

LAWRENCE The star is so very far away that my gaze has to travel an incredible distance to reach it.

VASILKA Who's travelling now – your gaze or the star?

LAWRENCE You're such a smart little girl. Both probably.

VASILKA And where do they meet?

LAWRENCE Good question. Who knows?

VASILKA So every time you look at the stars or the moon, you meet them too.

LAWRENCE That's right. Your gaze comes to them...

VASILKA And they to you.

LAWRENCE Just so. *He smiles at her.*

VASILKA But... *She thinks seriously, pouting again.*

LAWRENCE But what?

VASILKA What about the stars, the moon, the sun – do they see us? They don't see us. They're not alive. They don't have eyes.

LAWRENCE In my opinion, everything that exists is alive.

VASILKA How can that be?

LAWRENCE It's too complicated for your sweet young mind.

VASILKA No, tell me – please, please! *She pleads with her hands.* Lots of times there is something that I don't understand but at the same that I do understand.

LAWRENCE Now what are you saying to me?! *He laughs.*

VASILKA No, Lawrence, don't joke! I don't know how to say it any other way. I don't know how to put it... *She reflects for a moment...* Some things for example I don't understand but deep inside of me I know how it is, I know how it has to be... it doesn't matter that I don't understand, and anyway I do understand... Hmmm... it's weird but true.

LAWRENCE Oh, Vasilka, I know what you want to say. That's the way it is with all people. There are many things we don't understand, although we do. That's what they call intuition.

VASILKA Intuition?

LAWRENCE Yes. Intuition is when you just sense something. And sometimes you just know that it's that way, even though you can't see it or say it with words.

VASILKA Yes. Exactly! Sometimes your heart knows something, even though everything else makes it seem another way. I, for example, know that my mommy and daddy love each other, even though it doesn't seem so.

LAWRENCE Don't they get along?

VASILKA For a whole year, daddy has lived somewhere else. And yesterday he came to pick up his tools. That's all he had left with us, except for his baseball mitt. I'll never let him have that. Then at least he'll come back. Now they've worked out that he'll have me on Saturdays, that I'll sleep at his house. Tomorrow will be the first time and we'll see how it goes. I can hardly wait. I hid his mitt under the bed and I won't give it back. He doesn't even know I have it. He thinks Mommy hid it from him. To annoy him.

LAWRENCE *He laughs without meaning to, and then grows serious again.* Sorry. I won't laugh anymore.

VASILKA It's alright. I'm happy if I say something funny. I'm usually not very good at that.

LAWRENCE Oh, I think you are.

VASILKA *She shakes her head gravely.* No, I'm not. It's great of you to be so nice, but I'm not. I never know how to tell jokes.

LAWRENCE There's nothing wrong with that. I've never been very good at telling jokes either. Actually, I don't even know any jokes.

VASILKA Me neither. At least I don't remember them now. Paulie, my neighbour, knows lots of them.

Silence.

The moon will be full soon, isn't that right?

LAWRENCE Yes. On Monday.

VASILKA What will it be full of?

LAWRENCE *He laughs.* It's actually full all the time. It's a small round planet, not even that. We often call it a satellite of the Earth. And of course it doesn't even give its own light, just reflects that of the sun. And when the sun pours over its entire hemisphere, as it does every twenty nine and a half days, we see it as full. At those times, the night sky is ten times lighter than during the crescent moon. The crescent moon is when it is very slender, the waning moon when it is becoming slender, the waxing moon when it is becoming big...

VASILKA Uh-huh... Waxing and waning...

LAWRENCE On those nights, every part of the Earth sees the same moon.

VASILKA You mean when it's full?

LAWRENCE Yes, of course. I'm sorry if I confused you.

VASILKA No problem. You're probably not used to explaining those sorts of things to a child.

Lawrence turns away as if what she said pricked him.

VASILKA It's complicated but I understand some of it. Anyhow I only asked because I like the question. I know the moon is not a balloon that you can blow up and make full.

LAWRENCE When I was your age, they used to say that the sun is at work all day and the moon takes its place at night.

VASILKA Somebody has to do it.

LAWRENCE You're perfectly right.

VASILKA And if you teach me how to measure these things then I will be able to take your place. Great minds think alike!

LAWRENCE *He laughs.* Where did you come up with that?

VASILKA I decided for myself. I'm your little moon.

LAWRENCE *With a smile.* No. I mean where did you hear the expression 'great minds think alike'?

VASILKA My father says it.

LAWRENCE So what is it now – is he your daddy or your father?

VASILKA When I like him, he's my daddy. When I don't – which is never... *She smiles at him. Lawrence smiles back.* – Was that funny?

LAWRENCE It was.

VASILKA *Happily.* See, it worked. Actually I love them both – daddy and father. I guess when he is daddy, he is more mine. *She is thoughtful.*

LAWRENCE Well, you're a special little girl and, yes, if you like, you can be my little moon.

VASILKA *Gratefully.* Really? You're so nice. *She hastens to add.* And I will learn everything you teach me very, very quickly. Daddy says I'm very smart.

Lawrence looks at her. She back at him. Then sassily. .

And father thinks so too!

They smile at each other.

Did I tell a joke?

LAWRENCE Yes, I think you did. *He nods to her.*

VASILKA *Cheered by this.* It's not that hard!

LAWRENCE *He smiles at her again. He is captivated by her joy.* You really are sweet!
Vasilka cuddles up to him.

VASILKA Oh, you dear Lawrence. I knew it was true.

LAWRENCE What was true?

VASILKA That you like children.

LAWRENCE *He sighs heavily.* I do, yes. *He removes her arms from around him and steps away. As if something weighs on him. He is turned away from her.*

VASILKA Just so you don't chase me away. Everyone else does. I bother everyone else. Well, not my mommy, though even she loses her temper sometimes. But she has the nicest smile in the world.

Lawrence stands quietly. Vasilka walks to him, holds his hand, and gently asks.

VASILKA And what do you really do in your workshop? *She gestures melodramatically toward the sky.*

A few seconds pass before Lawrence turns and answers. He is still gripped by his dark mood, but tries to hide it.

LAWRENCE I take measurements, I look. Mostly I measure. But above all I like to look. Shall I show you?

VASILKA Yes – please.

LAWRENCE Lie down.

Vasilka lies down. Lawrence next to her. He points up with his hand.

You see, Ursa Minor? That means little bear. We call it the little dipper.

VASILKA Where? There? *She points somewhere with her finger.*

LAWRENCE No. There. *He directs her hand.* You see that curve the stars make, there on the left?

VASILKA *Suddenly enraptured.* Yees – now I see it! *Then a little disappointed.* It doesn't look like a bear.

Lawrence's hand and gaze rest on Vasilka's for a moment. He absently strokes her hand.

VASILKA What are you looking at?

LAWRENCE *Dreaming.* W-w-what? Nothing. Just looking.

VASILKA Looking up.

Lawrence suddenly stands up.

LAWRENCE *Sternly.* Come.

VASILKA Where?

LAWRENCE I'm taking you home. Your mother is probably worried by now.

Vasilka gets to her feet.

VASILKA My mother's not home. But you were very nice. Thank you.

Lawrence looks at her carefully. He thinks she might be making fun of him. But the expression on her face is completely serious.

LAWRENCE Please.

He sits on the motorcycle. He opens his arms to indicate that she should sit between them.

Vasilka steps closer. He lifts her.

Your legs here.

He shows her. She follows. Lawrence starts the motor and they exit.

SCENE FOUR

VASILKA, LAWRENCE, MARTHA, PAUL

Vasilka's apartment.

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Uporaba in reprodukcija besedila brez pisnega dovoljenja avtorja je prepovedana.

A big living room. On the left side, the doorway into the kitchen, on the right the front door, and on the same side in the back corner a small hallway that leads to Vasilka's room on the right side and the bathroom on the left.

Martha, looking worried, steps out of Vasilka's room. The doorbell rings. She stops and looks toward the door. Another short ring and the jiggling of the doorknob. Martha rushes to open the door. Vasilka bursts in. Her mother hugs her.

VASILKA Mommy!

MARTHA Vasilka!

VASILKA Mommy! *She holds her.*

MARTHA Did you go to the movies again! How many times... *Vasilka steps away from her and eagerly interrupts her.*

VASILKA Mommy, you're already home?! *She hugs her again.* Did you finish early? When? *Lawrence appears at the door. Martha had not noticed him.*

MARTHA Vasilka, don't ask me silly questions! *Pulls Vasilka to her.* Who said you could go out of the apartment and leave it unlocked? What if... *She looks at Lawrence.* You?

LAWRENCE *Awkwardly speaks.* I brought Vasilka home.

The mother looks questioningly at her daughter. Vasilka again rushes to explain.

VASILKA Mommy, I could tell you that I met him by chance, that I was home the whole time, and that I only went out five minutes ago for some fresh air – you know how I need fresh air – and that I got lost and ran into Lawrence and asked him to take me home, to your warm arms! *She hugs her even tighter.* But I won't, because I don't want to lie!

Lawrence smiles in the doorway. Martha looks at him, then at her daughter.

MARTHA And I'm supposed to be happy because you're so honest?

VASILKA Yes, mommy, yes – be happy! Be happy! You're so pretty when you're happy! Smile, mommy, smile!

MARTHA *She can hardly keep up with her.* Hey, hey, don't get so excited. You know you're not supposed to!

VASILKA I'm not supposed to, I'm not supposed to. *She says the last words like a grown-up would.* Since when is a person not supposed to be happy?

MARTHA *She smiles at her.* You said that just like your grandfather.

VASILKA Of course! And you smiled. Like you used to with him.

MARTHA Go to the bathroom now and wash up! Then pyjamas and bed!

