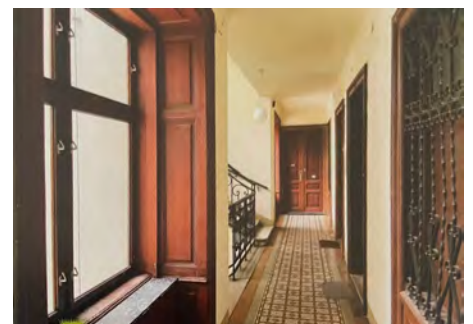
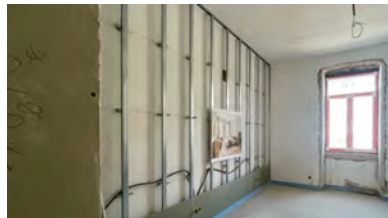
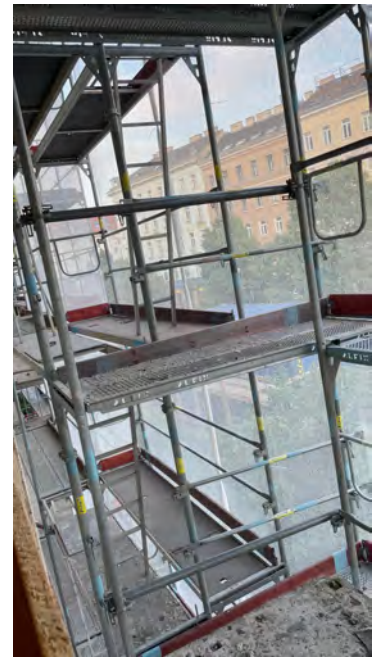


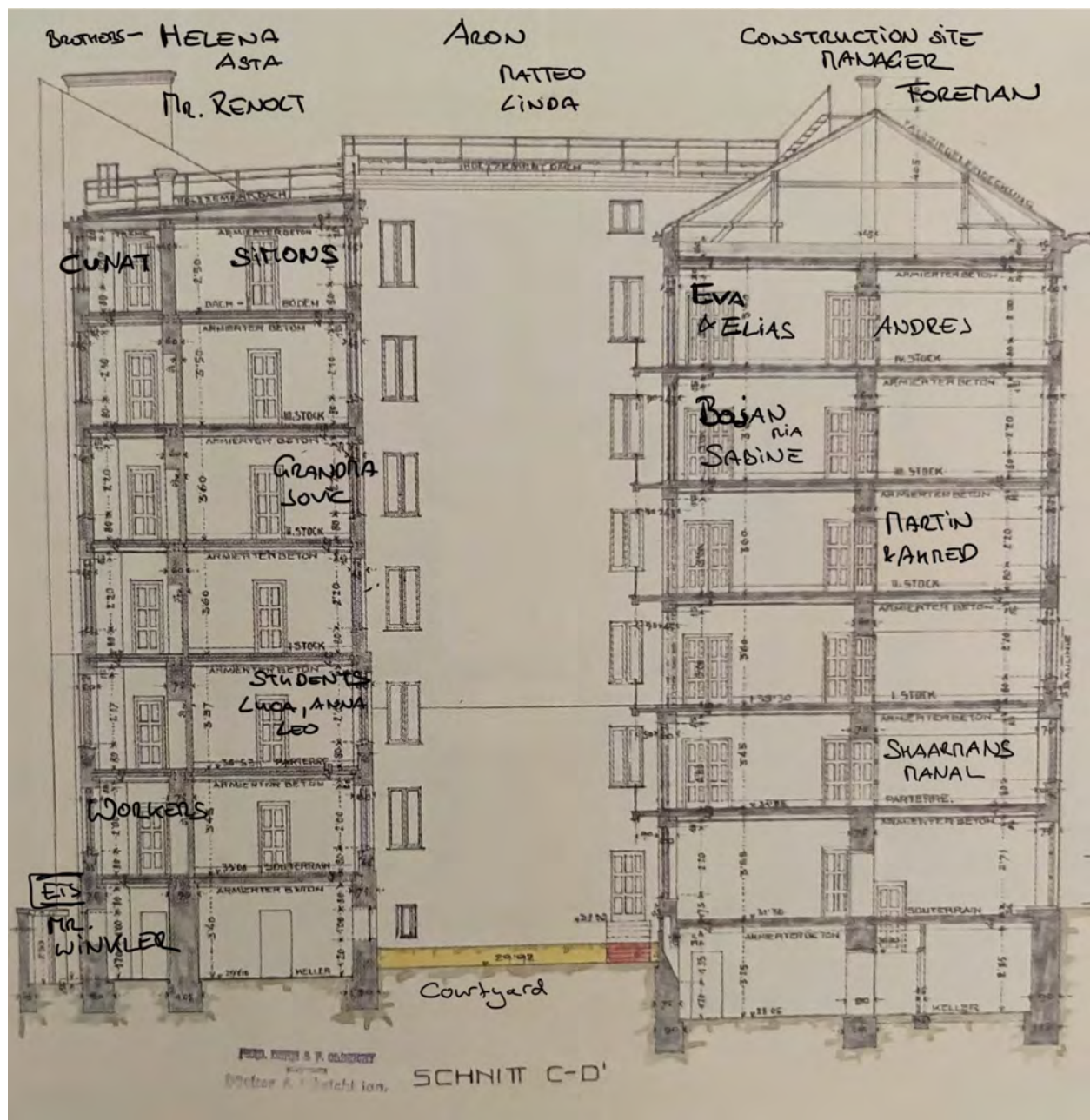
WRECKING BALL

Treatment for a feature film
by Clara Stern

June 2025



THE HOUSE



Early morning. The sound of rain outside on the windowsill. A drop starts to form on the ceiling, grows bigger, heavier, until gravity pulls it down. It lands on the cheek of **EVA**, 41, who stirs. When a second drop lands on her face, she wakes up, immediately looking up at the ceiling. Eva watches the next drop forming on the ceiling, she does not blink like in a stare down match. The drop lands on her eye. "Fuck!" The water won. Eva gets out of bed and pushes the big double-bed to the side, the bed is heavy, Eva groans, the bed squeaks, the bedposts scratch on the wooden floor. Quickly Eva rushes out of the room. And enters another bedroom, trying hard to make no sound. It's a child's room and the child in question, **ELIAS**, 5, is fast asleep in his bed. Eva checks the ceiling for any water damage, but Elias' room is dry. Relieved Eva lets her son sleep. Eva, tired, carries a big pot into her bedroom and places it next to her bed under the dripping spot together with an old towel. Now she checks on three more buckets that are positioned in the bedroom, they have also started to collect some water. Eva sighs, picks up her phone from the nightstand, takes pictures of all the damages and water. Longingly she looks at her bed, but turns her back on going back to sleep.

Eva, alone in the kitchen, prepares breakfast for Elias. She cuts away the bread crust and eats it, in between she takes a sip from her coffee while scanning through her emails on an iPad, opening a file with floor plans of row houses (Reihenhäuser). A loud noise startles Eva, it's coming from the hallway outside of the apartment, sounds like something is clanging against metal. Eva looks at her watch: 6:36.

Eva opens her door, searching for the source of the sound. Opposite her the neighboring apartment door opens as well and **ANDREJ**, 32, in dirty construction work clothes, but with a tooth brush in his mouth, looks out. Eva stares at him bewildered. Andrej sees Eva, panics, retreats quickly back inside. The hallway is covered in dust, in front of Eva's apartment lays a damp floorcloth as a dirt barrier. The light is dim, because the windows are covered with a plastic foil from the outside. The metal clanking noise starts again, its source seems to come from above. Eva leans as far out of her doorframe to see: "Hallo?" The noise stops. Eva quickly slips into a pair of shoes and walks out of the apartment until she can see the end of the flight of stairs. There's a big metal door, sealing the entrance to the construction site, decorated with Do-not-enter-signs.

In front of the door, trying to wriggle a screwdriver between the door and its frame is **MRS. CUNAT**, 61, wearing elegant clothes, her shoes covered with plastic overshoes against the dirt. Eva greets her, Mrs. Cunat wishes her a good morning, then looks at the door and reluctantly explains that there is water coming from the roof directly into her kitchen, and she needs it to stop. Eva asks if she has called the construction site manager. Yes, no answer. Eva looks at her phone, it's 6:39 am, so Eva tries to calm Mrs. Cunat by stating that the workers will be here in about twenty minutes to start the day. Mrs. Cunat looks at Eva: "Or you could help me? Does it not rain into your apartment, too?" Eva explains politely that she will show the foreman the damage later instead of trespassing.

