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## THE VIRGIN AND THE BEAST

by

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### Dramatis Personae

PRINCE: Aged forty-five. Face marred by an “accidental” burn.

CHRISTINE: Aged nineteen. A shapely lass who still seems to smell of mother’s milk.

UNCLE GUS: Aged seventy-two. An agile old man full of vim.

BUGGER: Aged thirty-five. A well-dressed man.

AUNTY CHARLIE: Cleaning lady.

Setting: an old tenement house in downtown Budapest, one of these days.

The play is based on a true event.

## Scene 1

*The living room in Prince's flat. Doors lead to a little bedroom and another separate room which has a second door to the corridor, though that cannot be seen from here. The place is a dreadful mess: empty bottles lying around, masses of ashtrays heaped with fag ends. A large old wardrobe stands with one of its double doors open. Inside the wardrobe is a chair where Prince sits in the daytime. He is sitting there now, though the closed panel of the door hides him from view.*

PRINCE *from the wardrobe*  
Ug yoooo!

*Throws an empty bottle out. A rustling sound: he must be looking for another.*

*The door opens, enter Uncle Gus.*

UNCLE GUS  
Here I come. My blessed Gladys always used to say when she came in, "here I come." Her very words: here I come! The dear woman.

Squatting in the wardrobe again?

*A great roar from the wardrobe.*

UNCLE GUS  
My Gladys would've been ever so sad had she found me squatting in the wardrobe. It isn't proper, that. Man should not squat in wardrobes. Where would the shirts go? My god, how poor Gladys used to arrange the freshly ironed shirts in the wardrobe, turning it into an island of bliss, a perfumed island! You think I didn't have an urge then to sit in the wardrobe, like you do now? Course I did. Didn't dare! What would my Gladys have said if I had told her, "Gladys, I'll just go and sit in the wardrobe with the shirts. You go ahead and clean the bathtub, call me when you're done." What would she have said? See, I'll never know. Mayhap she'd have said, "All my life I've been hoping for a man who'd sit in the wardrobe with the shirts I've ironed and think of me." Can we ever know that? No. Not any more. That's why I say to you: one's got to try everything. I don't cry. Should I cry? No sir. When I think of Gladys, I think of joy. And man past seventy shouldn't cry in his joy, for people won't know what's the matter with him. No tears of joy over seventy, isn't that right?

*Another roar from the wardrobe.*

UNCLE GUS  
The girl's coming here.

*This time a howl from the wardrobe.*

PRINCE  
Aaaw uuur?

UNCLE GUS  
She as wants to rent a room. My poor Gladys used to say, if we can't have a child, let's take someone in. So we did, we took in a kid aged ten. He lived with us for a year then ran away with the TV set. Then my Gladys knew, and I knew too, that we shouldn't take another lodger for we still had the radio. But where would we be if that got pinched? Where would the news be, eh?

So this girl's coming here. She was to go to Mary's on the fourth but they don't like her. Her husband wanted a young boy, not a pretty young girl. So I said to her, "here we have a decent, honest man, he has a room he doesn't use, I'm sure he won't mind..."

*The wardrobe's other door opens to reveal a horrible sight: Prince's face burned to an unrecognisable ruin. Nose twisted to an improbable place, mouth slanted, one eye perhaps not even there.*

PRINCE *yelling at the old man.*  
Aaawja ay out ee?!!!!

UNCLE GUS  
I only said what's true. That you're alone. My poor Gladys never could stand to let anyone be alone. She would say to me, "Look, this Julie with the tattered dresses is always alone on the fourth. Go up and talk to her." And I would go up to her, Tuesdays at four, and talk. But it was my Gladys wanted me to.

Gladys! I didn't cheat on you with her! Never touched her! We'd sit naked in the dark face to face, true, every Tuesday at four, but she didn't want it and I wasn't that sort... We just sat, trams groaning down in the street, and she would laugh. That was it, Gladys, that and no more!  
So I told this girl what's true.

*Prince rises from the chair only to fall back again.*

UNCLE GUS  
That you've got no money. Here's this girl. She won't pay much, but she wants to work. Working people make money. Me and my Gladys, we were janitors here for forty years. Did we work? Yes! Did we make money? No! But we had a flat to live in and had the love of the residents. Is that something you can buy, I ask you, is it?

PRINCE  
I ay oll aan! Oncha ing aee ur o ee... I awnha ee aown... aown!

UNCLE GUS  
Alone, alone! And you haven't any money. Look, even your gas bills! I paid your gas bills for you. I didn't want to tell you 'cause I pitied you...

PRINCE *springs up and yells*  
I on awn noaee ity!!!

UNCLE GUS  
All right, that's not what I meant. It ain't pity anyway. But if you don't like it that way, I can talk different... Like to the renitent characters in the old days, those as knew I was an informer like all janitors, yet still they wanted to provoke me. And to those I said, "I won't put up with this!!! Won't put up with this!" Those times my Gladys would stand behind me and I would feel her smile spilling over my shoulder, feel her pride in me.

So that's what I say to you now: I won't put up with this, you got it? I won't! Bloke like you deserves a better fate than drinking yourself to death. Sitting in the wardrobe all day, won't even open the goddamn curtain, this stink here makes me sick! Had enough! Who ever told you they don't want you anywhere? Who said they won't employ you 'cause of how you look, eh?

*Astonished, Prince moves two steps forward. The full horror of his face is now revealed. Uncle Gus stares at it too.*

UNCLE GUS

All right... it may be difficult to find a job... but there's work you can do at home!

*shouting again*

YOU LISTEN TO ME, I AIN'T COUGHING UP ANY MORE DOUGH FOR YOU! YOU WORK IT OUT! AND IF I GET YOU A LODGER YOU THANK ME, GOT IT?

Ah, my dear Gladys's smile spilling over my shoulder! Thank you my friend, thank you for bringing back the one I loved more than anything!

No tears... not over seventy!

*He squeezes Prince's hand.*

*Prince sits down on his chair gazing straight ahead as far as his face allows.*

UNCLE GUS

She's paying the first two months in advance. I've agreed with her.

PRINCE

Aw?!

UNCLE GUS

Well, I mean I just told her how much I think you'd want. Twenty thousand for the room plus utilities, she'll put forty down now and the rest to come regular. A decent girl she is, she'll go far. I recognise the type. It was my Gladys taught me, we used to sit out front and look at girls and women walk by, and she told me which one would go far and which wouldn't. And she was right, she always was. We stopped some of them. "What's your name?" Gladys would ask. "I'm Irene Taylor," she'd answer. "Well my dear," my Gladys would say, "you'll go far." And she'd walk on, beaming with joy. Not Gladys's fault that she didn't notice the swerving bus. No way it's her fault! If the damn bus had been on time, not ten minutes late, it would all have been different.

PRINCE *still patiently*

I on awn a odger!

UNCLE GUS

It ain't about wanting. Sure, who wants a lodger? *Need* brings lodgers. It's brought you this one, she'll come in and pay you.

PRINCE *more frantically*

Ooo!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

UNCLE GUS

Yes.

PRINCE

Ooo!!!!

UNCLE GUS

You do what I tell you to, you snivelling brat!

*Prince springs up, grabs a chair, strikes it against the floor where it shatters. He threatens the old man with the chair leg, howling.*

PRINCE  
I on awn a odger!

UNCLE GUS  
That all you can say? You better not speak at all anyway! Come back when you can pronounce words. You're a good man and I'm going to help you!

PRINCE  
I ot a ood an!!

UNCLE GUS  
You are too! A good man!

PRINCE  
Ooo!

*He strikes the air in the old man's direction. Gus stands up proud. Prince obviously wants to hit him, but he cannot bring himself to. He flings the chair leg away, thinks, sits down and makes Gus sit next to him.*

PRINCE  
Aauh Uss... ess aawk eehy-uee...

UNCLE GUS  
I've been talking seriously all the time.

PRINCE  
I on awn a odger!

UNCLE GUS  
There you go again. Try it at least. Probation, you know. One month. Then you come to me and say, "Aauh Uss! Odger oh ood!" If you do, I'll tell her myself to go. Look here, you need that bit of money lest they evict you. Lots of people been evicted... Poor Gladys was still alive when they evicted that family from the scullery. Well, they're better off now. The six of them jumped off Chain Bridge together... better off now. Dangling their feet from the clouds. And what do we dangle? Nothing! Man had better not dangle anything these days lest someone steal it!

*Prince stares at Gus: he's lost track.*

UNCLE GUS  
So can I bring the girl?

PRINCE  
Aawja ay oo er?

UNCLE GUS  
What did I say to her? About what?

PRINCE  
A-ow ee?

UNCLE GUS  
About you? What's there to say? Nothing.



PRINCE

Ooo an eev! I aay eeeuh!

AUNTY CHARLIE

You talks proper like, then I listens. For now you shuts your maw while you needs our charity. Not that you deserves it! You's a piece of rubbish, it's written on your forehead. I bets you've killed folks, ain't you?

*Prince restrains himself with difficulty.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

Get mad if you likes, I doesn't care! But I can feel that sort of thing. You're ugly, got an ugly mug and sure there's a reason for that. Someone up there, the great cleaner up there keeps track and knows what to do about who! Everyone deserves what they gets. Everyone! You done something to deserve that mug! But that ain't my business. My business is to clean up. Yours is to pay. Uncle Gus is paying for now, but I'll beat a price out of you too, you hears? You doesn't talk but you hears what I says, right?

*Prince stands up slowly, menacingly.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

Yes, attack me if you like! For speaking true! Dares you say you ain't a piece of rubbish? And you better treat that girl decent like, you hear? I hates cripples. Everyone helping them. Stupid Uncle Gus's gone soft in the brain in his old age, wasting on you what little he has. I hates cripples 'cause you must help them. And who's gonna help us healthy ones? Who, eh? Nobody! We can all croak. So mark my words, you gets a healthy girl here, you treats her well or I'll come back and get you! How I hates cripples!

