
Contents

<i>Aleš Jan</i> Keeping Pace with the Times	7
<i>Andrej Hieng</i> The Return of Cortes	16
<i>Saša Vuga</i> The Footpath to Midnight	42
<i>Pavel Lužan</i> The Day of Mr. X	68
<i>Vladimir Kocjančič</i> A Day in the Life of Dennis Ivanovitch	88
<i>Frane Puntar</i> Tail Hunt	118
<i>Rudi Šeligo</i> The Seed of Light	134
<i>Franček Rudolf</i> Termites	154
<i>Igor Likar</i> Erasure of Verity	178
<i>Goran Gluvić</i> Mayakovsky's Death	200

<i>Andrej Blatnik</i> Scratches On the Back	220
<i>Lojze Kovačič</i> Stories from Beehive Front-boards	238
<i>Milan Jesib</i> Under the Wing of the Night	260
<i>Metod Pevec</i> The Phantom Boy	280
<i>Feri Lainšček</i> The Pension Europe	306
<i>Evald Flisar</i> The Dark Side of Light	332
<i>Ervin Fritz</i> Fortune and Misfortune	356
<i>Matjaž Kmecl</i> Ninny	372
<i>Tanja Viber</i> Štefka or A Love Triangle in a Public Restroom	394
<i>Peter Semolič</i> A Wedding	410
<i>Vinko Möderndorfer</i> Invitation to Tea	430

METHOD PEVEC was born in Ljubljana in 1958. He is a writer, a film script writer, an actor and a director. He graduated in Philosophy and Comparative literature at the Ljubljana Faculty of Arts. He has acted in several Slovene films and starred in the film *See You in the Next War* (1980, based on Vitomil Zupan's novel and directed by Ž. Pavlovič). - He writes prose, film scripts and directs. His published novels are *Carmen*, 1991, and *Mary Ann*, 1994. His collection of short stories *The Moon, the Violins* was published in 1994. He has written the following film scripts: *Everything is Under Control* (a short film), shown in 1993; *Andrej Hieng - the Portrait* (a TV film), shown in 1993; *The Grim Condor* (a TV film portrait of V. Zupan), shown in 1994; *Carmen* (based on his own novel, directed by himself), shown in 1995; *Under Her Window*, shown in 2001. The Radio Slovenia archives keep the following of his radio plays: *A Phantom Boy*, 1995, *Musicus*, 1992, *Champagne*, a *Lock of Hair and Memories*, 1996, *Inspector Kocjan's Snares* (a series), 1998, *Sparkling Champagne*, 1998 and a series of 12 episodes *Call Madame Milo*, 1999-2000.

About the Work

The Phantom Boy radio play in fact consists of two parts: its first half is presented as a psychological thriller, which in the other half of the play turns - upon disclosure of the stranger intimidating the protagonist - into a humorous play about a fictitious love of a young writer. As a whole, however, the play deals with the problems of the modern man who can never entirely release his emotions and is unable to establish genuine relations with his fellow men and the outside world.

The Phantom Boy

Metod Pevec

Voices

Doris, Vanda, Luke, Andrew, Policeman, Young female voice, Secretary, Colaborator, Female

(Slow, heavy but unobtrusive breathing of a young male. Phone signal at the same time. Ringing. No answer from the other side. Then answerphone is switched on automatically, over which a soft, erotic female voice is heard.)

YOUNG FEMALE VOICE: *(answerphone recording)* This is the residence of Doris Mrak. Call later or leave the message, please ...

(Two short and one long beeps. Breathing. Shy, male voice ...)

LUKE: In Ljubljana, there used to live a boy and a girl who were infinitely in love with each other. Their love, however, was not ...

(Sound transition: male voice is outsounded by high pointed heels echoing in a corridor. The steps stop short.)

(Grating sound of key in the keyhole. Door opens. Sharp periodic beeps speak of messages left on the answerphone. The steps stop. Click! Pushbutton. Rustling sound and voice from answerphone.)

FEMALE VOICE: Good afternoon. Vicky's Drycleaners here. We have not found those buttons, I'm afraid.

(Bleep, rustling sound and a new, euphoric female voice.)

VANDA: (*answerphone recording*) Hi! Vanda here. It's Tuesday, six o'clock in the morning. I'll be home by ten o'clock. Call me. Urgent! Revolution!

(*Another bleep and shy male voice*)

LUKE: In Ljubljana, there used to live a boy and a girl, who were infinitely in love with each other. Their love, however, was not like any other before ... "I could never bear to live without him and his love," she said a number of times. "In the moment one of us gets tired of love, I'll kill myself - or him." This is why they truly nursed their love, for they didn't want it to pass, to end simply because of the recklessness. In fact they even subjected it to some severe rules. Thus he visited her only when she indeed wished him to be by her side. In such cases she called him and he came. But he always came only at night. When they woke up in the morning it smelled of dew and jasmine which blossomed under the window of her flat ...

(*Long bleep announces end of the message. Heavy sighs, lighting of cigarette and dialing of a number.*)

DORIS: (*to herself, nervously*) The creep ... The creep ...