Offended Mrs. Cunat starts walking down the stairs as someone comes walking up the stairs: **ARON**, 43.

Eva is startled, Mrs. Cunat looks surprised as well. Eva asks what Aron is doing here, he explains that he needs some files for today's pitch. "The house in Salzburg?" Eva is happy for Aron that he got the pitch! "I really need to get that project. I didn't get the one in lower Austria. They wanted a cheaper version, but then it's not sustainable anymore." Eva listens patiently and offers to get the files for Aron. "You won't let me into our apartment?", Aron asks provocatively. Eva feels embarrassed, she glances at Mrs. Cunat who stares without shame at them while walking down the stairs, her plastic shoe covers swishing through the dust. Aron wants to walk into the apartment, Eva lets him in, reluctantly.

Aron heads straight towards his writing desk in the living room, but stops dead in his track. "What the fuck?" Aron looks around the living room. Eva hates everything about this situation, she hurries to downplay it: "It only started last week." Now we can see that the water damage situation is not restricted to the bedroom: The high ceilings of the old Viennese Apartment Building are stained with yellowish spots from old water damages. The bookshelves are covered with plastic wrap, a huge dehumidifier is humming, the carpet is rolled to the side, because there are buckets and pans protecting the wooden floors, collecting the water coming from the ceiling, as it is still raining outside and so it is inside. Aron takes in the full picture and turns to look at Eva. Eva explains how everything is still under control, she has notified the construction site manager, she has talked to **HELENA**, they assured her that everything will be restored. Aron hardly listens but rushes towards Elias' bed room, opens the door, looking at the ceiling. Elias wakes up, recognizes him, surprised and very happy: "Dad!" Eva, who followed Aron,

watches Aron hug Elias, kiss him on the forehead, asking how he slept. Elias cuddles into Aron's hug. Eva looks at the scene longingly. Eva asks quietly, if they should have breakfast together. Aron's answer is no.

Aron is back in the living room, pulling the plastic foil aside to get to his desk and his filing cabinets. Eva followed him. And Elias followed them, talking about a dream about monkeys who stole a hammer. A knock on the apartment door.

It's **BOJAN**, 39, in a nice suit, **MIA**, 1, on his arm. He apologizes for bothering this early, but he had heard the footsteps through the ceiling knowing they are awake. Eva asks kindly if he needs something for Mia. No, Bojan wants to remind Eva of tonight's tenants' meeting in his apartment. Eva sighs, she has told him, she won't join. Bojan presses her: her expertise as an architect is really needed. Suddenly Aron appears next to Eva, Bojan looks surprised to see him, greets politely, repeats the time of the meeting. Eva waves Mia goodbye as Bojan leaves.

The moment the door is closed, Aron asks Eva if she's planning on going to the meeting. Eva tries to stay patient, repeats that if Aron has eavesdropped anyways, he must have heard that she said no. Aron, walking back to his desk, reminds her of their friend Lisa who got stuck in a lawsuit against her proprietor for three years. Three years! Where they did everything to make her life in the apartment a living hell. Eva says, she knows. Aron emphasizes that Lisa never got compensation money because she annoyed the hell out of the owner by organizing the tenants. Aron looks at Eva, concerned: "And you don't have a clear contract situation, you're vulnerable." Eva looks Aron in the eye: "I know." "Do you want to risk losing your precious apartment? You wanted us to move in. Elias loves it." Their gazes lock for a moment, Aron abruptly turns his attention to his desk. Several floor plans are laying there, he picks one, hesitates. Within a second, Eva is next to him, skims through the plans, grabs one and hands it to Aron, explaining that this is the one he preferred because it was the best compromise between his idea and her static's calculation. Aron looks relieved, thanks her and calls for Elias to say goodbye.

Elias comes running, eating his breakfast sandwich that Eva had prepared before. Eva gently scolds him: he knows he has to have his tea before eating. Elias ignores her. Aron needs to go, Elias starts to whine, Eva picks him up, tries to console him. They walk Aron to the door. Aron gives Elias a kiss, in an automated movement he bends to kiss Eva, but pulls back, irritated. Eva tries to hide that Aron's drawback hurts. Instead, she wishes him good luck for the pitch. Aron is almost out of the door, but

turns back to ask Eva: "Was it Bojan?" Eva looks him dead in the eye. Elias asks what Bojan did. "Nothing." Elias insists on knowing what they are talking about. Eva thanks Aron coldly and reminds him that it's his turn to pick up Elias today. Aron leaves. Elias repeats his question about Bojan. Drilling noises start to roar through the building. It's 7:00 am.

Eva, dressed in a raincoat, tries to put Elias' foot into a rain boot, but Elias is focused on hugging a huge stuffed orang-utan, which he can't - as Eva patiently explains again - take along to kindergarten. "Only teddy bears up to a size of A4, that's the rule." Elias doesn't know what A4 is nor does he care. Instead, he complains about a stomach ache. "That's when you don't have your tea first." Eva manages to get the rain boot on, Elias pulls it off again, he wants to put the shoes on himself. Only if he let's go of the monkey. Gently Eva tucks at ape. Elias holds on. Tug-of war until Eva takes Elias into a big hug, comforting him, rubbing his belly. She enjoys the moment of holding him, but Elias wriggles out of her arms, opens the apartment door. Eva stops him, as he's not wearing shoes. But he always runs barefoot to MANAL! Eva promises, that once the construction work is done, he can run around in socks again. Wearing both rain boots and dragging his orang-utan behind him, Elias is hopping down the stairs, producing a huge cloud of dust. Elias knocks at the apartment on the ground floor. Immediately **MRS. SHAARMAN**, 32, opens and **MANAL**, 4, slips through the door and runs down the stairs, shouting that she is faster than Elias. Elias and his monkey follow suit. Mrs. Shaarman thanks Eva and asks, in broken German, if she should pick Elias up today. A baby starts to cry in the background. No, it's Aron's turn today.

Eva catches up with Elias and Manal in the courtyard, they are making an effort to run through all the puddles, as the rain is still strong. The courtyard is full of building supplies: bags of cement, piles of metal grids, wooden beams and material for scaffolding. The **FOREMAN**, 52, is smoking a cigarette in the corner. Eva walks up to him, asking if they could bring a second dehumidifier as she has a new leak now. The foreman keeps looking at his phone: "It's raining, what do you expect?" Eva hates the way he talks to her, but stays polite: "A waterproof roof?" The foreman laughs, throws his cigarette on the ground and walks away, leaving Eva left out in the rain. Literally. A window opens on the second floor and **GRANDMA JOVIC**, 83, calls Eva's name. Eva waves up at her, so do Elias and Manal. Grandma Jovic asks if

Eva could bring her some bread. Bojan forgot yesterday. Eva promises. And milk! And yoghurt!

Eva calls for the kids, but they don't listen. Eva tries to grab Elias' hood as he runs past her, he loses his balance and stumbles, falls, lands only centimeters away from a metal rod. Eva scolds Elias, grabs him firmly by the hand, picks up the dirty orang-outan and calls for Manal who jumps around in a puddle. Eva walks past an open sack of cement. With a firm kick she knocks it over. A small cloud of cement dust settles on her shoe and trouser.

Outside the house, one kid on each hand, they pass by the old-fashioned ice cream parlor. While passing the big glass window, Eva waves at **MR. WINKLER**, 61, who is cleaning inside. Elias immediately asks if they can have ice-cream today. It's raining, is Eva's answer, inquiring about Elias's stomach-ache.

An annoyed but very correct kindergarten teacher puts the huge orang-outan back into Eva's arms, talking about boundaries.

Eva asks in the other group if ASTA is already here. No.

Eva stands outside the kindergarten, the huge orang-outan in her arm, checking her phone, she hesitates, then decides to wait. Eva looks down the street: **HELENA**, 39, walking towards her with **ASTA**, 3, hiding from the rain under an umbrella. Quickly Eva pretends to be on the phone, mouthing to Helena "Coffee?" as they walk by into the kindergarten. Helena hesitates, Eva pushes, just a quick espresso. Helena agrees: "At my place."

A small ceramic's studio. Eva looks at all the handmade plates, vases, mugs. She touches a piece of raw clay, leaves a dent. Helena brings coffee from a small kitchen corner and mentions that she has seen Aron's latest work in a fancy home design magazine, this house entirely out of wood, Eva must be so proud. Eva feels uncomfortable, so she compliments the ceramics studio. Helena calls it her sanctuary, her child-free-haven. Then Helena talks about difficult nights: Asta just won't sleep in her bed. Eva squeezes her hand understandingly, assures her that this phase will pass and then she'll miss it. Helena feels soothed and asks how Eva's mother is. "Good, just a little worried." "About your grandfather?" "No, about the apartment."

