

# My Husband! My Husband!

This is in garish primary colours, a return to Berlin of the 20s in style.

We open with 'STASH' in drag singing one of her songs. Perhaps the Possie Ballade! Under whiskier lights, with thumping accompaniment. At the end — a spot picks out a member of the audience: 'hardier and gentler!' 2. Look just see - Possie song! We will pretend of die, we other poles. But we of die of your amusement, like an array - utary = the harder 300! He walks out.

→ We were opened to our people - not my mother + father, my brothers, my fiancé, my boss, my birth profession at work - mission — but their one it did open! Madame Black, as she is! Madame Black! Well (wondering no), (would she not of justice that is....

2. My Husband! My Husband!

The the scene in the shop. The dog is shopping  
bag.

MY HUSBAND! MY HUSBAND!

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BY

MAURICE ROWDON

CHARACTERS

STASH

MAGDA BRONIATOWSKA

PAUL BRONIATOWSKY

PETER BRONIATOWSKY

ANDREW MYERS

TWO YOUNG GIRLS, CASHIER (POLISH),  
SHOPPERS (POLISH).

A POLISH DELICATESSEN---HELP-YOURSELF WITH A CASH DESK NEAR THE ENTRANCE. MAGDA BRONIATOWSKA, A MIDDME-AGED POLISH WOMAN RATHER UNFASHIONABLY DRESSED, IS WALKING ROUND CHOOSING ARTICLES QUIETLY. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER SHOPPERS. THE WOMAN AT THE CASH DESK IS TALKING TO ONE OF THE SHOPPERS IN POLISH. THE MURMUR OF THEIR TALK COMES OVER AS WE FOLLOW MAGDA BENDING AND SELECTING.

STASH, ALSO POLISH AND SOME YEARS YOUNGER THAN MAGDA, ENTERS THE SHOP AND STANDS THERE, FOLLOWING MAGDA WITH HIS EYES. THE MURMUR OF THE WOMEN'S VOICES CONTINUES TO COME OVER. MAGDA GLANCES IN HIS DIRECTION BUT DOES NOT SEEM TO SEE HIM, AND SHE GOES ON SHOPPING. HE GETS INTO A POSITION WHERE SHE CANNOT AVOID SEEING HIM.

MAGDA RAISES HERSELF AND TURNS TO WALK IN HIS DIRECTION. SHE GLANCES AT HIM, LOOKS AGAIN, STARES, GASPS---SHE IS SO ASTONISHED THAT SHE DROPS HER SHOPPING AND IT CRASHES TO THE FLOOR. THE OTHER SHOPPERS TURN. THE WOMAN AT THE CASH DESK RUSHES ROUND TO SEE WHAT HAPPENED.

MAGDA AND STASH STAND STARING AT EACH OTHER.

STASH (IN ENGLISH, QUIETLY) It's Magda, isn't it?

MAGDA (IN POLISH) Stash! Stash! It's you!

THEY CLING TOGETHER. SHE LOOKS INTO HIS EYES CLOSELY.

MAGDA (STILL IN POLISH) Come back to my house! Oh Stash!

STASH (WITH A TOUCH OF FEROCITY) Speak  
in English!

MAGDA (BEWILDERED) What?

STASH: I don't want to hear that language!  
Come on!

HE ALMOST DRAGS HER OUT OF THE SHOP. HER  
SHOPPING IS LEFT IN THE HANDS OF THE WOMAN  
AT THE CASH DESK.

MAGDA (TO ANYONE, AS THEY LEAVE, IN ENGLISH)  
It's my husband! my husband!

THE TITLES COME UP OVER THE DELICATESSEN AS  
THE WOMEN CLEAR UP THE MESS. THE MURMUR  
OF POLISH TALK, MORE ANIMATED NOW, CONTINUES.

CUT TO THE BASEMENT FLAT OF THE BRONIATOWSKYS.  
THIS IS IN THE FORM OF TWO ROOMS. THE  
FIRST LEADS STRAIGHT FROM THE FRONT DOOR,  
AFTER A TINY HALL FOR COATS. THE SECOND  
LEADS OUT OF THIS ROOM ON TO THE GARDEN SIDE.  
THE FIRST ROOM IS USED AS AN OFFICE CUM SIT-  
TING ROOM, WITH IKONS AND CARPETS ON THE  
WALL, AND CROSSED SWORDS. THE SECOND HAS  
A GRAND PIANO, BOOKSHELVES, A SETTEE AND ARM-  
CHAIRS. THERE IS A RATHER IMPRESSIONISTIC  
PAINTING OF STASH IN HIS YOUTH ON THE WALL.  
THE DOOR TO THIS SECOND ROOM IS AJAR.  
THERE IS THE MURMUR OF MORE POLISH VOICES,  
FROM THE SECOND ROOM, WHERE PAUL BRONIAT-  
OWSKY (AGED 19) IS GOING THROUGH A POLISH  
PLAY WITH TWO GIRLS OF THE SAME AGE: THEIR  
POLISH IS THAT OF BEGINNERS.

MAGDA AND STASH COME INTO THE FIRST ROOM  
FROM THE STREET, BREATHLESS, STILL HALF CLING-  
ING TO EACH OTHER, STARING.

STASH: You said that well---'my husband'!  
After thirty years!

MAGDA (IN POLISH) Oh Stash, I've thought  
so much--- (STOPPING) What's wrong with  
Polish? Have you committed a crime?

STASH (TOUCHING HER FACE) That same wicked  
little look!

THEY KISS FOR THE FIRST TIME, IN THE FAMILY  
WAY, ON BOTH CHEEKS.

STASH: Won't they talk about you in the shop?

MAGDA: I don't care!

STASH: Your accent's appalling. And you've been living here how long---since the war?

MAGDA: When did you come?

STASH: To England?

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: Five years ago.

MAGDA: Five years---! Why doesn't anybody know?

STASH: Anybody meaning a Pole I suppose--- a real human being---not an Englishman, not a foreigner!

MAGDA: Stash, what happened? Why do you hate us?

STASH: And why do you have to say 'us'--- not me? Always 'us'! 'We Poles'!

MAGDA: You haven't changed in your face--- hardly at all.

STASH: After thirty years? That's difficult to believe.

MAGDA: Your expression's more open--- you were locked up inside then---

STASH: You knew where I was living didn't you---all this time? You never once tried to see me. You came back to Warsaw God knows how many times with your war-hero husband in tow, and you didn't think to call me up. 'We Poles' seem to have let 'us Poles' down!

MAGDA: Perhaps I did come to see you. Perhaps I turned away from the door because I was frightened.

STASH: The story I heard was that you saw me in bed with a boy. And turned away.

And vomited all night.

MAGDA REMAINS SILENT.

STASH: I wrote you a million letters!  
Unanswered letters for twenty-odd years!

MAGDA: And why didn't you come here  
straight away when you arrived---five  
years ago?

STASH: Good God! It just seemed to me  
that not having had a reply for twenty years  
or more----!

THE YOUNGSTERS LAUGH NEXT DOOR.

STASH: Who's that?

MAGDA: My boy. I have a son. He's  
learning Polish with some other children.

STASH: Learning Polish? Shouldn't they  
be learning English?

