

Miro Gavran

ICE – CREAM

(A Play)

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ICE – CREAM was first presented by the Theater GAVRAN, Zagreb, Croatia,
on 30 January 2014 with following cast:

MOTHER.....Mladena Gavran

DAUGHTER..Ana Vilenica

Director: Boris Svrtan

Sets: Jasmina Pacek

Costumes: Jasmina Pacek

Music: Neven Zebić

Characters

MOTHER

(26 years old, 30 years old, 36 years old, 44 years old, 53 years old, 60 years old, 63 years old, 73 years old, and 83 years old)

DAUGHTER

(3 years old, 7 years old, 13 years old, 21 years old, 30 years old, 37 years old, 40 years old, 50 years old, and 60 years old)

PROLOGUE

MOTHER: According to our encyclopaedia, ice-cream is a dessert made of milk or cream, egg yolks and sugar. To obtain various ice-cream flavours, you add fruit juice or aromas, chocolate, coffee, hazelnuts, rum, vanilla, and so on.

DAUGHTER: The mixture is whipped up in a special dish in a cooled appliance (formerly by hand, today with an electric mixer) until it becomes a firm, frozen mass of various consistencies – and that’s how you get soft or firm ice-cream that is served in various ways.

(A swift musical chord and the lights change.).

Scene 1.

(MOTHER is 26 years old, and DAUGHTER is 3. Holding her daughter’s hand, MOTHER walks onto the summer terrace of an ice-cream shop stretching to the proscenium where, out of sight, there is ice-cream displayed in a glass show-case. The show-case stands at the edge of the stage between the audience and our heroines, so that, when addressing the non-existent ice-cream lady, MOTHER is actually addressing the audience.)

MOTHER: Calm down, sweetheart, calm down. . . Mummy is going to buy you some ice-cream now. Good day. . . now tell me, sweetie, what sort of ice-cream you would like. This dark one is chocolate flavoured and the other is vanilla.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I'd like the sweetest one.

MOTHER: They are both sweet.

DAUGHTER: Then I'd like both of them.

MOTHER: That would be a bit too much, sweetheart. You have to choose.

DAUGHTER: I'd like both – I don't know which one.

MOTHER: You can see that the lady is waiting, tell me, which one do you like best.

DAUGHTER: Which one does Daddy like best?

MOTHER: Daddy usually takes half of one and half of the other.

DAUGHTER: Then I'll take half of one and half of the other.

MOTHER: One half and half, and I'll have vanilla, please.

(She offers the 'money', gives one ice-cream to the little girl and takes the other for herself.)

MOTHER: Thank you. . . Come on, darling, sit down here and we can eat our ice-cream in peace and then we will be off to the kindergarten.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I don't want to go to kindergarten.

MOTHER: But you have to, sweetheart – and you promised me that you would go to kindergarten if I took you for an ice-cream. You will see how nice it is there. Lots of toys and lots of children.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I would rather be at our flat with Daddy.

MOTHER: Daddy is on a trip, he's working. He won't be home for days. Daddy is building roads.

DAUGHTER: Does Daddy drive a bulldozer?

MOTHER: No, sweetheart, Daddy is an engineer, he oversees others who build the roads, and he gives orders to the driver of the bulldozer.

DAUGHTER: I would like my Daddy to drive a bulldozer.

MOTHER: Why?

DAUGHTER: So that he could put me up in the bulldozer and drive me around.

MOTHER: Do you like the ice-cream?

DAUGHTER: Yes, but it is very cold.

MOTHER: It has to be like that.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I don't want to go to kindergarten.

MOTHER: I explained to you that Daddy is not at home and that you have to go to kindergarten today. I can't leave you at home alone.

DAUGHTER: I'd be home with you.

MOTHER: Sweetheart, I told you that Mummy starts working tomorrow in a big building and that I won't be home tomorrow either. This is Mummy's first job and I am excited that tomorrow will be my first day, just like it's your first day at kindergarten today.

DAUGHTER: But you didn't work before and you were always home with me.

MOTHER: I didn't have to work before because. . .because. . . When Mummy and Daddy fell in love. . . I found out I was carrying a baby, so I stopped going to university, and I had you, but you were small then and I didn't have the time to study during the day or during the night, so I earned my degree only two months ago and I can now do the work I was trained for.

DAUGHTER: What's that school of yours called?

MOTHER: What school?

DAUGHTER: That school you finished?

MOTHER: It was the study of law.

DAUGHTER: And what's that?

MOTHER: That's hard for me to explain.

DAUGHTER: Will you be driving a bulldozer?

MOTHER: No, I won't.

DAUGHTER: Then that must be useless, too, just like Daddy's job.

MOTHER: Sweetheart, I don't know why bulldozers are so important to you – let the boys play with bulldozers, but you should be like all little girls and play with dolls, and sew dresses for them, and play at cooking. . .

DAUGHTER: That's all useless, too – I like bulldozers more than anything.

MOTHER: Then you should have been a boy.

DAUGHTER: Daddy said that to me once. But when will Daddy be home again?

MOTHER: Only in about ten days.

DAUGHTER: Why is he away so often?

MOTHER: I told you – he has to work for all of us. . . he has to build roads. . . and when he comes home and hears that you are going to kindergarten and how nice it is for you there when you are playing with the other children, he will be very, very happy and proud of you.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I don't want to go to kindergarten.

MOTHER: Sweetheart, you must, we have already agreed about that.

DAUGHTER: No, Mummy, I won't – there's no-one there that I like.

MOTHER: You'll come to love everybody there. You'll see bit by bit.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I don't want to go to kindergarten and I won't go.

MOTHER: You have to, love, you promised you would if I took you for an ice-cream.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, my tummy's aching.

MOTHER: Come on now, stop pretending.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I'm frightened.

MOTHER: What's there to be frightened of, there are two good aunties there and lots of children who will love playing with you.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, I want to go home.

MOTHER: We can't go home. I have to go to the shop while you're at kindergarten and then to the doctor for a paper I need for my job tomorrow.

DAUGHTER: I'm not going, Mummy – I'm staying here.

(DAUGHTER 'digs in' and does not want to move. MOTHER suddenly pulls her hand.)

MOTHER: Oh yes you are going.

DAUGHTER: I won't go, noooo!!!

(DAUGHTER starts crying.)

MOTHER: Stop that now – everybody's looking at us.

DAUGHTER: You're a mean mother. . . I won't go to kindergarten. . . and all of them there are mean. Boo hoo. . . !

MOTHER: That's enough! That's enough, I said!

(Music, the lights change.)

INTERMEZZO I

MOTHER: Far back then, the Roman Emperor Nero, who was also known as a great gourmet, thought up a way to enjoy something juicy and fruity during the summer heat. He ordered that ice be brought down from the mountains, and then had it mixed with the fruit juice that he loved. So he was enjoying what we call sorbet today. Otherwise, the Romans mixed snow with honey and chopped fruit.

DAUGHTER: The Chinese Emperor Taizang of the Tang Dynasty developed his version of ice-cream by mixing ice with milk. The first European to have the honour of tasting iced cream was Marco Polo. He described the sweet in the travelogue *The Travels of Marco Polo*, called *Il Milioni* by the Italians, as something that sounds like today's ice-cream and was served at the court of Kublai Khan.

Scene 2.

(MOTHER is now 30 years old, and DAUGHTER 7. MOTHER is holding her hand – they come onto the terrace of the ice-cream shop and approach the ice-cream show-case. .

.)

MOTHER: Good day. . . Look how many varieties there are here, as many as four: strawberry, vanilla, chocolate and banana.

DAUGHTER: I'll have strawberry and banana.