VASILKA *She rushes out.* I'm going...

MARTHA *After her.* You can have your snack in bed!

VASILKA *From the other room.* O-kaaay!

MARTHA *Looks at Lawrence as if she's forgotten about him.* Oh, I'm sorry... Please come in.

LAWRENCE Thank you. *He enters.*

MARTHA You don't need to take your shoes off. *Martha closes the door after him.* She's happy I'm not angry. *She gestures with a nod toward the room into which Vasilka has disappeared.*

Vasilka's head appears from behind the door.

VASILKA Did Daddy bring my inhaler?

MARTHA No, it wasn't there.

VASILKA Oh. *Her head disappears.*

MARTHA *Then.* That's all we'd need. That he was here and you weren't!

VASILKA *From the bathroom.* There's no towel!

MARTHA *To her.* Coming. *To Lawrence apologetically.* What a mess... *She goes to a cupboard. Speaking to him as she goes, as if she's only now remembered.* Please, sit down.

LAWRENCE You know, I think I'll just...

MARTHA You don't need to feel uncomfortable. Just sit down.

Lawrence reluctantly sits. Martha kneels in front of a cupboard and takes a towel from a drawer. Lawrence pulls a book across the table. Martha stands up, the towel in her hands.

MARTHA I'll just take this to her.

Lawrence nods. She goes to the bathroom from which the sound of water and Vasilka's happy singing can be heard. Lawrence picks up the book and leafs through it. Martha returns.

LAWRENCE *As if to apologize for leafing through the book.* The bible... *He puts it down.*

MARTHA No, go ahead.

LAWRENCE I already know it. *He smiles at her.*

MARTHA *A little scattered.* Of course. Who doesn't?

LAWRENCE When astronauts first orbited the moon in 1968, they read aloud from Genesis. The beginning.

MARTHA Oh, did they? *She nods. She actually doesn't know that. She wants to say something, but she is having difficulty finding the words. Then she starts ...*

You know, I'm a little embarrassed that I let the police drag you away that time.

Would you like a glass of wine? I enjoy one after the evening shift.

She doesn't wait for Lawrence's answer. She goes to the kitchen still talking.

How busy I am during the full moon.

LAWRENCE What do you do?

Martha appears with two glasses and a bottle of red wine.

MARTHA Pardon?

LAWRENCE Where do you work?

MARTHA Oh that. I'm a psychologist at the clinic.

She puts the things on the table. Fills the glasses.

Red's alright?

Lawrence nods.

I only drink red. White wine gives me a headache even if it's the very best wine. Cheers!

LAWRENCE Cheers.

The clink glasses and drink.

MARTHA *She puts the glass down and sighs.* And there's only two of us. People just come and come. I guess because we're at the main clinic, they don't get the feeling they're crazy.

She smiles at him. He back at her. They would be ashamed to go to the mental health ward.

Though we send most of them there eventually. And it's going to be a full moon soon. You can tell right away. *She shakes her head as if she can't quite believe it.* What a madhouse. *She takes another sip.*

Oh god. I really do feel bad about what happened the other day. That film operator's not a bad guy. He's a bit – how can I put it? – simple. It's not my habit to do things by half measures and I guess I was a bit ashamed that I let a child go alone to the movies. And then I reacted the way I did. Now I've changed the rules. But there you go – she went out again tonight.

What should I do? Lock her in?

LAWRENCE She says you come home at midnight.

MARTHA She told you that? Then she pulled your leg.

LAWRENCE I promised to take her home.

MARTHA Oh well, she doesn't really know when I'll be back. It sometimes happens that I stay late for a meeting or something... *She pauses.*

You know, it hasn't been easy for me lately. I don't have anyone to watch her. I'm getting a divorce from her father and he has his own problems. So I have to leave her alone when I

have evening shifts. That's every other week. So she'll be with him on Saturdays. *Vasilka rushes out in her nightgown with a teddy bear under her arm.*

MARTHA Just look at her. My little lover girl.

VASILKA *In her mother's lap. She yawns.* I'm your little lover girl. Do you two know each other?

MARTHA Well, not officially. *She takes Vasilka from her knees, stands and wipes her hands on her skirt, and then offers her hand to Lawrence.* I heard that your name is Lawrence. The police told us.

VASILKA He knows all of that!

MARTHA I'm Martha. Pleased to meet you.

They shake hands. Lawrence is also standing now. He nods shortly and they sit down again.

VASILKA He let me look at the stars!

MARTHA I heard you had some sort of observation point up on Rose Hill.

LAWRENCE For ten years now.

MARTHA *Something occurs to her.* Wait, wait – you were up there?

VASILKA A little bit, just a little bit.

MARTHA How did that happen? *She looks at Lawrence who's about to say something but Vasilka interrupts.*

VASILKA It's not his fault. I hid in his little trailer and then he went up. And since I was already there, he let me look at the stars. And you know what, the stars didn't have any points.

MARTHA How did you even think to do such a thing? You know, you put Lawrence into a very uncomfortable position.

VASILKA But nobody saw me.

MARTHA Nevertheless, you'll have to be punished.

VASILKA Okay Mommy. But I'll go to bed now.

She goes to Lawrence and kisses him on the cheek.

Good night.

LAWRENCE Good night.

MARTHA *She stands up.* I'll get you some bread. *She goes into the kitchen.*

VASILKA *To Lawrence.* Isn't she nice?

LAWRENCE Very.

VASILKA The best mommy. Wait until you see her smile. You'll fall in love with her. *Lawrence smiles.*

VASILKA *Slightly offended.* Oh, you don't need to smile. I meant it very seriously.

Her mother steps out of the kitchen with a slice of buttered bread.

MARTHA There you go, dear. *She hands it to her.* Now get to bed.

VASILKA *She waves her bear at Lawrence.* You see! This is my little bear.

MARTHA Okay, sweetie, enough lingering. *Pushes her on.*

VASILKA *Over her shoulder to Lawrence.* Good night, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE Good night, Vasilka.

Mother and daughter go into Vasilka's room. Lawrence remains seated and calmly regards the room. Suddenly a key jiggles in the lock of the front door. Lawrence looks in that direction. Somebody was trying to unlock the door only to find it already unlocked. Paul enters, Martha's husband. He looks at Lawrence in surprise.

PAUL Who are you?

LAWRENCE *He stands immediately. He is uncomfortable.* I'm Lawrence. *He awkwardly extends his hand to be shaken but the other ignores it.*

PAUL And what are you doing here? *He shakes his head. He cannot understand.*

LAWRENCE I brought your daughter home.

PAUL Did she go out again? But this is awful! Wait, what did you say your name was – Lawrence? But aren't you the one...?

Martha appears.

PAUL *Reproachful.* Martha!

MARTHA *Surprised, she looks from one man to the other.* Paul. Hello. Did you bring the inhaler?

PAUL Yeah, here it is. *He sets it on the table.* It was unlocked. *He is referring to the front door. Martha does not respond. She picks up the inhaler.*

MARTHA *To Paul.* She lost it again. Maybe she doesn't need it anymore. *To Lawrence.* She hasn't used it for a while. But you never know.

An awkward silence. Then Martha turns to Lawrence.

MARTHA Lawrence, Vasilka would like you to read her a story before she goes to sleep.

PAUL *Jealous.* I'll do it! *And he rushes to Vasilka's room.*

VASILKA *A happy voice from the background.* Daddy! Daddy!

LAWRENCE *In haste.* I'd better go...

MARTHA You don't need to.

LAWRENCE It would be better. *He gets ready.*

MARTHA You won't finish your drink? *She gestures to the half empty glass on the table.*

LAWRENCE No, thank you.

Paul appears at the doorway to Vasilka's room.

PAUL Martha. *He shuts the door behind him.*

Lawrence is at the front door. He stands in the frame, holding the door handle.

LAWRENCE Good night. *And he closes it quickly behind him.*

Paul angrily strides toward Martha.

PAUL Would you explain to me what's going on here?

MARTHA Didn't you read her a story?

PAUL Are you completely out of your mind! Who was that?!

Martha is silent.

You let a pedophile into our house!

MARTHA But it's not true!

PAUL What do you mean not true?! You're the one who told me about it – there's more than twenty complaints against him.

MARTHA Then why isn't he locked up?

PAUL *He explodes.* Because they can't prove anything against him! Do you want something to happen to Vasilka so there is proof?!

MARTHA *Also upset.* You can't judge somebody without proof. He's kind and ...

PAUL Now I see that you've completely lost your mind! He goes to watch children's movies, to afternoon matinees and gives candy to children! Does that strike you as normal?

Silence.

Does that strike you as normal? Tell me!!

MARTHA *She bursts into tears.* If you were here, this wouldn't have happened!

PAUL Oh, back to that again? We're talking about the safety of our child, and you want to argue about the two of us!

MARTHA *She collapses into a chair crying.* But I'm alone for everything. *She puts her head in her hands.* I can't do everything...

Vasilka runs from her room.

VASILKA Mommy, Mommy! *Her voice falters and she throws herself against her mother. Her mother embraces her, wiping the tears from her face.*

PAUL *He waves his hands angrily.* Here we go again! How can we ever talk!

Martha carries the little girl back to her room. She strokes her head. Vasilka appears to be glued to her. She pushes her head as far as she can into the crook of her mother's neck. They disappear through the door. Paul continues to gesture as if to say that this cannot be believed. He is still angry. Martha comes out of Vasilka's room.

MARTHA *She is trembling as if she can barely contain herself... Go now, Paul.*

PAUL What is this?

MARTHA You're right. There's no sense in quarrelling. You no longer live here and you no longer have any say in what happens here.

PAUL She's my daughter!

MARTHA You decided for a different life. Tomorrow is Saturday and she will stay with you. Try to teach her something useful.