The mood is immediately tense. Eva tries to keep a light tone, states that she assumes there's nothing to worry about, right? Helena refers questions to her two brothers or the property management, who handle the day-to-day business. Eva is bad at hiding her concern. Helena takes a deep breath, promises that she won't let anything happen to the house she grew up in, too. "So, you are not trying to kick out the ones with the low rents?"

Helena is clearly offended: "No." Eva opens up, that she's just worried as the lease is still in her mother's name and not hers. Helena reassures her, that it's going to be okay. As long as nothing slows down the construction work. Because they need the money from the luxury apartments, that are going to be built on the roof, to maintain the house.

Eva hurries up the dirty, dusty stairs, the wet orang-outan in her arm, she passes two builders who remove the plaster off the wall. Eva knocks at a door, then without waiting, pushes the handle. To her surprise the door is locked. She knocks again, impatiently.

Grandma Jovic's kitchen stems from the 1980s, she leans against the kitchen counter, her wheeled walker next to her, as she counts money. Eva puts the groceries in the fridge, asking why Grandma Jovic locked the door. It's simply, she doesn't feel safe with all the workers in the house. Eva wants to wash her hands in the sink, but the water is turned off. Grandma Jovic says that it's been like this for a couple of days, Bojan brought her water from the tap in the courtyard, he's a good grandson. He also talked with the foreman about the water. Grandma Jovic hands Eva the money for the groceries, stroking Eva's cheek in a quick gesture.

A knock at Grandma Jovic's door: It's **MR. AND MRS. SIMON**, 73 and 75. Mr. Simon has a bandage around his forehead. Eva, concerned, wants to know what happened. A piece of plaster hit Mr. Simon in his sleep as the ceiling is completely wet from the rain. Yes, he went to the hospital. Yes, he took photos. Yes, he called the construction site manager and property management. The foreman will look at the damage. Mrs. Simon asks if Eva could come over when the foreman assesses the risk. Eva hesitates, she really has to start working now. Maybe tomorrow or in the evening. In the evening is the tenants' meeting. Isn't Eva going to be there?

Eva walks down the stairs and into the courtyard. Andrej, the builder who Eva saw with his toothbrush in the morning, tries to remove the cement that Eva has knocked over, but it has hardened due to the rain. Eva asks Andrej why the water is turned off in one part of the house. Andrej doesn't know. When will it work again? She should ask the foreman. Where is the foreman? Andrej points behind Eva. Eva had not seen him, standing behind her. Eva changes her tone, repeats politely her inquiry about the water to the foreman. The foreman just asks with a bored voice if Eva has water in her apartment. Yes. So why does she meddle?

She should focus on her own problems. Eva swallows her anger and her answer and leaves. The orang-outan dangling from her hand.

In the apartment Eva's first thing is to check the water buckets and pans. Some need to be emptied. Then she checks Elias' bedroom, the floor is dry, anxiously Eva takes a ladder to check the ceiling properly. Even with the ladder she is too short to be able to touch the ceiling, but it looks dry.

Eva sits down at her desk at the window, opens the plan of a prefabricated family house. The screeching noise of metal being cut can be heard across the courtyard. Eva looks down on the courtyard, but the view is blocked by scaffolding. On Eva's desk are four pictures: Their wedding photo, one with Baby-Elias, a photo from the 1990ies showing two girls and a boy in the courtyard, grinning at the camera. Next to it a picture of Elias and Manal playing in the same courtyard. Eva smiles. With a deafening bang, rhythmic hammering starts coming from directly above Eva. Eva puts on her headphones. Plaster trickles quietly onto her keyboard, as she starts to work.

The sky is still filled with dark grey clouds, the rain keeps pouring, steadily, relentlessly.

Eva is on a zoom call with her boss, who thanks her for the good work. Eva plucks up the courage to offer to do the follow-up project as well. Eva's boss is confused, as they had agreed on reducing Eva's hours to 20 instead of 30. Starting next month. Eva is embarrassed, she knows she asked for it, but now she needs the money. Her boss says she has to check with HR, but she thinks they already filled that position. Eva fails at hiding her panic. That's the moment her phone rings: "Kindergarten". Elias pukes at the kindergarten, Eva needs to pick him up. Did they call Aron? He's picking him up today. No, they called her, the mother. Eva can feel the anger pulsating through her.

Eva carries Elias up the stairs, her jacket full of vomit, Elias is too. In front of her apartment door there are two men, both tall, but one very skinny, wearing a suit, the other one looks like a bouncer. "Elisabeth Berg?" Eva explains that that's her mother. "Do you live here?" Eva asks who the gentlemen are. The one in the suit introduces himself as **MR. RENOLT**, he's the proprietor's representative. The bouncer stays silent. Eva puts Elias down, Elias tired and sick, leans against her. "Which proprietor?" "Neuhuber Real." "No, the proprietors are called Feldner." Mr. Renolt explains in a condescending tone that one

third of this house was sold to Neuhuber Real, only to ask if Eva's mother is home. Eva starts to sweat, answers that her mother is visiting her grandfather on the countryside. "And what are you doing here? Watering the plants?" Eva can hear his sarcasm. "We live here as well." Mr. Renolt steps one stair closer to Eva, saying that they should have a talk about her renting contract. In that moment, Elias pukes on the stairs, on himself, onto Eva's shoes, her pants and sits down in the mixture of dirt and puke. Eva picks him up and excuses them. Mr. Renolt hands her a business card, asking for a call from her mother.

Inside the apartment, Eva's façade collapses. She puts Elias down, her hands are shaking, she looks at her son full of puke, herself full of puke. For a second it looks as if Eva is going to join Elias' crying. Just for a second.

Eva undresses Elias, throws the vomit-covered clothes in the washing machine, her jacket and trousers too, puts Elias in the shower. The water doesn't work. Eva tries it in the kitchen. Nothing. Eva swears. Loudly. Elias throws up in the shower.

Wearing sweatpants and holding Elias, who is wrapped in a towel, Eva knocks at the apartment below her's. **SABINE**, 32, opens the door, she is carrying little Mia. Eva asks Sabine, if they have running water. No, not since an hour.

Together the two women carry the children through the dusty, dirty house, asking workers where the foreman is. Finally, they are told to look at the roof. They approach the iron door Mrs. Cunat had tried to open in the morning. It is open now, but Eva won't step over the threshold. She knocks against the metal door. Andrej appears from the construction site, they ask for the foreman, he returns with him. The foreman sees Eva and does not hide his annoyance. Eva remains standfast, asks about the water being turned off. The foreman claims that they announced it. Sabine and Eva exchange a glance. Andrej stands behind the foreman, listening. Sabine asks when the water will be turned on again, they have small kids, they need water. The foreman is not sure. But in the other part of the house the water is working again. And that's what Eva wanted, right?

Eva, carrying Elias, a towel and fresh clothes, knocks at Grandma Jovic's door. The door is almost immediately opened from inside. Not by Grandma Jovic but by Mr. Renolt, the proprietor's representative. Behind him stands the silent second guy. He makes old Grandma Jovic look tiny next to him. Eva greets them politely, but does not hide her surprise. She asks Grandma Jovic

if her water is working and if yes, if Eva could bath Elias, because their water is turned off.

An old-fashioned bathroom with colored tiles. Elias and Eva sit together in the bathtub, Elias is still dizzy, he snuggles up to Eva's chest. Despite the overall situation Eva relaxes, rocks Elias, humming gently, as she forms funny hairdos out of the foam on his head. Elias can't see them, but Eva smiles.

Eva cleans the bathtub, while Grandma Jovic repeats that it's not necessary. Eva asks what Mr. Renolt wanted. Grandma Jovic answers evasively, just talking about the elevator that's going to be built. Then she orders Eva to stop cleaning, she has made hot cocoa for them, just like when Bojan and Eva were little.

As Eva carries sleeping Elias down the stairs, an apartment door stands open. Curious, Eva pushes it open a bit further. Half of the old parquet flooring is covered with laminate. Metal frames are built in front of the original brick wall and ceiling, on some drywall is fixed. Carefully Eva ventures further in. In one room a huge poster is hanging on the metal frames: a ridiculous AI rendering of how the room could look with furniture.

