

THE DOOR

Screenplay written by István Szabó and Andrea Vészits
Based on the novel by the same title by Magda Szabó

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1. EXT. CEMETERY, FALL – DAY

A storm rages. The trees are torn by the wind; the rain beats down. Magda stands in the storm, staring ahead. We cannot see what her point of focus is.

Magda
I killed Emerenc.

The rain intensifies.

2. EXT. GARDEN OF EMERENC'S VILLA, SUMMER – DAY

Fire flames up around Emerenc. She is tall, strong-boned and even in her old-age, sturdy, not fat, but muscular, and radiating strength like a Valkyrie. The kerchief on her head is a bit like a battle helmet. She is washing in a very old-fashioned way: boiling the bed linen in a cauldron over an open fire, lifting the sheets now and again with a big wooden spoon in the insufferable summer heat of the spacious garden of a large villa. From the flat on the first floor the sound of piano music can be heard. Someone is playing a classical piece faultlessly. Magda watches Emerenc from the street, then opens the gate and approaches her cautiously.

Magda
Good morning!

No answer. Magda offers her hand even more politely. Emerenc doesn't so much as glance at her.

Magda
Good morning!

Emerenc
Morning!

Magda
I'd like to ask your help. My husband and I live just opposite. We moved here a few days ago.

Emerenc nods.

Magda

Our former apartment was smaller, so I could take care of it myself. But now I would just like to write.

Emerenc

What do you write?

Magda

Novels.

Emerenc looks at her.

Magda

Up till now, I taught.

Emerenc

If someone can give me a reference on what kind of people you are, I might consider it. I have things to do now.

Magda is at a loss for words as she leaves. Emerenc calls after her:

Emerenc

I don't do just anyone's wash.

3. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SUMMER – DAY

The bell rings. Magda opens the door in a bathing suit. Emerenc is dressed in her best: a black long-sleeved lawn dress and patent leather shoes.

Emerenc

Good day! I could start working for you tomorrow.

Magda

Excellent! Come on in.

Emerenc stares disapprovingly at Magda's bare shoulders, but comes in all the same.

Magda's husband, Tibor, is sitting with a book among the inherited antique bourgeois furniture of what was once her mother's room, looking elegant in a jacket and tie in the 30 degree heat.

Emerenc immediately pays her respects to Tibor, going over to him and extending her hand.

Emerenc

Emerenc Szeredás.

Tibor

Pleased to meet you. Szobotka.

Magda

You're from Hajdúság too, aren't you?

Emerenc doesn't care for the question.

Emerenc

What makes you think that?

Magda

Your "a"s. My father spoke like that.

Emerenc

I came here from the Great Plains, from Csabadul.

In her mind's eye Magda sees the countryside she knows so well: **clouds, water, flower buds.**

Magda

I'm from the Great Plains too. And how much would you like for your services, Emerenc?

Emerenc

I can't tell you before the end of the month, once I know how much trouble I'll have with you. I have to go now.

Emerenc says goodbye to Tibor:

Emerenc

I wish the master good night!

She says nothing to Magda.

Once Emerenc has closed the door behind her, Tibor looks at Magda.

Tibor
Master?

Magda laughs.

Magda
Master.

They laugh together.

4. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SUMMER – NIGHT

Magda and Tibor are lying in their double bed reading. Magda reads aloud to Tibor. They hear the front door opening. Emerenc comes in wearing her usual grey working dress with a white apron. You can hear her cleaning in the kitchen.

Tibor
What's she doing at this hour?

Magda
She brought the carpet back.

Tibor
Now?

Magda
When she has the time.

Tibor
But now she's washing up!

Magda
She probably saw the dishes from supper.

Tibor
You see...!

Magda
You want me to be ashamed of myself?

Tibor
That's the least you could be!

They laugh.

A wind picks up. Tibor gets out of bed to shut the window. Emerenc stops mopping the floor and rushes out of the kitchen, past Tibor and out of the flat, with a look of terror on her face. She could still be in the stairway when thunder rumbles. Tibor watches from the window as she runs across the garden and shuts the door of her flat behind her. A huge storm breaks out. The sky rumbles, lightning flashes.

Magda
What's wrong with her?

Tibor
She's terrified of the storm. There's probably a reason.

5. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, AUTUMN – DAWN

The leaves are turning yellow. Emerenc is sweeping the pavement with a big birch broom.

6. INT. THE STAIRCASE OF MAGDA'S HOUSE, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda pins a notice up on their door. "Please deliver the parcel to the caretaker of 7 Julia Street, Emerenc Szerdás. Thank you."

7. INT. JÚLIA STREET, EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda walks through the autumn garden to the neighbouring house and knocks on Emerenc's door.

Piano music is again to be heard from the first floor, but this time someone is practising or having a lesson. Emerenc's door doesn't move an inch, though you can hear someone moving around inside. Magda shouts.

Magda

Hurry up, please, because I must go and I want to ask you to do something for me.

At first her words are met by silence, but after she rattles the door handle, Emerenc rushes out as if she's about to hit someone. She slams the door behind her and screeches.

Emerenc

Don't you go disturbing me after hours – I'm not paid for that!

Magda stands there in disgrace, blushing to the roots of her hair at the strange yelling. She can only stammer.

Magda

I'd like to ask you whether you could accept a parcel for me because I've got a dentist's appointment.

Emerenc doesn't reply, she just gives Magda a murderous look and storms back into her home.

The handyman – plumber and tinsmith – and his wife, Adél, tenants of the basement, have witnessed the scene from their window.

Handyman

Ever since we've lived here – about 20 years now – Emerenc has never let anyone into her home.

Adél

She guards her cat inside. We hear it meowing occasionally. But there's no knowing what else she's got to guard beside the cat.

Handyman

She even receives her own relatives and her police inspector friend on the porch, winter and summer. They know that they're forbidden to go in. But they just laugh about it.

8. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – DUSK

Dusk is falling. Magda is sitting at her desk working at her typewriter. She hears the door of the flat opening and shouts to her husband:

Magda
Hello, darling!

No reply. A few moments later the hall door shuts. Magda goes out and finds a wonderful plate of cold food on the kitchen table beside the parcel.

9. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – DAY

Emerenc and Polett, the shy old spinster who does the ironing, are sitting together on the porch when Magda turns up with the clean dish. Now too the sound of piano music can be heard coming from the flat on the first floor. Magda looks up to the open window.

Magda
What lovely music.

Emerenc
D'you know what I'd like, just once?... Silence.

Polett
They have their piano lessons even on Sundays.

Magda hands the dish back to Emerenc.

Magda

I've brought back your dish. Thank you for the wonderful feast.

Emerenc

Dish? That's not mine. Have you ever seen that plate, Polett?

Polett

I...

Emerenc

Have you seen it or not?

Polett

I haven't.

Magda doesn't understand. Someone here is crazy.

Emerenc looks at Magda mockingly. Magda's gaze hardens; she spreads her arms and the dish breaks to pieces on the floor. Magda walks away calmly.

Emerenc looks after her with an expression of surprise, but not without a hint of acknowledgment.

10. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, SUTU'S STALL, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda is shopping at the little vegetable stall at the street corner. She is being served by the middle-aged saleswoman, Sutu. Sutu isn't alone in the shop, sitting behind the counter with her is Polett.

As she weighs the fruit, Sutu chats to Magda. Polett listens intently.

Sutu

Emerenc would have done anything for her first cat. And that tomcat was a great hunter. A pigeon breeder – a very decent man by the way – used to live here...

Polett interrupts:

Polett

Decent? He hung that cat by a wire from Emerenc's door handle. I saw it myself, the cat's throat was slit...

Sutu

Because the cat killed his pigeons one by one.

Polett

That's not true.

11. EXT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – DAY

Magda imagines the dead animal: **Emerenc comes home and sees her cat hanging from the door handle. She disentangles the cat from the wire and hugs him, not showing any anger or emotion.**

Meanwhile the pigeon breeder shouts down to her from the upstairs window.

Pigeon breeder

I've got two sons, one of them is on a disability, the other's got three children! I earn my living with those pigeons. You get parcels sent from America. I have to protect my family. You only keep an animal for pleasure. I know who you are, have no doubt about that. You should be grateful that I hold my tongue!

After that, Emerenc buries the cat in the garden under the dog rose. Polett stands in the background. She timidly tries to offer help, but the silent, seemingly calm Emerenc rejects it.

The other residents, the handyman, his wife, Adél, and Mr. Brodari from upstairs, all witness the event.

10. (CONT.) EXT. JÚLIA STREET, SUTU'S STALL, AUTUMN – DAY

Polett

That didn't bring any blessing on the pigeon breeder. Emerenc saw through him - but his pigeons died one after the other.

Sutu

The pigeon breeder reported Emerenc to the police, accusing her of poisoning. The police came out to inspect, but the vet maintained that a bird pest had finished off the pigeons.

Polett

But the executioner's new birds died just like the old ones. He tried to report her again, but the police gave him a dreadful dressing down for bothering them.

Sutu

At that he cursed Emerenc in a loud voice, killed her new cat too and moved away.

12. INT. POLICE STATION, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda signs a form and hands it over to a female clerk.

Clerk

Sit down! Wait here!

Magda sits down.

A lieutenant colonel happens to pass through the room when he sees Magda and steps over to her.

Lieutenant colonel

We haven't met yet, madam. Please, come into my office!

Magda is puzzled, she follows the inspector anxiously. They enter a bigger room. He offers Magda a seat.

Lieutenant colonel

Are you getting along with Emerenc?

Magda is unpleasantly surprised.

Magda

Yes.

Lieutenant colonel

She's not an easy person. She has her whims.

Magda

None of us is easy.

Magda doesn't know what to make of this strange interrogation.

Lieutenant colonel

The insinuations about her are endless. Back when I was a sub-lieutenant, we opened a special file on Emerenc, but later on we just dismissed the letters of complaint. We didn't bother telling her that she had been charged of killing Jews and robbing them during the war, being a spy for the Americans, of attempting to overthrow the people's democracy, of operating a secret transmitter from her home, of storing stolen goods in her home, and even of hiding treasures! Has her nephew come out of hospital yet?

Magda is alarmed.

Magda

I didn't even know Emerenc had a nephew.

Lieutenant colonel

You didn't? You can't be serious.

Magda

I've not heard anything.

The lieutenant colonel smiles.

Lieutenant colonel

You don't have to be afraid of Emerenc. At first I was very scared of her when she shouted that the local politicians have guns with which they shoot at crows in their boredom, but they are guarded by the police of course, whereas we come to investigate her with dogs. I looked around to see who could hear. I hadn't often been in a house where they were less scared of the police of the people's democracy. But Emerenc is not afraid of anyone.

She's weathered a few storms.

13. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAWN

It's snowing hard. Emerenc is clearing the pavement with her big birch broom.

14. – 14/A. INT./EXT. MAGDA'S FLAT, JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda is sitting at her desk typing. As she glances out of the window she sees Emerenc coming out of her flat carrying a steaming bowl of food in the driving snow. Having carefully locked the door with a key, she sets out down the street. When she disappears from view, Magda gets up from her desk and watches where she is going. Emerenc goes through a gate two houses down.

Tibor

What are you looking at?

Magda

Emerenc is off with her sustenance bowl again. She's found someone else to nurse.

Tibor

Where is she going?

Magda

Across the ways there. I think to Polett's. You know, that scraggy little woman who always looks hungry and continually sings that French song.

Tibor

Someone speaks French in this town?

Magda

Parlez-moi d'amour...

Tibor

You see, you never sing that song to me.

Magda
You want me to?

She turns, embraces Tibor, and whispers into his ear:

Magda
Parlez-moi d'amour...

15. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Snow is falling. Emerenc runs from house to house in her big boots and even bigger birch broom. She is sweeping the whole street.
Magda comes out of the gate with a prayer book.

Magda
How long do you think this snowfall will last?

Emerenc
At dawn the sky was clear, but the Pleiades were shining so ominously that it's certain to snow for another two days... Where are you off to?

Magda
Church. Wouldn't you like to come?

Emerenc
I'm not a fine lady to go trotting off to church all dolled up.

Magda looks at her in astonishment.

Emerenc
I don't need priest or church. I saw how God works during the war. I've nothing against the carpenter and his son, they were working people, but the son was upset by the lies of the politicians. When it became unpleasant for the leaders, they got him mixed up in something so that they could execute him. I feel most sorry for the mother.

Paintings of Christ's sufferings flash into Magda's mind.

Emerenc sees that she has offended Magda and is pleased. She watches with satisfaction as Magda leaves her and sets off towards the church. Emerenc calls out after her.

Emerenc

It's easy to be godly if someone else works for you at home.

16 INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda's husband comes home, brushes the snow off him. He's got a nasty cough.

Tibor

I don't think that Emerenc ever goes home. She never goes to bed like other mortals.

Tibor flops wearily down in an armchair and then glances round the untidy flat. He starts coughing again.

Tibor

Doesn't she come near us any more?

Magda

Never on white days. She says we have a roof over our heads, we should sit it out till she has time for us again and she'll make up for it. And a bit of bending does me no harm. Are you not feeling well?

Tibor

I think I've got a temperature again.

Magda lays her hand on Tibor's forehead. She hugs him from behind.

Tibor

Cover me, sweetheart!

Magda sits on her husband's lap and hugs him tightly, almost covering him.

Tibor

I haven't told you how much I love you today.

Magda
How much?

Tibor
Not for eternity.

Magda
How long then?

Tibor
Just as long as I live.

They laugh, and kiss each other.

Meanwhile the front door opens. It's Emerenc, and she puts a plate of pastries down on the kitchen table. Magda gets out her purse, but that annoys her.

Emerenc
Don't you try to tip me!

Magda watches as Emerenc storms out, then puts her purse away offended. Tibor is amused.

Tibor
Don't keep courting her! This suits me perfectly. She comes at the oddest times, but she sees to everything and doesn't even take a cup of coffee. If that's not enough for you, that's your problem. You want to have heart to heart talks with the charwoman?

17. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Emerenc is doing the cleaning; not sparing herself, she lifts the heavy furniture. Magda is pottering about in a bad mood.

Emerenc
Are you jumpy because someone wrote bad things about you in the newspaper?

Magda is surprised.

Magda

How d'you know that? You don't read.

