

Jera Ivanc
SMOKING KILLS

with
Marla
Camilla
'Gypsy'
and
Women in uniform
in
Camilla's living room

NOTE: Most of the stage directions (especially those concerning the closet door and weather) are merely informative.

(It's raining heavily outside, thunder can be heard, everyone in the course of the play comes in wet. Camilla in an apron is kneeling in front of the closet. The closet door is opened. Camilla is cleaning the floor. Her mobile rings.)

CAMILLA *into her mobile:*

I'm listening. *(she listens)* Good. I'm ready.

(Camilla hangs up, puts away her apron and mop. The doorbell rings. Camilla looks around, closes the wardrobe door. The doorbell rings again, she leaves the room.)

CAMILLA *shouting:*

I'm coming, I'm coming...

(A few moments later she reenters followed by Marla and Gypsy, the former carrying a folder, the latter a package. The wardrobe door opens, Camilla closes it again.)

CAMILLA:

I'm sorry I kept you waiting. I was on the phone talking to Erik's mother.

(Marla and Gypsy stand still, very stiff, very formal, very quiet, Camilla is a little nervous but tries to be obliging)

CAMILLA:

Come in – make yourselves at home. I really didn't expect you to come. In this nasty weather. *(smiles)* What can I get you? Are you hungry? Would you like something to eat? *(silence)* You're not hungry. Would you like... Would you like some coffee? *(silence)* Tea? *(silence)* Juice? *(silence)* Water?

MARLA:

We're here on business.

CAMILLA:

All the same...

MARLA:

Where is Erik?

CAMILLA:

He's gone out.

MARLA:

We'll wait.

(Gypsy hands the package to Camilla)

CAMILLA:

For Erik?

MARLA:

Open it!

(Camilla looks at both with anxiety and surprise, then starts opening the package, stares into it for some time, takes out a gun, looks at it for a few moments, then puts it on the table. She takes an envelope out of the package, opens it, reads it, stares at it, then smiles, absently, looks at Marla and Gypsy, who turn away.)

CAMILLA:

Erik was the only one I ever loved.

(A long silence, Camilla looks at Gypsy, then at Marla.)

CAMILLA:

Say something. Please...

MARLA:

We're here on business! *(silence)* Stop pretending you didn't know this was going to happen! *(Camilla looks away/down)* You knew, of course you did. And still you were stupid enough

GYPSY interrupts:

Marla.

(Marla takes a deep breath, but after a few seconds bursts out again)

MARLA to Camilla:

You know the rules! *(a short silence, Camilla looks at Marla)* What!? Do you or don't you!? Stop staring at me!

GYPSY harder:

Marla!

MARLA to Gypsy:

What!?

GYPSY to Marla, slowly, distinctly:

We didn't come here to talk, but to make sure she

CAMILLA interrupts:

You have no proof.

MARLA:

Oh, really? *(starts taking photographs and documents out of the folder and throwing them in front of Camilla)* Photographs, depositions... it's all there! *(Camilla looks at them, says*

nothing) You knew smoking was dangerous. And since you didn't report him... *(a short silence)* But, like I said before. We're here on business.

(Marla turns away, Gypsy steps towards Camilla, who is in shock.)

GYPSY:

Where is Erik, Camilla?

CAMILLA *looks at Gypsy:*

Why do you even bother to ask? *(Shows some photographs to Gypsy)* He went out for his evening smoke, you know that.

GYPSY:

Will he be back at the usual time? *(no reply)* Camilla?

CAMILLA:

Yes. He never misses the evening news.

GYPSY:

Thank you. *(looks at her watch)* Good... You read the instructions.

(Camilla nods)

GYPSY:

You understood them.

(Camilla nods)

GYPSY:

And you know what has to be done.

(Camilla nods)

GYPSY:

So?

CAMILLA *after a while:*

I can't.

GYPSY *stepping back:*

I'm afraid you have no alternative.

CAMILLA *looks at Marla, then Gypsy:*

I can't. *(silence)* Marla? *(silence)* Gypsy? *(both look away)* Please... You can't ask me to do that! you can't! you can't! *(jumps up)* I'll shoot myself! *(points the gun at her temple)*

Sooner me than Erik! *(Marla and Gypsy start)*

GYPSY *after a while, as if thinking aloud:*

If you do that, then we'll have to do Erik. *(looks at Marla)*

MARLA *shrugs:*

Erik or both... what odds?