MOTHER: And I'll have chocolate, please. Do you want it in a cone or a dish so that we can eat it here?

DAUGHTER: I'd like a dish.

MOTHER: Then I'll have a dish, too, please.

(MOTHER takes the 'ice-cream' and 'pays'.)

MOTHER: Thank you. . . here you are. . . thank you. . . Here, sweetheart, let's sit over there.

(MOTHER and DAUGHTER sit in the other part of the terrace and start eating.)

MOTHER: It's really nice that you are a school-girl from today, and that you have new friends.

DAUGHTER: Pero and Luka were with me at kindergarten.

MOTHER: That's good. . . you always liked playing with them. . . And the new ones – what are they like?

DAUGHTER: They're all sorts.

MOTHER: Who are you sitting next to?

DAUGHTER: A little girl with blonde hair who has a big school-bag.

MOTHER: What's her name?

DAUGHTER: They call her. . . I don't know.

MOTHER: You don't know?

DAUGHTER: I knew, but I've forgotten.

MOTHER: Tomorrow, ask what her name is and remember it so you can tell me. What about the teacher – what did she say to you all?

DAUGHTER: She said that we must all be friends and that she will be our friend and that it would be lovely for all of us and that she will take us on an excursion. She asked us about our mothers and fathers and I told her that you work a lot and that they have

given you more money now and that you are now the boss in your room, and that my father is an engineer who builds roads and oversees things. . . and that he has not been home for ages, but that when he comes back he will be bringing me presents. Mummy, I can hardly wait for Daddy to come home so that I can tell him all about school.

MOTHER: Daddy won't be coming back.

DAUGHTER: What do you mean, he won't be coming back?

MOTHER: He is building a very large road. . .

DAUGHTER: But will he be coming home when he finishes it?

MOTHER: No, not even then.

DAUGHTER: Why not?

MOTHER: Because after that he will be building an even longer road and will be away again and will not be coming home.

DAUGHTER: But when he finishes that even longer road, won't he be coming home then and bringing me presents?

MOTHER: Sweetheart. . . Daddy does not want to come home, ever.

DAUGHTER: Doesn't want to? Why?

MOTHER: While he was there. . . he met a woman and is now living with her and not with us.

DAUGHTER: But he's my Daddy, he must live with us – and he said that he loves me and he loves you, and when a man and woman love each other then they live together and have a child, and he must live with us because he's my Daddy and I love him very much.

MOTHER: That lady wants him to live only with her, and not with us.

DAUGHTER: And why can't that lady live with us so Daddy would have all three of us and we would all be happy?

MOTHER: It can't be like that – that's not allowed. She wants him only for herself – she doesn't love us and she wants Daddy just for herself.

DAUGHTER: Then she's a very mean lady.

MOTHER: I think so, too.

DAUGHTER: And what work does that lady do?

MOTHER: She's a slut by occupation.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: And what's that?

MOTHER: That's a woman who loves other women's husbands. And Daddy lives with her now.

DAUGHTER: But why does Daddy live with her and not with us?

MOTHER: Because it's nicer for him to be with her than with us.

DAUGHTER: Ah, that's because everyone loves those sluts. . .

MOTHER: Yes, that's why.

DAUGHTER: So why don't you become a slut, too, and then Daddy will love you and come back to us, and your life will be better, because you won't have to work.

MOTHER: It's a bit late for me to change my profession now. I can't be like that woman.

DAUGHTER: Why can't you?

MOTHER: That's hard to explain.

DAUGHTER: But why?

MOTHER: Because she has a lot of free time, she doesn't have to do any work and she is always rested and well-groomed and tidy, and beautiful and cheerful. . .

DAUGHTER: **I think you are very pretty.** And why couldn't you do nothing and enjoy yourself. . . why do you work so much?

MOTHER: Because we have to live off something. Daddy hasn't sent us any money for a year now because he spends all he has on that slag, so we have to look after ourselves.

DAUGHTER: And when will I see Daddy again?

MOTHER: I don't know, love, Daddy has gone to another country with that woman of his, so he is far away from us now.

DAUGHTER: Could we go to visit him? For me to see him?

MOTHER: We can't do that either, because I do not have his address, and I don't want to see him again - ever.

DAUGHTER: Why don't you want to?

MOTHER: Because he has hurt me. He has hurt me very much.

DAUGHTER: Does it hurt you now?

MOTHER: It hurts.

DAUGHTER: How much does it hurt you?

MOTHER: Very much, it hurts me very much.

DAUGHTER: But where did he hurt you?

MOTHER: Here.

(She points to her heart.)

DAUGHTER: Do you want me to kiss you there so that it stops hurting?

(MOTHER starts to cry. She hugs her little girl. DAUGHTER hugs her mother.)

DAUGHTER: Mummy, you've got ice-cream on your dress.

INTERMEZZO 2

MOTHER: The Arabs deserve the credit for bringing ice-cream to Europe because they introduced the skill of freezing cream for ice-cream to the Italians during their rule of Sicily.

DAUGHTER: After that, from 1500 when an Italian chef served it at the wedding of Catherine d'Medici to the French king, Henry II, Italian ice-cream started to spread throughout the world and more and more people enjoyed it.

MOTHER: At the sumptuous wedding feast of King Charles I of England in the 17th century, a sweet previously unknown to the English was included among the delicacies served to the wedding guests.

DAUGHTER: The king's French chef prepared a chilled cream-like dessert that looked like fresh snow, and was sweet and creamy in texture.

MOTHER: The new delicacy was a great success, although Charles jealously wanted to keep his Chef De Marco's recipe a secret. . .

DAUGHTER: but luckily the recipe soon became known among ordinary folk, too.

(Music. The lights change.)

Scene 3.

(MOTHER, now 36 years old and her thirteen-year old DAUGHTER approach the ice-cream show-case.)

MOTHER: Tell me. . . what would you like?

DAUGHTER: I don't know – I don't feel like eating ice-cream.

MOTHER: Half an hour ago you said you would like some ice-cream.

DAUGHTER: That was half an hour ago.

MOTHER: Would you rather have cake than ice-cream?

DAUGHTER: Cakes are even more stupid than ice-cream.

MOTHER: Cakes can't be stupid.

DAUGHTER: Why not?

MOTHER: They are not living reasoning creatures. Cakes can be sweet, tasty, tasteless, old, fresh, but they cannot be stupid. Only people can be smart or stupid, but not cakes.

DAUGHTER: You are so boring with all your lecturing.

MOTHER: If you don't want cake or ice-cream – have some tea.

DAUGHTER: I'd rather have coffee.

MOTHER: Coffee is not a suitable drink for little girls of thirteen.

DAUGHTER: I am not a little girl, but a girl – I got the curse two years ago.

MOTHER: Alright – can you put your voice down a bit. So – what's it to be, ice-cream or cake?

DAUGHTER: I want coffee.

MOTHER: I can't treat you to coffee because it could be harmful for you.

DAUGHTER: Renata is six months younger than I am and she drinks coffee with her mother. .

MOTHER: That's unwise for both of them.

DAUGHTER: Are you trying to say that her mother is stupid? Her mother has a doctorate in Medicine and lectures at the university, unlike you. But everyone is stupid as far as you are concerned who is not as old-fashioned and narrow-minded as you are.

MOTHER: I didn't say her mother was stupid.

DAUGHTER: Yes, you did. That's what you said. If you did not think that she's stupid, you would not have anything against me drinking coffee with you now the way that Renata does with her mother.

MOTHER: Alright, go ahead, today is a special day, it's your thirteenth birthday after all. What sort of coffee would you like?

DAUGHTER: I've no idea. . . I don't care about coffee any more, I'd rather have some ice-cream.