When exiting Eva notices that the opposite door is open as well. Now, more courageously, Eva holds on to sleeping Elias and walks in. No drywall, no repairs, just dirt and cracks. To her surprise Eva finds in the first room several mattresses on the floor, with simple blankets and small piles of personal stuff. Eva notices a bad smell. The bathroom door is open and as Eva realizes what she is smelling, she nearly vomits. Eva hurries to get out of there, stumbles over something on the floor, almost losing her grip on Elias, Eva has to force herself not to run.

Elias is asleep in his bed and Eva back at her desk, staring at the floor plan trying to concentrate. She gives up and grabs her phone. Ten missed calls from Aron. Eva does not care. She calls Helena. Who does not answer. Frustrated Eva knocks over the 1990ies photo of the three little kids. The doorbell rings.

Mrs. Simons is asking if Eva could come over, the foreman and the construction site manager are doing their inspection now. Eva turns her down, using Elias being sick as an excuse. Mrs. Simons leaves clearly disappointed.

Eva grabs Mr. Renolt's business card out of the pocket of her jacket full puke. She googles the company "Neuhuber Real": a lot of real estate projects involving old tenant buildings turned into fancy, expensive apartment houses are featured on the homepage. Eva gets nervous, then grabs her phone and calls the property management. To her surprise someone picks up. Eva frames

the question carefully, asks if it is true that one third of the house has been sold to "Neuhuber Real". The woman on the other side hesitates, then says she knows Eva's mother for so long, so yes, it will be announced next week per notice.

Before Eva can even digest the information, there's a soft knock at her door. Expecting it to be Mrs. Simons Eva opens annoyed. Andrej, the builder, is standing outside. He leans closer and with a very low voice, says: "Water working now." "Why are you whispering?" Eva is confused. Andrej looks down the staircase, puts a finger to his lips and walks away. Eva realizes something, calls him back, now whispering herself, asking if the water was turned off on purpose. A small nod from Andrej is all she gets. Eva closes the door, slowly, with the exhausted expression of solving a difficult mathematical problem. She is clearly pondering a question, then she makes a decision. And with it, the energy rushes back into her body. Eva quickly checks on Elias, he's still asleep, a moment of hesitation, then she takes a baby monitor out of a drawer, it clearly has not been used in a long time, she sets it up, takes the second part with her.

Eva follows Mrs. Simon into their bedroom, where Mr. Simon, the foreman and the **CONSTRUCTION SITE MANAGER**, 56, are looking at the damaged ceiling, where a part of the plaster is missing above the bed and water is dripping from several spots. The manager asks what Eva is doing here. Eva smiles politely and answers that she's just here as a neighbor. The foreman looks at her, not hiding his dislike, explaining to the manager that Eva is an architect. The manager looks Eva up and down. Eva repeats: Just here as a neighbor.

The baby monitor in Eva's pocket blinks, but as the sound is turned off, Eva doesn't notice.

The inspection goes as expected: promises to repair, but nothing on how to stop the problem from reoccurring. Eva keeps on asking questions, making suggestions, until the manager turns to the foreman and asks him to do exactly "as the young lady advises". When saying goodbye, Eva promises to Mr. and Mrs. Simon to come to the tenants' meeting tonight.

Pleased with herself, Eva returns to the apartment only to find Elias' bed empty. Panicking, Eva searches for him, in the apartment, in the whole house. The foreman is the one who brings Elias back, stating that a construction site is not a playground and his workers are not babysitters. Embarrassed Eva scolds Elias, who replies sulkily that he just wanted to go to Manal or Grandma Jovic but ended up "helping" the builders.

The orang-utan is doing laps in the washing machine, Elias is watching TV, Eva is finally getting some work done.

Suddenly, something moves outside on the scaffolding: Two workers are fixing plastic foil in front of the windows, covering them completely. Eva opens the window, shouts, what the hell they are doing! They were told to do so. They continue. The light inside gets murky.

Aron arrives to pick up Elias, he apologizes for not hearing Eva's call in the morning. In a passive-aggressive way Eva asks what would have happened if she had not heard the call from the kindergarten? Aron asks back in the same tone if she wants him to quit his job? Eva retorts: "Would it make a difference, money-wise?" Elias shouts from the living room that they should stop fighting. Eva takes a deep breath, and offers Aron coffee, while Elias finishes his episode.

Over coffee Eva asks about the pitch. Aron starts talking with excitement. Eva asks questions and listens as he describes details about his design with love and care. And it's visible why she fell in love with him and that she still is. When Aron goes quiet, Eva longingly says the house sounds exactly like what they had dreamt of creating together when talking about opening an architectural firm together one day: sustainable, social, and beautiful. Aron replies tauntingly that he thought Eva didn't believe in their dreams anymore. Eva is hurt, so she turns it into anger. She put all of her career dreams on hold in order to realize their common dream of having a child. She took the money job. And he went off to build his dream houses without her. Dream houses that didn't even pay the rent. Aron looks at Eva coldly: "So that's your excuse for cheating on me?" Eva's hands tremble, but Aron's not done. He had thought it made her happy to move to this apartment, back to her childhood place, where the rent is cheap and the neighbors are there to help. But obviously, nothing can make Eva happy. And before Eva has the chance to reply, Aron leaves to go get Elias.

Elias comes running into the kitchen to say goodbye to Eva for the night, he finds her crying. Immediately Eva wipes her tears away, smiles and hugs him Eva tightly.

When the apartment door is shut behind Aron and Elias, Eva takes a long kitchen knife from the drawer and walks through the apartment. She opens the window at her desk and slashes the plastic foil covering her window. Opening it with violent stabs.

At exactly 5 pm the hammering, screeching, and pounding stops. Eva can feel some of the tension leave her body. The sound of the rain falling on the scaffolding is almost calming.

It's dark outside, Eva empties the pots and pans from rainwater, wipes the floor dry, puts on some lipstick, takes a pack of chips and knocks on Bojan's and Sabine's door.

Bojan is happy to see Eva, takes the snacks and asks her to get the family Shaarman and the students.

The Shaarmans don't want to come, their lease is short-term anyways for two more years. They don't want any trouble. Eva understands. Whispering Mrs. Shaarman confides to Eva that a guy – the description matches Mr. Renolt – has asked if the Shaarmans have friends who want to live for a while in one of the empty apartments. And he asked about Eva's mother. If she lives here. Eva thanks Mrs. Shaarman for the information.

Eva has to knock loudly at the student-flat, as someone is playing the piano. Finally, **LUCA**, 25, opens the door. Eva reminds him of the tenants' meeting, his cousin, Bojan, is waiting for them. Reluctantly Luca and his flat-mates **ANNA**, 22, and **LEO**, 23, follow Eva as she enters the tenants' meeting.

At Bojan's place everyone huddles together in the living room: On the sofa, on the floor, on additional folding chairs. It's crowded but strangely cozy. Everyone is here: Bojan and Sabine, Mrs. Cunat and her son **CHRISTIAN**, 30; Mr. and Mrs. Simon, Mr. Winkler from the ice-cream parlor, **MARTIN**, 47, and his partner **AHMED**, 49, who had helped Grandma Jovic with the stairs.

It could be a really nice evening, but the atmosphere is tense. Bojan does a little welcome speech, summarizing the state of the construction progress and the negative effects it had and has on all of them. Then he asks for updates. Sabine writes down a list of speakers. Eva notices that everything is organized smoothly, most have been to these meetings before.

Eva listens as Mrs. Cunat talks about her damage, Mr. Simon about his accident and the inspection; Mr. Winkler thinks about closing the ice-cream parlor as he can't open the outside seating area this summer; Luca, Anna and Leo are searching for a new apartment, the noise keeps them from studying and practicing. Ahmed adds that he fell over a cable today in the courtyard. Eva instinctively answers that there's a list of security hazards that a construction site has to prevent, otherwise they could be shut down, like the volume of dust, open electrical cords, tripping hazards like rubble or metal bars. Bojan asks if Eva could check for those hazards? Eva agrees to do so tomorrow.

Sabine takes notes, as they will send the list to property management and the owners. Eva asks who else has had a visit from Mr. Renolt. A couple of them did, but didn't understand who is was. Eva shares what she found out, that one of the proprietors, either Helena or one of her brothers, has sold their third to a developer. Alarmed, everyone starts to talk at once: What does this mean? Did she talk to Helena? What do they want? Mrs. Cunat demands that Eva has to know what this means as an architect. All eyes on Eva. Eva feels very uncomfortable, stammering, that she's just here as one of the tenants. Awkward silence. Bojan tries to smooth the waters: Perhaps Eva has an idea whom they can ask for advice how to save their childhood-home. Eva knows that he's openly manipulating her. It works. She promises to ask a former colleague who now works for the municipality's tenants' association tomorrow. "What a relief", Mrs. Simon pats Eva's arm and praises her help today at the inspection, painting her as a hero. Eva likes the feeling.

