

Jaroslav Jakubowski

'Life'

An adult comedy

Translated by E.V Carter

Empty stage - A catafalque. On it lies an empty coffin and next it to the lid. Inside the coffin lies a man; nondescript. He is clearly dead. A mobile phone rings – the ring tone is annoying (should be Elvis’s ‘Unchained Melody’) The sound emits from inside the coffin. The ringing should last a while.

BODY

This is ridiculous. I can't answer the phone. Dead bodies don't answer phones. But I'll just die if I don't answer it. Actually, I'm already dead so it shouldn't really matter whether I answer the bloody phone or not. Apparently the Irish bury their dead along with their mobile phones. Just in case. Just in case what?

The phone continues to ring and the BODY holds it up to his ear.

BODY

Hello?

VOICE

Who is it?

BODY

I'm supposed to ask who it is. Hello?

Voice

The soul.

BODY

The soul?

VOICE

What have you done to me? Where am I?

BODY

How am I supposed to know? I thought you knew?

VOICE

I don't know. Get me out of here.

BODY

How? I'm just a body...

Voice

Well thanks a f...

Connection is lost and the BODY jumps out of the coffin.

BODY

It's always the same...

WOMAN I (*who has just entered the stage dressed like a prostitute. Lights and music – like in a nightclub*)

Get me out of here...

BODY (*to the audience*)

I had no intention of getting her out of there. She was the most beautiful girl in 'Eden' nightclub.

(*to the WOMAN*) It'll take a while.

WOMAN I

I want to be with you. We can run away together, like you said.

BODY (*to the audience*)

I didn't remember, I was drunk.

(to the WOMAN) Sweet cheeks, and how am I supposed to leave my wife just because you want to get out of this joint. It's a weak argument. And besides, even if we did run away together we'd soon get bored – I'd sit in front of the TV with the remote and you'd make dumplings and out goes the romance. And you know how much I like a bit of romance.

WOMAN I

Coward (she slaps the BODY and exits)

BODY

A coward is better than being a dead body, at the end of the day. In any case, I made the whole thing up. I've never been to Eden nightclub and, it's not out of the question, that I'll never go. I've not done many of the other things, which I wanted to do. If you put all those things together you could make up a whole medium – length life...only that it wouldn't be mine, of

course, but somebody elses. Mine was as it was. And why was it as it was and not any different? What am I? A philosopher?

The WIFE enters the stage – the stage props create an apartment. They both sit on a sofa, facing the audience.

WIFE (*like she is reading from a screen*)

The prisoners refused to eat bread.

BODY (*like he is reading something from a newspaper or a laptop*)

Why?

WIFE

They didn't like it.

BODY

This one actress, she doesn't eat bread and she says she feels better for it.

WIFE

Which one?

BODY

You know...the wife of that actor – from that soap.

WIFE

Oh I know the one. She's thick.

BODY

Because she doesn't eat bread?

WIFE

Just generally.

BODY

Yes,

(to the audience) Why is it that when a woman sees another pretty woman she always assumes she's thick.

WIFE *(reading intently)*

The prisoners have begun negotiations. They'll start eating bread – but only if it's toast.

Scenery change. *'The BODY' is now a 'boy' sitting at the table with his parents. His mother is spoon-feeding him.*

MOTHER

But I've mashed it all up for you.

BODY *(childishly)*

It's still got lumps.

MOTHER

One more spoonful.

The BODY pulls a face and swallows with disgust.

MOTHER

That's a good boy. And one more for daddy...

BODY

Not for daddy...

FATHER (*from over a newspaper*)

And why not?

BODY (*to the audience*)

I always loved to piss my father off.

***(to mother)* Cos' dad called me an imbecile today.**

FATHER

Don't lie you little shit. I just said that you don't think sometimes and there's a big difference. Well, eat – do you know how much your father has to slave away just to put food on your plate?

BODY (*to the audience*)

I didn't give a damn. What was most important was fucking off my father.

(*to FATHER*) How much?

FATHER

You'll see for yourself one day.

The BODY is now a FACTORY MASTER's apprentice. He is standing in front of a production line and is lifting and stacking – his actions flow automatically, music accompanies.

FACTORY MASTER (*picks up what has been stacked and moves it elsewhere*)

The pile has to be solid and straight. Ten that way, ten the other way. Ten that way, ten the other way.

BODY

Please, sir, I really need the bog.

(to the audience) I was dying for a smoke.

FACTORY MASTER

When I say you can go, you can go. Stand there and stack. Ten that way, ten the other way. The pile has to be solid and straight.

A prolonged scene of 'automatic stacking'.

BODY

But I have to go, sir.

***(to the audience)* Now I really needed to fucking go.**

FACTORY MASTER

The machine is on. I'm not going to switch it off just because you have to go. Well...ten this way, ten that way...!!

'The BODY' can't stand it any longer and makes gestures which are akin to him pulling out a machine gun and 'pumping' the FACTORY MASTER with a shower of bullets. Sound of shooting emits and the FACTORY MASTER shakes and jumps up as if he was, indeed, being 'pumped' with a shower of bullets. Suddenly this all stops and the two of them are standing by the assembly line like nothing had happened.

BODY

Thanks to hard graft I got promoted. But others were promoted even more.

The BODY stands face to face with his boss (it can be the same actor as the FACTORY MASTER)

Boss

Do you still like them?

BODY

Who?

BOSS

The ones that we don't like.

BODY

As if! I don't like the ones that you don't like.

BOSS

You don't not like them not enough. It seems to me you like them.

BODY

Fine, I'll not like them more then.