MOTHER: That's better – what flavour?

DAUGHTER: I'll have a scoop of raspberry and a scoop of pistachio.

MOTHER: And for me, please, a scoop of vanilla and one of chocolate.

DAUGHTER: I'd rather have punch!

MOTHER: What? What did you say?

DAUGHTER: I'll have punch and raspberry.

MOTHER: Then punch and. . .

DAUGHTER: Raspberry!

MOTHER: Punch and raspberry in one bowl and I'll stick with vanilla and chocolate. . . that's it. . .

(MOTHER 'pays' and takes her 'ice-cream'.)

MOTHER: There you are. . . thank you. . .

(MOTHER holds out a dish of ice-cream to her daughter.)

MOTHER: Here, careful with it. .

DAUGHTER: Stop nagging – I’m not a child, it won’t drop out. .

MOTHER: Will we sit inside?

DAUGHTER: I like it here better – on the terrace.

MOTHER: Good – why not?

(They eat in silence.)

MOTHER: I wanted to talk with you about something serious.

DAUGHTER: Thank goodness that you admit that you have been talking until now about things that don’t matter.

MOTHER: What does that mean – what are you trying to say?

DAUGHTER: Well, if you say that we are going to talk about something serious now, doesn’t that mean that what we talked about before was not serious? Get it?

MOTHER: Ah, yes. . . yes. I see. . . Listen, I’d like to talk to you about Zoran.

DAUGHTER: What – has he dumped you?

MOTHER: No, he hasn’t.

DAUGHTER: Do you want to dump him?

MOTHER: No – far from it.

DAUGHTER: But you should, you know? That creep really gets on my nerves.

MOTHER: Why does he get on your nerves?

DAUGHTER: I don't know – he moseys around our flat as if it's his own. Always saying something wise. Just because he's bonking you, that doesn't mean that he can keep on serving up that shit about how I should live.

MOTHER: He wants the best for you – he wants the best for both of us and everything he says is with the best of intention. .

DAUGHTER: Oh, yeah – I can just imagine. Where were his good intentions when he didn't let me out with my girlfriends for a whole week?

MOTHER: You came home at two in the morning from Maria's birthday party, and we agreed that you would be home by eleven. When you slip up like that, you will always be punished – always. I wanted you grounded for a month, but Zoran suggested that a week would be enough. You can thank him that you were grounded for such a short time.

DAUGHTER: You two are always hatching up something against me.

MOTHER: His intentions are good, he only wants the best for you.

DAUGHTER: He's not my father – he should keep out of my life! Let him try to shovel the shit to his daughter from his first marriage, if he can. But she came of age this summer and she doesn't give a damn about him so he keeps on crapping all around our flat.

MOTHER: Come on, please, what language! Does every second word have to be so vulgar.

DAUGHTER: Why not? If my life is shit, then the way I talk can be full of shit, too, can't it?

MOTHER: Leave it, eat your ice-cream. . . Is it good?

DAUGHTER: I've eaten better.

MOTHER: It was in the papers that this ice-cream shop is on the list of the best five in Zagreb.

DAUGHTER: What must the list of the worst five look like then?

(They eat in silence.)

DAUGHTER: What did you want to talk about? What's bothering you? You're not sick, are you?

MOTHER: No, I'm very well, don't worry.

DAUGHTER: You're not pregnant are you? He didn't put you up the spout?

MOTHER: Come on – how could you think of such a stupid idea?

DAUGHTER: Bonking can lead to pregnancy.

MOTHER: Don't worry – I'm not pregnant.

DAUGHTER: So what's bothering you?

MOTHER: It's like this. . . Zoran and I. . . Zoran is a man upon whom you can rely in everything. . . You know that I like him and he likes us, too.

DAUGHTER: You already said that. Although I don't believe that he likes me – I think I get on his nerves.

MOTHER: That's just your impression – he has a good opinion of you and thinks that you will be a fine person one day. . .

DAUGHTER: He says that because of you. He cares about you so he has to put up with me.

MOTHER: No, really, he thinks very highly of you. . . although he knows as well as I do that adolescence and school and everything bother you. . .

DAUGHTER: What is it that you are trying to tell me?

MOTHER: Zoran has proposed to me.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: What did you say?

MOTHER: He proposed to me.

DAUGHTER: Idiot!

MOTHER: Why?

DAUGHTER: He's a complete cretin.

MOTHER: But he loves me.

DAUGHTER: And that's why he's an idiot. He wants to marry a woman who is at work more than she is at home, a woman who has a daughter who gets on his nerves. You're not going to marry him, are you?

MOTHER: I wanted to talk with you first. . . It's natural for everyone to want to have someone of their own. . . More than six years have passed since your father left me. You know how I felt then – I thought I would never marry again, not only not marry, I thought that I would never be able to love anyone again. All the men I met only irritated me, every one of them. And then – Zoran appeared - and his wife had rejected him just like your father rejected me, and he was so hurt, so distrustful of women. In the beginning it was a friendship between two wounded souls, who. . .

DAUGHTER: When two losers get together, it can never end well.

MOTHER: What does that mean?

DAUGHTER: The shit you have both gone through has brought you together – but you do not love each other!

MOTHER: What gives you that idea?

DAUGHTER: He's just as boring to you as he is to me, but you haven't got the balls to start something with a real hot shot in case you get the 'boot' again.

MOTHER: What 'boot'?

DAUGHTER: In the arse, Mum. Since Daddy dropped you, you don't believe in yourself so you are hanging on to that bore, that boa constrictor. He's not the man for you.

MOTHER: Don't talk like that – the two of us have managed to build up something over the last two years. .

DAUGHTER: Surely you're not going to marry him?

MOTHER: That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I did not want to decide without your approval. I am not alone, I have you, you are the most important thing in the world to me and I told him that I would answer only after I had spoken to you.

DAUGHTER: So what now – he's walking around in the Maksimir Park and waiting for what I say to you?

MOTHER: He's not walking in Maksimir Park but along the Sava River levee.

DAUGHTER: Along the levee? Walking along the levee?

MOTHER: Yes, beside the river.

DAUGHTER: You are both out of your minds. Complete idiots.

MOTHER: Why do you think that?

DAUGHTER: He wants to marry you, not me. You are the one to say 'yes' or 'no' – why are you putting all this on me.

MOTHER: But we both care about your opinion.

DAUGHTER: Why don't you stop all this crap, both of you. What do you care about what I think or feel. As if I care a shit about the pair of you.

MOTHER: Wait a minute – don't be crude!

DAUGHTER: I wasn't being crude – I didn't say anything worse than crap and shit.

MOTHER: That's enough!

DAUGHTER: Really I couldn't care a rat's tail about either of you.

MOTHER: Are you saying that you have nothing against me marrying Zoran?

DAUGHTER: Screw you both as far as I'm concerned.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: Thank you. . . I was afraid you would have something against it.

INTERMEZZO 3

MOTHER: Ice-cream arrived in America quite late, but famous Americans like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Dolly Madison, President Madison's wife, offered it to their guests.

DAUGHTER: In 1774, the London confectioner Philip Lenzi, advertised in the New York papers that he was selling various sweet delicacies, including ice-cream. .

MOTHER: Nancy Johnson invented a device for churning ice-cream in 1846 – something like what we can see even today in small ice-cream shops.

DAUGHTER: Mass production of ice-cream began in Baltimore in 1851, while Jacob Fussell is considered to be 'the King of American Ice-cream'.

MOTHER: An ice-cream freezer was perfected in 1926.

(Music. The lights change.)

Scene 4.

(MOTHER is 44 now, and her DAUGHTER is 21. They arrive at the ice-cream shop.)