MAGDA: English is what they grew up in---

STASH (GOING TO THE DOOR LEADING TO THE NEXT  
ROOM) So they might forget they're Poles!  
You wouldn't like to breed an Englishman ~~we~~  
would you?

MAGDA (WATCHING HIM) Be careful. Your  
portrait's in there.

STASH: Do you still paint?

MAGDA: No.

STASH: You brought it all this way?

MAGDA: In the car, rolled up. My mother  
had it.

STASH (WITH A CHUCKLE) Then you must  
have---a little feeling for me---?

HE PEEPS THROUGH TO THE SECOND ROOM. FROM  
HIS PV WE SEE THE THREE YOUNGSTERS REHEARS-  
ING FROM PLAY SCRIPTS AND FINDING IT A LARK.  
THEY STOP WHEN THEY SEE HIM. STASH IS GAZ-  
ING ACROSS AT HIS OWN PORTRAIT ON THE WALL.  
HE BOWS TO THE YOUNGSTERS WITH MOCK FORMALITY.

STASH (TO THE YOUNGSTERS) I was looking at my portrait. That's me.

PAUL: I thought you were dead!

STASH: Not really. Only a little now and then. What are you reading? It sounded like Sluby Panienskie.

PAUL: Yes.

STASH: But you're oneshort---you need two girls and two boys, to fall in love with each other.

PAUL: Yes I know but---

STASH HAS ALREADY TURNED AWAY. BACK TO THE FIRST ROOM.

MAGDA: What did you think of him---my boy?

STASH: I was looking at my portrait. I'm one of those people who never change. You're quite right. Our spirits stay the same. (LOOKING ROUND) Is the whole house yours?

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: Do you know I make terrible mistakes now when I speak Polish---just after five years---I must have spat the Pole out---like that (MOCK SPITTING). Don't look so damned martyred! You've been martyred so many times before---by the Germans! by the British! Then the Russians! You've been martyred by your own husband too, I mean your second one, your illegal one!

MAGDA: My husband! And what do you know about him? He's given me a beautiful child---and a home---it's more than you could provide!

STASH (LIGHTLY) I've a nice enough home. Top floor flat. At least it isn't a basement.

MAGDA: There's---

STASH (TURNING ON HER SUDDENLY) You're a liar! Liar! The house isn't yours! Only this basement! I can tell when

you're lying. 'We Poles' lift our chins and pout in a certain way when we're lying.

MAGDA: Do we?

STASH: So you found me in bed with a boy. And you vomited. Some say all night. Others say just the evening's dinner. And you'd already been married perhaps eight years---to another man! I could spend an amusing day undoing all your lies. I can see them all round your head! They're twined in your hair! They're in that ghastly old-fashioned coat you just threw off!

MAGDA: I was martyred. I'd had eight years of it and wanted something different--- when I came to see you--

STASH: Ah! Just now he gave you a home and a beautiful child. And the truth is he did! And you weren't martyred!

MAGDA: You always stripped me bare didn't you? All right, I'm nothing---!

STASH: You married him in Italy didn't you? in the war?

MAGDA: On the front, yes.

STASH: To hell with 'on the front'! He was a headquarters man! You were miles---miles behind the lines!

MAGDA (WATCHING HIM LEVELLY) And you make me believe we really were.

STASH: If people saw us together they'd take us for mother and son.

MAGDA: Thank you.

STASH: Not at all.

VOICES ARE RAISED AGAIN NEXT DOOR IN LAUGHTER.

MAGDA: I can see you liked my son. You hardly looked at the portrait. I can tell your lies too!

STASH: The boy's got his face--- which doesn't recommend it to me.

How did you get over the legal side by the way? I mean you were already married--- our marriage was as legal as another---

MAGDA: Oh the war. I didn't think you'd survive the concentration camp---

STASH: Ah, so you knew the Germans had arrested me.

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: I learned to do without women in that camp. Forced myself to learn!

MAGDA: Yes, I heard that too. I heard you got food that way---

STASH: Go on---explain---'that way'---

MAGDA: Oh!

STASH: I was the camp doctor's wife for two months. Then I graduated to the commandant. You're looking at me with disgust.

MAGDA: I was thinking of what a doctor told me.

STASH: What did a doctor tell you?

MAGDA: That nearly all homosexuals end in mental homes.

STASH: And you're straight, are you? And that 'chestnut'-merchant of yours is straight is he? the man who made his money travel across frontiers---emerged from the war a rich man!

MAGDA: Ah, you pick up filth as well do you?

STASH: That isn't what I have against him. Don't worry. I've done far worse things than swindle on the currency exchange. it's the lying---that damned erect back of his---

MAGDA: And how do you know him?---by a dirty lot of gossip at the Polish clubs! And it's really your own father you're talking about---it's a father complex---some-

thing like that---!

STASH (LAUGHING) My father was a darling! I adored him! He wasn't erect! And as for the father-complex---you've barely read a book in your life!

MAGDA (GAZING AT HIM WITH A REMINISCENT SMILE) You always used to win like that. And I do really feel I haven't read a book! And I've read more books than you've had cups of coffee. Do you still drink coffee all day?

STASH (NOT LISTENING) I stood outside that shop a hundred times. And this evening I decided to walk in.

MAGDA: Ah! You planned it! Everything planned! Always up here in the brain! 'Do you want sex'? I remember you asking that. A boy of---what were you---sixteen, eighteen?

STASH: 'Do you want sex'?

MAGDA: I'm an old woman, according to you.

STASH: But I can sleep with anything!

MAGDA: Skatina (bitch)!

HE LAUGHS.

THE PHONE BELL RINGS NEXT DOOR. SOMEONE ANSWERS IT.

MAGDA: It's my 'erect husband'. He always phones about now.

PAUL APPEARS AT THE DOOR.

PAUL: It's dad. He's on his way.

MAGDA: Yes, all right. Go back to your play. (TO STASH) We can't talk here.

STASH: Afraid of him?

MAGDA: He won't understand---he's not an understanding man---

STASH: Then why bring me here? We could have gone to my-place!

MAGDA: I didn't think!

STASH: And doesn't he want you to cook his dinner for him like a good Polish wife? And where's all that shopping---on the floor of the delicatessen---

MAGDA (GRABBING HER COAT) We'll pick it up---come on!

STASH (GOING WITH HER) Ah---you're interested in me---it's an escapade!

HE GIVES HER A QUICK KISS AS THEY REACH THE FRONT DOOR. THEY LEAVE.

PAUL HAS BEEN WATCHING.

PAUL (TURNING BACK TO THE GIRLS) They're lovers! It's absolutely obvious! (THE GIRLS LAUGH) He's better looking than the old man. Come on, let's have a smoke!

CUT BACK TO THE DELICATESSEN. THE MURMUR OF WOMEN'S TALK COMES OVER AGAIN. THE CASHIER IS TALKING TO ONE OF THE SHOPPERS AS BEFORE, IN POLISH. MAGDA AND STASH COME IN, ARM IN ARM.

MAGDA (IN ENGLISH) My shopping. I'm so sorry!

CASHIER (IN POLISH) Mrs Broniatowska! I wondered! Such a shock! Your husband you said (HANDING MAGDA THE BAG)---look, I replaced the jam, what you smashed---that's all right---your husband, you said?