*Prince moves to his desk with some closed drawers. Visible to the audience only, he takes out two things: a gun (revolver) and a bottle. After some hesitation he sticks to the bottle.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

See, he drinks! He gots money for that, for booze. Shameless! You drinks, I doesn't care. Your business. But no barfing all over the place when the girl's here! No way!

*Prince strikes the edge of the open drawer with the bottle, breaking it at the neck. He moves to attack Auntie Charlie with it. She is busy gathering up her vacuum cleaner and never notices Prince approaching with the broken bottle.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

And put on something decent!

*Now she turns, sees Prince, screams and bolts to meet Bugger who is just arriving at the door, wearing a pink suit and shiny shoes. He shouts at Auntie Charlie who screams again loudly and runs out.*

BUGGER

At it again? Haven't had enough yet? When will you stop? What the hell is it you fancy in those damn old chicks, eh?

PRINCE

Ol ee... eh-uh... ahhin ahay... I iller... I ill her... ink ee an oouh me uh-ou... ge' oss!!!

BUGGER

All right, Prince, calm down. It's all cool. The hag's beaten it, buzzed off on her vacuum.

*Prince calms down, looks expectantly at Bugger.*

PRINCE  
Eh ee o?

BUGGER  
I tell you she's gone, flown away. Haven't you got something better to drink?

PRINCE  
O.

BUGGER  
Aren't you bored of those stained pyjamas? Dirty, stinky, shitty, disgusting... Won't you ever get dressed? My news aren't good. I couldn't get a passport.

PRINCE  
Aaaw?

BUGGER  
I mean, passport yes... but it needs a photo. Right, fake passport, no problem, but your picture must go into it and there's no immigration officer on earth who'll see your picture and pass on... You could be caught, Prince, and I with you. That's not good, not okay, you see? Not okay.

PRINCE  
En immaa unee ack!

BUGGER  
I don't get that. Listen, the way you talk, that's not okay. I can't understand a thing.

*Prince pounces on Bugger, brings him to the floor, strangling him.*

*Then he stands up, walks frantically to the desk and writes. He hands the scrap to Bugger.*

BUGGER  
Wait... Damn, I left my reading glasses in the car...

*Prince strikes the back of Bugger's head with his palm.*

BUGGER  
Okay, okay... the money? What money?

*Prince thinks, then walks back to the desk. This time he pulls the gun out.*

PRINCE  
I ill oo... ihh oo onnn... ee mee uh uney!

BUGGER  
Steel yourself, mate... there's no money.

*Prince stares, stunned.*

BUGGER  
You put it in my care, didn't you? Well, I meant to do you good. Thought I'd double it. Triple it. Make everything okay. So I went down to the club. You know how okay I am with poker. It wouldn't have been enough to make our getaway so I thought I'd multiply it.

*Prince keeps staring.*

BUGGER

And I was doing fine, I'd won a heap of money by dawn. But then that stupid cueball says, first quads take all. He cheated, the slimebag, they all cheated. But how do I prove that? Should I call the police? Consumer protection, or what? The slimebag cheated so you and me, we've both been swindled, mate. Hurts me as much as it hurts you, believe me...

*Prince leaps at Bugger and floors him.*

BUGGER

My new jacket, you idiot!

*They wrestle, then Bugger kicks Prince in the face hard. Prince howls with pain and stands up, face bleeding. He leans on the table wincing in awful pain. Bugger stands behind him, talking in a hiss.*

BUGGER

You've cashed in your chips, man! You're dead. Attacking me, you rat? Me, the only man who's still okay with you? Want me to go to the police? Report your whereabouts? They'll give you twenty years sure okay, believe me. So don't you dare hit me again! Let's say your money bought my silence, right? I'd have taken you out of the country but I can't, how the hell could anyone take you out with this face, eh? Risking the green lane isn't my style, mate. I don't know what they know about you in this house, but if you aren't okay with me, I can sure enlighten them! Better get back in your wardrobe and be happy if I open your fucking door to visit you, because I'm the only friend you've got left, you louse! Your only pal, you puke!

I treat you okay if you'll let me, but if you make a fuss... I could sell your car too, because I need the money. Pals have been inquiring about the clunker and I told them, it isn't okay yet, I don't know where you are. I lied to them, I, Bugger, who never lies to pals because that isn't my style. I'll sell the clunker, and you can try and find someone to get you across on the sly. If I were you, I wouldn't make a fuss, mate.

And your gun will be safer with me.

*He picks up the gun, pockets it and departs, whistling.*

BUGGER

You want poppy seed cake? I'll get some tomorrow.

*Prince stands up slowly, wipes his bleeding face and walks to the wardrobe. He sits inside and slowly closes the door on himself.*

## Scene 3

*The wardrobe is closed. The room is now visibly tidier, bottles are lined up neatly. The door opens. Enter Uncle Gus and behind him Christine with a small suitcase. She looks around curiously.*

UNCLE GUS

You could call this the living room... my poor wife Gladys used to say when we came here, "look you, Gus, this is the living room." Then there's a bedroom for the gentleman here, not too big, used to be the

maid's room in the old days. That little room, you know, is so full of mischievous maids' dreams that upon my word you taste sweet if you lick the wall. "Don't you lick the wall," my Gladys used to say, because of course she didn't feel that taste in the wall, she being a woman, though one of the best... she didn't lick walls. Not that I mean the gentleman here licks the wall... but the dreams of those maids are there and that's good for sleep, you can be sure.

CHRISTINE

And my room? Where's mine?

UNCLE GUS

That can be accessed from here and from the corridor too... Because of course they remodelled the house back when the cry was, why should a small class be more comfortable than the majority? Let all be miserable! And then they remodelled these big bourgeois apartments and whole generations grew up, you know, without having an idea what it is like to have a home. But that's the way it is... my Gladys always used to say, "I just wish I didn't feel something was out of place when I look at this new wall." They made the walls crooked, you see, and souls too. Crooked. But it'll all come straight. You'll live to see it, I won't.

CHRISTINE

Such a nice flat! We don't get them as big as this. Wow! Not in our country.

UNCLE GUS

But you have the Hargita mountains, don't you... The greenery. Lake Saint Anna. I've just seen something about them on TV. You must have a good life over there.

CHRISTINE

And how tidy everything is... like our clean room back home. Because we still have those, the clean rooms. Every house has one.

UNCLE GUS

Here, miss, it's always so tidy you could even... tip your cigarette on the floor. But how pale you are, miss...

CHRISTINE

I've just come over the Chain Bridge, on foot from South Station. I stopped on there... and watched the water. Long. Watched the water for a long time from the high bridge. A long time.

UNCLE GUS

That's not good. Pretty girls should not look long at the water. Lest they get sad and jump.

CHRISTINE

I would have, but they were shooting some movie on the bridge. It was full of police.

*Uncle Gus stares at Christine. Then he forces a laugh.*

UNCLE GUS

Joking, little girl, joking, aren't you?

CHRISTINE

I'm not joking. There were policemen everywhere.

*Silence.*

CHRISTINE  
And that gentleman? Where is he?

UNCLE GUS  
He's here in the room.

CHRISTINE  
Where? Where is he?

UNCLE GUS  
Well, I'll be going.

*The door moves slowly, opens just a crack. Gus flees before he has to see the girl meet the monster. Christine stands still, smiling. She puts her suitcase down. The wardrobe slowly opens. Prince is still not visible. Silence. Prince apparently doesn't know what to "say" first. Finally he makes up his mind.*

PRINCE  
O... oo uh oom...

CHRISTINE *looks at the wardrobe with interest*  
I'll go, sir, but let me introduce myself first. Then yes, thank you, I'll go to my room. In there.

*The wardrobe now opens fully. Prince is sitting inside, wearing a suit, looking out with surprise.*

PRINCE  
Ou... ou unnehan aw I ay?

CHRISTINE  
Of course. I'm Hungarian too, aren't I? Of course I do, I understand. I'm Hungarian like you. Hungarian.

PRINCE  
Oo aw... unnehann... oh oo uh oom.

CHRISTINE  
My name is Christine Körösi. Spelt with two ö-s, Körösi. Christine Körösi.

*She walks to him, extending a hand. Prince's face now comes fully to the light. Christine shows no surprise. She smiles, holding her hand out. The two hands slowly approach, then link.*

CHRISTINE  
How handy that my room opens to the corridor, so I won't disturb you all the time. Provided we'll agree. If we will. We will, won't we?

PRINCE  
Ee uh-ee... ou uh uhey...

*Christine laughs, draws her money out and puts it on the table.*

CHRISTINE  
Two months in advance. Here. In advance, two months.

*Prince stirs, stands, steps out of the wardrobe.*

PRINCE *in embarrassment*  
I a ompeet ool... oo ive inna aw-obe...

CHRISTINE  
Everyone's got to live somewhere. If in a wardrobe, then there, never you mind. I've got some mulberry brandy from home, will you have a drop with me? To our agreement? It's from home.

*At first she laughs while she speaks but by the end her voice seems to quaver.*

*Prince sits down with surprise, holds up a glass. Christine pulls a bottle from her case and pours for him. He then remembers to get a glass for her too.*

CHRISTINE  
How nice it would have been if I could say, Papa packed this for me to bring to Budapest. But no, he didn't... unfortunately no.

PRINCE *responds instinctively*  
O?

CHRISTINE  
No. I ran away. Though I used to like it there. You have the right to know the truth, because you're giving me lodging for fair money. I ran away. But I will go back! I didn't leave for good. And it wasn't easy, I nearly ran back to him... standing on the bridge, thinking of Papa. If I jumped now, maybe the water would carry me to him. Or someone would let him know at least... But then I didn't jump.

PRINCE  
O?