DAUGHTER: Here's our ice-cream shop. I remember when you first brought me here as a child – there were only two flavours.

MOTHER: Chocolate and vanilla.

DAUGHTER: That's right – chocolate and vanilla. This place was heaven in my eyes – real Paradise. I remember that I ate vanilla and you ate chocolate.

MOTHER: No – I had vanilla and you had chocolate.

DAUGHTER: You think so?

MOTHER: I'm sure – that was how it was in the beginning. You loved chocolate when you were small, but you asked for other flavours later.

DAUGHTER: Maybe – but I like vanilla best now. . . so I thought it must have been like that before. . .

MOTHER: Why did you invite me here?

DAUGHTER: To remind us – it was really nice when the two of us used to come here – we would talk things over each time and enjoy our ice-cream.

MOTHER: What are you going to have now?

DAUGHTER: I invited you, so it's my treat.

MOTHER: Your treat?

DAUGHTER: Yes, my treat.

MOTHER: But you are still a student.

DAUGHTER: A student who is making very good money and has been paying for her own flat for six months now.

MOTHER: You know that I don't like the idea.

DAUGHTER: What don't you like?

MOTHER: That you are already working instead of finishing your studies and only then. . . .

DAUGHTER: But, Mummy – if you are studying journalism then it is more important that you gain experience on the job rather than having great marks in theory. Aren't you happy that for a year already I have had articles published in the papers with the highest circulation, that I am paid fees that are higher than your salary? Aren't you proud of me?

MOTHER: Of course I'm proud and happy – I show all our neighbours your articles – I must be boring them, but it's just that I worry that you aren't giving enough time to your studies.

DAUGHTER: Please don't worry – that's moving along, too. It's all the same if it's a little faster or a little slower.

MOTHER: I would like it to be a little faster.

DAUGHTER: Not to worry. What are you having?

MOTHER: Well. . . I could take hazelnut and strawberry.

DAUGHTER: And two scoops of chocolate for me, please.

(DAUGHTER takes the ice-cream from the ice-cream lady.)

DAUGHTER: Thank you. . . here you are.

(She hands the ice-cream to her mother, and then pays the ice-cream lady.)

DAUGHTER: Here – keep the change. . . thank you. . . Will we sit outside or inside?

MOTHER: Outside. There's more air.

(They sit down and start eating.)

DAUGHTER: What happened to Zoran?

MOTHER: He visited his family in Zagorje during the harvesting of the grapes. He was carrying that thing for the grapes on his back. . . what it is called? . . .

DAUGHTER: Is it tub-carrier?.

MOTHER: Ah, yes – that's it. But he doesn't know how to say 'no'. He worked all day like a real farm labourer – but when he came home and leaned over the bed to get his slippers he let out a wail and couldn't move or straighten up.

DAUGHTER: What happened?

MOTHER: He overdid it. Sciatica. He couldn't go to work. For three days he was moaning in pain and could not straighten up. That Voltaren cream did not help him so I took him to a chiropractor. He had him 'centred' in ten minutes.

DAUGHTER: Is he alright now?

MOTHER: Yes, he is – it's as though nothing ever happened.

DAUGHTER: Ah – thank goodness. Give him my best.

MOTHER: I shall. He sent his love to you, too. I forgot to tell you.

(They eat their ice-cream.)

DAUGHTER: This ice-cream is good.

MOTHER: Yes, it is.

DAUGHTER: It's really tasty.

MOTHER: Yes, it great.

DAUGHTER: The tables and chairs are the same as before. The façade is a little. . . it could do with a freshening up.

MOTHER: Yes – they should do something about it.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Listen!

MOTHER: Yes.

DAUGHTER: I'm getting married in a month's time!

MOTHER: What? Who to? You don't even have a boyfriend. I thought you were married to the newspapers. Who is he? Do I know him? Why did you keep this secret?

DAUGHTER: You've heard of him. . . from me – I have mentioned him.

MOTHER: Who are you talking about? Who is he?

DAUGHTER: My editor, Tibor.

MOTHER: Tibor! Your editor?

DAUGHTER: Isn't it wonderful – he is the most successful editor in our newspapers, and he was extremely good as a journalist.

MOTHER: But isn't he married?

DAUGHTER: No. . . . Not any more.

MOTHER: What does that mean: not any more?

DAUGHTER: Well – he divorced. He's been alone – for some time.

MOTHER: When did he get divorced?

DAUGHTER: It must be. . . more than a week already.

MOTHER: A week.

DAUGHTER: Perhaps nine. . . ten days.

MOTHER: Doesn't he have a child?

DAUGHTER: Yes – two children, actually. A son and a daughter.

MOTHER: A son and a daughter?

DAUGHTER: Yes – a son and a daughter.

MOTHER: How old are his children?

DAUGHTER: The little boy is five and the little girl three.

MOTHER: Five and three?

DAUGHTER: Yes – five and three.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: Wait – don't rush.

DAUGHTER: We love each other very much – I have never loved anyone as I do him!

MOTHER: I can believe that, because he's the first real man in your life. But you are only twenty years old, why rush into marriage with a man who. . .

DAUGHTER: Please, just don't say anything against him – he is wonderful, he is very gentle and so clever. . . I feel wonderful with him and he adores me.

MOTHER: How old is he?

DAUGHTER: He's thirty. He's nine years older than I am.

MOTHER: And his wife?

DAUGHTER: What about her?

MOTHER: How did she agree to give him a divorce?

DAUGHTER: Things hadn't been good between them for some time.

MOTHER: For how long?

DAUGHTER: For a long time.

MOTHER: Longer than your affair with him – or did your love and the disagreement with his wife overlap time wise. .

DAUGHTER: Mummy, he did not leave her because of me. .

MOTHER: Didn't he?

DAUGHTER: He had wanted to break up with her even before he met me and before we fell in love. .

MOTHER: Well why didn't he?

DAUGHTER: Because of the children.

MOTHER: But the children were not an obstacle now?

DAUGHTER: He realised that it would be better for the children if they were not together with them fighting in front of them every day.

MOTHER: And why were they fighting every day? Because of whom?

DAUGHTER: Mummy, please don't try to make me feel guilty because none of it was my fault. Don't try to take away my happiness. Instead of congratulating me on his proposal and my marriage soon to a great journalist and successful editor, you are talking to me as if I were a child.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: He can't marry you in a month's time.

DAUGHTER: Why not?

MOTHER: The law says that at least six months must elapse from a divorce until a following marriage.

DAUGHTER: Really? But we have already made the reservations. . .

MOTHER: Yes, really.

DAUGHTER: I didn't know that, neither did Tibor.

MOTHER: Well, my knowledge of the law is of some use.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: You will have six months to think about everything. It's too serious a decision to be made just like that – so abruptly. . .

DAUGHTER: But we've made up our minds, Mummy. We can't go back.

MOTHER: Why not?

DAUGHTER: I'm pregnant.

MOTHER: How far along are you?

DAUGHTER: I'm in the third month.

(A long silence.)

MOTHER: I think I'd like another scoop of ice-cream.

DAUGHTER: I'll get it. Which flavour would you like?

MOTHER: It's all the same to me – you choose.

(DAUGHTER gets up and approaches the ice-cream show-case.)

DAUGHTER: A scoop of hazelnut, please.

(DAUGHTER takes the ice-cream and hands the ice-cream lady the money.)

DAUGHTER: Thank you.

(DAUGHTER returns to her mother and places the 'ice-cream' in front of her.)

DAUGHTER: There you are. .

MOTHER: Thank you.

(MOTHER starts eating, and then pauses.)

MOTHER: You know, I have to admit something to you.