Emerenc

What were you thinking, choosing such a rotten craft where any scoundrel can pour dirty water over you? You should take care of the master instead! He's ill.

Magda stares in silence.

Emerenc

His lungs are sick.

Magda

How do you know?

Emerenc

I just know.

18. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – NIGHT

Magda wakes up to find Tibor shaking with coughs. He spits blood. She calls the ambulance.

19. INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – DAY

Tibor is pushed into the operating theatre. The surgeon goes over to Magda.

Surgeon

We're hoping to remove the lung abscess in one piece.

Magda sits down in the hospital corridor. The lamp above the door to the operating theatre lights up. Magda stares at it.

20. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda arrives home pale and miserable. Emerenc is sitting in an armchair cleaning silver. Magda gets a shock.

Magda

What are you doing here?

Emerenc

Why did you exclude me from your trouble?

Magda is impatient, the old woman irritates her.

Magda

You never showed any interest in our lives. I'd like to be alone now if you don't mind. I'd like to go to bed early.

Emerenc goes away immediately. Magda lies down on the couch fully dressed. A little while later, Emerenc appears with a steaming thick blue glass chalice. It is a treasure on a tin tray.

Emerenc

Drink it!

Magda doesn't want it.

Emerenc

Drink!

Emerenc speaks to Magda as if she were a bad-mannered and dim-witted child. When Magda pushes the chalice aside Emerenc picks it up and clamps it against Magda's teeth. If she doesn't want to have it spilt over her she has to swallow it. She looks at the old woman, hysterical with loathing. Emerenc sits down beside her on the sofa.

Emerenc

Don't spend the night with bad thoughts, because there's nothing to worry about. I always feel death coming. Besides, the dogs haven't given any sign, and no cups have cracked either. You don't have to believe me, you have a

right not to and if you prefer to turn to the heavens, I'll bring the Bible: you don't have to talk to me.

All of a sudden Magda sits up. She's still hysterical.

Magda

I'm going back to the hospital!

Emerenc pushes her back.

Emerenc

You're not.

They almost fight. Emerenc is the stronger.

Magda leans back on the cushions and says in a quiet voice:

Magda

I'm scared...

Emerenc

My father was consumptive. He was a carpenter and cabinetmaker. You are Christ's brothers, my mother kept saying. I wasn't yet three when my father died. My mother couldn't cope with running the workshop on her own, so she married the first assistant. My step-father wasn't a bad man, he married a widow with four children and he was afraid he could be called up to fight at any time. He was afraid all his life. You've experienced yourself what it's like to be scared. He dreamt that if he was called up he'd never see us again. He was the first man to be called up in Nádori, and he was killed. I cooked for everyone at the age of 9, and I took care of the twins. When the news came of our step-father's death, it turned out that our mother loved him too, so now she had two men to mourn. One day when she hit me I decided to run away. I wanted to take the twins with me, but we only got as far as the barn because the little ones asked for water right away.

21. EXT. GREAT PLAINS, STORMY LANDSCAPE (CGI), SUMMER – DAY

Emerenc's story comes to life in Magda's imagination. We see everything from a distance, the clouds, the movement of the trees, and sometimes we

see them very close up. We hear less and less of the words, but just see the pictures that bring her words to life.

EMERENC (V.O.)

So I ran to the well with a tin cup which I wore round my neck on a string. I had just gotten there when the storm broke. Never in my life had I seen a storm break so fast. The sky didn't turn black as it had other times, but purple, as if a fire had been laid among the clouds. The thunder nearly split my ears. I started running backwards, because as I looked at the little fair ones I couldn't see them, but instead I saw that the lightening struck the tree above them. Everything was smoking. By this time it was pouring. I stood in front of my brother and sister and all I could see was - two black stumps that were more like charcoal logs. So here I am standing there bewildered, turning my head this way and that, wondering where the fair ones had gone. After all those two *somethings* can't be my brother and sister. So I yelled so loud that it could be heard at our house. My mother ran out barefoot in her shirt, pounced on me and beat me all over. She didn't know what she was doing. In her desperation she just wanted to break and smash, to hit anything in reach. Then she caught sight of the children. All at once her face became crimson, then, like an arrow, she tore away from me in the rain, her hair dragging along the ground behind her as it came loose. She ran and screamed. Birds screech like that sometimes. I saw her jump into the well, but I couldn't move.

20. (CONT.) INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Emerenc finishes her story while leaning against the stove.

Emerenc

If I would have run for help then, they could have saved her. But I just stood there, staring, wondering what my mother was doing for so long at the bottom of the well. My grandfather came for me, but he didn't keep me for long, and when the masters came from Budapest looking for a maid, he handed me over. They took me away straight after the funeral. D'you know what I'm saving up for? A crypt. Every window will have different coloured glass and on every shelf there'll be a coffin, my father's, my mother's, the twins' and mine. I started saving up before the war, but someone asked for the money for a good cause. I started saving again. Then I was robbed. I

haven't been without work for a single day in my life. I saved the cost of a crypt. My heir can build a crypt that everyone will stop and stare at. D'you believe me?

22. INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – DAY

In the hospital Magda straightens the pillows under Tibor's head. Tidies the blanket, then sits down beside him. Tibor smiles at her. Magda smiles back.

Tibor

Were you worried that I'd go?

Magda

No.

Magda laughs.

Magda

Emerenc said that no cups had cracked and the dogs didn't howl, so nothing would happen.

Tibor smiles too.

Tibor

As long as there's no storm?! That brings the reaper.

Magda

As long as there's no storm. Storm, lighting, a well.

23. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda is going home from the hospital. The snow-cleared part of the pavement in front of their house shows that Emerenc has been at work.

24. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DUSK

The flat is empty. Magda goes into all the rooms looking for Emerenc, shouting her name.

Magda
Emerenc! Emerenc!

She can't believe that she is nowhere to be found. She hasn't done any cleaning at all that day: the crumpled blanket is lying on the couch just as Magda left it. Magda mutters to herself:

Magda
Where the hell has she got to now?

25. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda helps the convalescent Tibor out of the taxi and they go through the gate to their house.

Two houses away the gate opens and Emerenc comes out with a bowl in her hands. She sets out after Magda and Tibor.

26. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Magda is helping Tibor off with his coat when the front door opens and Emerenc turns up with food for the convalescent. She holds out her hand.

Emerenc
Welcome to the master. I wish you a speedy recovery!

With that she goes straight into the kitchen, putting the bowl down on the kitchen table. This too is a gorgeous piece, just as the chalice was before. It is round with two handles, and on its lid is a Hungarian flag with the name Kossuth and his portrait on it. She has brought sparkling chicken broth. When Emerenc notices that Magda is looking at the bowl first and foremost she says:

Emerenc

Are you admiring the bowl? It's a very useful piece. One of my employers, Mrs Grossmann, gave it to me in 1944 at the time of the Anti- Jewish Laws. That woman had all sorts of beautiful china and glass. Remember the chalice in which I brought you the mulled wine last time? That's a part of the inheritance too.

Magda takes the bowl to her husband.

Tibor starts to spoon up the soup, enjoying it, and studying the china.

Tibor

What strange stuff Emerenc brings.

Magda

It's the Grossmanns' inheritance.

They don't speak.

Tibor

Maybe she didn't know where they were being taken.

Magda

Looks like I was lucky during the war.

Tibor

Lucky?

Magda

I mean, I was among decent people and I knew everything.

Tibor

What did you know?

Magda

I knew what the wagons were transporting, who, where and for what purpose.

In Magda's memory **the cattle wagons with barred windows are rushing along the track.**

Tibor

And you call that lucky? Is that the right word?

Magda

It may not be the right word.

Tibor

It isn't. And all we've got are words.

Magda

Then what should the word be?

A brief silence.

Tibor

Perhaps the Grossmanns left these things with Emerenc for safe keeping.

Magda

Or she thought, like so many others, that if she didn't take them away
someone else would.

Tibor has put down his spoon a while ago, leaving half the soup in the bowl.

Magda

Maybe the handyman's suspicions are justified. Perhaps there are valuables
behind the locked door, confiscated treasures of people taken off. Things
that shouldn't be put on show. What a weirdo- the poor Grossmanns in the
gas chamber, without even a grave, while she is saving up for the Taj Mahal!
She keeps a captive animal as an alibi. Not a bad idea.

Tibor

Are you writing a novel?

Magda doesn't even hear what he says.

Magda

If she'd studied after the war she could be an ambassador by now or a minister, but no, education was not what she wanted, all she had in mind was packing things away, and now she does charitable acts with the stolen bowl. Why would someone like her go to church? What would her type believe in!

Tibor

Don't make incriminating assumptions, Magda, dear! Don't adopt these people's habits!

Emerenc is pottering around in the kitchen and you can sense that for once she is waiting for praise. Magda doesn't even thank her. She puts down the half full bowl without a word.

Emerenc

Didn't the master like it?

Magda

It was too much for him.

27. AVENUE OUTSIDE DOCTOR'S OFFICE, WINTER – EVENING

At Christmas, Magda and her husband come out of the local doctor's office and set out for home. Magda supports her husband: you can see he hasn't completely recovered yet. On the street, they find a puppy buried up to its neck in snow. Tibor isn't an animal lover, but he helps Magda remove the frozen snow from the whining puppy.

Magda buttons the puppy under her coat. His frightened black face stares out at the street from beneath her fur collar.

28. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Emerenc is tidying up in the kitchen. She is cutting up Christmas pastries and putting them onto a plate. As Magda and Tibor come in she puts down her knife and snatches the dog from Magda. She gets a duster and rubs him over thoroughly, then sets him down on the stone floor to see if he can walk.

He is stiff all over from the snow. Magda brings a bath towel, and Emerenc wraps up the puppy and whispers in his ear.

A popular Christmas song can be heard on the television. Emerenc is oblivious to all around her. She is walking with the dog in the hall, croaking a song in her rasping voice and swaying, the caricature of motherhood, with a tightly wrapped black puppy in her arms. She's like an absurd Madonna.

Magda watches her. **A series of pictures of the Madonna** appear in her memory.

The bell rings. Mr Brodarics from the neighbouring house is standing in the doorway.

Mr. Brodarics

Emerenc, come straight away! We've got a burst pipe! I've already phoned the plumber. Hurry and turn off the mains.

With a murderous look Emerenc lays the dog in Magda's arms.

**29-29/A. INT. /EXT. MAGDA'S FLAT, EMERENC'S GARDEN,
WINTER – EVENING**

Magda stands with the tightly wrapped puppy in her arms just as Emerenc had. She looks out of the window.

Next door Emerenc is struggling with the mains tap in the driving snow. Polett is jumping about, getting in her way.

Emerenc shouts at her.

Emerenc

Don't help me, for goodness sake! You're always at my heels like the girl upstairs. Breathing down my neck!

Polett

Why are you going for me? I mean well.

Emerenc

Don't you all be well-meaning for me!

30. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda puts the dog in the room furnished with her mother's lovely antique furniture.

Tibor

I hope he likes the 18th century. Dogs only chew things till they're two years old, then they stop anyway. Didn't Emerenc tell you that?

31. EXT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, SUMMER – DAWN

The flowers are in bloom. Emerenc is watering them.

32. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SUMMER – DAY

Magda sits in the hall listening to Emerenc talking to the dog in the other room. She is speaking in a raised voice, articulating each word as if she were instructing a child learning to speak.

Emerenc (O.S.)

You can jump up at your mistress, you can sleep beside her on the sofa. Your mistress allows that because she loves you. The master is quiet, like water, you never know what's at the bottom of water. You mustn't annoy the master because then he'll get rid of you, and it's a good place.

Magda calls out to her husband.

Magda

Come, you should hear this!

Now both of them are standing in the hall.

Emerenc (O.S.)

Sit, Viola!

Magda

Viola? But he's a boy!

Emerenc (O.S.)

Sit, Viola. If you don't sit you won't get any sugar. Sit.

Magda enters the room.

The dog's things are thrown over Magda's mother's old dressmaker's dummy. She snatches them off and throws them on the floor.

Magda

The vet said it was forbidden to give the dog sugar.

Emerenc

The vet's a fool!

Emerenc gives the dog a firm pat on the back.

Emerenc

Sit, Viola, sit. If you sit you'll get a treat. You'll get a lump of sugar. Sit, Viola, sit.

And Viola sits.

Emerenc looks up.

Emerenc

I'd like to take Viola for the day! I won't be at home all day. He can guard the house!

Magda is hesitant.

Tibor

Aren't you worried about your cat?

Emerenc

Why should I be? I'll teach him that he has to like other animals, not hurt them.

33. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, SUMMER – DAY

Magda is taking the dog for a walk and he drags her over to Emerenc's gate. Two well-dressed, elderly gentlemen would like to go in; one of them has a cello case, the other a violin. Magda pulls Viola back to stop him knocking them over.

Viola scratches Emerenc's door, yapping for the old woman to let him in. He makes enough noise to disturb the whole neighbourhood.

34. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SUMMER – DAY

Magda tries to quieten him down, she articulates each word like Emerenc, but the dog takes no notice of her.

Magda

Good dog! Come with me! Come with your mistress. Let's leave Emerenc in peace! It's Magda now, not Emerenc. You're *my* dog. Understand? Behave properly! Come on, you'll get a sugar lump!

A key rattles in the lock at which Viola stops barking, wagging his tail and watching. Emerenc appears in a rage, opens the door a crack then slams it immediately behind her. She speaks only to the dog, as if Magda wasn't even there.

Emerenc

Who do you think you are? Shameless creature! Charging over here and making a row. Go back home! We'll see each other in the evening.

Viola listens to her bewitched. Mr. Brodarics and his guests gather at the window.

The dog seems to be obedient at last, and Emerenc is about to go back into her flat.

As they set out Viola jerks Magda so hard that she falls down among the flowers. Emerenc rushes out and hollers at the dog.

In the meantime Polett arrives.

Emerenc

Sit, you rascal! This is no way to behave, you scoundrel! Stand, Viola!

The dog only lies low and whines.

Emerenc
Get up, Viola! Apologize!

The dog stands up, puts his left paw over his heart, and his right points to the sky like a patriotic statue. Emerenc goes on giving the dog orders.

Emerenc
Say it, Viola!

Viola barks.
Polett laughs like a child at the circus.

Emerenc
What are you laughing at?
Then she turns back to the dog.

Emerenc
Now promise you'll be a good boy!