CHRISTINE  
No. I wished to see, ever since I was born. Our house was in a high place, on a bank... below it the stables, then the threshing floor, the barn... and the road across the stream, up to the plum orchard... big plum orchard, beyond that the apple orchard and beyond that... I didn't know what was beyond the apples. For a long time I never dared go there. The sky meets the apple orchard like a roof, I thought, and once I feel I'm ready to go up there, I'll see wonderful things...

Then one day I went up. And saw nothing. A crappy cornfield. You know how it is? We weren't really in a high place, much more like a deep place... that cornfield, it was sort of midway up, don't you see? We weren't high... we were down there and the cornfield above.

*Prince nods and goes on staring.*

CHRISTINE  
That's when I decided to do something about my life. You must have had that feeling too, when you must change something. Languages, people, university... my God! Papa used to say, "Being Hungarian here is enough for you." But it wasn't for me, though being Hungarian there is harder than being Romanian, and that isn't a piece of cake either. Harder to be Hungarian. Am I boring you?

*Prince is so fascinated by the girl that he even forgets to nod.*

CHRISTINE  
I'm telling you because I want you to see I'm not that kind of girl. I have goals. Come over here. Find a job. Stay with nice people. Learn Italian. Then hop on the train and go to Bologna. They have the European University there. I've read so much about it. I'll enrol there and I can become anything. What do you think? I can become anything.

PRINCE  
Eh-eee i an...

CHRISTINE  
Nice plan, yes, but still just a plan. Well, I'll go and unpack. Things are as simple as this: work, language, Bologna. It's just that we've forgotten that they're simple, right? Everyone looks for complicated things because they've lost faith in simplicity. Well I haven't. That's why our kind of Hungarians go far in the world. Because we carry the forest with us. The simplicity of the forest, right? Or the plum orchard, whatever they have.

You mind if I come in to chat again? I have no one here in Budapest. And it's nice to chat with you. Must admit it's this little bit of drink talking. True, it's just mulberry, but even that can ferment, and as Papa says, once something ferments, what does it matter if it was grape or plum or mulberry? They all make you just as stupid. What matter what it was?

*Silence. Christine watches Prince, smiling.*

CHRISTINE  
What time do you get up?

PRINCE  
I on eh uh...

CHRISTINE  
So can I have the bathroom from six to seven? All right?

*Prince nods. Christine starts toward the door that Uncle Gus had shown her.*

CHRISTINE  
You look so familiar, as if we'd met somewhere before, haven't we?

*Prince walks to a mirror covered with black cloth. He tears the veil off and peers into the mirror. He stares in astonishment at his mirror image.*

## Scene 4

*Christine sitting in the living room. The sound of a vacuum cleaner through the open door of her room. Aunty Charlie looks in from there.*

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Nobody's lived here for years! But I'll be done in a minute... My vacuum's so good it'll suck the paper clean off the wall if I wants it to! He still in the bath?

CHRISTINE  
Yes, we've agreed. This time it's his. The bath. It's his this time.

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Agreed? Funny thing... I tells you, little fig, fellow ain't had a bath since he's come here and that's half a year!

CHRISTINE *laughs*

Why do you say to me, little fig? You say that to me?

AUNTY CHARLIE

Because that's what you're like. A little fig. And don't talk back. He ain't had a bath. I knows. I been cleaning the bathroom. That tub ain't had water in it for months, sure as hell. His bum must have looked like a rabbit four weeks dead by the highway.

CHRISTINE

Aunty Charlie! And why do they call you Aunty Charlie? He does call you that.

AUNTY CHARLIE

How would I know? Was my husband called me Charlie. And that tells you all about him. A proper oaf he was, God rest him. And I used to be pretty, like you now, little fig, and you tell me, just what kind of man is that, to look at a woman and call her Charlie? Thought he was a faggot but no... he was too dumb even for that. An I got stuck with the name. But I doesn't mind any more.

Room's done, little fig.

CHRISTINE

Clean room. Like the clean room back home. Thank you. Clean room. So nice!

AUNTY CHARLIE

You take my advice.

CHRISTINE

Advice? Happy to... what advice?

AUNTY CHARLIE

You listen to me, little fig. If you wants to pick up a guy here, you doesn't say everything twice.

CHRISTINE

Twice? I say things twice?

AUNTY CHARLIE

Yes. Men usually doesn't forgive us for talking anyway. But if we goes about saying things twice, they'll sure ditch us. 'S why I tells you, it's enough to say things once. Even better not to speak at all. You're a poor girl. Just smile.

CHRISTINE

I didn't notice... I didn't... Twice, really?

AUNTY CHARLIE

It made my vacuum cleaner start on its own.

CHRISTINE

Right, I'm sorry... I'm nervous... left home and I'm nervous... it's very... it isn't easy to leave home and pretend...

AUNTY CHARLIE

But this way you gives yourself away. Stop that, you hear me?

CHRISTINE

Yes. I'll pay attention. I'll pay...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Hush! Just once!

CHRISTINE  
Just once... I feel better already...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Told you, didn't I?

*Uncle Gus rushes in anxiously.*

UNCLE GUS  
Now I say what my poor Gladys used to say times like this: "Is all well?"

CHRISTINE  
I had very nice dreams, Uncle Gus. All will be well.

UNCLE GUS  
Nice dreams at a new place... that always means... anyway, didn't you find anything... strange?

CHRISTINE  
Strange? What? Why?

UNCLE GUS  
Nothing, nothing. There's nothing strange here.

AUNTY CHARLIE  
You take care of that girl! Take care. She's the suicidal type.

UNCLE GUS  
Come on, Aunty Charlie, you've got vacuum on your brain...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Do I? And what's that cut on her wrist, eh?

CHRISTINE  
Sometimes one... despairs...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
No. One does not despair. As your misfortune-ridden Gladys always used to say, didn't she, Gus?

UNCLE GUS  
Gladys wasn't misfortune-ridden, Aunty Charlie. Not ridden.

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Yes she was.

UNCLE GUS  
No.

AUNTY CHARLIE  
What then do you call it when someone gets raped in her old age and dies of it?

UNCLE GUS *howls*  
Shut up, you! And that's not what she died of, get it? No!

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Yes it was, the shame of it.

UNCLE GUS *howls*  
No!

*Christine looks on, speechless.*

UNCLE GUS  
You're jealous, Aunty Charlie! Because I have her, I have my Gladys to remember while your husband, what did your husband see when he saw you? He saw a Charlie! So what right have you to judge me? Me, I have a calamity on account of Gladys and what do you have? A lousy vacuum cleaner is what you have, but if you mention once again what happened to Gladys then you won't have it any longer, only your vacuum cleaner will have an Aunty Charlie to remember, because I'll tie that gooseneck pipe on your goose neck, see what I mean?

AUNTY CHARLIE  
What sort of death is that, eh?

UNCLE GUS  
That is none of your business!

Gladys is happy... there...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
She'll be happy when her killer is found.

UNCLE GUS  
They're looking. You know they're looking.

AUNTY CHARLIE  
I know.

*Gus cannot control himself any longer.*

UNCLE GUS  
How many times will you throw that at me? How many times?

*Silence. Gus turns his back. Aunty Charlie walks up to him, very close.*

AUNTY CHARLIE  
All right. I'll shut up. And that one in there... he's having a bath.

UNCLE GUS  
Really!? Why?

*The bathroom door opens, very slowly. Prince emerges cautiously. Aunty Charlie and Uncle Gus stare.*

UNCLE GUS  
How... smart he looks...

*Prince growls.*

UNCLE GUS  
Aunty Charlie, we'd better go... If you need anything...

AUNTY CHARLIE *steps in front of Prince*  
And you treat her well! I'm watching you!

*She exits with Gus, pulling her vacuum cleaner after herself.*

*Christine stands.*

CHRISTINE  
I'm going too. To my room. I won't disturb you. I'll get ready... try to find some work.

PRINCE  
A ill ee ood.

CHRISTINE  
Though I'm not in such a hurry after all. I've brought some tomatoes, peppers from the market... I could knock something together for us if you like.

PRINCE  
O oo oh oom!

CHRISTINE  
I've still got some of the money I saved, I could even buy some sausage... well yes, that'd be over the top...

*Prince just stands there and looks on.*

CHRISTINE  
It was Mama who taught me cooking, you'll have no reason to complain...

PRINCE *yells*  
O oo oh ooom!!!

CHRISTINE  
What's the matter? You can tell me. Some bad news?

PRINCE  
O ah-aaaay!!!!

*He kicks the table over and begins to rage. Christine runs to her room, terrified. Prince finds a bottle, drinks deep. The main door opens, enter Bugger.*

BUGGER  
At last, old man! What with the tidiness, I thought something wasn't okay!

PRINCE  
I awnha ee aown... aown!

BUGGER

You'll be alone, don't you worry. You're always alone at the end. I tried to go round the old pals, the guys we worked for. Thought maybe they'd cough up some money—

Damn, you look good, mate! Ever so smart, had a bath at last, and that suit...

But they spit on you, old man. What am I to do? Leave you to rot? But you're a pal of mine. They gave no money though you used to give them, and not little scraps either. You were the Prince... you used to protect them, right? You were the guy who collected the big money, it was your due, eh? And now they shit on you. Disgusting.

PRINCE

Ohen aahass!

BUGGER

Rotten bastards they are. All. They don't want your gun either. They say they won't buy from me because I'm not reliable. They say that... to me! Who used to work with the great Prince! Work with you! It's all rotten, mate. Got to look for some money elsewhere.

Why don't you take some work-at-home job? One of my chicks does beads at home, you could give it a try, couldn't you?

PRINCE

Oo an o oo ell!!!

BUGGER

Why? You've got dexterity... or used to. That's rich, I picture the Prince, the prince of the underworld, threading beads at home, eh? "Shit, I dropped one!" What a laugh!

*Christine's door opens. Bigger, surprised, draws a gun and jumps behind the wardrobe. Christine appears in the doorway.*

CHRISTINE

You were right. I apologise. I have no right to meddle in your life just because I'm renting a room here. It won't happen again.