DAUGHTER: What is it?

MOTHER: I have never really liked ice-cream much.

DAUGHTER: Then why did we come here right through my childhood.

MOTHER: Because of you – I knew that you liked it so I kept you company.

DAUGHTER: Because of me?

MOTHER: Yes. Because of you.

INTERMEZZO 4

DAUGHTER: The coffee plant is a tree-like shrub of the Rubiaceae family. Of the many types, the most important for producing coffee beans are the various *Coffea arabica* and *Coffea canephora*.

MOTHER: The coffee plant is cultivated in several countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia.

DAUGHTER: Its native habitat was the Kaffa Region of Ethiopia.

MOTHER: The evergreen bush can grow up to five metres in height with green, glossy leaves and white blossoms with five petals.

DAUGHTER: The berries are firstly green then red and finally dark blue and the kernels hold two seeds.

(Music. The lights change.)

Scene 5.

(MOTHER is 53, and DAUGHTER is 30. MOTHER and DAUGHTER are sitting on the ice-cream shop terrace. Coffee cups are on the table in front of them. MOTHER takes a sip from her cup.)

MOTHER: This is really first-class coffee.

DAUGHTER: They say it's the best in town.

MOTHER: Your grandmother drank only Turkish coffee, strong Turkish coffee. I never liked it. When I was a girl, I tried for a year or two to drink it after breakfast, the way my mother did, but it never suited me. It was only when I discovered espresso coffee that I started to enjoy it.

DAUGHTER: I can't even imagine a day without coffee any more.

MOTHER: Neither can I.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: Why did you want us to meet?

DAUGHTER: Just like that, so we can talk.

MOTHER: And that's all?

DAUGHTER: Yes, that's all. .

(Silence.)

MOTHER: How are the kids?

DAUGHTER: Fine – she's fine and he's fine.

MOTHER: I haven't seen them for three weeks. They will forget that they have a grandmother. The audit will be finishing in my office tomorrow so if you and Tibor would like to spend the weekend alone, you can bring them to our place.

DAUGHTER: Oh, thank you very much. They will be delighted. You know they love you and Zoran.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Listen. . . they wrote to me. . . his sons wrote to me from Canada.

MOTHER: I didn't realise that you exchanged letters.

DAUGHTER: Twice a year usually: for Easter and Christmas.

OTHER: Well it's not Easter or Christmas now.

DAUGHTER: I know it's not.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: And, what did they say?

DAUGHTER: They sent me a telegram. . . He died yesterday.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: So he died?

DAUGHTER: Yes, he died. They thought it would be a routine operation, but he did not come out of the anaesthetic. Not even his doctors knew that he was so ill.

MOTHER: Forgive me if I can't say that I am sorry.

DAUGHTER: What's even worse – I can't say it either – you know, really sincerely. After he 'ran away' from our life, I saw him only three times and read some ten of his incoherent letters in which he apologised clumsily. . . he kept on apologising for everything. . . although I never asked that of him.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: They are my half-brothers. . . and they are asking me to come to the funeral.

MOTHER: And – what have you answered?

DAUGHTER: That I'll see. . . I wanted to talk to you. Do you have any objections if I go to the funeral.

MOTHER: It's all the same to me. But you – do you want to go?

DAUGHTER: I have no idea. . . Actually, I don't want to, but I'm worried. . . I'm afraid that, if I don't go now, I shall reproach myself one day that I didn't. . . It's all a muddle. . . I don't know what to do.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: What did Tibor say?

DAUGHTER: That I shouldn't be spending money on aeroplane tickets and hotels.

MOTHER: That's all?

DAUGHTER: Only that. Money is more important to him than anything else. When he pays the alimony for the two children, when he pays for the gifts for his mistress. . .

MOTHER: Where did you get the idea that he has a mistress?

DAUGHTER: I heard. . .

MOTHER: Don't believe gossip – people love to dish the dirt.

DAUGHTER: I heard him myself while he was talking with her on the phone. He did not know that I had come home – I had forgotten some documents, went into the flat and was in the corridor – I heard him laughing and talking baby-talk with her, and remembering their wonderful trip to the Plitvice Lakes.

MOTHER: Do you know who she is?

DAUGHTER: Yes, I do.

MOTHER: Who?

DAUGHTER: The editor-in-chief's wife.

MOTHER: The wife of the editor-in-chief?

DAUGHTER: Yes – her exactly. .

MOTHER: That makes it complicated . . . And what are you going to do?

DAUGHTER: Nothing at all – I shall pretend that I know nothing. .

MOTHER: Why?

DAUGHTER: He's a womanizer – a typical womanizer. It's better that he's playing around with her than with someone else. She's married, has a son, and Tibor is frightened of her husband – he'll be discrete. He won't leave me and the children while he's with her. If I tell him I know, he will break up with her, and start with someone else. He will leave me. He will leave me sooner or later. I want it to be later - much later.

MOTHER: But why?

DAUGHTER: Because I love him and because I do not want the children to grow up without a father.

MOTHER: But what about you and your feelings. . .

DAUGHTER: What feelings. . . we can forget about that. . .

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: If you were in my place. . . I think you would act in just the same way as me.

MOTHER: I really don't know. . . Do you believe he will change one day?

DAUGHTER: Come on, Mummy, please, we aren't children. . . And don't feel sorry for me. I haven't pitied myself for a long time. And I don't know what self-respect is, I

really don't know, so don't try to awaken it in me because it will only makes things worse than they are now.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: I can see that you are upset and are straining yourself to find the right words – don't. I did not invite you here for you to give me advice.

MOTHER: But you still wanted to have coffee with me and to talk. Unless it was just that you wanted to tell me that your father had died.

DAUGHTER: I could have told you that about him on the phone.

MOTHER: Yes, you could have.

(A long silence.)

DAUGHTER: I'd like to ask you something, but. . .

MOTHER: What is it?

DAUGHTER: Something embarrassing, I'm not even sure if I should. . .

MOTHER: Just go ahead and ask me – if I don't like the question, you won't get a reply. I'm listening.

DAUGHTER: After Daddy left you, how long did you continue to love him?

MOTHER: Ah, that's what interests you?

DAUGHTER: Yes – exactly that. All my life I have asked myself how long did you continue to love him. When I was still a girl I wanted to ask you, and later, but I never dared.

MOTHER: But you'd like to know?

DAUGHTER: Yes – if you want to tell me. How long did you continue to love him after he left you?

(Silence.)

MOTHER: When I found out, I was overwhelmed with hatred. I hated him with all my heart. But when he emigrated with her – the hatred disappeared after a while. . . .what was worse was that the love returned. . . I loved him again and hated myself for loving him, and I suffered for another three years – and then, one day, indifference took over. I even forgot the colour of his eyes.

DAUGHTER: Really?

MOTHER: Yes, really.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: I'll buy my plane ticket and go to his funeral.

MOTHER: You do what you think is right.

(Music. The lights change.)

INTERMEZZO 5

MOTHER: Coffee is usually served hot, and is made from baked and ground seeds.

DAUGHTER: This drink is popular in many countries, and in Croatia, too.

MOTHER: More than 50% of the Croatian population drink coffee regularly.

DAUGHTER: Coffee has a powerful effect on the brain.

MOTHER: It speeds up metabolism in the living organism.

DAUGHTER: Increases the strength and working of the heart.

MOTHER: Improves cardiac circulation.

DAUGHTER: Raises blood pressure.

MOTHER: Raises the sugar content of the blood. . .

DAUGHTER: . . . and acts as a diuretic.

MOTHER: So, go easy with coffee.

DAUGHTER: . . . it can stimulate emptying of the bowels. . .

MOTHER: . . . or even lead to. . .