(*Phone ringing. Female voice ...*)

VANDA: Vanda here ...

DORIS: Are you back already?

VANDA: We haven't flown at all. The flight was cancelled, in fact taken over by Lufthansa. Listen, Doris, let's give our employers notice to quit. Nothing but a load of shit!

DORIS: What?

VANDA: It's all over.

DORIS: What's all over?

VANDA: I've given Peter the push.

DORIS: Really? What's this supposed to mean?

VANDA: It means that the game is over. I couldn't bear staying with him any longer. It just didn't work. No way! And what I hated most was his constant shilly-shallying and philosophizing. He just couldn't tell me straight, for example: bye girl, it was okay, or maybe it wasn't, it doesn't matter,

- anyway ... No, he kept on that we could still live normally together ... in a different way, of course. That we could still sleep together, but with no obligations. And then he kept on about some erotic tolerance, about - just listen to this! - sexual comradeship. Comradeship! Everything is so bloody simple, of course: here and there he would like to have a peep - with my permission, if possible - under the skirt of some other bird. My foot! He never stopped about this fucking comradeship ... which is, according to him, a solid emotional basis for eroticism, for sex ... and how sex is one of the most pressing and healthy psychophysical recreations!
- DORIS: What a creep! And what did you tell him?
- VANDA: That I didn't intend to do these things, neither for his nor for my health. I let him know that I intended to sign no antimasturbation agreement and that he'd better go to a sex shop and buy himself something inflatable!
- DORIS: You really have no luck, Vanda. Why do you always have to fall in love with some fucked up artist?
- VANDA: Thanks, and the same to you: why do you always have to fall in love with married men? And while talking about them, how's Andrew?
- DORIS: Oh, he's all right ...
- VANDA: And how's he getting on with that crazy spouse of his?
- DORIS: Madhouse! They are separating.
- VANDA: And about time, too ...
- DORIS: Do you know this text?
(Rewinding of tape on answerphone, pushbutton and the voice telling the story ...)
- LUKE: In Ljubljana, there used to live a boy and a girl, who were infinitely in love with each other.
- VANDA: No idea, what this could be. I don't read Slovene literature, you know. What is it?
- DORIS: Well, it's an idiot who keeps leaving messages for me every single day. Now he's started his second story.
- VANDA: And what kind of stories is he telling you?
- DORIS: Love stories, of course.
- VANDA: Great! So you don't have to read books at all!
- DORIS: But it seems to me that this same prat keeps following me as well.
- VANDA: I suppose it only seems to you. I've known you for years, and you're still on your own.

DORIS: Stop poking fun at me!

VANDA: So tomorrow we're off, right?

DORIS: Okay, see you then. Bye!

(Short piece of music. Silence. Long pointed heels echoing in the corridor. The steps stop short. Grating sound of key in the keyhole. Door opens. Sharp periodic bleeps speak of messages left on answerphone. The steps stop, then continue, but suddenly soft sounds of dragging feet shod in slippers are heard. The steps stop short again. Click! Pushbutton. Rustling sound and a kind male voice over answerphone.)

ANDREW: Hi, Andrew here. Listen, Doris. I can't make it today. Complications. You know. I'll be on the line tomorrow. Hey, can you have a look around and see if I left the key in your place? I mean the key of your flat. See you!

(Bleep and another message. The already known male voice.)

LUKE: A year of happiness passed by, when he decided to surprise her. With a bunch of forget-me-nots he stopped in front of the house, in which she lived: in the window of her flat he noticed the shadow of some other man. The entire night he was crouching under her window, looking at the shadows and listening to gentle, loving sounds. Towards the morning he returned home and ate the bunch of flowers in despair. When the sun rose, he dialed her number. "Why, my love?" he asked. "That's what you wanted," she answered. For a while they listened to the silence building up between them and then hung off at the same time.

(Bleep announces end of the message. Dialing of a number.)

DORIS: It's me. Are you at home already?

VANDA: No, I've only sent my voice ahead. Christ, what's the matter with you?

DORIS: Listen, Vanda, somebody's pursuing me!

VANDA: Did you see him?

DORIS: I didn't, but when I got home, hundreds of little hearts were scribbled on the walls of our block.

VANDA: *(laughs)* And how do you know that they were meant for you? Are you the only woman in the house?

DORIS: No. But I'm the only one under sixty. And there was again a bunch of flowers in my letter box and yet another story on my answerphone.

VANDA: I don't know ... If I were you, I'd make a date with him. If he's a proper man, he'll come and you'll be able to make arrangements with him. If he's not, then he must be bloody dangerous, any way. Well, the truth is that people are really mad these days ... to say nothing about men ...

DORIS: There's something else.

VANDA: What?

DORIS: This bloke keeps coming to my flat.

VANDA: How do you know that?

DORIS: I simply do. I feel him. I smell him ... Apart from that, I've found the biorhythm chart on the floor.

VANDA: Your chart or his?