PAUL That's not how this is going to end...

MARTHA Goodbye, Paul.

Something in her voice tells Paul that he has no choice but to obey. But he stands there for a second with conflicting intentions, before he finally turns and heads angrily toward the door. He opens it and turns...

PAUL If anything happens to her...

MARTHA Goodbye. *And she also turns and heads toward Vasilka's room. Paul slams the door behind him.*

For a while, only silence in the room.

Darkness.

SCENE FIVE

LAWRENCE, MARTHA

A beautiful sunny afternoon on Rose Hill. Lawrence stands in front of his trailer. He holds his hand in front of his eyes to block the sun and gazes into the distance. Soon Martha appears from the side, out of breath. She is pushing a bicycle.

MARTHA *She calls to him from a distance.* Good lord. I didn't think it would be so difficult! *She approaches him.* When I was younger, it didn't seem so steep! Hello. *She cheerfully offers her hand. They shake hands. Both are somehow more relaxed than last time.*

LAWRENCE What brings you up here? People rarely come.

MARTHA Maybe I came to see you.

He looks at her amazed.

If that doesn't bother you.

LAWRENCE Of course, it doesn't bother me. Here, I'll do it.

He helps her put the stand down on her bicycle.

I'll just lean it here. He leans it against his motorcycle.

MARTHA Thanks.

LAWRENCE Any time. Will you sit down? *He offers her a space on the unfolded sleeping bag.*

MARTHA Thanks. *She sits, takes off her backpack, and rests it by her feet.* Ah, I keep thanking you. I must sound silly.

LAWRENCE Not at all. You're just polite.

MARTHA I don't know about that. I wasn't so polite yesterday. I never do the right thing with you. I shouldn't have let you leave.

LAWRENCE Did you have problems yesterday?

MARTHA Not really. My hus... *She pauses, having difficulty finding the words.* My soon-to-be ex-husband – always upsets me.

LAWRENCE Did you come here to apologize?

MARTHA A little bit. Yes. *She smiles at him, he at her.*

LAWRENCE That will make Vasilka happy.

MARTHA What?

LAWRENCE By the way, where is she?

MARTHA At her father's. She spends Saturdays with him. Sleeps over too.

LAWRENCE Oh, yes. You mentioned that.

MARTHA And then I remembered that my behaviour last night was not very hospitable and I thought that I would find you and give you this. *She reaches into her backpack and pulls out a bottle of wine and hands it to him.* Red! Same as last night. Not the same bottle. The same kind. My co-worker has relatives down by the seaside and she often brings me a bottle. It's good. You'll like it.

LAWRENCE I liked it last night. Well, thank you. *He takes the bottle and sets it down carefully. He stands and walks to the trailer.*

MARTHA *Going after him, a little bit faster as if she is embarrassed.* I looked for your trailer and your motorcycle behind the cemetery. They weren't there, so I figured you had come up here. And then I thought nothing would be wrong with a little bit of exercise. I filled the bicycle tires with air. You came up early today...

LAWRENCE *He looks for something in the trailer.* Sometimes I come early. Especially if it's a nice day.

MARTHA It is that. *She takes in the view with her gaze.*

He takes two glasses from the trailer. He walks back to her. She sees what he has brought.

MARTHA Oh, glasses! Wonderful! I have an opener. *She takes it from her bag and shows it.*

LAWRENCE I have one too. *He smiles and shows his. She puts hers away while he opens the bottle.*

MARTHA I'll just help myself. It's for me, isn't it? *She takes a glass.*

He nods.

From now on, Saturday will be my day. Paul, my husband, has Vasilka for the first time since we've separated – he's never had her before. Everything is so unspoken, if you know what I mean. A person can't get used to everything right away. *She pauses. It looks as if a bitter memory has interrupted her thought.* It's not that simple.

LAWRENCE No, it's not.

A moment of silence. He deals with the bottle.

MARTHA It's not that I won't miss Vasilka, but this will now be, thank god, my one free, really free day. I don't know what I'll do, but this one started well.

There's a 'pop!' when Lawrence pulls the cork from the bottle. He pours them wine.

LAWRENCE There you go.

MARTHA Thanks.

They hold their full glasses. Lawrence carefully sets down the bottle.

MARTHA Before you said that that will make Vasilka happy – what will?

LAWRENCE Your smile. She says it's the most beautiful smile in the world.

MARTHA Go on. *She's embarrassed.*

LAWRENCE And she's right.

MARTHA Cheers, Lawrence!

LAWRENCE Cheers, Mrs. Singer!

MARTHA How did you know my name is Singer?

LAWRENCE: I saw it on the door.

MARTHA Yes, of course. *She smiles.*

They toast. They drink while they're talking.

MARTHA: We should use first names with each other. This formal address between people who like each other is silly.

LAWRENCE Alright.

MARTHA I'm Martha Singer, and you? *She offers her hand again.*

LAWRENCE Lawrence, as you know.

MARTHA Just Lawrence?

LAWRENCE Just Lawrence.

MARTHA Why so mysterious?

LAWRENCE There's no mystery. *He opens his hands.* This is me.

MARTHA Vasilka says you're an astronomer.

LAWRENCE Yes, I am.

MARTHA And that you measure the distance to the moon. How long have you been doing that?

LAWRENCE Ten years.

MARTHA And who pays you for that?

LAWRENCE No one anymore.

MARTHA No one? How do you live?

LAWRENCE Like this.

Silence.

Studying the moon a little.

MARTHA And what do you want to find out? *Teasing.* If there's life there?

LAWRENCE There is.

MARTHA *Very surprised.* You think there is?

LAWRENCE As long as I'm there every night, there is.

Martha reflects.

MARTHA I guess you're right. Though I can't come to the essence of it. Still it seems somehow logical.

LAWRENCE A logical illusion?

MARTHA Yes. Just like an optical illusion.

LAWRENCE Hm-mm. There are probably many kinds of illusions.

MARTHA I'm sure there are.

LAWRENCE It's part of a project that is called Apollo. Nobody in the field even knows that the project continues but that's not so important.

MARTHA May I have some more? *She puts down her glass.*

LAWRENCE Of course.

He pours for her and for himself.

MARTHA Thanks. *She takes a sip.* You know, I did my homework before I came here. I surfed the Internet for information about the moon.

LAWRENCE So you read that the moon is getting farther away from the Earth.

MARTHA Something like that, yes.

LAWRENCE By 3.8 centimetres each year.

MARTHA That much?

LAWRENCE Yes.

MARTHA That's not very much.

LAWRENCE That's what I'm measuring.

MARTHA Why?

LAWRENCE Somebody has to.

MARTHA I suppose... Somebody has to do everything. But aren't you wasting your time?

She smiles at him and then thinks. Lawrence looks at her, drinks. Martha suddenly blurts out.
What is it? Are you in love with the moon or what? Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't mean it like that...
She's embarrassed.

LAWRENCE Never mind. *He smiles.* People can be in love with all sorts of things. With ideas, with nature...

MARTHA Or with each other. That's the biggest illusion.

LAWRENCE Well, well. So bitter.

MARTHA I'm sorry... Oh, again this sorry. I only apologize to you.

LAWRENCE And thank me.

MARTHA Yes. *She thinks, then...* I don't even know how to speak normally anymore. I communicate with so few people. Just a few friends and colleagues. With them, it's routine – like brushing my teeth – you understand, right?

LAWRENCE I understand.

MARTHA I don't even want to get to know new people. You're the first... *She goes silent, because she realises she is probably saying too much.*

LAWRENCE *He rushes in.* Just don't say you're sorry to me again!
They smile at each other. After a moment...

MARTHA *A little playfully.* Thank you.
They smile again.

LAWRENCE *As if to change the subject and relax the situation.* Once we were really in love with the moon. Crazy in love.
She tilts her head and listens.

The moon was our obsession, our great desire. It was the end of the sixties and the Russians and Americans were competing – who could get there first. It was a question of national prestige. That's when the Apollo project was started.

MARTHA I remember. It was an American who did it. Armstrong...

LAWRENCE June 16, 1969, Apollo 11. *He looks dreamily up at the sky.* That was a rare moment that united the whole world.

MARTHA *Her gaze is also drawn to the sky.* Sometimes I think it would be good if we were attacked by extraterrestrials. Humans would unite against them. Everybody would become important again, every child would become a soldier to preserve humanity. Nobody would die of hunger. Wealth would mean nothing if we were threatened with annihilation.

LAWRENCE You're right. It was sort of like that back then. Everyone in the world looked up in the sky and knew that somebody was sleeping up there on the moon, somebody like himself, a part of our time and history.

MARTHA That must have been a wonderful feeling.

LAWRENCE It was. Wonderful. *Silence. Then with new energy...* They did so much to reach their goal. A fifth of the annual budget went into the space program. Four-hundred thousand people worked on the moon program. Kennedy made a promise and they had to keep the promise. To the world.

MARTHA And beat the Russians. Well, great, at least something good came out of the Cold War.

LAWRENCE But then after six landings, we lost interest and the moon began to bore us again. It became just a dull mass of gray stone again.

MARTHA Only you, the incurable romantic, remained faithful.

LAWRENCE I was only about five years old back then. I didn't even know what it was all about. For me astronauts were like some kind of cowboys, explorers of the universe – the new wild west. Now I'm the last remaining piece of the magnificent Apollo program that put nearly thirty people on the moon and circled it countless times.

MARTHA The last astronomer. What do you actually do with that thing there? *She shrugs toward the trailer. While he was talking, she had filled their glasses again. The effects of the wine can already be seen.*

LAWRENCE This is one of the last offshoots of that feverish time. It's a laser measuring device, the last of three in the world. That's all that's left of the Apollo project. Most people think there's nothing left. But it's not true. I still collect data for scientists all over the world. They still need me though they have forgotten all about the Apollo and what it meant.

