

THE ALIEN
(A play in four acts)

by:

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translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

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INFORMATION

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SHORT AUTHOR BIO:

Ivan Dimitrov is born in 1983 and has graduated in Bulgarian Philology. His short stories were nominated for the debut book competition of "Ars" Publishing House. Author of *"Local foreigners"*, a book of short stories, the novel *"Life as a missing spoon"* and the book of poetry *"Poet on portrait"*. He's one of the top five poets in the *"Sofia Poetics" Festival* contest in both 2010 and 2011. In 2011 his play *"The eyes of the others"* won the *"New drama"* contest in Shumen. In 2012 the English translation of the play by Angela Rodel was chosen with 9 other plays among 430 from all over the world to enter the official program of *HotInk at the Lark International Festival* in New York. There, in the end of March 2012 the play had its stage reading in New York. In September the play was produce at *"New Ohio Theater"* under the direction of Samuel Buggeln. In May the same year his play *"The Alien"* won the contest of a Bulgarian play of the Absurd in Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria) and is going to be produced there. Once again the same year in October his newest play *"Time disease"* (written in both New York and Sofia) won the contest for Youth play organized by *"Youth theatre Nikolay Binev"* with cooperation with *"National Theatre in Belgrade"* and will have its world premiere in Belgrade in 2013.

The Alien
(Short synopsis)

Welcome to a family's home. The Mother is listening to music, the Father has just gotten back from doing the shopping. At first glance, everything is fine – until the Mother asks the father whether he has bought a gun. The Father can't figure out what is going on and is obviously trying to avoid the topic. They agree to put the conversation off until later. While setting the table for dinner, the Son finds out from the Mother that years ago, the Father had made her a mysterious promise, which he now refuses to keep. Left alone for a moment, the Son and the Daughter realize something isn't right and agree to eavesdrop on their parents after dinner.

Later that same night, the Father is trying to fix a broken outlet when the Mother unexpectedly blows up at him: it's high time they killed the kids. Ever since she was a kid, she's had the feeling that she didn't fit in and couldn't find meaning in life, so she has gotten it into her head that she must be an alien, but then she met a kindred soul – the Father. He suggested to her that they try an experiment: starting their own family, since so many people have found meaning in life by doing just that. Back then, the Mother agreed to take part in the experiment, but now she thinks it was unsuccessful and insists to get rid of all the evidence...

LOCATION: Living room with one front door and four other doors leading to the: kitchen, bathroom, master bedroom and kids' bedroom.

CHARACTERS:

THE FATHER – 46 years old, in the First Act is dressed officially

THE MOTHER – 45 years old

THE SON- under 18 – dressed in his house clothes

THE DAUGHTER – under 18 – in the First Act is dressed in her school uniform, after that she is dressed in her house clothes

ACT ONE

THE MOTHER is sitting on the couch, staring into space, listening to very loud music and reading a magazine. After a short while, THE FATHER comes in the front door, carrying bags full of groceries.

THE FATHER (*his words cannot be heard or only barely, but they can be made out by reading his lips until THE MOTHER finally turns off the music*). Hello?

Pause.

Honey, I'm home!

Pause.

Honey?

Pause.

She's cranked up the music again!

Pause.

(*louder*) Honey! I'm home!

Pause.

You're going to ruin your hearing with this racket. (*louder still*) Honey!!

Pause.

What am I saying? She'll already ruined her hearing! (*yelling at the top of his lungs*)

Ho-o-o-ney!!!

THE MOTHER (*turns off the music*). What's the matter?

THE FATHER. I'm been trying to tell you that I'm home for some time now.

THE MOTHER. Oh... I didn't hear you.

THE FATHER. Wait – you mean you can still hear?

THE MOTHER. As far as I know, yes.

THE FATHER. So I won't have to start waving some friggin' signal flags to talk to you?

THE MOTHER. You won't have to wave any flags.

THE FATHER. Really?

THE MOTHER. Especially not any friggin' ones!

Pause.

THE FATHER. So you cranked up the music again?

THE MOTHER. So what? You got something against music?

THE FATHER. Do you have to listen to it that loudly?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. It helps me that way.

THE FATHER. It helps you go deaf –

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). You're the one who's hard of hearing. As if we

both don't know that.

THE FATHER. Huh? What was that?

THE MOTHER. Don't you worry about me.

THE FATHER. I'm worried about myself. What will I do when you go deaf?

THE MOTHER. Are you going to keep wasting my time with this nonsense?

THE FATHER. Are you saying the fact that I care about you is nonsense?

THE MOTHER. Well... No... But –

THE FATHER. So what does it help you with?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. What?

THE FATHER. What do you mean what?

THE MOTHER. What helps me with what?

THE FATHER. Isn't that what I'm asking?

THE MOTHER. What are you asking?

THE FATHER. What does the music help you with?

THE MOTHER. O-o-oh. The music?... It's my way of relaxing.

THE FATHER. With all that noise? Normal people like to relax in peace and quiet.

THE MOTHER. Silence prevents me from relaxing. I keep thinking about things.

THE FATHER. Like what?

THE MOTHER. Lots of things.

THE FATHER. What, don't you want to tell me?

THE MOTHER. ...About lots of things you don't want to know about.

THE FATHER. So how does the music help?

THE MOTHER. It makes it so I can't hear my thoughts.

THE FATHER. Well, that's just great! You can't hear your thoughts! And what do you do when you can't hear your thoughts?

THE MOTHER. Nothing. I just sit there not hearing my thoughts. Otherwise I'm constantly preoccupied with some thought. Like "I've got to cook" or "do laundry" or "clean the house." Or (*yelling*) "dinner will be ready soon."

THE SON (*opening the door to the kids' room a crack*). We're gonna eat soon?

THE MOTHER. Once your sister gets home.

THE SON. We're always waiting around for her.

THE MOTHER. Well, that's why we're a family, now isn't it, dear?

THE SON. Yeah right, we're a family... I don't even want to get into it.

Pause.

THE FATHER. What did you say?!

THE SON. Nothing!

THE FATHER. You take that back!

THE MOTHER. He's seventeen. He can say what he wants.

THE FATHER. Not in my house.

THE MOTHER. In our house!

THE FATHER. Not in our house, that's what I meant.

Pause.

THE SON. Can't we eat dinner without my sister just once!?

THE MOTHER. No!

THE FATHER. When was she supposed to get back?

THE MOTHER. Any minute now.

THE SON (*shutting the door to the kids' room*). Fine.

Pause.

THE FATHER. So what else?

THE MOTHER. What else what?

THE FATHER. What other thoughts keep going through your head?

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). Is there any fucking point to this whole married life?

THE FATHER. Huh? What was that?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. I asked if you did the shopping.

THE FATHER. Isn't that why I went out?

THE MOTHER. Did you get everything?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE MOTHER. Really?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE MOTHER. Absolutely everything I asked you to get?

THE FATHER. Yes, of course.

THE MOTHER. Are you sure?

THE FATHER. Yes... What's the matter with you? Of course I bought everything! You gave me a list, didn't you?

THE MOTHER. But still...

THE FATHER. I bought everything.

THE MOTHER. Wonderful!

THE FATHER. What's going on with you? Have I ever forgotten to buy something when you've given me a list?

THE MOTHER. If I understand correctly, you must have bought cheese?

THE FATHER. Yes!

THE MOTHER. And whole-wheat bread?

THE FATHER. Yes!

THE MOTHER. Olives?

THE FATHER. Yes!

THE MOTHER. Vanilla extract and yeast –

THE DAUGHTER (*coming through the front door*). Hi, mom. Hi, dad.

THE MOTHER. Hi, sweetie. How was school today?

THE DAUGHTER. Great.

THE MOTHER. How did that test go?

THE DAUGHTER. It went fine.

THE MOTHER. What about your homework assignment?

THE DAUGHTER. The teacher was really happy with it.

THE MOTHER. Good job, sweetie!

THE DAUGHTER. He told me if my next assignment is that good, he'll give me an

A for sure.

THE FATHER. I'm so proud of you, honey.

THE MOTHER. Are you hungry? Your brother can't wait to eat!

THE DAUGHTER. He can't wait to do anything... I *am* hungry. Just let me take a quick shower. (*Pause.*) Dad, we played volleyball in gym class today. And guess what, dad?

THE MOTHER. What?

THE DAUGHTER. I made the school team!

THE FATHER. Really?!

THE MOTHER. It won't hurt your grades, will it?

THE DAUGHTER. It won't, mom. I promise.

THE FATHER. Can I come to the games?

THE DAUGHTER. Of course, dad.

THE FATHER. Wonderful! That's... wonderful! Just wonderful!

THE DAUGHTER. Mom, should I call Mr. Impatient?

THE MOTHER. Tell him to come out in five minutes to help me set the table.

THE DAUGHTER (*going into the kids' room*). OK!

Pause.

THE FATHER. The volleyball team. That's wonderful! Just wonderful!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. And did you buy lettuce?

THE FATHER. Are you going to ask me about everything?

THE MOTHER. Yes.

THE FATHER. Well, suit yourself...

THE MOTHER. What about a gun?

Pause.

THE FATHER. What?!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. A gun! Did you buy a gun?

THE FATHER. Are you serious...

THE MOTHER. It was the last thing on the list!

THE FATHER. (*stunned silence*)

THE MOTHER. Right under the "jar of pickles."

THE FATHER. (*still stunned*)

THE MOTHER. Now that I mention it, did you get the pickles?

THE FATHER (*quietly*). Yes.

THE MOTHER. Then you should've gotten a gun, too, right?

THE FATHER. I didn't get a gun.

THE MOTHER. But didn't I put it on the list?! Right under the fucking pickles.

Pause.

THE FATHER. I thought you were joking.

THE MOTHER. Come on, now! As if you don't know me by now! You know very well that I have no sense of humor whatsoever.

THE FATHER. So what about the gun?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. You forgot to buy the most important thing!

THE FATHER. What do you need a gun for?

THE MOTHER. What do *we* need a gun for!

THE FATHER. What do *we* need a gun for? What are you getting at with this?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Don't pretend you don't know!

THE DAUGHTER (*going from the kids' room to the bathroom*). Today they caught one girl in our class cheating. She came in wearing this super short skirt. Plaid. And she kept hiking it up. And these two guys were sitting behind her the whole time, and the poor dudes didn't know what to do – should they take their tests or just watch the show? So they kept craning their necks to get a good view. And the teacher thought they were cheating so she starting watching them. Only they weren't cheating; the girl had written all the formulas on her thighs and she was cheating like crazy. And while the teacher was keeping an eye on the guys, she noticed that the girl was cheating. I thought she was going to rip her ear off. We were totally laughing, like rolling on the floor laughing. And then the girl started in with her excuses, well uh this, well uh that. And the teacher hiked up her skirt and all the guys in the class just bugged their eyes out. And the girl was like I have no idea how that stuff got there! And the teacher was like... so you don't know? Let's see if a slap'll help you remember. And the girl started bawling (*she goes into the bathroom and shuts the door*). And we were just rolling on the floor laughing.