MAGDA TAKES THE BAG.

MAGDA (IN POLISH) Thank you.

STASH (TO THE CASHIER, IN ENGLISH) That's right, her husband! She's got two husbands!

THEY LEAVE.

CASHIER (TO SHOPPER, IN POLISH) Did you hear? Mrs Broniatowska---two husbands!

CUT BACK TO THE BRONIATOWSKY BASEMENT, WHICH IS IN SEMI-DARKNESS. THE DOOR TO THE SECOND ROOM IS AJAR, WITH LIGHT POURING THROUGH. SILENCE.

PETER BRONIATOWSKY, MAGDA'S HUSBAND, COMES IN THE FRONT DOOR WITH ANDREW MYERS, AN ENGLISHMAN IN HIS MIDDLE AGE.

THE MEN HANG UP THEIR COATS WITH END-OF-HARD-DAY SIGHS, AND ENTER THE FIRST ROOM. BRONIATOWSKY SWITCHES ON THE VARIOUS LIGHTS CAREFULLY.

BRONIATOWSKY: Come in Andrew.

BRONIATOWSKY WALKS THROUGH TO THE SECOND ROOM AUTOMATICALLY.

BRONIATOWSKY: Magda! Andrew's here---  
(PEERING THROUGH TO THE CORRIDOR BEYOND)  
Magda? Magda?

MYERS SITS DOWN WITH THE GROAN OF A MAN AFRAID OF WORK. HIS BRIEFCASE DROPS TO THE SIDE OF THE CHAIR.

BRONIATOWSKY HAS DISAPPEARED.

CUT TO STASH'S TOP-FLOOR BED-SITTER. IT IS SIMPLY, EVEN RATHER MONASTICALLY FURNISHED, WITH DIVAN BED, WARDROBE, SCREENED-OFF KITCHEN AREA, DINING TABLE, LOUNGE CHAIRS.

STASH IS MAKING COFFEE WHILE MAGDA SITS AT THE TABLE, HER FUR COAT STILL ON. SHE IS HOLDING IT TIGHT ROUND HER NECK.

MAGDA: Is it always this cold?

STASH: It'll warm up soon. I'm hardly ever here.

MAGDA: It makes you a liar too (LOOKING ROUND) You said a top-floor flat. This is a pokey room, and I expect you have to go down the corridor for the lavatory.

STASH: Yes I do.

MAGDA: Still, you've got a phone.

STASH: Yes.

MAGDA: He'll be wondering where I am.

STASH: You're excited aren't you?--- like when you came to my room in Warsaw--- it excited you being away from your family---

all those counts and army officers---  
the people you belong to!

MAGDA: I was excited by you---that's all!

STASH: So you didn't answer one of my  
letters for over twenty years. Yes!

MAGDA: I knew all about you---friends  
from Warsaw gave me reports!

STASH: Did they tell you I'd come to  
England?

MAGDA: No.

STASH (BRINGING THE COFFEE TO THE TABLE)  
Because they didn't know. Because I slogged  
at my English for a good ten years, and  
schemed to get away, and never told a soul,  
and at last I made it. And not one of  
them knew where I'd gone.

MAGDA: Your visa was for Paris. I heard  
that.

STASH: Sugar?

MAGDA: I don't take it.

STASH: You used to.

MAGDA: It's a strange room. It doesn't  
seem in London.

STASH: Warsaw perhaps?

MAGDA: No, just strange.

STASH: Suppose your son tells him I was  
there?

MAGDA: Well? He doesn't know who you are!

STASH: But it's on your mind isn't it?  
If we Poles got to learn that Mrs Broniatowska  
was married before, and to a man your husband  
despises, a man you don't want your husband  
to meet, so you almost push me out of that  
door---!

MAGDA: You think I can look at you and just  
think what my husband might say?

STASH: (GAZING AT HER) I don't know. I'm  
not sure.

MAGDA: So why did you come to the shop---  
if you're not sure of me---of my feelings?

STASH: Why did I write you a thousand let-  
ters?

MAGDA: After a time I threw them away  
unopened. He made me.

STASH: A man can make a woman throw a  
lover's letters away! Not on your wife!

MAGDA: Ah, you were a 'lover'!

STASH: You managed to get to Italy and  
there you saw a lot of medals on a man's  
chest, and you thought I might end in a  
gas chamber! You hoped!

MAGDA: Shut up!

STASH: That's better! A little of that  
poise is flaking off!

MAGDA: And did you never run away from  
me?

STASH: No!

MAGDA: You did, every moment! Every  
time you turned over in bed. You were  
never with me---not for a single moment!  
You were always alone!

STASH: I wonder if anyone else has known  
you and loved you like I have---remembered  
you---registered every mark on your face---  
those lines---that pout---the pucker of the  
eyebrows---

MAGDA: Don't you dare touch---!

STASH: Ah I've got the flames rising.  
We'll get to the little savage yet---  
underneath the fur coat! Mrs Broniatowska---  
the Countess Broniatowska! I wouldn't mind  
if you'd torn the letters up---burned them---  
stamped on them---sent them back in shreds!  
But not to answer! You couldn't answer!

MAGDA: What could I have said---that I  
was happy?

STASH: He didn't give you a single happy

moment?

MAGDA: I got used to him.

STASH: You choose to marry a man you can't stand---are you telling me that?

MAGDA: I needed him.

STASH (IN A FLASH) When---in the war---after the war---now?

MAGDA: Always---right from the beginning.

STASH: And you were never happy?

MAGDA: Oh very---sometimes---

STASH (WITH A SHRUG) I suppose he made you respectable. You always needed that. He hasn't got much of a job but while people go on eating Polish gherkins you won't starve. And everybody looks up to him---the Telegas and the Ledakowskys and the Gazdas. Such a brave man---tortured by everybody except the English, and even they reserved a special kind of torture for him at Yalta, didn't they? They sold his country to the Reds! Yes, I know it all by heart---and you lived on it all---and you too refused to speak English didn't you; because you and your husband had given England your blood---'the red poppies at Monte Cassino' were <sup>red</sup> with Polish blood'---and what did they give you in return? Nothing! So you owed England nothing. She owed you something! Your blood! So you didn't learn her language! You didn't mix---no! But then your children had to go to English schools---they had to speak the language---they had to fit in---and you found after a time that they rather despised you for being an outsider! They wanted to be English! Disaster!

MAGDA: You've learned a lot about us in five years.

STASH: I'm reading it all in the lines of your face---! You're not going to drink that coffee?

MAGDA: It's horrible. You always made such good coffee in Warsaw.

STASH: That's because I've forgotten to do it the Polish way. That's the real way isn't it? Not Italian coffee or French coffee or American coffee. But real coffee. Polish coffee.

MAGDA: Did you trouble to come out of your little shell of hatred for a moment to meet some of us?

STASH: From time to time!

MAGDA: How is it I've never heard them speak your name? My husband never mentions it! If we're such a tight little community how is it I never heard your name as one of us?

STASH: You did hear of it. And he did mention it to you---often.

MAGDA: And I'm telling you he never mentioned Stanislaw Boczkowsky once! (COLLECTING HIS CUP) And now let me make you a real cup of coffee---Polish coffee!

