

libraryline

# Moneystains

## Breda Beboan



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# Moneystains

Breda Beban

a 1996-1997 screenplay  
written in collaboration with  
Hrvoje Horvatić and Chris Darke

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Original text written in 1996-97  
In collaboration with  
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Moneystains

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*Moneystains* is, according to consultation with Chris Darke, a composite title invented by the author and her collaborators in which “stains” is intended to be interpreted as both a noun and a verb. It is also an arrangement of words that suggests an image and gives a semantic atmosphere to the film, on the way that money stains everything it touches.

MOSCOW 1991

SCENE 1

EXT. ROOFTOP TERRACE OF AN APARTMENT BLOCK.  
AFTERNOON.

A nail trimmer snaps vigorously at a man's fingernails, cutting close to the quick. Fingernail clippings fall onto a rough brick surface. Clipping his nails, CHRIS, an Englishman in his early 40s, is leaning against a rooftop balcony railing. At the sudden sound of a steel door slamming he raises his head. FYODOR, a Russian in his early 30s, hurries breathlessly on to the balcony. He is dressed in an immaculately pressed suit that seems one size too big for him. Both CHRIS and FYODOR speak in Russian, CHRIS with a heavy English accent.

CHRIS

You're late.

FYODOR

I almost didn't make it. You have no idea what it's like in the centre of town.

CHRIS

I know. Which is why I want to close this deal quickly. What have you got to tell me?



FYODOR

Everyone's been paid off. In a month's time you'll own this whole block.

Obviously very comfortable in his carelessly creased linen Armani suit, CHRIS starts to perform a trick with a fifty pence coin which involves repetitively flipping it between the fingers of his right hand.

CHRIS

What about across the road?

FYODOR smiles.

FYODOR

It's held by hard-liners. They don't believe in the future.

CHRIS glances towards FYODOR and smiles as well. This time CHRIS speaks in English.

CHRIS

Soon they won't have much choice.

FYODOR doesn't speak English.

FYODOR

What did you say?

This time CHRIS speaks in Russian again.

CHRIS

Very soon they'll have to believe in the future.

At that moment the fifty pence coin accidentally slips from between Chris' fingers and he leans over to watch casually as it falls to the street below.

## SCENE 2

EXT. ROOFTOP TERRACE. APARTMENT BLOCK AND THE STREET BELOW. AFTERNOON.

Scene from above, CHRIS and FYODOR cross the roof terrace. In the street below, a young Russian woman, IRINA, hurries home. Carrying a string bag full of groceries, she's just about managing to hold onto a folder and books tucked under her arm.

## SCENE 3

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE APARTMENT BLOCK. AFTERNOON.

IRINA is wearing a faded floral summer dress. While she is walking, her long hair moves almost independently of her slender body. Suddenly, she notices something on the pavement and stops. After looking around briefly, IRINA picks up the shiny fifty pence coin that CHRIS has dropped a few moments ago.

## SCENE 4

INT. LIVING ROOM. APARTMENT IN THE APARTMENT BLOCK. EARLY EVENING.

Early evening light falls into a gloomy living-room. The only other illumination comes from a TV set on which President Yeltzin, standing on a tank, is announcing the end of the Communist era to the crowds gathered in Red Square.

A tubby figure in his mid 60s hurries into the room. This is ALEXANDER, Irina's father. He takes cutlery out of a drawer, wipes down some cupboard doors with a rag then uses the dirty rag to wipe sweat from his face and neck. As he hears the front door open and close, ALEXANDER switches off the TV and stares blankly at the rag in his hand.

SCENE 5

INT. KITCHEN. APARTMENT IN THE APARTMENT BLOCK. EARLY EVENING.

The kitchen table is already set for dinner. Seated at the table is Irina's eleven year old sister, ANA, who's doing her homework. IRINA leaves her folder and a couple of books on the corner of the table, leans over to kiss her sister and gives her the fifty pence coin. ANA looks at the unusual looking foreign coin, then immediately starts to make a pencil rubbing of it.

ALEXANDER rushes into the kitchen and goes straight to the stove, snuffling and mumbling to himself. IRINA and ANA are both amused by the unusual spectacle of their father making dinner. They speak in Russian.

ANA

And, Sister, Sister, he's fixed the door  
and he's cleaned the house...

ALEXANDER

Hi, Irina. Did any of your fellow  
students show up today?

Not waiting for an answer, ALEXANDER brings food to the table, then rushes out of the kitchen briefly. He returns with a camera and goes towards the side of the table where IRINA has placed the books.

ALEXANDER

Come-on girls, join me at the other side  
of the table.

IRINA looks at ANA and raises her eyebrows in mock amazement while they follow their father's instructions. As ALEXANDER is about to place the camera on Irina's pile of books, he stops for a moment, then picks up a book.

ALEXANDER

‘An Accidental Family’ by Dostoevsky!  
It’s good to know that there’s at least  
one lecturer with some brains at  
the university. Did you discuss the  
nightingale story?

IRINA shakes her head, no.

ALEXANDER

At times like this, a good lecturer should  
insist on the nightingale story.

ANA

I’ve never heard the nightingale story.

ALEXANDER returns the book to the table, places the camera on top of the files, pushes the self timer button, then rushes to join his daughters at the other side of the table.

ALEXANDER

I’ll tell you the story, Ana. Wait a  
minute.

Putting his arms around his daughters, ALEXANDER takes a seat between them. The camera flashes. He immediately shovels food on to plates. IRINA rises to get the salt. Passing by her father, she rests her hand on Alexander’s shoulder for a while. Surprised, she notices that her father is sweating heavily. IRINA returns to her seat. She glances at her hand then looks at her father who’s staring back at her. IRINA turns towards ANA who’s preoccupied by making pencil rubbings of the fifty pence coin. ANA speaks without lifting her head.

ANA

Tell me the nightingale story.

A moment’s silence.

ANA

I want to hear the nightingale story.

Resting his head on the wall, ALEXANDER starts to rock back on his chair.

ALEXANDER

A long time ago there were innkeepers in Moscow who used to keep nightingales. So, there is a nightingale singing away and a merchant, who wants everything just the way he likes it, comes to the inn. 'How much is that nightingale?' he asks. 'It's not for sale' replies the innkeeper. 'How much did you pay for this inn?' asks the merchant. '100 roubles' says the innkeeper. '100 roubles for the nightingale, then' declares the merchant. The innkeeper accepts the offer and the merchant says 'Now, cook the nightingale for me'. So the innkeeper cooks it and puts it on a plate. Then the merchant says 'All right, so cut me off 10 kopecks' worth. That's all I want. You can keep the rest for yourself'.

ANA is rapt with attention, thinking about the story.

ALEXANDER sits back upright. Behind him, a greyish stain is visible on the wall where he was resting his head. He has obviously been sitting in the same position for years. Suddenly, he takes a kitchen towel from the table and tosses it at ANA, who snaps out of her daydream.

## SCENE 6

INT. IRINA'S BEDROOM. APARTMENT IN THE APARTMENT BLOCK. NIGHT.

In her dark bedroom, IRINA sits motionless on the floor listening to sounds of her father tidying up in the kitchen.

As the noise subsides, IRINA looks towards a ray of light coming into the room under the bedroom door. The shadow of her father approaches, stops, then turns away.

#### SCENE 7

INT. APARTMENT IN THE APARTMENT BLOCK. NIGHT.

IRINA steps out of her room. The corridor is almost dark, except for the light coming from her father's room. IRINA moves slowly towards the door he has left slightly ajar. Looking through the crack, IRINA sees ALEXANDER from behind. He is bending over carefully arranging piles of books and papers into cardboard boxes. The shelves are almost bare and the cupboards open. Unaware that IRINA is watching him, ALEXANDER is fully absorbed by his private ritual. His movements are steady, repetitive. From the other side of the door IRINA can hear him breathing. IRINA silently turns away and goes back to her room. She slowly closes the window and looks at the empty street below. After a while a group of drunken Russian men can be heard on the street singing a nationalistic anthem.

#### SCENE 8

EXT. / INT. ENTRANCE. APARTMENT BLOCK. LATE MORNING.

Carrying folders and books, IRINA reaches the entrance of her apartment block. A gunshot suddenly rings out. Two women standing close by hurry into the building. IRINA looks after them and then, in a sudden panic, she runs up the stairs, papers falling out of her folders.

#### SCENE 9

INT. APARTMENT IN THE APARTMENT BLOCK. LATE MORNING.

IRINA makes her way to Alexander's room. She pushes the door open and sees her father slumped lifelessly in his chair. Blood is collecting in a pool at his feet. From the bullet hole in his chest it is clear that ALEXANDER has shot himself in the heart.

White with shock, IRINA tentatively approaches Alexander's body. On his desk, covered with small drops of blood, are a party membership card and a belt with a Communist star on the buckle. Touching nothing, IRINA turns and walks slowly out of her father's room.

IRINA stops at the kitchen door and looks towards the table. Among the breakfast leftovers, she spots her father's camera and next to it Ana's pencil rubbings of the fifty pence coin. IRINA lowers her eyelids. After a while, she opens her eyes and quickly focuses on something. Behind Alexander's chair, the greyish stain marks the place where he used to rest his head on the wall.

Seen in close-up, IRINA covers the stain on the wall with her open hand. It's a desperate gesture performed by someone who is trying to touch and hold onto something that has disappeared forever. IRINA moves her hand towards her face. She looks as if she's about to scream, but doesn't make a sound.

IRINA hides her face in her hands.

## OPENING CREDITS

LONDON, 9 YEARS LATER

### SCENE 10

EXT. EAST LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

Long, silent aerial shot of an East London residential neighbourhood. Gardens, trees and details of architecture are clearly visible as the camera is moving low and above the houses and streets.

SCENE 11

INT. BATHROOM. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

Loud music can be heard as we see the forceful movement of a head emerging from under water. In close-up we see IRINA gasping for air. Her hair is short and she looks older.

Wide shot from above of IRINA laying in a bathtub filled with water. She takes a deep breath, submerges under water and remains laying motionless as a female voice begins to sing to the music.

SONG<sup>1</sup>

I think I lost it  
Let me know if you come across it  
Let me know if I let it fall  
Along a back road somewhere  
Money can't replace it  
No memory can erase it  
And I know I'm never gonna find  
Another one to compare

IRINA emerges slowly from under the water and takes a deep breath.

SONG

Give me some love to fill me up  
Give me some time, give me some stuff  
Give me some sign  
Give me some kind of reason  
Are you heavy enough to make me stay  
I feel like I might blow away

IRINA reaches with her head towards the nearby ghetto-blaster and turns the music off. She pauses briefly, then rests her head on the bathtub and closes her eyes. She speaks English with a Russian accent.



IRINA

I am Irina. I am a Russian immigrant.  
I am lost in translation. I am drawn by  
the gravity of flickering moments.

She opens her eyes.

IRINA

This sounds horrible...it's too romantic  
and...it's pretentious.

She closes her eyes again.

IRINA

I am Irina. I am a Russian immigrant.  
I want to be a writer. I want to be  
respectable member of society.

She opens her eyes.

IRINA

This is pretentious and it's a bit sticky.

She closes her eyes again.

IRINA

I am Irina. I am a Russian immigrant.  
After all these years in London I speak  
English even to myself.

IRINA can hear the phone ringing.

## SCENE 12

INT. LIVING ROOM. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON.  
EARLY MORNING.

Naked, IRINA rushes into a sparsely furnished living room scattered with numerous books. By the time she reaches the phone, the answering machine had switched on and a man, PAUL can be heard leaving a message.

PAUL

(OFF)

Irina, it's Paul.

A moment's silence. IRINA stops, then walks away from the phone. She goes towards the unmade bed. Without too much effort she covers the bed with a blanket. It is clear that she is not very well organised.

PAUL

(OFF)

I'm keeping my fingers crossed for today. Give me a call if you want.

Standing near the bed IRINA picks up a manuscript from the floor, then goes towards the table on which are papers, books, a laptop, an overflowing ashtray and the remains of a meal. With a single gesture she clears one corner of the table and puts the manuscript down. She looks towards the window. On the other side of the street an almost indistinguishable figure of CHRIS can be seen as he is giving directions to men unloading cardboard boxes from a big truck. IRINA pays no attention to this. She looks at the patches of sunlight on the floorboards.

IRINA leans towards the table and kisses the manuscript. Completely immersed in this quiet moment, she transforms it into an event similar to the ritual of kissing an Icon, performed by members of the Orthodox Church.

### SCENE 13

EXT. IN FRONT OF IRINA'S HOUSE. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

IRINA slams the door of her house, puts the manuscript into a red folder and pauses briefly to arrange her clothes. She wants to look smart. As she emerges behind the green fence in front of her house, PAUL, a handsome young man approaches from across the road. He has the classless urban look of someone aspiring towards an art or media career. Once he begins to speak it is clear he

comes from a middle-class background. Looking straight ahead, IRINA carries on walking. PAUL catches up with her.

IRINA

Paul, it's annoying. Today is a big day for me. I haven't slept all night and I'm not too sure of myself.

PAUL

I wanted to give you something.

PAUL hands IRINA a book. It's an English translation of 'The Moscow Notebooks' by the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam.

IRINA

Since when have you been interested in poetry?

PAUL

I found it with my mother's things. There's a note inside.

IRINA stops, takes the book and reads the note: 'In my dreams i stumble towards you, Paul'.

IRINA

Where's the line from?

PAUL

Nowhere.

IRINA looks at PAUL with an expression of disbelief, then starts walking again.

IRINA

You have dreams and I have nightmares. I walk the streets of Moscow with my father and we speak English.

IRINA drops the red folder and the book she was holding in her arms. PAUL picks them up.

PAUL

I say 'dream' you say 'nightmare'. Irina, I've given you time, I haven't hassled you, I've kept away.

IRINA

I know.

PAUL

I've given you time to think. Maybe we both needed time to think. But I miss you. If you still don't want me around...

IRINA talks over PAUL.

IRINA

Maybe you worked it out. But I still have problems.

PAUL

We'll sort them out together.

IRINA

I have to go.

PAUL

Can I come with you? You'll get there too early. You always do.

IRINA

No.

PAUL

You always used to ask me to come with you before important meetings.

IRINA

You never came.

PAUL

I'm here today.

SCENE 14

EXT. BUS STOP. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

IRINA and PAUL are at the bus stop sitting on the bench.

PAUL

Irina...

At the sound of Paul's voice IRINA bends her head, then turns in the opposite direction. By moving her head away she reveals her neck. PAUL puts his hand on her neck.

PAUL

I love your neck. Every time I say 'love'  
somehow I still think of you.

PAUL removes his hand from Irina's neck.

PAUL

When you say 'love' you think of your  
father and your father's Russia.

IRINA nods a couple of times. It's true.

PAUL looks at the numerous people standing at the bus stop, on their way to work, heavy traffic on the street behind them.

PAUL

What the hell am I doing here?

A 6 year-old boy isolates himself from a group of people waiting for the bus and looks towards IRINA and PAUL. Out of the blue, the little boy's ears begin to move very fast entirely independently of his perfectly still face.

IRINA looks at the boy, then turns towards PAUL whose face is suddenly transformed. It's lit up by a broad smile. PAUL repeats the little boy's 'ears moving' gesture. IRINA smiles a little. Her mood improves. She puts her open hand on Paul's face and pushes him gently away.

A bus pulls over. As a block of people begins to move towards the entrance door, a woman grabs the little boy's hand and pulls him towards the bus. IRINA gets up.

IRINA

I have to go.

PAUL is still smiling.

PAUL

Sometimes you don't finish your sentences. What you really want to say is you have to go so we can meet again.

IRINA walks towards the bus. People are still jamming the entrance door. She turns towards PAUL.

IRINA

Maybe we can go for a drink tonight.

PAUL

I'm broke.

IRINA

I'll treat you.

## SCENE 15

EXT. BUS STOP. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

The door closes behind IRINA. The bus drives away.

Still sitting on the bench PAUL is the only person at the bus stop. The big smile has disappeared from his face. He puts his head in his hands.

## SCENE 16

INT. MAINLINE RAILWAY STATION. SOUTH EAST LONDON.  
MORNING.