Pause.

THE FATHER *laughs.*

THE FATHER. They sure don't put up with any nonsense at school, now do they?

THE MOTHER. What school?

THE FATHER. When I think back on all the cheating we did in our day...

THE MOTHER. Why are you wasting my time with this cheating right now?

THE FATHER. Did you even hear your daughter at all?

THE MOTHER. Did you even hear me? Why didn't you buy a fucking gun! I asked you something! Why didn't you buy a fucking gun?!

Pause.

THE FATHER. First, what is all this fucking? Honey, you don't talk like th...

THE MOTHER. I'll talk however I want –

THE FATHER. And second, what gun, honey? I... I honestly thought you were kidding.

THE MOTHER. As if we hadn't talked it over so many times.

THE FATHER. Talked what over?

THE MOTHER. Acting like you don't know won't change anything.

Pause.

THE FATHER (*angrily*). Well, even if that's the case – where was I supposed to get this... gun? From the corner store? Can you imagine? Please give me a pound of cheese, a half-dozen eggs, vanilla extract, three pounds of apples, red ones, and a gun? A gun? Yes, a gun. What model would you like, sir? What caliber would you

prefer? I don't know. I don't know anything about guns. What's your best-seller? Or maybe you could recommend something to me? Oh, this is the gun for you. It's the best one we've got. This is the one everyone goes for. Thank you. And please come back again next time you need a gun. Should I put it in a separate bag? No, thanks, that won't be necessary. Just put it in there with the apples. Thank you. Goodbye and have a nice day. I hope it works out well for you... Is that how you think it is? You simply go in and buy a gun just like that?

THE DAUGHTER (*coming out of the bathroom and running to the kids' room*). We were totally laughing our heads off!

THE FATHER (*towards THE DAUGHTER, who has already shut the door*). We're really proud of you, honey. The volleyball team, that's wonderful. Did you hear that? Wonderful.

THE MOTHER. How should I know where to buy a gun? I'm a woman, a mother, a fucking housewife. You're the man in the family! You should know where to buy a fucking gun. I can't cook your fucking dinner and buy a fucking gun at the same time. It just doesn't go together, right? Women cook, clean, do the laundry, take care of the kids. Men work, take out the trash and shop. For everything. Even fucking guns!

THE FATHER. Is that right?

THE MOTHER. That's right!

THE FATHER. So that means I need to fulfill your desires, even your craziest ones.

THE MOTHER. Since you're my husband: yes.

THE FATHER. I don't think I'm under any obligation to do so.

THE MOTHER. Well, then you're fooling yourself! And it wasn't just my desire.

THE FATHER. What?!

THE MOTHER. You can't possibly have forgotten?

THE FATHER. Forgotten what?

THE MOTHER. Our deal?

THE FATHER. Forgive me, honey, but I don't remember us making a deal about any guns.

THE MOTHER (*exploding*). I'm not talking about fucking guns! We made a deal!
Pause.

THE FATHER. I can't remember.

THE MOTHER. You do remember. And how!

THE SON (*coming into the room*). Are we going to have dinner soon? I'm starving...

THE MOTHER. Well, then help me.

THE SON. What should I do?

THE MOTHER. Put the tablecloth on the table.

THE FATHER. Want me to help with something?

THE MOTHER. You just stay right where you are and think long and hard!

THE FATHER. About what?

THE MOTHER. About the conversation we were having.

THE FATHER. But isn't it already over?...

THE MOTHER. You think over what we just said. After dinner, we'll continue our... talk.

THE FATHER. But I can't figure out why –

THE MOTHER. I said after dinner!

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER (*coming out of the kids' room*). What's for dinner?

THE MOTHER. Chicken with peas, carrot salad and crème brulee.

THE DAUGHTER. Great.

THE SON. I'm already drooling.

THE DAUGHTER. Because you're a big slobbering tard who always wants to stuff his face.

THE SON. You're a nerd.

THE DAUGHTER. Slacker!

THE SON. Dork!

THE DAUGHTER. Moron!

THE MOTHER. That's enough name-calling, kids!

Pause.

THE SON. She started it.

THE MOTHER. I don't care who started it.

THE SON. But –

THE MOTHER. No name-calling!

THE DAUGHTER. Well, it's no fun in any case. He can't even come up with a good insult.

THE SON. Oh, you think so, huh? Just wait...

THE FATHER. That's enough, kids. Listen to your mother. Don't call each other names. You are brother and sister. You should love each other, respect each other. You should be close. One day you'll appreciate the fact that you're brother and sister. You'll never be as close to anyone as you are to each other. You'll never depend on anyone like you depend on each other. The bond between brother and sister is a wonderful thing. Which you must take good care of. You need to get along and stop fighting over little things.

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). Blah blah blah.

THE FATHER. What did you say?

THE MOTHER. You took the words right out of my mouth, dear!

THE DAUGHTER. I want to be nice to him, but he keeps acting like a total bonehead!

THE SON. Yeah right, because you're such a saint...

THE FATHER. Shake hands!

Pause.

THE MOTHER (*to THE SON*). Weren't you going to help me?

THE SON. Yes.

THE MOTHER. Then help! While you're sitting there dawdling everything will be ready on its own.

THE DAUGHTER. I'll help you, mom.

THE MOTHER. Your brother will help. You've helped me enough.

THE DAUGHTER (*going into the kids' room*). Fine.

THE FATHER. Well, I'll go change then... Since you don't need me.

THE MOTHER. Your favorite pants are in the wash.

THE FATHER. I guess I'll wear some of my non-favorites then...

THE MOTHER. And you won't forget to think about it?

THE FATHER. About what?

THE MOTHER. Motherfucker... Are you kidding me?

THE FATHER (*going into the master bedroom*). OK, fine. Can't a guy make a joke around here?

Pause.

THE MOTHER (*to THE SON*). Will you put the dressing on the salad?

THE SON. Of course.

THE MOTHER. Make sure you use plenty of lemon.

THE SON. It smells amazing.

THE MOTHER. Be careful not to use too much salt.

THE SON. What's up with dad?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Nothing, dear. Your father is perfectly fine.

THE SON. I heard you arguing.

THE MOTHER. We were doing nothing of the sort.

THE SON. Mom...

Pause.

THE MOTHER. OK, fine. But it was just a little argument.

THE SON. So what has dad done?

THE MOTHER. Nothing!

THE SON. Come on, tell me! I won't tell anyone!

THE MOTHER. He made me mad!

THE SON. How?

THE MOTHER. He doesn't keep his promises.

THE SON. Dad?

THE MOTHER. Yes!

THE SON. Really?!

THE MOTHER. Uh huh.

THE SON. You can't be serious. Once dad says something, it's as good as done...

THE MOTHER. Well, that's how it is when it comes to petty things. I can't deny that. When it comes to petty things your father has always been fine. One might even say he's a petty person, no matter how bighearted he can seem at times. That's just how your father is. What can you do?... But when it comes to bigger things, you can't count on him at all... Many years ago he made me a promise. Shortly before you were born. Right before I agreed to marry him. He promised me something. Something very important. Your father and I were very much alike back then

(*Pause.*) But when I say that now, I get the feeling that we've grown apart. Before... I remember very clearly... Because... You're walking down the street and you run

into your other half. He invites you to dinner and before you can even say ‘yes,’ you know... he’s the one. You’ve finally found someone who you don’t even need to talk to. It’s as if your head is the left hemisphere and his head is the right hemisphere of a single brain. And you share everything, absolutely everything... And then... Boom... Something happens, and you drift apart. And nothing is the same anymore.

Pause.

THE SON. Mom, are you guys going to get divorced?

THE MOTHER. What makes you think that, dear?

THE SON. You were really yelling at each other today.

THE MOTHER. We’re a little bit overwrought right now, honey. But everything’s fine. It’s just one of those days.

THE SON. But I –

THE MOTHER. Dinner’s ready!

THE DAUGHTER (*coming into the room*). I’m starving.

THE SON. But mom –

THE FATHER (*from the bedroom*). I can’t find my pants!

THE MOTHER. They’re in the closet!

THE FATHER. I don’t see them.

THE MOTHER. Do I have to help you with everything?!

THE FATHER. Aren’t you my wife?!

THE MOTHER. I’m coming.

THE DAUGHTER. Want something to drink?

THE MOTHER. Just water, thanks.

THE MOTHER *goes into the bedroom.*

THE DAUGHTER. Want something to drink, retard?

THE SON. Something’s going on!

THE DAUGHTER. You do know, right, that they’re not gonna let you drink beer, never mind that you and your little friends are always out getting wasted!

THE SON. Forget about the beer! Something’s going on! Between mom and dad! Are you listening to me?

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. What’s going on?

THE SON. They had a huge fight earlier. Didn’t you hear anything?

THE DAUGHTER. No.

THE SON. They got into a big argument. But I couldn’t hear what about.

THE DAUGHTER. So what did they say?

THE SON. They put off some important conversation until after dinner.

THE DAUGHTER. What do you think? –

THE SON. They’re not getting along.

THE DAUGHTER. Well, they’ve never gotten along perfectly, have they?

THE SON. But they’ve never fought like they did today!

THE DAUGHTER. So what do you suggest?

THE SON. We just keep playing along as we have until now. Insulting each other. Arguing. After dinner we’ll go to our room – to do our homework, play on the

computer, listen to music, whatever. We won't go out tonight. I'll say I have a test tomorrow, and you have to go to your first volleyball practice tomorrow morning before school. We'll stay in our room and eavesdrop. We have to hear that conversation!

THE DAUGHTER. OK... sometimes I think you really aren't that dumb.

THE SON. And sometimes I think you really aren't that annoying.

THE MOTHER and THE FATHER enter.

THE MOTHER. Happy now?

THE FATHER. I would never have found them without you.

THE MOTHER. They were right under your nose.

THE DAUGHTER. Mom, he made fun of my boyfriend!

THE MOTHER. Again?

THE DAUGHTER. He called him a little shit.

THE MOTHER (to THE SON). I told you not to make fun of your sister's boyfriend!

THE SON. She attacked me first. She said I'm a slob.

THE DAUGHTER. There's no denying the truth. You're a total slob. No one can argue with that.