SHE STALKS TO THE KITCHEN AND TIPS THE COFFEE DOWN THE SINK WITH A FLOURISH.

CUT TO THE BRONIATOWSKY FLAT, THE FIRST ROOM. ANDREW MYERS IS SITTING AT A TABLE WITH ACCOUNTS BEFORE HIM. PETER BRONIATOWSKY IS CHECKING ENTIRES IN A LARGE LEDGER, HIS SPECTACLES ON.

BRONIATOWSKY LOOKS ROUND ANXIOUSLY.

MYERS: Ah wait a minute. There were those bottled gherkins if I remember rightly.

BRONIATOWSKY: It's past eight.

MYERS: She's with friends. I can feel it.

A NOISE OUTSIDE.

BRONIATOWSKY: There she is! You'll get your piroshki after all.

PAUL COMES IN FROM THE STREET.

PAUL: Hullo.

MYERS: Hullo Paul. It's the bloke from upstairs again.

BRONIATOWSKY: Where's your mother?

PAUL: Isn't she in?

BRONIATOWSKY: Have you been smoking?

PAUL: No.

BRONIATOWSKY GOES TO HIS SON AND SNEELS HIM AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

BRONIATOWSKY: You're a liar.

PAUL: Oh thanks!

BRONIATOWSKY: Better than tell lies smoke until you're sick, but tell me! Did your mother leave a message?

PAUL: No. She went out, I think.

BRONIATOWSKY: She went out shopping?

PAUL: I don't know.

BRONIATOWSKY: What, she just went out--- she must have said something!

PAUL: No she ddn't.

BRONIATOWSKY: Anyway, I'll take Andrew to the club---she's probably with Hanya, licking up culture.

PAUL: She was with a man.

BRONIATOWSKY: What man?

PAUL: He was the man over the piano (NODDING TOWARDS THE SECOND ROOM).

MYERS: 'Man over/ the piano'---I like that. What does your mum do---take him down and give him a dust when she wants a walk?

BRONIATOWSKY: That portrait you mean? He's been dead for God knows how many years.

PAUL: Well he said so himself. He pointed at it and said that's me.

BRONIATOWSKY: He was here?

PAUL: She went out shopping and she came back with him, then they went out again.

MYERS (TO BRONIATOWSKY) What sign were you born under?

BRONIATOWSKY: I tell you twice a month. Leo.

MYERS: You're going to fall in love.

BRONIATOWSKY: What, again? I hope she's nice!

MYERS: She's your wife.

BRONIATOWSKY: My wife? What tells you that?

MYERS: The stars.

BRONIATOWSKY LAUGHS.

MYERS: What's so funny? Here's a man suddenly comes back from the dead. Eh Paul? The young know about these things.

BRONIATOWSKY: Let's grab some dinner. We can struggle with this lot afterwards. (TO PAUL) Take one of your girls out (GIVING HIM MONEY). You like it better than eating here anyway.

PAUL: Well mum always seems to be burning things lately.

MYERS (PUTTING HIS COAT ON) She's burnt her boats tonight by the look of it--- going out with a dead man, eh, Peter?

BRONIATOWSKY (TO PAUL, AS THEY LEAVE) See you later.

PAUL WATCHES THEM GO. THE FRONT DOOR SLAMS. PAUL LIGHTS A CIGARETTE AT ONCE. HE STROLLS NEXT DOOR. WE TRACK AFTER HIM TO FIND HIM STUDYING THE PORTRAIT ON THE WALL.

CUT BACK TO THE STASH BED-SITTER.  
STASH IS RAISING THE NEW CUP OF COFFEE  
TO HIS LIPS.

STASH: And your husband kisses the  
Countess Gobrowska's hand once a week,  
and you all remember how she played in  
cabaret forty years ago and was the  
heart-throb of Warsaw---oh good God!  
I took one look at you all and decided  
I'd rather be an Englishman---

MAGDA (QUIETLY) Even that---better than  
a Pole eh?

STASH: And you're great friends with  
Gazda, the smartest little crook in the  
community! What does he talk about with  
Count Peter Broniatowsky---all the chest-  
nuts they ate together during the war?  
(LAUGHING) I hear Gazda ate so many  
chestnuts he farted all the way from  
Cassino to Dieppe at the end of the war,  
and the British army caught trench mouth!

MAGDA: You did something terrible didn't  
you? In Warsaw? Is that why you left?

STASH: 'Why I left' (WITH A SHRUG);  
same reason as you. I heard of a place  
where people were free. And I went there.  
I don't mean about the régime, the Russians---  
communism---I can live under anything---I  
mean I wouldn't have felt free in any  
kind of Poland!

MAGDA: Why do we love our country so  
much?---when you talk against it I feel  
like something burning and tearing me---  
and it's burning you too---I can see it---

STASH: You think you're Polish? And what  
Poland do you love? I don't see you or  
your husband with his belly full of chest-  
nuts as very Polish! You're a sort of  
hybrid---

MAGDA: Did you come to the shop to tell  
me what I know already---

STASH: You even look a hybrid. You  
never could dress. I remember those  
ghastly crinoline things you used to put  
on for a party---and those cutglass necklaces-

and you're just the same now! Even your coffee's horrible! It's perfect Polish coffee therefore it's horrible. I mean it's untrue. It's untrue coffee! Because the Poles are crippled---twisted--- I mean the real Poles, over there---they're bent---and you're not bent---so you're not a Pole---you're an untrue Pole---you're sick because you're not sick.

MAGDA: Perhaps you don't know how sick we are!

STASH: 'Poland'! Go there---go and live there---you won't teach your children the language any more! Why Polish? Why not Latin and Greek---they're no more dead than Polish! What are you hoping for---you and your chestnut-man---a new revolution? There won't be one! The 'old Poland'? It never even existed! You made it up, like people made up old England and old France and everywhere else, we're all one people---one world---and you scuttle round like rats in a loft with your blasted Polish newspapers and celebrities and Warsaw tittle-tattle! It's a big fart---a fart from a chestnut!

MAGDA: Did my husband do any more trade in chestnuts than other people?

STASH: He made a fortune! Which you wouldn't think seeing the basement you live in.

MAGDA: The house is ours. We let the upper floors. Mr Myers has most of it. He's a retailer---he works with my husband.

STASH: You ran out of money?

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: He can't manage his affairs?

MAGDA: His love affairs, yes!

STASH: He has many?

MAGDA: Oh!

STASH (QUIETLY) You suffered a lot eh?

MAGDA: I suppose.

STASH: He keeps the girls---I mean incomes---that kind of thing?

MAGDA: Oh no. Just dinners out. And hotel rooms. Little bits of jewellery. Not that I know. I never had control.

STASH: It surprised you, the way he turned---such an honourable, such an upright man?

MAGDA: What? He's been like that ever since I met him! I was one in twenty girls, in Italy. But he wanted to marry me. Some girls he wanted for a night, some for a week, and me to marry!

STASH: And you needed him---right from the start---how 'needed' him?

MAGDA: I could see my future when I looked at him. I can't explain it. And when I thought of you I could see no future.

STASH: Looking at me now---do you think I could have given you a future---?

MAGDA: No of course I don't.

STASH: I'd have given you something more exciting---more terrible---and you couldn't have stood it? could you?