MOTHER + DAUGHTER: . . . diarrhoea!

(The lights change. Music.)

Scene 6.

(MOTHER and DAUGHTER are in a café. They are sitting at a table and drinking coffee. . MOTHER is now 60 years old, and DAUGHTER is 37.)

DAUGHTER: You must go to see that exhibition. What's wonderful about the Secession style is that it can be seen in everything: in architecture, in sculpture and painting, and in arts and crafts.

MOTHER: When is it closing?

DAUGHTER: At the end of next week.

MOTHER: I'll definitely go. And you should see that Spanish film. I really laughed.

DAUGHTER: All their films are a little quirky.

MOTHER: You know when she is showering and waving her arms. . .

DAUGHTER: And that scene through the window – while they below. . .

MOTHER: Or in that other film when he puts him in the cellar so that his skin slowly changes, until he becomes a female.

DAUGHTER: And when she then falls in love with him. . . .

MOTHER: Ah yes, they are quite crazy.

DAUGHTER: One never knows with them. . . all their directors are kinky.

MOTHER: That's right, all of them – starting with Buñuel. His heroes were not quite normal either.

(Silence.)

MOTHER: What would you think of me if I went to have some plastic surgery.

DAUGHTER: What sort of surgery?

MOTHER: In general – if I went for a plastic job, what would you think of me?

DAUGHTER: If you want to go to have such an operation – then go. What do you care what anyone else thinks about it?

MOTHER: Well, I don't feel like going.

DAUGHTER: Then why are you asking me?

MOTHER: Zoran thinks that they are drooping a bit. . .

DAUGHTER: What – your breasts?

MOTHER: No! – My eyelids.

DAUGHTER: Oh, sorry!

MOTHER: And he thinks I should have the operation done.

DAUGHTER: Did he say that directly or. . .

MOTHER: Not directly, in so many words.

DAUGHTER: How then?

MOTHER: He used a metaphor and said that I looked like a wrinkled Pekinese dog.

DAUGHTER: But Pekinese dogs don't have wrinkles. . . and what did you say to that?

MOTHER: Nothing – I was shocked. I even got angry at him, but I didn't let it show. Instead, I went into the bathroom and looked into the mirror – I took off my glasses, had a look and realised that he was one hundred percent right.

DAUGHTER: Come on, your eyelids are not. . .

MOTHER: Don't – don't comfort me, I have eyes.

DAUGHTER: Would you really have the operation?

MOTHER: I would. . . If I was not afraid to. The knife is the knife.

DAUGHTER: I don't think you need it. Only if you care about it because of Zoran. If he really wants you to, if it is important to him.

MOTHER: I don't know how important it is to him. How much he even notices me. Whenever I have been on a diet, he has never ever supported me.

DAUGHTER: He hasn't?

MOTHER: He says that it is all the same to him if I am fat or slim, and that my diets are of no use anyway. He says: 'Whenever you go on a diet, I lose a few kilos'. And me? Everything I take off while I am on the diet – it all comes back after a month. I am at that age now. I am sixty now and whenever I look at food, I put on weight. I don't even have to eat – just a look at food is enough.

DAUGHTER: Come on.

MOTHER: You'll see – at a certain age the metabolism simply slows down. You eat less, but put on more weight. It's terrible!

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Listen, Mummy – my little one is giving me trouble.

MOTHER: What sort of trouble?

DAUGHTER: She has just started her first year of secondary school, has three negative grades and she's smoking and drinking.

MOTHER: How do you know?

DAUGHTER: When I come near her, she smells of alcohol and cigarettes. If you could only smell her pillow. . .

MOTHER: Surely she's not smoking already – she's only fifteen.

DAUGHTER: She has totally lost it. She's not even a virgin any more.

MOTHER: What do you mean? . . . What? Did she confide in you?

DAUGHTER: Of course not! She doesn't talk with me about that.

MOTHER: Then how do you know?

DAUGHTER: She keeps a diary.

MOTHER: You're not telling that you are reading it?

DAUGHTER: Regularly. Just the way you read mine.

MOTHER: Me? I would never. . . Where did you get that idea?

DAUGHTER: Don't go on about it – it's normal.

MOTHER: Sometimes maybe. . .

DAUGHTER: In that diary, she spits all over me as if I am the worst mother in the world. And she does not go easy on her father either.

MOTHER: And who is this person with whom she. . . She didn't describe that, too, did she?

DAUGHTER: Of course she did – it was as though I was reading a porn story. That clown is a sixth former from her school. She writes that she does not love him, but that he attracts her terribly. They did it in the school toilet a month ago.

MOTHER: Surely she did not lose her virginity in the school toilet.

DAUGHTER: Ah yes she did – standing up, too.

MOTHER: Oh, my God – who raised her, for goodness sake?

DAUGHTER: The street – that's who. And our new school system. She says in her diary that she hoped it would be 'something more', but that she felt as though someone had stroked her thingee with sandpaper.

MOTHER: Does she even know what sandpaper looks like?

DAUGHTER: She knows, obviously – from technical culture. They have it as a subject at school – we used to call it domestic science.

MOTHER: Why don't you talk to her about it all? Now is when she needs you most.

DAUGHTER: How can I talk to her – then she'll know I read her diary!

MOTHER: Well, you must not be direct in your approach. . .

DAUGHTER: How then – a metaphorical approach?

MOTHER: Try in a roundabout way about her friends and their emotional lives.

DAUGHTER: She's a smart kid, she would see through me right away. Lately she is so shaken up with puberty that I even get on her nerves when I am silent, let alone when I give any advice.

MOTHER: So what are you going to do?

DAUGHTER: I can't even try anything. But you – she loves you. She writes the nicest things about you. When I read what she says about you I am even sorry that I am not her

grandmother. I go out of my way to please her, do everything for her, but you are a hundred times dearer to her than I am.

MOTHER: How do you think that I could talk to her about such things?

DAUGHTER: That kid, that jerk of hers, he's a problem – he smokes, he drinks, he drives an unregistered car without a licence. The worst of everything. If I say anything against him to her, then she will be even more for him just to spite me. . .

MOTHER: Alright then, I can only try. . . I could take her to see that Spanish film and then talk to her a bit afterwards.

DAUGHTER: But you have already seen the film!

MOTHER: So, I'll see it a second time just so that we can set the stage for a relaxed conversation.

DAUGHTER: My God, what sort of generation is this? At least we respected our elders. At least we showed some respect in front of our teachers, and our parents. You didn't have so many problems with me, did you? Except for a few trifling things, maybe.

MOTHER: Ah, listen. . . those were different times.

DAUGHTER: Yes, different times.

MOTHER: You were also sometimes a bit. . . you know. . .

DAUGHTER: But nothing like her generation – nothing like it at all.

INTERMEZZO 6

MOTHER: The ice-cream cone, the edible cup for ice-cream scoops, made its debut at the World Fair in St Louis in 1904.

DAUGHTER: Some people consider Abe Doumar, an ice-cream maker of Lebanese origin, as the inventor of the first waffle-like cone.

MOTHER: However, the first man to patent the machine for making ice-cream cones is usually regarded as having been Italo Marchioni, an Italian from Wall Street.

DAUGHTER: This inventive Italian made the first edible ice-cream cup from waffles in the shape of a cone.

MOTHER: Customers were delighted, of course, with this practical and tasty 'packaging'. **DAUGHTER:** With unbelievable speed, their inventor became the most popular ice-cream street vendor, and he expanded his sales at as many as 45 street stands.

Scene 7.

(DAUGHTER is 50 years old, and MOTHER 73. MOTHER leans slightly on a cane. We feel that she could walk without it, but that it gives her a sense of security. The two of them approach the ice-cream show-case.)