Standing still, IRINA is coming down an escalator. Though she is surrounded by numerous people, the atmosphere of the station appears to be very quiet. As she makes her way towards a rough-looking drinker splayed against a window of an off-licence, the noise of the station's atmospheric sound suddenly increases. IRINA pauses briefly, reaches for her purse, then drops her change into a cardboard box in front of the drunk.

IRINA

I am Irina. I'm a Russian immigrant.  
Wish me luck.

IRINA quickly disappears amongst the crowds.

## SCENE 17

INT. MAINLINE RAILWAY STATION. SOUTH EAST LONDON.  
MORNING.

Scrutinising the crowds, CHRIS is standing on the main concourse. Evidently waiting or searching for somebody in the throng, he focuses intently on a man with a bag standing yards in front of him.

CHRIS slowly and deliberately looks at his watch. The man in front of him repeats the gesture. CHRIS touches his belt and the man indicates that he is Chris' contact by again repeating the same gesture. Suddenly the man bends down as if to tie his shoelaces.

Someone approaches CHRIS from behind and abruptly slips a bag into his hand. CHRIS looks behind him, trying to identify the figure already disappearing into the crowds. When he turns back he discovers that his impersonator has vanished as well.

Heading away from the pick-up, CHRIS unzips the bag a little, his fingers tearing at one of the bundles within. He

rubs the paper of the bank notes between his fingers. He looks suspicious. It doesn't feel right.

Nearby, a rough-looking drinker is splayed against a window of an off-licence. CHRIS extracts a bank note from the bag and, passing quickly by, drops it in the cardboard box in front of the drunk.

Hardly able to believe his luck, the drunk stares at the note. He looks around as if for confirmation but CHRIS has vanished into the crowd. Slowly, the drunk rises and heads automatically towards the off-licence.

Meanwhile, CHRIS has placed himself on the level above the concourse and is now observing as the drunk is manhandled out of the off-licence. The SHOP ASSISTANT is wrestling a Tennants four-pack from the drunk's grasp and throws the note back at him.

#### SCENE 18

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE OFFICE. SOUTH WEST LONDON. DAY.

IRINA

I've changed 'empty heart' into 'deserted heart'. 'Empty' implies that the character's heart is just empty. Our character has been abandoned and isolated. 'Deserted heart' is a more accurate translation.

In a spacious office furnished with antiques, IRINA is going through a manuscript with publisher RUPERT SHUTTLEWORTH, an Englishman in his 60s. RUPERT nods at IRINA while walking slowly between a big desk and an open door that gives onto a balcony terrace.

IRINA

Then there are changes to chapters 23, 27 and 32, which Olga Petrovna found rather difficult to handle. You'll read them. I think they're OK. I've also added several things to the introduction



which I believe are a crucial contribution towards understanding Tolstoy's writing process. First, Tolstoy wrote a letter to G.A. Rusanov on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1889, from which we see that the story was based in fact, so I departed from that...

RUPERT SHUTTLEWORTH

Historical facts are always a problem in publishing the classics. My wife and I were even thinking of doing an academic volume. Ah, here she comes now.

As IRINA pauses confused by his interjection, a short, handsome woman, wearing make-up and jewellery, marches into the office without knocking.

This is OLGA PETROVNA, Rupert's wife and Irina's co-translator. She approaches the desk while talking over her husband with a thick Russian accent.

OLGA PETROVNA

Here are the galleys for the Tolstoy collection.

OLGA PETROVNA greets IRINA in Russian, then brandishes the papers as if displaying them as much to IRINA as to her husband.

IRINA

But I've only just finished my introduction and the translation definitely needs another reading...

OLGA PETROVNA

The introduction is not going in. Nobody reads them anyway.

IRINA looks at OLGA, astonished.

RUPERT SHUTTELWORTH

Our production schedule is very busy at this time of year. We've had to push publication forward.

IRINA leans over the galleys and reads aloud.

IRINA

'Edited and translated by Olga Petrovna Shuttleworth'.

RUPERT SHUTTELWORTH

Well, technically speaking, Olga is editor and translator. I think you'll find it in our contract. This is standard practice.

IRINA

But I did the translation.

OLGA PETROVNA

Nonsense. You assisted me.

OLGA PETROVNA walks out of the room. At a complete loss, IRINA sits down heavily in the chair. The chair gives way under her.

### SCENE 19

EXT. PUBLISHING HOUSE. TERRACE BALCONY. SOUTH WEST LONDON. DAY.

Through the balcony door, we see IRINA falling onto the floor still holding her papers as RUPERT, making solicitous comments, walks round to help her.

Embarrassed and angry, IRINA pushes RUPERT away. She gets to her feet quickly, walks out on to the balcony and stops by the railing and looks at the bleak panorama of the city. If IRINA were not so proud, she would burst out crying. She rolls her manuscript tightly and starts dragging the rolled paper against the stucco plaster work. The plaster splinters and falls, the papers shred and tear.

## SCENE 20

INT. PUBLISHING HOUSE. SOUTH WEST LONDON. DAY.

RUPERT is silently standing at his desk. IRINA walks back into the office from the terrace and without a word, gathers her handbag and the red folder and leaves.

IRINA rushes into the small toilet desperate to pee. She opens the door. OLGA PETROVNA is already seated there. She looks up helplessly at IRINA. IRINA angrily slams the door.

## SCENE 21

DAY. EXT. STREET. SOUTH WEST LONDON. AFTERNOON.

IRINA is walking fast. She is furious and still needs to pee. She looks around. Shops and houses but no toilets. Across the road she sees a bus stop and behind it is fencing concealing a building site. She dumps the red folder into a dust bin and runs across the road. She makes her way through the fencing onto a deserted building site. While she pulls up her skirt and pees, the stream of her urine runs under the fence and forms a pond around a man's shoe.

Back in the street, IRINA looks around confused, realising she doesn't really know which part of town she is in. She asks a man nearby who, irritated by the puddle he discovers he is standing in, does not reply. He simply points to the sign on the bus stop which reads 'World's End'. IRINA stares at the sign with disbelief.

IRINA

(OFF)

I am Irina. I am a Russian immigrant.  
This is pathetic.

She tries to orient herself by looking at the bus map. As a feeling of helplessness overcomes a feeling of anger, she sits on a narrow bench at the bus stop and lights a cigarette.

## SCENE 22

INT. TOP FLOOR OF DOUBLE DECKER BUS. EARLY AFTERNOON.

Seated on the front seat, IRINA leans her head on the side window. She doesn't have to hold back or be ashamed any more. Tears roll down her face, one after another. She wipes them, but cannot or does not want to stop them.

The bus stops at the traffic light. Suddenly IRINA notices something or someone amongst the moving crowd on the street. She leans forward and focuses on a figure of a woman both of whose hands are bandaged but she manages to hold a baby which kisses her on the forehead.

Still in tears and without knowing exactly why, IRINA breathes a sign of relief.

## SCENE 23

EXT. STREET. EARLY AFTERNOON.

The woman whose hands are bandaged stops unexpectedly as a large, heavy handbag slides from her shoulder. Someone bumps into her from behind. She turns around and we see CHRIS.

WOMAN WITH BANDAGED HANDS

I'm sorry.

Irritated, CHRIS reacts with an arrogant gesture of someone who has no time for other people's weaknesses or incompetence. After making a few steps, he walks into a lobby of a large bank.

## SCENE 24

INT. LOBBY TO A LARGE INTERNATIONAL BANK. AFTERNOON.

Seen from behind, CHRIS and a well-dressed BANKER in his late 50s are walking across an impressive marble and metal interior.

BANKER

You've been in this business too long not to know about cash deals. This is street level stuff.

Suppressing his anger the BANKER stops and turns towards CHRIS who's wearing an immaculately pressed suit that seems one size too big for him.

BANKER

Chris, you've been paid. We're still waiting. You've got fourteen days to make the payment respectable. The partners can't afford to wait any longer. What are you doing here?

The BANKER makes a gesture as if to say 'Don't say a word'.

BANKER

Where have you been? Didn't you notice the new boys? Their instincts are untamed and they're moving fast. We should have removed you from Eastern Europe years ago.

CHRIS

I made you a lot of money in Eastern Europe.

BANKER

You didn't do too badly out of it either. Fourteen days.

The BANKER abruptly walks into a lift and just as the door is about to close he presses the 'door open' button.

BANKER

If this job proves lucrative I might let you play the small time crook out there for a bit longer.

The lift door closes smoothly and CHRIS turns around to face a bank of large windows overlooking a street packed with traffic. The huge lobby is soundless.

#### SCENE 25

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. EARLY EVENING.

IRINA opens a fridge. It's empty. She slams it shut. She opens the freezer and takes a bottle of vodka out. She gets a small glass. As she tries to pour herself a drink, she realises the bottle is almost empty.

Holding the half full glass, IRINA goes into her room. It's getting dark. She moves to the desk and turns on a lamp. The lamp is faulty and flickers on and off. She touches the lamp and it lights up; when she removes her hand it goes off. She repeats the gesture several times. Still holding onto her glass of vodka, she strikes the lamp which falls off the desk onto the floor. As the room goes dark, a light goes on in the window of the house directly opposite.

IRINA sees CHRIS' silhouette moving about his room. She doesn't know who this man is. She knocks back the small amount of vodka from the glass she's still holding in her hand.

#### SCENE 26

INT. BAR 'POINT 101'. CENTRE POINT. EVENING.

In a modernist bar with a huge glass front, the Russian film 'The Man With a Movie Camera' by Dziga Vetrov is projected onto a large screen suspended above the entrance. From inside the bar the projection looks as if it is superimposed over the street outside. IRINA and PAUL are seated at a table on the gallery. Looking towards PAUL, IRINA can see the black & white images projected against the bluish background of a busy street below.

IRINA

I don't care anymore.

A waitress puts drinks in front of IRINA and PAUL and takes some empty glasses away.

PAUL

You don't care?

IRINA

I don't.

PAUL picks up his drink, leans forward, clinks Irina's glass. He speaks with conviction.

PAUL

Well that's a first. Let's celebrate the new Irina.

PAUL lifts his glass.

PAUL

To Irina who doesn't care and...to a London publisher who got one over on Irina. You thought he'd make your dream come true. Didn't you? How many times has it happened? The same thing as today? He kept doing the same thing to you and you kept going back for more. How many men have you been with? How many? How can you be so clever in bed and such a fool once you step out of it? When you are with a man, really with a man, you never let them in, not even for a split second. That's why you never surrender. How come you were such a sucker for that 'I want to be a successful writer' dream of yours?

IRINA

You are not getting it.

PAUL

What's there to get? What's the difference between surrendering to a man and surrendering to a dream?

To IRINA this is an oversimplification.

IRINA

It's not about a dream. It's about an idea.

Irina's gaze drifts away from PAUL. She focuses on a sequence of close-ups of ordinary people's faces projected on the large screen behind his back. IRINA speaks almost to herself.

IRINA

The weak are equally important as the strong.

PAUL

What was that?

IRINA

My father's mantra – 'The weak are equally important as the strong'.

PAUL

You can't help it. Can you? You'll be ignored by this society as long as you refuse to understand how it works.

IRINA smiles at her thoughts, then leans towards the table and rests her forehead on her hands.

IRINA

And you understand how it works. That's why you are doing so well.



PAUL

I don't care about this society. I don't care about any society.

PAUL reaches towards IRINA and with both hands gently lifts her head.

IRINA

How can you just say this? Don't you feel guilty? At least a little bit?

PAUL

Guilty of what? I feel free.

IRINA

Free for what?

PAUL smiles and moves closer to IRINA.

PAUL

To look at your naked body and see my favourite landscape.

Not really paying attention to what he is saying, IRINA looks closely at PAUL. Once again she is absorbed in the moment when a broad smile lights up his face. Maybe she finds him sexy. Maybe she finds him sexy whenever he smiles in this way.

PAUL

You want to feel the same, about a man. Don't you?

IRINA

Maybe, but I don't really care. Shall we find an off-licence and get a bottle of vodka?

## SCENE 27

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. LATE NIGHT.

Loud music can be heard. In a dimly lit spacious room, IRINA and PAUL are moving along with the rough, irresistible rhythm of Mark E. Smith's 'punk' version of the rockabilly number 'F-'Oldin' Money'.

### SONG<sup>2</sup>

I went to the bank just to get a little money  
They told me very quietly  
I just started feeling funny  
They said 'You ain't got a house, you  
ain't got a job'  
I ain't got a window and I ain't got a plug  
It'll take a lot of bank notes to satisfy  
my heart  
If I could get my hands on some a  
folding money

Both IRINA and PAUL have had a lot to drink and when at first they make an attempt to synchronise their movements, the result is clumsy but funny. Following the rhythm PAUL introduces a folding money gesture. Looking at Paul's hands IRINA copies him briefly and from then on their dancing appears to be perfectly choreographed. After a while they both simultaneously unbutton their shirts and swing them in the air. IRINA looks at PAUL and yes, he is very sexy. Recognising a perfect moment, PAUL moves towards IRINA and following the rhythm of the song, he begins to fold the soft cups of Irina's bra until both her nipples are revealed.

## SCENE 28

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

The morning sun is coming directly through two large windows and now we can see clearly that in Paul's room pieces of furniture are pushed towards the empty walls

in order to make space for numerous cardboard boxes which occupy the central part of the room.

IRINA is laying on a mattress. Resting her head on one arm she's looking towards the door. Sitting in a wheelchair, PAUL wheels himself into a room. On his lap there's a tray with two cups of coffee. He places a cup of coffee next to the mattress. The smell of hot coffee or something else makes IRINA smile.

PAUL

It's almost half nine, you have to go to the Home Office, you're still in bed; my room is packed with cardboard boxes; I bring you coffee in a wheelchair; and you don't say anything.

While PAUL is talking, IRINA discovers next to the mattress an old photograph of a small boy and his mother, taken against a sunlit landscape. A figure has been cut out of the photograph and all that remains is a man's hand on the child's shoulder.

PAUL

My father dumped all this stuff in front of my door the other day...my mother's belongings. Don't you want to know?

IRINA

I was trained by you not to ask any questions. Remember? English middleclass family, no affections shown, no stories to tell.

PAUL turns on the wheelchair's motor, then begins to steer himself around and between the cardboard boxes. IRINA puts the photograph back where she found it and sits on the edge of the mattress. Amongst the clutter of things on the floor she notices a strange looking object

which is comprised of three small mirrors attached to a motor. She pushes a button and the mirrors begin to move in different directions.

In close-up, IRINA can see her face reflected from various angles as the three mirrors rotate independently from each other. Paul's hand moves briefly towards the reflected images of Irina's face as he snatches the object away.

Without stopping, PAUL wheels himself towards the cardboard boxes and places the object casually on one of them.

PAUL

It's my new sculpture. I made it yesterday. It's not finished yet. Now it runs on batteries. It should be plugged into the mains and keep on moving forever.

While PAUL carries on wheeling himself around, IRINA gets up from the mattress and moves towards the centre of the room.

PAUL

You're not going to ask what it means are you? Irina, you're still here, but I'm already starting to miss you.

IRINA moves the sculpture from the shadow and places it on a cardboard box lit by the morning sun coming through the window. After a bit of a struggle to position it so the light is reflected into the room, IRINA is pleased.

IRINA

Look.

Paul's room is transformed. As the ray of sun is reflected in the moving mirrors, the patches of light are dancing along the empty walls.

SCENE 29

INT. MIRROR FACTORY. LONDON SUBURB. DAY.

A strong beam of reflected light hits a grey wall for a moment.

CHRIS stands in an office with MONTY, a small, middle-aged man in his sixties. They have their backs to a long window through which we see mirrors being lifted from a production line. MONTY is studying the bank note, holding it above eye-level.

MONTY

The watermark's all right. The stripe's cheap alloy. Not bad, though. This wouldn't have shown up under a blue light six month ago.

MONTY brings the note down above the surface of the desk and snaps it couple of times listening to the sound it makes. CHRIS starts pacing about.

MONTY

The paper's a bit thick. But this kind of stuff still does the rounds in Eastern Europe.