Viola puts out a paw to Emerenc.

Emerenc
Not to me, I know. To your mistress.

Viola turns to where Magda is standing, and shiftily, with a guilty conscience, offers her his right paw. She doesn't take it because her knee is hurting badly and she is angry with both of them.

Emerenc
Don't bother with him, he'll have lunch with me today and I'll bring him back this evening. Wash your leg, it's bleeding. Alright, see you later!

The sound of chamber music flows from Mr. Brodarics's open window upstairs
Magda ambles home alone.

35. EXT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, AUTUMN – DAY

The yellow leaves are falling. Emerenc is burning a heap of raked leaves.

36-36/A. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT / EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda sits at her desk in front of her typewriter and looks down at Emerenc.

Emerenc's porch is a spacious rectangular room from where the door to the larder opens. Between two benches stands the table.

She has guests today: sitting around the laid table are Sutú, Polett, the handyman and his wife, Adél, Emerenc's nephew and the police inspector. Pastries are on the table and Emerenc is pouring coffee from a gorgeous pitcher into the cups with a smooth air of confidence, as one who really knows what's what. Viola is there.

The conversation is sometimes heard across the garden.

Lieutenant colonel

How are you getting along with the writer lady?

Emerenc

We don't always agree. She stares at the tops of trees all day and says she's working.

Lieutenant colonel

She's writing. You have to think about what you're writing sometimes.

Emerenc

But *that* much?

Polett

I saw one of her books in a shop window.

Sutu

You can't even read any more.

Polett

Her name was in big letters.

Lieutenant colonel

The papers weren't too keen on her.

Emerenc

Why? Because she goes to church? Is that a crime again?

Lieutenant colonel

That's not why. They're saying she's too refined. Too upper-middle class.

Emerenc

So she's a refined young lady. Good God! Her husband doesn't even take his tie off at home. Sometimes they only speak English. On Thursday it's only German.

Adél

So you won't understand?

Emerenc

No. They're practicing so they won't forget.

Polett

Does she speak French?

Emerenc

I'm sure she does. She knows all sorts of things.

Magda goes into her husband's room, takes out some opera glasses and watches the company at Emerenc's through them.

37. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – EVENING

Emerenc knocks on the door of Magda's room.

Magda is typing away. At first she doesn't hear the increasingly loud knocks. The old woman speaks with difficulty.

Emerenc

So I will ask you something now.

Magda

Go ahead!

At that moment Viola rushes in barking and jumps up at Emerenc.

Magda

Emerenc, wouldn't you like to keep the dog? We only wanted to give him shelter anyway.

Emerenc

If it were possible, I'd have acquired a dog long ago, but under my contract I can only keep one animal inside my flat. But if you're offended that Viola likes me, I'll deal with that. It is possible to alienate an animal. What I wanted to say was that I'm expecting a guest in a few days. You know I don't let anyone into my flat. Would you allow me to talk to my guest at your place? I'll make up for it.

Magda

You want to receive a guest here?

Emerenc is suffering.

Emerenc

All you have to do is make this person believe that I live here with you. By the time the master gets home in the evening we'll be gone. Wednesday, at 4 o'clock.

Magda watches her agony with astonishment. In the end Emerenc almost shouts:

Emerenc

Do say yes!

38. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – EVENING

Tibor laughs.

Tibor

Could be someone answering a marriage ad, couldn't it? And Emerenc wants to give him the once-over at our place? I'm sorry I won't be here.

39. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, AUTUMN – DAY

Emerenc is like a demented woman controlling herself with her own iron strength, and Viola, who is affected by other's moods, isn't himself either. The old woman carries all sorts of plates and dishes covered with a tray cloth.

40. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – DAY

Emerenc unpacks the dishes she has carried over onto the kitchen table. Magda is annoyed.

Magda

If this is a secret dinner, why are you schlepping your stuff down the street? As you're not a leper and neither, I imagine, is your guest, you can use our plates. Take out anything you like from the sideboard, use my mother's silver cutlery! Or do you think I'm too greedy to lend it to you?
Emerenc stops unpacking for a moment.

Emerenc

Thank you. I never forget a gesture be it good or bad. But this dinner service is important to me. I want my guest to remember. I don't want to be secretive, I just don't want the person in question to see that I don't have a family and I don't wish to explain why I don't open my door.

Emerenc sets the table beautifully in Magda's mother's room. She arranges the cold meats and salads, then she ties a colourful kerchief on the dressmaker's dummy.
Magda stands and watches.

Emerenc

Do you still need this dummy?

Magda

It was made for my mother's figure.

Emerenc

I'd like to take it home. It's like a person.

Emerenc laughs.

Emerenc

I wouldn't be alone.

Magda

Have you never thought of going to the doctor with your problem?

Emerenc

What problem?

Magda

That you're so closed. You even lock everyone out of your flat.

Emerenc is wiping the champagne glasses.

Emerenc

I'm not ill. I don't harm anyone by living as I do. Leave me in peace. I don't like it when you preach. If I ask for something and you give it to me, do it without a lecture, or don't give it at all.

Magda leaves her and goes into the bedroom. She puts on a record, not wanting to hear what she doesn't see.

Emerenc has finished setting the table. Everything shines beautifully. She sits down at the table and glances at the empty chair ready and waiting for the guest. She too starts waiting with a straight back. The atmosphere is festive.

The record has finished playing. Magda is eavesdropping. Silence. She starts reading.

Emerenc slouches and stares into space. The tension in her is building up.

The telephone rings. Magda picks it up.

Magda

Hello! Yes. Good. I'll tell her.

Magda puts down the receiver and goes into Emerenc.

As Magda opens the door, Viola pushes in after her and sits down beside Emerenc, beating the carpet with his tail. Emerenc doesn't even give him a glance.

Magda

They called from the hotel where your guest was supposed to stay. The visit's been cancelled for business reasons. She can't fly to Europe at the moment. When she gets the chance to come again, she'll send notice in good time.

Magda goes out, shutting the door behind her. She waits. From the other side, smashing sounds can be heard. Emerenc shouts.

Emerenc

Ungrateful bitch. Drop dead! Drop dead!

Magda opens the door, but remains on the threshold.

Viola is sitting at the head of the table in the guest's place, eating greedily. Emerenc pushes the dish in front of the dog who supports himself with one foot on the mat, his other paw keeps slipping on the Murano glass table mirror, in the middle of which the silver candelabra is swaying to and fro. Magda has never been so angry in her life.

Magda

Get out of here, Viola! My mother's mirror! What's going on here, Emerenc? Are you out of your mind?

Emerenc cries out.

Magda doesn't know what to do because the dog won't obey her. He goes on eating his supper, while Emerenc stands sobbing on the far side of the table. The picture is so absurd that Magda gets more and more worked up, and is about to explode when all of a sudden Emerenc wipes her face, throws herself at the dog eating away happily, and starts beating him with the handle of the serving fork.

Emerenc

Ungrateful! Disloyal! Damnable liar! Callous capitalist!

Viola whines, jumps off the chair and lies on the carpet. He doesn't escape and doesn't try to defend himself. Emerenc hits out at the dog as if she

wanted to stab him with the serving fork. Magda gets frightened and starts shrieking, but after a bit, Emerenc squats down beside the dog, raises his head and kisses him between his ears. Viola whimpers in relief and licks the hand that has beaten him.

Magda

Oh, come on, that's going too far! Could you please get rid of the mess in my mother's room?

Magda turns on her heel and leaves the room.

Emerenc puts the cakes, champagne and the still untouched dish of a different kind of roast meat into Magda's fridge.

Then she opens the door of Magda's room. Now she is back to normal. She stands in the doorway with the dog, looking dignified and unrepentant.

Emerenc

I'm going to take Viola for a walk to the forest. I also apologize for my behaviour. That's never happened to me before. And it never will again.

The door shuts behind them.

Later, still in his coat, Tibor stands in the kitchen.

Tibor

Serves you right. Why the hell do you have to take everything seriously? Take the food from the fridge and bring it back to her, I'm not going to eat the leftovers. I'm not Viola.

41. EXT. EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – EVENING

The tray is heavy - Magda can hardly open the gate. Emerenc is nowhere to be seen. Magda calls out to her.

Magda

Emerenc, I'm afraid I can't keep the festive feast. I've brought it back: it's here on the porch table, come out and take it whenever you are ready.

Emerenc squeezes herself out through a tiny crack in the door which prevents her cat from getting out and a visitor seeing in. She's changed from her best dress to her everyday clothes. She doesn't say a word. She goes to the cupboard where she stores junk, brings out a huge pan and scrapes everything into it, mashes the cake, with the meat and the salad. Then she takes it to the lavatory, spoons it all into the basin and flushes it down. She gets rid of the drink too: she grabs the bottles by their necks and hurls them at the doorpost. The champagne explodes. She throws the bottles into the rubbish bin and mops the porch with the spilled champagne.

42. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – EVENING

Magda enters the flat and says to her husband:

Magda

You gave me bad advice. I shouldn't have done that. Someone has wounded the old woman. And now I hurt her too. She beat Viola yet he didn't take offence.

43. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – NIGHT

Tibor is asleep. Magda is tossing and turning in bed. She gets dressed.

44. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, AUTUMN – NIGHT

They are walking through the semi-darkness, Magda and Viola. The gate is locked. Magda rings Emerenc's bell. It is long past midnight, but the light's still on in the porch. Emerenc soon appears. They stand on opposite sides of the bars.

Emerenc's voice is matter-of-fact, dry and dutifully quiet. The rest of the house is asleep.

Emerenc
Is the master ill?

Magda
No, he's not. I'd like to come in.

Emerenc lets her in and locks the gate after her. Magda would like to say something nice, something appeasing, but nothing comes to mind.

Magda
I'm hungry. Have you got any food left?

Emerenc smiles.

45. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – NIGHT

Emerenc disappears into the bath room; you can hear the water running. She never touches food without washing her hands. Then she opens the larder door wide. She comes back with a yellow damask tablecloth, then brings a plate and a knife and some kind of roast meat. Magda eats eagerly. Emerenc offers her some wine which she pours from a demijohn and Magda drinks that too.

46. EXT. JULIA STREET, AUTUMN – NIGHT

Emerenc sees Magda home. When they reach Magda's house, Emerenc hands the lead to Magda, she waits till they enter the garden and then whispers slowly and articulately, as if she were taking an oath:

Emerenc
I'll never forget this.....

47. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – NIGHT

Tibor doesn't even wake up when Magda gets back into bed beside him.

48. EXT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, SPRING – DAWN

Emerenc is planting flowers.

49. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – MORNING

The bedroom window is open slightly. Outside the trees are in bud, the birds are singing. The door opens. Emerenc comes into the bedroom.

Tibor wakes with a start from his sedated sleep. Magda wakes up the moment she sees Emerenc in the light pouring in through the open window. She is dressed in her best and leads Viola on his lead to Magda's side of the bed. The dog is wearing a little round felt hat on his head, and Emerenc has pinned a freshly cut rose onto its band. She has woven flowers all round his collar, and she chants a festive greeting in Viola's name:

Emerenc

Thank you for your love and care,
the food I eat, the clothes I wear.
Thank you for my upbringing.
Thank you, mother, for everything.

Viola tries to rub off his little hat. Emerenc adds another sentence to close the rhyme:

Emerenc

I, the boy child, give you this bouquet,
roses for my mistress on Mothers' Day.

Tibor is so irritated by this little ceremony that he jumps out of bed, rushes into Magda's mother's room and locks the door.

But the door opens again immediately. Tibor dashes in a fury into his own room, and by the time Magda gets there he is speaking in a tone that we haven't heard before. His normal calm is swept away by a senseless rage. He shouts.

Tibor

What's the point of living if you can wake up in your own home to find a goddamned garden dwarf standing on the carpet, a riding boot in front of one's books, and the bookshelf full of all sorts of junk!

Magda is shocked to see that Emerenc, with the discretion of a well brought up present-giver, has just put down the treasures she has gathered for them on junk collecting day.

In front of Tibor's collection of English classics, is the boot, while the garden dwarf grins on the carpet. His copy of Ulysses has been pushed to the back of the shelf and in front of it she has put a kettle full of artificial flowers. There's a falcon sitting above the fireplace.

Magda stares at the flat in shock. She tries to calm Tibor.

Magda

This is how Emerenc tries to express her affection.

Tibor

Affection? This is crazy!

Tibor hurries out of the flat half dressed.

50-50/A. EXT./INT. JÚLIA STREET, MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

There are heaps of junk are standing outside the houses.

Sutu, Polett, Adél and the handyman are picking through them.

A waltz can be heard coming from Mr. Brodarics's place.

Emerenc is sweeping the street and greets Tibor kindly, but he rushes on.

Emerenc looks after him with a smile, murmuring to herself.

Emerenc

What's there to do? Men are all batty.

Magda watches them both from the window.

51. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Magda puts the falcon down beside Viola. The dog gnaws it up right away. She knocks the painting out of its frame. On the canvas an agitated looking young woman is studying the foam of a black crested sea. Behind her is a villa and a steeply rising row of cypress trees. She nails the painting to the frame of the window in the kitchen door and stands the boot against the hall wall as an umbrella stand. She stuffs the dog with the broken ear behind the mortar.

When Emerenc comes into the flat, Magda is sitting at her typewriter working.

Emerenc

I brought everything that was any good. Nothing left for the others. Were you pleased?

Magda goes on typing, muttering to herself.

Magda

Was there no sustenance bowl?

Emerenc

Where did you put the nice little dog?

Magda

I hid it from view because it's dreadful.

Emerenc is incensed; she stops on the far side of the desk.

Emerenc

Are you such a slave? Just because the master doesn't like animals, can't he bear a statue? Is that ugly shell that he keeps on top of the roll-top desk any better? I'll smash it one day.

With that, Emerenc swaps the shell for the dog.
Magda is unusually stern.

Magda

Emerenc, could you please take the little statue back to the street? It's tasteless. Kitsch.

Emerenc

What's kitsch? Tell me.

Magda

Kitsch is something fake, false.

Emerenc

Is this dog false to you? Hasn't he got everything: ears, legs, tail? Why do you tell me such lies? Just tell me you don't want anything from me and that's it. I understand that you are afraid of the master, but don't try to disguise your cowardice by calling something a kitsch.