Goodbyes are being said, people are still standing together in small groups, making small talk, comforting and encouraging each other. Eva soaks in the atmosphere of solidarity around here. Everyone is less tense and more resistant than before. To Eva's surprise Mrs. Cunat hugs her when saying goodbye.

Everybody is gone, Bojan pours Eva a glass of wine and takes a deep breath as he plunges himself onto the sofa next to Sabine. He thanks Eva for coming tonight. "It makes me hopeful to finally have you on our side." Eva feels insulted, says, she has never been on the other side. Sabine kicks Bojan, Bojan apologizes. Eva forgives him as quickly as she was mad. Eva rants about Helena, that she lied to her face today, didn't tell her about the investment firm, not calling her back. Bojan advocates for Helena, family is thicker than friendship.

Eva openly shares her worries that Mr. Renolt asked if her mother still lives here, then concludes that Bojan and Sabine are lucky that they have a legal contract. Sabine comments that they pay way more rent than Eva does, as their contract is only four years old. Bojan feels uncomfortable about Sabine's statement, puts it in perspective that the rent is still low compared to other places because Helena's mother gave them a very generous deal. Then he adds: "And a contract without a fixed term, that's like finding a gold nugget in the Danube." Sabine completes the sentence unisono with Bojan, obviously he has said that before. They laugh. Eva looks at them, happy, sharing their worries, sitting next to each other. A wave of envy rushes through Eva. And that's when she notices that Sabine does not drink. Sabine

sees her look, puts her hand on her belly and winks. "Congratulations!"

A phone call ends the relaxed atmosphere.

A fancy, newly built apartment house, white and shiny. Eva, annoyed and impatient, exits the elevator. **MATTEO**, 38, is waiting in the open door. Eva did not expect to see him. They say hallo in a very awkward way. Eva asks how long Aron is already staying with Matteo? A bit more than a week. Uncomfortable silence. Matteo looks back, checking, then whispers: "Look, I couldn't say no, could I?" Eva shakes her head in exasperation. Aron appears, carrying Elias, completely swollen from crying. Elias stretches his arms towards Eva; his sobbing has reached the hick-up-stage. Aron looks exhausted, ashamed and annoyed at the same time. Eva tries to sooth Elias and asks Aron to call them a cab. Matteo offers Eva his car. Eva declines, she had two glasses of wine. "With whom?", is all Aron wants to know.

Eva has had enough. Why didn't Aron tell her that he moved from the AirBnb to Matteo's place, she has a right to know where her son sleeps, and he shouldn't be surprised that Elias does not want to stay with a father who has barely stayed alone with him before! Aron starts shouting back, Matteo tries to calm them down, reminding them of the hour and his neighbors, Elias starts to cry louder. Aron accuses Eva of being self-righteous, of blaming him for her infidelity, of blaming their son of destroying her dream, of not taking responsibility for her own decisions. "When will you stop playing the victim?" Eva is so shocked about Aron's outbreak, that she's speechless.

The neighbor opens his door, announcing that he has called the police. Elias is still crying. Matteo asks Eva to leave, please. Eva apologizes to Matteo. Aron looks from Eva to Matteo.

Eva is squeezed next to Elias into his child's bed. Elias is finally asleep, Eva is continuously stroking his head, unsure if she is comforting him or herself with it. From time to time a sobbing breath still escapes Elias.

A new day. The same heavy rain. Buckets are quietly spilling over, new spots have appeared on the ceiling, water is gently trickling down the wall. At exactly 7:00 am the hammering starts.

The same procedure as the morning before, but this time Eva has to discuss with Elias about a giant fluffy bobtail dog.

A soft knock on the door. It's Andrej presenting a piece of wood with huge nails amateurishly hammered into it. Eva is more than

confused. But Elias proudly explains that he made that yesterday with the workers. Andrej hands it to him, but Eva snaps it out of his hand immediately, that's too dangerous for a little child. Andrej apologizes. Eva looks at him: "What do you want?" Andrej takes a deep breath and asks Eva to please not tell anybody, that he stays in the apartment on her floor. Eva does not understand, the other workers also live in an empty apartment. Yes, but they don't have water. Eva hands Andrej the wood with the nails back. Elias starts to whine. Eva closes the door.

On her way through the courtyard, Elias and Manal with her, Eva observes as Mr. Renolt talks with the construction site manager and the foreman. Eva greets them loudly, almost provocatively.

At the kindergarten, after having dropped off Elias and Manal, Eva waits outside. Eva is restless, like she's in the corner of a boxing ring, waiting for the fight to start. It's not long until Eva sees Asta, Helena's daughter, coming towards her, but not at her mother's hand, but at her father's. Eva doesn't even bother to wait for them, impatiently she leaves.

Eva can see Helena through the big windows of her ceramic's studio. Without knocking, Eva tries the door, as it's not locked, she enters, giving Helena such a scare, that she drops a bowl. It shatters on the floor. Helena bends down to pick up the pieces. Without an apology or even a hallo, Eva asks why Helena didn't tell her, that one of them sold their part of the house. Asks, if it was her or one of her brothers. "It's none of your business." "Fine, that the house is business to you. Well, for me it's home." Helena smashes the pieces of her broken bowl back onto the floor: "If you want to keep your home, stay out of it. Every tiny thing that all of you complain about, draws out the construction work and increases the costs. And makes it more difficult to keep the tenants who barely pay rent." "Well, that's victim blaming." "Go, make me the villain, if it makes you feel better." Eva turns around to leave, her bag brushes against a vase. It breaks in two with a loud noise.

In a municipality's office, **LINDA**, 38, welcomes Eva. Eva asks about Linda's kids, they talk about their time at a famous architecture firm, the long nightshifts before deadlines. Linda wants to know what Eva is doing now. Eva explains that she is calculating energy efficiencies for modular houses. Linda laughs a sad laugh: "Motherhood means children and boring, but stable jobs." Eva can't laugh along.

Rather she starts to describe the situation in her house. Linda listens, it all sounds familiar to her. Linda assesses that the tenants are in a good position, because they act in solidarity. Linda offers that one of their rental law experts can come to one of their tenants' meetings. For acute cases, like when the ceiling dropped on Mr. Simon's head, there's the city's Bureau for immediate action, they'll send the building inspectors, to make sure the walls won't cave in. In that case they are entitled to a compensatory apartment. Eva is taking notes.

Then Linda asks if there's a \$18 pending on the house? A what? Linda explains: If the owner does not have enough rental income to maintain the apartment building, they can try to get a court ruling under \$18, which allows them to raise the rent. Without limit. Eva looks at Linda in horror. But if that happens, they, the tenants, would be informed, right? Linda nods, yes, per notice in the house. Or the tenant in apartment number one gets a letter. "But no one's living in number one." As long as there's a mailbox to number one, it counts as "informing the tenants". Linda reminds Eva, that if that's the case, it's crucial that they share all information. So that they can't offer secret deals to buy them out of the apartments. Linda explains the deals often include NDAs, so that the tenants can't share how much financial settlement they ask for.

Leaving the municipality's office, Eva sends a voice message to Bojan, asking to text everyone if they've seen a \$18 notice.

Eva is standing in front of apartment No. 1. It's clearly uninhabited, but it's locked. Eva walks over to the mailboxes, lifts the lid above the small slit of No.1, peeks inside: It's filled with mail. Eva tries to pull it out by hand, but the paper gets stuck. Eva is determined. She doesn't have to go far, until she finds an abandoned toolbox. With a screwdriver, she forces the mailbox open. Letters and leaflets fall to the floor. Quickly, Eva picks them up, takes the rest of the mail, turns around. The foreman has been standing behind her, watching her. Eva doesn't say a thing. Nor does he. Boldly, Eva hands him the screwdriver and walks up the stairs.

In her apartment, Eva sorts hastily through the papers, until she finds an official looking letter. She tears it open.

Frantically, Eva knocks on Bojan's door, Sabine opens, annoyed about the loud knocking as Mia is asleep. Without being invited Eva walks in, holding two letters: the invitation to the court hearing and the decision. Their house is under \$18 now. Eva

explains what this means. Sabine has to sit down. "We have to tell the others." Sabine nods, visibly in disbelief.

All of a sudden, a loud rumble like stones falling comes from the bedroom. A child, Mia, starts to scream. Sabine looks at Eva in horror, jumps up and runs.