THE FATHER. Your brother is not a slob!

THE DAUGHTER. Just look at his bed. And how it smells. What could he be doing in there? Well, actually, I think I can guess. He's pretty conservative in his politics. Leans pretty far to the right. I bet he's a right-hand man...

THE SON. I'm gonna smack that smart mouth of yours.

THE DAUGHTER. I dare you.

THE MOTHER. Kids, that's enough!

THE SON. And I've got to share a room with a creep like her! I'd be better off blowing my brains out!

THE DAUGHTER. Well, if you're gonna blow your brains out, make sure to do it in your half of the room.

THE FATHER (yelling). Stop! The two of you will get along. You will love each other like brother and sister. At least for tonight – do you hear me? – at least for tonight you will stop this bickering!

THE SON and THE DAUGHTER (together). But –

THE FATHER. No bickering!

THE SON. OK, OK.

THE DAUGHTER. But if he starts, I'm gonna give it right back to him.

THE FATHER. No one is going to start! And no one is going to give it back!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Let's have dinner, at long last.

THE FATHER. Before that, don't you think we should –

THE MOTHER. Sit down!

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. Want some salad, dad?

THE FATHER. Yes, please.

THE DAUGHTER. How about you, mom?

THE MOTHER. Thanks.

THE FATHER. It's nice that we still eat dinner together like a real family.

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). Like a real family? You've got to be kidding!

THE FATHER. What did you say, honey?

THE MOTHER. It really is nice.

THE FATHER. I don't know why, but it somehow reminds me of our first dates...

THE MOTHER. It reminds you of them?

THE SON. Oh no-o-o, not this again.

THE DAUGHTER. It's so romantic.

THE FATHER. Do you remember, honey?

THE MOTHER. I had the feeling that you were the only person in the whole world who understood me.

THE FATHER. You were the only woman who had ever existed for me.

THE MOTHER. I loved you so much.

THE FATHER. You're still the only one, you know that, right? I know I don't say it very often, but you're the only one.

THE MOTHER. I remember very well that I loved you.

Pause.

THE FATHER. That you loved me?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. I love you, honey!

Pause.

THE SON. What a loving family!

THE DAUGHTER. You better keep quiet.

THE SON. I'm just basking in idyllic family glow.

THE DAUGHTER. Stop being a jerk!

THE MOTHER. When you proposed to me. It was so nice. And you agreed to everything I asked of you. All my conditions.

THE SON. You had conditions?!

THE DAUGHTER (*to THE SON*). Sh-h-h!

THE FATHER. Have I ever been able to deny you anything?

THE MOTHER. Of cour... I mean, no.

THE FATHER. It's delicious. You're a fabulous cook.

THE MOTHER. Do you like it, kids?

THE SON & THE DAUGHTER. Yes, mom.

THE MOTHER. And in the beginning, you didn't believe I would ever learn to cook.

THE FATHER. I didn't believe it!?

THE MOTHER. Nope, not at all.

THE FATHER. Well, I take that back then. Because it's delicious, it really is.

ACT TWO

Later the same night.

THE MOTHER *is sitting cross-legged on the couch, as if mediating. She has a huge pair of earphones on. THE FATHER comes into the room.*

THE FATHER. Where did I leave that screwdriver? I have the feeling that someone is constantly messing with my stuff. I'm positive that I left it in the drawer with the other tools... *(to THE MOTHER)* Honey! Ho-o-oney!... That music again. Won't she ever give it a rest?... Honey! *(He goes over to her and pulls the cord from the earphones out of the stereo)* Can you hear me now?

THE MOTHER. Yes.

THE FATHER. That music again!

THE MOTHER. You're always whining about music.

THE FATHER. I have nothing against music, as long as it doesn't get in the way of our communication.

THE MOTHER *(extremely quietly)*. You call what we're doing here communication?

THE FATHER. What?

THE MOTHER. I don't think music gets in the way of our communication.

THE FATHER. You bet it does!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. And what did you need me for?

THE FATHER. I can't find my screwdriver!

THE MOTHER. And how can I help you?

THE FATHER. Have you seen it anywhere?

THE MOTHER. What?

THE FATHER. The screwdriver with the red handle!

THE MOTHER. No.

THE FATHER. Strange, where on earth could it have disappeared to? I'll ask the kids!

THE MOTHER. They've gone to bed. *(Pause.)* So what do you need the screwdriver for?

THE FATHER. That outlet is broken again.

THE MOTHER *(to herself)*. I just can't take it anymore.

THE FATHER. It's the third time this month that I've had to fix it.

THE MOTHER *(to herself)*. That's why I have no other choice but to crank up the music.

THE FATHER. If it keeps breaking all the time, we're never going to get anywhere.

Something as basic as an electrical outlet just can't conk out so often.

THE MOTHER (*to herself*). It's the only way I can relax.

THE FATHER. Maybe we need to replace all the wiring.

THE MOTHER. I can't take it anymore.

THE FATHER. Where did I put that electrician's number...

THE MOTHER. I can't take it!!

THE FATHER. Hey, that's enough yelling! What can't you take?

THE MOTHER. You know very well what!

THE FATHER. All this uproar over one measly outlet!

THE MOTHER. What outlet, for Christ's sake?

THE FATHER. The one that's always conking out.

THE MOTHER. Why are you dragging the outlet into it?

THE FATHER. Isn't that what you can't take anymore?

THE MOTHER. I can't take *life* anymore.

Pause.

THE FATHER. Life?

THE MOTHER. Yes.

THE FATHER. And what can't you take about life?

THE MOTHER. I can't go on like this!

THE FATHER. Like how?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Like this!

THE FATHER. And what about the outlet?

THE MOTHER. I couldn't care less.

THE FATHER. Well, I can't take the outlet anymore!

THE MOTHER. This can't go on!

THE FATHER. I agree. We can't let a little old outlet get in our way!

THE MOTHER. Enough about the *fucking* outlet already! That's not what I'm talking about!

THE FATHER. I thought that the outlet is exactly what we were talking about!

THE MOTHER. You're the only one talking about it!

THE FATHER. Just me?

THE MOTHER. Just you.

THE FATHER. So what are you talking about?

THE MOTHER. About life!

Pause.

THE FATHER. I don't see any difference between life and the outlet!

THE MOTHER. Stop beating around the bush! You know very well what I'm talking about. I think it's time we continued our conversation!

THE FATHER. What conversation?

THE MOTHER. The one we started before dinner.

THE FATHER. ...(*looks puzzled*)

THE MOTHER. About the gun.

THE FATHER. What gun?

THE MOTHER. The one you didn't buy!

THE FATHER. What's the point of talking about a gun that doesn't exist?

THE MOTHER. Before we got married we discussed something. You promised me something!

THE FATHER. What did I promise you?

THE MOTHER. There's no way you could have forgotten!

THE FATHER. I can't think right now. I need to fix that outlet. I can't deal with anything else while the outlet is broken.

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). I think it's high time we killed the kids, honey!

THE FATHER. What!?

THE MOTHER. I think it's high time we killed the kids! They're already old enough... There's no reason to put it off any longer.

THE FATHER. Are you OK?

THE MOTHER. If you had kept your stupid promise I'd be OK!

THE FATHER. What promise?

THE MOTHER. Don't you remember when we met?

THE FATHER. You were a hot little thing. Made me want to eat you alive.

THE MOTHER. I was so unhappy back then.

THE FATHER. But then you met me!

THE MOTHER. But then I met you.

THE FATHER. And I kissed you.

THE MOTHER. I didn't hide anything from you.

THE FATHER. And then you let me put my hand up your shirt!

THE MOTHER. I told you about my father, my mother and about how I didn't see any point in all of that stuff. In life.

THE FATHER. And then you let me do so many more things!

THE MOTHER. I told you that I had always felt like an alien. Ever since I was little. My dad raised me, because my mom died when I was born. He tried hard... But I was always the weird kid. I never had any friends in kindergarten, in school, or even in college. I was always alone.

THE FATHER. And then we decided that we would be together.

THE MOTHER. Even as a child, I realized that I was an alien. That I wasn't made for this world. That my only shot at life would be somewhere else. Maybe on some other planet.

THE FATHER. And since then we've been living happily ever after.

THE MOTHER. And you told me that you felt the same. That you never found any meaning until you met me.

THE FATHER. I was a loser, I'll admit it.

THE MOTHER. And since the two of us had found each other, I agreed to become your wife and to participate in this fucking experiment. Because, as you yourself said, as you very well remember, so many people have found meaning precisely in this. In having a family, children and so on... Maybe they were right... And I said OK. What choice did I have? Before meeting you, I had planned out my own suicide. With the gun my father had left behind. I had already held it to my head a couple times. And

every time I would keep putting it off for a day, for two days, for a week. But I could tell that the moment when I would blow my brains out was drawing near. And then I met you... You convinced me of all this. And I said: Well, why not? Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I would be capable of living like everyone else, of believing what they believe. What do I have to lose in trying? OK, fine, let's live together. Let's try to build some kind of a future. To have kids. To raise them, to educate them. And so on... And so on... What do I have to lose? And so we tried...

THE FATHER. Both of us were so mixed up back then. Don't you think?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. No.

THE FATHER. I was definitely mixed up, very mixed up. And I really did feel like an alien. I was studying philosophy. I worked whatever odd jobs happened to come my way. I avoided having any nine-to-five job: I pasted up posters, moved furniture... The idea of a nine-to-fiver repulsed me. I told myself that that was most people's problem. That they put so much energy into something that doesn't belong to them. They serve someone else their whole life. And for what? So they can afford this or that lifestyle. But no, I told myself, I'm not like them. I always kept myself aloof. And I never believed for a second that one day I would join in... That I would become part of all that. Then I met you. And we thought up the experiment.

THE MOTHER. You thought it up!

THE FATHER. We thought it up together!

THE MOTHER. Don't you dare say I'm wrong!

THE FATHER. Have it your way... I thought it up.

THE MOTHER. Of course you thought it up, who else could have?

THE FATHER. That we should try living like everyone else.

THE MOTHER. Exactly!

THE FATHER. Then we got married.

THE MOTHER. Yes.

THE FATHER. And since then everything has been fine.

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Nothing is fine!

THE FATHER. What?

THE MOTHER. I don't think the experiment has been a success, honey. Just please, don't be offended.

THE FATHER. What!?

THE MOTHER. The experiment has failed!

THE FATHER. It hasn't failed.

THE MOTHER. It's failed. And that's exactly why you have to go out and find a gun for us to kill the kids with.

THE FATHER. No!