CHRIS

I need to find an outlet quickly.

MONTY looks at CHRIS attentively and when the telephone on his desk starts to ring he hits a button to transfer the call.

MONTY

You could do it here. There are clubs run by Turks, Yugoslavs...or whatever they call themselves now. But I don't need to tell you...

CHRIS

It'll take too long. You must have something better for me. You owe me one.

MONTY

From what I hear, Slovenia's where it's all happening now. Give me a couple of days.

MONTY lifts the bank note above the eye level again and moves closer to a lamp.

CHRIS

When this stuff is cleaned up I'll put some your way.

Extreme close-up of a fifty pound note lit from behind. The printed numbers and patterns are clearly visible. For a brief moment a beam of a strong light flashes through the note.

MONTY

(OFF)

I hope you still know what to do.

### SCENE 30

INT. LUNAR HOUSE. IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DEPARTMENT OF THE HOME OFFICE. CROYDON. DAY.

IRINA puts her bag onto the x-ray machine. As she walks through the metal detector the alarm sounds. A female officer starts to body-search her. Underneath Irina's shirt, the Officer discovers the shiny Communist star on the buckle of her father's belt. IRINA undoes the belt, puts it to one side and walks once again through the electronic gate.

## SCENE 31

INT. RECEPTION AREA. LUNAR HOUSE. HOME OFFICE.

CROYDON. DAY.

Numbers flicker one after another on an electronic display. Number 99 turns up and remains displayed for a while.

IRINA looks at the display, then at the ticket she's holding in her hand. Anticipating the fact that she'll have to wait for a long time, she takes a deep breath, then, quite unceremoniously, she looks at the faces of people sitting in the reception area.

Her attention is drawn by a hunched, dark-haired man in his mid 30s who cradles his head in his hands and squashes a bag between his chest and arms. His shoulders tremble. Sitting next to him is an old woman in her mid 70s. Clearly from a rural background, she has the strong, impressive features of a survivor. She tries to comfort the man by gently stroking his back, while attempting to extract the bag from his grasp. She places the bag between herself and the man, unzips it and takes out various objects which she arranges on her lap with almost ritualistic movements.

The objects include a plait of hair tied with a ribbon, tiny woollen gloves, a sweet wrapped in paper and a golden necklace with a child's tooth as a pendant. Finally, the woman takes out something swaddled in a handkerchief which she unwraps with great delicacy. It's a photograph of a baby in a silver frame. By carefully placing the photograph amongst the other objects, she completes a display on her lap which evokes a strong feeling of loss.

The woman contemplates her makeshift shrine for a while, then she picks up the sweet. She takes off the cellophane wrapper, puts the sweet into her mouth, turns her head and looks straight at IRINA. Bewitched, IRINA is staring back.

SCENE 32

INT. RECEPTION AREA. LUNAR HOUSE. HOME OFFICE.  
CROYDON. DAY.

IRINA passes her passport and alien registration card under a thick glass shield to a female IMMIGRATION OFFICER. The IMMIGRATION OFFICER speaks into a microphone.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Your visa expires in a month's time. If you want to extend your stay you need to apply for indefinite leave to remain in Britain.

Receiving this information, IRINA speaks to herself.

IRINA

Leave to remain...

The IMMIGRATION OFFICER speaks over IRINA.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Can you speak louder please?

Uncomfortable, Irina leans forward and speaks loudly.

IRINA

I want to apply for an indefinite leave to remain.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

You need to prove that you've been able to maintain and accommodate yourself exclusively from your own resources without working except as a self-employed writer or translator. You need to prove that your work has been published. Most importantly, we have to look at the statement of your bank account. Make sure you submit the application before your visa expires.



Though aware that there's nothing left to ask any more, IRINA keeps on standing as if frozen to the spot.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Do you need any more information?

IRINA moves her head away to hide her tears. For no apparent reason a feeling of anger overcomes the feeling of helplessness. Her mood suddenly changes. She swears quietly as she begins to walk energetically towards the exit.

IRINA

Shit.

### SCENE 33

INT. IRINA'S FLAT. EAST LONDON. DUSK.

In the light of a lamp standing on the floor, IRINA empties her handbag of everything one usually finds in a woman's bag. She moves to her desk which is still cluttered with a writer's paraphernalia: paper, books, pens, and a laptop. After a moment of consideration, she leaves the room, then quickly returns holding a couple of cardboard boxes and a dust bin. Almost mechanically she starts to remove everything – either packing it into the cardboard boxes or throwing it away into the bin.

IRINA picks up the laptop and hesitates. While she's contemplating whether it will fit into the already almost full boxes, through her window, Chris' silhouette is moving in the background. As IRINA bends down to put the laptop underneath the desk, the light in Chris' room goes off and he leaves the house.

IRINA moves towards the floor lamp and shakes her handbag out upside down. Some dust falls out and a coloured sweet. IRINA stops motionless. She bends over and picks up the sweet. She closes her eyes, then, after a while opens them. She takes off its cellophane wrapper and

tastes it. She licks the surface of the sweet several times then suddenly, puts it into her mouth, bites it into pieces and swallows it. She puts her handbag away, reaches for the telephone and punches out a number. As Paul's answer machine picks up, IRINA replaces the receiver and, without any sign of frustration in her movements, she leaves the room. She knows where to go.

#### SCENE 34

INT. 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

PAUL pulls out a tray of glasses from the washer and steam rises into his face. Lifting his head up, he notices IRINA passing through the crowded pub. She finds a place at the bar. PAUL shoots her an enquiring glance while pouring a vodka into a glass. IRINA lifts her hand and points down with her thumb. As PAUL places the glass of vodka in front of her, someone calls him. Still glancing towards IRINA he goes back to serve customers crowding the bar. IRINA knocks back the drink in one go.

Standing next to IRINA is a man wearing a striped suit and a tie. Probably in his early thirties, he has one of the characterless faces of the end of the 20th century. He leans towards IRINA as PAUL places another vodka in front of her.

MAN IN SUIT

A good looking woman like you  
shouldn't be drinking on her own.

IRINA turns briefly towards him, then looks in front of herself. She speaks with determination.

IRINA

If you and I were the only people on  
a deserted island a murder would be  
committed. Fuck off.

She reaches for her glass and knocks back the vodka.

SCENE 35

INT. 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

PAUL places two glasses of vodka on the bar top. IRINA is sitting at a table. The pub is empty. It's after hours.

PAUL

I'll just get changed. Then I'll tell you  
what we're going to do.

PAUL disappears behind the toilet door. IRINA stands up and walks towards the bar.

INTERCUT WITH TOILET.

PAUL washes his face. Still wet he looks at himself at the mirror. After a while, he takes off his work clothes and puts on his own shirt. He extracts a letter from his pocket.

INTERCUT WITH PUB'S BAR AREA.

Standing at the bar, IRINA knocks back another vodka. Slightly tipsy, she starts to count down by lifting the fingers of her right hand one by one. As she erects her fifth finger PAUL appears from behind the toilet door and speaks immediately. The perfect timing makes IRINA smile.

PAUL

We could get married?

IRINA

Yes. I don't get the credit for my work I  
get a husband instead.

While pretending to ignore the implications of Irina's answer, PAUL hands her the letter he has found in his pocket.

PAUL

Why not? I thought you didn't care  
anymore. We can move in somewhere  
nice and try again.

IRINA looks at the envelope.

IRINA

Ah, Ana! I can't believe she's still sending letters to your address.

PAUL knocks back his drink.

PAUL

Maybe the two of us getting married is not such a good idea.

IRINA smiles brightly.

IRINA

Maybe?

PAUL

Irina, what do you see in me?

IRINA

Right now – lightness. But most of the time I don't know.

PAUL also smiles a little.

### SCENE 36

EXT. STREET. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

PAUL is shutting up the pub, as IRINA is walking slowly while reading her sister's letter. We move with IRINA. PAUL starts to approach IRINA from behind, then stops for a moment.

PAUL

How many vodkas did you have tonight? What I want to know is how can someone drink so much and walk so straight?

PAUL catches up with IRINA.

PAUL

Never mind. What's your little sister got to say?

IRINA raises her head.

IRINA

She's complaining about our aunt, you know the one she lives with.

IRINA goes back to reading the letter and laughs.

IRINA

The neighbour's grandma, Olga Semyonovna, fell out the window while waving to the postman...from the second floor. And Fyodor Petrovich, that's our aunt's husband, is crazy about the nurse who is visiting Olga Semyonovna.

IRINA and PAUL stop in front of Irina's house.

PAUL

Beautiful nurses, flying babushkas... Maybe I should move to Russia? Or maybe I could stay at yours tonight?

As both IRINA and PAUL start laughing, he puts his hands around her waist. His fingers feel something under her shirt. IRINA makes a slight move back, then by lifting her shirt reveals the buckle with a Communist star on her father's belt.

PAUL

It hasn't brought you much luck recently.

IRINA smiles. Still holding her letter, she gently pushes Paul's hands away. Suddenly, loud music can be heard from the top floor of Irina's house. PAUL looks up.

IRINA

It's not about luck, it's about fate.

IRINA looks across the road towards the illuminated window behind which CHRIS appears briefly. IRINA catches his glance.

PAUL

What did you say faith or fate? How can a belt mean so much.

IRINA turns to PAUL, unbuckles the belt and gives it to him.

IRINA

It doesn't any more.

### SCENE 37

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

IRINA turns on the light, goes up to the window, leans against the casement. Through the window she can see PAUL standing in the street adjusting the belt around his waist, then he walks away. IRINA looks at her sister's letter. A couple of tears fall on Ana's big Cyrillic script. The ink blurs and runs. IRINA suddenly feels that she has been watched. She wipes her eyes and looks towards the house across the street. She can see CHRIS standing motionless at the window. Discovered by IRINA, he quickly moves away.

### SCENE 38

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

IRINA is laying in bed, her head on the pillow turned to one side. Two amateur size colour photographs are mounted on the wall behind her. One is the last photograph her father took of his daughters and himself. The other photograph shows an irregular greyish circle on a white background.

With her eyes wide open and without blinking, IRINA gazes somewhere into distance, into space. The telephone rings. She doesn't move. As the answering machine begins to play she speaks quietly in perfect synch with her own voice recorded on the machine.

IRINA

(OFF AND IN SYNCH)

This is Irina. I'm not here.

She stops talking, but remains motionless as the answering message carries on playing.

PAUL

(OFF)

Irina, it's Paul. I have to talk to you.  
When I came home I picked up one  
of my mother's books...for the first time  
I found a bit of her in her stuff.

IRINA gets out of bed, turns on the light and picks up the receiver.

IRINA

Tell me.

PAUL

(OFF)

It's in a book by someone called André  
Gide. On one of the pages there's a  
photograph underlined and a question  
mark on the margin.

INTERCUT WITH PAUL'S APARTMENT.

PAUL is seated in the wheelchair. He is holding the book in one hand, the receiver in the other. He turns the wheelchair on and wheels himself around the room.

From Paul's point of view, in close-up, the open book begins

to move against the background of the room. We can see clearly the paragraph underlined. Underneath Paul's fingers we can also see the old photograph of a small boy and his mother. PAUL begins to read aloud into the receiver.

PAUL

(OFF)

'The train at that moment was running alongside a bank...

The door would suddenly give way and he would topple out...

Who would see it? The slightest push would do it. He would fall into the darkness like a stone...

And off tomorrow to the East! Who would know?'<sup>3</sup>.

PAUL turns off the wheelchair, stops and closes the book.

INTERCUT WITH IRINA'S APARTMENT.

PAUL

(OFF)

In the introduction a phrase 'acte gratuit' is underlined as well. What's 'acte gratuit'?

IRINA

It's when someone kills someone for no apparent reason. The motive is hidden deep underneath the pattern of human relationships, it belongs to the world of ideas. Or maybe the motive is somewhere between the stars.

PAUL

I'm not getting it.

IRINA

Maybe one day.



SCENE 39

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

CHRIS turns his head away from the window as, in the house across the street, the light in Irina's room goes off. Sitting at the table, he is holding a cordless telephone and scribbling something down. He is in a middle of a telephone conversation with MONTY.

MONTY

(OFF)

Obviously backed by a larger operation. Polde is very efficient. Though the guys find his passion for Middle European history rather annoying. There's a touch of old-fashioned mannerism to the way he operates; you'll probably discover he likes using libraries. Chris, this is none of my business, but what made you stay on in Eastern Europe after the gold rush was over?

CHRIS picks up a vodka glass from the table and moves to a part of the room crowded with furniture and cardboard boxes. Leaning against the wall are paintings covered in bubble wrap. From the little we can see at the moment, they could be medieval Russian Icons.

CHRIS

None of your business.

MONTY

(OFF)

You fell in love with the place. Didn't you? The whole bloody thing got under your skin.

CHRIS makes a cheers gesture with the vodka glass, then clinks it with the receiver.

MONTY

(OFF)  
Chris...

CHRIS

Yes.

MONTY

(OFF)  
Good luck with the job.

CHRIS puts the receiver down, knocks back the vodka and pushes the play button on a hi-fi. As a Russian pop song fills the room, he returns to the table laden with more drinks, puts a couple of whole anchovies into his mouth and washes them down with a draught of wine.

SCENE 40

INT.EXT. LOWER DECK. LONDON BUS AND STREET. NORTH LONDON. MORNING.

Irina's hand picks up a tacky publication titled 'Riddle of the Stars' which someone has obviously left behind on a bus. IRINA takes a seat, flicks through the publication without too much interest, then drops it. Lifting her eyes, on the seat opposite, she notices her neighbour, CHRIS. She looks at him attentively. He looks a bit rough, his eyes are closed.

IRINA

(OFF)  
I like him.

CHRIS opens his eyes and looks straight at IRINA. She quickly turns her head away and looks outside of the moving bus.

IRINA

(OFF)  
Shit. He feels like home.

IRINA can't help it, she looks at CHRIS again. His eyes are closed, she has time to study him more precisely. He is a charismatic looking man in his early fifties.

IRINA

(OFF)

He's not Russian. What is a man like  
him doing on the London Public  
Transport?

CHRIS lifts his hand and massages his temple. It's clear that he doesn't feel very well.

IRINA

(OFF)

That's it, he drinks too much, that's why  
he feels like home.

IRINA smiles. CHRIS opens his eyes and looks at her. This time she doesn't turn her head away. She keeps on smiling, she wants the smile still to be natural but somehow doesn't manage it. CHRIS gets up and goes to the stepping-down platform at the back of the bus. The bus slows down briefly. CHRIS jumps off while the bus is still moving and falls as he hits the ground. IRINA rises quickly to see CHRIS rolling in the street. The bus conductor yanks the communication cord and the bus comes to a halt a few yards away.

IRINA gets off the bus and stops. From distance, she sees CHRIS lying on the ground as a man runs towards him. The man tries to help CHRIS who angrily pushes him off balance<sup>8</sup>. The man gets up and leaves without a word. The bus pulls away. IRINA and CHRIS are alone in the street. CHRIS gets up and starts walking. IRINA, without thinking twice, starts to follow him.

SCENE 41

INT. EXT. ALFREDO'S SNACK BAR AND STREET. NORTH  
LONDON. EARLY AFTERNOON.

It's lunch time and the café is crowded. IRINA goes straight to the toilet. She washes her hands while looking at her face in the mirror.

IRINA

I am Irina. I don't know what I am doing.

At the sound of a toilet flushing, a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN walks out of the cubicle. Her look is distinguished by a combination of designer clothes and sloppiness, her gestures are confident. She stops by the mirror, next to IRINA, then puts red lipstick on with the nonchalant gesture of an expert. The two women exchange glances.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

I am not Irina, but I don't know what I  
am doing either.

IRINA follows the woman out of the toilet, then stops briefly by the toilet door. While joining a good looking young man at the table by the window, the MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN holds her hand on the young's man shoulder a bit too long for a casual gesture. IRINA smiles, then surveys the café. A few tables away from the couple, a waitress brings food and puts it in front of CHRIS. He stares at the food, takes a slice of toast from the plate, gets up and leaves.

In front of the café CHRIS stops on the street, his profile obscured by a traffic mirror. IRINA watches as the reflected heads of passers-by replace Chris' head.