*She closes the door. Bigger steps back from the wardrobe, still surprised.*

BUGGER

Who's the cunt?

*Prince drinks deep from the bottle.*

PRINCE

Odger.

BUGGER

Have you gone bonkers? You crazy? And if she's a cop?

PRINCE

Ee o a op.

BUGGER

Listen, this isn't okay. We never agreed on this. Not okay at all!

PRINCE

On eh ichée... I nee unnee...

BUGGER

Look, if you need money, I'll get some. But this chick... she can't stay, you see?

PRINCE

Oodg-uuuuuuuh!

BUGGER

Lodger? You've taken on a lodger? You bonkers? Your loony janitor and cleaner aren't enough? Not enough witnesses that you're here? Why in fucking hell do you bring in another pain in the ass? Fucking hell!

PRINCE

I inn awnn oo!

BUGGER

If you didn't want to then who did? You lost what little wits you had? You who could have... holy shit! A lodger? Who is she?! Write it down.

*Prince tries to answer then begins to write feverishly. Bugger reads.*

BUGGER

What? And she has nobody here in Budapest?

*Prince shakes his head and takes another drink.*

BUGGER

Don't drink so much, it'll make you sick. And she wants a job?

*Prince nods.*

BUGGER

We're saved, mate! All okay! Got work!

PRINCE

Ihee oo-ann... uh ah ay...

BUGGER

A pretty woman... with nobody? Nobody here? And what did she do? Run away?

PRINCE

Un away.

BUGGER

I'll have a look. Maybe she can stay. I'll look. After all... when we were pimping that Serbian chick, you know... she made us quite a bit, didn't she? I just need to okay myself back to the trade... I'll take a peek at the bird, shall I?

*He walks to the door and peeks through the keyhole.*

BUGGER

What the shit is she doing?!

*He tears the door open and rushes in. Prince, confused, goes closer to look. Bugger steps out carrying an unconscious Christine.*

BUGGER

Spit it out, fuck you! Got to make her puke... the stupid goose swallowed a boxful of pills...

*He goes to the bathroom, drags the girl in. Sound of water running.*

BUGGER

Throw up! Thought you'd die on us? Right here? Fucking hell! Throw up!

*Water still running.*

## Scene 5

*Christine is seated in the centre. Bugger stands in front of her, expounding. Prince is sitting off to the side, looking on without a word.*

BUGGER

It's okay everywhere, but the okayest here, my girl. Looking for a job? Found one?

CHRISTINE

Yes, washing dishes. But I left.

BUGGER

Why?

CHRISTINE

I had to work too fast... and what the guests left... I wasn't allowed to bin the leftovers.

BUGGER

Then what?

CHRISTINE

I had to return them to the kitchen... They'd be good enough for the next guest.

BUGGER

That why you left?

CHRISTINE

Yes. This is not done where I'm from. Our place, we give leftovers to the pigs.

BUGGER

Because you guys aren't okay with market economy yet.

CHRISTINE

No.

BUGGER  
You're freaking lucky to have met us.

CHRISTINE  
You are friends? You two?

*Prince makes a growl of protest.*

BUGGER  
The very best.

CHRISTINE  
Then you must be a good man.

*Prince growls again.*

BUGGER  
I'm not a good man... it's just that what I do is okay. And I'll tell you something else: I love to play. Cards.

CHRISTINE  
They like cards back home too.

BUGGER  
But I lose. And occasionally I've lost someone else's money.

*Prince growls yet again.*

CHRISTINE  
And you regret that?

BUGGER  
Yes... for a very long time I couldn't look that person in the eye. Felt terrible.

CHRISTINE  
And then?

BUGGER  
He was alone... I stayed with him. I'd gambled his money away, but I stayed with him. He's my pal. It's all okay between us. You trust me?

CHRISTINE  
Yes. I think I do.

BUGGER  
And you won't do anything silly again, okay? Life is fucking beautiful. You'll see. Everybody who's ever done business with me saw how fucking beautiful it was.

CHRISTINE  
I was so desperate... but it's all right now. And I'm ashamed. It's over. That is over.

BUGGER  
Right. You want a lot of money, fast.

CHRISTINE

Yes, that would be good.

BUGGER

So no point going to work, say, in some office... years until you save as much as you want. And you'd need a work permit and stuff like that.

CHRISTINE

I must apply for one. I know.

BUGGER

Papers, insurance, that sort of thing. But you want to go on, right? Barcelona?

CHRISTINE

Bologna. Yes.

BUGGER

I've been there.

CHRISTINE

At university?

BUGGER

Almost. Do you trust me?

CHRISTINE

Why do you keep asking that? At home we trust everybody. That's how I was brought up.

BUGGER

Here it's a dreadful world, Christy.

CHRISTINE

I see that.

BUGGER

People get lonely, their lives aren't okay any longer.

CHRISTINE

In the cities, yes. But where I come from, we still dance together.

BUGGER

You dance? No shit! What sort of dance?

CHRISTINE

Little rustic dances.

BUGGER

Rustic's lusty, busty! Feel the money bulging in your pocket.

CHRISTINE

I can dance for money here?

BUGGER

You can. For rustic, they'll pay you fortunes. And it gets better.

CHRISTINE

Then what about loneliness?

BUGGER

People get lonely, Christy. Especially men.

CHRISTINE

Men are lonely by nature.

BUGGER

Right. Look at my friend here. He's been living in the dark, then you came to stay and brought him the sunshine, see?

*Prince growls again.*

CHRISTINE

Yes, and he's forgiven me now. Would you believe, I found a flower on my bed when I came home this afternoon.

*Bugger gives Prince a surprised glance.*

PRINCE

I inn oo ih ere! I inn!

BUGGER

No, of course you didn't. The Prince does not put flowers on women's beds.

*Christine looks at Prince in amazement.*

CHRISTINE

Prince? Is that his name?

BUGGER

He used to be the Prince before his... accident. He was the Prince. Still is, princely okay.

CHRISTINE

The Prince of where?

BUGGER

Leave that for now. We'd only make him weep. He doesn't like to remember.

CHRISTINE

Does the Prince ever weep?

*Prince growls.*

BUGGER

He does. On my shoulder.

*Prince quaffs angrily from his bottle.*

BUGGER

Don't drink so much, Prince, mind your liver.

*Prince makes another angry growl.*

BUGGER

So people have got lonely. Particularly men. They roam the streets, aimless. But they love their wives, they all do.

CHRISTINE *suspiciously*

What do you want from me?

BUGGER

They'd have lived together twenty years, thirty. They keep a picture inside. Of her. They want to find that in someone else. Just for one night. They don't break faith. Every man wants to find the love of his youth again. Again, to remember. And when he's remembered, he'll go home with flowers, or without, look at his wife, and love her again, go on loving, because someone's reminded him what their first night was like, or the first few. And for years again, or decades, it's all okay. All!

You believe he doesn't think of screwing his wife when he's screwing this woman? Course he does. But he's screwing her without responsibility, without the monotony of his recent years, again and again discovering something that makes him even more fond of her, more devoted to her.

CHRISTINE

You want me to become a whore?

*Prince makes a sound almost like laughter.*

BUGGER

See, he's laughing! The Prince is laughing. You know how long since I heard him laugh?

CHRISTINE

You want to make me do that?

BUGGER

No! Never crossed my mind!

CHRISTINE

But you'd help me do that?

BUGGER

Eh, no! Forget it. Talk about it some other time. Maybe tomorrow...

*Christine steps to the window, looks out.*

BUGGER

Hey, get away from that window!

CHRISTINE

Why?

BUGGER

Never mind, just come away, I'll feel better.

CHRISTINE

So why? Can't we talk about it now?

BUGGER  
What?

CHRISTINE  
How much will they give me for remembering their wives?

*Prince and Bugger exchange a meaningful glance.*

BUGGER  
You wouldn't need to worry about that. That would be demeaning. You accepting their money. Degrading for a woman. Think about it: there's been a miracle, a biological revolution, and then you got to talk about money... no, I could never stomach that.

CHRISTINE  
True, that would be embarrassing.

BUGGER  
That's why you'd have me. I'd arrange it in advance. I guess you're... a beginner.

CHRISTINE  
Yeah. I'm a virgin.

BUGGER  
What?

CHRISTINE  
I've never loved. There were opportunities, but I didn't...

BUGGER  
In that case... that's worth a lot. Makes it costlier for them, first time... Maybe twenty thousand for you.

CHRISTINE  
Twenty thousand. That's a lot. Three million lei. A lot.

BUGGER  
They prefer beginners. Seasoned hookers aren't for the line you and I want to take. That's just animal lust, nothing more. Beginners are different. Every man wants to find his innocent first love. If he finds her in you, that's maybe ten thousand each.

CHRISTINE  
And how many of these men in a day?

BUGGER  
Four. Maybe five.

CHRISTINE  
I see.

*She drops her head.*

CHRISTINE *quietly*  
Holy mother of God!

*Silence. Prince stands up and gestures at Bugger to go.*

BUGGER

Look, Christy, I've got to go now. Think until tomorrow. You see? Think. It's like becoming a nurse with the Red Cross. And in a few months you earn what you need for university. Keep that in mind. And you'll still be just as young. There, everything will be okay.

*Exit Bugger. Christine sits with her head bowed.*

CHRISTINE

Holy mother of God!

PRINCE

Ugger an ihio! Eeehioow!

CHRISTINE

Sure, I did think of that: what else, without papers, of course I thought of it, like all the other girls back home, and of course it didn't kill them... Holy mother of God! I don't even know... well it doesn't matter, they'd know what to do, that's enough... and I know that an unspoiled maiden gets more... of course, sell what you can only sell once, but that's where the money is, so the girls said... some came home and had a new fence built with what they earned here... even her husband's happier, and her child... now it's they who send her to Budapest in the spring to get money, holy mother of God, they send her! Little Ben said, he's Annie's son, seven years old, he said, "Mother, go whoring in the spring and in the summer we can have a holiday" ... "Mama, go whoring," and Annie went, she still goes, and what harm in it? Nothing at all. New fence, happy husband and her son sends her to do it.