A noise comes from the kids' room, like something being dropped or an accidental bang against the door.

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Did you hear something?

THE FATHER. What?

THE MOTHER. The kids. I think the kids are awake!

THE FATHER. Honey, don't be silly. It's 11:30. The kids have long since been asleep!

THE MOTHER. They don't ever go to bed this early!

THE FATHER. The light's off in their room.

THE MOTHER. I heard something!

THE FATHER. Or more like, you thought you heard something, honey...

THE MOTHER (*extremely quietly*). Oh, so you of all people, with your shitty hearing, you're going to tell me I'm hearing things, huh?!

THE FATHER. What?

THE MOTHER. I must have been hearing things! So what do you say?

Pause.

THE FATHER. About what?

THE MOTHER. You need to go out that door, buy a gun and...

THE FATHER. No!

THE MOTHER. I don't see any other way out.

THE FATHER. I was left with the impression that you were happy with our family life.

THE MOTHER. With this farce?

THE FATHER. Farce?

THE MOTHER. This farcical family life.

THE FATHER. You can't call our marriage a farce!

THE MOTHER. Sorry, honey, but I think I just did.

THE FATHER. But you...

THE MOTHER. But me what?

THE FATHER. But you seemed so happy...

THE MOTHER. Me? Happy?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE MOTHER. Are you kidding? In the beginning I pretended to be happy. It was an act, dear. I pasted on a smile, put on a cheerful voice. I tried to be chipper, bubbly. But lately I haven't even been good at faking it.

THE FATHER. I haven't noticed any of what you're talking about.

THE MOTHER. You only notice what I let you see, honey. But the kids... the kids have long since sensed that something is happening to their mother. Your son has even starting asking me questions!

THE FATHER. Asking you questions?

THE MOTHER. We couldn't hide it forever, now could we? Honey, please. Go buy a gun and let's get this over with!

THE FATHER. Hang on a second. I never remember agreeing to... kill our babies!

THE MOTHER. Before I married you, I told you that I agreed to take part in this experiment only because in you, I had found my first fellow creature in this world.

(*Pause.*) My first fellow alien, so to speak.

THE FATHER. But we never said anything about killing the children!

THE MOTHER. I asked you what would happen if the experiment turned out to be a failure. You said we would obliterate all traces, go our separate ways, and that would be that.

THE FATHER. Well, I meant we would get divorced and the like! I don't recall ever saying: now, if things don't work out, we can always execute our offspring, right?

THE MOTHER. But it's a fact that things aren't going well and I want you to keep your promise. You'll help me find a way out of this! You'll help me kill the children!

THE FATHER. Just don't drag the kids into this, I beg you!

THE MOTHER. There's no way we can't drag them into it, honey.

Pause.

THE FATHER. We've been living peacefully for so many years... I... I had forgotten that story about the alien... And now you're saying we have to kill the kids?

THE MOTHER. That's exactly what I'm saying!

THE FATHER. But that's not fair. You can't announce this to me just like that!

THE MOTHER. It's not my fault that you don't notice anything, honey!

Pause.

THE FATHER. Know what? I think your father is to blame for everything!

THE MOTHER. Don't drag my father into this, OK? Have I ever harped on the fact that your parents abandoned you? No! That you grew up in an orphanage? No! I've never harped on your parents.

THE FATHER. Being abandoned is one thing. Having your mother die at your birth and your father never get over it is quite another. And to have him constantly harping over how much he loved your mother and how he would never be able to get over it. And then some doubt slips into his words as to whether you weren't the cause of her death – never mind that she wanted to save you and the doctors couldn't do anything about it. It's another thing entirely to have your father fill your head with all sorts of nonsense, while you're by his side the whole time: through depression after depression. It's another thing entirely for him to start rediscovering his dead wife in you. And for all sorts of hogwash to run through his addled mind. It's another thing entirely for him to bring you up to age eighteen and then, figuring that he'd fulfilled his parental duties, to blow his brains out with a fucking gun! It's another thing entirely...

THE MOTHER. Stop!

THE FATHER. It's another thing entirely to have a father like yours! A whole other can of worms!

THE MOTHER. I told you to stop!

Pause.

THE FATHER. It's no surprise you don't want to drag our families into it. I understand completely.

THE MOTHER. My father has nothing to do with this!

THE FATHER. Oh, he has far too much to do with this whole story. He's the crux of all your problems. Because, begging your pardon, with a father like yours and a childhood like yours, I'd feel like an alien, too!

THE MOTHER. Don't you feel like an alien?

Pause.

THE FATHER. No.

THE MOTHER. And did you ever feel like an alien at all?

Pause.

THE FATHER. Never...

THE MOTHER. So you lied to me?

THE FATHER. Men are capable of spouting off all sorts of nonsense to a woman to impress her.

THE MOTHER. But you weren't like that!

THE FATHER. Sometimes I felt like I was slightly on the margins of life as a whole, but still within the boundaries of normal. Which is definitely not something that could be said of you. As soon as I saw you and fell in love with you – now this is 100 percent true – I said to myself: now there's a woman with issues.

THE MOTHER. Really?

THE FATHER. Normal people don't start off a conversation with: I can't figure out this crappy thing called life at all. They prefer something along the lines of: hi there, how's it going, got a light? They sling all sorts of platitudes, but under no circumstances... and I really mean under no circumstances whatsoever so they go on about how depressed they are. They don't say they feel ostracized and don't get what the point of life is. And they never claim to be aliens.

Pause.

THE MOTHER. So now what?... It turns out that you lied to me.

THE FATHER. I love you, honey. But you have to admit that you have serious issues. And killing the children won't help you one bit!

A clattering sound comes from the kids' room.

THE FATHER. Did you hear something?... Some noise from the kids' room?

THE MOTHER. Didn't I just ask you the same thing?!

THE FATHER. But the room is still dark!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. I don't see anything positive about the fact that you lied to me.

(Pause.) What else have you lied to me about?

THE FATHER. Almost nothing, dear. I've tried to be as open as the circumstances have allowed.

THE MOTHER. To hell with your fucking circumstances! What else have you lied to me about?!

THE FATHER. You can't deny that we were... That we are happy together. And the kids are great. And everything is going really – and I mean really – well. Just look, your son is getting good grades at school. Your daughter, too. And now she's made the school volleyball team and we can go to the games and cheer her on. Just imagine how proud we'll be! It's wonderful!

THE MOTHER *(screaming)*. What else have you lied to me about, motherfucker?

THE FATHER. Okay, okay... Now that I think about it, most of the lies had to do with convincing you that we were two of a kind. I spouted off all that nonsense about feeling like an alien and so on. I convinced you to join the "experiment." I wanted

you to marry me! Everything came down to reaching that goal.

THE MOTHER. So there was no experiment?!

THE FATHER. There was only one goal – to get you to marry me!

THE MOTHER. And you achieved that goal... Good for you!

THE FATHER. Of course, I had to withhold some facts from you, twist some others around...

THE MOTHER. Which facts?

Pause.

THE FATHER. I'm not an orphan, honey. Is that what you wanted to know? I'm not an orphan.

THE MOTHER. And your parents didn't abandon you?

THE FATHER. They would never have been able to. They were crazy about me. They downright worshipped me.

THE MOTHER. So what happened to them?

THE FATHER. I couldn't stand them and ran away. I haven't been in touch with them for a long time. They live in a small town in the sticks. Far away...

THE MOTHER. And they haven't come looking for you?

THE FATHER. I left them a letter advising them not to try. Otherwise, I wrote, I would blow my brains out and that would be last anyone would see of me. I had the reputation of being a hothead at school. I was pretty stubborn. There was no way they wouldn't take me seriously.

THE MOTHER. So that still means that you wanted to kill yourself?!

THE FATHER. I was bluffing, honey. Bluffing. I've never felt any desire to take my own life. I've always enjoyed it far too much.

THE MOTHER. And this is the kind of person I married?

THE FATHER. Yes –

THE MOTHER. How vile.

Pause.

THE FATHER. I kept thinking that eventually you'd come around to liking life.

THE MOTHER. Nope.

THE FATHER. Well, that's too bad.

THE MOTHER. So the whole experiment was just a lie?

THE FATHER. We're together. We have kids. And all this domestic happiness.

THE MOTHER. How dare you talk to me about happiness?!

THE FATHER. You can't possibly not have felt it?

THE MOTHER. No...

THE FATHER. Not even once?!

THE MOTHER. I have absolutely no idea what this fucking happiness you keep going on about is!

THE FATHER. When we're in bed together, during one of those long winter nights, haven't you ever felt some kind of pleasant warmth creep through your belly?

THE MOTHER. No.

THE FATHER. Or, say, at one of the kids' birthday party, haven't you ever wanted to burst into tears of joy? For no reason. To just burst into tears.

THE MOTHER. As I already said, I don't know what this fucking happiness you're talking about is.

THE FATHER. Strange...

Pause.

THE MOTHER. It's not the least bit strange, if you ask me. I'm an alien!

THE FATHER. ...Strange, because I thought that I've felt such moments in you. If not happiness, then something pretty close to happiness.

THE MOTHER. I don't think so.

THE FATHER. Are you sure?

THE MOTHER. Absolutely.

THE FATHER. That can't be true.

THE MOTHER. I don't know how I could put it to you more plainly!

THE FATHER. You've gotten it into you head... that you're an alien and so on... You feel, but you ignore your feelings because of this obsession of yours.

THE MOTHER. I don't feel anything, honey. (*Pause.*) And I really do think it's high time we killed the kids!

THE FATHER. You're starting in on that again?

THE MOTHER. Regardless of whether you lied to me or not, you made me a promise. Now you'll help me kill the kids and then each of us will go our separate ways.

THE FATHER. Honey, you can't just kill the kids!

THE MOTHER. Why not?

THE FATHER. Well, you just can't!

THE MOTHER. What, some liar's gonna tell me what I can or can't do with my kids? Fucking loser!

THE FATHER. You're their mother.

THE MOTHER. So what of it? Should I read them a fairytale before I blow them away?

THE FATHER. Mothers don't kill their children. They take care of them...

Besides... They're already grown up. They'll have their own lives soon enough.

THE MOTHER. Their life is tied to my life.

THE FATHER. And since you hate your own life so much you also hate that of your children? And you want to take it from them?

THE MOTHER. This has nothing to do with feelings, honey. The experiment failed, and that's that.

THE FATHER. There was never any stupid experiment!

THE MOTHER. I can't go on playing the role of a mother. It repulses me. As long as the children are alive, I remain their mother, regardless of whether I want to be or not. The only way to break free is for us to kill them.

THE FATHER. Speak for yourself!