As she goes out she notices the boot. She grabs it and tips out the umbrellas in front of Magda. She's so angry she shouts.

Emerenc

Have you lost your head? D'you think anyone in their right mind would keep umbrellas in a boot?

Emerenc jerks open the tool drawer, whips out a screwdriver, then bangs the dismantled spur down in front of Magda.

Emerenc

Because you are blind, stupid and cowardly, God knows what it is I like about you! Maybe when you grow old your taste will improve and you'll be braver.

Emerenc marches out with the boot, leaving the spur on the table. Magda picks it up. The middle of the crest flashes red. Magda stands astonished, holding an oxidized black work of art decorated with a garnet.

52. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – EVENING

Emerenc's nephew stands in the doorway.

Nephew

My aunt has asked me to tell you to look for someone else to help, she is resigning. Please, Sir, don't take what she says lightly. Once she's made a decision, it's difficult to make her change her mind. She doesn't understand a word of this modern world.

Tibor

We're not going to beg her to come back. I offended her because I wasn't prepared to let her turn my home into a flea market.

Nephew

The only trouble, sir, is that when she looks for a present for you she is still selecting things for two children. Whatever comes of this, please don't bear a grudge because there are few such good and upright people on this earth.

Magda

What? You mean she considers us children?

Nephew

You can't talk to her. Maybe later. Bye, now!

The Nephew departs.

Tibor

Well, we sure fixed that.

Magda

You're happy about this?

Tibor

We'll do just fine without her crazy whims.

Magda

Is your problem that she's gotten to like me?

Tibor

Have you gone insane too?

Magda

I'll show her that I can do fine without her.

53. INT. POLETT'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Magda knocks on Polett's door across the street.

Polett opens the door, surprised.

Polett

Oh, the writer lady! Is something the matter?

Magda

Polett, how would you like to work for us? Two or three times a week would be enough. Just some housecleaning: the wash, ironing, perhaps cooking too.

Polett

What about Emerenc?

Magda

Emerenc doesn't want to work for us. You can ask her.

Polett

Of course I won't, God forbid! You're the light of her eye. She only calls you "the girl." If Emerenc would ask me to help out at your place for a while, that would be different. But definitely not like this! I'm sorry. I can't accept. I can't take over her place.

Magda

I see.

Magda stands there uncertainly. Polett is also motionless.

Polett

Please speak French to me sometime...

Magda looks puzzled. Polett continues.

Polett

Just a little...

54. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – EVENING

Magda serves supper. Tibor takes a mouthful, then after the second he says in a normal, quiet tone:

Tibor

We're paying too dearly for that dog with the chipped ear. We'll have to put the little statue in the best place, and when guests come we'll remove it. You can't work if you've got to do the housekeeping. We'll have to make amends.

55. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – EVENING

Emerenc isn't on the porch. Magda knocks on the door in vain, then she goes round the side and tries banging on the wooden panel.

Magda

Come on out, Emerenc, I want to talk to you.

Emerenc

Come to apologize?

Magda

No. Our tastes differ, but that doesn't matter, and we didn't want to hurt you. Won't you come back?

Emerenc

Will you give a home to the plaster dog?

Magda

Yes.

Emerenc

Where will it go?

Magda

Wherever you want.

56. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – EVENING

When, on reaching the staircase, Emerenc quietly says Viola's name, the dog almost breaks down the hall door. Emerenc says good evening politely and again holds her hand out to Tibor, strokes the joyful Viola and then looks around. The dog statue is standing on the kitchen table. Emerenc looks at Tibor and Magda, then at the statue, and an unforgettable smile flashes across her face. She wipes the dog, takes one more look at it then hurls it to the ground. No one says a word. Emerenc stands among the fragments of pottery like a prince.

57. EXT. MAGDA'S GARDEN, AUTUMN – DAWN

The leaves are falling.

Magda is standing in the garden in her dressing gown. She has brought Viola down. She looks at the trees, autumn has arrived.

Sutu rattles the garden gate.

Sutu

Excuse me, please!

Magda goes over to her.

Sutu

Polett has killed herself.

Magda
She has done what?

Sutu
I've just found her. She hung herself from the walnut tree in the garden so that we don't even have to break the door down. She pulled a cap over her head.

58. EXT. GARDEN OF THE VILLA ACROSS THE STREET, AUTUMN – DAWN

Magda sees in her imagination the event as Sutu relates it: **Polett is standing in the garden. She pulls a cap over her head and it covers her face.**

57. (CONT.) EXT. MAGDA'S GARDEN AUTUMN – DAWN

Magda
How considerate of Polett. She didn't want to startle anyone.

Sutu
Could you please tell Emerenc about this? I have to wait for the police.
Would you tell her?

59. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – DAWN

Emerenc is sorting lentils when Magda arrives.

Emerenc
Have you come about Polett? I saw her at dawn when the dog gave a signal.
I thought I'd go all round the neighbourhood. I found her by chance.

Magda is stunned by Emerenc's unemotional tone of voice.

Emerenc

We didn't mention the cap, we just agreed on the dress that she should be wearing when they bury her. I gave her a petticoat; she didn't have a black one. I didn't find her shoes. Has anyone found them?

Magda

You knew what Polett was about to do?

Emerenc stirs the lentils, gauging whether it's enough for all of them.

Emerenc

Another thing we agreed on was that she shouldn't take poison. Poisoning hurts. But hanging goes smoothly. I saw enough of it here in Budapest - when the Whites were in power the Whites did the hanging, when it was the Reds' turn, they did it. Even the talk before the executions, when they abused the prisoners, was the same. The hanged kicked out exactly the same way, no matter what colour the ideology had.

Magda

And you didn't try to stop Polett?

Emerenc

What would she have stayed here for? We weren't enough for her, not Sutu, nor Adél, nor me, yet we always listened to all her batty ideas in good faith. I'm lonely, she kept saying.

60. INT. POLETT'S FLAT, SUMMER – DAY

Magda imagines the scene as Emerenc relates it. **Polett is huddled in her little room. Emerenc shouts at her.**

Emerenc

**Who isn't lonely I'd like to know? Even those who live with someone
are lonely. They just haven't realized it yet.**

Then Emerenc takes a kitten out of the basket and hands it to Polett.

Emerenc

**It's a tom. And he can look at you with his odd eyes in such a way that
he doesn't need to meow, you understand what he wants.**

Polett

Don't want it.

Emerenc

Why not?

Polett

It's not a human being.

Emerenc

**As if we weren't all animals! Take him in, he was thrown out, he'll die
on his own he's so small.**

Polett shakes her head angrily.

Polett

I need a person.

Emerenc

Good, go and buy one at the market!

Polett begins to cry.

Emerenc

What's the trouble this time?

Polett

**I can't even take in ironing. I always get a headache from the charcoal
smell.**

59. (CONT.) INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, AUTUMN – DAWN

Emerenc

And she ironed beautifully, better than any of us.

Magda

Emerenc, shouldn't you discuss what you're going to say at the police station?

Emerenc

D'you think I didn't make her write a farewell letter? I dictated to her what she should write to the police. "I, Polett Dobri, am ending my life of my own accord, because of illness, old age and most of all solitude. Etelka Vámos, Adél Kürt and Emerenc Szeredás should do with my belongings as they see fit." I brought round her iron that night just to avoid any argument over it. If she'd had enough of life, no one has the right to hold her back.

61. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – EVENING

Emerenc opens the door. You can see she been crying.

Emerenc

I'll take Viola away.

Magda

Alright.

Emerenc

You'll have Viola given the injection when the time comes. If you love, you have to be willing to kill too. Ask the good Lord. He kills too.

Magda shakes her head.

Emerenc

Do you think I didn't love Polett? If I hadn't, I would have held her back. Because if I yell at someone, they do what I say.

**62-62/A. EXT. /INT. MAGDA'S GARDEN, MAGDA'S FLAT,
SPRING – MORNING**

Between the branches there is an almost imperceptible green glimmer that is not a haze, nor buds, nor even leaflets – but a sign that spring is here. Magda looks at the trees from the window.
The phone rings.

63. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – DAY

Magda runs across to Emerenc.

Magda

The librarian from Csabadul has just rung to invite me to meet the local reading public. If I accept will you come with me?

Emerenc

Why have they invited you?

Magda

Because of my novels...

Emerenc

I see.

Magda

...of which you have such a low opinion. It appears that in your home village, there's someone who doesn't consider writers to be shirkers.

Emerenc

Do we have to stay the night? Because that's out of the question.

64. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc is kneading dough in the kitchen.

Emerenc

When we're in Csabadul, don't tell anyone in what manner I belong with you.

This statement annoys Magda.

Magda

Is it all right if I introduce you as one of my husband's relatives? I can't pass you off as one of mine.

Emerenc looks at Magda more sarcastically than ever before.

Emerenc

The master will be impressed. Don't bother. I just wanted to see if you would do it. You are a nut case. What do you imagine they'd think I've become? A king? Even as a child I was sent into service. I'll tell them I'm a caretaker; it's not a bad job.

65. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc, dressed smartly, is walking towards Magda's house. A car is parked outside, on its side is written: Nádori-Csabadul Community Library. Emerenc looks at the car and the driver, then goes into the house.

66. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Magda is hurrying feverishly to get ready. She's adjusting a frill on her shoulder in front of the mirror.

Emerenc

Aren't you dressed yet?

Magda

For heaven's sake, Emerenc!

Emerenc

Is that what you're wearing? That dressing gown?

Magda

Yes.

Magda puts on lipstick.

Emerenc

You want to go there like that?

Magda defiantly puts two lines of rouge on her face.

Magda

Yes.

Then she rubs the rouge into her cheeks making red patches.

Emerenc

Painted like that? What will they think of me?

Magda

Stop moaning!

Magda hurriedly wraps the books intended as gifts. Emerenc looks at the covers, but says nothing about the books.

Magda

Would you take a book?

Emerenc

Will you write in it saying you gave it to me?

Magda

Of course.

Magda autographs it: To Emerenc with love ...

Meanwhile Emerenc talks about herself.

Emerenc

I haven't been home since 1945. Even then I just used to go straight there and back, as much as the trains allowed, and I swapped odds and ends for food. You know what the world was like in those days.

Magda

And before that?

Emerenc

I spent a week there in '44, but I didn't enjoy it. At that time no one was very cheerful in my family. My grandfather was a tyrant, and the rest of the family was disturbed by the scandals going on all over the country.

The doorbell rings. Magda opens the door. Emerenc stands behind her. Sutu is at the door. You can tell she expects Emerenc to be angry.

Sutu

Excuse me, madam, but I can't stand in for Emerenc because I've been summoned for an inspection by the district council. It's about my shop permit. My living.

Emerenc interrupts angrily.

Emerenc

And you couldn't ask for another appointment?

Sutu

From whom?

Emerenc steps closer to Sutu.

Emerenc

Drop dead!

Emerenc shuts the door in Sutu's frozen face and looks at Magda.

Emerenc

See, your God doesn't want me to go. Though I would have been curious to see how you behaved in a village.

67. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, SPRING – DAY

Magda and Emerenc walk towards the car.

Emerenc

Make sure you get a look at the state of the old Szeredás House on Lilac Lane, where I was born.

Magda

Alright, Emerenc.

After Magda has gotten into the car, Emerenc calls to her:

Emerenc

Would you be so kind as to go out to the station at Csabadul and walk along the ramp? The ramp's the most important thing. And don't chatter too much if they ask about me. I'm fine. I'm healthy.

68. EXT. CSABADUL, MAIN SQUARE, STREET, SPRING –DAY

The car stops in the main square.

Magda looks around and stops somebody. She gets directions.

The car stops outside an old house. Magda gets out, goes to the fence and gives a greeting.

Magda

Good morning.

69. INT. EMERENC'S COUSIN'S HOUSE, SPRING – DAY

The cousin, who has a backache, pulls out the drawer of a beautiful old sideboard and searches among some photographs.

Cousin

This sideboard was made by Emerenc's father who was not only a carpenter, but a cabinet maker as well. My uncle wasn't as impetuous as his daughter.

The cousin takes an ancient snapshot from the drawer, the edges cut wavy, showing a young woman with a child in her arms. She hands it to Magda.

Cousin

Emerenc with her daughter Évi. We've heard nothing of the child since she took her away from the village. When Emerenc appeared in the last years of the war with that suckling baby, I thought our grandpa, who raised Emerenc, would beat her to a pulp. If he wouldn't have been recovering from a stroke, he would've too.

70. INT. EMERENC'S GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE (THE COUSIN'S NOW), SUMMER – DAY

The scenes from the past come to life before Magda's eyes.

The old man, leaning on two canes, stands in front of young Emerenc, who hugs the child close to her, as in the snapshot.

Grandfather

Who's child is this?

Emerenc

Évike.

Grandfather

I asked whose it was.

Emerenc

Mine.

Grandfather

Who is the father?

Emerenc lowers her head and doesn't say a word.

Grandfather
**How dare you bring your bastard into the home of your parents? To be
the talk of the town?!**

Emerenc is silent.

Grandfather
**Who knocked you up? Who did you roll in the hay with, you whore!
Honest work was no good for you, eh?**

71. INT. NOTARY PUBLIC'S OFFICE, SUMMER – DAY

**An oval sign reads: Royal Hungarian Notary Public Office, Csabadul
Grandfather, the Notary, and Emerenc with the child are in the office.
A huge goose lies on the Notary's desk.**

Notary
Does it have a big liver?

Grandfather
We stuffed it ourselves. Huge.

Notary
And what's wrong with the papers?

Grandfather
She's lost the child's papers.

Notary
**That's a bad idea during these chaotic times. Where's the child's
father? On the front?**

Grandfather shouts at Emerenc.

Grandfather
Where's the child's father? Answer!

Notary
He knocked her up and was on his way? Do you know his name? He must have had a name!

Emerenc is silent.

Notary
Then we can only put the child down under the mother's name. Szeredás...

Grandfather
That's what I say too. It makes no difference now. Szeredás.

Notary
What's the child's name?

Emerenc
Évike.

Grandfather
Évike Szeredás.

72. INT. EMERENC'S GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE, SUMMER – DAY

Grandfather sits on the bench with Évike on his knee. He bounces the child.

In the meantime, we hear the voice of the cousin as she finishes the story.

Cousin (V.O.)
In the end, he came to love the child more than his lawful grandchildren. He burst into tears when Emerenc took her away, and he never forgave himself for letting the child be taken from him, when she was so sweet.