*She trails off and looks up at Prince standing above her.*

CHRISTINE

Is that how much I'm worth? Until I get the money, till I go to university, I'm worth that much?

*Prince seriously nods in affirmation.*

CHRISTINE

I don't even know how to do it.

PRINCE

Aaah eee-hy.

CHRISTINE

Easy? You say that too? Because you suffer. You would appreciate nothing but your own suffering.

PRINCE

I oo aheehiay ohinn...

CHRISTINE

You won't even want to talk normally. Bet you could if you wanted to! If you wanted, you could. But you don't want to. You hide in your wardrobe and think it's all over, don't you? But it isn't!

PRINCE

I oo aheehiaaaaay ohinnnn.

CHRISTINE

That isn't the way. "I would appreciate nothing." That's the way. Try it. Sit down. We'll practice. Why, if I'm going to be a whore, the least you can do is learn to talk.

*Prince shakes his head and starts toward the wardrobe. Christine abruptly yells at him with unexpected vehemence.*

CHRISTINE

Sit down, sit down... SIT!!!!

*Prince sits down, shocked. Christine laughs, a loud, rippling laugh. Prince joins her making the strange noise that passes for his laughter. Christine kneels in front of Prince and holds his hand.*

CHRISTINE

Listen, teddy bear, speech lesson. "I would appreciate nothing." "I" is all right. You can do "oo" so you must manage "w" ... it's almost the same. Just do what I say and I might teach you everything... can you whistle?

*Prince tries to pout but cannot manage.*

CHRISTINE

A man ought to know how to whistle and handle a knife. You can handle a knife?

*Prince nods.*

CHRISTINE

Then all you need is to learn to whistle. Don't you think of coming back till you can whistle, Prince! Hear me, my father the King, I'll only pledge my hand to the Prince who can whistle my heart away! There! Your eyes laugh now! Come, sit, we'll practice. Sit. So say: "would."

PRINCE

Oo...

CHRISTINE

Wwooould... Think of the most beautiful thing a young lass can say to her lad when they bid farewell at dusk: "I would..." Later. Feel that "wou" at the start... try it... like giving a kiss, like the girl asking for a kiss, that's what "wou" feels like. Wwooould.... and the "d" flows into the kiss, thrusting that tongue forward and it's done... the lad goes home, kissed by a word... how beautiful is our Hungarian language, I would know, over there... well?

PRINCE

Wwooould...

*He makes it, sobs like a child, becomes frantic...*

CHRISTINE

There you go. Think always of the girl's kiss when you say that letter. So we've got the beginning. "Uh" is fine. "Pr" — that's what you've got to say to get "appreciate." "Pr," that's defiance, anger, just say it at once: "pprrrrrrrr" ... Who are you angry with? Be mad at me! You can't? Try Bugger, your friend... or whoever you like...

You know what? I'll tell you: Aunty Charlie!



CHRISTINE

You will whistle. That's the price. If I'm to be a whore, you are to whistle. All right? But if I'm a whore... I'll need someone to love. To be able to bear the closeness of those I hate. At least that's what I think. Isn't that right?

*Silence. Christine abruptly kisses Prince on the lips. Then she just stands there, looking. Prince turns away slowly.*

PRINCE *quietly*

I would... appreciate... nothing...

*He walks slowly toward the wardrobe, enters, closes the door on himself. Christine just stands in the middle, gazing into the air.*

## Scene 6

*Prince is sitting at the table. Bigger sits across from him, calculating busily and glancing repeatedly toward Christine's room.*

BUGGER

Five a day. That should do. Only well-off gents. They mustn't see you in any circumstances. Nobody. It's dangerous enough you're in the next room... but no matter, one of them's top brass at the police... I got his address and I've told him about the call his wife's gonna get if they make any fuss... he said it's okay, all okay... So five, maybe six days a week, so in one month, make it three weeks a month, comes to a million—

PRINCE

Nine hundred thousand.

BUGGER

Oh yeah. Right.

*He looks up at Prince only now.*

BUGGER

What did you just say?

PRINCE

Nine hundred thousand.

BUGGER

You talk?

PRINCE

Up yours.

BUGGER

Okay, enough. One month and we've got enough for your facelift. I've talked to the doc... I'll need to get you to the suburbs and he'll do it, he's a good kid, deals in morphine, he's one of us, all okay.

PRINCE  
Wassin it for you?

BUGGER  
What wasn't for me?

*Prince makes more effort.*

PRINCE  
Whattt is in ittt for you?

BUGGER  
I just like your pretty eyes. You're cool. And you didn't talk too much. Now that you're starting again, I might change my mind.

*He laughs. Prince looks at him seriously.*

PRINCE  
So why?

BUGGER *jumps up*  
You bonkers? Everyone knows you've got a bank account overseas. I'll get your map stitched up, get a passport, get you out, you pay me. And we can remain friends, or not.

PRINCE  
Havennn go' banccounnn.

BUGGER  
You're so sweet when you lie. But I'm not swallowing it. Got you in my hand, Prince. I was always second fiddle. The grunt. "Bugger, bugger off for some cigs," right? Well that's over, man. Now I tell you what we'll do and how, got it?

PRINCE  
You'll always emain a damm ugger.

BUGGER  
We'll see.

*He glances toward Christine's room.*

BUGGER  
What the hell are they doing? The bloke's time is up. I hope she isn't screwing up the very first time. If the stupid punter's satisfied, he'll tell everyone how okay it was and they'll come to her in turn... why does it take so long to knock it out?

PRINCE  
I don' know... I don' ememmmber...

*He tries to laugh, managing only his weird noise. Bugger, already upset, is vexed further by Prince's laughter.*

BUGGER  
You could have stayed your glum old self. You're too annoying when you're cheerful.

*He walks to the door and listens.*

BUGGER  
They're talking. Why?

PRINCE  
Ecauzzz no' everyonnnne izz zuch a dummass jerk as you, Bugggger.

BUGGER  
I'll try to run the girl for four months. It'll be a real blower if we manage that without being caught out. No papers, nothing. Least we've got this police topdog. Dude's a bit of a pervert, he's in a blue funk because of his wife, so we're okay, but still it'll be a blower. I'll pimp her for four months. It'll be okay.

PRINCE  
Denn... what?

BUGGER  
What else? She'll disappear. I'll gank her, she goes in the Danube. A hundred miles down she'll float up and be fished out. Like the others.

PRINCE  
I don't wantt...

BUGGER  
What? What don't you want!?

*Prince thinks.*

PRINCE  
We coould ake her wid uss...

BUGGER  
Take her with us? You bonkers? How? Hasn't even got a passport. Came over on the sly. Look, your misery is enough for me, I'm not a charity for the whole Carpathian Basin. I'll do her in like that Serbian babe. Even you shagged that one...

*Prince snarls.*

BUGGER  
She drifted nearly two hundred miles before she was caught. And what happened? Nothing. All okay. Same this time.

*Bugger hears a noise from the main door.*

BUGGER  
Punter's just gone out to the corridor...

*He hurries out, leaving Prince alone.*

PRINCE  
I would apprrreeeshiate nothinng... would appreesiate nothinn... whissle...

*He tries to whistle, distorting his face, without success. Bugger is back.*

BUGGER

What are you doing to your face? Leave the facelift to the doc, don't try it at home... look here!

*He shows money.*

BUGGER

I told him to give twenty thousand extra because she was a virgin. He did, and ten more, and said she *really* was a virgin! How about that? And how about selling her to everyone as a virgin? Bloke was in tears when he came out. On my word, in tears!

*The door opens; enter Christine.*

CHRISTINE

Got a cigarette? Preferably one that explodes?

*Bugger and Prince exchange a look.*

BUGGER

No smoking. Bad for health.

CHRISTINE

Pity. I'm cold.

*She sits, then smiles.*

CHRISTINE

A Körösi girl can do anything. Surmount all problems. So was the gentleman satisfied?

BUGGER

Who? Oh, him... yes, here's five thousand... your first fee. Congratulations, not bad for a start.

*Christine puts the money in her robe's pocket.*

CHRISTINE

He was awfully nice.

BUGGER

Really?

CHRISTINE

He wouldn't believe I was still a virgin... then he was so happy... I've made a man happy. That's surely better than doing dishes in a smutty kitchen, isn't it?

BUGGER

Absolutely.

CHRISTINE

Then we talked a long time.

BUGGER

Don't make a habit of that.

CHRISTINE

This man is in pain.

BUGGER

That must never happen! You should never cause your guest pain!

CHRISTINE

So I said to him: you, in pain?! Listen to the kind of pains we have back home... and I told him... I told him all about it... a good man he was, a good Hungarian man who still has tears for the suffering of his brothers. Well and right that we still have such people.

BUGGER

No discussing politics with the client.

CHRISTINE

He found solace with me and paid for it. It's just like back home... with Mary's statue in the side chapel. Man walks in, seeks solace, finds it. He drops some money in the box and goes home. Relieved.

BUGGER

Next one's coming at six tonight, then seven thirty. The one at ten o' clock isn't sure. He's supposed to be walking the dog, that's his pretext for coming, but the dog's sick. If he can take it for a walk, he'll be here. If not, he'll call to fix another time.

CHRISTINE

Well, what do you say, Prince? I've managed it. I used to think that when I lose what a girl's got to lose it would be at midsummer in a haystack with a boy from the village... but no, it was here... Where everyone longs to be, the Hungarian capital, my true homeland... why, that's at least as good as a haystack back home, isn't it?

PRINCE

A' leasss...

CHRISTINE

He even cried a little. He snuggled up to me and cried. Said he'd only met whores who did the needful and then threw him out the door. While I calmed him. Said I was not a whore. That was... nice of him... so when's the next one?