DORIS: (*nervously*) You silly cow! Mine, of course, but yesterday it was not there yet. Understand? It was not there yet!

VANDA: You yourself must have forgotten it there. Perhaps somebody made it specially for you at work, but you forgot.

DORIS: No, I didn't.

VANDA: And what are your lines like?

(*Rustling of paper.*)

DORIS: The physical and the emotional ones are right on top, but the intellectual is falling.

VANDA: You see? What else do you want!?

DORIS: Listen, Vanda, this bloke knows everything about me. Look: place of birth, date, hour, sex ...

VANDA: Yes, it must be so bloody difficult to find out of what sex you are. You're exaggerating, Doris. But anyway, ask Andrew about it.

(*Car horn in the distance.*)

VANDA: Listen, Doris, somebody's waiting for me downstairs. See you!

Tomorrow I'll be in the air again - I mean tomorrow after tomorrow. Cheerio!

DORIS: Cheerio!

(Click. Airport bustle. Jets landing and taking off, gongs and distant voice of flight announcer. This sound scenery intermingles with characteristic office sounds made by keyboards and printers, rustling of paper, etc. Phone ringing.)

COLLABORATOR: Adria Airways. What can I do for you?

... Vanda, for you.

VANDA: Yes, please.

(Doris on the other side)

DORIS: It's me. I must talk to you . . . urgently!

VANDA: You sound very strange, Doris.

DORIS: What shall I do, Vanda? That bloke was again in my flat.

VANDA: Did he bring you the biorhythm chart again?

DORIS: He did the washing-up.

(Vanda cannot restrain from laughing.)

VANDA: What on earth are you trying to tell me? That there's a maniac visiting your place just to do the washing-up for you? Great! So give him my number as well. And he can also scribble some graffiti on the walls. Sorry, Doris, but I must go now ...

DORIS: You're making fun of me ... Listen, I left my place without doing the washing-up, but when I returned it was all done! *(Laughter on the other side of the line)*. Just listen what was left on the answerphone for me today.

(Answerphone is switched on.)

LUKE: He tried to forget her. But in vain. Love can never be forgotten. He tried and tried, but the more he tried, the more she kept appearing in his heart. Even more than that: she kept following him, and when he was unable to chase her away and she truly became intrusive, he could not calm down for a while. Quite often he had to get up from his bed and walk through the town like a lost soul. Sometimes it happened that he dreamt of her and in the morning woke up - in pajamas, shivering with cold - on a thin pasteboard in front of the house, in which she lived.

(Bleep. End of message.)

DORIS: So, what are you going to say? Is he a maniac - or is he not?

VANDA: Maniacs don't do the washing-up, they don't bring flowers, they are normally illiterate and far from romantic. I don't know, but I think that somebody's having you on. Once there was some idiot, who kept leaving messages for me, telling me that I was an old cow, a stewardess for bombers and so on. But such fuckers are luckily not dangerous at all. So, stop exaggerating that's all I can say to you.

DORIS: You're no help at all.

VANDA: Listen, Doris, I'm in a hurry. In half an hour we are taking off, understand? I can't help you. If you're scared, call the police. And switch the phone off. See you tomorrow. I'll buy you the self-defensive spray in Frankfurt, okay? Cheerio!

DORIS: *(disappointedlly)* Cheerio ...

(They both hang up. Noise of jet taking off.)

(Doris dials a number. Ringing. Formal female voice on the other side.)

SECRETARY: Can I help you?

DORIS: Can I speak to Andrew, please?

SECRETARY: I'm sorry, madam, but he's at the meeting at the moment. Anything. urgent?.

DORIS: Very urgent ...

SECRETARY: All right, I'll try to connect you ...

(One of those loathsome electronic little tunes, which are supposed to amuse the ones waiting to get through. Doris's rather heavy, breathing. Andrew answers the phone.)

ANDREW: Yes?

DORIS: I know, Andrew; that you are at a meeting right now and that you've got five people in the office; but I simply have to talk to you. Urgently!

ANDREW: Go ahead.

DORIS: When are you coming?

ANDREW: I don't know ... I can't tell you at the moment.

DORIS: Everything's gone wrong. Somebody's pursuing me, keeps threatening me and leaving funny messages on my answerphone. I'm scared.

ANDREW: Don't bother too much. These are nothing but those stupid phone jokes, you know: weirdoes, stoned door-keepers, and so on.

DORIS: No, Andrew, somebody keeps coming to my flat.

ANDREW: How do you know that?

DORIS: I just do. What's happened to your key?

ANDREW: No idea . Do you think that ...?

(Andrew becomes suddenly silent, as if afraid to utter the sentence aloud ...)

DORIS: ...that she's rummaging your pockets again?

ANDREW: *(sceptically)* You think so?

DORIS: Yes, I do, Andrew. I do.

ANDREW: Okay, I'll change the lock then.

DORIS: When are you coming?

ANDREW: I don't know yet. But I'll call you before.

DORIS: Listen, Andrew, does your wife like doing the washing-up?