CHRIS crosses the street. Without a moment's hesitation, IRINA leaves the café and follows him.

## SCENE 42

INT. LIBRARY. NORTH LONDON. DAY.

CHRIS is standing among the bookshelves. He takes down a book and slips something between its pages. IRINA is sitting at a large table watching him.

CHRIS leaves and IRINA approaches the bookshelf, takes out the book and finds a postcard of one of London's bridges. A hand-written message reads: 'Today. 2 p.m.' She stares at the card for a moment then returns it to its hiding-place.

## SCENE 43

EXT. A BRIDGE AWAY FROM CITY. AFTERNOON.

IRINA's face. She is intent and at the same time a little excited. She looks around recognising the bridge from the postcard. In the distance, over the water are warehouses and a road curving away, forming a wide lay-by. She stands by a lamp-post. It's a good observation point.

A black cab passes IRINA, turns onto the bridge and stops in the middle. CHRIS gets out and continues walking along the bridge. The cab drives on, makes a u-turn and drives past Irina.

CHRIS is standing in the lay-by. A silver Ford comes from a different direction and stops just ahead of him. CHRIS walks to the car and gets in. The car remains parked in the lay-by. Other cars drive past.

## SCENE 44

INT. CAR. AFTERNOON.

In the front of the car sits JANEZ, the driver, and POLDE, a Slovenian in his mid-forties. POLDE turns towards CHRIS who is sitting in the back of the car and passes him the postcard.

POLDE

So you are an old friend of Monty's?

CHRIS takes the postcard and hands an envelope to POLDE who takes out a bank note from the envelope and lifts it up to the light.

POLDE

How much of this do you have?

CHRIS

Five hundred thousand.

POLDE

By when?

CHRIS

Eleven days.

POLDE

I can only clean a limited amount at such short notice. You will have to be in Ljubljana to take care of the rest. I can guarantee certain outlets, but in this you'll need assistance I can't offer – at least a couple of smurfs. Clean, anonymous people you know. A young couple, for example.

CHRIS

What's your percentage?

POLDE

First I need twenty thousand sterling to set things up and 25% of the total transaction.

CHRIS

You can have the twenty thousand right away and 15% of the transaction.

POLDE

20%. It strikes me that your options are rather limited.

CHRIS

I'm not paying you to have options.

The driver turns around to look at CHRIS.

POLDE

This is Janez. He's a history student.

JANEZ gives CHRIS a grin.

#### SCENE 45

EXT. BRIDGE. AWAY FROM CITY. AFTERNOON.

IRINA is watching the car in the lay-by from across the road. The silver Ford moves towards the middle of the bridge and stops. CHRIS gets out of the car which does a u-turn and drives away. He sees a figure in the near distance walking away and focuses on IRINA.

CHRIS pauses, deep in thought, then continues walking.

#### SCENE 46

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. EVENING.

A light flashes on the answering machine on the floor. IRINA bends down to press 'play'. The room is dimly-lit; the objects and furniture are dark silhouettes.

LARISSA

(OFF IN RUSSIAN)

Irinotchka, it's LARISSA. Where are you?

You went completely underground.

The book must be finished by now.

It's time to party girl. Are you coming over tonight? Around half seven, eight?

Looking forward to seeing you.

As the message plays the camera moves with IRINA out of the room. The camera stops by a cupboard in the corridor. On the cupboard's polished steel surface a luminous square appears at the moment when IRINA turns on the light in the bathroom. We briefly see Irina's figure reflected as she moves about. She stands in front of a mirror and for the first time we see her putting make-up on. It's obvious that she is trying to copy the nonchalant gesture of the expert performed by the MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN in the café. After a couple of attempts IRINA masters the gesture. Her lips are full and red. She's pleased. She picks up a light jacket and slams the door behind herself.

#### SCENE 47

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. EVENING.

In the empty pub, PAUL is fiddling with his 'three small mirrors' sculpture, obviously attaching a cable to the mirror. For a while, IRINA looks at PAUL through the window, then turns and walks away.

IRINA's face. The red lipstick is somehow very visible. Deep in thought, IRINA pulls a tissue out of her pocket and wipes the lipstick away.

#### SCENE 48

EXT. GARDEN OF A BIG RESIDENTIAL HOUSE. NORTH LONDON. EVENING.

In a floodlit garden groups of people are talking loudly against the sound of music and laughter. LARISSA, a tall young Russian woman, detaches herself from one of the groups, then approaches IRINA while holding a bottle in one hand and two glasses in the other. She speaks loudly in Russian.

LARISSA

As beautiful as usual. And on your own?



So, the young artist is definitely out of the picture?

IRINA shrugs her shoulders, she doesn't really know.

LARISSA

Oh, if I were you I'd hold onto a guy who can do it as many times as he wants.

Smiling, IRINA puts her hand over LARISSA's mouth. They embrace and kiss three times. LARISSA empties the bottle into a glass which she hands to IRINA and rushes to a plastic bin packed with ice and more bottles of vodka. LARISSA fills her own glass, they toast in Russian and she leads IRINA into the party.

In the middle of a group of people on the other side of the garden stands ZINOVY ZINK, a Russian writer. He looks like he is trying to be polite but appears a little bored and lost. IRINA and ZINOVY spot each other across the garden and raise glasses.

#### SCENE 49

INT. BIG RESIDENTIAL HOUSE. NORTH LONDON. EVENING.

IRINA goes into the house and stops at the kitchen door as a woman hands her a plate of food. In the kitchen a group of people is gathered around a sympathetic, tubby man, ALEXEY who is playing a guitar and singing passionately in Russian. He immediately notices IRINA. He speaks in Russian.

ALEXEY

Hey, Irinotchka. We haven't seen each other for how long? Three, four, five months? Come over here. Now we'll have one vodka for each month. The time gone by will disappear, we'll feel as if we never separated.

IRINA smiles and lifts three fingers.

ALEXEY

Three vodkas then.

A woman isolates herself from the group, gets a set of small glasses and places three glasses in front of ALEXEY, three glasses on the other side of the table for IRINA. The woman fills the glasses with vodka. IRINA approaches the table. With immaculately choreographed gestures and perfectly timed, ALEXEY and IRINA empty the vodka glasses one after another. Everybody cheers. IRINA picks up her plate with food, walks out of the kitchen, moves into the living room and sits on a window seat. While eating, she watches a couple across the room who are dancing together. The woman is moving lasciviously, very close to her partner who has a hand low on the woman's back and looks at her with an amused expression. The woman manoeuvres him backwards towards the sofa onto which he collapses while the woman climbs onto his lap.

ZINOVY enters the room. He looks first at IRINA then at the couple who are kissing passionately. He looks back at IRINA with a mischievous expression on his face and takes a table-cloth from a nearby table. He goes to the couple, removes the glass from the man's hand and tosses the cloth over the two of them.

He sits beside IRINA. In front of them the cloth bulges and writhes. There is a big smile on Irina's face. ZINOVY kisses her on the cheek. They speak in Russian.

ZINOVY ZINK

Irina, it's nice to see you. Unfortunately I have to go now. Listen, briefly...do you remember that talk you gave at the school of Slavonic Studies?

IRINA

That was some time ago.

ZINOVY ZINK

But, you see I remember it very well.  
You were talking about the role of the  
Icon in Tolstoy's 'The Forged Coupon'.

The singing from the kitchen becomes louder.

IRINA

I was improvising.

ZINOVY ZINK

It certainly didn't sound like that. I  
would like to include something along  
these lines in a book I've been asked to  
edit. Anyway, I am doing a reading in  
two days, please come and we can talk  
about it then.

ZINOVY takes an invitation card from his pocket and gives  
it to IRINA.

ZINOVY ZINK

Tell me you'll be there.

IRINA

Yeah, I'll be there.

ZINOVY kisses Irina's hand, then grabs a pickle from her  
plate before leaving. Passing by the sofa, he lifts the cloth  
and with a quick movement reveals the couple. As ZI-  
NOVY goes to leave, he encounters the group from the  
kitchen headed by ALEXEY and joined by LARISSA. They  
all are singing a Russian song at the top of their voices.  
ALEXEY moves towards IRINA.

ALEXEY

Irina, Irinotchka, each time I see you I  
want to fall in love with you.

LARISSA approaches behind ALEXEY, smiling brightly.

LARISSA

Bastard, that's what you always say to me.

ALEXEY

But I've never said it to Irina.

He grabs IRINA by the hand and puts his hand around her waist.

ALEXEY

I'm a Communist when it comes to love  
– I find all women equally attractive.

Regardless of the rhythm and the melody of the song which the group carries on singing, ALEXEY waltzes IRINA away from the crowd. As they reach the sofa, he stops suddenly, holds IRINA close to his body, looks across the room and shouts towards the group still singing at the top of their voices.

ALEXEY

I'm in love.

Both IRINA and ALEXEY fall on the sofa laughing loudly. IRINA feels unusually relaxed in the presence of this man. Maybe it's because of the vodka, or maybe because he doesn't expect anything from her. IRINA puts her arms around ALEXEY.

IRINA

I'm in love as well.

#### SCENE 50

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

Sitting at the table, CHRIS is looking through the window doing his fifty pence coin trick. In the street, a cab pulls over in front of Irina's house. ALEXEY gets out and walks around the car to open the door for IRINA. He lifts her up and carries her in his arms. As they reach the door to Irina's house, he puts her down, holds her close in his

arms for a while, then goes back to the car. Before getting into the cab ALEXEY stops, looks towards IRINA, then raises both hands in the air. He speaks loudly in Russian. Sitting in his room, CHRIS can hear clearly what ALEXEY is saying. No doubt, everybody else in the street can hear him as well, but they can't understand him.

ALEXEY

The great Pushkin, the greatest poet  
of all poets said 'The Russia is no  
more'. But, let's not be sad my friend.  
'Life is just a moment's pulse, just swift  
dissolving of ourselves into everyone'.

The car door slams behind ALEXEY. IRINA enters her house. The cab drives away.

The light in Irina's room is turned on. CHRIS can see as her silhouette begins to move about.

Suddenly, he rises like someone who has finally discovered a solution for a difficult problem. He moves to the other side of his room and looks intently at the table and chair. He takes the chair and lays it on its back by the table. He looks at this arrangement for a moment, then looks up at the ceiling as if he were laying in the chair looking up. He turns the chair around so that its back is under the table and the base of the seat sticks out. If he were lying in the position indicated by the chair, he'd be staring up at the underside of the table.

INTERCUT WITH IRINA'S APARTMENT.

Taking her clothes off, IRINA pauses by the window and looks at the house across the street. She can see a sudden series of lights flashing in Chris' window.

## SCENE 51

INT. LIBRARY. NORTH LONDON. LATE MORNING.

CHRIS' hand is holding a photograph showing a table and a

chair as he had arranged them the night before. After a while, CHRIS places the photograph amongst the pages of a book.

CHRIS puts the book back on a shelf and leaves the library. IRINA emerges from hiding several shelves away and goes straight to the shelf that CHRIS has left. She takes the book, opens it and extracts a photograph of the table and chair. She studies the photograph, then replaces it.

IRINA sits at the same table as the day before. Rocking back in her chair she stares up at the ceiling. She then swivels around in the chair so that she has her back to the table. Suddenly, she stands up and manipulates the chair into exactly the same position as on Chris' photograph. She bends to look under the table. Nothing. She searches under other tables. Still nothing. Finally she approaches a table at which an elderly man is seated. He is looking at Irina with a bemused and slightly irritated gesture. IRINA bends to look under the table. She sees a bulky envelope taped to the underside and reaches to take it. IRINA gets up, smiles at the old man, then stuffs the envelope into her bag and leaves.

#### SCENE 52

EXT. STREET. NORTH LONDON. LATE MORNING.

Walking in the street, IRINA tears open the envelope inside her bag and sees a bundle of fifty pound notes. She releases a quiet sound of surprise.

IRINA

I am Irina. I don't know what's going on. I don't know what's going on and I don't really care.

#### SCENE 53

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE. WEST END. DAY.

IRINA takes a shirt from a hanger and approaches a male SHOP ASSISTANT.

IRINA

I'm buying a gift for my friend's  
birthday and he's about your size.  
Do you mind if I...

She holds up the shirt to the man's chest to get an idea of  
the fit. He holds out his arms slightly amused.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Of course. Go ahead.

SCENE 54

INT. CASH DESK. DEPARTMENT STORE. WEST END.  
AFTERNOON.

The SHOP ASSISTANT is manning the till at which Irina is paying for the shirt. He reads the bar-code for the price and as IRINA is reaching into her bag he notices the envelope which, protruding slightly, is stuffed full of notes. IRINA hands him a fifty-pound note. He takes the note and surreptitiously places it under a blue light. He picks up a telephone and, turning his back to Irina, speaks softly. He turns back to IRINA and folds the shirt.

SHOP ASSISTANT

So how old is your friend today?

IRINA

He's twenty seven.

As they talk, a SECURITY GUARD approaches the till. He draws level with IRINA and lays his hand on her arm.

SECURITY GUARD

Would you come with me, madam.

SCENE 55

INT. CORRIDOR. DEPARTMENT STORE. WEST END.  
AFTERNOON.

The SECURITY GUARD is walking IRINA down a corridor. As they arrive at a door which faces a lift, the lift door opens. CHRIS gets out of the lift, flashes a pass at the SECURITY GUARD and swiftly takes IRINA by the arm, before anyone has time to react.

CHRIS

We know about this one. I'll take care of her. Thanks mate.

CHRIS and IRINA are already in the lift and the door is closing as the SECURITY GUARD looks after them. IRINA looks amused. After a moment's consideration, IRINA gets straight to the point.

IRINA

That's quite a performance. How did you do it?

CHRIS

I saw it in a film.

IRINA

But this is not a film.

CHRIS

No, it's a diversion.

IRINA raises her eyebrows and smiles a little.

CHRIS

Why did you take the money?

To IRINA this is obvious. She is rather disappointed with the question. Still, why not say it.



IRINA

I need money.

SCENE 56

INT. IN THE CAB. AFTERNOON.

IRINA reaches into her bag and takes out a pack of cigarettes. She lights one, puts the pack back in her bag. She zips up the bag and places it in her lap. Smoking, she looks squarely at CHRIS who leans forward and slides back the cab driver's window.

CHRIS

Shepherd's Bush.

SCENE 57

INT. YUGOSLAV RESTAURANT. SHEPHERD'S BUSH.  
AFTERNOON.

CHRIS and IRINA walk into a restaurant with the ambience of a converted front room. The sound of low music and conversation in Serbo-Croatian can be heard. CHRIS and IRINA sit at the bar.

CHRIS

Two slivovitz and two kafa.

A BARMAID in a low-cut dress serves. CHRIS looks towards the back of the restaurant where one group of men play cards at the table, while others play pool. A SERBIAN MAN emerges from behind a door and looks over at CHRIS who nods back. CHRIS points the man out to IRINA.

CHRIS

Go with him. Take the money with you.

IRINA gets down from the bar and follows the SERBIAN MAN into the back room. The door closes behind them.

SCENE 58

INT. KITCHEN. YUGOSLAV RESTAURANT. SHEPHERD'S BUSH.  
AFTERNOON.

IRINA sits opposite the SERBIAN MAN at a table in a small kitchen. The man is tall and broad, with features that were probably strikingly handsome once but have now gone to seed. After throwing a comment in Serbian at an old woman who's chopping vegetables at the sink, he holds out his hand on the table and clicks his fingers at IRINA. She takes the envelope out of her bag and hands it to him. Under his breath, he counts though the notes slowly. He speaks in English with a heavy Balkan accent.

SERBIAN MAN

Nine hundred and fifty. I'll give you a third.

IRINA

I expected six hundred.

The SERBIAN MAN says something in Serbian to the vegetable-chopping old woman, who laughs loudly. He pulls out a roll of notes from his trouser pocket and counts them out on the table.

SERBIAN MAN

Five hundred, top.

IRINA takes the money.

SCENE 59

INT. YUGOSLAV RESTAURANT. SHEPHERD'S BUSH. AFTERNOON.  
Back at the bar IRINA notices that only her drink remains. The BARMAID points towards the exit.