BUGGER

I just said, at six.

CHRISTINE

What sort is he?

BUGGER

Policeman.

CHRISTINE

Police? But I've no papers, nothing...

BUGGER

He doesn't know that and he's got reason to be careful. It'll be okay, trust me.

CHRISTINE

You... I don't trust. Six o' clock? I'll have a shower then.

PRINCE  
You're a grea' girl, Chrissine...

*Christine stops.*

CHRISTINE  
That's how you like me, is it? Making love next door for money? And can you whistle yet?  
*Exit.*

*Bugger stares at Prince.*

BUGGER  
What was that about whistling? And since when are you such pals? Did you sleep with the babe, Prince?

PRINCE  
O...

BUGGER  
I don't want that to tangle with our business, get it? She'll do her job and disappear. Right?

PRINCE  
I'll sssee...

BUGGER  
You've got something in your head! But remember, I'll snitch on you if you just move a finger wrong. I'll report you. They'll even pay me for you, and you can rot in the can for all I care, got it?

PRINCE *bitterly*  
Issapp... yess, you'll make her issappear... an' all will be okay...

BUGGER  
Don't you smell something?

PRINCE  
Mell what?

BUGGER  
I swear I smell gas... fucking hell!

*Both spring up and rush to the bathroom.*

BUGGER *offstage*  
Find the main valve. There's got to be a main shutoff for the gas...

*Bugger comes back carrying a limp Christine.*

CHRISTINE  
Pity... the gas boiler seemed a good idea...

BUGGER  
You could have blown up all of us, you little idiot! Enough... think of your university... Bologna, got it?

CHRISTINE  
The European University in Bologna...

BUGGER

That. So take a rest... you've got two hours before the cop. Come, rest... Bologna, University.

*He drags the girl to her room. Prince returns from the bathroom, goes to his wardrobe, stops. He kicks the wardrobe with feeling.*

PRINCE

Fuckinn' hell!!

## Scene 7

UNCLE GUS

Now you tell me what's going on here!

PRINCE

Get out!

UNCLE GUS

Yesterday this lodger of yours came home with two men!

PRINCE

I was asleep. You should sleep too.

UNCLE GUS

Sleep when someone's gone missing?

PRINCE

Were they maltreating her?

UNCLE GUS

No, they were laughing together, loudly.

PRINCE

Is that your ppprrroblem then?

UNCLE GUS

The shame! Two men! And you don't say anything?

PRINCE

No.

UNCLE GUS

It's your responsibility! Aren't you enough of a cripple to feel when someone's becoming a cripple? Here comes a healthy young person, a little fig, and what do you do? You start talking like a normal man, while the unfortunate girl is slipping lower and lower?!

PRINCE

Don' pesser me, Unnle Guss... Don' pesser me. Clozzz de wawdobe!

UNCLE GUS

You can't trick me. Hiding here from her! Hiding in your wardrobe so you needn't hear! How long have I laboured to get you two close? A nice match... I'm making it so she'll love you, you'll love her, and all will be well.

PRINCE

You doin' wha'?

UNCLE GUS

When you yelled at her so... I felt sorry for her, put a flower on her bed, and the little girl thought it was you, didn't she? But why do I trouble if you're letting her lead that life, why?

PRINCE

You pud de... fower... on her bedd?

UNCLE GUS

Of course. Who else?

PRINCE

Meansss you been eeesssdopping...

UNCLE GUS

I never eavesdrop any more. Had to, in the old days. I hated it. Got a cold in the ears from listening at keyholes. Passages swollen and leaking. Anyone could see I was the one who had his ears at keyholes. They all knew and still they talked behind their doors, talked about their conspiracies while I had pus running out of my ears. That's the only reason I welcomed the political change... Gladys was happy too, "Gus, you look better now, no more keyholes for you," she used to say.

PRINCE

So you heard everything?

UNCLE GUS

I don't know what you're up to, what all the secrecy is about... and I don't care. But I like you.

PRINCE

You shount like me, Uncle Gus.

UNCLE GUS

But I do. I don't like Mister Bugger but I like you... And you can count on me any time but please... careful with the little girl...

*Noise from the entryway. Bugger and Christine appear, laughing wildly.*

CHRISTINE

Uncle Gus! Darling Uncle Gus...

UNCLE GUS

I've got to water the plants.

*He departs in a hurry.*

CHRISTINE

Water the plants? What plants?

BUGGER

You hiding any decent booze, Prince? A great day, isn't it, Christine?

CHRISTINE

I've been accepted!

PRINCE *morosely*

Unniverssity? Bolognna?

CHRISTINE

No, Bombshell Lounge... dancing... twenty thousand a night! Twenty! Twenty nights a month, that makes four hundred! Four hundred thousand Forints! Bugger got me in.

BUGGER

No I didn't, you got yourself in, Christy! She jumped up on stage, danced like a goddess... she was damn okay, though Shutup Red... you know, Prince, the owner, he didn't even want to see her at first, but I whispered in his ear and he did... and he sure saw what a hot little girl she is!

CHRISTINE

Shall we show him?

BUGGER

Let's.

CHRISTINE

Bring on the fucking tape!

*Prince perks his ear at that. Bugger puts a cassette in the player. Prince meanwhile walks to Christine and draws up the long sleeve on her right arm. He shows the arm to Bugger.*

PRINCE

What's this? What did you do to her?

BUGGER

We had fun. You know how hard the competition is there? And they didn't even ask for papers... Though of course I got an ID card for our little Christy.

CHRISTINE

We went tripping in the park, didn't we, Bugger?

BUGGER *to Prince*

Tripping, yeah... the chick sure tripped, right into the road... caught her in front of the tram at the last moment, the little idiot wanted to kill herself... but at least that was her only attempt today.

PRINCE

Ugger... I or... I for... forbb...

*Tries to say the word but he is so distressed he can't manage.*

BUGGER

Carry on when you can speak properly.

CHRISTINE

Is the Prince angry with me? Why's the Prince angry? Shall I kiss the Prince?

PRINCE

No... let noboddee kiss a face like diss... noboddee should toussh sushh a monnster... beasst... no-boddeee...

CHRISTINE

But I can kiss this beast.

*Prince howls.*

PRINCE

Nooo!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*He grabs Christine's arm, twists it and shoves her roughly to the floor. Bugger laughs at them. Prince goes to the bathroom, shutting the door behind him.*

BUGGER

Grouchy Grumpy! You bathing, Prince? Do not disturb?

*Christine lies on the floor, spread-eagled. Bugger approaches, gets down near her.*

CHRISTINE

What's his problem with me?

BUGGER

You got a hell of a body, I noticed that at the lounge.

CHRISTINE

He's even learned to talk. What's his problem?

BUGGER

But I'm your pimp... I can't get close with you... And I hate whores anyway, they get all kinds of disease they don't even know about, lice, white discharge... once I caught something from a whore, then had my prick treated for weeks.

CHRISTINE

He took me in, he made me meet you... what's his problem?

*Bugger starts kissing her.*

BUGGER

How'd I know? He's an ass... hey, I do know: he doesn't like young women...

CHRISTINE

The hell! What's really happened to him?

BUGGER

Nothing, really. An accident. Got is face burned. In an accident. Positively an accident.

*He goes on kissing Christine.*

CHRISTINE

But what was he before? Before the accident?

BUGGER

He was the Prince. Everyone's prince... everyone was scared of him...

CHRISTINE

Scared? Why was everyone scared?

BUGGER

He was a cool guy, girls all over him, and he was good at his job...

CHRISTINE

They were afraid of him then... and now that he's a monster... his face... now they aren't?

BUGGER

Now they aren't.

*He tries to lie on top of her.*

CHRISTINE

Let me alone.

*She rises. Bugger stays on the floor.*

BUGGER

I'll pay you for a bout, okay?

CHRISTINE

Another time. Another time. Not now. I've got to puke.

*Bugger gets up too.*

BUGGER

I'm not staying for that. See you tomorrow night at the lounge... I'll bill them for you, you'll dance for them. No worse than today, get it? Okay?

*Christine knocks on the bathroom door.*

CHRISTINE

Prince, come out, I've got to puke...

BUGGER

I'm not staying for that...

*Exit.*

*The bathroom door opens. Prince enters without a word, sits by the table. Christine goes to the bathroom. Brief silence, then Christine comes back, gets a cigarette out and lights up. Silence.*

CHRISTINE

I'll kill you if you hurt me once again. Nobody can hurt me. I'm good to everyone. To you, to Bugger... I'll kill you if you hurt me.

*Silence.*

CHRISTINE

If only you'd seen... Everyone was looking at me at the lounge, eyes popping! My success, Prince! That's what you wanted, isn't it? And I'm doing well, I've got almost three hundred thousand from all those men... Did you listen to them having their way with me? Could you hear it?

PRINCE

Could... Manny timesss...

CHRISTINE

Well that's done with. Now it's just dancing. To show them all what I can do. Never you fear, I'm smarter now. I'm smart, have no fear for me... where I come from, people have the sense they need. Did it hurt when you heard those sounds, Prince?

PRINCE

Not in the warrrobe... there I heard... nothinnn...

CHRISTINE

They lie at my feet, all of them. They think they use me and abuse me like a slave while actually I'm ruling them. Ruling their instincts, their sick, idiot male instincts. Not what you expected, is it, Prince? I'll just do two months here, pick up some stash, then go. I'll never come back. Not here, not to you, not to this country. I'll never come back.

PRINCE

That is not good.

CHRISTINE

No? Why not? Have you learned to whistle, Prince? How nicely I taught you to talk... Didn't I say you had it in you to talk? And you hurt me. You play the male, you play the savage...

PRINCE

Come away with me. Come away.

CHRISTINE

Just a few weeks. If I take some time off, I might even tidy up your face, teach you to smile. The scars will go by themselves. Do you believe me?

PRINCE

I'll go away... I'll take you... wizz mee...