THE MOTHER. You're just afraid.

THE FATHER. I... I love them!

THE MOTHER. You do know, right, that love and all the rest of that stuff is bullshit?

THE FATHER. It's not!

THE MOTHER. From the way things are going, it looks like I'll have to do everything myself... as usual!

Pause.

THE FATHER. I won't let you do this.

THE MOTHER. Who do you think you are? Get out of my way, weakling.

THE FATHER. I won't allow you to kill our children!

THE MOTHER. I'll do whatever I want!

THE FATHER. You love them!

THE MOTHER. Let's not get into what I do or don't love, it's a bit of a dicey topic. I'm gonna kill the kids and that's final!

Noise from the kids' room. The door suddenly bursts open and THE SON and THE DAUGHTER fall to the floor. They have obviously been eavesdropping on the conversation the whole time.

Fade out.

The sounds of a struggle can be heard.¹

¹ There is intermission between Act Two and Act Three.

ACT THREE

THE MOTHER is sitting on the couch. Her arms and legs are tied up, and there is a thick strip of tape across her mouth.

THE SON. I can't believe it!

THE DAUGHTER. Just look what kind of mother we've got...

THE SON. A mother who wants to...

THE DAUGHTER. to just... –

THE SON. Other parents who want to get rid of their kids –

THE DAUGHTER. kill us.

THE SON. ... ditch them and disappear somewhere. They hit the road –

THE DAUGHTER. She wants to kill her own flesh and blood.

THE SON. And they don't come home for years. And when they do finally come back, they regret what they've done

THE DAUGHTER. And completely in cold blood, to boot. She's been planning it for years. She's been dreaming about it.

THE SON. They beg forgiveness from the creatures they gave life to.

THE DAUGHTER. What the hell were they thinking in the first place? We'll try some shitty experiment and if we figure it's not going well, we'll obliterate all evidence of its existence.

THE SON. But in any case, they never ever say to themselves: "Why did I have to go and give them life? Why don't I just take it back?!"

THE DAUGHTER. But we're not just talking about some physical evidence, but about human beings, with feelings.

THE FATHER. Kids! Please!

Pause.

THE SON. So you knew about this the whole time and never told us? That we don't have a mother but some... How did she put it?

THE DAUGHTER. Alien.

THE FATHER. Yes, an alien.

THE SON. Up until now, you've never once mentioned that what we thought was our mother is actually a raging psychopath who wants to blow us away like animals because that's what's most convenient for her. And because she can't deal with "life."

Pause.

THE FATHER. How could I have told you that?

THE DAUGHTER. You could have tried something along the lines of: Kids, your mom is crazy.

THE SON. Or: your mom thinks that she's come from some other planet, so she

wants to bump you off.

THE DAUGHTER. For fuck's sake...

THE FATHER. Don't you dare curse, young lady!

THE DAUGHTER. Oh, I'll curse just as much as I please, motherfucker.

THE FATHER. We don't use that kind of foul language in this house!

THE DAUGHTER. Sorry, dad, but on days like this, foul language is the least of our worries! Talk about fucked up! It's not every day that you hear your very own mother saying she's sorry you were ever born. Straight from her own mouth!... But if only that were the end of it. OK, fine... that sort of thing happens, right? We've read about it in the newspapers. We've seen it on TV. They wish you hadn't been born and that's that. At worst, they vanish from your life. As terrible as it might seem, that's actually normal. It's happened before, and it'll happen again. No matter how awful you may feel, you get over it someday. You learn to live with it. But to hear your own mother say she wants to kill you. That's... that's...

THE SON. Terrible... Immoral... Monstrous...

THE FATHER. Kids. Listen!...

THE SON. Shut up!

THE FATHER. I'm your father, you can't tell me to shut up.

THE SON. So you're my father, huh? You're in cahoots with her. You're the one who made her all those promises!

THE DAUGHTER. You talked her into some "experiment." You agreed to her conditions!

THE FATHER. Listen, kids. I was in love with your mother... I still am in love with her.

Pause.

THE SON. In love with that thing?! I don't get it at all... you're in love with that alien?!

THE FATHER. If I hadn't thought up the experiment and convinced her to marry me... you wouldn't... be here now...

THE SON. That would've been better.

THE DAUGHTER. That way her problems would be solved, right? And she wouldn't want to... obliterate us!

THE SON. The fact that you love her does not make you any less in cahoots with her, dad.

THE DAUGHTER. Nor does the fact that you're our father change anything.

THE FATHER. Fine, if that's the case, then your mother's not to blame. I'm to blame, because I misled her and forced her to join in this game called family life which she apparently never wanted any part of.

THE DAUGHTER. But she said it... She said it... That she wants to...

THE FATHER. Your mother has her issues. But she's not like that!

THE SON. How the hell should I know what she's like? How can I be sure? Huh? I mean, who knows how many times she's hovered over my crib with a gun or a knife, or with her bare hands? Because of all her problems with "life." Because of the problems in her head! I'm starting to wonder how we even survived at all. That's the

real shocker. How we survived in this environment. With this alien. With this joke of a mother.

THE DAUGHTER. Why hasn't she killed us before now?

THE SON. Did she ever bring this up when we were little?

THE FATHER. No! This was the first time...

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. I don't believe you!

THE SON. Me, neither... not a bit. You yourself said that you love her! So that means you're on her side.

THE FATHER. But kids. I love you. Just as much as I love your mother.

THE DAUGHTER. There's no way we can trust you, dad. What if out of love for her, you kill us so as not to lose her love?

THE SON. Or to rekindle that spark in your relationship? Or some other romantic bullshit?

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. If only the stupid door hadn't opened!

THE SON. Then we would've heard the rest of the conversation. What your reaction would've been!

THE DAUGHTER. Whether she would've talked you into it.

THE SON. Or whether you would've talked her out of it.

THE DAUGHTER. Or whether nobody would've talked anybody in or out of anything.

THE SON. I wonder if she would've given up on her plan?

THE DAUGHTER. She seemed pretty decisive. I doubt it.

THE SON. But still!

THE FATHER. Kids!

THE SON and THE DAUGHTER. Shut up!

THE DAUGHTER. Would you have told us? Now there's an interesting question. Would you have told us?

Pause.

THE FATHER. I don't know.

THE SON. You don't know?

THE DAUGHTER. You wouldn't have told us!

THE SON. You would've put our lives at risk!

THE DAUGHTER. And what if she had managed to do it? If she had killed us?

THE FATHER. Kids, I really don't think your mother would seriously have –

THE SON. How can you be so sure?

THE DAUGHTER. She's gotten it into her head.

THE SON. She would've found a way.

THE DAUGHTER. And then?

THE SON. The couple would have lived happily ever after.

THE DAUGHTER. With no kids.

THE FATHER. But –

THE DAUGHTER. But I don't understand where we went wrong. What was our

crime? Weren't we good kids? Didn't we try hard enough? You yourself know very well how tough school was for me at first, but I gritted my teeth. And now I'm a straight-A student. For you! I got used to doing homework, to cramming for exams. Not that I see any point in all that. On the contrary. School has no point. None!... Sometimes I think that the teachers' only goal is to limit the students. To force them to think a certain way. To shove them into some sort of box! To make them clones!... And I had to put up with all that, because I wanted you both to be happy. To be proud of me. Now that meant something... For you to be proud... for me to be good. I tried everything I could think of to live up to your shitty expectations. Of course, you never openly made any demands on me, but I could see very well whether you approved of something I was doing or not. And you know how far I took things? I've always loved basketball and dreamed of being on the school basketball team...

THE FATHER (*in disbelief*). Basketball?

THE DAUGHTER. That's right. Basketball! But because I know my stupid father is crazy about volleyball... I knew how much you would love going to games. Talking to the other parents. Cheering me on. Telling them how that girl there is your daughter. So I said to myself: why not? It'll mean so much to him!

THE FATHER. But... sweetheart... I never wanted –

THE DAUGHTER. Shut up!

THE SON. Now it's our turn to talk!

THE DAUGHTER. So I do all of that and what happens in the end? My mom wants to blow my fucking brains out!

THE SON. We busted our asses to make your happy. Know why I didn't make the soccer team?

THE FATHER. Soccer?

THE SON. You've never liked soccer... So I had to watch the important games by myself, because my dad wasn't interested, and the only thing my mom does is cook, check whether I've done my homework, and listen to music, staring at some goddamn spot on the wall. You know why I didn't make the soccer team?

Pause.

THE FATHER. Why?

THE SON. Because I sucked at chemistry. I got a D – which you and mom, you and that... alien... never found out about in any case, and for three months I had to bust ass to save my GPA. And all for you! Because you would've been upset. I knew what kind of faces you'd make. And because of some stupid desire to please you. Jesus fucking Christ!... Wanting to please your parents – what could be stupider than that when your mother wants you to kick the bucket. So I kissed the idea of playing soccer goodbye. And I never said a word about it!

THE FATHER. But... I...

THE DAUGHTER. We were good kids.

THE SON. Perfect kids!

THE DAUGHTER. We did everything... all for you.

THE SON. We never stopped thinking about you.

THE DAUGHTER. And what did we get in return?

THE SON. What? Tell me!

THE DAUGHTER. A bullet in the head.

THE SON. In the gut.

THE DAUGHTER. Our throats slit.

THE SON. Strangled.

THE DAUGHTER. A fall in the bathtub.

THE FATHER. But...

Pause.

THE SON. And how long have we been like this... in mortal danger?

THE DAUGHTER. You deceived us. Even now... When we realized there was some problem. There was no way you could hide it from us. We thought it was something between the two of you. Some problem with your relationship.

THE SON. You know what we mean. One of those things that couples who've been married a long time go through.

THE DAUGHTER. Boredom. Monotony.

Pause.

THE SON. Cheating.

THE DAUGHTER. First, we thought that you'd screwed up. Then we decided it was mom.

THE SON. We sat there by the door for a whole three hours... Waiting for you to get around to it. To figure out what was going on. To see what the problem with our fucking family was.

THE FATHER. I forbid you to swear –

THE SON. I can't believe you're getting worked up over a few fucking swearwords. Our mother is ready to chop us up for stew and serve us for dinner, and you're worried about a few fucking cusswords. Just because kids aren't supposed to talk that way. Fucking kids. Fucking kids these days! Take a look at yourself! The husband of a psychopath!

THE DAUGHTER. We waited and waited for three fucking hours, going through all sorts of scenarios. We were sure that there was some kind of problem between you. And we were wondering how we could help you.

THE SON. We were planning to buy you a romantic getaway. Venice, Rome, something like that. We were prepared to blow all our savings. Every last cent!