In the bedroom wall is a huge dent with cracks in the plaster and in the middle is a hole visible to the neighboring apartment. Bricks are lying on the floor. Mia is standing in her crib, crying. Sabine picks her up, caressing her. As the dust settles, a worker is peaking through from the other side.

The foreman is standing in front of the hole, assessing the damage. Sabine is still in shock. Eva asks how the hell this can happen "by accident"? The foreman threateningly asks what she is implying. "You can't harm them with water because they don't live below the attic, so you make a hole into the wall." Eva asks what exactly the renovation tasks on the other side were. The foreman says he was just about to get his workers to fix that, but if Eva wants to, he can rather get the manager. Or does she prefer Mr. Renolt? Eva replies that Mr. Renolt only represents one third of the proprietors. "Yet." is the menacing answer. Sabine just begs the foreman to get the wall fixed.

Eva's phone is ringing, her boss is asking where she is.

The meeting is over, Eva waits until she and her boss are the only ones left. Eva apologizes for being late, the boss dismisses it, it's nice to see her make mistakes, otherwise one would think she's not human. The boss laughs about her own joke. But Eva is suspicious: "Why are you nice to me?" The boss has talked to HR, they have already hired someone for Eva's ten hours, so she will be on 20 hours starting next month. This scares Eva more than she thought it will. Her boss tries to stay positive, that's what Eva wanted, so she should be happy: more time for herself. Eva nods, yes, that's what she wanted two months ago, but now... "I might lose my apartment. And I think I'm a single-parent now." Eva is lost in thought for a second, then apologizes for oversharing and gets out of there.

As promised at the tenants' meeting when Eva is back home, she "inspects" the house for safety hazards. She slowly and consciously walks up the stairs, asks two workers why the plaster has been removed, but their German is not good enough to give her an answer, she takes photos of the metal rods and bars that are not safely stored in the courtyard, she takes photos of the cracks and rifts in the walls on the ground floor and the

entrance area. Eva even tries the door to the construction site on the attic, that Mrs. Cunat tried to break open, it's locked. Eva checks on Mr. and Mrs. Simon, sharing the news about \$18 and seeing that because of the constant rain more of their bedroom ceiling has fallen down. They decide to make an emergency-tenants' meeting tonight. Mr. Simon will inform Mrs. Cunat. Next, Eva knocks at Martin's and Ahmed's door, Martin is home, Eva informs him about \$18 and the planned meeting. Just as she wants to enter her own apartment, Eva can hear Mr. Renolt and his "bodyguard" talk downstairs. She tries to hear what they say, but the echo and the constant construction noises make it impossible to understand.

Back in her apartment Eva can feel something is different. It takes her a moment to realize that now all of her windows are covered in plastic, creating a dim and murky atmosphere. Even the one that Eva has sliced open is covered with a new layer. In an impulse Eva angrily throws the keys, that are still in her hand, it hits an old mirror and leaves a huge crack on it.

Eva tries to focus on her work, but ends up googling \$18, the real estate company, going through forums and threads. Eva's tension is growing, she radiates fear.

Eva calls her mother. Her **MOTHER**, 68, picks up, Eva has to tell her to put the phone away from her ear. "It's a videocall!" Her mother puts it down. She is preparing lunch in an old-fashioned kitchen, the TV is very loud in the background. Eva asks if she could turn it down, her mom walks with the phone to the next room, where Eva's **GRANDFATHER**, 91, is lying in bed, Eva waves into the camera, he does not recognize her. Eva's mother closes the door and continues to cook. Eva starts telling her mother about the situation in the house, and asks if she was called by anyone asking where she lives. "From the property management?" No. Eva has read in a forum, that they pretend to be from a call center or similar, to find out, if one is still living there. Her mother hesitates, then remembers that she was asked to test a magazine and she ordered it to this address, not Eva's. Eva's heart starts to beat faster. "Did the news paper arrive?" "No. Or at least not yet."

Eva, drained, is laying on the big double bed, feeling tiny and alone, in the dim, plastic filtered daylight, watching the drops fall from the ceiling into the bucket. It's hypnotizing. A loud knock disrupts the rhythm.

Eva made the mistake of opening the door: Mr. Renolt and his bulky shadow. Mr. Renolt smiles a false smile, asking if Eva's mother has returned home. Eva, making fun of him by using the voice of a little girl, replies that her mommy's not home. Mr. Renolt's smile is wavering but apparently stuck to his face. He announces that he's here to make Eva an offer that might change her future. 20000 Euros. "For leaving the apartment?" Yes. And for a soon-to-be divorced mother this must be a fortune. Eva says that's not true. Mr. Renolt acts surprised, asks, if her neighbors are lying. But divorce or not, a construction site is not a place to raise a kid. "I heard you lost him yesterday? Imagine what could have happened to him!" Eva folds her arms to support herself, trying to keep a steady voice, not showing her fear. Eva declines the offer. Mr. Renolt emphasizes that it's only valid today. Eva loses her patience, saying that he won't be successful with his tactic here. Not with anyone in the house. Now Mr. Renolt's smile turns from fake to real: Oh, he made three deals today. "And probably, I guess, I should thank you for it." "You're bluffing." The silent bodyguard behind Mr. Renolt blurts out triumphantly, that it's true. Mr. Renolt explains that Eva's meddling made everyone panic, especially the news about \$18. Yesterday, everyone was way more reluctant. "But today... everyone I talked to until now understood that this is the only deal, they're going to get." Who? Eva wants to know who are the people who have supposedly signed. Martin and Ahmed. Grandma Jovic. Bojan and Sabine. Eva can't control her emotions anymore, calls Mr. Renolt a liar and slams the door in his face.

Trembling Eva waits behind the door until she can hear their footsteps fade away. She tries to call Bojan, no answer. Eva runs down the stairs, and like Elias the other day, she has forgotten to put on shoes, but she does not care about it. She runs and knocks at Bojan's door, rattles the handle, nothing. So, Eva continues to run. Down the stairs, through the rain and the wet courtyard in her socks, up the other flight of stairs, to Grandma Jovic trying the door handle, this time it's open. There they are: Grandma Jovic, Bojan, Sabine and Mia are sitting around the kitchen table. Staring at Eva, who's standing there panting, just spitting out the words: "Did you sign?" Bojan takes a deep breath, says it's complicated, but Eva interrupts him, no, it's very simple: Did they sign a deal or not? "Yes." Silence. Then Bojan starts to explain himself, that Grandma Jovic, had already signed, because the elevator won't be built for another three years and now she can afford a nice nursing home, and they themselves, with another baby on the way, the

noise, the dirt, Eva saw what they did to their bedroom wall... With a very cold voice Eva calls Bojan a fraud, a cheat, a fake who pretends to be social and caring, but he's not. Sabine interrupts Eva, asks who is she to judge. Eva literally just got involved yesterday. Eva defends herself, she has much more to lose and yet she didn't cave at the first temptation. Sabine is clearly annoyed: "It's just an apartment." Eva shakes her head angrily, it's not just an apartment: "It's home, it's where I know who I am, where the people I care about live." Now Bojan asks, why, if she really cared, she didn't show up at a single meeting until yesterday. With a dry voice, holding back an enormous amount of anger, Eva answers: "Because I was busy with cheating on my husband, believing it's the right thing to do to confess, and watching him move out. That's why I was not there for you." Eva turns around and leaves.

Next to the apartment door, is the electrical meter box. A small key is dangling from it. On a sudden impulse Eva grabs it.

Eva is standing next to the mailboxes in front of the electrical braker box (Sicherungskasten), she takes the small key and opens the box. There's a bigger key hidden below the fuses. Triumphantlly Eva takes it.

Like Eva has anticipated, the key fits into the construction site door to the attic. Eva turns the key, opens the door, and walks up the narrow steps.

Most of the roof is gone, mainly wooden beams are still left. A gust of wind and rain hits Eva, as she arrives on the top of the stairs. The view overwhelms her, demands her full attention: Through the rain and the clouds the city is lying at her feet with its river and hills, its churches and parks. And its houses, so many houses, so many homes.

Eva's focus is drawn back to the roof she's standing on, more precisely to her wet feet: she is standing in water. Not a puddle, but the whole roof is filled with water, about ten centimeters high. When they took down the old roof, they took away the rain gutters, but left the stone balustrade, turning the roof into a pool. Eva walks over to the part above her apartment. Eva kneels down, touches the surface, wipes the water away, only parts are covered with tar paper. In a corner Eva finds a huge number of unused tar paper rolls.