BOSS

I'll give you some good advice. Get to like us, and the rest will fall into place....

BODY (*looks at the BOSS in disgust*)

I'm supposed to like you? Is that really necessary?

BOSS

I'm afraid so.

BODY

You mean to say, that it's worth my while.

BOSS

We're counting on you. So you ought to count on us.

BODY

Depends (*to audience*) how much for...

BOSS

**Well, show us. The fruits of your labour will prove to
us...**

BODY

Well, that means I'm supposed to do what?

BOSS (seriously)

**Kill your father. Rape your mother and betray your
closest friend.**

The BODY is dumbfounded. The BOSS begins to laugh.

BOSS

I was joking. We're not going to tell you what to do, of course. We respect you too much. You're talented, intelligent and...young. Take the opportunity that we're giving you...

BODY

Opportunity.

BOSS

An opportunity of a lifetime.

BODY

An opportunity of a lifetime...

BOSS

**A once in a lifetime opportunity to become just like
us...**

BODY (*after a while of thought*)

**Alright! (*to the audience*) I quickly learnt how to
control my nausea.**

BOSS (*friendly,, forcefully*)

That's my boy

The BOSS kisses the BODY on the lips.

**BODY (*to the audience – momentarily tearing his lips
away*)**

**Apparently there are some boundaries you shouldn't
cross...**

***The BOSS presses his lips to him once again breathing
heavily. The BODY tears away.***

BODY

But that's bullshit – there are no boundaries not to cross.

BOSS

There is no such thing as nausea which can't be turned into quivers of joy and ecstasy.

The BOSS turns the BODY around and makes a motion – as if he was raping him. He does this until he can no longer. He pulls up his flies, composes himself, and leaves. The BODY lies with his face on the ground.

BOSS (*parting words*)

It's really better that you stop liking THEM.

BODY (*rises, brushes himself off*)

And I liked everyone...

School scene – ‘bullying of freshmen’. The BODY is standing and shouting at some poor boy running in a circle, making sounds like an engine.

BODY

Faster, faster go fucking faster. Speedway – turn sharp!!! (Kicks the boy on his buttocks)

The same bullied boy is sitting in a toilet cubicle. The BODY throws a coin over the top of the cubicle wall.

BODY

That game was called ‘throw the penny into the music box’.

(to the boy) Go on sing for fuck’s sake!! A Christmas carol!!

The bullied boy starts to quietly sing ‘Silent Night’.

BODY

Alright, stop. (*The bullied boy carries on singing. The BODY takes him by the head and shoves it into the toilet bowl*)

BODY

Stop it for fuck's sake! (*from the bowl a gurgled 'silent night' is heard*)

The bullied boy transforms into Jesus and stands before the BODY pointing his index finger

JESUS

Whatever you do unto the least of my brothers, you do unto me.

BODY (terrified)

Lord Jesus, I didn't mean it, I only do it out of boredom. (*talks to the audience*) Lessons were boring, breaks were boring, I smoked, looked at naked girls, traded in music records and fucked up freshmen. I liked it and I'm not ashamed. If you're fucked over your whole life... then at least have something to remember it by.

JESUS

You're a mug. That kid you bullied now earns more in one month than you do for the whole year even with 'extras' on the side.

BODY

Money isn't everything.

JESUS

Of course. But you're still a mug. You've fucked everything up royally.

BODY

**I tried. I woke up early every morning, went to work
and came home.**

JESUS

It's much too little.

BODY

And what could I have done more – a weed like me.

JESUS

**Believe in me. And through me in man. And in
yourself, too.**

BODY (*silent for a while*)

I always believed in man's fall.

JESUS

And what do you know about falling? You didn't even know how to sin in full. You're so half – measured.

BODY

What's to become of me?

JESUS

And what do I care?

BODY (*choked up*)

And that...mercy?

JESUS

Who do you take me for? Some kind of saviour of mankind?

BODY

Well, yes...

JESUS

Fine, I got a bit carried away. Cos' mugs like you always piss me off. First you throw away your lives, and then you weep for me to do something about it. What will be with you will be - the case has still not been decided. But, for the time being, I don't envisage a happy ending.

BODY

Maybe it's fixable somehow.

JESUS

WHAT'S fixable?

BODY

You know, the 'Pearly Gates'... or whatever you call it.

JESUS

Do you think this is some sort of state fund? Why should I believe in you when, for your whole life, you saw me as a figure from a comic book.

BODY

I admired you... but I knew that I had no chance of being like you.

JESUS

Damn you, man. I don't know why I do these things. But alright, I'll talk to the right people. But remember; I promise you nothing.

JESUS exits.

BODY

Thank Jesus. *(to the audience)* He's an alright guy. And he's still only 33. If he wanted he could really set himself up a fucking cushty life on earth. Power, women and fame. If I was in his shoes I'd choose that. Not what he did. I never had power – other than over the television remote and that was rare because the kids used to hide it. Fame never materialised either. And women... *(dreamily)* women...

A stunningly beautiful GIRL appears.

BODY

That was her. Love. Summer. Sun. But I can't remember her name, God dammit.

GIRL

Asha

BODY (*toys with the word pronouncing it in different intonations*)

Asha, Ashana, Ashy, Asha.

The GIRL crouches as if in front of water and touches its surface.

BODY

Summer. Sun .Water .Us. Love. The universe above.

We crouch over the water and gently stroke the waves. The water is warm and our hands touch often.

In the waves our faces reflect Love, Universe, Fuck!

And then she...

The BODY goes upstage leaving the crouching GIRL.