BARMAID

Your man...

IRINA smiles like someone who has just discovered a new,

interesting game. She obviously finds the idea of CHRIS being her man rather amusing. She sits down and sips from her glass.

SCENE 60

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE YUGOSLAV RESTAURANT.  
SHEPHERD'S BUSH. LATE AFTERNOON.

IRINA stands on the street outside the restaurant and looks around expecting to see CHRIS. He's not there. IRINA loses self-confidence for a moment and wonders what her next move will be. After a while, she walks towards a nearby telephone box.

INTERCUT WITH PAUL'S APARTMENT.

The 'F-'Oldin' Money' number is playing loud. PAUL picks up the phone.

IRINA

(OFF)

Paul, it's Irina.

PAUL answers by singing in synch with the song:

PAUL

I went to the social just to have a little  
pension  
I was sorely in distress I was needing  
some attention

IRINA

(OFF)

Have you been drinking already?

PAUL

No. I haven't. What about you? Why  
are you shouting?

IRINA

(OFF)

There's so much I have...

Not interested in what IRINA has to say, PAUL interrupts.

PAUL

It's my birthday and I haven't got any money and I have to do a few hours at the pub.

INTERCUT WITH PHONE BOX. INT. SHEPHERD'S BUSH. STREET.

IRINA is not at all affected by Paul's bad mood.

IRINA

I'll see you later.

She puts the phone down.

#### SCENE 61

EXT. STREET. SHEPHERD'S BUSH. LATE AFTERNOON.

Seated in a cab, CHRIS watches IRINA flag another cab down. She gets in and drives away. CHRIS follows.

#### SCENE 62

INT. CAB. LATE AFTERNOON.

Seated in the cab, IRINA drives along the streets of Central London. She is looking at people on the street as the afternoon lights changes to early evening. In low voice she is singing verses from 'F-'Oldin' Money'.

IRINA

I went to the bank just to raise a little money  
They said 'We're pleased to see you'  
But I started feeling funny  
I ain't got a house, I ain't got a job...

### SCENE 63

EXT. EAST LONDON. EARLY EVENING.

Irina's singing becomes louder as we see an aerial shot of the East London neighbourhood: roof tops, streets and trees. Early evening light. The 'Prince George' pub where PAUL works is visible.

### SCENE 64

INT. 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

IRINA opens the door to the noisy pub, makes her way amongst the crowd and finds a free table in the corner. Almost immediately, PAUL approaches with two drinks. At the moment he takes a seat next to IRINA, the bell calling last orders rings and the PUB LANDLORD shouts above the noise for PAUL to come and help. People crowd at the bar. PAUL puts his drink down and grimaces.

PAUL

Happy birthday to me, eh?

As PAUL goes behind the bar, CHRIS walks into the pub, spots IRINA, then moves straight to her table and sits down. A moment's silence. IRINA looks in front of herself, then turns towards CHRIS as if to say something but gives up. Trying to be cool, she sips from her glass, but chokes on the ice and starts coughing, struggling for air. After calming down, IRINA puts her hand on her chest.

IRINA

(OFF)

I am Irina. I never really know how strangers can make conversation.

Maybe it's best to sit in silence...or talk a lot which is the same.

PAUL arrives back at the table and takes his drink. He looks at IRINA, raises his eyebrows and points with his glass towards CHRIS. IRINA turns towards CHRIS.

IRINA

(OFF)

This is Paul. He's twenty seven today.

Both CHRIS and PAUL look at IRINA.

IRINA

(OFF)

Shit, this was clumsy.

CHRIS

Happy birthday.

IRINA gets in control of herself again and hands the envelope containing the five hundred pounds to PAUL.

IRINA

Here's Paul's present. Happy birthday.

PAUL looks in the envelope and his eyes widen. CHRIS rises from his seat and looks first at PAUL and then at IRINA. IRINA looks back at him smiling innocently as if defying him to take action.

IRINA

(OFF)

Now, this was much better.

Intrigued for a moment, CHRIS realises that he probably cannot predict Irina's reactions. He smiles a little.

CHRIS

So, what are you up to?

IRINA

Nothing really.

PAUL is still looking at the money as the landlord calls his name again. He takes the money out of the envelope and stuffs it into his pocket and goes back to the bar. CHRIS sits next to IRINA again.

CHRIS

You know that by taking the money you created something between us.

IRINA nods, smiling. She wanted to create something between the two of them.

CHRIS

I know a perfect place to celebrate. It's open all night.

SCENE 65

IND. NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

CHRIS and PAUL are sitting at the table in a seedy, all-night drinking club. Rather in contrast to the environment, a live band is playing very sophisticated Turkish music. IRINA gets up to go to the bar.

As CHRIS and PAUL talk, a group of men are gambling at a nearby table. The atmosphere between CHRIS and PAUL is slightly uneasy.

PAUL

How long have you known Irina?

CHRIS

Not long.

PAUL

It's just that she's never told me about you.

CHRIS

We met this afternoon.

PAUL

Oh, really.

CHRIS

We live in the same street.

CHRIS glances at the gamblers.

SCENE 66

INT. NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

IRINA waits to be served at the bar. In the background, CHRIS and PAUL rise from their table and go to watch the gamblers.

IRINA notices a couple at the bar who look like they have been drinking heavily. The man is at first kissing the woman tenderly, then his advances become more aggressive. The woman shouts at him. As she pushes him away, a pink mohair jumper falls off her lap onto the floor. The woman shuts her eyes and rests her head on the bar which is sodden with drink.

IRINA picks up the jumper, gently lifts the woman's head and slips the jumper under it. The woman opens her eyes, looks at IRINA for a moment and then shuts them again.

SCENE 67

INT. NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

At the gambling table a man takes bets on a game of 'Find the Lady'. The dealer talks incessantly while shuffling three boxes; he never takes his eyes off the players.

CHRIS and PAUL watch as one player loses a handful of notes. The dealer invites others to place bets and collects notes from another player. CHRIS is observing PAUL who watches the proceedings.

PAUL

Does anyone ever win?

CHRIS

Well, you're the man with the money.

PAUL takes a handful of notes out of his pockets.

PAUL

I've only got fifties.



CHRIS

That'll do. Have a go.

PAUL

Why don't you go first?

CHRIS reaches towards the notes PAUL is holding in his hands. He takes a fifty pound note as if the money belonged to him. PAUL shoots an enquiring glance at CHRIS.

CHRIS

I'll borrow one.

CHRIS immediately hands the note to the dealer and leans towards PAUL. They both watch the dealer as he shuffles the three boxes.

CHRIS

So, does your friend tell you everything?

PAUL

Mostly, yes. But she doesn't have to tell me some things.

CHRIS is watching the dealer's hand movements and notices a particular twitch of a finger which happens above boxes that prove to be empty. PAUL looks at CHRIS attentively and realises that he's counting the dealer's movements. The dealer stops shuffling the boxes and CHRIS points at one of them, then turns towards PAUL.

CHRIS

What do you mean?

PAUL indicates the money.

PAUL

Where this came from, for example.

The dealer opens the box. It is empty. This time CHRIS takes a note from his pocket, bets and loses again.

CHRIS

I owe you fifty quid.

PAUL

Once more for luck?

He hands CHRIS a fifty pound note. CHRIS bets and hits the right box. The dealer pays CHRIS with a look on his face somewhere between surprise and aggression.

CHRIS and PAUL turn away from the gambling table. CHRIS hands a fifty pound note to PAUL.

PAUL

You are a gambler, aren't you? You noticed something about the dealer. There was a give-away.

CHRIS repeats the dealer's finger gesture.

CHRIS

Did you catch it?

PAUL

No, I was watching you.

As CHRIS and PAUL reach their table and sit down, IRINA returns with the drinks. PAUL knock back his drink in one go and brings his glass back onto the table with a sharp crack. IRINA jumps slightly and looks from CHRIS to PAUL.

PAUL

Right, I'm going to have another go.

CHRIS and IRINA watch as PAUL goes back to the gambling table, then they look at each other. CHRIS looks at her in a way that makes her feel slightly uncomfortable.

IRINA

I'll be back in a moment.

CHRIS watches as she walks towards the ladies toilet. He looks over at the gambling table where PAUL is engrossed.

#### SCENE 68

INT. LADIES TOILET. NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

CHRIS pushes in as IRINA is about to shut the cubicle door. She puts her hand out to push him away. He brushes her hand away gently and brings her head forward to kiss her. She avoids his embrace. CHRIS steps into the cubicle, pushing her backwards and shutting the door behind him.

He kneels down in front of her, running his hands up her legs and under her skirt, pulling down her pants. IRINA lifts up a leg to free them. He looks for a moment between her legs, then buries his face there. IRINA looks down at Chris' head. Her hands clasp the back of his neck. She shuts her eyes and leans her head back. With his hands CHRIS feels her legs trembling.

#### SCENE 69

INT. NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

CHRIS returns to the table. After a while, IRINA approaches CHRIS from behind. She is about to put her hand on his shoulder but stops just as she was about to touch him. After a moment's hesitation, IRINA withdraws her hand.

#### SCENE 70

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE NIGHT CLUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

It is drizzling as IRINA, CHRIS and PAUL are standing on the street waiting for a cab. There is the sound of cars driving on the wet asphalt. PAUL sits down on the wet pavement and CHRIS goes towards him.

CHRIS

Did you win?

PAUL reaches into his pocket and pulls out a number of

creased bank notes, yes, he did win. Irina sees a cab and flags it down.

SCENE 71

INT. CAB. NIGHT.

IRINA sits next to CHRIS. PAUL is seated opposite them on the folded down seat with his legs stretched out in front of him. There is a prolonged silence between them.

IRINA

I'm starving.

Silence again.

IRINA

I'm still starving.

PAUL laughs.

IRINA

A man goes to his doctor. After the consultation the doctor says to him 'I've got bad news for you. You will only live as long as tomorrow morning'. The man goes home to his wife and tells her the news. He says, 'Why don't we have a big meal, get drunk and make love all night?' 'That's easy for you to say', his wife replies, 'You don't have to get up in the morning.'

No one laughs. IRINA grimaces in disconcert, then opens her bag. Looking for cigarettes she takes out the invitation to ZINOVY ZINK's reading. CHRIS glances at the card as he takes a cigarette from IRINA, then looks at PAUL who has taken the creased bank notes out of his pocket. While folding the money PAUL starts to sing the song to himself.

PAUL

What goes on in your mind?  
I feel like I am upside down...<sup>4</sup>

SCENE 72

EXT. ROOF OF MOVING CAB. STREET. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

As Paul's singing continues, reflected lights play across the cab's roof. The road picks up the reflections of the light on wet asphalt.

The cab slows down and stops. PAUL steps out and sings a couple more lines. CHRIS closes the car door from inside and the cab drives away. PAUL pauses in front of his house watching as CHRIS extends his arm around Irina's shoulder.

INTERCUT WITH INT. BLACK CAB.

IRINA leans her head on Chris' shoulder briefly, then straightens and shrugs his arm away. She turns to look out of the rear window. Standing in front of his house, PAUL is looking back at IRINA.

SCENE 73

EXT. STREETS. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

The cab pulls up in the middle of the street and IRINA and CHRIS get out of opposite sides. CHRIS pays the driver and the cab pulls away. As they stand in the middle of the street CHRIS looks intensely at IRINA. She turns and walks towards her house.

SCENE 74

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

An alarm clock goes off soundlessly, throwing a narrow beam of light into Chris' face. CHRIS opens his eyes and turns off the alarm. Seated in an armchair, in the same clothes he wore last night, CHRIS was obviously taking a cat nap. He stands up and throws an Alka-Seltzer into a glass of water.

SCENE 75

EXT. STREET. EAST LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

As the morning light is reflected in several puddles in an empty street, the silver Ford appears from around the corner. Standing in front of a workshop, CHRIS waves his hand and opens the workshop door. The Ford pulls over.

SCENE 76

INT. WORKSHOP. EAST LONDON. EARLY MORNING.

CHRIS hands POLDE a thick envelope. POLDE opens the envelope, looks inside, then puts it into his pocket. CHRIS and POLDE walk slowly as they talk.

POLDE

You're going to be very busy in Ljubljana, but I'm sure you'll enjoy it. Ljubljana is very beautiful. Slovenia is the new Switzerland you know.

CHRIS

And with a good exchanged rate.

In the background, two young men, RICCARDO and WILLY, are rolling the counterfeit bank notes, placing them into small plastic bags and then stuffing them into the tube-like legs of chairs.

POLDE

I can put 350.000 through the bank. The government is watching us more closely now, but given the amount of humanitarian aid going through the system at the moment, your money should go unnoticed. There are always risks you know.

POLDE hands CHRIS a piece of paper.

POLDE

The Casinò is another outlet you can use. And then, of course, you'll have the smurfs. Are they in place?

CHRIS

They will be.

POLDE

The Casinò might be tricky – the smurfs could turn out to be very important – but they need to be very careful if you want all the money changed in such a short time.

In the background, more chairs and tables lie around the space, most of them upside down and wrapped in plastic, ready for transport. POLDE lifts a chair and sits. CHRIS carries on walking, then suddenly turns around and approaches POLDE. CHRIS speaks with resoluteness.

CHRIS

Do you want the twenty thousand now?

POLDE

Yes, of course.

CHRIS

Stand up.

Still sitting, POLDE looks surprised.

CHRIS

I said get up.

POLDE gets up. CHRIS lifts the chair POLDE was sitting on and throws it away with a forceful movement.

CHRIS

So you want the money? Then I

strongly suggest you stop acting like you're doing me a big fucking favour. Is that clear?

Looking attentively towards CHRIS and POLDE, RICCARDO and WILLY have turned a big table upside down and are stuffing the legs with folded money.

SCENE 77

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. LATE MORNING.

IRINA's face as she bites into a juicy, red apple. IRINA is walking around her apartment wearing an untied bathrobe. We can see she's naked underneath it. She is holding the apple in one hand and drying the ends of her hair with the other. Suddenly she stops and looks at a polished stainless steel surface. IRINA can see the reflection of her triangle of pubic hair. Seen in close-up as she moves a little the reflection moves with her.

IRINA

I am Irina.

Irina's finger moves towards the polished steel surface and she touches the reflected image of her pubic hair.

IRINA

Are you in love, Irina?

Standing next to a cupboard in the hall, IRINA removes her hand from the steel surface and bites into the apple again.

IRINA

(OFF)

You are a fool Irina. It's all a game.

As if she had suddenly remembered something, IRINA goes towards her room.

INTERCUT WITH PAUL'S APARTMENT.



The phone rings in Paul's room. Seen in close-up, the answering machine takes the call. As the greeting message is playing, next to the telephone we recognise Paul's sculpture comprised of three small mirrors attached to a motor. Paul's hand approaches the receiver, then stops.

IRINA

(OFF)

Paul, it's Irina.

Still in close-up Paul's hand pushes the button and the small mirrors begin to rotate. While IRINA is talking we can see PAUL reflected in the three mirrors as he moves slowly away.

IRINA

(OFF)

Paul...pick up the phone...I know you're there...Paul, I went straight home last night...OK, don't pick up the phone. I'll come and find you in the pub later on this evening. Bye.

Paul's figure reflected in the three moving mirrors becomes smaller, distant.

INTERCUT WITH IRINA'S APARTMENT.

IRINA puts the receiver down and looks for her bag. She finds it by the bed, takes out the invitation to ZINOVY ZINK's reading, looks at it for a while, then drops it on the floor.

## SCENE 78

INT. RUSSIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN BOOK SHOP. WEST END.  
EVENING.

Holding a glass of wine, IRINA climbs a narrow staircase into a gallery space above a book shop. At a trestle table, ZINOVY is signing a copy of his book. As he lifts his head to hand the book to a young man, ZINOVY notices IRINA. He speaks with a tone of ironic bonhomie.

ZINOVY ZINK

Irina, when it's your turn to give readings I shall be in the front row staring at you over my glasses recalling all those of mine that you missed. Never mind. Here, have a copy. Let me sign it first.