DAUGHTER: Look at how many varieties they have now. It will be hard for us to decide. What would you like?

MOTHER: It's all the same to me.

DAUGHTER: Just say which one you would like. We have to treat ourselves a little.

MOTHER: You choose for me.

DAUGHTER: Do you want us to try the new one with the coffee taste and grated chocolate on top?

MOTHER: Ah, the one with the taste of coffee, I'll have that. So we don't have to drink coffee later.

DAUGHTER: We can still have coffee later.

MOTHER: We don't have to – I know that money is tight at the moment with your husband having lost his job. You have to save at every turn.

DAUGHTER (to the ice-cream lady): We would like two servings of three scoops of coffee ice-cream with chocolate on top, please. . . and keep the change.

(DAUGHTER 'pays', takes the 'ice-creams' and walks with her mother to one of the tables.)

DAUGHTER: Here, sit here. . . there's no hurry. Here you are.

(They start eating.)

DAUGHTER: Well, what do you say?

MOTHER: Not bad. . . not bad at all.

(They eat in silence.)

DAUGHTER: It will be good for you there, you'll see. A new beginning. You will be surrounded with people of your own generation. You'll have things to talk about with them, you'll remember the same TV series, radio programmes, the singers. . . the San Remo festival. .

MOTHER: Yes, yes. . .

DAUGHTER: And if you don't like it, you'll go back to your flat. . . Your flat will be waiting for you. . . but you have to try again. . . try to live like a social being. . . Since Zoran died, you have withdrawn into yourself and stopped socialising with other people. You have even stopped cooking. You used to enjoy cooking.

MOTHER: There's no point in cooking just for yourself.

DAUGHTER: That's why you will have regular meals cooked for you at the home.

MOTHER: I've lost my appetite. . . I simply don't care about food anymore.

DAUGHTER: You must go to the canteen every day, for every meal. . . Promise me that you will go there every day and have at least two bites. . . you must promise me that.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Well? Do you promise?

MOTHER: I promise.

DAUGHTER: And that lady – your room-mate – she seems to be a very cheerful person. It's good that you will be sharing the room with someone so open and good-natured. She will certainly pull you out of your depression.

MOTHER: She is a little bit of a bore.

DAUGHTER: No, she's not – she's just excited at meeting you.

MOTHER: I'm worried that she will come on a little bit too strong.

DAUGHTER: Just give a chance to her and to yourself. . . A week or two. . . If it doesn't work out, you'll ask to be given a room with somebody else.

MOTHER: With whom?

DAUGHTER: With someone who suits you.

MOTHER: I don't know anyone there.

DAUGHTER: Of course you don't, since this is your first day. You just have to have a positive attitude towards everything and fight against that depression.

MOTHER: Should I take my medication?

(MOTHER reaches into her bag for the small box with her tablets, but DAUGHTER takes the box from her and places it on the table.)

DAUGHTER: Forget the medication. . . people will be your medication. You shouldn't even have started on those tablets. Other women's husbands die – but they mourn for them and move on. That's the way it's done. Apart from that, it's wonderful that your new home is across the street from our ice-cream shop – what a coincidence – and now they have as many as twenty flavours. .

MOTHER: You know that I have a high blood sugar count.

DAUGHTER: So do I, but I have not given up everything sweet. One has to treat oneself sometimes and sweeten up one's life. . . You'll see – you will like it at the home. It will be a new beginning for you. And the children will come to see you. . . and Tibor will, too.

MOTHER: He doesn't have to.

DAUGHTER: He's got the time now – why shouldn't he drop in to see you from time to time.

MOTHER: Alright then.

DAUGHTER: Try it for two or three months and then, if you like it, you can sell your flat and we can use the money to buy a holiday apartment by the sea on the island of Šolta. We will all have somewhere to go on holiday, both you and me and Tibor. . . and when we are not using it, we can let it out and build up your pension a little.

MOTHER: You would sell my flat?

DAUGHTER: Not me – but you. . . But only if you like it very much at the home. If you find that it suits you – then it would be stupid to pay overheads for a flat in which no-one is living. Don't you agree?

MOTHER: Yes. . . that's true enough..

DAUGHTER: But please don't feel that you are under any pressure now. . . The fact is that I had to pull a lot of important strings to get you into this home by moving you up the waiting list. . . but if you don't like it, just tell me. Deal?

MOTHER: Deal..

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: That apartment on Šolta – it's really great. I'm sure you would like it. It has a living room and two small bedrooms. One for you and one for Tibor and me. It's near the sea. In a small place.

MOTHER: Which place is that?

DAUGHTER: Stomorska.

MOTHER: I went to Rogač when I was a student. At that time, there was no water, no road and no electricity.

DAUGHTER: Those times are past – now they have water and electricity and everything you could possibly wish for.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: Have you finished?

MOTHER: I don't feel like having any more.

DAUGHTER: Leave it then. . . Shall we go?

MOTHER: Where?

DAUGHTER: To the home.

MOTHER: I'd rather be here a little longer. . . with you.

DAUGHTER: Alright. . . there's time. . . we can talk about anything you like.

MOTHER: We don't have to?

DAUGHTER: Don't have to what?

MOTHER: We don't have to talk all the time.

DAUGHTER: And what will we do if we don't talk?

MOTHER: We can sit here in silence. . . together.

DAUGHTER: Of course. . . we can do that. . . If we want to, of course we can be quiet.
. . . you are quite right.

(The lights change. Music.)

INTERMEZZO 7

MOTHER: The first ice-cream on a stick was called an Eskimo Bar, and it was devised by the owner of an ice-cream shop from Iowa, Chris Nelson.

DAUGHTER: In the spring of 1920, Nelson was inspired to concoct this new invention by a small, indecisive customer who could never make the fateful decision on whether to buy ice-cream or to buy chocolate.

MOTHER: Uniting both, he certainly made life easier for many future capricious customers.

DAUGHTER: The first chocolate-covered ice-cream on a stick was created in 1934.

MOTHER + DAUGHTER: And you all know – everything that followed.

(The lights change. Music.)

Scene 8.

(MOTHER is 83 and is using a mobile walker. DAUGHTER is 60 years and, leaning on a stick, carefully watching her mother's slow-motion progress. She would gladly help her, but does not know how.)

DAUGHTER: Slowly, Mummy, slowly. You know that I have to have that hip operation soon – I can't walk quickly. .

MOTHER: Slowly does it.

DAUGHTER: We have to treat ourselves to some fine ice-cream. I am so pleased that you are well and that we can get together and talk the way we used to once. What are you having?

MOTHER: Two scoops of chocolate and two of vanilla.

DAUGHTER: I'll have the same – two chocolate and two vanilla.

(DAUGHTER 'pays' and takes the 'ice-creams' and goes to sit at the table.)

DAUGHTER: Ah, I am really happy that we are together, and to see that you are well. You could have told me that you would be on TV. Neighbours rushed into our flat 'Turn on the TV – look, Grandma is on the TV'. We turned it on and after the news the phone started ringing, everyone was congratulating us, we were very proud of you. Tibor sends his love and lots of good wishes.

MOTHER: I haven't seen him for three years.

DAUGHTER: It hasn't been so long, surely?

MOTHER: Oh yes it has – and I haven't even seen you for eight months and fifteen days.

DAUGHTER: That's impossible – it can't have been that long!

MOTHER: Exactly that long. .

DAUGHTER: And both the kids rang. They said 'We have the best grandma in the world'. They'll be coming to see you tomorrow.

MOTHER: She hasn't visited me for a year, and I haven't seen him for two years.