CHRISTINE

Because your smile will heal your scars. And my smile. I'll burn my smile on your face, shall I, Prince?

PRINCE

We'll be togezzer... I'll wizzdraw my money... overseas... and we'll be togezzer...

CHRISTINE

And I do smile, inside... not when they fall on me with their sweaty bodies, not when they pay... but when they leave, when they go out the door destroyed, when they've paid just to make their cocks smile, to make the filth inside them smile... and I don't need to pay, I can smile without paying.

PRINCE

Don't you unnerstann I say?

CHRISTINE

You're different. You could smile inside. But you don't. So you'd take me? With you? Where? I have my own road and that's what I'll walk. I've had a shot, see? So what? Does it change anything? It doesn't affect me, Prince, it doesn't. Nothing affects me that comes from you people. Only what I create. Only that.

*She stands, walks to the desk, finds a bottle and takes a swig.*

CHRISTINE

If only you had a fridge... Vodka's disgusting when it's warm. Good night.

*She starts toward her room. Prince stands in front, barring her way, saying nothing.*

CHRISTINE

You can't come in for free. Only if you pay. But then you're welcome. I won't be sleeping for ten more minutes, for sure. You have till then to come... if you pay.

PRINCE

I...

*Falls silent.*

CHRISTINE

Say it and it'll smooth your face.

*Prince struggles to speak.*

PRINCE

I... uh... ooo...

CHRISTINE

I don't understand. Talk normally.

PRINCE

I... an't...

CHRISTINE

Try.

PRINCE

Uh oo... Uh... ooo...

*He becomes upset. Still repeating "uh oo," he goes into his wardrobe and shuts the door on himself. "Uh oo"-s still come from the wardrobe. Christine stands in the middle of the room.*

## Scene 8

*Prince sits in his wardrobe with the door open. He's evidently trying to whistle, but to no avail. Uncle Gus enters in a fuss. He notices Prince.*

UNCLE GUS

Mister Prince, come out of that wardrobe, please, not that it's wrong for you to be there... As my poor Gladys used to say, "Gus, don't you meddle in the affairs of others!" There used to be this woman who sat all day in her kitchen with a breadbox on her head, the kids would jeer at her all the time, but my Gladys said, "never you mind, Gus, for you can see the breadbox on top of Mrs. Fisher's head, but how do you know there isn't something on your head that others see but we can't?" That's how much my Gladys loved me... and when Mrs. Fisher jumped off the third floor with the breadbox on her head, Gladys said while we were cleaning up the patio afterward, "Look you, Gus, she's happy now. Mrs. Fisher is now soaring happily." And we looked up at the sky between the housing blocks and on my word it was as if we could see Mrs. Fisher soaring up there, smiling, taking a bite of cloud, and all was well, and then I held Gladys's hand and we were just as happy as Mrs. Fisher with her belly full of cloud. By the way! There's a telegram from little Christine's father.

*Prince looks astonished.*

PRINCE

Wha'???

UNCLE GUS

I was never a father. No sir, that wasn't given to me and my Gladys. We never blamed one another... we were happy. Well, sir, I've found out Christine's address and written to her father to come here and pull her daughter in a loving embrace.

*Enter Aunty Charlie, all worked up.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

Why the hell did you leave your cellar unlocked?

UNCLE GUS

Who needs to lock anything in the new regime?

AUNTY CHARLIE

And why on earth does you keep an axe there? For hacking wood? What wood is there? Fool of a janitor, to keep an axe in the cellar!

*Aunty Charlie goes out the door.*

UNCLE GUS

If I want an axe in the cellar, I'll have one! Who's got anything to do with it?

*Aunty Charlie returns, half carrying a limp Christine.*

AUNTY CHARLIE

Little chit wanted to kill herself with an axe! Because of two fuggy oafs like you! You makes her a whore and leaves it to me to find her in the cellar carving herself up?! If she had to grab an axe, she ought to have smacked Uglyface here!

Gus, you come with me to clean up the blood, no way I'm doing it alone. Get some salt, that will soak it up.

Animals!

*Exit Aunty Charlie and Uncle Gus.*

CHRISTINE *reading from the telegram in her hand*

I went there and saw your photo in the window. Never come home again. Father.

PRINCE

I muss go away now... go abwoad. Can't take you, I think...

But now I think I can take you... because people muss go togezzer... everywhere, like Uncle Guss, like he was happy wizz his Gladys because happiness like dat is possible... I have money out there... loss of money... and if Bugger doesn' kill us or if we kill him den... den we can be togezzer.

CHRISTINE

Take me with you, Prince.

PRINCE

I'll take you... wizz me.

CHRISTINE

I love Papa very much. More than any father was ever loved.

PRINCE

You could uh someone else... uh... can't say it...

CHRISTINE

And he's right. I'm a hussy, Prince. All the filth they've loaded into me is rotting inside. Rotting, burning, hurting me.

PRINCE

No ore dan me... no ore...

CHRISTINE

My father's the most wonderful man on earth. And I've lost him. Lost him now. I won't survive this, Prince, not this.

*She looks at him.*

CHRISTINE

You are very ugly, Prince. Verry.

PRINCE

I know. But dere are pass... passic... surjj...

CHRISTINE

No point. This is how I met you. Stay like this for me.

PRINCE

For you... I'd ssay like diss... but not for myselff...

*They gaze at one another in silence. The door opens slowly. Uncle Gus peeks in.*

UNCLE GUS

If I'd known it would come to this, I really...

*Prince and Christine pay no attention, they remain standing and looking one at the other. Uncle Gus tactfully closes the door.*

PRINCE  
You're all... bloody...

CHRISTINE  
Do you need me, Prince? Do you? Does anyone?

PRINCE  
Lihe... like a fig... I need you, little fig.

CHRISTINE  
If you say you need me, I'll never kill myself again, never, cross my heart.

PRINCE  
Don'... kill yourself... Chissee...

CHRISTINE  
Whew, how fucking ugly you are... I love you, Prince.

*Prince pushes her away. In torment, he walks to his wardrobe. Christine follows, goes into the wardrobe after him. Soft noises. The wardrobe starts rocking, then falls over. Christine's peal of laughter from inside, accompanied by Prince's strange laughter, louder and louder.*

## Scene 9

*The wardrobe is upright again. Aunty Charlie is vacuuming loudly. Uncle Gus is seated in the room. Enter Christine, practically flying, in a fine new dress and new shoes.*

UNCLE GUS  
What joy, oh what joy this is! I can't control myself. Aunty Charlie, turn off the fucking vacuum, won't you!

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Leave me alone! And the machine wasn't properly stowed again! Think you, you old fool, that I doesn't know how you uses my vacuum at nights? Takes it to your room! At night! Old lecher!

UNCLE GUS  
Not true! Shame on you! And if you ever say that about me again...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Then what, eh? I'm doing my job. You mind Christy. He's taking her! I arranged it!

UNCLE GUS  
Me! I arranged it! Turn the damn vacuum off!

*Aunty Charlie goes on vacuuming. Christine stands in front of Uncle Gus.*

CHRISTINE  
I bought this from what I've earned, Uncle Gus! I'll wear it for the journey!

UNCLE GUS  
How pretty, how beautiful... I'm so excited...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Mind you don't get a heart attack, old fool!

UNCLE GUS  
You're going far, plenty far?

CHRISTINE  
I don't know yet. We're leaving. Then we shall see.

UNCLE GUS  
Make it far, plenty far. I've always known Mister Prince would get lucky, so lucky. I knew it, one can feel it about someone who deserves his luck. And me? I was lucky with my Gladys...

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Why didn't your Gladys teach you to wipe your muddy shoes when you enters a place...

UNCLE GUS  
Shut up! You're pretty, my girl... God, how beautiful, like her... she was this beautiful...

CHRISTINE  
Tell me about her, Uncle Gus, tell me about Gladys...

UNCLE GUS  
I will just as soon as this retarded, peeping wench finishes her fucking cleaning!

AUNTY CHARLIE  
I won't. Talk while I does it.

UNCLE GUS  
I can't, not about Gladys! Not like this! With the vacuum buzzing!

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Not because I'm here? It's the vacuum, eh?

*Uncle Gus springs up and begins to shove Aunty Charlie out of the room.*

AUNTY CHARLIE  
Don't you dare touch me, you old brute, you hears? Hey!!

*By now he's shoved her nearly all the way out, along with the vacuum cleaner. He shuts the door on her and locks it, then sits back down.*

UNCLE GUS  
Where was I? Yes, Gladys... of course... Gladys was so beautiful... like you, little girl. Gladys... I could talk about her for hours... hours? days... days? weeks... but I won't, because that would be saying Gladys is no longer... But Gladys is there, because I talk to her, because she always comments on what I'm doing.

CHRISTINE  
What happened to Gladys, Uncle Gus?

UNCLE GUS  
She was killed, darling.

*Silence.*

UNCLE GUS  
Killed, because she was beautiful. Beautiful even when old. She was raped, darling. In our house by Lake Balaton. Someone raped and killed her at night, my little darling. Though she was sixty-two, yes she was. But beautiful. We had this cottage in Siófok, a small town by the lake. It was my inheritance, from my father. Used to go there for holidays. And whenever my duties as janitor would allow. But I arranged for a stand-in, that I always did, we never went unless I did. She was raped, my girl, and killed. Gladys. I wasn't at home, I'd gone fishing with the man next door. Only came back at dawn. There she lay. She must have been ironing.

CHRISTINE *quietly*  
Killed...

UNCLE GUS  
There was no blood. It was either the knock or the shame that killed her. Better like this. To live *after that*? How could she have lived after *that*?

*While talking, he hands Christine a book.*

CHRISTINE *reads the title*  
Bologna!