MARTHA And who needs this information?

LAWRENCE Oh, various people. *He points toward the moon.* It's retreating you know. Or as your wise daughter says: it's leaving. And when it is completely gone, we will have lost one of the most magnificent shows of nature.

MARTHA And what is that?

Lawrence stands, overcome with emotion...

LAWRENCE The total solar eclipse.

Excitedly walks up and down. The moon is exactly 400 times smaller than the sun and at the eclipse it is exactly 400 times closer to the Earth than the sun. This astonishing, unbelievable

coincidence causes the moon to cover the sun, and at that moment, the two appear to be exactly the same size. *He explains to her.* We live in one of the rare historical eras of our galaxy when it is possible to see such a unique event. When the moon moves away from the Earth, this magical event, which for centuries has aroused man's fear and respect and taught us humility before natural forces, will no longer occur.

MARTHA Aren't they talking about a solar eclipse this Monday?

LAWRENCE Not Monday, Tuesday. And I'll be here with my equipment!

MARTHA This isn't everything? You have more?

LAWRENCE *Still excited.* Yes, no, – well, I mean I'll be ready. And you know what else is unique this time around?

MARTHA No, I wouldn't know. *She is not making fun of him, and indeed feels a little embarrassed that she doesn't know.*

LAWRENCE It will be a full moon. The day after tomorrow, that is the day before the eclipse, on Monday, it will be a full moon. And then on Tuesday, the solar eclipse! Isn't that amazing? It's the first time in seven hundred years that the two events have been so close to each other. It's a unique phenomenon. *They look at each other. Lawrence is utterly carried away. She doesn't know what to say. He sits beside her. They look at each other. She doesn't turn away. She wants to say something but can't bring herself to say it. Finally she gathers the courage.*

MARTHA *Looks at him seriously.* I tell you Mr. Lawrence – I don't know what do with you.

LAWRENCE The formal again?

MARTHA I don't know... *She bends her head and leans against him.* I don't know... *Lawrence doesn't react.*

MARTHA *She looks at him.* Vasilka, my Vasilka, asked me if she can come up here with you sometimes. She wants to see the full moon. It might be completely inappropriate. It might also seem ridiculous to you. But at the moment, it is what my daughter wants more than anything else in life. And I can give her so little ... *She sadly bends her head.*

LAWRENCE She can always come here. She can sleep here if she likes. I often stay until morning. That's if you trust me, of course.

MARTHA Trust you? I asked her what you two did. Sorry, just a mother's concern. And... *She stands up.*

LAWRENCE What?

MARTHA You're good with her. Children need to be treated as equals. *She moves closer to him again.* I understand why she wants to be here.

Their lips are very close to each other.

LAWRENCE *He actually doesn't know what to do, but her closeness somehow intoxicates him...*

Hmm...

MARTHA Do you want to kiss me?

They look at each other. She brings her lips closer.

MARTHA *She sighs.* Kiss me...

Darkness.

SCENE SIX

MARTHA, PAUL

The apartment.

It's dark. Unlocking of the door. Someone is sitting on the couch. Martha enters and turns on the light. We see that it is Paul on the couch. He is nervous.

MARTHA *Surprised.* What are you doing here? *She flinches...* Did something happen to Vasilka...?

PAUL No. She's sleeping in her room.

MARTHA What is it? *She puts her keys on the table, fumbling slightly.*

PAUL You're drunk.

MARTHA That's none of your business. What is it?

PAUL Your child had an attack.

MARTHA My child? Since when is she mine? Isn't she ours?

PAUL You're drunk and dumb.

MARTHA Thanks. Then I must turn you on. Did you come here to fuck me?

PAUL *He jumps angrily to his feet, right beside her.* Martha! Watch your mouth!

MARTHA *Into his face.* What should I watch? Are you threatening me?
She turns away and takes her shoes off.

PAUL Vasilka hasn't had an attack for more than half a year.

MARTHA What are you trying to say?

PAUL I'm wondering what's happening? If you're taking care of her?

MARTHA Let me refresh your memory, dear – my, MY – not our daughter – hasn't had an attack for exactly eleven months, three weeks, and several hours. Exactly since the time that you moved out.

PAUL Except for tonight.

MARTHA Except for tonight. *She comes right up to him and speaks in his face.* I'm wondering what's happening? If you're taking care of her?

He pushes angrily away from her.

PAUL You should be ashamed of yourself. Where have you been?

Martha laughs loudly. She really is a bit drunk.

What are laughing at?

MARTHA Why would that interest you? Have you changed your mind for some perverse reason?

PAUL Maybe.

MARTHA *Exaggerating.* Oh-ho-ho! What have we here? The repentant sinner who suddenly decides he likes home sweet home. Did your little blonde change her hair colour?

PAUL Don't be sarcastic. We'll talk in the morning.

MARTHA I'm not sarcastic. I'm drunk, remember? And if you'd really like to know, I had a great time today!

They look at each other. She waits for the effect of her words. He restrains himself.

Martha mockingly imitates his tone. Is that what we going to talk about tomorrow? Your repentance?

Paul steps right up to her. He is so angry he can barely contain himself. He almost hisses.

PAUL We'll talk about it tomorrow, I said.

MARTHA *She yells into his face.* We have nothing to say to each other. For some perverse reason you started to get laid well and you started to like it! And now that's become...

He angrily lunges at her. He's completely lost his temper. His hands are fists. She screams. ...more important than the happiness and future of your daughter! And now all of a sudden you pretend to care about her?

A second passes as he looks at her... Then he hits her.

She moans.

Darkness.

SCENE SEVEN

LAWRENCE, VASILKA

Lawrence with his motorcycle and trailer behind the cemetery. A box of tools at his feet and some tools around him on the ground. He is working on the motorcycle.

Vasilka runs up. Face swollen from crying, she rushes up to him and hugs him round the waist. She is bitterly crying. Lawrence stands up immediately.

LAWRENCE Vasilka, Vasilka – what is it?

VASILKA My heart was wrong!

LAWRENCE *He kneels down beside her.* Wait. I'll wipe your tears. *He wipes her tears, but she continues sobbing.* Why was your heart wrong?

VASILKA It doesn't know anything, anything! It just lies to me!

LAWRENCE *He lifts her into his arms and strokes her hair.* Come now, come, what does that mean? You don't need to cry like this.

VASILKA My father doesn't like my mother.

LAWRENCE Of course, he does.

VASILKA If he did, he wouldn't have hit her.

LAWRENCE *Surprised.* Hit her? He actually...? *He puts Vasilka down and thinks.*

VASILKA With his fist. So she bled.

LAWRENCE When? She was with me yesterday.

VASILKA She was with you? She didn't tell me that. I came home with Daddy because I forgot my inhaler – I had an attack – and she wasn't home. Then Daddy said that we would wait for her. She came late and they started to argue right away. More and more... *Her chest rises and falls from the upset.* And then, and then .. *She takes a deep breath so she can talk.*

LAWRENCE *He hugs and comforts her.* It's alright, it's alright...

VASILKA I didn't see it. I heard it. And then I ran out. Oh, Daddy was so sorry! I've never seen him like that... I couldn't take it. I came to see you as soon as I could...

LAWRENCE That was the right thing to do, the right thing... *He strokes her hair.* Calm down.

VASILKA This is where she was bleeding. *She holds a finger to her face. She sobs into Lawrence's collar. Sobs some more. He strokes her soothingly. When she is calm, he moves her away.*

LAWRENCE Hmm... Better now? *Vasilka looks at him through her tears, waiting for his words.* Grown-ups sometimes do bad things, and not always on purpose. Now blow your nose and come with me. *He gives her a tissue and she blows her nose.* And no more crying. *She follows him to the trailer from which he takes a painted tin box from under the canvas.*

VASILKA What's that?

Lawrence opens the box. He takes out a photograph and gives it to Vasilka.

Who's that?

LAWRENCE My family.

VASILKA *She stares into the picture.* Your children... they could be my brothers.

LAWRENCE Vasilka! *As if she's exaggerating..*

VASILKA *Pouting.* Well, they could play with me. Where are they now?

LAWRENCE New Zealand.

VASILKA New Zealand? Is that far away?

LAWRENCE Oh, and how.

VASILKA Why aren't you with them? *Rushes to continue.* I mean I'm glad you're here, but if they're yours, you should be with them.

LAWRENCE *Sighs.* I know, yes. *Gently takes the picture from her and looks at it.*

VASILKA *Matter of factly.* Well, my daddy is also mine, and he's not with me.

I'd like to have a brother. *She raises her shoulders to show how great that would be. Then something else in the box attracts her attention.*

VASILKA What else do you have there? *She wants to look.* You have another picture ...

LAWRENCE *He closes the box.* Garbage. I should have thrown it away long ago. *He goes back to the trailer to return the box.*

VASILKA Will you show me that other picture? The one underneath?

Lawrence looks at her curiously.

It looked interesting. Please!

LAWRENCE *He steps back to her.* It's just a photograph of the surface of the moon.

VASILKA The surface of the moon? Don't give me that crap!

LAWRENCE How you talk!

VASILKA Sorry. That's what Paulie says when Mommy tells him to go home.

LAWRENCE Paulie, your neighbour, right?

VASILKA Yeah. Paul is his real name, just like my dad. We play together a lot. But he's babyish, even though he's a year older than me. *Lawrence smiles.* I said something funny again. *She looks at Lawrence. In a special way. He notices this.*

LAWRENCE What is it?

VASILKA *Openly admiring.* You have such a nice smile.

Lawrence pauses. He doesn't know what to say. After a while...

LAWRENCE You really think so?