DAUGHTER: You know how busy these young people are. Everything goes faster now – things aren't the way they used to be.

MOTHER: Yes, I am aware of that.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: I didn't know that you played the Lottery. We were quite surprised.

MOTHER: Surprised?

DAUGHTER: Pleasantly surprised, of course. What's important now is that you don't lend anything to anyone, that you reject all the people who will be contacting you now as friends or distant relatives. We will help you as a family to protect you from everyone. You can count on us one hundred percent – we are at your disposal for anything you may need.

MOTHER: You're here for me?

DAUGHTER: Yes, we're here.

MOTHER: Where did you say you are?

DAUGHTER: Here.

MOTHER: You haven't been here for eight months, fifteen days and five hours.

DAUGHTER: But I have had a lot to do, I am putting together the papers for my pension, I simply did not manage to come – but I was thinking of you all the time. You know I am always here.

MOTHER: I thought you were still angry at me.

DAUGHTER: Why would I be angry at you?

MOTHER: When I told you that Yura was my boyfriend, you told me that I was embarrassing you in front of your friends and our relative, that he was not for me and that you would have nothing to do with me ‘until this nonsense ends’.

DAUGHTER: Alright then – it’s your life – but Mummy, he is ten years younger than you are, he is seventy-three and you are eighty-three. That’s a big difference.

MOTHER: Your husband is nine years older than you.

DAUGHTER: It’s different when a man is older than a woman.

MOTHER: Why should it be different?

DAUGHTER: Because in our civilisation – ah, it’s not important – what is important is that that is behind you and that you have broken off.

MOTHER: But we didn’t break it off.

DAUGHTER: You promised me!

MOTHER: We love each other.

DAUGHTER: Come on, Mummy, please, you’re not going to talk to me about love, at your age.

MOTHER: And he loves me. He proposed to me.

DAUGHTER: He only wanted to exploit you now that you have won the JACKPOT of Nine Million Kunas. He’s the one you need to protect yourself against the most!

MOTHER: Calm down a bit! Stop shouting – I hear very well. He proposed and I accepted.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, you're joking!

MOTHER: You're shouting again! No, I'm not joking. I am very serious – and happy.

DAUGHTER: You should have said 'no'.

MOTHER: But I didn't.

DAUGHTER: That marriage is out of the question. What will your grandchildren say, and what about our friends?

MOTHER: I am already married to him.

DAUGHTER: Whaaat? When?

MOTHER: The wedding was two months ago.

(DAUGHTER gets up from the table, goes to the counter and brings back a glass of water. She sits down, drinks the water and places the glass on the table.)

DAUGHTER: You got married two months ago, and I am only hearing about it now. You could at least have phoned!

MOTHER: I decided that I would tell you when you came to visit me. It's not a thing for the phone. . . but you never came.

DAUGHTER: And you now have a husband.

MOTHER: Yes. . . we live in the same room.

DAUGHTER: In the same room.

MOTHER: Yes – four-o- five. Right next to the lift. It was a bit noisy – until we got used to it.

(Silence.)

DAUGHTER: How could you do this to me? If you were to die tomorrow – your husband would inherit everything you have, instead of me who has been taking care of you all my life.

MOTHER: You haven't invited me to the apartment on Šolta for seven years.

DAUGHTER: What do you mean I haven't – you could have come whenever you wanted to.

MOTHER: No, love, I don't go where I am not invited. . . even though you bought that apartment with the money you received from the sale of my flat. . . at that time, you told me that I would spend two months there every year.

DAUGHTER: I know that the sun does not agree with you, and I didn't want anything to happen. . . sun-stroke or I don't know what. . .

You could have dropped in whenever you liked.

MOTHER: I rang once last summer – some Hungarians answered the phone, I couldn't understand a word they said.

DAUGHTER: There, if you like, we could go to Šolta now. We were planning it for next week, but when we saw that on TV, we cancelled so that we can be handy for you.

MOTHER: Handy for me for what?

DAUGHTER: For all these transactions – one has to know with millions, you need to open two or three accounts – just in case one of the banks goes bust. ..

MOTHER: You don't have to worry – my Yura worked in a bank his entire life. Right up until he retired. He is taking care of all that.

DAUGHTER: He is taking care of your money?

MOTHER: He understands it all – all about IBANs and ciphers and remittances. . .
SPINs. . .**DAUGHTER:** The word is PINs.

MOTHER: That's it, PINs.

DAUGHTER: But I understand all that, too. You could have asked for my help.

MOTHER: But when you are always so short of time.

DAUGHTER: I always have time for you. Now I am retiring and will only be taking care of you. But you have to be careful with that man, so that he doesn't cheat you.

MOTHER: He was the one who talked me into buying the ticket.

DAUGHTER: He talked you into it?

MOTHER: Yes, he did. He said: 'Today is the anniversary of our love, today is our lucky day, darling, so buy a lottery ticket.' If it had not been for him, I never would have bought it. I never play the lottery. He deserves the credit for that win.

DAUGHTER: Come on – why him – you were the one who marked the numbers, you played the winning combination.

MOTHER: That's not exactly the way it was.

DAUGHTER: How so?

MOTHER: I asked him which numbers I should mark – and he said: 'Mark the numbers of my telephone and the numbers of our room.. .'. I listened to him and that's how it happened that I won the JACKPOT. . .

DAUGHTER: You mustn't tell that to anyone. . .

MOTHER: Why not?

DAUGHTER: He'll lay claim to that money.

MOTHER: Far from it – we have agreed to buy a flat in my name.

DAUGHTER: You're buying a flat?

MOTHER: Yes, we are – we are moving out of the home.

DAUGHTER: And how much does that flat cost?

MOTHER: Two Million Kunas.

DAUGHTER: Two million?

MOTHER: It has a good location. . . And we will put two million in a fixed deposit account so that we have the interest and can afford coffee, ice-cream, the cinema, concerts, and the theatre.

DAUGHTER: Two million for the flat, two million in a deposit account, and what about the other five million?

MOTHER: Guess.

DAUGHTER: Come on, tell me. .

MOTHER: I wanted to invest in a business. . . I wanted to buy myself an ice-cream shop so that I could eat ice-cream every day.

DAUGHTER: An ice-cream shop? Really? What sort of business is that? Why?

MOTHER: I'm only teasing. .

DAUGHTER: Come on, Mummy, please, my heart almost stopped. . .

MOTHER: Ah, you are so naïve – I almost peed myself laughing. . . you believing that I would want to go into business. . . you really are funny.

DAUGHTER: That's not funny at all. . . But really, what are you going to do with that money?

MOTHER: Yura said: 'I don't have any children, but if I did, the first thing I would do would be to take care of them'.

DAUGHTER: He put that well. You can see what a good and clever man he is. . . how wise in his thinking.

MOTHER: So we have decided that we will keep less than half for ourselves for the flat and the deposit at the bank – and we shall give five million to you and your children so that you can improve your situation a little.

DAUGHTER: Mummy, you are the best mother in the world.

MOTHER: But I have one condition.

DAUGHTER: What's the condition?

MOTHER: You know that I have sugar. A high sugar count.

DAUGHTER: Yes, so have I.

MOTHER: But still, when I go into an ice-cream shop, I just can't resist – five scoops and a plate full of cakes.

DAUGHTER: Yes, and what about it?

MOTHER: My condition is that you never, but never ever, take me to an ice-cream shop again. Never ever.

DAUGHTER: If that's your only condition – I accept. So does that mean that this is our last ice-cream?

MOTHER: The very last. . . But perhaps one scoop of pineapple for the end – for farewell. **DAUGHTER:** Then I could have one, too – I have never eaten pineapple ice-cream.

T H E E N D