ANDREW: What a stupid question! Yes, she's a washing-up maniac, in fact. She even decided to sell the washing-up machine, because she heard that such machines can't destroy all the microorganisms accumulated on dishes. She buys every new cleanser on the market and is allergic to dirt.

DORIS: *(beseechingly, alarmingly)* When are you coming, Andrew?

ANDREW: Maybe tomorrow. But I'll call you before.

DORIS: *(hardly restraining from crying)* Tomorrow will be too late.

(Doris rings off, without saying goodbye. She immediately dials a new number. Weary male voice on the other side of the line.)

POLICEMAN: Central Police Station.

(Silence and heavy breathing)

POLICEMAN: Hello?

THE PHANTOM BOY

DORIS: (*nervously, doubtfully*) I'd like to tell you that somebody's attempting to kill me.

POLICEMAN: Easy now. Who are you and who wants to kill you? Why do you think that somebody wants to do that?

DORIS: I'm Doris Mrak ... A maniac is pursuing me.

POLICEMAN: With intention to kill you?

DORIS: I don't know ... He keeps bringing me forget-me-nots and my biorhythm chart. He keeps coming into my flat, doing the washing-up and leaving little stories on my answerphone.

(*Doris's voice is ragged, extremely nervous, psychotic ...*)

POLICEMAN: Calm down, madam, please. Have you been attacked?

DORIS: Not yet. .

POLICEMAN: So ... Easy now ... Nobody's attacked you ... Somebody did your washing-up, brought you forget-me-nots and the biorhythm chart ...

DORIS: Somebody keeps coming to my flat. And he can come any moment now.

POLICEMAN: And for how long have you suspected that somebody's entering your flat?

DORIS: I don't know, for a week ... maybe more ...

POLICEMAN: Why haven't you changed the lock then?

DORIS: I don't know. Listen, while somebody may enter my flat any moment now, you're questioning me as if I've made it all up.

POLICEMAN: Well, madam, we are dealing with all sorts of cases, and in such instances normally recommend private security agencies. Come to our station and write a statement. And then we'll see what we can do for you ... Hello?

(*Doris hangs up, the line is cut. Now only steps in her flat are heard. They are recurring at increasingly shorter intervals, giving the impression that the flat is getting gradually smaller*) (*Suddenly the phone rings. Doris picks up the receiver.*)

DORIS: Yes?

(*Silence on the other side of the line. Just heavy but unobtrusive breathing. The line is cut off.*)

(Click. As if somebody slammed the phone down.)

(Long silence. Doris's breathing. The phone rings again. Once, twice, three times. The answerphone is switched on automatically. The known male voice.)

LUKE: He came back to under her window for a number of times, and each time he saw different shadows, heard different men. But he was still infinitely in love with her. He loved her even more, except that he could not live without her love any longer. As this was becoming unbearable ... truly unbearable ...

(Click and silence, followed by steps. Rattle. Door. Wardrobes ... And front door. Grating sound of key in the keyhole. Steps disappearing down the corridor.)

(Roar of jet engines and general airport bustle. Short female steps in high heels.)

VANDA: Doris! What are you doing here?

DORIS: I can't go home ... I'm waiting for you ...

VANDA: What happened?

DORIS: I'm not going home any more ... I'm not ...

(Doris sobs and shakes all over, as if on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Vanda tries to calm her.)

VANDA: Calm down, please, and tell me what's happening ...

DORIS: He called again. And again he did the washing-up.

He'll kill me, he said ... He slept in my bed. Hear me? He slept in my bed!!! And all this is driving me mad, Vanda. Help me! Please!

VANDA: Have you called the police?

DORIS: I have.

VANDA: And?

DORIS: Nothing. They think I'm crazy ...

VANDA: Have you called Andrew yet?

DORIS: I have, but he's got no time to spare.

VANDA: The bastard! ... Sorry ...

(All the time steps are heard, then traffic noises and finally car driving off.)

VANDA: Hey, I've got an idea! For a while we are going to swap flats. Okay? Nobody'll come to my place to do the washing-up. Tomorrow I'll call you and we'll have a cup of coffee at your place.

(Zip fastener, rattling of key.)

VANDA: Is this the front door key?

DORIS: Yes. And if anything happens, call me!

VANDA: Nothing will happen. Don't worry. Everything's going to be all right. We'll chase all fears away and your life will be normal again ...

(Car disappearing in the distance) (Silence. Creaking of fountain pen. Uncertain steps slowly nearing along the corridor. Becoming louder. They stop. Fountain pen becomes silent. Two steps again. Key in the keyhole. Muffled steps across the flat. Creaking of wardrobe door. Front door opens. Vanda puts down the keys and her heavy traveling bag... Silence. Gentle female steps upon boards, carpet and tiles. Opening of fridge. Ice cubes rattling in glass. Pouring of drink. Ice cubes rattling again... Sipping of drink. Steps. They stop. Push-button. Rewinding of cassette on the answerphone. Click.)

LUKE: *(answerphone recording)* ... he couldn't live without her love any more. As this was becoming unbearable ... truly unbearable ... he decided to kill her.