Anger rushes through Eva. She grabs a gas cartridge, that's stacked next to the tar paper for the flamethrower to scorch the paper, and throws it across the roof. It lands with a splash and a loud clonk. Eva walks over, picks it up again and with a loud, angry scream she throws it again. And again, and then she takes

it and hammers down on the roof, the water. It's liberating to let it all out, to not care, to not hold it in any longer. Someone shouts behind Eva, but she doesn't hear it, she's in her own world, trashing the roof. A hand grabs Eva's arm, pulls her back. It's Andrej. Shouting at Eva to stop, snatching the gas cartridge away from her. Andrej screams at Eva, if she's crazy, this is gas, if she wants to blow up the whole house. Eva realizes what she has done, looks down on herself, completely wet, her hand is bleeding, she hurt it without noticing. Andrej brings the gas cartridge back where it was, putting it down very gently. Then points at the door, gesturing Eva to leave. Eva does not move, so Andrej walks back, takes her hand, pulls her towards the stairs. Eva yanks her hand away, but keeps following him. Eva can still feel the rush of her tantrum pulse through her. At the narrow stairs, suddenly, Eva grabs Andrej's shoulder, he turns around, Eva kisses him. Andrej immediately pulls away and walks down the stairs.

Andrej meticulously locks the construction site door and keeps the key, without saying a word, he walks Eva to her door. Quietly Eva thanks Andrej. She really means it. They look at each other. Then Andrej kisses Eva.

In between the dripping water, on the big double bed, Eva and Andrej have sex.

After the sex, Eva is sitting naked on the toilet, peeing, holding her head in her hands, taking deep breaths, asking herself what has gotten into her, but also smiling about herself. All of a sudden, there's this weird, almost rushing sound. Then she hears Andrej call for her. Eva hurries.

In Elias' room the water has entered. It does not drip, it's running from the ceiling, especially along the walls. Andrej, half-dressed, is using Elias' blanket to soak up some of the water. Eva runs over to the bookshelf, grabs the photo albums. Andrej suggest to get the foreman. No. Eva realizes she's still naked. Andrej asks her what she wants to do. Pressing the photo albums against her bare chest, Eva answers: I need to leave. Andrej is gone. While getting dressed, Eva searches for a number on her phone and calls: It's the Bureau for immediate action.

Elias' little bedroom is full: People in suits, people in workwear, firefighters, who are placing tarpaulins under the wet spots, the water is still coming. Everyone is wearing helmets, assessing the damage. Eva is standing in the middle, watching, listening, pointing at things, listing problems. The foreman and the construction site manager are very unhappy about the

situation, blaming it on Eva. Although there's barely any space left in room, a small group of experts returns. A tall woman with a helmet, states that the roof above this room is problematic, not only is the tar paper missing, but it looks like it has been severely damaged with force, maybe on purpose. The construction site manager protests, she ignores him. Eva looks up at the ceiling and realizes, it might have been her who has made the situation worse. The woman in charge demands to take a look at the other apartments on this floor as well. Eva follows the whole troop as they walk over to the apartment opposite Eva's, the one Andrej stays in. Eva hurries to say, that no one is living there. The woman in charge asks the manager if he has a key, the manager looks at the foreman, the foreman admits that the key is missing. The woman in charge orders the firefighters to open the door. Wood splinters and in they go. In one of the empty rooms there's a mattress on the floor, a make-shift shelf out of bricks, containing books and small items. Compared to the other workers' apartment Eva has seen, this one is almost cozy. The woman in charge throws an annoyed look at the manager and tells him to have it removed or the Financial Police will take a look at the labor contracts. And on they go. Mr. and Mrs. Simon are overwhelmed by the sheer number of people entering their apartment. Eva hides in the Simon's kitchen to take a deep breath. The inspection of the apartments on the top floor is completed. The woman in charge counsels with the other departments, then announces that Mr. and Mrs. Simon's apartment will hereby get an official entry ban, the ceiling is too unstable and needs to be reinforced. Mrs. Simon starts to cry; Mr. Simon asks several times where they should go to now. The building contractor has to supply a substitute apartment, is the automated answer. Eva asks what happens to her apartment. The woman in charge looks at her confused. Eva explains that she's the one who called. The woman in charge advises to not use the children's bedroom, but the rest of the apartment is fine. "What about the water damage?" The contractor has to take care of. If they don't, Eva can sue them in court.

Beaten, Eva drags herself up the stairs to her apartment. She sees the foreman talking angrily to Andrej. Andrej looks up and sees her. Disappointment and anger in his face.

Eva is sitting in the changing room of the kindergarten waiting for Elias and Manal. She looks like a giant on the tiny bench, she does not feel like one. The kids come running in, Elias is

telling Eva immediately that he had two apples as a snack. Two! While Elias and Manal change and discuss who can eat more apples, Asta, Helena's child, comes in the changing room as well, saying Hello to Eva. Following an impulse Eva tells Asta to change, too, she's coming along for a playdate to their place. Elias, Manal and Asta cheer. Eva tells the kids to hurry up.

As Eva wants to leave, carrying Asta on her arm, one of the kindergarten teachers stops her, saying that she was not aware that Eva is picking up Asta today. Eva acts surprised. Didn't Helena say anything in the morning? The teacher remembers that it was Asta's father who brought her. Eva rolls her eyes: "Men..." The kindergarten teacher laughs along and wishes a nice day.

Eva starts walking out of the kindergarten, carrying Asta, telling the other two kids to hurry, suggesting a race to the corner: "Who's faster?" And off they go and Eva with Asta runs after them.

Eva is sitting on Elias' bed, the kids are playing around her, completely ignoring the fact that the room is like a wet cave. Eva holds her phone in her lap, it's vibrating the whole time: Helena. Eva does not pick up, but stares at the screen, feeling more and more scared about her impulsive act. Then there's hammering at the apartment door. Eva gets up, braces herself. The moment that Eva opens the door Helena storms into the apartment, calling for Asta. Eva just points towards Elias' room. Helena pushes Eva out of the way.

When Eva enters, she finds Helena on the floor holding Asta, who tries to wriggle herself out of the tight embrace, telling her mother happily that they she had chocolate. Helena does not let go of Asta, but turns to Eva, stating that Eva is lucky, that she didn't bring the police with her. Eva nods, she would have understood.

Now Helena sees for the first time the condition in which the room is in, takes in the water, the stains, the tarpaulins, the buckets, the damp air. And the shock is visible in her face. Elias calls Asta back to the game, Helena says no, they have to go, Asta begs her, fidgets in Helena's arms until Helena reluctantly let's go of her. Helena still looks at the water running down the wall, asks if this is why Eva has kidnapped her daughter: To show her this. Eva is tired. She admits that there was no real plan involved. Helena sits down on Elias' bed, she is emotionally exhausted as well, but still very angry. Eva apologizes. Helena answers that five minutes ago, she was imagining different ways to kill Eva. Again, Eva understands. Helena picks up one of the photo albums. It's one of when they

were little. There are pictures of little Eva with little Helena. And little Bojan. Eva says that Bojan decided to give up, he will leave the house. Grandma Jovic as well. They took the deal. Helena does not look at Eva as she admits that she didn't know yesterday morning that her brother Harry had sold his share. That's why she didn't say anything. Eva asks if Helena plans on selling as well. And adds that she understands. Helena shrugs her shoulders. The problem is that she has no clue what to do, whom to trust with this whole house thing. But it pains her to see the house like that. It will depend if her brother Hannes decides to sell as well. Helena looks again at the ceiling and tells Eva, that she can't live like that. Eva agrees.

Eva asks if Helena knew about the \$18? Helena has no clue, what she's talking about. Eva advises her to ask her brothers.

Helena takes a deep breath and tells Asta that they have to leave now. Then she turns to Eva: "Don't you ever do that again."

Eva sits Elias down in front of the TV, makes him promise to not leave the apartment, she will be back in a couple of minutes.

Eva walks through the house, she finds the foreman, asks him, if he has seen Mr. Renolt. Yes, at Mrs. Cunat's place.

Eva knocks at Mrs. Cunat's apartment, Christian opens. In the back Eva hears Mrs. Cunat arguing with Mr. Renolt.

Mr. Renolt, followed by his bodyguard-shadow, comes to the apartment door, telling Christian that he seems like a smart young man, he shouldn't let his mother miss such an opportunity. And reminds him that rebuilding the apartment themselves without a permit, as they did, is a reason to terminate their lease.