Using her hand pressed against her mouth she emits a loud farting sound.

BODY

She farted like a rocket. Loud, long and clear. (*he crouches next her again and 'demonstrates how it was'*)

BODY

I looked at her and she does nothing – just carries on staring at the water, caressing it with her hands. Like nothing had happened. Like the loudest, most God – awful fart had not just shot out of her arse.

GIRL (*extremely sadly*)

It was summer. I'd eaten a load of plums.

BODY

You could have been the love of my life. And not just for that summer. It all ended with that one fart.

GIRL

I cut myself; but not hard enough... so they saved me.

I married a welder. I gorge myself on plums.

The smell of the fart hits the BODY – he runs upstage and is sick. The girl exits.

BODY

Life...we throw our rubbish into it as if it were a bin bag – right until a hole is torn. Which reminds me...

A bed wheels onto the stage. On it bedcovers and in the bedcovers WOMAN II. She sleeps, snores. The BODY sits on the bed.

BODY (rasping voice)

I had such a hangover. I could have even drank the water from the jar we used to put our fags ends in. (

he shudders at the thought, recomposes himself and looks at the sleeping WOMAN, then shudders again.)

I had such a hangover. I only remember sitting in some bar trying to explain to the bar – lady that I wanted a top up of beer but (*he slurs his words as if drunk*) it didn't work out. (*Normal voice*) I was horribly lonely then. I stumbled out of the bar and there she was, waiting for me. I said: (*mumbling*) "run away with me" or something equally as nonsensical, and we ran away. To her place.

The BODY looks at the WOMAN, uncovers her breast and then covers it again.

BODY

The first thing I saw when I opened my eyes was a bunk bed. On each bed sat a child, staring at me. I had such a hangover.

The BODY pulls a silly drunken face

BODY

And where's your father, dolly? He went away? Where to?

WOMAN II wakes up and sits up in the bed

WOMAN II

To the nut house. Daddy went mad. He made babies and went mad. One day he remarked that normal life bored him and that he'd like to lead a new life as a mad man. Go and get some vodka, alright?

BODY gets up and leaves.

BODY

I never went back there again. But I remember her breasts well. I could have at least left something for those kiddies.

WOMAN II gets up and exits. The BODY is left alone.

**Is it just me or do I always run away from something?
I had this reoccurring dream: I'm standing in front of a window in this hotel room – I can see a beach and people on the beach – they gather around a figure lying in the sand...probably a girl. Suddenly they look my way and rush towards the hotel. And in the corridor and on the stairs you hear their loud footsteps. I don't know what to do – where to hide. I feel so guilty even though I didn't know the girl. I try and remember why I actually came here – what the purpose of my trip to this cold hotel room is. And then those others burst into the room. And I wake up. And even though I'm now awake, I still feel guilty.**

Enter the FATHER wearing striped pyjamas. He gets into bed. The BODY sits next to him.

FATHER

You know how much I love you, son.

BODY

I know father.

FATHER

So why do you act the little boy that can't grow up?

BODY

Because I'm scared, father.

FATHER

What are you afraid of?

BODY

I don't know – but I've got used to fright. I'd go as far as saying that it serves me quite well.

FATHER

Well, I can't get used to it. Even now when it's time to die.

BODY

Fathers don't die. Only sons die.

FATHER

I have to tell you something – I cheated on your mother...Only once...once, when I was on business. I poisoned my whole life because of it.

BODY

I cheated too...many times. At least I'm better than you at something, you old goat.

Enter the PRIEST saying the last rites.

PRIEST (*as if he is saying mass*)

We live in times in which betrayal stopped being a tragedy becoming, at the very most, only a slight inconvenience - a small flaw or crease on the smooth surface of comfortable life. We live in times in which sin is a dated concept opposing freedom. We lives in times which despise rigidity, boundaries and form...even though St Augusts once said that, 'there are no bad times...only bad people'.

BODY

**But then again in 'Les Miserables' Victor Hugo wrote...
"There are no bad herbs, and no bad men; there are only bad cultivators."**

PRIEST

Wouldn't it be better," instead of condemning evil, to do good"? - Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

BODY

Woody Allen: "The good people sleep much better at night than the bad people. Of course, the bad people enjoy the waking hours much more..."

PRIEST

"As long as you have time: do good" – St Paul of Tarsus.

BODY

"But it is the same with man as with the tree. The more he seeketh to rise into the height and light, the more vigorously do his roots struggle earthward".

Friedrich Nietzsche

PRIEST

**“The biggest evil flows from within us” – Jean Jacques
Rousseau.**

BODY

**“The evil that is in the world almost always comes of
ignorance” – Albert Camus.**

PRIEST

**It’s a funny world – that there is still so much bad
within it.**

BODY

But there are more good – willed people?

PRIEST

"Good and evil have the same face; it all depends on when they cross the path of each individual human being." — Paul Coelho

BODY

Someone who quotes Paul Coelho must really be desperate.

During this scene the PRIEST retreats upstage. The duel of quotations becomes heated. Exhausted they sit on the floor. Beautiful and uplifting organ music resounds. A BRIDE appears surrounded by a group of BRIDESmaids and wedding guests.

PRIEST (rises, brushes himself off)

Pull yourself together, calm down, get a grip and remember to compose yourself. Grow up, refine

yourself and be worldly and wise. Be tender, faithful, responsible and honest – to yourself and to others. Respect everyone. Man without other man is not a man. Well, get up...go. This day will change your life. After this day nothing will be as it was before. Today is your wedding day.