73. INT. COMMUNITY HALL, SPRING – DAY

Unusually few people turn up at the meeting and all present listen without showing a flicker of interest. Everybody is too hot.

As Magda relates the same thing mechanically for the hundredth time, she can't take her eyes off the photograph of Emerenc and her daughter.

74. EXT. RAILWAY STATION, SPRING – DAY

On the way home they go via the station.

Magda walks to the end of the ramp as Emerenc asked her. It's just like anywhere else, high, made of strips of concrete, neglected.

Magda stops and looks back. Standing on the ramp is a young Emerenc with her daughter in her arms.

75. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – EVENING

The dog runs out of the porch towards Magda at the gate. Emerenc doesn't get up, she's sitting outside on the laundry bench.

Magda (V.O.)

Just wait 'till the atom bomb explodes!

Emerenc turns her back to the garden, while pressing Viola's head to her knees, stares at Magda.

Magda hands over the photograph. Emerenc looks at it for a long time, but not in the manner of an upset mother who is suddenly faced with her past.

Emerenc

This is Évi Grossmann. She was the person I was waiting for the other day.

She lives in America and sends me money. This is what she looked like when I brought her home to Pest from Csabadul, but now I don't even want to see her face, because she didn't come when I asked her to. Yet if it wasn't for me, her head would have been smashed against a wall or she'd have been killed in a gas chamber.

Emerenc pushes the picture back, but Magda doesn't take it.

Emerenc

Up until then I was respected by everybody. You can imagine how pleasant it was to have to tell my grandfather that the baby I'm holding is mine and please feed her until the war is over because I can't provide for her in Pest.

You remember the Jewish Laws, don't you? The old ones chose to drink cyanide, the young paid to escape, but they couldn't take the route over the hills with a baby, so they gave her to me, and I took the little girl to the village. Don't ask me what sort of reception I got when I arrived.

76. INT. VILLA, MAID'S QUARTERS, SUMMER – EVENING

The young Emerenc in the photograph opens the door. Standing in the doorway are the young Grossmann couple with rucksacks and boots. They hand over the little girl to Emerenc and disappear into the night.

77. INT. TRAIN, SUMMER – DAY

Emerenc is on the train with the baby.

78. INT. EMERENC'S GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE, SUMMER – DAY

Emerenc's grandfather beats Emerenc with his cane just like Emerenc hit Viola with the serving fork.

Emerenc takes the beating and doesn't even try to get away.

Emerenc

Beat me, kick me, call me all the names you want. Just leave the child alone!

The old man is out of breath. He is panting. They stare at each other with hatred.

Emerenc undresses the little girl. She takes out a fistful of jewels and money from under the clothes and extends it toward her grandfather. He does not take it.

Emerenc

Take it. It's all yours if you take good care of the child until this horrible mess is over!

Grandfather

You're a thief too? The war will let you get away with anything?

75. (CONT.) EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – EVENING

Emerenc

They took very decent care of the child for more than a year. Then the Grossmans came home and I could fetch her. The poor things wanted to begin their life again, but in the end they went abroad again. Did you go walk along the ramp?

Magda

Yes.

Emerenc

I often see it in my dreams. We had a heifer, she was a sandy colour, I'd looked after her since she was a calf. People used to laugh because she followed me everywhere, but later we had to sell her.

79. INT. EMERENC'S GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE, SUMMER – DAY

The heifer is being taken away. Little Emerenc runs after it, clutching the rope, not letting go.

Grandfather whisks her up, takes her up to the hayloft on the ladder, locks the door on her and removes the ladder.

The heifer bellows miserably.
Emerenc struggles with the lock while the heifer is being taken away.
Emerenc, her child's body slight, wriggles through the loft window and jumps from the roof into a haystack.

80. EXT. FIELD, SUMMER – DAY

Emerenc dashes across the field.

81. EXT. RAILWAY STATION, SUMMER – DAY

By the time Emerenc arrives, the heifer has already been shoved into a boxcar. The animal bellows. Emerenc screams its name:

Emerenc
Viola! Viola!

Viola appears in the doorway of the boxcar and jumps from a great height.

It lies on the ramp, unable to get up. Emerenc weeps beside it.

Emerenc's grandfather holds the girl's head and won't let her look away while they knock the heifer unconscious.

82. INT. BUTCHER, SUMMER – DAY

The butcher cuts up the heifer. Emerenc's grandfather squeezes the child's hand in an iron fist, forcing her to watch this too.

Butcher
Let the child go already!

Grandfather
I want her to learn never to love anyone, because then no one of hers will ever be beaten to death and she won't jump off anywhere either.

75. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – EVENING

Emerenc

Go on home now. Both of us have talked enough. Take Viola home.

Magda

The heifer was named Viola?

Emerenc

Go on now. This dog's tired.

83. EXT. RAILWAY STATION, SUMMER – DAY

Viola, the dog, runs towards us on the ramp. The dog stops and looks around.

84. EXT. WOODS IN BUDA, LATE AUTUMN – DAY

Emerenc walks in the woods with Viola.

Viola runs off, chasing birds or fluttering leaves. If the dog meets other dogs, they sniff each other, mill around, and run off.

The dogs' masters greet each other politely, as if they were all acquaintances, as if in a village.

Emerenc stops and looks at the falling leaves of autumn and the clouds. She is motionless. Viola is suddenly startled, losing sight of Emerenc.

A tree trunk moves. It is Emerenc. Viola runs over.

85. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – DAY

The sound of chamber music coming from the first floor flat fills the garden.

On the table there is strudel and folded paper.

Emerenc pushes the paper towards Magda.

Emerenc

I've agreed with my nephew that any money remaining after I'm gone is his.

Everything in the flat will be left to you. Don't thank me, or I'll get angry.

Emerenc gets up and lights the gas under the coffee-making flask.

Magda

What's made you think of death? Hope you're not ill, are you?

Emerenc

The death of the lawyer's son - where I first worked as a maid - was announced on the radio. We were the same age. You can watch his funeral later on the news. I don't want to see it. For a long time I was the one who nearly died for him.

Magda

Died for him?

Emerenc

He came in to my room at night. They're searching for him everywhere. Hide me! Of course I didn't ask him who was after him. I hid him. When he finally escaped abroad, I thought I'd lose my mind. Don't stare at me, drink your coffee, I'm not the only one who's been in love. He appeared again one night. I thought he'd come back to me for good, or that he would take me away from here. That could be the only reason for his return, though he never promised he would.

86. INT. HIDING PLACE, WINTER – NIGHT

An unshaven man stands silently in the doorway.

Emerenc (V.O.)

He never promised me anything. At least he didn't lie.

Man

They're after me. Can I stay here?

Young Emerenc and the man lie in bed together, clutching each other.

Emerenc (V.O.)

I loved him. Not his head. It was his big smart head that took him away from me, but his body, which will be buried the day after tomorrow. Do you know how happy I was when his comrades took him away in 1950

and half beat him to death, accusing him of being a British spy? I thought, let them beat him, let him suffer! He didn't even speak English. At the Piarist School he was only taught French. I worked for the family. I knew what he was studying. He didn't mention me in his biography, though I was certainly part of it.

**87. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, EMERENC'S GARDEN, WINTER –
DAWN**

Banging on the gate is heard. Two men in leather coats are trying to get in. A car from the State Security Department is parked behind them. Emerenc, in a hastily pulled-on coat, comes to the gate and asks from a distance:

Emerenc
Who are you looking for?

Man in Leather Coat
Open the gate!

Emerenc comes to the gate.

Emerenc
This isn't the type of house where you can just barge in. Who are you looking for?

Man in Leather Coat
Does Ernő Brodarics live here?

Emerenc looks at the men in leather coats.

Emerenc
They came for him already.

Man in Leather Coat
Who did?

Emerenc
They didn't introduce themselves. About an hour ago.

The two men glance at each other and return to the car.

88. INT. STAIRWELL OF EMERENC'S HOUSE, WINTER – DAWN

Emerenc rings the bell of the Brodarics's flat for a long time.

89. INT. CELLAR, HIDING PLACE, WINTER – DAWN

Brodarics hurries down the steps after Emerenc in his pyjamas.
Emerenc opens the door of the hiding place.

90. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, EMERENC'S GARDEN, AUTUMN – DAWN

Two soldiers run down the street.
The rattle of machine gun fire is heard. One of the soldiers falls.
During a moment of silence, Emerenc darts out onto the street and pulls the soldier into the garden.
She sees Brodarics behind the window and signals for him to come down.

Emerenc
Come and help!

91. INT. HIDING PLACE, AUTUMN – DAWN

Emerenc and Brodarics lug the unconscious soldier into the hiding place.

Brodarics
What do you want with this State Security man? You want to hide him?

Emerenc
Take a look at him! He's a peasant lad. A plain linesman. I won't let him die.

85. (CONT.) INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – DAY

Magda

Tell me, did you only like saving people, or did you inform on anyone?

Emerenc doesn't even reply. She takes out a plate and fills it with strudel.

Emerenc

The master has a sweet tooth.

The garden gate creaks. The two elderly gentlemen with a cello and a violin case are going out into the street.

92. EXT. EMERENC'S VILLA, GARDEN, JÚLIA STREET, SPRING – DAY

Magda sets off home carrying the plate, and now everything she has heard from or about Emerenc is suddenly there around her in the present: **the Grossmanns, the Germans who came first, the Arrow Cross Party who followed; they leave and the Russians move in. Emerenc cooks and washes for them. And there is Évi Grossmann, the heifer, the cat hung from the door handle and the grand love affair. All the while, the waltz is heard from the Brodarics's.**

The cavalcade grows bigger.

Magda goes out through the gate **and the cavalcade floods out behind her into the street, into the city.**

An April 4th parade is underway: flags, signs. Pull back to show everything on a TV screen.

93. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Magda watched the April 4th parade on TV.

The sound of Mr. Brodarics's favourite waltz floods in through the open window.

94. EXT. JÚLIA UTCA, SPRING – DAY

Outside Magda's house Emerenc is busy with the huge birch broom. Magda is dressed up.

Emerenc

Give extra tithes at church. I'm sure today it counts double.

Magda moves as far as she can from Emerenc.

Magda

I would be grateful if at least on Good Friday you could leave me alone!
And when you've finished, could you please cook the plum soup. The fruit
is out on the kitchen counter.

Emerenc looks at Magda, then offers her the broom.

Emerenc

Would you like to try a bit of sweeping? After all you're going to church to shed tears, so it wouldn't hurt you to do a bit of work as well. Because there are two kinds of people in the world: those who sweep, and those who get someone to sweep. Jesus swept.

Magda makes her leave.

95. INT. CHURCH, SPRING – DAY

Magda seems to be praying.

Magda (V.O.)

She is self-sacrificing and generous. Her goodness is natural, whereas I was raised to be like that. What I think is faith is perhaps only discipline. But sometimes she irritates me so much – forgive me Lord – I feel like killing her. Why does everybody trust her when she does not trust anyone?

96. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

When Magda gets home, the table is set and Tibor is sitting down eating chicken paprika. The shrivelled plums are there on the table in a bowl, untouched.

Tibor

I couldn't wait for you, I was so hungry.

Magda

Good Friday was the only day when my father wanted to fast. Even the piano lid was locked so nobody would start playing. I keep this fast, as you very well know.

97. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc is sitting outside on the bench as though waiting for Magda.

Magda

Don't look so triumphant because I haven't even tasted your chicken paprika, and I'm not paying for it, because I didn't order it.

Emerenc smiles.

Emerenc

It's a great God you've got if he measures with plums. *My* God, if he exists, is everywhere, at the bottom of the well and in Viola's soul too. Listen, because this is when I strike. The master's not got long to live, you yourself know that. Do you think he'll get his strength from plums? What's he going to take with him when he goes? Don't send him off with plums or that diet of slop, or with the thought that you're always off somewhere. Even now you weren't with him, instead you went to pray. Make him laugh, that's worth as much as an Our Father.

Magda bursts into tears. Emerenc takes an immaculate white handkerchief from her ironed apron pocket and offers it to Magda.

Emerenc

Don't tell me you came because of the chicken? As long as the master lives there'll be no fasting in this house - at any rate I'm not going to cook the fasting meal. Princess of Plums. It's Friday, go home and read the Bible in German.

Magda turns and sets off home.

Emerenc

Come back, I won't hurt you. I never mean to hurt you. You're not very bright. Why do you listen to me grumbling on?

They stand facing each other. Mozart is playing from Mr. Brodarics's window.

Emerenc

You're from the Plain, that's why you've got a cursed temperament. Come here, I'll give you a present. The Easter bunny laid it.

Magda

I'm not coming, Emerenc, we've said all there is to be said. If you want you can have Viola here for the night.

97./A. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH (CGI), SPRING – DAY

The sky suddenly darkens and it starts raining. The wind comes up in the same legendary manner as we know it from Emerenc's story.

Viola whimpers.

Lightning has started to slash the sky and suddenly it's all blue flames and water.

Emerenc's face is unexpectedly filled with terror.

Emerenc

Quiet, Viola. In a minute, dog. In a minute.

The sky glows and there's a loud thunder clap. In the lightning's glare Emerenc, terrified, fishes out the key of her flat. She turns it in the lock. Emerenc looks at Magda and doesn't take her eyes off her.

Emerenc

Now listen. If you tell anyone, I'll curse you. You're going to see something that nobody has ever seen before and nobody will again until I'm in the grave. Come on inside. Don't be afraid.

98. INT. EMERENC'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc goes ahead without putting the lights on. Magda follows her. Viola is breathes loudly; small rustling sounds can be heard.

The light that floods them is fierce and pure white.

The room is large, spacious, spotlessly clean, the walls are recently whitewashed; in it there's a gas stove, a sink, a table, two chairs, two large cupboards, a velvet couch that has seen better days, its huge cover now torn, and the one-time so fashionable love seat. This home is as clean as the row of glasses behind the gauze curtain on the sideboard. Viola goes and hides under the love seat, which means the storm is now really at its height. Emerenc is deathly pale. Magda starts to cough from a strange smell.

There is a strikingly odd a huge safe pulled in front of the door to the next room.

Magda

The Grossmanns' safe?

Emerenc

They pried that open back when the Arrow Cross Party was still in power.