MAGDA: You would have been more faithful---

STASH: Me?

MAGDA: Oh I think so.

STASH: I've never been faithful to anything for more than five minutes!

MAGDA (A SHRUG) It's what I feel. But he gives me this other thing---that I needed.

STASH: Ah! Bed! And what did I give you?

MAGDA: You didn't make me feel there was a future in it---that's all.

STASH: Children you mean?

MAGDA: Just future. I can't explain.

STASH: You mean about me having that boy---?

MAGDA: No. It was just a feeling. That I was never really with you.

STASH: And you're really with him?

MAGDA: Always. Every time. And it's something I can't help. His girls don't make any difference to that. That's what I mean by need. I can't get away from the need so I can't get away from him. That's why I never answered the letters. I couldn't explain---I hadn't thought it out.

STASH: Did you read any of those letters?

MAGDA: The first ones.

STASH: They made him jealous?

MAGDA: Oh---I just said a family friend.

STASH: And what about when they kept on coming in? over years and years and years?

MAGDA: I threw them away---in front of him--- it made him laugh---he began to guess it might be a lover---and he felt good seeing me throw them away unread---

STASH: That was a dirty thing to do.

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: Yet you kept my portrait on the wall.

MAGDA: It was closer to me than the letters. The letters seemed strange ←--- all about Warsaw when I didn't live there any more---and most of the people you talked about I didn't know---so your portrait was closer to me.

STASH: And what did he think about the portrait? Surely that meant your lover had won after all didn't it---if you kept a portrait of him over the piano, slap in front of all the guests---

MAGDA: I told him it was somebody else. He didn't know it was the same man as wrote the letters.

STASH: How devious you are.

MAGDA: And I told him you were dead.

STASH: The portrait, not the letter-writer? Well! And I thought I could play a trick or two in the war of survival!

MAGDA: And I got used to you being dead. Even with your letters arriving. So when I saw you in the shop just now it was like somebody coming out of the dead---like seeing my brother and I knew the nazis shot him in the street---

STASH: Meaning you killed me. In your mind.

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: Not a soul here knew we were married?

MAGDA: No.

STASH: Surely we had a witness---I can't remember---it was dangerous---we ran all the way---there was firing---do you remember? My father used to fake passports for the Jews---and he faked my age---he faked a birth certificate for me---he didn't want to do it because it made me eligible for military service---but I begged and begged for three whole days---and we went and found a priest, do you remember?---not even my parents knew---but we must have had a witness.

MAGDA: It was Gustaw, your room-mate. He was from Krakow. He died in Siberia.

STASH: You see how war favours the illegal and underhand? The witnesses die off, the witnesses of truth! I mean your second marriage---did you realise after the war, and all these years since, that I was helping you? By not coming forward and saying she's my wife?

MAGDA: I didn't think you took it seriously enough!

STASH: With thirty letters a year arriving? And me addressing you correctly as Mrs Broniatowska, you didn't realise a) I was helping you and b) I was taking you very seriously indeed?

MAGDA: You talk like a lawyer. You never did before.

STASH: I've been weighing the case up all these years---that's why.

MAGDA: And now you've come to prosecute, what do you mean to do with me?

STASH: What could I do? declare you unlawfully married---divide you from your family---expose---denude---defame! Do you see all that in my face? And you ask me if you've changed. And the answer is a million times no, no!---if only you had! You always had something small in you---'prosecute'!

MAGDA: Who was there to change me?--- Peter does the same things every day--- the same vodka, the same nights out.

STASH: But he's an amusing man! He's got loads of personality, Peter Broniatowsky! I've talked to him!

MAGDA: You've talked to him?

STASH: A dozen times. Ask him yourself--- doesn't he know Stephen Bolek?

MAGDA (HUSHED WITH HORROR) Bolek?  
(JUMPING UP, PUSHING BACK THE CHAIR)  
Bolek? You're not him---!

STASH: That's my name. I changed it when I came to England---Stephen Bolek! Yes!

MAGDA: You ought to be in prison! He's said it a thousand times. He goes red in the face when your name is mentioned---the veins stand out on his neck---if he knew I was here with you---with Stephen Bolek! That's your face, yes! I've seen it in the papers---a hundred times! And I didn't connect! 'Stephen Bolek'---that's for Bolek---that---and that! (SPITS ON THE GROUND)

HE SITS GAZING AT HER.

STASH: At least you didn't spit in my face.

MAGDA: How could you? (SUBSIDING INTO HER CHAIR AGAIN) My poor darling! (TAKING HIS HAND)

STASH: Perhaps you should have answered those letters---then you could have influenced me---

MAGDA: Let me phone him---let me go back---

STASH: Ah! You feel I can't do you harm any more eh? I can't prosecute! But don't provoke me---

MAGDA: Oh I wouldn't provoke you. Knowing who you are! I just want to tell him I'll be back---soon.

STASH: Why---did you think of staying---before---before I was Bolek?

MAGDA: I almost---felt it again---like we were before---knowing how hopeless it would probably be but better than what I've got.

STASH: But never with Stephen Bolek, eh?

MAGDA: Never in ten million lifetimes.

STASH: Did they ever specify what was wrong with me?

MAGDA: Oh yes!

STASH: And the case was proved?

MAGDA: You went to prison!

STASH: I needed money.

MAGDA: That's why you were shouting about my crimes and his crimes, because you're black with crimes yourself---the guilty like to spread their guilt! Well my husband needed money too! So he bought gold sovereigns in Cairo and sold them in Naples---like everybody else! He didn't sell his country!

STASH: I was helping my country surely---

wasn't that the case against me? Yes, I did get money. It did come from somebody connected with their embassy.

MAGDA: And you sold nothing for that money?

STASH: The case was cleared. They let me become an Englishman. So it must have been all right.

MAGDA: Not one of us believes that.

STASH: Not one of you is in a position to judge.

MAGDA: You're judging yourself! It's in your face! You're not so cool now!

STASH: Aren't you relieved? that I'm a criminal too? Not just you and your husband?

MAGDA: Oh, 'criminal'!

STASH: All you mean is my case went to a court of law---yours didn't---for shutting your mouth for thirty years---illegally re-marrying!---and him and his illegal fortune--- those cases didn't go to the lawcourts! But my case did! And my case was disproved! And I was acquitted! They let me go! They gave me my naturalisation papers! I never did anything wrong!

MAGDA (GOING TO HIM) Stash, it's like when you were sixteen---the same tears--- when I wouldn't marry you!

STASH: And I was so good! I let you go free. I didn't say a thing---not to anyone in Warsaw. And I wrote to you; asking you why you'd gone---and I came to England because it was your country---and I learned the language just for you---I grabbed every English student I could find and made him talk to me in English---until I mastered it. And I didn't tell a soul. I didn't let a soul know how fluent my English was. And it went on for over ten years---after I decided to get away. And then the chance came. They sent me to Paris. They trusted me.

SHE DETACHES HERSELF FROM HIM THOUGHTFULLY.

MAGDA: And what about the boy? being in bed with a boy? If you were so much in love with me, a woman, how could you do that?

STASH: Oh---you know the answer better than I do---I could sleep with a buffalo. if I had to---it's what the war taught me---you know how I got through the concentration camp---

MAGDA: A lie!