VASILKA *She nods.* It's so nice when people smile! *Excited.* I wish people would always smile. Only smile. Boy, am I sorry I don't know how to tell jokes. I'd tell them all day long and listen to people laugh. *She suddenly and warmly hugs him.* I like you so much because you smile at me. Nobody else smiles and laughs like that. Mommy used to, but lately I can't do anything right. *She moves away from him and tells him.* You and Mommy have the most beautiful smiles in the world! *She stops gushing.* Now please show me that picture so I won't be sad. I've never seen the surface of the moon.

LAWRENCE *Pretending to be fed up.* Yeah, yeah – I don't want you to be sad. *He goes to the trailer.* You've probably already seen it on television but you just didn't know it.

VASILKA I like watching television, though I don't remember seeing anything like that. *Lawrence returns with the larger photograph. He hands it to Vasilka.*

LAWRENCE Here.

VASILKA *She takes it and looks.* Wow... That's the moon?

LAWRENCE The surface of the moon. *He points.* You see, here on the ground the kind of reflectors like the one I showed you...

VASILKA The ones that collect the light and then bounce it back.

LAWRENCE Exactly. These are the ones that reflect it. The team of Apollo 14 fixed it. And this, here next to it – *he points with his finger* – is a trash bag that those dirty astronauts left behind on the moon.

VASILKA *She leans in closer and looks carefully.* Oh, it's true!

LAWRENCE *Beside himself.* Five years of extreme training and they didn't learn how to throw their garbage away!

Vasilka looks at him amazed.

VASILKA You sure are mad!

LAWRENCE Of course, I am! And every day all over again! Can you imagine?! We brought our garbage up there! *He gestures toward the moon.* It drives me crazy! What! Should we put a dump on the moon! *Still agitated.* They probably brought the reflectors up in those bags.

VASILKA You know what, Lawrence, I've made up my mind.

LAWRENCE What?

VASILKA I'm going to be an astronaut one day. I want to go to the moon.

Lawrence first looks at her in surprise and then laughs.

It's not funny.

LAWRENCE I'm sorry. Actually I'd be very happy if you succeeded.

VASILKA I will. Believe me. When I really want something, I succeed. And right now, I solemnly promise that I'm going to bring those bags down.

LAWRENCE Now that would be nice. *He hugs her.* I was starting to lose any hope. And you won't leave any garbage up there?

VASILKA No way. And I'm going to say that in my first interview so everybody will know what we did wrong.

LAWRENCE Smart. Soon the Chinese will send a man to the moon and I'm not sure they know.

VASILKA Chinese? Really? I didn't know they were that cool.

LAWRENCE Their astronauts are called taikonauts.

VASILKA Taiko – what? Funny! *She smiles.*

LAWRENCE Taikonauts. The Russians called their cosmonauts.

VASILKA I've heard that. Wow! Taikonauts. *Suddenly she is overwhelmed by a wave of tenderness. She hugs Lawrence, wrapping her arms around his waist.* If I didn't have you now, I think my heart would break.

LAWRENCE Vasilka, don't exaggerate.

VASILKA I'm not exaggerating. Even though you didn't read me a story the other night.

LAWRENCE Your father did. *He quickly corrects himself.* Your daddy!

VASILKA You can call him my father since he's argued with Mommy. Because of you. *Silence. Lawrence seems uncomfortable. He changes the subject.*

LAWRENCE They'll be a solar eclipse on Tuesday.

VASILKA Really?! Can I watch with you? I'll ask Mommy to let me stay up all night!

LAWRENCE Pumpkin. How will you watch a solar eclipse at night?

VASILKA What do you mean how? Here. With you.

LAWRENCE *He smiles.* There is no solar eclipse at night, smarty pants!

VASILKA Oh yeah, because there's no sun.

LAWRENCE Bravo!

VASILKA Then we'll watch the full moon tomorrow night.

LAWRENCE We will, if you get permission.

The sound of an automobile horn.

VASILKA *She flinches and looks in that direction.* It's Daddy. Oh, he's going to be mad.

LAWRENCE *Frowning.* You didn't tell anybody where you were going again?

VASILKA No. Mommy thinks I'm at Paulie's.

LAWRENCE Run over there, so he won't come over here.

VASILKA Goodbye Lawrence! *She pulls him down by his sleeve and kisses his cheek. Runs off saying.* Thanks for the company!

He looks after her. Waves.

LAWRENCE *To himself.* Any time my little moon... any time...

SCENE EIGHT

MARTHA, LAWRENCE, VASILKA

Apartment. Martha sits and watches TV. She has a glass of red wine in front of her. The bell rings. Once. A short ring. Martha goes to open it. It's Lawrence.

MARTHA *Pleasantly surprised.* Oh, Lawrence!

LAWRENCE Hi. *He's a little bit uncomfortable.* I didn't want to ring long enough to wake Vasilka. She's asleep, right?

MARTHA Of course. Come on in.

Lawrence enters.

You didn't go up today?

LAWRENCE No, not today. Maybe I'll go later.

MARTHA Well, you certainly won't miss the full moon tomorrow. Sit down. Will you have something? I'll go get you a glass of wine.

LAWRENCE *He sits down.* No thanks. I won't have anything.

MARTHA I'm already... *She gestures with her glass and awkwardly smiles at Lawrence. She takes a sip and puts down her glass. A pleasant surprise... that you came... An embarrassed silence.*

LAWRENCE Yes... *He wrings his hands.*

Silence.

MARTHA You really won't have anything?

LAWRENCE No, really. Thanks. *He turns and looks toward Vasilka's room. She's sleeping, right?*

MARTHA Sleeping, sleeping. Like a lamb. Once she's asleep, she never wakes up.

Silence.

I was thinking about you.

LAWRENCE Oh yeah? *His reaction seems over sensitive.*

MARTHA Yes. There's nothing wrong with that, is there?

LAWRENCE No. Nothing wrong.

MARTHA The police had taken you away from that theatre twice before. Thursday was the third time.

LAWRENCE Of course, you know everything.

MARTHA I know. I don't need to ask. That sort of thing gets around fast. You don't bother going to the big multiplexes.

LAWRENCE They have security guards. *He smiles at her.*

MARTHA I don't think they'd let you in anymore.

He smiles at her and shrugs his shoulders as if to say: you got me.

MARTHA It's not a joke, Lawrence. If they don't send you to jail, somebody around here is going to do something to you. People know about you. If you weren't a scientist, they wouldn't tolerate it. There have been too many incidents during the last ten years.

LAWRENCE What are you trying to say?

MARTHA What? Just that I'm worried for you.

LAWRENCE There's no need.

MARTHA Oh, Lawrence... *She sighs heavily, because she actually doesn't know how to tell him that things are beginning to look very bad for him. Slowly... cautiously...*

Why do you try to make contact with children?

LAWRENCE Because I like them.

MARTHA You miss your own? Vasilka told me that you have a wife and two sons in New Zealand.

LAWRENCE *Surprisingly harsh.* No, I don't miss them.

Martha senses the walls going up. Silence. Then Lawrence continues with a changed voice, as if he regretted his previous harshness.

Children are the only pure beings. We adults have been damaged by time and experience that should have ennobled us, but in fact experience just teaches us to live in the world of grown-ups. The truth is there is no such thing as a grown-up. We just made up the idea so we could take responsibility and have children and procreate, get food and all the rest. But in reality, we never grow up. I distinctly remember the moment when I first became aware of myself. I don't know – maybe it was the fifth, maybe the seventh grade. I suddenly became aware of myself, of my position in the world, and the possibilities of me influencing that world. And since the time I understood that and I first starting to observe myself, I haven't changed at all, not inside. When I was twenty, thirty, forty years old, I've always had the same soul, from the moment I became aware of it. Maybe I know more now, but I haven't changed. I still look at the world with the same curiosity, I still breathe the same way. Experience has only taught me how to become what I want.

MARTHA And what do you want? To be a recluse your whole life?

LAWRENCE Nobody grows up. That's why people as they grow old are so similar to children. They're no longer driven, they don't need to prove themselves.

MARTHA So according to this logic, you think of children as a symbol of something that might be called the pure spirit?

LAWRENCE You could call it that.

MARTHA You could have been a psychologist.

LAWRENCE I could have been many things.

MARTHA You don't like films for adults?

LAWRENCE Sure I like them. I don't like happy endings.

MARTHA Isn't that something we need?

LAWRENCE Shall I tell you the truth?

MARTHA Go ahead.

LAWRENCE I feel sad when there's a happy ending.

MARTHA Lawrence, what happened to you? Why do you keep measuring the distance of the moon when nobody is interested in it anymore? I asked around and nobody has any interest in the Apollo program, let alone in your measurements. They've developed advanced instruments and can get that kind of information in less than a second: not only the position of the moon, but of all the other planets in the solar system. The magnificent Apollo program is just a part of history now. I want to know who are these scientists who are so interested in your measurements since they can easily get them browsing the internet.

LAWRENCE I'm interested.

MARTHA You can't live like that!

LAWRENCE I'm happy up there.

MARTHA But it's an escape.

LAWRENCE What kind of escape? To where? *Convincingly.* Home... just home.

MARTHA You could have been such a wonderful person.

Lawrence looks at her in astonishment. She realizes what she said and hurries to correct it...

I didn't mean it that way. You are wonderful. But tell me something. I want to know why after all these years you do this. Where did you get the equipment, the trailer and everything?

He doesn't answer. They look at each other.

LAWRENCE Can I tell you something?

MARTHA Go ahead.

LAWRENCE You know, up there, is our only chance to do something right. It's too late down here. Everything has become too complicated.

MARTHA Oh, Lawrence. *Inspired she rushes forward to embrace him. Lawrence flinches and retreats.*

She looks at him, wondering what's wrong.