The BODY approaches the BRIDE who is heavily made up and coiffed. The BODY kneels before her as if he were dumbstruck by her grandeur.

BODY (to the audience)

I couldn't believe this was happening to me. Me – an eternal wanker standing at the altar making a vow to God.

BRIDE

Pull yourself together, calm down, get a grip and remember to compose yourself. Grow up, refine

yourself and be worldly and wise. Be tender, faithful, responsible and honest – to yourself and to others. Respect everyone. Man without other man is not a man... Well, why can't you?

BODY (*apologetically, to the audience*)

Well, I couldn't...I was completely off my head drunk.

BRIDE

So many men tried to make me their wife – handsome, clever, always willing. A man should always be at the ready. A man's role is to satisfy his wife. Satisfy me. Do you hear!!! Satisfy me!

The BODY, at this point, sits on a pile of porn magazines (a porn film can also be played) he makes sexual movements until complete oblivion. He flops onto the bed and curls up. The BRIDE sits on the bed doing her makeup.

BODY

I loved them all. I was good and kind to all of them. By their sides, I became a better person. And they didn't want anything from me. I closed my eyes and saw them all – naked, submissive and in awe of me. That's just how I imagined heaven to be.

Terrifying laughter is heard

VOICE

Man, who do you think you are? You couldn't even seduce your own wife. You couldn't even live your own life like a human being - as it should be. We've got a whole file on you here in our 'Memory Institute'. Absolutely everything. Having studied it, it tells us that you were an open and willing collaborator with the devil. But you couldn't even be a proper sinner. There are a lot of regrets and other rubbish which we

are wasting our time on. What do you think - what should I do with you?

BODY

I wasn't a collaborator. My file must have been corrupted. I was always on the opposition's side.

VOICE

There has been no fraud here, I'm afraid. Our institute verifies everything thoroughly. The devil would not have framed you – he's got nothing to gain. He wanted your soul.

BODY

Even if I were a collaborator, I was not aware of it and, in any case, I never hurt anyone apart from myself.

VOICE

Admit the truth! You were a self-absorbed, greedy, jealous, quick – tempered, people hating, lazy... a glutton, a drunk, cynical, neurotic, cowardly, a conformist and opportunistic son-of-a-bitch. And now you stand before me in denial? So you don't want to rise from the dead?

BODY

When my grandmother died, I touched her hand. It was yellowed, hard and cold. She looked like a giant porcelain doll. So if were to rise from the dead looking like a porcelain doll, I politely decline.

VOICE

Your choice. Everyone can refuse eternal life in lieu of eternal death.

BODY

Can't you just die...? No further consequences - like you lived life from day to day?

VOICE

Not possible. Because your soul cannot extinguish – even if it wanted to.

BODY

What good is it to me? I want to be free of it.

VOICE

For the time being, it has released itself from you.

You're a dead body.

BODY

I always suspected that.

The BODY starts to laugh at his own joke. He stops suddenly.

BODY

Fine God. Let's say that I face the truth, admit wrongdoing and ask for your forgiveness. My soul goes up to heaven, my body rots and then you do some kind of hocus pocus and everyone's happy again. It's exactly this that seems to be the weakest link in this story. I know, 'mystery of faith' and all that – but faith cannot depend solely on mysteries. Don't you think?

VOICE does not answer

BODY

Are you there? Actually, don't say anything. You're in the right. You're right. Do you hear?

Enter a boy (about 18yrs, wearing a black suit, polished shoes, a white shirt with unbuttoned collar – very de mode)

BOY

Who are you talking to?

BODY

To myself. Do we know each other?

BOY

I'm Marian. We went to the same primary. I was two years above you.

BODY

Marian – the one that drowned?

BOY

On holiday in 1990 – right before the World Cup final... West Germany vs Argentina. What was the result?

BODY tries to remember.

BODY

I don't remember. I stopped watching the World Cup games after Mexico 86'.

BOY

I never missed a game...until that final.

VOICE

8th July, 1990, Rome. West Germany vs Argentina – 1:0, 0:0 at half – time. Brehme scored the winning goal in the 85th minute – penalty shoot.

MARIAN

The Germans had a brilliant team back then.

BODY

They've always had a brilliant team.

MARIAN

No, they've mostly had average teams - but they really played with gusto. Voeller, Klinsmann, Matheus - they were magicians.

BODY

The biggest magician was Szpakowski. Do you remember Wlodek Smolarek circling around Zbyszek Boniek like a atom.

MARIAN

Or he hung on a shoe pin.

BODY (*as if he were a sports commentator*)

Goooooooooooooooooaaaaaah!!! Oh, no – it's hit the side of the net.

BOY

And again an off-target goal.

BODY

Why?

BOY

Well, it's a goal but it's off - target. It's sort of a paradox.

BODY

Right. You know, I came up with this theory once. Our boys stopped playing well when Szpak started appearing on TV.

BOY

And?

BODY

So I thought to myself that one has to be linked to the other. That if this world has any meaning, some sort of reason, then there has to be a reason for our boys playing badly.

MARIAN

And that reason is Szpakowski?

BODY

That's what I think. When Ciszewski was commentating everything went smoothly. And when Spaku started, it all went downhill.

MARIAN

Ciszewski also commented when we lost matches.

BODY

Well, yes, but mostly we won. But when Szpak did the commentating, it was the other way round. There was the odd win here and there but we usually got our arses kicked.

MARIAN

And how exactly did Szpak make our boys lose? Was he a bad omen or did he send out negative energy, or something?