STASH: Oh? What's a lie?

MAGDA: That the camp corrupted you--- that the camp commandant, being such a beautiful man---! It's a lie! You were like that always! At sixteen! At fourteen! It showed in the way you made love to me! It's a lie! A lie!

STASH: And the English court of law lied too, when they gave a verdict of not guilty?

MAGDA: No. I believe that. I believe you were innocent. Because you were never like that, you never had a touch of Stephen Bolek in you.

STASH: And why did I pour out my life in hundreds of letters? were the letters all lies?

MAGDA: You wanted to pour out to someone--- you felt a prisoner there---you needed me--- I was the only one who might listen! the only one you knew, body and soul, in the outside world.

STASH: So I do know you body and soul?

MAGDA: Yes, I believe you do. And he doesn't know me at all. We're strangers. Which is why the marriage lasts.

STASH: And hasn't our marriage lasted too? if I know you body and soul? and if you come to me for help against your husband?

MAGDA: Help? against Peter?

STASH: Do you think I came to the shop for no reason at all? do you think I didn't feel what you were going through? and especially in the last two years, here in London, close to you---knowing you were round the corner---almost not daring to come to your house and look at you when you went out shopping in the evening?

MAGDA: You watched me?

STASH: Do you think I saw nothing in your face?

MAGDA: Ah! So I'm back in the old position am I? You're helping me! You implore me to marry you, you cry hot tears all over my blouse, and when I marry you it appears you've been helping me! But thank you very much, I didn't ask for help! And I'd like to know what help you could give me---here---in a pig sty---with a background everybody thinks is criminal---and living from hand to mouth! Do you still play the fool in clubs?

STASH: Why not?

MAGDA: It's hardly a man's work!

STASH: You still think of things that way round---first if it's a man's work---if it looks right---and then if it's good in itself? Yes, I play the fool in clubs!

MAGDA: And you aren't ashamed?

STASH: I'm not fit for anything else---I mean, I could do plenty of things but I'd rather do that if I get money for it. I don't want a life like your husband's---with that gloomy house and the swords on the wall and all that fake responsibility and one girl after another to compensate for the horror of it all---I don't want it! I mean, I have girls enough---and boys---I like a decent mixture---but it's for the pleasure, even for the love---it isn't to escape the horror of what I've been doing in the day. So the first thing I ask myself is do you feel pure? If you don't, don't do it. If you do, that's OK, whatever it is and whatever other people think! That's what I go by! And one day in Paris some-

body gave me money, it saved my life, I felt pure about taking it. I mean he only wanted an hour in bed, he was ugly but I thought why not, I don't care, my body isn't so lovely either---so why not, and I took the money, and I got to England with it, and here I am---and then this man turns up again in London and wants me to find out certain things for him---wants me to sell my country as you describe it---and I couldn't do it, I didn't feel pure about it, so he kept on coming and telephoning me, until the police began to ask themselves why---and then, before I knew where I was, I had prison bars in front of me---but still--- I felt pure, because I hadn't done anything wrong!

MAGDA: My husband called you Madame Bolek during the trial.

STASH (WITH A LAUGH) They all did!

MAGDA: You can laugh! But they ridiculed you---there were dirty jokes about you---!

STASH: But I'm not dirty! So what does it matter?

MAGDA: But doesn't it make you feel unnatural? You must feel wrong afterwards---

STASH: After what?

MAGDA: Well---after being almost a woman?

STASH: You mean at the clubs or here, in my room, on this bed?

MAGDA: Both!

STASH: The answer is I don't think of things from the outside. I think of whether I enjoy it!

MAGDA: Is that all there is---enjoyment? Isn't that sad?

STASH: Enjoyment sad?

MAGDA GAZES AT HIM.

MAGDA: But you were made a man.

STASH: Well---I am a man! Women like me don't they? They even run after me! One said---a couple of weeks ago---she said that when she saw me first her legs went weak. Yes, her legs went weak.

MAGDA: You have lots of friends?

STASH: Oh---this room's full all day---even when I'm not here!

MAGDA: And they don't find you unnatural?

STASH: Me? Of course not! Seeing that they're nearly all crippled in some way too!

MAGDA: Ah, we're all crippled! I remember you saying that! There's no nature! And that woman's coat---an American offered you forty thousand dollars for it---

STASH: Would you like to see it?

MAGDA: You didn't sell it? But you needed money so badly!

STASH GOES TO THE WARDROBE.

STASH (TAKING OUT AN ELEGANT WOMAN'S COAT) I preferred the coat. There!

MAGDA (TOUCHING IT) And this is what was in the papers?

STASH (GAZING AT HER) Yes.

MAGDA: And is it true---I read something of the kind---that the clubs pay you a big star's salary?

STASH: You always used to read the cheapest papers, in Warsaw! Oh I get enough to live on---it's a sort of position I suppose---being a source of dirty jokes, that's some thing---I wasn't even that before! And it gave me the courage to get in touch with you! I knew what a stickler you were for position! Eh? (AS HE TRIES THE COAT ON) How do you like it?

MAGDA (WITH A LAUGH) 'Like' it!

STASH: Come on! Don't you remember? You were the first to dress me up---your wig---I have it somewhere---all yellow and shaggy---(TAKING A NEW WIG OUT OF THE WARDROBE) this is a nice one---look!

HE PUTS THE WIG ON.

MAGDA (LAUGHING AGAIN) Did you have it on for that picture---it was this coat wasn't it?

STASH: Yes. (TAKING A LONG SKIRT FROM THE WARDROBE) And this!

MAGDA (AS SHE LOOKS IN THE WARDROBE) What lovely things! (FINGERING THE HANGING SKIRTS ETC) Look!

STASH CLIPS THE SKIRT ROUND HIM AND DEFTLY DROPS HIS TROUSERS TO HIS FEET. SHE LOOKS AT HIM SPELLBOUND. HE TAKES OFF THE COAT, AND HIS SHIRT, AND PUTS A BLOUSE ON.

MAGDA: Oh Stash! The way you broke my heart! We used to die of laughter!---remember?---I haven't laughed since!

THEY CATCH EACH OTHER'S GLANCE AND BEGIN LAUGHING. THEY LEAN ON EACH OTHER.

MAGDA: Let me phone him now! While I can laugh!

CUT TO THE BRONIATOWSKY FLAT---THE PIANO ROOM. PETER BRONIATOWSKY IS SLUMPED IN A CHAIR IN HIS OVERCOAT.

PAUL APPEARS FROM THE BEDROOM IN HIS PYJAMAS AND BRONIATOWSKY STARTS.

PAUL: Mum not back?

BRONIATOWSKY: What's the time?

PAUL: Næerly four. Did you know him in Warsaw---that man?

BRONIATOWSKY: No. Can't even remember his name. Stanislav somebody. She said he died at Auschwitz. Well, that happens sometimes. A man suddenly turns up from the past.

PAUL: Shouldn't you go to the police?

BRONIATOWSKY: Oh she'll turn up. We're Poles! We do things like that!

PAUL LEAVES AGAIN WITH A SHRUG.

BRONIATOWSKY CONTINUES TO SIT THERE.

BRONIATOWSKY: Paul!

PAUL RETURNS.

BRONIATOWSKY: Have you got a cigarette?