Outside the sky resounds and it's pouring with rain.

Magda looks around feeling disturbed. There are even flowers in a vase and on the stone tiles scrubbed shiny, there are pieces of carpet as if someone had cut up an old worn out Persian rug. Then Magda notices that under the sink there are nine small empty enamel dishes, showing traces of food, and nine little baking tins. Between the two cupboards, like a statue, stands Magda's mother's dummy. Like a naked female field marshal wearing

nothing but her medals: she's covered in pictures pinned on to her. One of them is an old newspaper photograph of a vital young face.

Magda

Who's that handsome man?

Emerenc

The lawyer's son.

Magda

He's different from how I imagined him.

Emerenc

When he left, I saw my calico cat who'd been strung up. I got another to replace the one they hanged, but that one was poisoned, probably by the same person. I decided that an animal doesn't have to go out into the garden, it can live indoors like a posh Pekinese dog. For the life of me, I can't tell you how I came to have nine. They're prisoners, but they live.

Magda just stands there. The storm moves off and the thunder dies down.

Emerenc

Your good man the vet who gives Viola her jabs, he should have the poor things put down when I die. You can't do more for anyone than stop them from having to suffer. If the tenants here found out that I've got so many cats, they'd force me to get rid of seven because the law only allows two. I can't give you any more than this.

Emerenc suddenly exclaims:

Emerenc

Suppertime!

And then the room becomes a hive of activity. Magda sees Emerenc's family, all nine cats, as they come out of their hiding places behind the armchairs and under the cupboard. The cats stop beside the empty plates and look back with their gem-like eyes toward Emerenc, who has started to ladle out some sort of stew from a large bowl on the stove. As she doles out a portion to each, bending down and then up again, the smile never leaves her

face. Viola indicates with his tail that he's there too. He's the last to get some, gulping down the stew and licking the plate clean. Emerenc then says sternly:

Emerenc
In your place!

Viola jumps back on the love seat and the cats jump up beside him, surrounding him.

**99. EXT. / INT. JÚLIA STREET, MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER –
EVENING**

Snow is falling thick and fast. It's a beautiful Christmas. Magda is standing by the window and looking out at the falling snow. Huge snowflakes are swirling.

In her memory she sees **Christmas cards from her childhood on which the snow is falling just like now.**

Filled with the spirit of Christmas at the window, Magda stands above the street lamp which streams with light even in the thickest snowstorm. Tibor joins her and he too is entranced by the spectacle. As they stare at the winter scene with its dancing snowflakes, Emerenc suddenly appears in the street with a broom. Her kerchief, her shoulders and back are covered in thick snow. She's sweeping on Christmas Eve.

Tibor
We should ask her in!

Magda
You know she wouldn't come. The sidewalk must always be clear.

Magda and Tibor turn away. They sit down in front of the TV.

100. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

In the room is a decorated Christmas tree with presents under it.
Magda is sitting at her desk in front of the typewriter, staring at the paper.
She's not working. Emerenc is laying the table for Christmas lunch.

Emerenc

Again those scribblers are plotting against you.

Magda

My new book's come out. That's when the rats emerge from their nests.

Emerenc

I've told everybody in the street it's all lies. Shouldn't I report that critic to the lieutenant colonel?

Magda is uptight.

Magda

Don't interfere, Emerenc!

101. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Emerenc is coughing and choking, she can be heard by the whole street.
Adél is running towards her with mulled wine. Emerenc stops every now and then, leans on her broom and coughs a lot. Adél's voice echoes down the street. Even Sutu hears her in her stall.

Adél

You haven't slept for days because the God forsaken snow keeps on falling.
You always have to start from the beginning in front of one of the houses.
But you're ill!

Magda comes down the street and grabs Emerenc by the arm to stop her.

Magda

Emerenc, you should be in bed!

Emerenc shouts out.

Emerenc

Stop bothering me, if you can't hold yourself back, go and look after the master, do the cleaning and cooking while this damned snow keeps falling. What's the point of me going to bed when someone might ring the doorbell any time? Leave me alone, it's nobody's business whether I rest or not!

Emerenc's cheeks are rosy red from her fever and her temper. She keeps sweeping with even greater energy, as though she had a personal matter to settle with the snow.

Emerenc

I hate it when they spy on me.

Her words get lost in a coughing fit, then she turns away.

102. INT. / EXT. MAGDA'S FLAT, JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

It is early morning; the telephone rings. Tibor picks up the receiver. He looks uncomfortable.

Tibor

Good morning. Yes, she's here.

Tibor gestures to Magda before she takes the receiver.

Tibor

The Minister of Culture.

Magda doesn't believe him, it's not possible.

Magda

Is somebody pulling my leg?

Tibor silently shakes his head. Magda takes the phone.

Magda
Hello?

A man's voice begins to speak. Magda turns red.

Magda
Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Magda puts down the receiver. She looks at her husband.

Magda
He said he finished my book last night. He likes it very much. He told me I should ignore the critics. They're only party soldiers. He'd like to meet me.
What could that mean?

Tibor
Why? Is he the member of some other party? You have to be careful what you say to him.

Magda
About what?

Tibor
About whomever he asks you about.

Magda looks out the window. The snow has not been cleared. Emerenc is nowhere.

103. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

Magda calls in to Emerenc.

Magda
Emerenc, do you need anything?

Emerenc shouts through the door.

Emerenc (O.S.)

Go away! Leave me alone. I'm not letting anyone in!

Magda

We must send for the doctor!

Emerenc (O.S.)

I don't want to see a doctor, all I need is a rest, I'll be back on my feet as soon as I've had a good sleep. Don't worry about me so much! I'll soon give your flat a good cleaning.

104. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda leaves the house. She is surprised to see Sutu and Adélka sweeping the snow off the sidewalk. Mr. Brodarics runs after her Magda.

Mr. Brodarics

Do you know how long it is since Emerenc last appeared on her porch madam? Two weeks. She's not even using the lavatory. The porch is covered in snow, and there've been no footprints for days. There's some kind of bad smell coming through her door.

Something must be done, or the old woman might not make it.

Magda is desperate.

Magda

I'm in a hurry Mr. Brodarics. Let's wait until tomorrow. I must talk to Emerenc face to face.

105. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Someone rings the bell.

Magda goes out and the mailman hands her a large, ornamental envelope. It has come from the Parliament.

Magda opens it excitedly. They inform her that she has received the highly prestigious Kossuth Prize. Magda goes in to the room where Tibor sits at a

desk and puts the notification from the Parliament in front of him. Tibor reads it and stand.

Tibor

You are allowed to be happy. Very, very happy.

The look at each other. Tibor steps up to Magda and kisses her.

106. INT. POLICE STATION, WINTER – DAY

Magda is standing at the entrance.

Magda

I want to see the lieutenant colonel.

The policeman on the door won't let Magda in.

Policeman

The commander is on leave.

Magda

Where can I get hold of him?

Policeman

What business do you have with him?

Magda

A private matter.

Policeman

I'm not authorised to give information.

107. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda arrives home out of breath. Mr. Brodarics and Emerenc's nephew are sitting in the kitchen with Tibor.

Magda

Why are you sitting here?

Tibor

I've opened the brandy bottle.

Magda picks up the glass in front of Tibor and gulps it down.

Tibor

The men have decided to break the door down.

Nephew

The doctor will be waiting outside and I'll get her up the stairs to your flat.

Mr. Brodarics

If you could just get her to open the door a tiny bit! Just make her turn the key and we'll do the rest.

108. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda and Tibor are lying in bed.

Tibor

I don't really like having strangers in the flat, but this is irrelevant at the moment. The old woman needs to be taken care of and kept in a warm flat. Bring her round to us.

Magda

Good Lord!

Tibor

You've grown fond of her, why the panic? If she doesn't get medical attention, that'll be it.

Magda

But the only way I can save her is if I betray her.

109. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAWN

At dawn Magda goes over to Emerenc and knocks on the door.

Magda

Emerenc I vow I'm not going to neglect you just because you won't open the door. Nobody will come in, but you should come out. You don't even have to go to hospital if you don't want to. You can stay with us in my mother's room with Viola. The doctor's ready to see you.

Emerenc shouts hoarsely.

Emerenc (O.S.)

If you don't go away I'll report you all for disturbing my peace! I've got a right to be on sick leave.

Magda stands there, terrified.

Magda

Emerenc, then just please step outside your door for a moment just so people will see that you are alive. You know how fond they all are of you.

Emerenc (O.S.)

I'm alive. Fetch me a longish box. My old cat died. Bury him. You can say you're taking away the dirty laundry.

110. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Magda is making the bed and raking the fire in her mother's room when the doorbell rings. Emerenc's nephew is standing in the doorway.

Nephew

Good morning. The doctor will be here at ten.

Magda

I've got to go to the Parliament at ten. The doctor should come at nine.

Nephew

He's not free before ten.

Magda

There is no way I can change my appointment.

Nephew

I'll ask him to come at a quarter to ten.

Magda

He should go straight to Emerenc. I'll call out to her and give her the box...

Nephew

What box?

Magda feels awkward.

Magda

I'll be taking the dirty laundry away in it. When she hands it to me you can come forward with the doctor. You'll bring her across to our place and I can go to Parliament.

111. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Magda is sorting through the old boxes and suitcases till she finds something suitable. Then she opens her cupboard, chooses a dress and some shoes to go with it and lays them out on the bed. She calls to Tibor

Magda

Tibor, will this be alright?

Tibor takes a look at the dress.

Tibor

You'll look very smart in it.

Magda

I'm anxious about the moment when it becomes clear that I'm not the only one who's standing at the door.

112. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda is carrying the cat coffin.
The handyman stops her in the gateway.

Handyman

The smell is worse today. If I didn't know it was impossible I'd think it was a dead body. During the war I often smelled this ghastly stench.

113. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

The doctor, the nephew, Mr Brodarics, Sutu and Adél are now standing on the porch.

Magda

Could you all move aside? I've got to stay by the door until I've received a package from Emerenc.

The porch empties. The doctor, the nephew and Mr. Brodarics wait behind the protruding corner of the wall.
Magda knocks.

Magda

It's me, Emerenc.

Emerenc (O.S.)

Don't come in, just give me the box!

Magda watches the moving door frame and Emerenc's hand. Nothing can be seen of her face. Magda pulls her hand in front of her nose because the smell that pours out of the crack in the door is so strong. She stands, her body

tense and attentive like a dog out hunting. She hands over the hatbox. Emerenc closes the door. Inside the light is switched on. The doctor peeps out from the corner. Magda signals him to stay put. Emerenc hands her the body of the cat wrapped in some worn out coat, not the hatbox.

Emerenc (O.S.)

The box was too small. Don't you know how big a cat is?

Magda takes the corpse, holding it in her arms like a murdered baby. Emerenc is about to shut the door immediately, but by this time the doctor has got his foot in the door and her nephew rushes forward.

114. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda runs towards their house with the cat's body. She suddenly feels nauseous and dumps the corpse in the rubbish bin.

115. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Magda dashes up the stairs to the flat, then lets the hot water run over her fingers. As she dresses hurriedly she speaks to her husband in an unrecognizable voice.

Magda

Could you do something for me? Could you run across and lock the door to Emerenc's flat for me before anyone goes in. Don't look inside, and as soon as she gets here give the key back to her. See you at the Parliament.

116. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DAY

Magda runs to the taxi, Tibor makes for the villa where Emerenc has her flat. The old woman is nowhere to be seen, nor is the rescue party, but he can hear a rumbling noise.

Magda collapses into the taxi not wanting to see or hear anything, and they turn out of the wintry street.

117./A. INT. PARLIAMENT, TV ROOM, WINTER – DAY

Before the awards ceremony, Magda is being interviewed by the television reporter

Reporter

Who or what can you thank for this special day?

Magda

I could mention the names of all sorts of people, first of all my family, my parents, my husband and all those whose story I have written. But right now the first name that comes to my mind is the name of a woman who saw to everything around me so that I could work in peace. Behind every visible result stands an invisible person without whom there'd be no life-work. In my case this person is Eremenc Szeredás.

The voice of the director can be heard coming from the loudspeaker.

Director (O.S.)

Cut! Thank you very much.

On the wall of the control room are dozens of TV screens. Every one of them is showing Magda's face as she repeats the name: Emerenc Szeredás. Emerenc Szeredás. Emerenc Szeredás.

Magda comes through the door and is fascinated to see herself saying: Emerenc Szeredás.

An elegant elderly gentleman, the editor-in-chief, walks over to Magda.

Editor-in-chief

You're still gorgeous, Magda! I've been in love with you since '46.

Magda

Look at the wrinkles under my eyes! But if you were in love, why didn't you ever allow my works to be published?

Editor-in-chief

It was a different world then, Magda, dear. You know that very well.

The director gets up from the control unit.

Director

You taught me in primary school. You haven't changed at all.

Magda looks around.

Magda

I started teaching when I was very young. Thanks to him.

She points to the editor-in-chief.

Editor-in-chief

And are you sorry?

Magda looks at him contemptuously.

Magda

No.

117./B. INT. PARLIAMENT, WINTER – DAY

In the grand hall so many relations and family members flood in with other people that there is hardly a seat left for Magda. When she hears her name she goes forward, taking the award after a handshake. As she turns to be photographed, she can't disguise her happiness. Flashes are fired, recording her happy smile.

118. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, WINTER – DUSK

It's almost dark when Magda gets out of the taxi. The street is quiet and deserted, only the sound of Viola's complaining whimpers can be heard coming from Magda's flat.

Once the taxi has driven away Magda takes a look in the rubbish bin to see whether the ghastly bundle has disappeared yet, but it's still there. She bangs down the lid in horror, and then sets out in the direction of Emerenc's flat.

119. EXT./INT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, PORCH, WINTER – DUSK

In the villa the handyman is in the process of letting down the blinds on the windows. His face is separated from Magda by strips of wood crashing down all at once.

Magda (V.O.)

He doesn't want to talk to me!

Magda looks up at Mr. Brodarics' windows. The blinds are down there too. Silence. Magda gets worried, and starts to run across the garden. Her smart shoes get stuck in the snowy mud.

On the porch her feet are rooted to the ground. The door is missing from Emerenc's flat. It's been torn out, the middle part is missing. Someone has beaten it in with something very hard.

Magda is overwhelmed by a feeling of weakness and she has to sit down on the small bench till she can gather her strength. Absolute silence.