BODY

I don't know. Maybe he was so intent on winning that he somehow put a curse on the game. And if he was a bit more wary in his approach- no expectations or anything, you know, less emotional, who knows...the

players might have sensed that calm and they wouldn't have missed opportunities.

MARIAN

If you love something too much, you can destroy it.

BODY

You took the words right out of my mouth.

MARIAN goes up the BODY, leans into his ear.

MARIAN

I have to tell you something.

BODY

Go for it.

MARIAN

But promise you are not going to laugh.

BODY

I promise – what's the harm?

MARIAN

I never had a girlfriend.

The BODY looks at the boy sympathetically.

BODY

You never poked it in?

MARIAN shakes his head.

BODY

**Poor sod. But all in all, if you look at it from afar,
there's nothing to regret.**

MARIAN

You're just saying that to make me feel better.

BODY

Well, there are some good points, but you can't overlook the bad ones.

MARIAN

I was never confident around girls.

BODY

You don't need confidence. Actually, it's the opposite – women prefer shy men. I, for example, always acted the shy, cuddly, type – you know, like I wanted to do it but I'm too shy...It's good to show that you have scruples. They like that. They think that you're a romantic and that you won't pull a fast one. It makes them feel respected. So you act all shy and wait for

things to run their course. What's most important is not to make any sudden moves. The rest takes care of itself.

MARIAN

What's it like...with a girl.

BODY

You mean when you hit the jackpot?

MARIAN nods his head.

BODY

Well...how can I put it...You just get really close to each other – so close that you can't get any closer.

MARIAN

Naked?

BODY

Yes, naked as well.

MARIAN (*dreamily*)

**God – what I would give to do something like
that...Tell me what it's like – what you feel.**

BODY

**Marian – couldn't you just try it on with one of your
celestial girlfriends?**

MARIAN

They just want to keep it platonic.

BODY

Well, it's a losing battle there, mate. (*after a while*)

Right, I've got something to tell you too. When I was

a boy, I used to spy on my mother whilst she used to wash.

MARIAN

Meaning...

BODY

Meaning that when she used to wash, I used to spy on her...to makes things clearer for you.

MARIAN

And?

BODY

It was the first woman I saw naked.

MARIAN

Didn't you have a sister?

BODY

I used to spy on my sister too.

MARIAN

Just don't tell me you used to spy on your old man as well.

BODY

Him I didn't have to. He used to have his baths with the door open.

MARIAN

Why are you telling me this?

BODY

Because you're a stranger.

MOTHER appears on stage, suddenly.

MOTHER

Hold on a minute, is that all you have to say about me in this story of yours? When I used to carry you...wipe your bottom...I give up, there's no point talking about it.

BODY

Because, mother, you don't have the leading role in this story. In general, well, yes. But I decide things around here and you're just a cameo.

MOTHER

A cameo? You ungrateful little...egoist! You...liar! Remember when you said you'd never leave your mummy...!

BODY

Mother, do you always have to try and muscle in. You should go now mother. I still have some things to sort out...

MOTHER

For your mother your heart you should save, for you won't be able to tell her you love her, when she goes to her grave.

BODY

I'm in my grave for the time being...well, just hovering over it. So kindly, mother, wait for another play in which you can talk to your heart's content.

The MOTHER is indignant. She turns on her heel, goes to leave and suddenly turns to the audience.

MOTHER

He's allergic to a 'domineering mother plot'. That's why they rejected a few of his scripts – brilliant he said ...Unfortunately, only he said that.

MOTHER exits. The BODY is now visibly angry.

MARIAN (*suddenly in good humour*)

But we really showed them who is boss in 82'. Lato, Buncol, Boniek...Gooooaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!

MARIAN, pretending to dribble a ball, exits upstage..

The LADY TEACHER appears. She is stern looking.

LADY TEACHER

I'll show you ladies...I'll show you spying! Come here, duckie.

The LADY TEACHER, in one swift move, grabs the BODY by his hair and pulls him upwards...

BODY

Ouch! That hurts...Don't you know that hurting children is against the law.

LADY TEACHER (*not letting go*)

Yeeeah? And can you punish me more than with your company?

The BODY jostles himself free, grabs her, floors her and then sits on her, his legs straddling her. The LADY TEACHER, terrified, squeals, shouts and kicks but cannot free herself.

BODY (*to the audience*)

I always dreamt of this... (*to the LADY TEACHER*) Me on top of you – you under me. Do think there might be

spark between us? That if I hurt you just a little bit, it would draw us together? I think so.

LADY TEACHER

You are bad - I'll summon your parents to the school.

BODY

Don't get my parents involved in this. This is just between us. Your thighs are rock solid...do you work out?

LADY TEACHER

You are a symbol of defeat of our education system!

BODY

And good upbringing!

LADY TEACHER

Let me go!

BODY

I'll let you go but first you have to solve a certain problem. A riddle, if you like.

LADY TEACHER

And then you'll let me go?

BODY

Listen carefully, because I won't say it again.

The BODY starts to unbutton the LADY TEACHER's blouse. He forcefully caresses her breasts, hitches up her skirt, tries to put his hand between her legs. Whilst doing this he says the below. The LADY TEACHER gradually begins to struggle less and less.

BODY

There once was a boy. He went to school and there were other boys just like him. They all had neatly cut fringes and canvas bags carrying their sneakers. In the school there was a window, through which you could see the street. During break-time the boys used to look at the passing cars and people walking on the pavement. One time, in winter, the boy saw a little girl wearing a red coat crossing the street. Suddenly she looked his way, but then turned her head and walked away. The question goes like this: what did the little boy think to himself?

LADY TEACHER

I don't know.