(Bleep, answerphone stops.)

VANDA: *(with fear in her voice)* Oh, shit!

(Vanda's steps again. They stop. Rustling of paper. Silence. Suddenly much quicker steps and fast dialing of a number. Ringing. Doris on the other side of the line.)

DORIS: Hello!

VANDA: Listen, Doris. I found some cuts on the kitchen table, the once I gave you some time ago.

DORIS: They should be in the drawer of my sewing machine ...

VANDA: Somebody's been scribbling all over them ... on their back sides ... Ugly handwriting ... Certainly not yours ...

DORIS: Of course not. What's written on them?

VANDA: Do you want me to read it?

DORIS: Yes, please ...

VANDA: "Hence he didn't wander about the town any more. He was calm, for he knew he would see no shadows in her window any more ..." This is followed by some asterisks: and a couple of strange marks ... No idea what they are supposed to mean...

DORIS: Read on.

VANDA: "He embraced her, pressed her tightly to his strong shoulders and muscles. For the first time in his life he was able to say, with ease, 'I love you', and then added, just before he kissed her, 'I love you madly.' She said nothing, for she was benumbed by the certainty in his voice. Until then she had not believed in men, and even less in love. Men disappointed her, and she was virtually afraid of love. Now she knew that she would have to believe in miracles. But she also knew that ..." That's all, Doris. Here it ends.

DORIS: Just like that? In the middle of the sentence?

VANDA: Yes.

DORIS: Strange ...

VANDA: Yes ... Hang on, there's a pen beside.

DORIS: Try if it's the one with which those words were written.

(More and more fear in Vanda's voice. Creaking of pen.)

VANDA: Oh, shit! Yes, it is the one ... These words were indeed written by it. What if this man is still in the flat?

DORIS: Have you got the mobile in your hands?

VANDA: I have.

DORIS: In the kitchen, in the middle drawer, there are some knives...

VANDA: No need for that. I've got the spray in my bag ... Christ, how scared I am. What if he's really here?

DORIS: Take the knife as well!

VANDA: All right ...

(Vanda's steps. Rattling of drawer. Sound of metal. Steps. Zip on traveling bag. Short squirts with the spray.)

VANDA: It works. And stinks, too!

THE PHANTOM BOY

(Quiet, cautious steps and whispers. Vanda's heavy breathing.)

VANDA: Perhaps he's in the bathroom ...

(Switches the light on and with her foot pushes the door open. Creaking of door.)

VANDA: Anybody home?

(Hollow echoing of Vanda's steps. Her voice trembles with fear.)

VANDA: No, nobody. Just me. On my own. Doris? I've never been so scared in my life.

(Vanda now walks on different type of floor. She tries to encourage herself by singing some songs about fear and death, but with little success.)

(Creaking of wardrobe door.)

VANDA: Something's just moved in your wardrobe, Doris.

(Steps and fast Vanda's breathing. Her voice trembles. Wardrobe door creaking even louder. Silent Vanda's tiptoeing. Increasingly heavier breathing by Vanda as well as by the man hidden in the wardrobe.)

VANDA: All right, I'm Vanda, and I'm not afraid of anybody.
If you are there, say yes. And everything's going to be all right.

(Dull groaning sound of the young man known from the answerphone. This is Luke.)

LUKE: Yes ...

(Opening of the wardrobe, noise of coat hangers falling down ... Effective squirting with the spray.)

VANDA: You bastard! I'll kill you!

LUKE: Don't spray me! Don't!

(Spraying stops. Luke is far from brave. He more or less pleads to be left alone and almost bursts into tears. Now Vanda goes into hysterics ...)

VANDA: What the fucking hell are you doing here?! Stay there! I've got a knife in my hand, see it? On your fucking knees!

(Dull sound of knees hitting the floor.)

VANDA: Who are you?

LUKE: Luke.

VANDA: Luke? Luke with no fluke? ... What are you doing here?

LUKE: Nothing.

VANDA: Speak up, man! See this knife here?

LUKE: No, I don't see it. My eyes hurt. I see nothing at all.

(Luke's continuous groaning, crying, wailing. The pain is severe.)

VANDA: To the bathroom, you bastard! But mind you, I've still got the knife in my hand.

(Luke drags himself away on all fours, "directed" by Vanda..)

VANDA: Watch out! There's a step there. More to the left ... You're in front of the bathroom door now. Well, you must know this flat better than I do. Any way ...

(Bathroom acoustics. Running water. Washing.)

VANDA: That's enough! Can you see anything yet?

LUKE: A little ...

VANDA: In half an hour you'll see better than you've seen ever before. That's what it says here, on the can ... At least that's what I think it does ... My German's rather bad ... Now get up! We are going back to the living room.

(Vanda's steps in high heels, rubbing sounds of Luke's tennis shoes.)

VANDA: Sit down and keep quiet, understand?

THE PHANTOM BOY

(Vanda opens the fridge and fills two glasses with whisky and ice.)