PAUL: I thought you said smoking was bad?

BRONIATOWSKY: Get me a cigarette!

PAUL: All right, all right!

PAUL GOES AND AT THAT MOMENT THE PHONE RINGS. BRONIATOWSKY GRABS THE RECEIVER BEFORE THE FIRST TONE IS OUT.

MAGDA (OVER, IN POLISH) Peter! It's Magda!---I'm all right!

BRONIATOWSKY (ALSO IN POLISH, WITH VAST RELIEF) Magda! Mggda!

MAGDA (OVER, IN POLISH) Stanislaw Boczkowsky came back to life! Can you imagine? We're talking---

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH, WITH EVIDENT ANGER) Magda, what are you doing? Here am I sitting here---come back home at once---!

MAGDA (OVER, IN POLISH) We forgot everything---we---!

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH) I said come back home---do you hear?---where are you---?

THE SOUND OF THE RECEIVER BEING PUT DOWN AT THE OTHER END AND THEN THE DIALING TONE. BRONIATOWSKY SLAMS HIS RECEIVER DOWN. HIS FURY IS FED BY HIS RELIEF.

BRONIATOWSKY (JUMPING UP) Paul! Paul! She's out with a man! (STRIDING TO THE DOOR) I'm going to find him---Stanislaw Boczkowsky---I'll hunt them out!

CUT BACK TO THE STASH BED-SITTER.  
STASH IS STANDING IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR  
PUTTING THE LAST TOUCHES TO HIS HAIR.  
HE NOW HAS HIGH-HEELED SHOES ON, AND  
SPARKLING EAR-RINGS.

MAGDA HAS JUST PUT THE PHONE DOWN.

STASH: He's very angry?

MAGDA: I shouldn't have touched that  
phone! The number of times he's rung  
me in the middle of the night to say I'm  
sorry, we got talking, don't worry I'll  
be back some time!

STASH: Never mind.

MAGDA: And now he'll do something  
courageous like banging on the doors of all  
the Boczkowskys he knows in London! Lucky  
for you you changed your name to Bolek!

STASH (WITH A LAUGH) All the Boczkowskys  
in town are going to get broken noses  
tonight!---while Miss Boczkowsky herself  
doesn't give a damn! Isn't that why you  
came to my dirty little room in Warsaw---  
because I never gave a damn---and your  
head was so full of duties and shames  
and little reminders about 'don't do this,  
be careful of that, watch out for him,  
be nice to her, in case they talk against  
you, in case they think bad about you'!  
Is that the way to live? (TURNING HIS  
FULL SPLENDOR TOWARDS HER) You can  
honestly put your life against mine and say  
it's better? Can you?

MAGDA: I don't know who you are!

STASH (SINGING) Milosc si wszsko wybaczy  
( 'LOVE WILL FORGIVE YOU EVERYTHING'---A  
CABARET SONG FROM PRE-WAR WARSAW).

HE BEGINS DANCING. SHE JOINS IN THE SING-  
ING.

STASH: Milosc si wszsko..!

MAGDA THROWS OFF HER COAT. SHE BEGINS  
DANCING WITH HIM, SHOWING HIM NEW STEPS.

STASH: Ah! You witch!

THEY SING TOGETHER. THEY MANAGE TO DANCE PRECISELY THE SAME STEPS TOGETHER, AS IF THEY HAD DONE THEM LONG AGO. SHE LIFTS UP HER SKIRTS: HER DANCING BECOMES SKITTISH, EXTRAVAGANT.

THEY BEGIN WHIRLING ROUND TOGETHER, SKIRTS FLYING. MAGDA IS SCREAMING WITH LAUGHTER.

THEY ALMOST FALL FROM GIDDINESS. IT BECOMES A CHASE ROUND THE ROOM---IN WHAT LOOKS LIKE A PATTERN FROM YEARS AGO, MAGDA CHASING STASH. AS HE DASHES ROUND THE TABLES AND CHAIRS, UPSETTING EVERYTHING, HE MAKES SCREECHING NOISES LIKE AN HYSTERICAL WOMAN.

HE SUDDENLY STOPS AND THEY END IN A HEAP ON THE DIVAN, PANTING, LAUGHING.

MAGDA (STILL BREATHLESS) Why did they give you a British passport?

STASH: Mm?

THEY LAUGH AGAIN.

MAGDA: They thought you might make a good spy for this side---one day---in those clothes?

THEY LAUGH.

MAGDA: Do you know something?---I don't like men much---strong men. I like you like this---!

STASH: You taught me how to do it! And you say we're not all crippled! You corrupted me!

MAGDA (LAUGHING) Ah, corruption again. First me, then the camp commandant--- don't you have a little bit of wickedness somewhere?

STASH: Would you stay with me?

MAGDA: You mean now---always?

STASH: Yes.

MAGDA: I might.

STASH: Give up an upright husband---  
safety---? You know, I always thought  
you married me for a reason. Was there  
one?

A PAUSE.

MAGDA: Yes.

STASH: There was!

MAGDA: Mine was a wanted name. The  
Germans were after my father---they found  
him and took him away. By that time I  
was married to you. I got away to Lvov as  
Mrs Boczkowska. Yet I loved you. Stash---  
I did wrong to marry you---but you pleaded---  
and it was useful---and anyway you seemed not  
the marrying kind---I mean, not interested  
overmuch---I mean, I'm not good, Stash---  
neither of us are---darling (TOUCHING HIM)  
---I mean Peter and I aren't good. We  
aren't good.

STASH: Did you think you were good---all  
these years?

MAGDA NODS.

STASH: How can he bear you walking  
round in that coat? For God's sake take  
this one.

MAGDA (TAKING HIS COAT) He doesn't see me.  
(GETTING UP AND TRYING IT ON BEFORE THE  
MIRROR) He just feels me. He's feeling  
me now. And, you know, it excites me---  
the animal thing! I can talk to you---as  
a woman---almost to a woman!

STASH: Ah!

MAGDA: It was something you could never  
satisfy.

STASH: Shall I try again?

MAGDA (A LAUGH ESCAPING HER AGAIN) In  
these clothes?

SHE CONTINUES TO LOOK AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR.

STASH: Your hair too. Look--- (GETTING UP AND GOING TO HER)

HE LIFTS HER HAIR IN A CERTAIN WAY---DRAWS IT HIGH UP FROM THE EARS: AND IT CHANGES HER FACE.

MAGDA: Not so old now eh?

THEY CHUCKLE. HE CLIPS HIS EAR-RINGS ON TO HER EARS.

STASH (STANDING CLOSE TO HER AND LOOKING IN THE MIRROR TOO) You're attracted to him aren't you---immensely?

MAGDA: Am I?

STASH: Imagine him now---panting after you---in the streets---knocking men down perhaps. It excites you! You're dressing up for him! You let me put your hair up for him! You couldn't stay loyal to the man you married in Warsaw---

MAGDA: The man?!

STASH: You want the animal---a panting brute---the veins sticking out of his neck when he loses his temper---you hate each other, passionately, like brutes, and then it turns to love! He's going to fall on you when he finds you again---fall on your neck---bite you---eh?  
(MAKING TO BITE HER NECK)

MAGDA: Stash! Don't touch me---Stash!