BODY

The boy thought that that was death. And he began to get scared, but luckily there was school, which he was

scared of even more so he could forget about what the other thing he was scared of was. You didn't pass. You get an F.

They reverse positions and resume their former. The LADY TEACHER is holding the BODY by his hair and the BODY responds with 'ouch'.

LADY TEACHER

When I smack you one...you won't know what hit you.

A bell rings – the LADY TEACHER exits. The BODY lights up a cigarette and inhales greedily...the scene resembles someone smoking in the school toilets.

Enter KOLO with a record under his arm.

KOLO

**Ewa Demarczyk covering songs by Zygmunt
Konieczny.**

***The BODY pulls out a colour magazine. He opens it
and show it to KOLO.***

BODY

**Ylva. Surname unknown. Shows you everything you'd
be too embarrassed to ask to see. *(to audience)***

**Father worked in a newsagent so I had piles of this
filth at home and set up a nice little business selling
them to fellow wankers.**

KOLO

Who?

BODY

Ylva, the lonely –hearts editor.

KOLO (*looks closer at the picture*)

I think these people have the hearts below their belts.

BODY

It's no laughing matter. Ylva knows her stuff.

KOLO

And what's that?

BODY

An earring.

KOLO

Here? ...I mean there? In that place? That must have really hurt her.

BODY

How do you know? You can't know.

KOLO

The very thought of it hurts.

BODY

What?

KOLO

The heart.

BODY

And just think – she does it for us. For me, for you...

KOLO

For money, I should think.

BODY

For money too. But mostly for us. Cos' you see...you're sitting in a warm toilet or wherever it's comfortable–

you're spanking the monkey and you're in heaven.

**And there, across the sea, poor Ylva gets another
piercing...butt in the air, come rain or shine, her veins
bulging in her skull, just so that you can have it good.**

KOLO (*holds out his hand for the magazine*)

Fine. I'll take it.

BODY

Hold up! Throw in the Tom Jones one.

KOLO

'Live in Las Vegas'... I'll get it.

BODY

Well kiss goodbye to madam Ylva!

KOLO

Wait. I have to have her...I've also Elvis, 'Live in Las Vegas'.

BODY (in a fake accent)

Olrajt

KOLO hands over the records, takes the magazine, loses himself in it and disappears.

BODY (in the spotlight, like at the Oscars, speaks to the audience)

Ylva, Eva, Elvis, Tom...you're all wonderful. Thanks to you the world is beautiful. I love you!

Lights off. Suddenly, upstage, a figure appears. He is wearing a white suit embroidered in gold thread and glitter: type 'Aloha Eagle' - covered in sequins (hairy chest showing) - he has the famous Elvis quiff, sunglasses and sideburns.

BODY

The late Elvis

ELVIS

**The late Elvis was the best...like the late Rembrandt
and the late Goethe.**

BODY

But I preferred the early Kieslowski

ELVIS

I don't know him.

BODY

A Polish director.

ELVIS

Poland? I heard something about it once. But I might be mistaken.

BODY

In Poland they believe in all sorts of strange things. That the country is the messiah of all other countries...or that you still live, for example.

ELVIS

Really? That's strange because sometimes I feel like I never died either. Just that, well...I left for a while and then came back to the same old place. You see, towards the end I sort of repeated myself – I forgot the words to the songs and things like that. But I knew what they wanted from me and I never made unnecessary moves. All that was needed was the old, tried and tested gesture, the facial expression, the song...and people went crazy. It was good...really good.

BODY

I watched your last concert on 'You Tube'.

ELVIS

The sound was quite bad. How did I do?

BODY

You're sitting in front of a white piano and frantically thrash the keys like you wanted to smash them to pieces. You're trying to sing 'Unchained Melody'.

You're struggling...the sweat is pouring down your face and every few minutes you look at the man holding your microphone. His face is saying, 'Lord, just make it to the end, make it to the end.' And you thrash on.

ELVIS

That bad?

BODY

No way! It's amazing...beautiful! You showed all those little shits who's King!

ELVIS (*wipes his faces with a handkerchief*)

Thanks buddy.

BODY

Could I ask you an indiscreet question?

ELVIS

Why I died?

BODY nods silently.

ELVIS

I'd like to know why as well. Kings, by merit, shouldn't really kick the bucket. Well, only if they're really bored.

BODY

And you?

ELVIS

For a little while, I wanted to be done with everything – you know, go abroad and start everything from scratch in some nice, forgotten corner of the world. In Guatemala or Poland, even...

BODY

That wouldn't have been a good idea but I catch your drift.

ELVIS

But you know – escaping one place means that you only find yourself in another and so on...There's no escaping because for the whole damn time there's your buddy who you can't bear to look at anymore. Yourself. So all that's left is to carry on doing the same, tired old moves and sing the same, tired old songs. It feels like you're walking into a warm, calm river. You let its current carry you and...you float off. And you hear your own singing, from slightly afar, on the other side of its bank.

ELVIS, from the middle of the stage, from under a spotlight, posing, sings 'Unchained Melody'. He is lip syncing. The song suddenly breaks off.

ELVIS

I always hated stuffy places. I hated all those offices, rooms, buses, waiting rooms, receptions and corridors where you couldn't breathe. And the window, if there

was a window... well, there was always somebody who didn't want fresh air. What good is a window which you can't open or look through because the blinds are drawn so the light doesn't hurt your eyes. Maybe they're there so that you can long - but for me the best place to long was on the bog with my head pressed against the cool wall tiles. At least there's nobody there to disturb your longing. Even in hell you can stand in front of a urinal and soothe your head against the wall. And when you leave you're a number again - but at least you had your five minutes of reign over nothing.