While ZINOVY signs, IRINA looks out of the window. She sees CHRIS standing in the street below, she smiles.

ZINOVY ZINK

Seriously, though, I'm glad you're here. Remember what I talked to you about at the party?

IRINA nods.

ZINOVY ZINK

Well, can you put down your idea on a page. No longer than that. My new publishers are very interested but they want the final say about contributors. They're here somewhere. I want you to meet them.

IRINA turns to see RUPERT SHUTTLEWORTH and his wife OLGA PETROVNA approaching.

Furious, IRINA turns back to ZINOVY and slaps his book down on the table. She heads in the direction of the door and straight towards the SHUTTLEWORTHS. Without breaking her stride, IRINA deliberately jogs OLGA PETROVNA's arm so that the drink she is holding goes all over the front of her dress. IRINA walks out of the room.

## SCENE 79

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE RUSSIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN BOOK SHOP. WEST END. EVENING.

Seen from high above, IRINA leaves the book shop and isolates herself from a group of people standing outside

holding glasses of wine. She stops at the edge of the pavement facing CHRIS who's on the other side of the street. They look at each other for a while. IRINA goes towards him and as he walks away she follows.

IRINA

Just passing by or did you come to see me?

CHRIS

Shall we go for a drink somewhere around here, or do you want to go back?

IRINA

I don't want to go back, I feel like walking. I'd like to go down by the water.

CHRIS

You mean the Thames?

IRINA

By the water.

#### SCENE 80

EXT. OPEN-AIR WALKWAY BY THE THAMES. EVENING.

CHRIS reaches the end of a walkway facing an open view onto the Thames. IRINA comes up behind him. She leans her head against his back. After a while, IRINA passes her arm around Chris' waist reaching with her hand down into his trousers. She starts to move her hand between his legs, then she lifts her head and speaks softly into his ear.

IRINA

Since I've met you I've been having erotic dreams about you. I have a feeling you are...

CHRIS interrupts IRINA by trying to turn around to face

her, but she gently keeps him in the position she wants. They are completely absorbed in the awkward intimacy of this moment.

Two skateboarders suddenly skate close by, one of them slamming his board into the wall close to IRINA and CHRIS. The skater grabs the board as it hits the walkway, remounts and is off. The skaters laugh as they speed away.

IRINA is startled by the intrusion and pulls away from CHRIS. He turns and takes hold of IRINA, pulling her close to him. IRINA rests her head on Chris' chest for a few moments, then looks up at him. They kiss lightly on the lips. IRINA holds his face in her hands. Their kisses become deep, passionate, the breathing becomes heavier. Suddenly, IRINA pulls away.

IRINA

Let's go. I've got to make a phone call.

#### SCENE 81

INT. 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. EVENING.

The phone is ringing in the noisy bar. Nobody answers. After a while, a man detaches himself from a table and obviously irritated by the sound of the phone ringing, he picks up the receiver and leaves it off the hook.

IRINA

Hello, hello...

#### SCENE 82

EXT. WALKWAY BY THE THAMES. EVENING.

IRINA steps out of the phone box to join CHRIS. They walk along the river in silence. CHRIS puts his arm around Irina's waist.

CHRIS

Is Paul in love with you?

IRINA

He sometimes thinks he is.

CHRIS

What about you?

IRINA

I like Paul.

CHRIS

You like me as well?

IRINA smiles.

IRINA

Since I moved to London at least with Paul I have some kind of history.

CHRIS

It must be very difficult for you here.

She disengages herself unobtrusively from Chris' arm.

IRINA

If I would have had a tenner for each time I heard that, I would have been rich by now.

CHRIS

Will you go back to Russia?

IRINA moves away from CHRIS increasing the distance between the two of them. She shakes her head, no, she doesn't want to go back.

IRINA

It's much easier for me to be a stranger in a foreign country than to be a stranger in a country I thought was my own.

CHRIS stops and looks at IRINA. She gives him a brief kiss, pulls him by the hand and they walk out of the frame.

IRINA

(OFF)

I want to go home.

We see the Thames as a stream of dark water. Rain starts to fall.

### SCENE 83

EXT. STREET. EAST LONDON. LATE EVENING.

The street is wet, the houses are dark. The light goes on in Irina's window.

### SCENE 84

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. LATE EVENING.

IRINA leans by the window and looks across the road as the light goes on in Chris' apartment. CHRIS approaches his window, looks at IRINA, then disappears. After a while he returns and holds up a bottle of wine by the neck in one hand and a fish by the tail with the other. IRINA turns and walks away from the window.

Through her window, we see IRINA crossing the street. She falls in the road. CHRIS puts down the fish and the bottle and rushes out.

### SCENE 85

EXT. STREET IN FRONT IRINA'S HOUSE. EAST LONDON. LATE EVENING.

IRINA is rising from a puddle in which she has slipped. She has muddied her clothes and hands. CHRIS comes to help her to her feet. She pushes him gently away and moving like a child, oddly relaxed, she sits down in the middle of the street. After a while, IRINA looks up towards CHRIS, then extends her hand towards him.

## SCENE 86

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. LATE EVENING.

The song 'For Heaven's Sake' performed by Chet Baker is playing as we see IRINA standing in Chris' front room. She is looking towards the paintings leaning against the wall. Chris has taken the bubble wrap away and now the gold background of the medieval Russian Icons is glittering in his dimly lit room. On the table beside IRINA sit the fish and the bottle of wine. Listening to the song, IRINA runs her hand along the unyielding skin of the fish.

### SONG

For heaven's sake let's fall in love  
It's no mistake to call it love  
Here's romance for us to try  
Here's the chance we can't deny  
While heaven's giving us the break  
Let's fall in love for heaven's sake

IRINA taps on the fish with her knuckles. The fish is frozen. CHRIS comes into the room, holds her from behind and hands her a towel.

## SCENE 87

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

IRINA is under the shower. She surrenders herself to the strong jet of water. She turns the water off and for a moment longer stands motionless, holding her head back, then opens her eyes. She can feel Chris' intense gaze. She turns her head slowly towards the bathroom door and looks back at CHRIS knowingly, reproachful. He turns and walks away.

CHRIS sits naked in a chair. He looks towards the bathroom and sees IRINA approaching down the corridor. She straddles him and sits down very slowly, then puts her arms around him. Closing her eyes IRINA takes a deep breath and holds it, just as one does when one wants to swim under water as far as possible.

## SCENE 88

INT. 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

In the empty pub, PAUL sits dozing on a stool behind the bar, his feet up, his head resting on his hand. All of a sudden, his elbow slips along the bar and he jerks awake. This movement brings his legs off the bar sweeping a collection of half-full pint glasses onto the floor.

PAUL stands up and looks at the mess of glass and beer, then runs a shoe through the fluid, grinding the glass into the floor. He sees a pair of feet standing behind the bar. He looks up and sees the PUB LANDLORD. Irritated and angry, the PUB LANDLORD looks at the mess, then at PAUL.

PUB LANDLORD

What the fuck do you think you are doing?

PAUL

Fuck you.

The PUB LANDLORD steps forward, slaps him hard round the face, then steps back, prepared for PAUL to come at him. PAUL just stares for a moment and walks away fast.

## SCENE 89

EXT. STREET NEAR 'PRINCE GEORGE' PUB. EAST LONDON.  
NIGHT.

PAUL is walking along an empty street. At a junction ahead of him a car screams by at great speed and disappears. Shortly after, he hears the screeching of its tyres then the sound of a crash.

## SCENE 90

INT. BEDROOM. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

At the sound of the crash IRINA opens her eyes. As everything falls silent again, she can hear Chris' breathing. She looks at him and then slips quietly out of the



bed. Motionless, CHRIS waits to hear the front door close and then sits up.

#### SCENE 91

EXT. CAR PARK. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

PAUL is crossing a parking lot. As he reaches the lamp post, the light goes on. Paul's shadow appears changing size and moving on the asphalt.

#### SCENE 92

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

CHRIS picks up the receiver and punches out a number. While waiting for the answer he pulls a clean shirt on.

CHRIS

It's Chris.

He moves towards the window and looks out. In the street he can see PAUL trying to look over the blinds into Irina's darkened room.

CHRIS

Is everything ready? And the drivers?

Well, when they arrive keep them there.

#### SCENE 93

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF IRINA'S HOUSE AND CHRIS' HOUSE.  
EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

Struggling to look into Irina's room, PAUL has climbed onto the window ledge. He makes out a shape in her bed partially lit by the street lights. PAUL climbs down from the ledge. As he walks away from the house he can see CHRIS standing on the other side of the street. CHRIS takes a couple of steps into the street, waits for PAUL to approach him, then carries on walking next to him. Looking closely at PAUL, CHRIS notices the bruising on his cheek where the PUB LANDLORD slapped him.

CHRIS

What happened to you?

PAUL

I got bored waiting.

CHRIS

Are you all right?

PAUL

Irina would say 'After a sleepless night, just before the day begins, I have an unusual sense of my own destiny'.

CHRIS smiles.

CHRIS

What would you say?

PAUL

What are you hanging around for?

CHRIS goes straight to the point.

CHRIS

I couldn't sleep. When I saw you through the window I realised that you are just what I need, the right man in the right place. Can we talk?

#### SCENE 94

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

PAUL washes his face, leaves the bathroom, then stops at the living room door. He can see CHRIS standing amongst the cardboard boxes, flicking through the book by André Gide. PAUL takes the book away from CHRIS. CHRIS moves to the table and looks at the various objects placed at the table. He points towards the three small mirrors attached to a motor.

CHRIS

What's this?

PAUL

My sculpture.

CHRIS

Funny. What happens if I push the button?

PAUL

It doesn't matter.

CHRIS

You don't want to talk about it?

PAUL

I don't care. It doesn't mean anything.

CHRIS pushes the button and the three mirrors begin to move.

CHRIS

If this stuff starts to sell, you know where the meaning will be – on the price tag.

CHRIS looks at his watch, takes an envelope out of his pocket and hands it to PAUL.

CHRIS

Let's get back to business. As I said, the warehouse is two streets away and the lorry leaves in a couple of hours. Are you up for it? Three thousand now and there'll be more after the exchange is done.

PAUL opens the envelope and leafs through the money.

PAUL

How do I know if this is worth anything?

CHRIS

You were spending it last night.

PAUL

Why me?

CHRIS

Answers to obvious questions are not worthwhile. But, if it would help you make up your mind – you're a young artist, probably a year out of college; working for peanuts in the pub, hanging around not knowing what to do. You think you are holding onto Irina, but you're only holding onto your own confusion. All you need at this point in your life is some cash to get away. You need to buy time, a chance to discover what it is that you really want to do and how you're going to do it.

PAUL listens rapt with attention. CHRIS is right.

### SCENE 95

INT. EXT. WORKSHOP. EAST LONDON. NIGHT.

The large workshop door opens and a lorry backs into the space. RICCARDO, WILLY and two other drivers start loading wrapped furniture into the lorry. CHRIS and PAUL are standing on the other side of the warehouse.

CHRIS

Leave messages for me on your answering machine but don't mention any names.

CHRIS gestures towards the two drivers who are talking together in a huddle.

CHRIS

You're their boss. They don't go anywhere near the cargo. Understand?

WILLY approaches CHRIS and PAUL.

WILLY

Where did you find those two? They're getting noisy.

CHRIS

That's why we've got Paul on board.

CHRIS notices that PAUL is looking nervously at the drivers. He places a hand on Paul's shoulder. PAUL speaks as if shaking away a temporary weakness.

PAUL

Do me a favour. Put my stuff in storage. I don't think I'll come back soon.

CHRIS

If you want.

PAUL reaches into his pocket, takes his keys out and gives them to CHRIS.

#### SCENE 96

EXT. STREETS BY THE WORKSHOP. EAST LONDON. DAWN.

The back of the lorry is slammed shut. PAUL looks through the window. East London streets go by as the lorry leaves the city.

#### SCENE 97

EXT. PARK. NORTH LONDON. AFTERNOON.

IRINA and CHRIS are walking down a path, where, at the

moment when a shadow cuts across it, CHRIS takes Irina's arm.

CHRIS

I was very much in love with a woman once. Her name was Varya. Because of me she left Russia and moved to London. It was a big decision at the time because, as you know, after emigrating there was no way of returning to the USSR. It worked really well for a while, but then gradually she became very unhappy. As soon as it was politically possible for her to go back she left for Moscow.

IRINA looks at him curiously and disengages from his arm.

CHRIS

I came home one day and found a note – ‘Maybe I hate everything I can't understand, but there's no life for me outside Russia’.

CHRIS stops and turns around. All he can see is a long deserted alley of trees, stretching into distance.

CHRIS

(OFF)

From then on I don't really remember anybody else.

#### SCENE 98

EXT. PARK. NORTH LONDON. AFTERNOON.

Sitting on the grass, IRINA looks towards CHRIS. She takes him by the hand, then pulls him gently towards her. They start to kiss. She climbs on top of him, undoes his trousers and mounts him. She starts moving very slowly. After a while, she speaks quietly, emotionless.

IRINA

First you come with money, then you come with sex. Now you come with a story. How many times have you told the Varya story?

IRINA starts to move faster, her head very close to his ear. She puts her hand over his mouth. CHRIS is starting to come. She whispers again.

IRINA

Say my name.

She presses down harder on his mouth.

IRINA

Say my name.

Taking her hand from his mouth, IRINA moves away from CHRIS and sits up.

IRINA

Now tell me, what do you want from me?

CHRIS looks at IRINA momentarily intimidated by her directness and remains silent. IRINA raises and starts to walk away. Approaching a line of trees, she stops and turns to look at CHRIS. At this moment Irina's face doesn't ask for anything or promise anything. It simply presents itself.

IRINA

You think I'm defenceless. You think I'm a fucking East European gold-digger chick. Don't you?

## SCENE 99

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

Standing in front of a Russian Icon mounted on the wall, CHRIS picks up the receiver and dials a number. He waits

for the greeting, then starts to pick up the messages by punching out additional numbers.

INTERCUT WITH PAUL'S APARTMENT.

In the empty apartment only the three small mirrors are moving.

IRINA

(OFF)

Hi, Paul. It's Irina. Hope you are not feeling too rough. Sorry I didn't make it to the pub last night. Give me a call.

IRINA

(OFF)

Paul, where are you?

We can hear the sound of CHRIS skipping the message.

IRINA

(OFF)

Irina, again...

After the bleep the message skips again.

IRINA

(OFF)

Paul...

The double bleep sound indicating end of messages.

### SCENE 100

INT. IRINA'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

IRINA opens the freezer compartment of the fridge and searches with her hand. She bends down to look in the freezer, then tries to pull out an object stuck in the back of the compartment. After struggling, she releases a glass in which some liquid has been frozen. She puts it in the sink under the hot water tap.



The glass breaks and the ice starts to melt revealing a set of keys.

SCENE 101

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT. EAST LONDON. DAY.

IRINA quietly unlocks the door to Paul's apartment and walks in. She can hear music and notices movement in the next room. She hesitates for a while, then approaches the living room door which is left slightly ajar. Through the crack she sees CHRIS from behind. Surprised, she puts her hand on her mouth. Unaware that IRINA is watching him, CHRIS is bending over packing Paul's belongings into cardboard boxes. As the telephone rings, IRINA walks into the room. Looking towards her, CHRIS tries to disguise his surprise. The answering machine clicks on.

PAUL

(OFF)

Chris, it's Paul.

CHRIS hits the speaker phone button.

CHRIS

I told you, no names. Why haven't you called?

PAUL

(OFF)

What do you mean? We're bang on time.

INTERCUT WITH PHONE BOOTH. ITALIAN/SLOVENIAN BORDER.

Holding a receiver, PAUL is standing in a phone booth.

CHRIS

(OFF)

Where are you?

PAUL

On the Italian-Slovenian border.

PAUL looks towards the two drivers who are standing by the lorry, unshaven. He rests his head on the glass wall of the phone booth and lights a cigarette.

PAUL

I think we're going to make it. You can start travelling.

PAUL puts down the receiver.

INTERCUT WITH PAUL'S APARTMENT.

IRINA has moved closer to the phone, so upset she can hardly bring herself to speak to CHRIS.