LAWRENCE Your husband came to see me.

MARTHA Paul? When?

LAWRENCE This afternoon. First he came for Vasilka and then he came back. That's why I'm here now. I didn't want Vasilka to know so I waited until she fell asleep. I stood below and waited until the light in her room went out.

MARTHA Oh, Lawrence... *Gently. She wants to approach him again.*

LAWRENCE No – wait, let me finish... *He takes a step away from her.* Today, for the first time in ten years, I didn't go up.

Silence.

MARTHA What did he want?

LAWRENCE He was polite. He didn't bother me at all about the... about... *Significant silence.*

MARTHA The report?

LAWRENCE The report, yes.

MARTHA You know, I had nothing to do with that.

LAWRENCE I know, Martha, I know. But that's not what matters. He wants you back. I don't know what you told him about us – well, there's not much to tell – but he came to ask me not to interfere with his family anymore.

MARTHA *Angrily.* How dare he...

LAWRENCE But he's right.

MARTHA What do you mean, right? How can he be right – I ask you? He should think about what I've been through during the last year! And now he wants his family back?! As if it were something you flick away with your finger and then you get back! That man has no idea what he's doing to us!

LAWRENCE Calm down, Martha. He also told me about your job.

MARTHA *She senses something.* What did he tell you about my job?

LAWRENCE That you have to do a psychological profile on me.

She is completely flushed, embarrassed that he knows this.

MARTHA Lawrence... *She doesn't know what to say.*

LAWRENCE It's alright, Martha. You don't need to say anything.

MARTHA Lawrence, I'm so sorry. It was just a wild coincidence that I got your case.

LAWRENCE That's probably why you came yesterday.

MARTHA It's true.

LAWRENCE And I thought...

MARTHA You were right to think...

LAWRENCE I wasn't right to think that. I simply never think right. You came up to see if I'm really crazy. *He turns and wearily moves away. Then he turns back to her.* To see if I'm a criminal.

MARTHA *She takes a step toward him.* Wait, Lawrence.

He waits...

Look, it's what fate determined, not me.

LAWRENCE I don't mind...

MARTHA No, wait. I need to tell you. I started to get interested in you when you brought Vasilka home. I admit it started even before then, at the movies. But then it was more as an unusual man, someone with character. You were so silent and dignified despite the old man's accusations. I felt right away that you couldn't be guilty. And when we met the second time, here, I already knew something about you – by a strange coincidence I got your file and I arranged for you to be assigned to me.

LAWRENCE *He smiles.* You arranged it?

MARTHA I know that probably sounds kind of weird to you. If they knew that I took on a case that involved my daughter, they would probably fire me. You know, conflict of interest, and all that...

LAWRENCE Why didn't you tell me?

MARTHA I intended to...

Her head drops. She is sorry. Silence. After a while, she lifts her head and looks at him seriously. I liked you. I'll tell you completely honestly. You're so different from anyone else I know. I knew I liked you from the moment I met you. I've been so very unhappy for the last year and I always had to hide it from Vasilka. I'm a psychologist and I know what it means for a person to live in such a condition, how sensitive you are to every outside impulse, how you can make up things, fantasize...

She pauses. She sits down on the couch. She looks straight ahead. He stands and says nothing. Then she lifts her head, as if she is emerging from her previous mood and begins to speak matter of factly...

MARTHA Yes, I admit it. I have to write up your psychological profile. For the police. We often do that for them when they ask. I even earn some money for it. Though I am not required to talk to you or get in contact with you. That was what I wanted. I didn't want to hide anything from you. I would go back up on your hill anytime. You know why? Because you strike me as the only person I know with a goal. With a real goal – a goal that isn't just getting a promotion at your job, a better car, a bigger house, more self-confidence. A goal that doesn't mean success in your life, but some sort of success in yourself. Yes, that's what makes you what you are – this success you carry inside of yourself. It's like a medicine for me, like plaster on a wound. Because I don't have that. It's too deeply rooted in me, this need to look at others, to the opinion of others, for the success that in this day and age, defines us. It must be your childish spirit that you were talking about.

LAWRENCE And now you've decided that you were mistaken about me.

MARTHA I haven't decided anything of the kind. I wasn't mistaken. I want to figure out what drives you, why you do what you do.

LAWRENCE *He smiles gently at her.* That's your job.

MARTHA No, I want to know for my own sake. And for Vasilka's. You're a special person, Lawrence, that's clear. But you should be studying the Earth, not the universe.

They both stand up. Lawrence restlessly turns toward the exit.

You can go, you know. There's nothing keeping us together. I just have one more thing to tell you. I want you to teach Vasilka what it is that you have. She's such a lovely little creature. You know I call her my little lover girl. But no one compares to you, Lawrence, the crazy astronomer, no one.

Silence. After a while.

LAWRENCE *He smiles at her.* Nice diagnosis.

MARTHA *She smiles back at him.* Not too professional, is it?

Lawrence smiles again and leaves. When the door shuts behind him, Vasilka comes out of her room with a teddy bear under her arm. Sadly and silently, she goes to her mother. Her mother notices her.

MARTHA Vasilka... *She says warmly.*

Vasilka curls up in her mother's arms and leans her head on her shoulder.

Her mother encloses her in her arms.

They sit in silence.

VASILKA Can I go see him tomorrow?

MARTHA Of course you can, sweetheart.

And she holds her even tighter.

Darkness.

SCENE NINE

LAWRENCE, VASILKA

Night on Rose Hill. A huge full moon rules over the sky.

Lawrence and Vasilka sit on the unfolded sleeping bag and look at the campfire in front of them. Then Lawrence lies on his back with his hands under his head and looks at the sky.

Vasilka looks at him. After a while...

VASILKA Lawrence?

LAWRENCE Yes...

VASILKA What is a pedophile? *She has difficulty saying the last word, though not because of its meaning.*

LAWRENCE Where did you pick that up? *He rises up again.* At home?

VASILKA Yes. Is that a person who does bad things to little children?

LAWRENCE Yes, that sort of person.

VASILKA I don't believe that anyone is really that bad.

LAWRENCE You're a very bright little girl.

VASILKA Such a person... he really can't help himself.

LAWRENCE *Puts an arm around her shoulders.* You are a bright little girl and I firmly believe that you'll be an astronaut one day.

VASILKA Really? Really and truly? Daddy says that it's hard to be a girl and an astronaut.

LAWRENCE When you're big enough to get the job...

VASILKA Wow – it's a job?

LAWRENCE Sure. What did you think?

VASILKA It's like being a pirate or a cowboy.

LAWRENCE Sure, a job like any other.

VASILKA Then I'll get paid?

LAWRENCE *He smiles at her.* You'll get paid very much.

VASILKA *Enthusiastically.* Wow, wow – it's going to be great! And I was worried that they wouldn't give me enough vacation time to go up to the moon. *She looks up. Admiringly ...* It really is full.

LAWRENCE *He also looks up.* When it's full, it has miraculous power.

VASILKA Mommy says that the moon makes me walk in my sleep, that that's why I end up in her bed every night. *She giggles.*

Lawrence smiles at her words and then stares up.

LAWRENCE Once a long time ago, our ancestors in the Scottish highlands built a great temple of stone.

VASILKA Temple... What's that?

LAWRENCE It's something like a church. But instead of God, people worshipped the moon. But when you see the temple, it looks very simple – just some stones in a circle. But it's not simple. They knew exactly what they were doing. Now, among those stones, rises a hill that has an outline that reminds you of a woman's body lying on her back. Every eighteen years, the full moon rises behind this hill, travels along the length of that perfect outline, and then disappears. After a while, it appears again. Precisely in the centre of the temple. Legend says that anyone who stands in the middle of this magical event receives the gift of immortality.

VASILKA Were you there when it shone?

LAWRENCE You mean in the middle? Or course, I was. Right in the middle.

VASILKA You are lucky.

Lawrence looks at her and smiles. She smiles at him. They look up. After awhile Lawrence gets up.

LAWRENCE Come here. Let's get in the sleeping bag. *They stand up. Lawrence folds the sleeping bag in half. To Vasilka.* You pull the zipper and I'll do the fire.

VASILKA Okay.

Each does their job. Vasilka has a little difficulty but keeps trying.

LAWRENCE Will it go?

VASILKA It will. Will we go to sleep already?

LAWRENCE Let's just get in. We don't need to go to sleep yet.

VASILKA Fine. I don't have to go to sleep that early.

LAWRENCE I've noticed. Get in.

Vasilka starts to get in but Lawrence stops her.

Hey! Take your shoes off!

VASILKA Oops! *She smirks.* Sorry.

She takes her shoes off and climbs into the sleeping bag. Lawrence also takes his shoes off.

LAWRENCE *Playfully.* Here comes Uncle Lawrence.

VASILKA It's great!

Lawrence climbs in next to her.

LAWRENCE It would be even better if I got in first, but this'll do.

VASILKA We're like caterpillars.

LAWRENCE Come on, let's lie down so we can see the moon.

VASILKA Auntie Moon, Uncle Lawrence.

Jokingly they get into the right position. They laugh all the while.

Aren't we funny!

LAWRENCE It's warm!

They calm down and look up. Lawrence sighs.

It really is beautiful.

VASILKA You don't want to go there?

LAWRENCE I don't know. I somehow like to look at it from here. You know they've analysed it and determined that moon stones are as old as our solar system. Much older than

the Earth. It's not even certain that it's a part of our solar system. Maybe it came from somewhere deep in the universe.

VASILKA And now it's going to go back.

LAWRENCE Yes.

VASILKA Maybe home...?

Silence.

LAWRENCE You know what I've wanted to ask for a long time now?