VANDA: Here you are! You'll talk much easier this way!
LUKE: Thanks.
VANDA: How old are you?
LUKE: Twenty.
VANDA: You're lying. Seventeen? Eighteen?
LUKE: Nineteen.
VANDA: Okay. What are you doing here?
LUKE: Nothing.
VANDA: Don't fuck about. I'm not Doris, you know! Don't tell me that you've been coming here to do the washing-up! So stop bluffing. What are you trying to do to her?
LUKE: Nothing ...
VANDA: Why have you been following her all the time?
LUKE: That's my business ...
VANDA: You think so? Well, let me tell you that you're wrong. As you can see, it's my business as well.
LUKE: I didn't want her to be scared.
VANDA: Why have you been coming to her flat, you maniac? If there are no girls in your school to show some mercy to you, then put an advertisement in the local newspaper: "A pleasant teenager will be most grateful for any love lessons given by an older girl." ... Don't move!

(Again fills two glasses with whisky and ice. When she returns, rustling of paper is heard again.)

VANDA: Have you seen this paper before?
LUKE: *(repentantly)* I have.
VANDA: Was this written by you?
LUKE: Yes ...
VANDA: And where are all the other sheets?
LUKE: In the wardrobe.
VANDA: Bring them to me!

(Luke steps to the wardrobe and back. In the meanwhile, Vanda dials a number: ringing, immediately followed by Doris's voice on the other side.)

DORIS: Hello?

VANDA: It's me ... Vanda. You can come home now. Everything's all right.

DORIS: No, I don't dare, Vanda. He may come at night, or in the morning ...

VANDA: He's here already.

DORIS: Who?

VANDA: He! Your maniac! Luke.

DORIS: Who?

VANDA: Oh, stop asking such silly questions! Winnie the Pooh, of course!

DORIS: Hey, is everything all right with you?

VANDA: No, it's not. I'm on my own here with a dangerous killer ...

(Vanda even manages to laugh a little.)

VANDA: But unluckily he's not of that calibre. He's a writer. Now you've got him ... He's crawling around here, on his knees ...

DORIS: Shall I call the police?

VANDA: Don't be so childish! You can't set the fuzz on literature. Put your coat on and come here. Immediately!

(Vanda bursts out laughing, rings off and calls Luke with a loud voice. Rustling of paper. Vanda begins to read. At first she simpers mockingly, but in the course of time finds the writing rather attractive ...)

VANDA: "In the vice of his hands all the prejudices and doubts gradually disappeared. On her skin she felt the extreme strength and sincerity of the uncovered love. Slowly and reliably his hands were telling the story about a total devotion and silently swore that their happiness could never be repeated. Deep inside she was burning with a hot flame, which had been scorching her for such a long, long time: all those dull, boring years, when she waited for him and bashfully hoped, in secret that it would truly happen, that he would come riding a white horse, dismount, and take her ..."

Okay, sweetie, okay. I must admit that your stories are not completely without ... well, they are not so bad after all. Why don't you publish them? In some youth magazine or something like that? Why bothering my friends with all this writing of yours?

THE PHANTOM BOY

LUKE: Well, I've sent them to all different places, but nobody's shown any interest to publish them ... If your name is Luke, then you have no chance. You simply have to have somebody to recommend you ... That's how it goes.

VANDA: And why have you chosen Doris of all girls?

LUKE: Because she's nice. No, because I like her ... No, because I love her! It happens, you know.

VANDA: What? But you don't know her at all!

LUKE: Of course I do. How couldn't I? I've been dating her for six months and I know everything about her. I could even write a novel about her. Apart from that ...

VANDA: (*cuts him short*) Oh, come on! You know nothing about her! Nothing! You may write hundred novels about her, if you want, but you haven't touched her, and neither have you spoken to her. You're dreaming, lad!

LUKE: No more than she is!

VANDA: Well, you may be even right in this respect ...

(*Front door bell ringing.*)

VANDA: She's here already. And don't shit your pants now, right?

(*Opening of the door. Steps.*)

VANDA: So, Doris, here he is. Have a good look at him. Not that bad, eh? ... Young, handsome, and not too dumb. Let me introduce you to each other ... The wonderboy Luke ... Doris! For Christ's Sake! I expected you two would sort it out ... Hey, Doris, you're as pale as a ghost ... What's the matter with you? Want some whisky?

(*Vanda already pouring drink for her.*)

VANDA: Here you are ... You don't want it? Okay then ... he promised he'd be a good boy and that he wouldn't do the washing-up. In fact he promised he'd do no such stupid things any more. He said he'd come back tomorrow, with some tools to repair the wardrobe ... and change the lock. What time, Luke?

LUKE: I can come first thing in the morning ...

DORIS: Out! Out! Both of you! Get out of my sight! I want to have no bloody wardrobe mended! Out! And keep out of my way!

(This is clearly an outburst of hysterics, for it is so violent that both, Luke and Vanda, react to it. Luke's tennis shoes are immediately heard running off at full speed, while Vanda's short steps stop for few moments.)