120. INT. EMERENC'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda comes in and turns on the light. It's an unpleasantly glaring light. She is standing in the midst of human and animal filth. Stinking and rotting mounds of food are lying on the bare floor or on sheets of newspaper. The contents of the little dishes tipped out onto the floor are covered in maggots, a half decaying raw fish and dead cockroaches. Covering this ghastly mess spread out before Magda is a thick layer of white powder.

Not a single window frame is in its place, the shutters have been forced open.

121. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

When Magda gets home, her hand is so stiff from the horror of it all that she can't turn the key in the lock and has to ring the bell.

Tibor opens the door.

Magda

You didn't come.

Tibor

I couldn't. What's the Kossuth Prize like?

Magda puts it down on the kitchen table. Tibor has a look at it.

Tibor

Nice.

As Magda sips her tea her teeth knock against the cup.

Emerenc's flat key is lying on the table.

Tibor brings Magda's coat.

122. INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – EVENING

Magda and Tibor are standing at the nurses' counter.

Nurse

Ward 25. But she hasn't arrived yet.

Magda

How can that be?

Nurse

She was taken to be disinfected first, because she couldn't have been put to bed in the condition they found her.

Magda and Tibor sit on a bench in the corridor.

Tibor

By the time I got to Emerenc the doctor had managed to catch hold of her arm. Emerenc put up a defence, but there was no way she could resist

because later on the doctor told me that she must have had a mild stroke sometime earlier - she could have been paralyzed for days on end.

123. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

Magda sees before her the scene that Tibor is describing to her:

Emerenc tears away and bolts the door. The handyman tries to force open the door, but as soon as the lock shifts one of the boards unexpectedly splits from the inside and through the crack, like a horror film, a hatchet shoots out. Emerenc flails about with it. From then on no one dares to go near the door.

Finally the handyman crouches down at the bottom of the door and manages to cut a hole around the lock with an axe so that the whole thing gives way. Emerenc collapses in front of them. She is unconscious. The ambulance doctor makes a call. The first things they do are sprinkle powder everywhere and spray everything, and then they wrap up Emerenc. While the officials scatter insecticide on the stinking mounds of food, some animals, huge cats, rush forward and flee through the door.

122. (CONT.) INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – EVENING

Magda

I should have suspected something like that ages ago. But nowadays I don't take notice of anything apart from myself.

Tibor

You've just been awarded a Kossuth Prize, Magda dear.

Magda

I could have done without that scene.

Tibor

Which scene?

Magda

Emerenc in her own filth, surrounded by rotting meats and putrid soups. E-me-renc sur-round-ed by rot-ting meats and put-rid soups.

Tibor gives Magda a disturbed look.

Tibor

Are you writing a poem now?

At that moment the nephew sits down beside them on the bench with a sigh.

Nephew

The flat is open - the savings books are prey for all.

Magda

Go there and root out those wretched books.

The nephew goes away.

Nurses bring Emerenc. Magda and Tibor hardly recognize her without her usual clothes. Her eyes are closed, she's unconscious. They hooked her up on the IV and put covers over her.

It's the first time Magda has seen Emerenc without a kerchief. She lies there in front of them radiating beauty even in her old age. Nothing covers her intelligent forehead: a leader overcome by illness.

Junior doctor

You'd best go home now. I don't know what I can say to reassure you at the moment. Her heart is so worn out that, for the time being, we can't tell what she can withstand, or...wants to withstand. I've rarely examined such an overworked heart.

124. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda cuts up some meat on a plate and sets out.

125. INT. EMERENC'S FLAT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda almost suffocates from the smell of decay as she looks behind and under everything, but the flat is empty, not a sound can be heard.

126. INT. PARLIAMENT, WINTER – EVENING

Mr. Brodarics's favourite waltz is playing.

Magda in evening dress struggles unhappily up the Parliament steps. She senses that she all her movements are false. All of a sudden she stops, turns round awkwardly and waits for Tibor.

This evening the grand hall is as bright as a starry summer sky. Awards and jewels shine from everywhere, and if she looks up she sees herself in the mirrors. She turns to Tibor.

Magda

The old-time balls must have been like this.

127. INT. BALLROOM OF THE GOLDEN BULL HOTEL, SUMMER – EVENING

The reception in Parliament changes into an old-time ball in a country town, where the couples are dancing to Mr. Brodarics' waltz.

126. (CONT.) INT. PARLIAMENT, WINTER – EVENING

Magda replies kindly to the congratulations.

Magda

Thank you. Yes. Very much. Really.

But the words conceal Magda's thoughts, she doesn't even hear what people are saying to her.

Magda (V.O.)

Emerenc was pure and upright, our best selves as we've always wanted to be. A queen. And I allowed them to expose her in a single humiliating moment of her life. Whatever Emerenc says now, that overwhelming stench

and filth will discredit. We wrecked a long life's work. Maybe Emerenc no longer wishes to persevere, because we have destroyed the legend of her name.

Magda

Thank you. Yes. Very much. Really.

128. EXT./INT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, PORCH, WINTER – DAWN

Magda comes at a run across the garden at dawn. She goes to Emerenc's porch.

129. INT. EMERENC'S FLAT, WINTER – DAWN

The plate of meat is untouched. The cats have disappeared.

130. EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL, WINTER – DAY

Magda runs up to the hospital.

131. INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – DAY

Sutu and Adél have beaten Magda to it. They are sitting beside Emerenc's bed with a dinner carrier. Magda sits down and touches Emerenc's hand. She winces, but doesn't look up; her eyelids shut tight give the impression of a death mask.

132. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

Magda arrives at Emerenc's home loaded with cleaning materials. She puts down the bucket with a thud when she finds the fumigation people on the

porch. They are smoking. Magda stands in astonishment before them, her hair still in festive curls.

Fumigation director

Please don't come here with that bucket! Instead could you please check the inventory to see whether it's alright? The owner can get compensation for the destroyed objects.

133. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Magda makes a phone call, agitated.

Magda

I'd like to speak to the lieutenant colonel, please.

134. EXT./INT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, PORCH, FLAT, WINTER – DAY

The authorities have got down to the cleaning in rubber gloves, aprons and masks. The liquid rotting stuff, they shovel up and throw into a container in a sanitary van. Then they hose down and scrub everything with some sort of chemical water. They take the furniture out into the garden where the sticky chairs and the scruffy love seat are spread out on Emerenc's well-kept lawn. The cupboard and the relatively unharmed or already disinfected things are moved away from them.

Magda and the lieutenant colonel arrive almost together. In front of the lilac bush Magda sees her mother's dummy with the portraits pinned onto it as a vision.

The lieutenant colonel personally pulls away everything that can be salvaged. He empties the drawers too.

Any paper which has fallen into the muck, dirty documents or soiled clothes are piled up on the love seat together with the old calendars, newspapers, boxes and books by Magda she has autographed for Emerenc. When everything has been emptied inside, they pour petrol over the love seat and the chairs and set fire to them. Emerenc's shoes, stockings, kerchiefs burn away.

Magda watches the fire. She thinks of Viola.

135. EXT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, WINTER – DAY

Viola jumps up on the couch. Emerenc is there resting on it. The cats are sitting there too, like swallows on a wire. Magda sees them in the fire.

134. (CONT.) EXT./INT. EMERENC'S GARDEN, PORCH AND FLAT, WINTER – DAY

People walking down the street stop in their tracks when they see the bonfire in the garden. The onlookers have to be waved on.

The residents stand stunned in silence in the garden: Mr. Brodarics, the handyman and Adél, beside them Sutú.

Lieutenant colonel

If there's anything else to do I'll phone the Epidemiological Services. Till then I'll take responsibility on behalf of the local police.

The fumigators do one more thing: with a great effort they manage to move the safe away from the door. There's no key to the door and they don't want to break it down.

Lieutenant colonel

I was just a young constable when I had to check the inner room. Since then Emerenc hasn't pulled this safe away from here. She hasn't been in either.

The fumigators take their leave. Emerenc's nephew arrives from the hospital. He stares at the still blazing stake in horror.

Nephew

Emerenc's condition hasn't changed. The doctor reckons it's not her heart that is causing the most trouble now, but her passivity. Your message from Parliament was relayed to her but she didn't say a word.

Magda

Why, what did they tell her?

Nephew

One of the nurses rushed in and told her that she was being talked about. In fact, she put a little radio to her ear so that she could at least hear the very end, but Emerenc only stared indifferently.

Lieutenant colonel

All her life she hated compliments. Anyone can chat!

The nephew comforts Magda in a stupid way.

Nephew

I'm afraid what's been burnt is your loss.

Magda is so surprised that she laughs.

Magda

Half my inheritance gone, tough.

Two of them remain on the small bench, Magda and the lieutenant colonel. Mr Brodarics brings them some coffee. They stir it.

Lieutenant colonel

How did things get to this stage?

Magda

Oh God, it was my fault. I'm a failure. If I'd been able to find you in time a lot of things wouldn't have happened, or at least not like this.

The inspector doesn't react, nor does he try to cheer Magda.

Lieutenant colonel

What do you plan to do?

Magda

Nothing. If she survives I'll take her to stay with us. I'm not going to fail her again, even if I never see Vienna again.

The inspector gets angry.

Lieutenant colonel

Don't overdramatize things! I'll keep watch over Emerenc. We can open the other room when she gets better. I'll have the door boarded up today.

After a short pause he adds:

Lieutenant colonel

I had a car accident and my daughter was killed. I wanted to commit suicide. Emerenc came to see me in hospital for months. She brought me back to life.

136. EXT. STREET JUNCTION, SUMMER – DAY

Magda sees the ghastly scene in her mind's eye: **the bleeding, sobbing inspector beside the wrecked car, a child's body in his arms.**

137. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH FROM MAGDA'S FLAT, WINTER – DAY

Strong hammering, as if someone were nailing down a coffin can be heard.

Magda goes to the window.

A policeman is nailing four boards crosswise and four boards longwise onto the door frame.

138. INT. HOSPITAL, WINTER – DAY

Emerenc is noticeably better, she is being washed and a nurse pushes in her breakfast on a small trolley. When she catches sight of Magda standing in the door she starts groping around, then covers her face with a hand towel. Magda stands there for a moment, but then suddenly turns and goes out of the ward. She dashes down the hall.

139. EXT. SUTU'S STALL, SPRING – DAY

The winter has melted to mud on Júlia Street.
Magda stands in front of Sutu's stall.

Sutu

There's something you have to know. Emerenc is getting better, but she doesn't really remember what happened. She asked me how she was brought in. I told her you arranged it. The thing she was most anxious about was whether the flat had been properly locked. We said, of course, right away, and that you have the key. Emerenc only knows what the lieutenant colonel advised us to tell her: one day we kept knocking on her door but there was no reply, so we ran across to your place. You couldn't get any answer either so your husband forced the door.

140. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

Magda imagines Tibor with a crowbar in hand forcing open the door.

Sutu (V.O.)

We found her unconscious on the threshold, Mr. Brodarics picked her up and we brought her to hospital...

139. (CONT.) EXT. SUTU'S STALL, SPRING – DAY

Sutu

No mention of de-fumigation or cats. The lieutenant colonel lies through his teeth, so does the Szeredás boy. What I don't know is how she will take it when she learns the truth.

Magda looks alarmed, she pays quickly.

Magda

Thank you.

Sutu takes the money.

Sutu

Your hands are cold. You're not coming down with something, are you?

141. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SPRING – DAY

Magda goes and stands by Tibor's desk.

Magda

Poor Emerenc, don't tell me she's forgotten her cats! She remembers everything, she just doesn't dare ask outright.

Tibor

She's lying there half paralyzed and you get angry at her? Will you allow me a harsh remark? You are stupid.

142. INT. HOSPITAL, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc is not alone; two nurses are sitting by her bedside. She answers them cheerfully, but as soon as they catch sight of Magda the nurses stand up and Emerenc grabs for her towel. As Magda approaches she spreads the towel over her face. The warning sign is on the table: This patient cannot be visited. Magda hangs it on the door handle in the corridor, shuts the door, then snatches the towel off Emerenc's head and throws it down on the empty bed. Emerenc stretches for it, but can't reach it. She has to face Magda. Her eyes are full of anger and hatred.

Magda

Let's stop this! If you hate me so much because I didn't let you die, I accept that, but don't keep covering your head, just tell me openly. I meant well, but it didn't work out that way. I wanted the best for you.

Emerenc doesn't take her eyes off Magda, she's like a detective, and finally, quite unexpectedly, tears well up in her eyes.

Magda

Emerenc, had this happened the other way round, would you have let me die?

Emerenc's tears dry up. She answers in a flat tone.

Emerenc
Of course.

Magda
And you wouldn't be sorry for me?

Emerenc
No.

Magda
But I couldn't have saved you from anything. Everything would have come to light. The cats, the filth.

Emerenc
So what? What does a dead person know or see? It's only you who imagines that someone's waiting for you up there, the angel brings up your typewriter and everything carries on as usual. You're so stupid! For the dead nothing matters any more, the dead is zero.

Magda
What's the marble crypt for then, Emerenc? What's the point of gathering your mother, father and the twins? If it's so, the mallow in the ditch is good enough then.

Emerenc
Maybe for you, but not for me, and not for my dead. One should honour the dead, but what do you know about honour? You think if you throw me a marrow bone in Parliament I'll put my hand to my heart and serve you like Viola? You know how to make statements, but to stay there when you're needed, once you snatched me away from death, to conceal my wretchedness from the eyes of the world, for that you didn't have time. Go away, make more statements. You had the nerve to say that you had me to thank for your prize?

Magda gets up and makes for the door in silence. She is about to step out when Emerenc calls after her.

Emerenc

Are you looking after the animals decently at least? Did you clear away the garbage? Did you improvise some kind of door?

Magda turns round.

Magda (V.O.)

Right, now I'll tell her that she's only got half a flat, the door has disappeared, the animals are lost.

But out loud all she says is:

Magda

No one has put a foot in your home but me.

143. INT. EMERENC'S PORCH, WINTER – DAY

Magda's words become images.

Magda (V.O.)

As the doctor picked you up in his arms, my husband fixed the door. I went that night and saw to everything. The scouring proved difficult, but I managed it. I divided the rubbish up among the bins in the street. The cats are well, except of course for the one that I buried under the rosebush. They eat meat now because I haven't time to cook. I must go now, Emerenc, because we haven't had our lunch yet and I don't want to get caught in the rain.