VASILKA What?

LAWRENCE Why didn't you tell me that you have to take special care of yourself?

VASILKA I'm a child. Other people take care of me.

LAWRENCE You know what I mean. You had to come home from your father's on Saturday night for your inhaler. You had an attack.

VASILKA *She hangs her head sadly.* Yes. I have asthma. But not always.

LAWRENCE But when that happens, you have to have it with you, don't you?

Vasilka is silent by way of guilty confirmation. She nods with tight lips.

Do you have it now?

Vasilka nods.

VASILKA Of course. In my back pack. *Lying nearby is a child's back pack.* I also have Pez candies – do you want one?

LAWRENCE No thanks.

Vasilka giggles.

What is it?

VASILKA *Saucily.* Ha – isn't that funny – now I'm offering you candy.

LAWRENCE It is a little bit funny, yeah.

They laugh.

We have an understanding now, right? You have to be clear about such things. What if something happened to you and I wasn't able to help?

VASILKA What do I know what kind of children you like.

LAWRENCE What do you mean?

VASILKA Healthy or sick.

LAWRENCE You, pumpkin. *He hugs her close.* I like you most of all!

VASILKA Oh, that's nice. *She lays her head against him.*

They remain that way.

VASILKA Lawrence...

LAWRENCE Yes?

She lifts her face to him.

VASILKA I also want to be immortal. Will you take me to that temple one time?

LAWRENCE *He holds her cheeks.* You don't need to. Something as beautiful as you could never die. *He smiles at her.*

He holds her and looks at her.

VASILKA Do you want to kiss me?

LAWRENCE What? *He flinches.*

VASILKA Do you want to kiss me? Like grown-ups kiss.

LAWRENCE Vasilka...

VASILKA I wouldn't mind. As long as I'm with you.

Lawrence looks at her, Vasilka at him. She looks sincere and deeply moved.

Darkness.

SCENE TEN

SIREN

The piercing siren of an ambulance. A light pulsing in the darkness.

SCENE ELEVEN

LAWRENCE, MARTHA, VASILKA

A hospital corridor.

Lawrence waits unhappily. He sits on a chair with his head leaning back against the wall.

Martha rushes in – she is beside herself.

MARTHA What – how could this have happened?!!

LAWRENCE She didn't have her inhaler...

MARTHA I gave it to her and then I found it under the bed!

She pulls the inhaler out of her pocket. Together with Paul's baseball mitt...

LAWRENCE Are you sure?

MARTHA *Suddenly hysterical.* Of course I'm sure – how could I not be sure if I found it there!

LAWRENCE Maybe it was old one...

Lawrence looks at her, Martha at him. Then she sits in a chair next to his. Absently...

MARTHA I was straightening up...

She sobs into her palms. He lifts his hand to either embrace her or caress her, to comfort her in some way, but then changes his mind and retracts his hand. She lifts her head.

Is there any change?

He shakes his head.

How could this happen? *More to herself. Lawrence is silent. Martha shakes her head.*

Quietly... All year nothing, and then two at once... *In great fear and pain...* Good god, what if...

Lawrence hugs her.

LAWRENCE It won't.

MARTHA *She leans her head against him. Crying.* She loves you so much!

Suddenly Lawrence stands up and nervously runs his fingers through his hair.

MARTHA We both love you.

Then suddenly...

I can't take it anymore! *The tears stream down her cheeks.* I can't, I don't know... I can't carry this inside of me anymore. I've never known how to pick the right moment, but I have to get this out. I'm sorry. Maybe I'm acting alike an irresponsible, selfish mother – *she wipes her tears* – in this moment... *She stops.*

Lawrence turns away, she toward him...

MARTHA Are you listening to me?

LAWRENCE I'm listening.

Martha steps up to him.

MARTHA Turn toward me.

He turns.

Look at me.

Lawrence looks at her.

I fell in love with you.

He looks at her.

I can't help it.

He looks at her.

I love you.

He closes his eyes. His face looks tormented.

LAWRENCE I can't, Martha, I can't. *He buries his face unhappily in his palms.*

MARTHA Why not?! Lawrence?! Why?! Wouldn't we be good together?

She pulls his hands from his face.

Lawrence lifts his head with tears in his eyes.

LAWRENCE I love her.

MARTHA *Surprised.* You love...? *Then she realizes who he loves.* You love ... her?!

Lawrence nods. Martha, clinging to the wall, shrinks into herself. She almost can't catch her breath. A few seconds pass...

How could this happen?

LAWRENCE I don't know. I just want to be with her. And because of that, I would be with you as well.

MARTHA But how can you... how can you love such an innocent creature?

LAWRENCE *He looks at her.* But then who should I love, Martha? Who? Everyone is so filthy, so dirty, so stained! We're garbage to this world, garbage! And we live in garbage! In nature, there is no garbage. Everything is reused, everything turned to the good. Only people make garbage. Garbage is our invention. The garbage of our pure wantonness.

We get fed up with everything, we ruin everything, and then we throw it away and leave it behind us. Just garbage. We leave our trace behind us everywhere. And once we have succeeded in scattering ourselves in this never-ending space, it won't be hard to find us. Just follow the garbage. Just follow the refuse of humankind! We leave nothing good behind us, only garbage. And we're going to teach everyone out there how to have things and then throw them away. That's what we do to each other, that's what we do to things, that's what we do to ourselves!

MARTHA *She looks at him crestfallen.* You are sick...

LAWRENCE Of course, I'm sick. You knew it all the time. Sick of life. There's no sickness worse, Martha, none!! Forgive me, if you can!

Martha looks at him, growing calmer. She reflects...

MARTHA But... you would get weary of her too; when she grew up... *She stops herself.* How I talk, as if I'm offering you my own child!

LAWRENCE That's why I want to die, Martha, just die. Because there's no hope for me. I want to be up there, up in the silence, among the floating atoms where nothing but silence happens and nobody knows if we mean something to someone else. Because we people need that: to mean something to someone else.

MARTHA Did you ever... *It is hard for her to find the words.* Did you do something – you know what I'm talking about?

He doesn't answer. He stops.

MARTHA *Screaming* Did you?!!

He says nothing. He looks away.

Martha crumples down. She cannot believe that it could be true. Horror is written on her face. Her heart aches at the thought that such a thing is possible.

MARTHA Oh oh oh... oh.

LAWRENCE I would never do anything that would make her unhappy.

She looks at him.

MARTHA *After a while...* Go.

Almost screaming...

Get out!

Lawrence goes. Martha sits down. After a while, one of the doors open and Vasilka appears. She is barefoot and dressed in hospital pyjamas.

VASILKA *Exclaims happily.* Mommy!

Martha bounds up.

MARTHA Vasilka!

They run to embrace each other. Martha lifts her up.

MARTHA *She squeezes her tight.* My baby...

Darkness.

SCENE TWELVE

LAWRENCE, VASILKA

A cloudy day on Rose Hill. It's getting ready to rain. Lawrence is setting up the telescope on the trailer. He squints as if he sees something in the distance. After a while, Vasilka runs up.

LAWRENCE Hey! How did you get up here?! *He calls to her from a distance.* Not on foot, I hope?!

Vasilka is already beside him.

VASILKA *Out of breath.* Only the last part. Daddy brought me as far as he could. With a jeep. He didn't want to, but Mommy perse... perse...

LAWRENCE Perseve... *He wants to helps her.*

VASILKA No, wait! I'll do it alone... *She thinks and then...* Persevered.

LAWRENCE Did you pick that word up from Paulie?

VASILKA You know I didn't! *She laughs.* He doesn't know hard words.

LAWRENCE You see, now I made you laugh.

VASILKA Why are you so early today?

LAWRENCE I have to get ready for the eclipse.

VASILKA That's what I thought.

LAWRENCE You can wait with me. Come. You could pull the lever. *He lifts her, placing her on the trailer.*

VASILKA No, I can't.

Lawrence stops, holding her in the air above his head. He looks at her.

LAWRENCE Of course, you can.

VASILKA It's the last time I'll be here.

Lawrence puts her down on the ground.

LAWRENCE The last time? Why is that?

VASILKA Mommy says I can't come any more.

LAWRENCE Why is that all of a sudden?

VASILKA She's trying to get along with Daddy from now on.

LAWRENCE Well, that's nice.

VASILKA Isn't it? Last night, when I came home from the hospital, they had agreed.

Because of me. We're going to leave town. We're going to go somewhere far away from his other woman.

LAWRENCE You were eavesdropping again.

VASILKA Like I always do. Daddy loves Mommy again, but she needs time.

LAWRENCE You mustn't do that. It's not nice to eavesdrop on other people's conversations.

VASILKA I wouldn't know anything otherwise. They take me for a child, 'someone who doesn't understand those sorts of things'. *She makes quotation marks with her fingers.*

LAWRENCE And you watch too much television.

VASILKA What?! *First she's angry, as if it's not true, then she has to admit it.* If I can't go to the movies! What's with you today? You keep scolding me.

LAWRENCE You're right. I'll stop.

VASILKA *Her mood changes suddenly. She's melancholy.* I just thought...

LAWRENCE What?

VASILKA I thought you were going to say how much you'd miss me.

LAWRENCE Of course, I'll miss you. You're my little moon.

VASILKA I knew you'd say that. *She holds him to her. Then she looks at him seriously.* I've very carefully thought of everything. But you must do what I say. Will you? Promise me you'll do what I say!

Lawrence nods.

You have to do exactly what I tell you. *She looks at him, he at her. Then...*

Now I'm going to leave you and then I'm going to run. *Her little voice trembles. She's about to cry but bravely resists.* And I'm going to run and run. And even when I cry, I won't feel it because I'll be running so fast that the wind will dry my tears. Do you understand? *She looks at him bravely.*

Lawrence nods.