VANDA: Calm down, please. Have a good sleep, and then call me. And above all - don't dramatize! The lad is not dangerous at all. Okay? Cheers!

(Vanda puts her glass down with a bang. Then slams the front door. Acoustics of the corridor. Steps down the stairs.)

VANDA: So, laddie. That's how it goes. Love is a serious thing. Didn't I tell you that you don't know her at all? And what are you going to do now?

LUKE: I don't know.

VANDA: Will you still molest her?

LUKE: I've never molested her.

VANDA: Will you or won't you?

LUKE: I won't.

VANDA: And why not? Are you going to give in?

(Opening of heavy door downstairs, followed by rather scarce sounds from the night street. Distant chiming of church bells, noise of lonely car ...)

VANDA: Come and see me some time. For a chat. Here's my card... Cheerio!

LUKE: Cheerio!

(Steps slowly disappearing in two different directions - stereo) (Silence.)

(Ringling of Vanda's phone.)

VANDA: Hello!

DORIS: Hi!

VANDA: Hi! So, you've called after all! After two days! Have you had a good rest?

DORIS: Yes, I have ...

VANDA: Good. And why haven't you called earlier?

DORIS: I don't know ... Well, the other day ... Why did you run after him?

VANDA: Oh, thanks very much for that! If I'm not mistaken, you sent us packing then. Is he leaving you alone now?

DORIS: Yes ...

VANDA: Have you changed the lock?

DORIS: Not yet. He threw the bloody key into the letter box. He's had Andrew's key. Can you imagine?

VANDA: Yes, I can.

DORIS: Andrew says that I should report him to the police.

VANDA: (*vigorously, almost menacingly*) Don't you dare!

DORIS: I don't get you. You're speaking in his favor.

VANDA: Yes, in his favor! Do you perhaps want me to speak in favor of your man, who has no time when somebody intends to kill you? Do you want me to speak in favor of you, who exposed her best friend to danger and then didn't even thank her for everything she's done for her?

DORIS: Excuse me, but this lad is sick ...

VANDA: You silly old cow! He's in love with you. He loves you. How can't you understand that? I'd be honored if somebody lost his senses because of me. And if we dismiss your fears - for after all you're always scared of something - he's done you no harm whatsoever. Apart from that, you didn't tell me that you knew each other.

DORIS: Only casually.

VANDA: He told me the story, and I'm not sure you know each other only casually.

DORIS: I was drunk then.

VANDA: So what? Why going to disco, if you're too old? And why boozing all night just to become relaxed? You flirted, then went to his place and undid his shoes, right?

DORIS: Probably.

VANDA: You undid his shoes. Undid them, took them and left. Why?

DORIS: I don't know.

VANDA: All right, you don't know. You undid his shoes and left. Why? Why did you leave? I don't get you!

DORIS: I was frightened ...

VANDA: Frightened of what?

DORIS: I don't know ...

VANDA: Again you don't know ... I've spoken to Peter. One of his cases got lost in the left luggage office, and it was all my fault again, of course. By the way, he knows those guys in the publishing house and will try to persuade them to print the boy's poems. So, don't kill him when he comes back to your place to take those cuts. Promise?

DORIS: I promise ...

VANDA: Okay, see you then ...

DORIS: You are not angry at me, are you?

VANDA: No, I'm not. I'm mad at you. But I'm not offended, if that's what you think. I'll call you. Sorry, I've got to go now.

DORIS: Bye!

VANDA: Bye!

(Click and silence.)

(Music: something emotional...)

(Doris's front door bell ringing. Slow, sleepy steps, opening of door.)

DORIS: Come in. Vanda told me you'd come.

LUKE: Yes. I need those cuts.

DORIS: I know, Vanda sorts everything out. She never fails ...

(Steps again. Doris speaks surprisingly sadly, as if totally secluded in recent days ...)

DORIS: Take a seat. Drink?

LUKE: No, thanks. I'm in a hurry. I've come to take those cuts and apologize to you. I don't know, but at that time it seemed that ... that I simply couldn't part with those laces ...

DORIS: Why haven't you rather written to me? Such stories seem nice on paper. Here you are!

(Rustling of paper. Awkward silence.)

LUKE: Do you love him?

DORIS: Whom?

LUKE: Mr. Andrew. That's how I call him.

DORIS: What a silly question! Of course I do.

LUKE: And do you think he loves you?

DORIS: Of course he does ...

LUKE: No, he doesn't.

DORIS: *(flies into a rage)* What the hell do you want of me?

Why are you behaving like this? Aren't you old enough to understand all these things?

LUKE: What things?

DORIS: These ...

LUKE: What - these?

DORIS: These ... Well, love is not what you think it is ... It appears like this only in your stories ... You are still a child ...

LUKE: Okay, let me tell you something, if you think this will make it easier for you ... But it won't. You are you, and you don't love him. And there's nothing that could be done about it.

DORIS: What the fuck do you think you are, eh? An amateur adolescent psychologist, or what? You're nothing but a conceited teenager, convinced you know everything about people and love.