As Christian closes the door, Mr. Renolt turns his attention to Eva: He heard that she has caused quite a havoc today. Eva ignores his provocations and cuts right to the chase: She will accept the deal, but she asks for 30000 Euros. Mr. Renolt laughs. His shadow starts laughing as well, like a weird echo. Mr. Renolt tells Eva that she's in no position to negotiate. Eva takes a deep breath and explains that they will need her agreement to seal off the chimneys on the roof, as she is still using a gas heater. Mr. Renolt asks if Eva feels very smart using her architect-knowledge. Then he suddenly wants to know, if she has ever been to the roof. Eva swallows and answers, yes, many times, as a kid. Best hide-and-seek places. Mr. Renolt smiles his fake smile: "I just thought that a lot of architects know that it's costume practice to hide the key to the construction site in the fuse box." "Is it?" Eva tries to keep her calm. She wants to know if he's interested in making a deal with her or not.

To her surprise the answer is no. Mr. Renolt says there's no longer the option for a deal for Eva specifically. It does not make sense, because she will receive a judicial notice of termination of her lease. And he smiles again, as he says: "Or should I say, your mother's lease, right?" Eva wants to know the justification for a notice. It's simple: that the main tenant does not use the apartment but sublets it illegally. "She doesn't even order her magazines to this address anymore, you see."

Back in her apartment, leaning in the doorframe Eva watches Elias as he laughs about the comic he's watching. She takes in this picture of her perfectly happy son. Then, she sees that a water drop is falling down. Onto the couch, next to Elias. And Elias coughs. Eva gives up.

Matteo's apartment, the chic white, new building. Eva rings the doorbell, holding Elias' hand and a big suitcase.

Matteo opens the door, surprised to see Eva. Aron's not home yet. Eva offers to come back later, with a look at the weather outside, Matteo invites them to come inside.

Eva drinks tea in Matteo's kitchen, Elias looks at a book on the couch. There's clearly tension between Eva and Matteo. Matteo admits that Aron asked him last night if something has happened between them. Eva asks what Matteo answered. Matteo told him. Eva starts to laugh, stating that Aron did leave her, but he did not leave Matteo. Matteo has to laugh, too, saying: "Where should he go to?" Eva sighs, because it's sad because it's true.

Matteo asks how Eva is. Eva tries hard to fight back the tears, with a look at Elias she whispers: "I'm going to lose the apartment." "No, you won't." "They'll terminate my lease." Matteo makes a dismissive gesture, Austrian renter's law is solid, they can't just do that, she should believe him, he's a lawyer. Matteo urges Eva to tell him everything.

Elias has fallen asleep on the sofa. Matteo has listened to Eva. He advises her to ask the rental law experts from the municipality's office, that her friend Linda recommended, for assistance. But Matteo is pretty sure that the termination of the lease is just an empty threat, they do that all the time, but in court it won't pass. They try to waste people's time and money, to wear them out. And Matteo is convinced that the deals the others made, are not legally binding, as Mr. Renolt represents only one third of the proprietors.

They can hear a key in the door. Aron is surprised to find Eva here, throws a quick look at Matteo, who goes to his bedroom to give them some privacy.

Aron carries Elias into the guestroom bed, then they sit down, Eva and Aron, and Eva asks Aron to take Elias. Not only for tonight, but for longer. The apartment is in a state that's not healthy for a child. Or anyone. But especially for a child to sleep in. Aron asks if she got involved. Eva's answer is that she got involved too late, that's the problem. That she's always waiting too long to make decisions. Or to say what she wants. Or needs. Silence.

Then Aron asks, why Matteo. Eva looks up to see Aron cry. She reaches out to caress his cheek, but Aron shakes his head and Eva accepts. Eva takes a deep breath and says that the attractive thing about Matteo was, that he didn't need her. Aron does not understand. Eva tries to explain, that Elias needs her as his mother, Aron needs her as a wife, as an assistant, as a cheerleader. Eva says that she loves being all that, but somehow in between all these roles she kind of forgot who she was and what she needed. And she started resenting everyone who needed her in a certain role. Because they chose the roles. Not her. Aron looks at her, saying that he gets it, kind of, but not fully. Eva smiles at him, saying she's also still trying to figure it out. But she's sorry, she hurt him in the process. Eva reaches for Aron's hand, this time he does not pull away. They sit like this for a moment. Then Aron says that he wants to go to couple therapy. If it's not to repair than at least to clean up. Eva agrees happily.

Back at the house, Eva hesitates to go into her apartment, instead she knocks on the other door, Andrej's door. It opens, because the firefighters have damaged the lock. Eva walks inside. The room where Andrej's mattress was is now empty. Eva looks at the spot, the portrait of a bad conscience.

With the now familiar roaring and hammering a new morning dawns. Heavy grey clouds are still on the sky, but there's no more rain outside, only inside.

Without Elias, Eva's day has less structure.

She sits down at her desk, headphones on, goes through floor plans and calculations.

She eats a sandwich while sorting through the bookshelves and cupboards trying to save what has gotten wet and to preserve what was spared.

Eva calls Linda for an appointment with the rental law expert. Eva takes a look at real estate ads, leaving the homepage frustrated.

When it's time to pick up Elias from Kindergarten, Eva takes the orang-outan along, fresh from the drying rack.

At the kindergarten the teacher looks at her in confusion: Elias has already been picked up. Eva doesn't understand. Who picked him up? Aron? No, Helena. Panic. Eva feels hot and cold at the same time, shouting at the kindergarten teacher that she can't just let her child leave with someone else.

A huge playground, in the middle a big, colorful climbing contraption surrounded by benches. On one of them sits Helena. Eva sits down next to her, holding the orang-outan, taking a deep breath. Eva wants to know if Helena wanted to give her some of her own medicine? Helena smirks, asks how it tasted. "Bad." Eva follows Helena's gaze as she looks at the climbing contraption. Some kids play alone, some fight. Elias, Manal and Asta are not very skilled, but by pushing and pulling each other they reach the top. Together.

The sun comes out. Eva closes her eyes, savoring the moment, trying to collect every ray of sunlight.

Eva asks Helena, if she wants to come over for dinner tonight. Helena stares at Eva, if she really wants to invite her, given the condition of the apartment. But Eva insists, yes, she decided to invite the whole house. First of all, she has news from the law expert that she wants to share and secondly, it was something that Aron said yesterday: If not to repair, at least to clean up. Helena is touched, but tries to take the gravitas out of the moment by asking, if Eva is literally inviting them to repair and clean her apartment. Eva laughs. Helena will try to make it. Then Helena calls for Asta, they have to leave, she has to meet her brother Hannes, in order to find out what his plans are, especially about the \$18 and rogue Mr. Renolt.

Rays of sunlight pierce through dusty air. Eva has cut open the plastic in front of the windows of the living room. The furniture is pushed to the side. On the floor is a variety of blankets and pillows, in the middle is food and drinks waiting to be consumed. Elias excitedly distributes folded napkins on the blankets.

A picnic in the construction site.

The Shaarmans are the first ones to arrive with a huge cake, then Luca, Anna and Leo, as students they are always up for free food, Mrs. Cunat with sandwiches, Martin and Ahmed contribute a nice bottle of wine, Mr. Winkler brings ice cream from his parlor. Slowly the room fills up. Mr. and Mrs. Simon arrive, talking about the fantastic hotel they stayed the night at, and

finally Bojan and Sabine with Mia. Eva thanks them for coming. Bojan simply hugs her, Sabine adds that it's a nice idea. Eva asks about Grandma Jovic, Bojan apologizes, but the stairs are too much for her.

Eva decides to bring her at least a plate with food.

Eva passes the worker's apartment on her way. Eva stops, she has an idea.

The workers freeze when Eva enters their make-shift bedroom. Most of them are lying on their mattresses, some are cooking food in a microwave. Eva sees Andrej sitting in a corner on his mattress, he looks away when she smiles at him. Eva picks up the courage to ask if two of them could help Grandma Jovic with the stairs. As a thank you, she brought food. Eva holds up the plate like a trophy. No one reacts. Annoyed, Andrej translates what Eva said, two workers agree to help her. Andrej looks away again.

People are cheering when Eva returns with Grandma Jovic to the picknick. Eva notices that Helena has arrived, she has brought a woman with her, whom she introduces as her friend VERENA, who's a journalist. Helena explains that this is one of her tactics to convince her brother Hannes not to sell, like Harry did.

And just as Eva wants to sit down, there's another knock on the door: Linda, Eva's friend from the municipality, and her colleague, the rental law expert. Eva asks them to come in.

Eva lifts Elias up and closes the door to her apartment.

THE END

Moodboard