BODY

Stuffy places are worse than the worst woman. You can always leave a woman...but a place? It is, after all, your space and you fit in there – it's your nest but you can't leave. You let yourself be boxed in for most part of the day and most part of the night and when

you're free, out in the open, it's only to move from one overly warm place to another, which is equally too warm.

ELVIS (*leaving*)

This one guy decided that he wasn't going to spend time in stuffy places. He succeeded. He had a lovely burial.

BODY

Burial. Sounds like "buried chances" – or "buried dreams".

OLD MAN (*looks good for his age*)

You should always seize opportunities and realize your dreams. Funerals are only commas in the great epic that is life.

BODY

Well, full stops, really.

OLD MAN

Life is eternal, son. Death is only a moment.

BODY

Perhaps the other way round.

OLD MAN

It's your self-pitying generation of young old people.

Look at me: you could have been like me if only you wanted to. Exercise in the morning, followed by a walk, a quick game of chess after lunch and a bit of cognac in the evening. I'm one - hundred - and - eighty – four years old and I'm still not bored!

BODY

How old?

OLD MAN

Could be one-hundred-and –eighteen. No matter. I still feel young. I am one of your many possibilities.

BODY (*to audience*)

That's true. I once thought I was immortal.

(*to OLD MAN*)

So you can be happy that you're not a baby, or a BODY.

OLD MAN

Just so you know what you lost. I have a whole load of grandchildren, great grandchildren, great great great grandchildren and maybe even great great great great grandchildren.

BODY

You should get a medal from the Office of National Statistics.

OLD MAN

I have much pleasure in leading a long, peaceful and worthwhile life.

BODY

Is this an ad for life-insurance?

OLD MAN

Satisfaction from what I achieved on earth.

BODY (*outstretches his hands like the Pope*)

This earth.

OLD MAN

Lasting peace deduced from the knowledge that my time was not wasted.

BODY

I'm happy, that I'm not you, you gloating old coot. I prefer Krzys Baczynski, Janek Wisniewski and Grzes Przemyk – they didn't live for very long but at least they left something behind.

OLD MAN

And you, what do you leave behind you?

BODY

My children

OLD MAN

Who, in time, will forget what you look like.

BODY

I've still got my profile up on my 'Class Reunited' yearbook page.

OLD MAN.

You class doesn't exist anymore. They're all dead!

Laughing and doing aerobics, old man exits. BODY sits on the edge of the proscenium, near the audience.

BODY

Life is like an ever shrinking roll of toilet paper... like pages being torn off of a calendar, like cutting your toenails, or your hair or stocking up on soap or shampoo...Forgetting that you were stood in front of the same mirror the day before, washing and dirtying, eating and shitting, flushing the toilet, stamping your tickets, waiting to get paid, putting in and taking out your bank card, making your bed, coming, "goodbye", "see you", "hello", "see you later", "bye", closing the

**door, opening the door, closing it again but in
between doing so becoming a different person.
Because life is eternal, unrelenting change and even
the fact that you're dead is part of that change.**

***Next to the BODY sits the WIFE with her head on his
shoulders.***

WIFE

We were supposed to go to Venice.

BODY

**We went to Venice. Near Znin and also near
Bydgoszcz.**

WIFE

**We were supposed to go to Venice and rent a room
overlooking that fucking something that they always**

**show in Venice - the water, the gondolas, those
palaces and the sun.**

BODY

And the pigeons in the square...

WIFE

**And the old man that feeds the birds, which sit on his
hands.**

BODY

Why the old man?

WIFE

It can be a child feeding the pigeons.

BODY

**Fine, the old man and his grandson feeding the fat,
huge, shitting-on-everything pigeons.**

WIFE

And the bed was supposed to be big and wide and soft and covered in this nice-to-the-touch matt silver material - or gold actually. And we weren't supposed to get out of that bed unless it was for a pee and we were supposed to make love and eat caviar and drink champagne and make love again.

BODY

I've never eaten caviar or drunken champagne – shame, isn't it?

WIFE

But you would have had to in Venice – because in Venice, it's a sin not to eat caviar and drink champagne.

BODY

Yes. In Venice it's a sin not to gorge yourself on caviar, quaff buckets of champagne and make love for 25 hours a day.

WIFE

And you were supposed to be kind to me.

BODY

What do you mean?

WIFE

Well, you were supposed to cuddle me, kiss me, carry me in your arms and tend to my every whim.

BODY

All of them?

WIFE

In Venice you would have had to.

BODY

And if we'd had had enough sex to last us a million years, what then?

WIFE

There's no 'what thens'. We would have never had had enough.

BODY

But Venice might have been flooded.

WIFE

We'd have had enough caviar and champagne to last us through.

BODY

Well then it's a shame that we never went.

WIFE

We could still go?

BODY

Go and see Venice and die...

WIFE

Why die? Dying is senseless.

BODY (*pauses. Almost simultaneously with the WIFE*)

I have to tell you something.

WIFE (*practically simultaneously with the BODY*)

Do you really have to?

BODY

No. At last I don't really have to do anything.

WIFE (*to audience*)

The last words he said were through his mobile phone. He rang to say that he had something important to tell me, but his credit ran out. The call came shortly after his – he had been hit by a tram. He had always wondered how you can fall under a tram.

BODY (*in the style*)

If you think you're lucky and nothing morbidly absurd will happen to you, then you think wrong. If you think you're unlucky and something morbidly absurd will happen to you, then you think right. But what happens to you is not here nor there - because you'll never really be ready, for what happens to you.