GYPSY to Camilla:

Exactly.

CAMILLA on the verge of tears:

Please... Don't do this to me.

(Gypsy and Marla look at each other)

GYPSY, mocking:

What are we doing?

(Marla shrugs)

GYPSY to Camilla:

You're the one with the gun.

(Camilla points her gun at them, they, by instinct, pull out theirs and point them back. They look at each other for some time. Camilla then again points hers at her temple, Marla and Gypsy look at each other, shrug, lower their guns, Camilla points hers at them, they point theirs back)

MARLA after a while:

This is silly.

CAMILLA slowly, her hands shaking:

We'll go away, both of us. As soon as he gets back.

(Marla and Gypsy look at each other. A long silence. Gypsy puts her gun down and sits down; Marla is still pointing hers at Camilla, not sure of what Gypsy is doing, and Camilla is still pointing her gun at both of them)

GYPSY:

You'll go away?

CAMILLA:

Yes. We'll go.

GYPSY:

And where will you go? *(silence)* Suppose you shoot us. Or suppose we let you go. Do you really think you can hide? *(silence)* So?

CAMILLA after a while:

We'll go anyway. We'll join the underground movement and then cross the border.

GYPSY smiles:

Cross the border. (*Camilla nods*) And how will you do that, if I may ask? (*no reply*) Do you have any connections? Do you know anyone in the underground who could help you?

(*Camilla shakes her head*)

CAMILLA:

But we'll go anyway.

GYPSY:

But you'll go anyway. (*Camilla nods*) Even though there's nowhere you can go. (*Camilla nods*) Good, then.

CAMILLA *puzzled, exhausted, on the verge of tears:*

Please...

(*Gypsy takes a box of cigarettes out of her pocket and takes one out. Camilla drops the gun but instantly points it back, her eyes full of tears*)

MARLA *to Gypsy:*

Are you sure?

GYPSY *lights a cigarette:*

Yes, I'm sure. She can be trusted. (*to Camilla*) Am I right, Camilla?

(*Camilla is puzzled*)

GYPSY *to both:*

Put your guns down. (*to Camilla*) Marla smokes, too. We're on the same side, Camilla.

(*Camilla is shocked, confused..., she puts down the gun, stares at both. Marla is still pointing her gun at Camilla*)

GYPSY *to Marla:*

Put your gun down, Marla.

CAMILLA *to Marla:*

Please...

MARLA:

All right. (*puts the gun down*) But this is definitely my last one.

CAMILLA:

What... why... I don't understand...

GYPSY:

There's not much to understand. We're here to help you, both of you. But first we had to make sure you're not one of those who simply do what they are told. (*with contempt*) Who follow the law. Who play by the rules. (*a short silence, Camilla sobbing quietly*) We didn't know how you'd react, you see. The number of those who execute the order is shocking.

They just... without a second thought... *(starts acting and gets really involved)* BANG!
someone's husband's brains all over us... and BANG! there goes a brother for hiding a
pack for his friend... and the old senile father asking his daughter not to take his life
because of a habit he developed long before it was considered *(searches for a word)* wrong,
will BANG! not be granted a last cigarette... and BANG! BANG! for a teenage son who
just... just... *(sighs deeply and sits down)*

MARLA:

(sings) BANG, BANG, I shot my baby down. *(deeply sighs, takes a cigarette out of a pack)*
Sometimes you really do need a cigarette.

(Gypsy back to her old self again, gets up, lights Marla's cigarette)

GYPSY:

So, here's the plan: We'll fake Erik's death and take him somewhere safe. Don't worry. *(to Marla)* We disappear after his funeral

MARLA:

At last.

GYPSY to Camilla:

but you will need to stay a while longer.

CAMILLA:

No! I'm going with you!

GYPSY:

You'll go as soon as possible. Trust us.

(Camilla nods, Gypsy hands her a piece of paper)

GYPSY:

Do not contact us. If anything goes wrong before Erik's funeral, call this number and use
the password.

CAMILLA reads:

Smoking kills. *(smiles)*

GYPSY:

Did you memorise it?

(Camilla nods and puts the paper into her mouth)

GYPSY:

What are you doing?