THE DAUGHTER. Every last cent!

THE SON. But if things turned out to be really bad, we would've come up with something else.

THE DAUGHTER. After all, haven't we watched all those fucking Hollywood movies where the innocent little kids manage to bring their foolish parents back together?!

THE SON. We were prepared for anything.

THE DAUGHTER. Except this.

Pause.

THE SON. At first we couldn't believe it. We thought we must have misheard. That we didn't understand. But she... (*he points at THE MOTHER*)... kept saying it over

and over!... If we'd made a recording, we could turn her over to the police.

THE DAUGHTER. But who would ever believe us now?

THE SON. Can you imagine, dad?

THE FATHER. What?... look... she...

THE SON. Can you imagine us calling the police and reporting that our mother is planning to blow us away? Who would believe us?

THE DAUGHTER. But now we have to do something. We can't just leave things like this. I mean, what would happen if she were to get away?

THE SON. We need to mom-proof the house. To gather up all the knives and forks. Everything she could use as a weapon.

THE DAUGHTER. And we need to decide what to do with her.

THE FATHER. But kids... Your mother –

THE SON. Our mother, our mother... We don't have a mother.

THE DAUGHTER. Now that she's said all those things.

THE SON. Now we're alone.

THE DAUGHTER. Against the world.

THE FATHER. But you... you'll always have me!...

THE SON. You? Oh, please!

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER *suddenly rips the tape off THE MOTHER's mouth.*

THE SON. You, our so-called mother, or should I say murderess? I don't know.

Which sounds more fitting?... Or would you prefer extraterrestrial? Aren't you going to say anything in your defense?

THE MOTHER. My darlings... There's been a misunderstanding...

THE DAUGHTER. A misunderstanding? You expressed yourself exceptionally clearly.

THE FATHER. Kids –

THE DAUGHTER. We're not kids! We are fully lawful human beings!

THE FATHER. Fine, fine... I'm just trying to say that –

THE SON. We want to know what *she* is trying to say!

THE MOTHER. I was speaking figuratively, my dears. I would never hurt you!

THE SON. Oh, yes, I think you expressed yourself quite... “figuratively” indeed.

THE DAUGHTER. Don't bother beating around the bush!

THE SON. Tell us the truth!

THE MOTHER. What truth?

THE SON. Why do you want to do it?

THE MOTHER. But, sweethearts... I have really never wanted to... look here. You are so wonderful and grown up. How could you possibly think that... You've completely forgotten about my sense of humor. Sometimes it's a little extreme, and I admit, quite dark, but...

THE DAUGHTER. You don't have a sense of humor, mom.

THE SON. My sister and I can both swear to the fact that someone accidentally cut out your sense of humor when tying off your umbilical cord.

THE DAUGHTER. Just remember how many times we've tried to make you laugh

over the years. At one point we started collecting tons of jokes. You didn't laugh at a single one of them. OK. You often pretended to laugh... Sometimes quite convincingly, I must admit. But you never laughed for real!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Are you accusing me of having no sense of humor?

THE DAUGHTER. We don't give a rat's ass that you don't have a sense of humor!... But to want to kill us!

THE SON. That's taking things a little far. Don't you think?

THE MOTHER (to THE FATHER). And you're defending these little monsters?! Who went and... attacked me like this?! I bet they've been waiting their whole lives for this moment! They're blaming me for all their problems without a second thought! Now there's children for you, honey. The ancients got it right... our son wants to sleep with me, our daughter with you... And they both want to kill us!

THE SON. What!?

THE DAUGHTER. Just don't try to bamboozle us with your empty psychobabble!

THE FATHER. Kids! Your mother isn't well! We are her family. She's going through a difficult period. We have to help her. She has no one else in her life.

THE SON. Why not? Did she kill off her friends, too?

THE DAUGHTER. That must've been how our grandpa died as well! I bet she snuffed him out, too.

THE MOTHER. Don't drag daddy into this. He was a wonderful person. He's not to blame for anything!

THE SON. I don't see what we're to blame for, either. But you've still decided to rub us out. So then why wouldn't you kill him, too? What? Was he too boring for you? Or was it just that an alien couldn't have earthly parents?

THE MOTHER. You don't understand at all. I'm an alien. For as long as I can remember... While your grandfather...

THE DAUGHTER. He was a normal person.

THE SON. Which surely didn't sit well with his abnormal daughter.

THE DAUGHTER. Which is why she faked his suicide.

THE SON. And she thought that was the end of it, until her kids grew up.

THE DAUGHTER. When she decided that she needed to rub them out, too.

Pause.

THE FATHER. Kids, don't attack your mother. We need to think about how we can help her. We need to find a specialized clinic. Or to help her ourselves...

THE MOTHER. You want to lock me up in a loony bin? After all our years together, the first thing that pops into your mind is to lock me up in a loony bin? Wow, you really must love me, for sure!

THE SON. A loony bin isn't going to help her!

THE DAUGHTER (to THE MOTHER). You! How could you have done it! I looked up to you so much! OK, I won't deny that you've always been a little out there. But I'd gotten used to it... I even liked the fact that my mom wasn't like all the other moms. That made you more special. And in the end you just want to shoot me, to lop my head off and mount it on the wall like some stupid trophy!

THE MOTHER. I've never wanted to do that!

THE DAUGHTER. To kill me?

THE MOTHER. To put your head on the wall. That wouldn't be very aesthetic.

THE DAUGHTER. And now you're gonna lecture me on fucking aesthetics?!

THE FATHER. Let's all just calm down –

THE DAUGHTER (*screaming at THE FATHER*). Just don't tell me to calm down!

THE SON. We can't be calm!

THE DAUGHTER. She doesn't even bother denying anymore that she wanted to kill us!

THE MOTHER. There's no point in denying it, right? You're really smart kids. Real fucking geniuses, who eavesdrop on their parents' secret conversations. Who eavesdrop precisely on conversations that are none of their business whatsoever!

THE SON. Well, at least we're not fucking psychos who demonstrate their love for their family with a gun in their hands and a finger on the fucking trigger, right?

THE DAUGHTER. Or maybe she meant for it to work out just like this. She can't solve her problems with life. She also can't kill herself. Otherwise she would've done so long ago. So she orchestrated this whole scene. We listen in on the conversation. We get mad and kill her.

THE FATHER. What?!

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. Sounds pretty logical to me. When your mom is psycho, you've got to be ready for anything, right?

THE SON. Even if that theory is true, this is nothing but a shitty attempt at a shitty suicide.

THE DAUGHTER. Well? What do you say? Is that it?

Pause.

THE MOTHER. You've got quite a twisted imagination, young lady! This wasn't a fucking suicide attempt. As I told your father earlier, I simply wanted to kill you. That's all. Nothing more, nothing less.

Pause.

THE SON. So?... What do we do with her now?

THE FATHER. Let's not forget that this is your mother. No matter what she's said. No matter what she wanted to do. This is your mother and you must love her. And try to understand that if she's said all those things, it's because she's sick and needs treatment...

THE SON. I got a special treatment for her!

THE DAUGHTER. She's got problems with life, right?

THE SON. We can help her solve them!

THE DAUGHTER. Bang – and no more problems!

THE SON. How could we have known that our mother is some crazed existentialist? With a fixation on obliterating her family tree.

THE FATHER. Kids. Let's not get carried away.

THE SON. She's already gotten carried away. She crossed all the lines.

THE DAUGHTER. We're never going to be able to forgive her.

THE SON. We might have to go to shrinks. Although I doubt they'd believe us. It sounds so unbelievable. Your own mother wanting to kill you!

THE FATHER. Kids!

Pause.

THE SON (*to THE DAUGHTER*). Go get a knife from the kitchen.

THE FATHER. You can't do this!

THE SON. Oh, she's already tried to do it. We're simply imitating our mother. Take it that way if it's easier for you! Too bad we can't find a gun, but a knife'll do the trick, too.

THE DAUGHTER goes into the kitchen.

THE FATHER. There must be some other solution to the problem!

THE MOTHER. Don't let them do it! They aren't...

THE SON. Why not? You haven't suddenly taken a liking to life, now have you?

THE MOTHER. Shut your trap!

THE DAUGHTER returns from the kitchen with a gigantic knife. THE FATHER rushes towards THE MOTHER. THE SON holds him back firmly. THE SON is stronger than he looks, or THE FATHER is much weaker.

THE FATHER. Leave your mother alone!

THE SON. Would she have left us alone?

THE DAUGHTER. I guess the honor falls to me!

THE MOTHER. Kids, I love you! Don't do it!

THE SON. Once it's started, there's not stopping it!

THE DAUGHTER. You wanted to do the same to us, right?

THE SON. Well, it's not the most pleasant job, but at least there'll be some shitty sort of poetic justice, right?

THE FATHER. She loves you!

THE SON. She loved her father, too. Who knows what she did to him? She can say whatever she wants. I don't believe grandpa killed himself.

THE MOTHER. You'll never understand him?

THE DAUGHTER. We've long since passed the point of understanding. We've gone way past that.

THE MOTHER. You won't... you can't...

THE DAUGHTER. Oh, yes we can! We can do more than you can imagine!

THE MOTHER. But I'm your mother...

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. Ever since I heard that you want to kill me, you're no longer my mother.

Pause.

THE MOTHER. I love you.

THE DAUGHTER Blah blah blah.

THE FATHER. Stop!

THE SON. This is between us and her!

THE DAUGHTER steps behind the mother. She holds the knife to her throat.

THE MOTHER. I love you! I really do love you!

THE DAUGHTER. You can't fool us any longer!

THE DAUGHTER** suddenly drags the knife across **THE MOTHER's** throat, but with the dull side to her skin. Then she cuts the ropes and frees **THE MOTHER.

THE SON. Well, that was that.

Pause.

THE FATHER. Honey!

Pause.

THE SON. I guess that's what they call a close shave, huh?

THE MOTHER. I...

THE DAUGHTER. Mom, we could never hurt you.

THE SON. Did you feel anything?

Pause.

THE FATHER. You told them you love them. I heard you tell them very clearly that you loved them.

THE MOTHER. I... I...

THE DAUGHTER. Sorry, mom, but my brother and I decided that this was the only way to help you.

THE SON. We had to force you to start loving life.

THE DAUGHTER. It wasn't easy...

THE SON. On the contrary, even.

THE DAUGHTER. I'm sorry about everything I said.

THE SON. Me, too, mom.

Pause.