Friends...love each other...be good to each other and

enjoy life. Of the possibilities that are thrown at us, that, I think, is the least of a bad bunch. Oh, and in every instance, don't underestimate trams – even if you believe in your own immortality.

Upstage; the POPE appears from out of semi - darkness. He is wheeled in on a throne. He sits tilting to the right, his head leaning against his right hand – John Paul II.

POPE

Man's soul is immortal, son.

The BODY doesn't know how to behave; sort of kneels, sort of bows and, in the end, throws himself down on his knees a fair distance away from the throne.

BODY

Holy Father, how good it is to see you.

POPE

To see is good, but to listen to...not so much.

BODY

There was not much time.

POPE

Time fades, eternity waits.

BODY

**I know! That's what was written on the church spire
you used see from your window.**

POPE

**Yes, and then after our exams we used to go and eat
cream buns.**

BODY

Yes, cream buns. You really told us all! I nearly burst into tears in front of the television. I even took a picture of the screen to keep as a memento. And when you, Holy Father, took that little baby in your arms when you were boarding that plane...I took a photo too! We were crying when you left father.

POPE

But I always came back.

BODY

Exactly. Without that, I don't think we would have pulled through. Between God and the truth, the new Pope really isn't the same. Well, he's alright and everything but, you know father, he's still a German.

POPE

And you can't talk to him about cream buns.

BODY

Unless they're German ones but they aren't the same?

Wouldn't you say father...?

POPE

Cream buns, cream buns and more cream buns. They can make you sick. You think I talked about them because I needed to or because they reminded me of the days of my youth? No! If it wasn't for those cream buns you would never have remembered what I was saying to you and why I came over to see you...like a madman – in rain or shine, so many times, from abroad, in sickness, in heat, in storm and cold. For fun? To gossip?

BODY

No father, I know.

POPE

You know what – what do you know?

BODY (*tries desperately to remember*)

**That the truth should be voiced with love... to it
itself... and to man.**

POPE (*sternly, like an examiner*)

Why?

BODY

Well, because the truth can be used for evil purposes?

POPE

**Because it happens that man voices some sort of
truth, to justify an evil.**

BODY

Like with women?

POPE

With women?

BODY

Yes – you tell her that’s she’s beautiful and that you love spending time with her and other things like that.

Because that’s true - but she thinks you’re saying that, because you love her. And you say that, because you want her to think that....so that you can...you know father...

POPE

You have a dirty mind son – that’s not what I taught my youth.

BODY

Not so dirty – I am just trying to understand what you preached to us, father. Well, maybe it is a little unsavoury – maybe a little depraved. Listen to my thoughts father, and judge for yourself.

POPE (*fearfully*)

If you must, my son.

BODY

There was this programme about you in the television once father – some sort of documentary, or the likes. We're sitting on the sofa with the wife watching it and suddenly she turns and says to me: I'd like to cuddle up to him - that's means you father- you get me, father. And do you know what I thought at that very moment father?

That you've got such charisma, father – this strength...and that you could probably bed any woman you wanted. My wife too – and that's with ease.

POPE

Son! You forget yourself.

BODY

Please don't get me wrong, father – I'm just telling you, father, what I thought at that very moment in my perverse little mind, and not that it's for real.

And suddenly, I felt so small... (*shows with his fingers*) And I felt jealous, like a man is of another man – like you were really going to steal my wife from me. Sick, no? Or maybe it's not sick...I don't know anymore.

POPE

It wasn't you that was sick – you just lived in sick times. Actually, times are always sick and we have to get through them as best we can without losing sight of what's most important. Some do it better than others. The thing is not to forget that we're not alone on our journey. Because the Lord is with us.

BODY

So this world still has a chance?

POPE

The world is not enough. Most important is that tomorrow never dies.

BODY

Apparently death comes tomorrow.

POPE

And you only live twice.

BODY

I'm shaken by it all. No! I'm confused.

POPE

Think of cream buns, kayaking trips... poems that you learnt off by heart. It helps when you're on your journey. And now come to me – let me bless you in your onward journey.

BODY

But...I liked it here.

POPE

It was...but it is no more. What's wrong: Reisefieber?

BODY

You can say that again.

POPE

You know what?

BODY

What?

POPE

After so many years, someone made me realise that I was, indeed, a man. Not a Pope – the Holy Father – a spiritual leader, but above all a man of flesh and blood.

BODY

A man? Superman, Batman and Captain Zbik all mixed into one!

POPE

Well tell me then why I look like such a freak on all those monument - Master Yoda or Darth Vader? What

is this – the Imperial Army defeated by arthritis?

Jeeez!

The POPE rolls off stage on the throne. A phone starts to ring, the BODY answers it.

VOICE

It's me – your soul.

BODY

You're here then.

VOICE

I am and I sincerely hope we meet again.

BODY

I'd like that – I've heard a lot about you but, in reality,

I know nothing about you. How am I to find you?

SOUL

That's your problem. But thankfully we've got, surprisingly, a lot of time.

The BODY climbs back into the coffin.

BODY

So this is how the famous 'last journey' looks - a bit like the sleeper cabin of a train. You pass some country but you're no longer its resident and it feels really, really good. You lie back and just go to sleep.

The BODY pulls something out of his pocket – a mobile phone. He checks it. He looks worried.

BODY

Does someone have a charger?

Four pallbearers enter. They put this lid on the coffin and carry it out. The WIFE, along with the other characters in the play, follow it. Elvis's 'Unchained Melody' plays.

END