IRINA

Why are you packing his things?

CHRIS

He wanted me to put them in storage so they can be sent to him when he settles.

On the table next to the telephone IRINA notices the black and white photograph of PAUL as a little boy and his mother. She picks it up.

IRINA

Settles where?

CHRIS

I don't know.

IRINA looks at the photograph. As if performing an exercise in slow concentration, she moves her finger along the edges of the little boy's figure. She speaks to herself.

IRINA

He was so vulnerable that it was a kind of strength.

CHRIS speaks with hint of irony.

CHRIS

I guess it comes with being Slavic – the romanticism of inventing people. Get ready for a surprise.

Frustrated and angry, IRINA gets up. She quickly approaches CHRIS and slaps him. He doesn't move.

IRINA

What do you want from me?

IRINA hits Chris' chest with her fist, then starts hitting him repetitively.

IRINA

Who are you?...Where were you born?...Do you have any brothers and sisters?...Do you care about anything?

Taller and physically stronger, CHRIS is standing motionless under her attack. After a while, IRINA falls on the floor exhausted. CHRIS kneels next to her and holds her face in his hands.

CHRIS

Who I am has nothing to do with your frustration.

With hardly any strength left, IRINA tries unsuccessfully to push CHRIS away.

CHRIS

The question is what is it that you really want?

IRINA gets up, avoiding CHRIS, goes towards the window. She stares bleakly in the street.

IRINA

I don't even know how to want anymore.

CHRIS looks towards IRINA who's still standing by the window. From behind, the position of her dark figure seems almost unreal against the unfocused background of the house across the street. IRINA speaks without turning around.

IRINA

I feel forgotten.

SCENE 102

INT. CAB. DAY.

Irina's face. She is looking in front of herself while a strong wind is blowing her hair away. At the sound of Chris' voice she closes her eyes.

CHRIS

As soon as we get out of the cab at Heathrow we act as if we don't know each other.

IRINA and CHRIS are sitting next to each other in a moving cab. CHRIS is looking towards IRINA. At the moment CHRIS stops talking, IRINA opens her eyes. After a while, at the sound of his voice, she closes her eyes again.

CHRIS

Keep your eyes either open or closed. You have half an hour to change your mind.

IRINA opens her eyes and looks out of the car. She can see an endless line of bleak, suburban terrace houses moving by.

IRINA

My father told me something I didn't understand at the time. He said that the most of his life he was trying to love people as they are. It seemed impossible.

Then he realised that all you have to do  
is to be kind to them – suppress your  
feelings and close your eyes.

IRINA closes the window. Between her face and terraced  
houses passing by there is a sheet of glass with raindrops  
on it. She leans backwards and closes her eyes.

IRINA

It's raining.

SCENE 103

EXT. AIRPORT. LJUBLJANA. AFTERNOON.

Irina's hand pushes a glass door. She leaves the airport  
building and passes CHRIS who is already standing out-  
side. Underneath a sign that reads 'Ljubljana Airport'  
IRINA gets into a cab.

SCENE 104

EXT. MOTEL. OUTSKIRTS OF LJUBLJANA. LATE AFTERNOON.

A cab pulls up in front of a motel. IRINA gets out of the  
car, then stops. For a while she contemplates the bleak at-  
mosphere of the decaying building.

IRINA

(OFF)

Welcome back, Eastern Europe. Why  
did I even bother?

Another cab arrives. CHRIS gets out and walks into the  
motel ignoring IRINA.

SCENE 105

INT. MOTEL ROOM. OUTSKIRTS OF LJUBLJANA. LATE  
AFTERNOON.

PAUL is sitting on a bed watching television. CHRIS walks  
into the room and closes the door behind him. Almost  
immediately the door opens again and IRINA walks in.

PAUL jumps off the bed and turns towards CHRIS.

PAUL

What's she doing here?

Calmly, CHRIS sits on the bed and smiles.

CHRIS

She was worried about you.

Suddenly PAUL approaches IRINA and slaps her. Irina's eyes find CHRIS at once. Wide open, her eyes stay focused on CHRIS for a couple of seconds, then she just blinks, turns around, opens the door and leaves the room. CHRIS gets up from the bed, walks around it and approaches PAUL. He speaks decisively.

CHRIS

Let me make this clear – from now on she's part of the team. We need her.  
Where is the money?

PAUL goes towards a closet, takes a large black leather bag, then drops it on the floor between himself and CHRIS. As the bag hits the floor, bundles of bank notes fall out.

PAUL

It took me ten hours to get it out of that bloody furniture. I'm wasted. I haven't slept...

CHRIS interrupts.

CHRIS

How you feel doesn't interest me.

### SCENE 106

EXT. TERRACE ABOVE A MOTEL RESTAURANT. OUTSKIRTS OF LJUBLJANA. LATE AFTERNON.

With an emotionless expression, IRINA is leaning on the

railings of a first floor terrace overlooking a parking lot. The door behind her opens as CHRIS and PAUL step out of the motel room. PAUL looks as if he is the one who has been slapped. CHRIS leans next to IRINA and focuses on something in the parking lot. IRINA follows his gaze and notices POLDE who's leaning against his black Mercedes. CHRIS hands each of them a key taped to a piece of paper.

CHRIS

Here are the keys to the locker at the Main Railway Station. This is where you deposit the money exchanged. We don't spend the counterfeit money or the money exchanged for it. On the street we don't recognise each other. I'm staying in the Union Hotel, room 306. Your destinations and the number of the locker are on the back of the paper.

CHRIS leaves. PAUL speaks angrily.

PAUL

Who the fuck does he thinks he is?

IRINA watches as CHRIS and POLDE get into the black Mercedes and drive away, then she turns and leaves.

#### SCENE 107

INT/EXT. SMALL TRAVEL AGENCY. STREET IN CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA. MORNING.

IRINA walks into a small travel agency and hands several fifty pound notes to a woman seated behind the counter. With a dead-pan face IRINA looks at the hue poster showing a clean bluish-green landscape mounted on the wall: 'Slovenia, small but beautiful'. The woman counts out the exchanged sum in front of IRINA, then points towards the leaflets displayed on the counter.

THE WOMAN AT THE COUNTER

Can I help you with anything else?  
Maybe few information about our  
beautiful city could be useful?

IRINA smiles, why not? With steady movements IRINA takes a couple of leaflets, then the exchanged money, and leaves. Out on the street, she almost bumps into CHRIS, but keeps on walking without breaking her stride. After a while she dumps the leaflets into a bin with a discrete but perfectly stylised 'I don't fucking care about your beautiful city' gesture, then turns around and immediately focuses on CHRIS. Standing in the distance amongst the crowd, he is staring back at IRINA.

SCENE 108

INT. RAILWAY STATION. LJUBLJANA. AFTERNOON.

IRINA puts envelopes in a black leather bag, shuts the bag into a locker, then walks towards the station café. By now it's obvious that there is a new, unbroken pace to Irina's gesture, even to the way she walks. Almost as if hypnotised – IRINA seems to be moving to a rhythm inside herself. She sits at a table, then notices PAUL going to the lockers too. He repeats the routine with the bag.

A YOUNG GIRL, dressed in a very short skirt and high heels, approaches and speaks to him. After listening for a while, PAUL turns and starts walking away. The girl catches up with him and grabs him by the hand. PAUL shrugs her away, stops and gives her some money. The YOUNG GIRL makes a gesture as if to say 'wait here', then goes straight into a photo booth without bothering to pull the curtain firmly behind her. Her feet in high heels can be seen pressing against the booth wall as she positions herself in front of the camera. When the pictures are taken she gets out of the booth and walks away. PAUL approaches the booth and waits for the photographs to appear. He looks at them, then leaves without picking them up.



IRINA walks over and takes the photographs. It's an image of the girl's pubic triangle repeated four times. Irina drops the photographs on the floor.

SCENE 109

INT. BANK. CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA. MORNING.

CHRIS stands in a queue waiting to exchange his money. Just before it's his turn, three policemen stride into the bank. One has a gun and stands by the door. The other two walk behind the desk and roughly drag away one of the bank staff.

Staring straight ahead, CHRIS waits until the police have left, and then leaves himself.

SCENE 110

INT. CHRIS' ROOM. HOTEL UNION. LJUBLJANA. LATE AFTERNOON.

POLDE and CHRIS stand with the black leather bag between them.

POLDE

We have to stop.

CHRIS

We can't stop. You have to find a solution.

POLDE

We can do it through the Casinò. In a month everything will be cleared.

CHRIS

We have a deal. You got your money. It's probably already in an Austrian bank. You have to find a way to finish this.

POLDE

The black market's not my style.

CHRIS moves towards POLDE, grabs him by the throat and pins him against the wall.

CHRIS

I think your options are pretty limited.

SCENE 111

EXT. STREET. CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA. EVENING.

IRINA is killing time, wandering along a street and glancing inside the shops. Suddenly she stops. Inside a Casinò she can see PAUL standing at the roulette wheel, with drinks by his side. He looks drunk.

SCENE 112

INT. CASINÒ. CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA. EVENING.

IRINA walks into the Casinò. PAUL ignores her. Standing next to him is the YOUNG GIRL from the station. PAUL puts his arm around her and they go to the bar. IRINA follows them to the bar and stands behind PAUL. PAUL is paying with one of the counterfeit fifty pound notes. IRINA puts her hand on Paul's arm to try and stop him. PAUL turns towards her.

PAUL

Come here.

He suddenly kisses her on the mouth. Passive, IRINA lets him do it. Then he whispers into her ear.

PAUL

It's cool. They like our money.

He starts kissing her again. At the moment IRINA turns her head away, PAUL pushes her and she almost loses her balance. She looks around. The SECURITY GUARD glances her way. IRINA leaves Casinò.

SCENE 113

INT. HOTEL UNION. CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA. LATE EVENING.

IRINA stops in front of a door in a dimly lit corridor. She looks at the room number, then knocks. CHRIS partially opens the door. Inside the room POLDE, in his shirtsleeves, is talking on his mobile.

CHRIS

What's up?

IRINA

Paul is in the Casinò. He's drunk and he's spending the fifty pound notes.

CHRIS disappears behind the door. IRINA remains standing in the corridor. From one of the rooms loud drunken singing can be heard 'Jugoslavijo, Jugoslavijo...'<sup>5</sup>. CHRIS steps out of the room and closes the door behind him. In the dimly lit corridor, CHRIS and IRINA stand facing each other. CHRIS leans his head to rest on Irina's forehead. IRINA puts her hands behind her back. With one hand she squeezes her wrist tightly. CHRIS softly places his hands on her cheeks. They remain motionless for a while, then IRINA removes Chris' hands from her cheeks and moves away.

IRINA

Let's go.

SCENE 114

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE CASINÒ. CENTRE OF LJUBLJANA.  
NIGHT.

IRINA turns the corner into a back street. She sees CHRIS talking to a SECURITY GUARD as two bouncers hold PAUL under the neon sign at the Casinò's rear exit. CHRIS is making conciliatory gestures while the SECURITY GUARD shakes his head in refusal. Running out of patience, the guard pushes CHRIS away and takes out a mobile phone.

IRINA turns around. The YOUNG GIRL from the station is walking on the other side of the street. IRINA takes some money out of her handbag and crosses the street.

CHRIS sees IRINA in the distance talking to the YOUNG GIRL and handing her something. The YOUNG GIRL starts to walk towards the Casinò. CHRIS looks at her expectantly as she approaches. Suddenly the YOUNG GIRL collapses a couple of meters away, releasing a short scream. The bouncers and the SECURITY GUARD immediately move towards her. CHRIS jumps to Paul's side, grabs his arm and drags him away down the dark alley.

### SCENE 115

INT. CHRIS' ROOM. HOTEL UNION. LJUBLJANA. MORNING.

In Chris' hotel room, IRINA and PAUL are seated in arm-chairs. IRINA looks into the distance, PAUL looks at his hands folded on his lap. CHRIS is pacing about.

CHRIS

We can still try to get something out of this.

CHRIS hands beepers to IRINA and PAUL.

CHRIS

If this goes off, and this means only in an extreme emergency, it's a sign to meet by the lockers. We'll wait for each other for half an hour, no longer. Paul has fucked up one Casinò, so I have to try another one out of town. Irina will tail POLDE.

PAUL

What am I supposed to do?

CHRIS

You shut up and stay put. Pray that the bleeper doesn't go off.

CHRIS moves towards the window. He reaches into his pocket, then, while looking out onto the street below, he starts to perform his fifty pence coin trick.

SCENE 116

INT. EXT. TAXI AND HOUSING ESTATES. LJUBLJANA.

MORNING.

IRINA sits in the back seat of a taxi parked in a bleak area of 1970s housing estates. Three mini buses, their roof racks piled with luggage, are parked in front of one of the buildings. The buses are crowded with men, women and children who look as if they have been travelling for a long time.

POLDE comes out of the building carrying a large cardboard box. He puts the box into the booth of his Mercedes. A tall, very handsome MAN IN A RED SHIRT, gets out of one of the mini buses and approaches POLDE. A small girl runs out of the mini buses and has a pee behind it. IRINA looks towards the people in the mini buses, then at the TAXI DRIVER.

IRINA

Where do these people come from?

TAXI DRIVER

Refugees from somewhere south of Slovenian border.

IRINA

I thought the war was over.

TAXI DRIVER

There's always a war somewhere in the Balkans.

POLDE and the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT walk over to a mini bus and lean inside. IRINA sees the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT

take a blue plastic bag and open it to let POLDE look inside. POLDE nods and leads the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT back to his Mercedes. He leans into the car to deposit the blue plastic bag. When he comes out he is holding a substantial amount in fifty pound notes which he hands to the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT.

#### SCENE 117

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF AN ANTIQUE SHOP. OLD TOWN CENTRE. LJUBLJANA. DAY.

Irina's cab pulls over next to POLDE's black Mercedes. IRINA gets out of the cab and approaches a basement antique shop.

#### SCENE 118

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP. OLD TOWN CENTRE. LJUBLJANA. DAY.

IRINA walks into the shop which is full of old clocks, cameras, gold, jewellery and watches. The SHOP ASSISTANT greets her politely in Slovenian.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Good day. Can I help you?

IRINA

I'm just looking.

The SHOP ASSISTANT nods, smiles politely, then concentrates on examining an old watch with a magnifying glass. IRINA moves towards the window display and spots a black leather-like curtain at the back of the room. Pretending that she is looking around, IRINA goes towards the black curtain and looks behind it.

In an office overcrowded with junk, IRINA sees POLDE and a GREY-HAIRED MAN. The man is taking the contents out of a cardboard box and displaying them on a table. Amongst the objects are watches, photographs in silver frames, bracelets, necklaces and Icons.

Some of the necklaces have children's teeth as pendants. POLDE starts taking the photographs out of their frames and placing them in an ashtray. He holds a cigarette lighter to them. IRINA sees the photographs of children and families curl, catch fire and crumble into cinders. With a dead-pan face IRINA watches as the GREY-HAIRED MAN starts to tap at a calculator. He stops briefly and picks up one of the Icons. He speaks Slovenian in a low voice.

GREY-HAIRED MAN

This one is worth a fortune.

POLDE

I thought so. I'll get more money for this in London.

POLDE takes the Icon and puts it back in the blue plastic bag.

Suddenly, the SHOP ASSISTANT steps in front of IRINA and pulls the curtain across sharply.

SHOP ASSISTANT

Are you still looking?

Without saying a word and almost as if hypnotised, IRINA still seems to be moving to a rhythm inside herself. She walks towards the exit and leaves. She gets into the cab. The TAXI DRIVER turns around and offers IRINA a coloured sweet wrapped in cellophane. She reaches for the sweet mechanically, unwraps it and puts it into her mouth. The car begins to move. Suddenly IRINA puts her hand over her mouth while desperately trying to say something.

IRINA

Quick. Stop the car.

IRINA opens the car door, leans forward and starts throwing up.

## SCENE 119

INT. EXT. OLD TOWN CENTRE. LJUBLJANA. DAY.

The traffic light changes into red and both Irina's cab and POLDE's Mercedes stop almost simultaneously.