LUKE: Yes, that's right. I'm sorry. I'll send you the literary review with my poems in it. If they decide to publish them ...

DORIS: They will. If Vanda takes the matter in her hands, they certainly will....

(Steps, door.)

LUKE: Bye, then ...

(Shuts the door with a tremendous bang, which ends with an echo and transcends into music. In the meanwhile Doris's phone begins to ring. Three times. Answerphone is switched on automatically.)

ANDREW: Hi! I'm sorry you are not at home, although I was certain you'd be. Well, I only want to tell you that our lawyer is very much interested in your case: He says he'll gladly take it over. Call me, please.

(Already during Andrew's message, clinking of glass filled with whisky and ice is heard, as well as Doris's sad and perhaps drunken voice.)

DORIS: I'm not at home any more ... I'm not at home at all ...
The Doris Mrak case? Haw-haw! No chance!

(Music. Phone ringing again. Three times. Answerphone. Message ...)

LUKE: Hi, Luke here. I know you're at home, Doris, because you've got the light on in your flat and again you're again listening to ... In short, I'm coming. I've got some weighty reasons for it. The stories ... you know ... I'll give you a copy ... I'm coming ...

(Even before the message ends, Doris's front door bell rings. At first she does not react at all.)

LUKE: Why don't you open the door? Doris? Open up! I've only got two minutes to pass the message.

(A couple of steps. Doris picks up the phone.)

DORIS: *(cheerfully)* You cheek!

LUKE: Mind what you're saying and open the door!

(Steps, opening of the door.)

LUKE: *(ironically)* No obstacles for Mobitel!

DORIS: You're all the same!

LUKE: Not at all!

DORIS: And what now?

(They move to the living room.)

LUKE: I don't know. The wardrobe's got to be repaired, the cake eaten up ...

DORIS: What? You're not normal at all ...

LUKE: And thank god for that ...

DORIS: *(very enthusiastically)* Marzipan!!

LUKE: Many happy returns!

DORIS: With the exception of Vanda, who called from Bangkok, you're in fact the only one who remembered my birthday...

(Rattling of saucers, forks and glasses.)

DORIS: Did you make it yourself?

LUKE: *(lying)* Yes.

DORIS: No, you didn't.

LUKE: How do you know?

DORIS: Because it doesn't taste of a recipe. Get it?

LUKE: No.

DORIS: A very complicated taste. You can't tell straight away, what's it made of. Cherries? Only old masters don't use recipes. Yum-yum. It's excellent ... Was it your granny who made it?

LUKE: All right, I admit. It was her, and the mobile was lent to me by my uncle. And now I've completely screwed it up, right?

DORIS: No, not yet.

(Metal and china rattling speaks of a mishap during their feast.)

DORIS: Now you really have screwed it up. All these stains on your shirt! Take it off! Quickly! *(Undressing, quick steps and running water)*

LUKE: Am I supposed to stay naked here? I'm cold ...

(This atmosphere is outsounded by music. When it dies down after a while, Doris and Luke seem to be in a very good humor. They clink glasses.)

DORIS: I still can't understand.

LUKE: How can't you? This week my dad stayed at home, and now it's my mother's turn. They change places every Friday.

(They both laugh.)

LUKE: When they separated they couldn't agree whose would be the house, the child and the dog. Then my granny intervened, shouting that she'd never allow them to sell anything at all. And so my mum and dad bought a bed-sitter in the centre of the town. When they are in the house - separately, of course - they say they are at home, and when they are in the bed-sitter, they say they are in the bed-sitter. When one of them is in the bed-sitter, the other one is at home. And then they change places again. Simple, eh? And my granny is the boss.

DORIS: And for how long has this been going on?

LUKE: For ten years.

DORIS: But do they meet at all?

LUKE: Sometimes. By chance. But when they do, they only quarrel. Well, once a month they meet in town, just to divide the bills between them.

DORIS: Don't the three of you ever go out together?

LUKE: Just for my birthday. But separately. First of all my mum takes me out a day before my birthday, and then my father takes me somewhere a day after it. To avoid seeing each other, they say. But on my actual birthday I'm always on my own.

DORIS: You poor devil ... Just like me ...

(Silence. Tension building up.)

DORIS: You smell of cherries ... Have you ever slept with a woman?

LUKE: *(embarrassed)* How do you mean?

DORIS: Oh ... You know ...

LUKE: In fact I haven't.

DORIS: What do you mean by "in fact"?

LUKE: That I haven't.

DORIS: Why are you hiding your hand?

LUKE: I'm not ...

DORIS: Are you afraid? I'm always afraid, you know ...

LUKE: Afraid of what?

DORIS: Afraid of people ... touch ... love. I'm afraid of everything.

LUKE: Hey, my laces!

(Sound of laces sliding through little holes, gradually whispers outsounded by soft music and whispers.)

DORIS: Who's at home this week?

LUKE: Dad.

DORIS: Will there be something amiss, if you're late? Very late?

LUKE: He won't notice.

(Music to the end.)

Translated by Henrik Ciglić