THE FATHER. We have wonderful kids, don't we, honey? You can't deny that we have wonderful kids. Now everything will be fine. Life will go on. They'll go to school, they'll eventually graduate. We'll watch them grow up. They'll apply to college. But before that we'll definitely go to watch the volleyball games. Right, honey? Because our daughter! On the volleyball team. It's wonderful... Simply wonderful!

THE MOTHER. I... I'm an alien.

THE FATHER. You're not going to keep harping on that now, are you? I thought we'd put that phase behind us.

THE SON. We tried to cure you.

THE MOTHER. Alien!

THE FATHER. Maybe it'll take more time than we thought, kids!

THE SON. We're ready to help you.

THE MOTHER. Alien!!!

***THE MOTHER** runs out the front door, slamming it behind her.*

ACT FOUR

The next day. The living room. THE FATHER, THE SON and THE DAUGHTER.

THE SON. Why did mom run away?

THE DAUGHTER. Yeah, why, dad?

THE SON. Didn't we do everything we...

THE FATHER. You did your best, kids. You really scared the heck out of us...

THE SON. But it was the only way...

THE FATHER. I understand. Perhaps your mother...

THE DAUGHTER. Will she come back?

THE FATHER. Maybe your mother needs... Give her a little time. After all, everything was so unexpected. And you put on such a good act.

THE DAUGHTER. You think so?!

THE FATHER. That part with the knife was incredible! Incredible!

THE DAUGHTER. Seriously?

THE FATHER. You were like a real actress.

THE DAUGHTER. Really?

THE FATHER. And you know what I've been thinking...

THE DAUGHTER. Yeah?...

THE FATHER. What I mean is... So I was thinking to myself...

THE DAUGHTER. What?

THE FATHER. Why don't you apply to study drama after you finish high school? You obviously have a talent for acting. And in such a stressful situation to boot! You managed to fool not only your mother, but me, too! Your very own father!

THE DAUGHTER. Well, if you hadn't believed it then mom wouldn't have believed it either, right?

THE FATHER. That's what I'm trying to say. Have you ever thought about it? –

THE DAUGHTER. The only thing I'm thinking about is mom...

THE FATHER. ...About studying acting...

THE SON. ...She ran away without a word. She could've at least... at least let on whether we'd helped her or not. Whether she liked life now! Argh... Having a mother with issues isn't easy...

THE DAUGHTER. I'm going to med school, dad. I don't want to be an actress.

THE FATHER. But still!

THE DAUGHTER. No!

THE FATHER. But –

THE DAUGHTER. Dad, please.

THE FATHER. Fine. But it's a terrible waste of your talent.

THE SON. Well, what if I can't figure life out either? And decide to... it would be...

no. Life is cut-and-dried. There's nothing absurd about life at all... I hope mom's all right. That's all... I hope she's OK... Wherever she is!

THE FATHER. Kids, I'm sure your mother is fine. She'll be back soon, you'll see.

THE SON. And she'll explain everything to us?

THE FATHER. And she'll explain everything to you!

Pause.

THE DAUGHTER. And she won't want to kill us anymore.

THE FATHER. You didn't seriously believe that, right? Your mother's always been a little out there as far as I can remember. She has her phases when she goes on about strange things. She can make you think – wow, we've been together all these years and I don't know her at all. She can shock you with a single word... And then she suddenly becomes the woman you love again. The only woman you've ever desired. That you've ever wanted to start a family with. Those dark times disappear somewhere in your memory. You forget them immediately. You stuff them somewhere deep down in your subconscious. You remember them the next time she changes again. But you're already used to it. In the fall and the spring she changes for a few days. She gets huffy, cantankerous. You try not to pay attention to her, because you know it will pass. No matter how difficult it is sometimes to not pay any attention to her. She can really drive you nuts. She can haul off and slap you, then kiss you, then slap you again. That's the kind of person your mother is. A strange person, inexplicable. Maybe that's why I love her so much. Perhaps I find some magic in that, which I don't find anywhere else. Only in your mother. (*Pause*) You have a wonderful mother, kids. Wonderful!

Pause.

THE SON. You really do love her a lot, dad.

THE DAUGHTER. You've always loved her. For as long as I can remember you've been bursting with love for her. Even though at times she can be so cold.

THE SON. And it seems like she couldn't care less about you or about us.

THE DAUGHTER. But that only lasts a little while.

THE SON. A very short while.

THE DAUGHTER. The rest of the time she's the best mom ever!

THE FATHER. I'm glad you think so, kids. She is incredible. And for her it is truly a joy to be the mother of such incredible kids like yourselves.

Pause.

THE SON. She's been gone for 24 hours. Don't you think it's time we called the police?

THE FATHER. And what will we tell them?... We can't tell them the truth...

THE DAUGHTER. That would be terrible...

THE SON. We'll think something up.

THE DAUGHTER. Like what?

THE SON. Something... Something believable... Better to make something up and to call them than to sit here and do nothing!

THE FATHER. We're not going to call the police. Your mother will come home.

THE DAUGHTER. You've been saying that since yesterday, dad. But mom is still

gone.

THE SON. Aren't you worried about her?

THE FATHER. What do you mean? Of course I'm worried. I just think... that it won't help your mother one bit if we call the police, kids.

THE SON. But they could find her.

THE DAUGHTER. And bring her back to us.

THE FATHER. And then what?

Pause.

THE SON. Don't you want her to come back?

THE DAUGHTER. I would never have expected that from you, dad!

THE SON. It's like you don't want her to come back at all!

THE DAUGHTER. Even though you claim to want the exact opposite!

THE SON. You don't want...

THE FATHER. Look, kids. Your mother has issues with herself. If she doesn't solve them on her own and we call the police, report her as a missing person and start a nationwide search, and if on top of everything they find her and bring her back – that won't change anything. Your mother has to decide to come back on her own.

THE SON. Fuck, you're right.

THE FATHER. And please, kids, let's stop using that kind of language!

THE SON. Sorry, dad.

THE FATHER. I admit that sometimes a person needs to curse. It may be an inner necessity, but over the past two days, you two have gotten carried away. I'll have to think up some punishment for you!

THE DAUGHTER. Punishment?

THE FATHER. For your own edification. It's not like your mother and I haven't ever punished you before...

THE SON. But right now... at this moment?

THE DAUGHTER. Can't we at least wait till mom gets back?

THE SON. Before you punish us...

THE FATHER. Well, it was just an idea. I didn't mean it that seriously.

THE SON. It sounded so strange. Mom's gone, and you're going to punish us!

The door opens.. THE MOTHER comes in.

THE FATHER. Honey!

THE SON and THE DAUGHTER. Mom!

THE FATHER. You came back. I knew you'd come back.

THE SON. How are you, mom? Are you OK?

THE DAUGHTER. We were worried about you.

THE SON. How do you feel?

THE FATHER. What a relief!

THE DAUGHTER. Are you better now?

THE FATHER. Because, to tell you the truth, I know I probably shouldn't say this in front of the kids... But I was started to have my doubts.

THE SON. Everything's over, right? Everything's over?

THE MOTHER. Kids. I'm sorry I took so long. But I had to think some things over.

THE DAUGHTER. And?

THE SON. Did you think them over?

THE DAUGHTER. And now everything's fine, right?

THE FATHER. We love you, honey. We really do love you.

THE DAUGHTER. I mean... everything's going to keep going like before.

THE SON. Every family has its tough times, right?

THE DAUGHTER. And we'll just forget this whole thing ever happened.

THE FATHER. You can't imagine how much we love you.

THE MOTHER. Everything that has happened has made me stop and think. It woke up some feelings in me. Absolutely unexpectedly... So many years of coldness, an inability to feel... And suddenly... It's really strange... I don't know what happened to me. All those years. I thought and thought... I remembered everything... All the little things, you know...

Pause.

THE SON. You came back, mom!

THE DAUGHTER. We love you.

THE FATHER. I love you. I love you so much.

THE DAUGHTER. And it was just like dad said, you just needed time to...

THE SON. There was no way you wouldn't realize how much you love us. We're your kids after all, right...

THE MOTHER. Even when you were just babies. How I held you to my breasts. And how you were with me wherever I went. And how you both cried...

THE SON. It's impossible for mother not to love her kids.

THE DAUGHTER. ...be alone with your thoughts to discover the truth.

THE SON. Genetically, I mean. It's genetically impossible for a mother to kill her children in cold blood.

THE FATHER. The moment I saw you, I knew I loved you with my whole heart.

THE MOTHER. Then kindergarten... Those mornings when your dad and I would walk you to the nearby school. And we always went on foot. Even when it was raining. We would wrap ourselves up in rain slickers and walk. I put on your yellow rubber boots and we splashed straight through the puddles.

THE DAUGHTER. The truth is that you have a family.

THE FATHER. And I realized that if I missed my chance, I'd be lonely my whole life.

THE DAUGHTER. You have us!

THE FATHER. I've never thought I could be happy outside of our relationship.

THE SON. A mother can't just kill her kids.

THE MOTHER. And then school. The good grades. Doing your homework in the evenings. Getting your report cards. Going to parent-teacher conferences where they couldn't praise you enough.

THE SON. In cold blood!

Pause.

THE FATHER. Didn't I tell you your mother would come back, kids! How wonderful!

THE MOTHER. Sometimes I'm even ashamed. Your homeroom teacher goes on and on about you. What angels you are. And how lucky you are to be together in one class.

THE DAUGHTER. And we have you. The best mom ever.

THE MOTHER. To grow up together, even though you were born a year apart. We started you in school together.

THE FATHER. I wonder if I shouldn't rustle up something for dinner. Something festive, I mean!

THE SON. We can all make something. Together.

THE DAUGHTER. I'll make the salad.

THE MOTHER. I thought a lot... A whole lot about...

THE SON. I'll make mashed potatoes. We haven't had mashed potatoes in ages.

THE FATHER. Why don't I scramble up some eggs? It's not fancy, but that'll be better anyway. You know that when it comes to cooking, I can be a real disaster in the kitchen.

THE MOTHER. And you know what I realized?

THE FATHER. How much you love us?

THE DAUGHTER. We love you, too, mom. So much... We love you so much!

THE MOTHER. I... I want to the attic of the old apartment... Where I lived with my father as a kid... I go there sometimes.

THE FATHER. We've got to get the rent from the tenants this week. I totally forgot!

THE SON. I'll go!

THE FATHER. Great. I'll call them. We'll fix a time... and then you'll go over there!

THE MOTHER. All his stuff is there. Photos... The mirror he used for shaving...

THE DAUGHTER. Poor grandpa!

THE FATHER. Why haven't we done anything with that old attic?

THE MOTHER. And I asked myself... What... What's happening to me?