Leaning with her forehead against the window, IRINA looks pale and tired. Gazing into the middle distance she notices that a crowd has gathered under a neon 'Air Canada' sign. A police car is parked nearby. Suddenly, the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT runs out of the crowd and across the road, weaving between the cars. For an instant IRINA and the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT catch sight of each other.

## SCENE 120

INT. EXT. TAXI. STREET WITH A FACTORY. LJUBLJANA.

AFTERNOON.

POLDE's Mercedes pulls over close to a factory gate. Looking out of the moving car, IRINA gives instructions to the driver to park the cab at a significant distance from the Mercedes.

POLDE is waiting in his car. IRINA gets out and leans against her taxi. All of a sudden, the MAN IN THE RED SHIRT comes running round the corner. He passes close to IRINA, almost touching her, then heads straight to POLDE's car. He grabs hold of the passenger side door as POLDE starts the car. He leaps into the car and shouts in Serbian.

MAN IN THE RED SHIRT

You gave me bad money.

The MAN IN THE RED SHIRT starts to viciously attack POLDE, then quickly runs away carrying the blue plastic bag. IRINA gets back into the cab and the driver pulls away immediately. As they drive by the Mercedes, IRINA can see POLDE's head lolling back, covered in blood. The cab advances along the street. IRINA turns around and keeps on looking through the rear window. Behind the Mercedes, numerous workers are starting to leave the factory. IRINA presses her bleeper.



SCENE 121

EXT. RAILWAY PLATFORM. LJUBLJANA. AFTERNOON.

IRINA and PAUL are trying to make sense of the station timetable. Holding the black leather bag, CHRIS points towards a train pulling slowly away from a platform. They run and just manage to jump on the moving train.

SCENE 122

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT. LATE AFTERNOON.

IRINA, CHRIS and PAUL are sitting in the compartment. With his back in the direction of the moving train, PAUL is occupying the window seat. Seated across from him, IRINA is turned to the window, her eyes closed. CHRIS is sitting next to IRINA looking at the landscape passing by.

Smoking nervously, PAUL turns towards CHRIS.

PAUL

The police could be waiting for us at the next station. Aren't you worried?

CHRIS

No, I'm not worried about the police.

PAUL

Then you can tell me how much money have we got. I want my share.

CHRIS

There's no such thing as your share.

PAUL stands up, then turns towards the window. After a while he furiously opens the compartment door and leaves.

CHRIS moves to the seat across from IRINA. Silent, he looks attentively at her face which is lit by the late afternoon sun. Ignoring him, IRINA is looking through the window. CHRIS stands up, goes towards the compartment door, then stops and turns around.

CHRIS

Irina...

At the sound of Chris' voice saying her name, Irina's face becomes alert. As if suddenly snapping out of a dream, IRINA looks intently at CHRIS for a moment, then turns her head towards the window again. The beautiful Mediterranean landscape is passing by.

SCENE 123

INT. TRAIN. LATE AFTERNOON.

PAUL is standing smoking by the half-opened carriage door. The dim light above him flickers on and off. CHRIS comes up to him.

CHRIS

Give me a cigarette.

CHRIS reaches for the cigarette, lights up and leans against the carriage wall.

CHRIS

The last thing the Slovenian government needs at the moment is a money laundering episode to jeopardise national banking law. They'll close the case by covering Polde's death in some way. Besides, it seems Polde was killed by a Serb. Convenient. More proof of who's responsible for every crime committed in the Balkans.

The light in the ceiling goes completely and the train starts to slow down entering a long bend in the track. PAUL moves away from the half-open door.

PAUL

I don't know what are you talking about and I don't care.

CHRIS

You are not stupid. You know what your problem is? You just don't like to think.

CHRIS moves towards the door and sticks his head out of the open window. PAUL stares intensively at Chris' back, then lifts his hands slowly. CHRIS turns around. PAUL quickly puts his hands down.

CHRIS

As long as you refuse to think, someone else will have to do the thinking for you.

CHRIS sticks his head out of the open window again. After a while PAUL lifts his hands and moves towards CHRIS.

#### SCENE 124

INT. TRAIN. LATE AFTERNOON.

Irina's face lit by the late afternoon sun. Her eyes are full of tears. Suddenly IRINA jumps up, pulls down the window and looks out. She sees Chris' body rolling on the ground.

IRINA runs out of the compartment. Running along the corridor she bashes into PAUL, stops for a split second as if expecting an explanation, then pushes PAUL away and dashes towards the carriage door.

#### SCENE 125

EXT. FLAT COASTAL PLAIN. EARLY EVENING.

Motionless, CHRIS is laying on the ground. IRINA is kneeling close to CHRIS. PAUL is standing a few meters away holding the black leather bag.

IRINA walks slowly up to PAUL. Once in front of him, she grabs him by the waist and undoes the shiny buckle with the Communist star on it. As she rips her father's belt out of Paul's trousers it unwinds with a thwacking sound and PAUL almost loses his balance. He drops the black leather

bag in front of Irina's feet and walks away. After a while, he stops briefly, then turns around.

As the setting sun falls on the expanse of salt fields PAUL takes the black leather bag and leaves.

#### SCENE 126

INT. HOTEL ROOM. SMALL COASTAL TOWN. AFTERNOON.

Chris' face. He opens his eyes, then turns his head to look at IRINA. They are lying in a bed. In the background, a large window is open onto a view of the blue Adriatic sea. CHRIS leans over IRINA. They start to kiss. Their kisses are deep, warm, without a sense of urgency. CHRIS moves slowly along Irina's body. His right arm is in plaster, his left hand bandaged around the palm. He kneels on the bed between Irina's legs. She raises her knees towards her chest, then with either foot planted on bed, she lets her legs fall open. IRINA moves towards CHRIS, puts her arms around his neck and while resting her head on his shoulder, she looks towards the open window. The blue sea.

IRINA

Are you hungry?

#### SCENE 127

EXT. CAFE BAR. SMALL COASTAL TOWN. EARLY EVENING.

It's a warm evening in late September. IRINA and CHRIS are sitting in front of a café overlooking the sea. IRINA looks serene. CHRIS is trying hard to perform his trick with a fifty pence coin. But the plaster on his arm means he can't manage it, and he drops the coin. IRINA picks up the coin and throws it into the sea.

CHRIS

You are strange.

IRINA smiles.

CHRIS

That slap you took in the face the other day, you just blinked.

IRINA

It's immigrant's blink. It takes a lot of practise to do that. Next time I get slapped I'll make sure to do something about it.

CHRIS

Did you do something about it before you moved to London?

IRINA

Yes, but it was different.

CHRIS

How different?

IRINA

Now I can do things which I never would have done if I'd stayed with the world I knew.

CHRIS

Is hanging around with me part of this change?

IRINA

Maybe.

CHRIS

Why did you stay? I really want to know.

IRINA

I had to find out something about myself.

CHRIS

What?

IRINA

Where do I belong?

CHRIS

Have you find out?

IRINA nods, yes.

CHRIS

Where do you belong?

IRINA looks around. Against the background of the sea, the everyday early evening life of a small coastal town off-season. People are passing by at a slow pace or standing talking to each other, little boats are rocking in the port. Suddenly, a gust of warm wind blows into Irina's face.

IRINA

I belong to this moment with you.

CHRIS

How long is this moment going to last?

IRINA

I hope until I leave to catch my plane tomorrow.

CHRIS stands up and extends his bandaged hand towards IRINA.

IRINA

Maybe this moment will become a part of another moment when I'll belong again.

Taking Chris' hand, IRINA squeezes a bit too hard. In pain, CHRIS pulls his hand away. As they begin to walk

next to each other, IRINA puts her arm around CHRIS.

IRINA

Shall we have coffee somewhere?

SCENE 128

INT. EXT. IRINA'S APARTMENT AND STREET IN FRONT OF  
IRINA'S HOUSE. EAST LONDON. MORNING.

Irina's hand puts sugar into coffee, then lifts the cup. For a while a circular trace of steam remains on a polished surface.

Leaning on her desk, IRINA sips from coffee cup, then looks towards the cardboard boxes occupying the centre of the room. The boxes are open and numerous books and manuscripts are scattered on the floor. She has unpacked her writer's paraphernalia.

IRINA approaches the laptop which is sitting on the immaculately clean surface of her desk and turns it on. As the computer programme is opening, IRINA goes away, then returns holding a book in her hand. It's 'An Accidental Family' by Dostoevsky. IRINA places the book on one side of the desk. She goes away again, comes back with her father's belt which has a Communist star on the buckle. She folds it carefully, then puts it on the desk, on the opposite side from the book. In a couple of moments she approaches the table with another object – it's an envelope bearing an official stamp that reads 'Lunar House. Immigration Office'. She sits in the chair, hesitates briefly, then drops the envelope next to the laptop.

Deep in thoughts, IRINA rocks back on her chair, tips too far and falls. As she hits the floor, she accidentally triggers the 'Play' button on her answering machine. A synthetic voice can be heard saying 'You have no messages'. IRINA gets up from the floor.

Standing behind the desk, IRINA massages briefly the back of her head which hurts from the fall, then turns

and looks up towards a large photograph mounted on the wall behind her. It's a blow up of the greyish stain which a long time ago marked the place where her father used to rest his head in their Moscow kitchen. IRINA opens her hand, kisses the top of her fingers then places her hand briefly on the greyish stain on the photograph.

We move with IRINA towards the open window. She leans on the casement and looks outside. After focusing briefly on Chris' empty window, IRINA's gaze moves along the street revealing the everyday morning life of an East London neighbourhood; a couple of old women are having a conversation while holding onto their trolley bags, three small children are playing with a ball which gets stuck under a car that has just pulled over, a woman walks out of the house next door and energetically pulls a child into the house. It's a beginning of a beautiful autumn day. IRINA shakes a little. It's cold. She moves back towards the centre of the room, pulls on a cardigan and kneels next to the ghettoblaster. She takes a few moments to find a specific song, then moves back to the window and wraps the cardigan around her body. She feels comfortable. She lifts her head to look at the street again. She smiles. At this moment music begins to play. It's the slow, repetitive rhythm of the 'Birthday Song' by 'The Fall'.

#### SONG

And though, my darling  
There's another side you never see  
Another side  
I know darling  
You know It's there  
I'm pointing to it now  
Oh, you  
Your eyes they convey me to a foreign  
country  
And is  
this  
your birthday?



## Notes

1. 'I Lost It', song by Lucinda Williams.
2. 'F-'Oldin' Money' song is a 1999 cover by The Fall based on a 1959 track by American rockabilly singer Tommy Blake.
3. Excerpt from 'The Vatican Cellars' by André Gide.
4. 'What goes on', song by The Velvet Underground, lyrics by Lou Reed, 1969.
5. Before Former Yugoslavia fell apart, this song used to be the alternative all Yugoslav peoples' anthem.

# Dubravka Šantolić Cherubini

## Afterword

The screenplay for the film *Monestains* was written between 1996 and 1997, during the period of Breda Beban's exile in London. From our conversations and the days spent together at that time in Trieste and Ljubljana, Breda had told me a lot about the screenplay. About twenty years ago she gave me the latest version of the text, to hear what I thought about it.

*Monestains* is an original script by Breda, developed with Hrvoje Horvatić, her partner and also her collaborator. The script was also attended by Chris Darke, writer and film critic who soon became a close friend of the couple.

Breda had already foreseen the main actors: for the role of Chris, she had thought about a young English actor, Daniel Craig, still unknown in those years in the world of cinema, while for the role of Irina she had chosen Irena Mičijević, then a very young actress who had just arrived in London from Belgrade. Later Irena Mičijević was one of the protagonists of two other works by Breda Beban: *Beautiful Exile* (2003) and *My Funeral Song* (2010).

*Monestains's* text had been read and discussed among her friends and some prominent people in the world of cinema in England, who encouraged her to continue. Considering that the locations of the film would be East London and Ljubljana, she had already found an important English producer and also a Slovenian one. The screenplay was presented at the IFFR - International Film Festival in Rotterdam in 1998 where it aroused considerable interest, both from the jury of the festival and from other producers. Subsequently, following the sudden tragic death of Hrvoje Horvatić, then her partner (who also helped in drafting the text), and an unexpected problem with the English producer, Breda decided not to make the film despite having finalized the choice of musical tracks and the form of the screenplay which is now published here.

Since the mid 1970s Breda Beban was already a successful artist in Zagreb and throughout Yugoslavia, having exhibited in several contemporary art galleries, when she was chosen by the commission led by Achille Bonito Oliva to represent Yugoslavia at the Sydney Biennale in 1984.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she was a pioneer of Yugoslav film and video art. Then, in twenty years of career in England, she expanded her visual production activity also with films for galleries, mini musical and other innovative projects, such as *imagine art after* and *The Endless School*, and she became one of the best recognized artists, at the time called 'A list artists'.

The edition of this unpublished opus is a further piece that wants to underline the versatility of Breda Beban's talent in spanning many fields of art and the uninterrupted innovation of her creative work. This screenplay now joins her already rich body of works.

This publication aims to pay homage to the artist and is a gratitude for the emotions that Breda's work has aroused in us.

## Chris Darke

Excerpt from 'Fragments for H: a personal tribute to Hrvoje Horvatić' in *Vertigo*, vol. 1, 8, Summer 1998.

I first got to know Hrvoje Horvatić and Breda Beban, his partner in life and work, through a retrospective of their video tapes at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1994.

It was shortly after, while interviewing Breda and Hrvoje for a magazine piece, I discovered the couple were indeed artist-filmmakers working in video. They already had a world-class reputation as video-artists but their influences were from cinema, conceptual art and Byzantine aesthetics. We prolonged the interview, turned it into an excuse for long lunches. We talked, ate and drank together regularly, every weekend. It was the most research I ever did for a piece.

Affinities emerged and friendship developed. It will remain a formative relationship for me. There are few friendships as intimate as those forged in a creative collaboration. Hrvoje and Breda made a family of their collaborators and crew, an approach to the process that produced a sense of loyalty and kinship. Theirs was a partnership that they extended to include others.

We'd spent almost two years writing a feature script, the three of us holed up for weeks and months on end, staring at rows of index cards pinned to a wall, something to move around when inspiration was thin. The script we wrote together, from Hrvoje's and Breda's original story, is called *Moneystains*. We worked for eighteen months, had a bust-up. Stopped. Started again. It was everything writing in collaboration should be, enervating, exhausting, inspirational.



## Biographies

### Breda Beban

Breda Beban (1952 – 2012) was an artist, filmmaker and curator/creative producer whose work deals with contemporary notions of subjectivity and emotion that occur on the margins of big stories about geography, politics and love. Breda Beban's films and photographs are recognized as unique expressions of intimacy, vulnerability and authenticity.

Born in Novi Sad, ex-Yugoslavia in 1952, Breda Beban was raised in Macedonia and Croatia. She studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. Starting her career as a painter and performance artist, she began to work with film, video, and photography after meeting her partner and collaborator Hrvoje Horvatić in the mid-eighties. Exiled together in 1991 after outbreak of the war in former Yugoslavia, they travelled from place to place before eventually settling in London, where they continued their collaboration until Horvatić's untimely death in 1997. Working independently and/or in collaboration with other artists or filmmaker, she has fashioned a range of productions that have been exhibited at major museums of contemporary art in Europe and the U.S.

Breda Beban lived in London and Sheffield, where she was Professor of Media Arts at Sheffield Hallam University. She passed away in 2012, leaving various projects uncompleted.

### Hrvoje Horvatić

Hrvoje Horvatić (1958 – 1997) studied at the Academy for Film and Television in Zagreb.

He worked in Yugoslavia and in UK, in collaboration with Breda Beban, on numerous features and documentaries and he directed also a few short films. Together with Breda Beban and Chris Darke, he worked on the feature-film script *Moneystains*.

## Chris Darke

Chris Darke is a London-based writer and film critic. His work has appeared in many magazines including *Sight & Sound*, *Film Comment* and *Cahiers du cinema*. He is also the author of several books including *La Jetée* (BFI Film Classics) 2016, *Light Readings: Film Criticism and Screen Arts* (2000).





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