HE ONLY BRUSHES HER SHOULDER WITH HIS LIPS.

STASH: You're trembling. So I am a man.

MAGDA: Don't drag me back---into all that---

STASH: Would you?

MAGDA: Don't try! It's funny how everything suddenly turns upside down. And life went like a little clock before! Thirty years---like a minute! You realise I can't go back

to him, don't you, even if I wanted to!  
I do want to but I can't! And you---in  
those clothes---I feel I'm a thousand  
different people! (SLUMPING INTO A CHAIR)  
You'd leave me in a day wouldn't you?

STASH: I never let you out of my sight---  
not once---in Warsaw!

MAGDA: Inside you did---I've never felt  
as lonely since---and you there, in those  
clothes---it makes me feel the same as  
then---I can remember---that terrible  
loneliness---

STASH: For God's sake don't cry!

MAGDA: And that same voice---'for God's  
sake don't cry'!

STASH: Perhaps you leaned on me too much---  
suffoated me---

MAGDA: Ah!

STASH: Like half the cripples who come here  
every day---sit in that seat---pour out  
their troubles---cry just like that---and  
I ask myself---how long can it go on, how  
many more can I have sucking my strength---  
they flock here, I tell you!---they pour  
out their troubles! And now you! Is it  
my fault you chose the wrong man? I thought  
at least you had a bit of strength---you  
looked so solid walking down the street---  
your husband so erect---a fine son---every  
thing fine from the outside!

MAGDA: Ah, that's how you saw us is it---  
puppets! Like you always saw people---  
big and strong until you got to know them  
and then they were weak weren't they, all  
mixed-up!---when they showed they'd got  
hearts! And you're the cripple, not they!---  
you're afraid to get too close, be looked at  
too much---yes, we suffocate the little child  
because he doesn't know who he is; inside!  
And then we're all to blame aren't we? I'm  
to blame for keeping you up all night---oh how  
I know you!---and that's why I never answered  
a single letter---I didn't want you to twist  
every word I wrote into a cry for help---  
well, you can stay as alone as you like!

And shall I tell you why you married me? (TEARING OFF HER EAR-RINGS AND FLINGING THEM ON THE TABLE) To cover for your boys! A cover!

STASH: Anything's possible!

MAGDA: Ah that's amusing is it? That's detached! Well I was detached for thirty years! (TAKING OFF THE COAT) And I'm going to be the same again!

SHE FLINGS THE COAT AT HIM AND THEN RUSHES OUT OF THE APARTMENT.

STASH (RUNNING AFTER HER) Magda! Magda!

HE STOPS AT THE DOOR. HE LISTENS TO HER FOOTSTEPS ECHOING DOWN THE STAIRS.

STASH (TAKING OFF HIS WIG AND UNCLIPPING HIS SKIRT, WITH A CHUCKLE) She's magnificent!

FADE.

OPEN ON THE STASH PORTRAIT IN THE BRONIATOWSKY FLAT. COME DOWN TO FIND MAGDA, COATLESS, ON THE SETTEE. SHE WIPES AWAY TEARS.

SHE DRAGS HERSELF UP. SHE WALKS TO THE DOOR LEADING TO THE BEDROOMS.

A NOISE MAKES HER TURN. SHE STARES ACROSS THE ROOM. PETER BRONIATOWSKY HAS JUST COME IN FROM THE STREET.

THEY STAND GAZING AT EACH OTHER.

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH) Well, who were you with?

MAGDA (ALSO IN POLISH) Who were you with all those years---a different one every night!

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH) Stanislaw who?

MAGDA: Stanislaw Boczkowsky.

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH) He doesn't exist---he---

PAUL APPEARS IN HIS PYJANAS, SCREWING UP HIS

EYES AGAINST THE LIGHT.

PAUL: What's the trouble?

BRONIATOWSKY (IN ENGLISH, TO MAGDA)  
There isn't a Stanislaw Boczkowsky in  
London! (TO PAUL) You see what kind  
of mother you have! Five o'clock in  
the morning! And I saw you in the street---  
running along without a coat---can you  
imagine, if someone saw you---!

MAGDA: That's right, that's right---  
talk to me about appearances!

BRONIATOWSKY: At least I've never brought  
anybody back---

MAGDA: I wish you had---to clear the air--  
and give me some company. You and your  
Andrew Myers---the two war-heroes---always  
remembering over a bottle of vodka---

PAUL: Come on mum!

MAGDA: How he came in the command post  
just as you were giving the order to fire  
and the order went out to the guns as  
'Andrew'! Yes! Yes! A million times--  
winters and summers---the same story---'And-  
rew, Andrew', it went out as 'Andrew', and  
'the silly buggers fired'! Oh God!

THE FRONT DOOR BELL RINGS.

BRONIATOWSKY (TO PAUL) Answer the door.

MAGDA/ He's in his pyjamas!

BRONIATOWSKY (IN POLISH, AS HE GOES TO THE  
DOOR HIMSELF) Damn and blast!

BRONIATOWSKY OPENS THE FRONT DOOR. IT  
IS ANDREW MYERS, IN A DRESSING GOWN.

MYERS: Hullo Peter. I heard a bit of  
movement.

BRONIATOWSKY: Come in Andrew. She's  
back.

ANDREW MYERS COMES IN

MYERS: Hullo Magda.

MAGDA: Hullo.

MYERS: Paul tells us you've been out with the man over the piano.

MAGDA: That's right.

MYERS (GAZING AT THE PORTRAIT) I'm sure I've seen that face before. It's the first time I've really looked at it.

PETER BRONIATOWSKY GOES TO THE SIDEBOARD AND POURS A VODKA, WHICH HE HANDS TO MYERS IN AN AUTOMATIC WAY.

MYERS: What, early-morning fire? Well, we both need it. (SWALLOWING IT IN ONE GASP) We walked the streets all night for you Magda. I hope he was worth it.

MAGDA: Oh yes, I think so.

MYERS: Yes (SUBSIDING INTO AN ARMCHAIR) war does terrible things. Divides people. And then they come together again.

BRONIATOWSKY (TO MAGDA) Is this Stanislav of yours married?

MAGDA: Yes.

BRONIATOWSKY: She was there?

MAGDA: Yes.

A PAUSE.

BRONIATOWSKY: What's she like?

MAGDA: Who?

BRONIATOWSKY: The wife.

MAGDA: Oh---(WITH A SHRUG) rather lost. (TURNING TO HER SON) All right Paul. The fun's over. You can still get some sleep.

PAUL: Good night Mr Myers.

MYERS: 'Night'! It's close on dawn. If your room wasn't so smokey you'd have

seen it (WITH A WINK).

PAUL GOES, AND PETER BRONIATOWSKY  
SUBSIDES INTO A CHAIR TOO, EXHAUSTED.

MYERS (GAZING AT STASH'S PORTRAIT)  
Now where have I seen that face before?

WE SEE THE PORTRAIT FROM HIS PV.

IT DISSOLVES INTO STASH IN HIS DRAG  
OUTFIT PERFORMING MIŁOSC SI WSZYSKO  
WYBACZY IN THE PRE-WAR MODE, TO THE  
ACCOMPANIMENT OF A PIANO, WITH BOLD  
FEMININE MOVEMENTS.