THE FATHER. It's big enough. We could remodel it into an apartment and rent it out, too. Yes, indeed... that's exactly what we need to do.

THE SON. And... what did you come up with, mom?

THE MOTHER *takes a gun out of her belt.*

THE MOTHER. I remembered that the gun your grandfather used to blow his brains out was there! And I thought to myself... Wouldn't it be great to blow out your stupid little childish brains with the same gun my father used to blow his out?... Besides, where else am I gonna be able to find a fucking gun? It's not a fucking woman's job to buy fucking guns, right? Buying a fucking gun is a fucking man's job!

Pause.

THE FATHER. But, honey –

THE DAUGHTER. You said you'd thought –

THE SON. And all of that with the memories. Of us as babies... and in kindergarten...

THE DAUGHTER. We love you, mom. You can't kill us!

THE FATHER. I... I... simply... don't understand...

THE MOTHER. All of those memories made me ask myself why I hadn't killed you before now. It would've been so easy. Before, you were so small and helpless. And it wouldn't have even crossed your minds to attack your mother.

THE SON. Yeah, well, back then our mother didn't want to kill is...

THE FATHER. You... can't...

THE MOTHER. Oh yes I can... and how!...

THE FATHER. But they... they're your children! They're our children!

THE MOTHER. So what? Should I buy them an ice-cream cone before I blow them away?

Pause.

THE FATHER. Just go...leave them with me... Disappear from our lives...

THE SON. So this is what my mother is really like! And here I thought you were really starting to take a shine to me.

THE DAUGHTER. Don't listen to them, mom. You can't do this!

THE SON. But no! What shine? What love?!

THE FATHER. Better for us to lose you than... You... You can't just...

THE MOTHER. Can't I? Just watch me. Now you'll see how a mother can blow her kids' brains out. Get ready! I told you, get ready... Aren't you going to beg?! Or... Listen to me when I talk to you! Beg!

THE SON. You really are some fucking alien... in the worst sense of the word.

Pause.

THE MOTHER. Uh, hello! As if I didn't tell you that before. But that's the problem with fucking humanity these days. Everyone talks only to themselves. Everyone listens only to themselves. The only way to get them to hear you, to take you seriously, is to hold the barrel of a fucking gun to their heads. That's the only way you can get their fucking attention... As if I hadn't told you... But you... You thought that I'm fucking crazy. You planned to lock me up in some loony bin. But I'm not fucking crazy. I am a fucking alien. They are two different fucking things. And I don't see any reason not to blow your fucking brains out. I've got to get this all over with. This whole farce. I can't take it anymore... Even if I go and leave you alone, it'll weigh on my fucking conscience. The fact that I've left something unfinished will always gnaw at me. That's why I have to fucking kill you.

THE DAUGHTER. You're not in your right mind! You'll regret it! Once there's no going back!

THE SON. OK, fine... Kill me if you really want to! Fucking motherfu...

THE FATHER. Get out of here this instant! Leave the children and me to live our lives!

THE SON. She pointed the gun at me!

THE FATHER. We'll get by, even without you!

THE DAUGHTER. You'll totally regret this!

THE MOTHER. I won't regret fucking anything. On the contrary!

THE SON. What are you waiting for, then? Shoot!

Pause.

THE MOTHER. OK, now I'm really gonna splatter the wall with your brains! We

needed to change the wallpaper in any case. Red isn't my favorite color, but I can put up with it for a few days...

THE FATHER. I don't understand why you don't just leave... Go back to your home planet! You're an alien, aren't you? Leave us stupid, pathetic earthlings to go on about our lives.

THE MOTHER. I can't leave you behind as evidence. That would be a mistake.

THE DAUGHTER. You're not even moved in the least! And I'm trying so hard to play on your heartstrings! I even shed a few tears, but you stick to your guns – literally! And you're my mother!?

THE MOTHER. I'm no mother at all. I'm an alien.

THE SON. I don't seem to see my brains splattered on the wall yet. You haven't lost your nerve, have you? Actually, you're all talk, no action, right? We all talk like that now and then! How we're gonna blow so-and-so away. And then we don't do jack. Just think how many would-be mass murderers we've got at school! Dozens. And they all just sit there doing nothing. Nobody has the guts to pull off a nice big massacre at school, like that one in America! That's why Americans are so far ahead of us, because of those nice big school shootings. I mean... What else do they have that we don't?

THE MOTHER. Shut up!

THE DAUGHTER. Come on! What are you waiting for! Let's get this over with! Kill us, 'cause how can we live anyway with a shitty mom like you anyway!

THE FATHER. Kids... She... she needs to leave us alone. She...

THE MOTHER. Now... It's all over now. I'll shoot all three of you!... And then afterwards –

THE SON. Will there be an afterwards? I was left with the impression that you'll blow your own crazy brains out once you're finished with us!

THE FATHER. The three of us? Wait a second... Why the three of us?

THE DAUGHTER. Or maybe the most logical thing to do would be to blow your own psychotic brains out and leave us alone. If you don't feel like living, die! If you don't get life – then take your own. But why drag us into this whole mess! Now that's what I can't understand!

THE SON. Aren't you gonna do it?!

THE FATHER. The three of us?!

THE MOTHER. Yes, the three of you. What part of that didn't you understand? Wasn't I clear?

THE FATHER. I thought this was between you and the kids. And now you're saying: the three of you!

THE MOTHER. This is between all of us. You must realize –

THE FATHER. Realize what? The three of us!!

THE SON. Dad, don't bother. Mom, just pull the friggin' trigger already!

THE DAUGHTER. Come on! Let's see if you've got the guts!

THE MOTHER. First, it was just the two of us together, right? Against the whole fucking world. Two aliens from another galaxy. That was our way of dealing with the absurdity of this fucking planet. We couldn't understand how people could live like

such squares, like such... So we made a deal. To give that life a try. But later it turned out that you were only fucking play-acting. That you didn't believe what you had told me even for a minute!

THE FATHER. But –

THE DAUGHTER. Poor guy... What was he supposed to do, being in love with such a psycho!

THE FATHER. I was fighting for our love!

THE SON. I'm amazed they haven't locked you up in some insane asylum by now.

THE MOTHER. And now love is going to get the best of you!

THE DAUGHTER. But dad wouldn't allow it, right... For her to be locked up in...

THE MOTHER. You didn't think you were gonna get away, now did you?

THE SON. You protected her, didn't you?

THE FATHER. She is your mother and my wife, kids...

THE MOTHER. It's time to put an end to everything.

THE FATHER. I never for a moment stopped loving her.

THE MOTHER. If you say that fucking word one more time, I'm gonna start with you, even though I had been wondering which of the kids to blow away first.

Pause.

THE SON. Me!

THE DAUGHTER. No, me!

THE SON. I've always pissed you off more, right?

THE DAUGHTER. But he's never really made you mad... Like only another woman can...

THE MOTHER. Look at them... take a good look at your fucking perfect family. Aren't they cute?... Is that it? Is that the fucking point of everything? To raise them, and afterwards for them to raise their own fucking kids, who will take up the fucking baton. And so on and so forth to infinity! What's the point? And on top of everything, you're supposed to be happy, because if you're not happy, something must be wrong with you. You're not normal. Well, what if I just can't be happy, huh? What then? Don't I deserve to exist?

Pause.

THE SON. Should we call some undertaker or something? So they can be ready, 'cause otherwise some neighbor'll stumble across this pretty sight... Like the gory end of some friggin' Shakespearean tragedy...

THE MOTHER. Shut up, you little freak! Shut your fucking mouth!

THE SON. No.

THE MOTHER. Fine then. I was debating, because your sister is a shitty little spaz who deserves to have her clever, pretty little head blown off no less than you do... But since you're so insistent, I'll start with you. Happy now?

THE SON. Very!

THE FATHER. No... Stop... I... I... I won't be able to go on...

THE MOTHER. Of course, you won't be able to go on. Are you fucking stupid or what? Your turn will come soon enough.

THE DAUGHTER. You're repulsive!

THE MOTHER. Oh, come on, now... Do we really need to start with the name-calling?

THE SON. Hmm, the wallpaper behind me is still as clean as can be. I don't even see the teensiest bloodstain!

THE MOTHER. Just you wait, you little...

THE MOTHER slowly points the gun at THE SON. Her hand is shaking. She holds him at gunpoint for a very long time. Then she points the gun at THE DAUGHTER.

THE SON. What? Don't I get on your nerves? Come on, mom. I can't wait!

THE MOTHER completely ignores him. She is frozen, with the gun pointed at THE DAUGHTER. Then she points it at THE FATHER.

THE FATHER. What!?

THE SON. Dad hasn't done anything to you! I thought the problem was with us!

THE DAUGHTER. Leave him alone!

THE MOTHER points the gun at THE FATHER for a long time. Then she slowly lowers it.

THE MOTHER. I... I...

THE FATHER. I knew she wouldn't do it! You have a wonderful mother. Wonderful!

THE SON. She –

THE MOTHER. I... can't...

THE MOTHER slowly raises the gun to her own head.

THE FATHER. Drop the gun! Do you hear me! Drop the gun!

THE DAUGHTER. Mom!

THE MOTHER. I...

Pause.

THE MOTHER falls to the floor, the gun still pressed to her temple. Her finger trembles on the trigger. She freezes like that for a moment, then points the gun at the ceiling. A series of shots ensue, accompanied by the MOTHER's angry scream.

THE FATHER. Don't...

THE MOTHER sits down on the floor, out of breath. She lowers the hand holding the gun. She looks at the gun, jumps and drops it on the ground.

THE MOTHER. I... I... don't know...

THE FATHER. Honey...

THE DAUGHTER. Mom!

THE MOTHER. How fucking stupid can you get. I... failed... And I was fucking sure that... What happened to me...

THE FATHER. Are there any bullets left in the gun, honey?

THE MOTHER. I... don't...

THE FATHER. Are there any bullets left!!

THE MOTHER. I don't think so... I fired them all... all of them.

THE SON. There were quite a few shots.

THE MOTHER. But I –

THE FATHER. Honey. How about we forget this whole incident, what do you say?

THE MOTHER. After all of that?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE MOTHER. Fuck it!

THE FATHER. We're your family, honey!

THE MOTHER. Well, I figured that all this...

THE FATHER. Yes?...

THE MOTHER. I guess that all this must mean that...I... I really do fucking love you. That... I can't fucking live without you... And I was so sure that... But when did it happen? I really do love you. You, too, kids. Even you, honey. I love you all. How revolting.... It's just so sappy. I should've just blown myself away... And the only explanation I can come up with is that I love you. That you are my family.

THE END.