UNCLE GUS  
Of course they never found who did it. No more watching these days. In the old days there was watching, and if someone did that to a life, the news would run right up the chain to the centre: get the scum and carry him before the law! But not this one. Do I search for him? I don't. Must be crippled enough already, to do that. Well, that's how it was, my girl. I'll go downstairs now, Gladys is waiting in the kitchen. We'll have dinner.

*He stands and leaves. Christine turns around and notices Prince, standing in the bathroom door with a towel, frozen. Meanwhile, voices from offstage:*

UNCLE GUS's voice  
Don't eavesdrop, you old hag, or your ears will swell and trickle with pus, is that what you want, eh?

AUNTY CHARLIE's voice  
I'm taking my vacuum home! Don't look for it again!

UNCLE GUS's voice  
Fuck yourself with your vacuum! It's the spiders you should fret about, the stairs are full of them!

*The row recedes, the voices can no longer be understood. Prince, as if in pain, lurches to the window.*

CHRISTINE  
You need help? Something wrong?

PRINCE  
Go... to your roommm... go.

CHRISTINE *tries to joke it away*

Don't you jump... that's my job... that's what I do...

PRINCE *quietly, but with tremendous force*

To your roooooommm!

*Christine goes to her room. Prince remains at the window.*

## Scene 10

*Prince is seated, dressed for travel, waiting. Enter Uncle Gus.*

UNCLE GUS  
So you're off.

PRINCE  
Yes.

UNCLE GUS  
Mister Bugger says I could sell the flat for a commission. So you aren't coming back?

PRINCE  
No.

UNCLE GUS  
I'll sell it, no problem. I could sell all sorts of things while poor Gladys lived! She used to say, "you could sell anybody, Gus!" For in those days we had to sell people... Well, not the actual people, but information, you see. I'd sell it, guy in the trench coat would buy it. For let me tell you, I had faith in the system. We had faith, those days.

*Silence.*

UNCLE GUS  
Not that I'm happy you're leaving. Sure, I can sell the flat, House of Parliament is right nearby, I'll stick a note on there and maybe some topdog will like it, right? What nice talks we used to have, Mister Prince, you and me! A gentleman to the core you are, Mister Prince. My Gladys would be fond of you, she always used to say how she liked gentlemen... she'd be really fond of you, and you'd like Gladys too... I love to talk about her, because I love her. Is that bad? No, it isn't!

PRINCE  
Your Gladys... she'sss alive... if you talk about her... alive...

UNCLE GUS  
She is, isn't she? If I talk about her, it's as if she were alive! And it's a good thing Mister Bugger left it to me to sell the place, a good thing because of the commission. That would afford a new gravestone for my Gladys... I'll even have it engraved on the side that this stone stands here by courtesy of the Prince... and once I'm under it too, people can wonder all they like what Prince it could have been who was courteous to Gladys and Gus. God bless you both!

*He extends a hand. Prince extends his, they grasp.*

PRINCE

Thanks for everything... Uncle Gus.

UNCLE GUS

And how nicely you're talking! The girl was right, see? You could have talked properly before if only you'd had someone to tell you that you could, right? And to treat you so well... just the way... the way Gladys treated me.

*Holding Prince's hand, he begins to weep.*

UNCLE GUS

She turned me into... Gus... and now she's dust...

*He laughs while crying.*

UNCLE GUS

Ashes to ashes, Gus to dust...

*BUGGER's voice backstage*

Aunty Charlie, what are you up to with that vacuum?

*AUNTY CHARLIE's voice backstage*

I'm taking it home with me!

*The door opens. Enter Bugger in a hurry, anxious.*

UNCLE GUS

I'll go and say farewell to the little miss...

*She knocks, then enters Christine's room. Bugger sits down facing Prince.*

BUGGER

Here's all the money... the advance from the lounge. We've got to beat it quick, they'll start looking for her. We're taking the train going west, and there'll be a taxi waiting in Sopron, before the border. You'll go by the green lane as you wanted. But only you. I'm travelling separate. I've got your Austrian papers here...

Those stay with me, else you might skedaddle. You'll need these before you can do anything. And I'm only paying your taxi driver if he'll wait for me to catch up.

PRINCE

You don' russs me...

BUGGER

No. And you don't trust me either, and we've good reason not to, the both of us. Once you've given me my share, you can go where you like. Or we can stick together, I don't mind. We're chums after all, tried and tested, aren't we?

PRINCE

You're disgussing...

BUGGER

If you could see yourself saying that! I'm disgusting? You've seen yourself, have you? Who are you to talk about disgusting? You crazy? Don't you say such things, that's not okay: I help you escape and you call me disgusting. Well, well...

PRINCE

De girl comesss.

BUGGER

Sure, I hope she's ready... we're going by way of the wharf, I've checked the place out, nobody ever goes there, especially at night. Bag and weight are already in the car.

PRINCE

Not like dat. All de way.

BUGGER

Not like what? All the way what?

PRINCE

She's coming wiz me. All de way.

BUGGER

She isn't.

PRINCE

Is.

BUGGER

Taxi driver's taking one person. I've no papers for her, no nothing. And she'll babble. Not okay.

PRINCE

I want.

BUGGER

Don't piss me off, Prince! Don't play with me! Playing with me is not okay, Prince. I've arranged everything, don't you start interfering. Chick's in our way, is all. We'll get her out of the way. Once you've got your money, you'll get new girls abroad, no matter how ugly you are. Don't you piss me off!

PRINCE

She and I are togezzer...

BUGGER

Really?

*Silence. He smiles, looking at Prince. Then he shouts to Christine.*

BUGGER

Christine! Are you ready? Come!

PRINCE

Don' you ty...

BUGGER

Make sure you put your "R"-s in, otherwise it isn't okay. And can you whistle?

*Prince springs to his feet. Christine enters, leaving the door open.*

CHRISTINE

I'm nearly done... then we can go.

BUGGER

You're delicious, babe! And those glasses: swell. Do you know why our friend looks like this?

PRINCE

Ugger!!!

BUGGER

He was the Prince, for years and years. Prince of Lake Balaton. Girls lying at his feet. But he didn't want any of them.

PRINCE

Dirty bassard...

*He pounces on Bugger but Bugger overpowers him, and gets him in a Nelson hold.*

CHRISTINE

Stop it!!!

BUGGER

Look at his ugly face! Look! The Prince of Lake Balaton... Pity he liked old girls so much, that was his aberration... is that the right word, Prince?

*Prince cannot answer, he only looks at Christine.*

BUGGER

Tumbling grannies, that was his idea of fun, right? Right, Prince? You had loads of money, you could have had the best hookers, but you fondled old crones... And that time in Siófok, remember? You found a quiet back street where I could hand you the stash for the weed, we started back... but then you saw this granny ironing in one of those weekend houses. Isn't that right, Prince?

*Christine stands frozen. Prince has stopped struggling, he only looks at her.*

BUGGER

So in he went and caught the granny. From behind like always, but she had her wits about her, didn't she, Prince? She licked your face with her clothes iron, didn't she, Prince? Good vintage iron with coals inside, practically on fire! It was okay hot, wasn't it? Then she shoved it in your face again, smeared the burned skin all over, right? You howled, I ran back to save you, because I'm your little boy Friday, aren't I, Prince? Granny was lying on the floor, dead I'm sure, you hit her so hard she died, didn't she, Prince? Then I got you out and hid you, right? And a good job I did, because no one ever found you.

There's five hundred thousand on his head, I just need to squeal and I get five hundred grand, but no... guy's got money overseas, plenty, far more than five hundred, right, mate? He made a stash from drugs and guns, sure he did. Is this the guy you want to live with, you stinking little Transylvanian whore, this?! He needs old chicks to get it up, and with a face like this... Disgusting!!!

*With a vacant look Christine walks slowly toward the bathroom. She enters and closes the door behind her.*

BUGGER

I had this chick once, she too had to pee every time something surprised her.

*He notices Uncle Gus standing, wordlessly, in the doorway to Christine's room.*

BUGGER *quietly, very seriously*

How did that fuckface get there? Hey Pop, how did you get there? What have you heard, Pop?

*The old man says nothing. He starts toward the main door, as if sleepwalking.*

BUGGER

Fuck him, he's gonna squeal!

*He draws a Bowie knife and runs after Gus. Commotion offstage. Bugger returns.*

BUGGER

He'd have squealed... the damn fucker, he'd have squealed on us! Get up, you dumbass, this place is too hot now, not okay... Christine! Come back, we've got to get lost, you hear?

*No answer.*

BUGGER

Fucking hell, is everyone going against the plan? Everyone?

*He kicks the door. Prince just sits, staring into the air.*

BUGGER

She's locked it, the little slut. Christie! Open up!

*No answer. Bugger kicks the door again. This time it yields, breaking. Bugger strides into the bathroom. Silence, then he returns.*

BUGGER

Right. We won't have to bother with the wharf. Clever girl. Straight up the drying rack.

PRINCE

Nooo!!!

BUGGER

But the old man's a pain. I'll get him out of the way, bring the car, then we bolt.

*He turns back.*

BUGGER

Don't you change the plan, Prince! If you try anything funny, I'll frame you for the old man and the chick, both! Get it? I can do it! So all goes as I planned... I can do it, I have this police bighead in my grip, so don't you try anything... wait here, I get the car, look around, and when all's clear, we go and that's it...

*He leaves. Prince stands and walks to the bathroom. Silence. Later he appears, carrying Christine in his arms. She still has some string from the overhead rack on her neck. Prince has difficulty moving her into the living room, so he too starts kicking at the broken door to get it out of the way. Once done, he walks to the wardrobe and opens it with his foot. In the wardrobe there is a chair. He sits on it, with Christine on his lap. Prince sits, staring vacantly.*

PRINCE

Lleep, li'll fig... li'll fig... lleep... li'll... fig...

*He pouts his lips in different shapes, trying to whistle. He succeeds. At first he struggles, then the sound becomes smoother. Whistling, quiet and clear. Meanwhile, the lights gradually dim, and finally — curtain.*

**The End**

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