On the count of three.

She starts to counts.

One... two... three... *At three, she starts to run as fast as she can in the direction that she came from.*

Lawrence looks after her.

LAWRENCE *Sadly.* Run, Vasilka, run...

Now he notices that the girl is running back to him. He cries out.

What is it, Vasilka?!!

Vasilka runs back to him.

VASILKA I forgot to give you something. *She hands him a paper bag that she pulls out from under her jacket.*

LAWRENCE Pumpkin. *He smiles and takes the bag.*

What is it? *He looks in.*

VASILKA To remember me.

LAWRENCE A balloon? *He takes a yellow balloon from the bag.*

VASILKA No, don't blow it up now. It will make me too sad. I drew something on it. *She adds importantly...* It means something. When you miss me, you can blow it up. It won't be hard to do. I put something else in there too.

LAWRENCE Yes, I feel something. *He looks in the bag again.* A little pump?

VASILKA Yes, a little pump. So you won't have to blow it up yourself. You need to save your breath for breathing.

LAWRENCE That's wonderful, Vasilka. Wonderful. But I don't have anything for you.

VASILKA Now you're my little pumpkin. But you couldn't have known... Lawrence, you're crying.

LAWRENCE No, I'm not!

VASILKA What's that shining under your eyes?

LAWRENCE It's just the light being reflected.

VASILKA Light from where? The sun is behind the clouds.

LAWRENCE From your heart.

VASILKA *Sceptically.* How is that possible? If the heart is dark because it's hidden in the body?

LAWRENCE The moon is dark too, but it still reflects so much light that it illuminates the night.

VASILKA *Understanding now.* You're right, yes.

LAWRENCE *Suddenly he thinks of something.* Wait.

He leans into the trailer and rummages around. A reflector glimmers in his hand.

VASILKA Oh, your beautiful stone.

LAWRENCE It's a corner reflector.

VASILKA A corner reflector.

LAWRENCE Here.

VASILKA *She doesn't take it.* Didn't you say this was the last one?

LAWRENCE The last. But no one deserves it more than you.

VASILKA Oh, I couldn't...

LAWRENCE Take it. *He takes her hand and sets the reflector in her palm. He closes her palm over it.*

But don't forget about that garbage up there. *He points up to the sky.*

VASILKA I won't. Now I have to go. Really!

Vasilka runs off. Lawrence looks after her for a long time and waves.

Darkness.

SCENE THIRTEEN

LAWRENCE, FILM OPERATOR

The movie theatre. Lawrence is sitting in the second row in the dark. We cannot see clearly, but it looks as if he is doing something strange. As if he is masturbating perhaps. The film operator is running an animated film.

After a while we see that the film operator has appeared at the door with something in his hand. He slowly approaches Lawrence. We see that it is some sort of baseball bat he holds in his hand.

FILM OPERATOR You pig! *He strikes Lawrence over the head with the club. He moans and falls over.* There, you pervert. If the police won't stop you, I will!

We see now that Lawrence is holding the little red pump and has pumped the yellow balloon (Vasilka's gift) half full. A simple smile has been drawn on it. He had been pumping the balloon which was held under his left arm and had been pushing the handle of the pump up and down in his lap.

The film operator kneels down and takes the pump. He realizes what he had done.

FILM OPERATOR Jesus Christ! *He is horrified but quickly collects himself.*

Ha – you animal!

He kicks him. Then he goes and throws the pump and the balloon into the garbage can. He turns back. With disgust and hatred.

Goddamn people! Why don't they go outside and watch the solar eclipse...

Wearily exits.

A large pool of blood slowly spreads beneath Lawrence's head.

Darkness.

SCENE FOURTEEN

LAWRENCE, VASILKA,

Hospital room. Lawrence lies in bed, his head bandaged. Blood has already soaked the bandage in places. Vasilka stands next to the bed.

VASILKA *Significantly.* Lawrence.

LAWRENCE *Has difficulty talking.* What is it?

VASILKA I know a joke.

LAWRENCE Wonderful! Will you tell it to me?

VASILKA Only if you promise to laugh.

LAWRENCE Look, I'm already smiling. *He smiles with difficulty.*

VASILKA *Gets ready with extreme formality.* Now – my first joke... How do you know where a worm has its head and its tail?

No answer. Lawrence wearily closes his eyes. Then he opens them.

You tickle it in the middles and see which end laughs!

Lawrence emits a coughing laugh.

Did you like it?

LAWRENCE Very much.

VASILKA *Pretending arrogance.* Of course, you did, since I told it.

LAWRENCE Pumpkin. Dear Vasilka – there's something I have to tell you ...

VASILKA Did you see the smile on the balloon?

LAWRENCE I did.

VASILKA So you filled up my moon. *The thought pleases her.*

LAWRENCE I did.

VASILKA Good boy. Now look what I've brought you! *She waves a transparent plastic bag in front of his nose, the kind of bag that is similar to a plastic folder.*

LAWRENCE *Very surprised.* Vasilka! Where did you get that?

VASILKA I promised you, didn't I?

LAWRENCE You did, but...

VASILKA But I wasn't up there.

LAWRENCE Who was?

VASILKA Can't you guess? Peter and Simon – your sons! They became astronauts. *She smiles gaily.* You thought that little me actually went up there?! Who would let me go in a space ship! I can't even drive Paulie's jeep.

LAWRENCE *Admiringly.* How grown-up they are!

VASILKA You can be proud. I would be happy if my husband were an astronaut, let alone two sons. Two! *She happily kisses Lawrence on the cheek.* Here. The bag. *She calmly places the bag on the blanket.* Now it's completely clean up there.

LAWRENCE Thank you. I'll sleep peacefully now.

VASILKA Oh no! You're not going to sleep! Who will measure the distance to the moon?

LAWRENCE I'm so tired.

VASILKA It doesn't matter if you're tired. You can't sleep. *Movingly, crying.* What will happen to the world without your measurements? Who will know how far the moon has moved away from us? And then one day it will go, just go... and there will never be anymore stars, no moon, no moonlight, no neap tide, no low tide... what will the world be like if the ocean is always the same? How will mommy lose weight if there is no full moon? You can't fall asleep! *Sobbing, she throws her head against his chest.* You can't, Lawrence, you never can. *Crying into his blanket.* You can't...

LAWRENCE *Very quietly.* Vasilka... Vasilka...

VASILKA *She listens.* What? What?! What did you say?

LAWRENCE You know... that garbage on the moon...

VASILKA Yes – what about it?

LAWRENCE It's better than nothing. Better. Whatever it is, only that it's not nothing. Stars are beautiful, sure, but if we don't see them, they are nothing. That's why their images travel for so many years. For a million years they travel, only so we can see them. Without us, they're just a pile of dust.

VASILKA *Bitterly.* Oh, I am sorry! I'll take that plastic bag right back!

Lawrence smiles.

LAWRENCE You see, you made me smile again.

Vasilka suddenly lifts herself up, very serious...

VASILKA Lawrence, you're going to die, aren't you?

LAWRENCE My bright little pumpkin. *He lifts his hand to caress her but cannot. Vasilka holds his hand.* You always guess right.

VASILKA It's not me.

LAWRENCE It's your heart, right?

Vasilka nods. Suddenly she exclaims.

VASILKA Hah!

LAWRENCE What?

VASILKA You probably didn't stand right in the middle of the temple.

LAWRENCE I didn't.

Vasilka sniffles.

VASILKA *Then bravely.* I'm not going to cry, you know.

LAWRENCE That's good. But... we'll wait for the solar eclipse, right?

VASILKA You know we will. *She warmly squeezes his hand.* You know we will.

They remain that way, Vasilka holding his hand, in the background a great sun glows. Slowly the moon covers it. Piano music and someone reading an excerpt from Genesis, the beginning. The voice is slightly broken, suffocated, similar to one that comes from a radio station that is very far away.

“First God made heaven and earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said: Let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning...”

Eclipse – darkness.

Then only the hospital light. Lawrence is dead. Vasilka is no longer beside him.

Darkness.

THE END

rokgre, playwright

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Uporaba in reprodukcija besedila brez pisnega dovoljenja avtorja je prepovedana.

Born in Maribor in 1968 and graduates with a B. Ed. in Fine Arts. He paints. Once per chance he adds movement and sound to his installation in space and it dawns on him: "This is theatre!" And he is damned. One night while sleepwalking he is gravely injured. The injury of his left arm forces him to go right-handed; this is when it starts for real – he writes, writes, writes. Within a year, he has four plays completed. So far, more than twenty premieres of *rokgre's* plays have taken place in Slovenia and abroad – dramas, comedies, cabarets, plays for children: *A Star, That, Thongsman, The Eleventh Wonder, Laetitia and Sylvester, Tower Block, Milan, Anteater or the Forrest of Red Fruit, Paulie, Othella, Kokolorek, What do we Talk About When We Talk About Love, Syrup of Happiness, Etiquette*, etc. He wrote several radio plays, for example, *The Legend about a Man, Rain, Kleist's Letter ...*

In 2000, he receives the Grum Award for the best new Slovenian play for *That*, in 2004, the Noble Comediographer Award for *Paulie*, which also wins the Grand Prix at the Festival of Monodrama in Ptuj in 2004. In 2008, receives the second Grum Award for *Garbage on the Moon*.

He is one of the writers for the most successful Slovenian television comedy series *Our Little Clinic*. He writes lyrics for the band he founded, *Patetico*, and also for singer *Neisha*. He has published two novels, *The Nipper or Who Invented Life?* and *Ten Years of Pondering*, as well as a collection of fairytales, *Cosmic Fairytales*, and a book of poetry, *Dreams*. He lives and works in Maribor.