Tibor screws the door back on its hinges. Magda scrubs the floor, puts the rubbish out in the bins, buries the cat in the garden, feeds the rest, then steps out into the rain from Emerenc's porch.

142. (CONT.) INT. HOSPITAL, SPRING – DAY

As Magda makes for the door, Emerenc stops her with her words.

Emerenc
Magda dear!

Magda stops dead.

144. PHOTOGRAPH

Magda's parents call after her.

Parents
Magda dear!

142. (CONT.) INT. HOSPITAL, SPRING – DAY

Magda turns round. She feels all her emotions clash inside her: the shame of lying, a guilty conscience and relief.
Emerenc raises her hand slightly, signalling Magda to come to her bedside.

Emerenc
Magda dear!

There is something different, something more in the way she addresses her, something mysterious and enigmatic.
Magda sits down on the edge of the bed. Emerenc takes her hand, examining her fingers.

Emerenc
With these clumsy fingers? Alone?

Magda turns her head away. She can't bear the old woman's gaze. One of the most moving moments in her life is when Emerenc unexpectedly opens her mouth and bites Magda's finger with her toothless gums, just as Viola might.

145. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT – DAY

Viola bites Magda's hand when he can't express his delight and boundless happiness in any other way than with this tiny bite.

142. (CONT.) INT. HOSPITAL, SPRING – DAY

Emerenc expresses thanks with this gesture, and that she was mistaken. Magda didn't betray her, she saved her.
Magda shudders with both horror and delight in equal measure.

146. EMERENC'S FLAT

The room looks like it did in the old days. The cats are chasing each other around Emerenc, Magda and Viola on the love seat.

142. (CONT.) INT. HOSPITAL, SPRING – DAY

Magda draws her finger away; she feels this is more than she can bear. Her tears are streaming. Emerenc fumbles around her eyes.

Emerenc

What are you wailing for? Now it's certain that I can go home without shame. I promise to get better soon.

Magda wipes her eyes. Emerenc gathers together the biscuits and bars of chocolate.

Emerenc

Take these sweets home to Viola!

147. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, GARDENS, MONTAGE, SPRING

Adél takes a cat to Sutu's stall and shows it to her.

Mr. Brodarics is chasing another cat in the garden of the villa.

A car brakes at the corner, almost running over a cat.

Tibor stands beneath a balcony watching a cat on the railing preparing to jump.

The handyman tries to catch a cat in a fishing net.

All of a sudden Viola starts to jerk at the lead. He stops outside a gate. A cat stares back at him from within. It doesn't run away, but approaches calmly.

148. EXT. GARDEN OF MAGDA'S HOUSE, SUMMER – DAY

The garden is covered in summer wild flowers, and next door, around Emerenc's porch, the roses are beginning to bloom.

Magda and Tibor are sitting in the garden reading and enjoying the sunshine. Mr. Brodarics calls out across the fence.

Mr. Brodarics

Excuse me, please...

With awkward gestures he shows them that he doesn't want to speak loudly. Magda gets up and goes over to him.

Mr. Brodarics

Sutu paid me a visit and told me that, should it so happen, she would be happy to close her stall and take over Emerenc's jobs. What do you say to that?

Magda

What do I say? Nothing. It's a disgrace. How has Sutú got the nerve to come and apply for the job when she had nothing until Emerenc acquired the stall for her with the lieutenant colonel's help? So it's a free-for-all now?

Mr. Brodarics

That's exactly what I think.

Magda sits down again beside her husband.

Magda

Did you hear that?

Tibor

Look here, he'll refuse Sutu's offer now, but they can't stand in for Emerenc forever. Burst pipes, chimney-sweep, snow, authorities! Emerenc either makes a full recovery or, let's say, she stays with us for good. Because once she loses her job, she'll lose her flat too.

Magda

God almighty, what will I do with her? What? How will I be able to fit a paralyzed patient into our lives? When will I have time to take her the bed pan, do her washing, cook for her and protect her from bedsores? And what will I do when I have to go away? And what will you do?

149. INT. HOSPITAL, SUMMER – DAY

The junior doctor leads Magda into the head doctor's office.

Junior doctor

Do you know the head doctor?

Magda

Yes.

The elderly head doctor is embarrassed.

Head doctor

Where did we meet?

Magda

I think you're the cellist. I live opposite Mr. Brodarics.

Head doctor

I see.

Magda
You play beautifully.

Head doctor
I've only good things to report too. Emerenc has suddenly started to fight for her life. Did you know that she has cataracts in both her eyes?

Magda
No.

Head doctor
Not to worry, it's a symptom of old age. I've got them too, and you will as well one day. It doesn't bother her yet, after all, she doesn't read. I'd like you to start trying to get her used to the fact that she'll have to go home soon. Could you let the lieutenant colonel know that we'll be sending the old woman home?

Magda
Not yet! Her flat is just as it was after the fumigation. You must realize she is under the impression that I sorted everything out, and she wasn't put to shame, she can happily come home, the cats are waiting for her.

Head doctor
She'll survive. I'm aware that so far you've led her astray. That was the right thing to do. I'll keep her in hospital for another week, during which time you can see to everything. Take into consideration that she'll need a lot of help. You'll have to arrange who'll do her shopping and who will cook for her, because she can't get out of bed yet. She'll need the bedpan too, but there'll be a nurse on hand for injections and bathing.

Magda
What will happen if Emerenc won't move to anybody?

The doctor doesn't want to hear Magda's question. He stands up and shakes her hand warmly.

Head doctor

Tell her the truth. Tell her here, where I can give her an injection. She is attached to you most of all. In fact she is only alive because of you.

150. EXT. GARDEN OF A CONFECTIONARY, SUMMER – DAY

Magda and the lieutenant colonel sit at a table.

Lieutenant colonel

I can't see what it is you're worrying about again. Emerenc is protected by law; she can't be evicted for two years according to the sick-leave regulations. All sorts of things can happen in that time: she can get better, or she can die. Anyone has a right to be ill. As a matter of fact I too would ask you to finish what you started.

Magda

And I'll ask you to tell Emerenc yourself what really happened. I wasn't even there.

Lieutenant colonel

I'm not afraid of her. I'll tell her this afternoon. I'll also tell her about Sutu's betrayal. Don't worry, that will get her going more than the pills will. She may get straight back on her feet in her fury. I'll see to it, but I have to say I'm disappointed in you. Luckily it's only now that you've only lost your self-control.

151. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SUMMER – DAY

Magda is lying curled up on her mother's bed with a motionless Viola when the bell rings.

Magda goes to open the door. Adél is standing in the doorway looking upset.

Adél

You won't believe this, but I wasn't allowed in to see Emerenc again. I don't know what happened. There was a notice on the door saying she couldn't be visited, and when I asked the nurse to take the soup I'd cooked for her, she told me to take it home.

Magda goes over to the peg and takes down her suit jacket.

152. EXT. AVENUE OF TREES, SUMMER – DAY

On the road leading to the hospital, the sky is iron grey and the wind starts to tear at the boughs of the trees.

153. INT. HOSPITAL, SUMMER – DUSK

Magda takes down the notice from the door. The nurse sees her but doesn't interfere.

When Magda goes in, Emerenc's face is again covered.

Neither of them speaks.

The twilight is thickening, the branches of the trees beat against the closed shutters.

Magda sits down beside her with the notice in her hand. Emerenc finally speaks up from under the cover.

Emerenc

How many cats are left?

Magda

None, Emerenc. We think we found three of them dead. The rest are lost.

Emerenc

Go on looking for them. If they're alive they'll be hiding in the garden.

Magda

All right. We'll look.

The boughs are moving against the windowpane.

Emerenc

You lied to me that you had cleaned up my place.

Magda

There was nothing to clean, Emerenc. The fumigators did it all.

Emerenc suddenly snatches the kerchief from her face and stares at Magda.

Emerenc

What sort of people are you? You and the lieutenant colonel? The master is the most decent; he at least never lied to me. Go away from here. If you'd let me die when I realized I couldn't work any more, I'd have looked after you even beyond the grave, but now I can't bear you near me. You don't know how to love, yet how I hoped that perhaps you did. You just put everyone in boxes and take them out when needed. This is my girlfriend, this is my old godmother, this is my beloved, this is a pressed flower from the Great Plains... So, leave me in peace! To save me for this... Idiot!

Magda

Emerenc, you'd be in a good place with us...

Emerenc

At your home? Go to hell! At your home the only sane person is Viola.

Emerenc leans back and looks at the ceiling.

Magda goes out without saying goodbye.

154. EXT. AVENUE OF TREES, SUMMER – EVENING

Magda runs home in the rain.

155. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, SUMMER – EVENING

Magda is very upset as she gets the supper ready. All at once Viola howls. Magda drops the loaded tray in fright. Viola's yelp makes Magda's blood turn cold, and she doesn't dare go near the dog.

Tibor stands there above the ruins of their supper, looks at his watch and says quietly:

Tibor

Quarter past eight.

Magda

Quarter past eight. Quarter past eight. Quarter past eight.

Tibor brings their raincoats.

Viola is crying like a child.

156. INT. HOSPITAL, SUMMER – EVENING

The junior doctor goes up to Magda and Tibor as soon as she sees them; she can hardly wait to be over what she has to say...

Junior doctor

My condolences. Sometime after eight o'clock she demanded that we transport her home at once. She said she had to look around in the neighbouring gardens for her family because no one feeds them. The nurse told her this was impossible. Then she started shouting that she must go straight away because she is needed. Then she threw herself out of bed and, as she fell to ground, she died from heart failure.

157. INT. HOSPITAL WARD, SUMMER – EVENING

Magda sees in her mind's eye the ghastly scene: **Emerenc throws herself out of bed and crashes to the ground.**

158. EXT. JÚLIA STREET, EMERENC'S GARDEN, SUMMER – EVENING

Magda and Tibor walk home in silence.

As they turn into their street, Emerenc is there sweeping.
They walk past Emerenc's house. As they look into the garden Emerenc is pruning the roses and a few steps further on, in the depths of the garden, Emerenc is lifting the boiling bed linen with a big wooden spoon in the huge cauldron. She is surrounded by steam and fire.
The street is full of Emerenc.

159. INT. EMERENC'S KITCHEN, SUMMER – DAY

A sharp hammering sound is heard. The lieutenant colonel breaks the boards off Emerenc's door.

Lieutenant colonel
Shall I come in with you?

Magda
Please do.

Lieutenant colonel
What are you afraid of?

160. INT. EMERENC'S FLAT, SUMMER – DAY

They both enter the pitch-dark room. They start coughing in the stale air. The lieutenant colonel opens all the windows, and in the light flooding in you can see what Emerenc has left to Magda.

A sight seen in films: the furniture is covered with a layer of dust an inch thick, cobwebs hang everywhere. We are standing in a room so beautiful it could be part of a museum. It looks like a salon from the end of the 18th century. On a porcelain topped table, shepherds and lambs are chasing each other. The tiny gilded legs of the small sofa are as slender as those of a very young cat; as Magda touches the upholstery with her hand, a dust cloud rises, then resettles, but at the gentle touch the material separates and tears all the way down. On the table is a perpetual clock, still functioning, with the sun, moon and stars on it.

Magda gently pulls the knob of the console drawer; it doesn't open. She tries to force it, but something else happens: the whole piece collapses. It gradually starts to melt, becoming like gold sawdust; it disintegrates, the figures fall down as well as the clock, the frame of the mirror simply dissolves, the drawers and even the legs turn into dust.

Lieutenant colonel

Woodworm. So, this was the reward for saving Éva Grossmann.

He leans his elbow on an armchair; that too is reduced to nothing. The velvet tears, the legs start crumbling to dust before their eyes, as if some mysterious preservative had kept them intact until a human eye caught sight of them again.

Lieutenant colonel

I'll have the place cleaned. Will you take the clock?

161. EXT. MAGDA'S BALCONY, AUTUMN – DAY

Magda is standing on the balcony from where you can see Emerenc's porch. Sutú is sitting at the table which is nicely laid in the way Emerenc like it to be. She's not alone. Maybe she's shelling something, because she's leaning over a dish together with Adél.

162. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – DAY

Mr. Brodarics rings the bell of Magda's flat. A pretty, slim young woman is standing beside him.

Mr. Brodarics

The lady was looking for Emerenc. I thought I'd bring her round to you...

The young woman offers her hand.

Woman

Eva Grossmann.

Magda
Évi.

Woman
Excuse me...?

Magda
Évi Grossmann.

Woman
Yes, that's what I was called when I was small.

163. INT. MAGDA'S FLAT, AUTUMN – EVENING

Magda has laid the table with the dinner service inherited from her mother, the silver cutlery and the best glass in the living room where she normally lays for guests

Évi eats in a refined way. You can see she was brought up to have self discipline just as Magda was.

Évi
I can't remember her face. When she returned me to my parents I was still very young and I've forgotten her face. I can feel her strong arms, and the way she hugged me to her breast. I even remember her smell because I liked that very much. But I've completely forgotten her face. Haven't you got a photograph of Emerenc?

Magda
There used to be a photo of you and Emerenc, but it was burnt at the time of the fumigation.

Évi
Burnt?

Silence.

Magda

How is your life, are you happy?

Évi thinks for a long time before she answers.

Évi

Yes.

Magda

You see, you can thank Emerenc for that. She saved your life and you became happy. I saved her life and with that I betrayed her. She loved and saved. I loved and killed. How can one make sense of that?

164. EXT. CEMETERY, AUTUMN –DAY

Magda and Évi Grossmann buy flowers outside the cemetery. As they set out uphill towards Emerenc's grave, a blustering wind comes up, almost knocking them over. It tears at the trees, whips wreaths off the graves, puts out the devotional candles one after the other.

Magda and Évi struggle against the wind as they get near Emerenc's grave, but the rain starts to pour down and both of them put up their umbrellas.

Magda points ahead.

Magda

That's Emerenc's grave.

They try to approach it, but the gale is blowing from the direction of the grave and they can't get near it, because at every step the force of the wind gets stronger, preventing them from going forward.

Helping each other, clinging on to each other, shielded by the umbrellas, they fight against the strength of the wind, but it's hopeless. They just can't get to Emerenc's grave.