(Camilla takes the paper out of her mouth, they all look at each other and start laughing)

CAMILLA laughing:

What?

GYPSY:

Good old Camilla.

(Gypsy takes the paper and burns it, Marla laughs, approaches Camilla, puts her arm around her and offers her a cigarette)

MARLA:

Wouldn't you prefer a cigarette?

(Camilla smiles, takes the cigarette, Gypsy lights it, Camilla coughs, trying to smoke)

CAMILLA:

It's been a while...

GYPSY:

Soon, it will all be just a bad memory. We'll be getting together again, smoking, *(sighs)* laughing, talking nonsense... You, Erik, Marla and me. Like we used to.

MARLA *sighs, smiles:*

Yes. I remember when... *(Gypsy and Camilla look at her)* Never mind. Lots of beautiful memories in here *(points the gun at her head)*

(Gypsy and Camilla nod, Camilla coughs and smokes. All in silence, as if remembering, short sighs, smiles, Camilla coughing... then everything is still for a few moments)

GYPSY:

Now, girls! We'll have plenty of time for this later. *(to Marla)* So – we do the usual drill, but a bit more convincing this time. I call my connection *(looks at her watch)*, Erik will be getting back any minute now, the guys bring the body, take Erik somewhere safe and we burn the house down. *(starts dialing)*

CAMILLA:

Not the house! *(Marla and Gypsy look at her)* Of course, of course, the body... *(smiles)* I'm sorry.

GYPSY:

(into the phone) We're ready. *(hangs up)* The body is on its way. So: Erik has come back, he was armed, there was a scuffle, Camilla shot him, his cigarette end started the fire.

MARLA *to Gypsy with reproach:*

We've already burned down half of the city that way.

(Gypsy looks at Marla and shoots herself in the leg, Marla and Camilla jump towards her)

GYPSY *in pain:*

Aaah, aaa...

MARLA:

What are you doing!?

GYPSY:

(tries to smile)

CAMILLA:

You really are crazy.

(Camilla goes looking for some towels, rags... Her mobile rings. She takes it and checks the screen)

CAMILLA:

Erik's mother.

GYPSY:

Pick it up. *(takes the rags... from Camilla)* We'll manage all right.

(Marla uses what Camilla brought to stop the bleeding, Camilla answers the phone)

CAMILLA:

Good afternoon, mother. How are you? I'm fine, thank you. Ooo, really? *(Gypsy gives her a sign to leave the room)* Yes? ... *(she leaves the room)*

MARLA:

Was that really necessary?

GYPSY:

Just stop the bleeding.

(The wound is bleeding heavily, there aren't enough towels and rags)

MARLA:

This won't do. I have to find some more. *(looks around)*

GYPSY:

Check the wardrobe.

(Marla starts opening the drawers, the doorbell rings)

GYPSY:

That must be Erik.

CAMILLA *off, shouts:*

It's Erik!

GYPSY:

(shouts to Camilla) Go and open up! *(to Marla)* Hurry!

(Marla has already checked all the drawers and found nothing, so she opens the wardrobe door and out falls a man's body)

MARLA:

Erik!

GYPSY:

Shit! Camilla!

(Both look at the door. There stands Camilla with the phone in her hand, smiling, behind her armed women in uniforms)

CAMILLA:

(pointing the gun at Erik) BANG! *(at Marla)* BANG! *(at Gypsy)* BANG! Allow me to introduce Erik's mother. Or should I say mothers? *(starts laughing, the women start handcuffing and gagging Marla and Gypsy)*

MARLA:

You're dead!

GYPSY:

Marla.

CAMILLA:

Do you mean me or you and your friends with the dead body back there?

(Marla tries to fly at her, but she's handcuffed and has a rag in her mouth)

CAMILLA:

(to Marla and Gypsy) What was that number again? *(grins, starts dialing, waits for the answer)* Smoking kills. *(listens, then repeats)* Red rose, post office, in one hour. *(One of the women nods and leaves, Camilla hangs up)* Smoking kills. What a password! Let's go.

A (All leave, taking Erik's body with them)

B (All leave, leaving Erik's body behind. After a while it leaves, too.)

C (All leave, leaving Erik's body behind. After a while it turns into a stage worker.)

THE END