

The Heroes of the Shaft

stories and storyboards

*written and performed by The Heroes of the Shaft Company
project by Katarina Šević & Tehnica Schweiz (Gergely László, Péter Rákosi)*



*The Heroes of the Shaft was a series of four **tableau vivant** acts, performed during the exhibition “No One Belongs Here More Than You” at Kunsthalle, Budapest. (26 March - 23 April 2011.)*

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The stage was built as a miniature of the apse of Kunsthalle Budapest. This space served as sculpture hall since the building of this edifice in 1895.



WE are in a mine, where the shaft has collapsed because of a gas explosion. A group of miners are stuck underground, waiting helplessly for the assistance to arrive. Having nothing else to do, they entertain each other with stories, for tales are the best cure against hunger, anxiety, and boredom. This cycle is about these miners, and their stories are about the rough outside world, about coexistence, isolation, vileness, failure, fortune and hope.

I/1. Flaming Man

I've heard a story about a poor man.

He was a very decent, honest fellow.

He provided for his six siblings and his sick old mother.

He sold fruit and vegetables at the main square, without a license, of course.



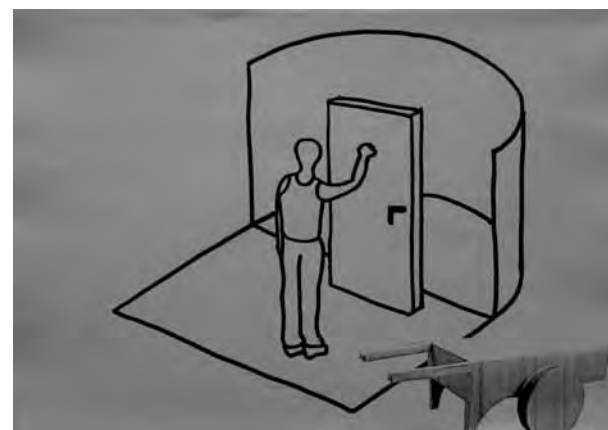
One day he was approached by a policewoman.

Since he had no license, she fined him and even confiscated his cart.

No matter how he pleaded so and so, the policewoman slapped him.

His honour violated, he took it into his head to file a complaint at the council.

He marched to the gate, but his knocking fell on deaf ears, and the door remained closed.



He was so fed up with all the humiliation that he set himself ablaze right there in front of the City Council.

Lo and behold! A miracle happened: he has been on fire ever since!

So, he became the hero of the revolution.

He is invited to every protest ever since.



I/2. Flaming Man II

I've heard it otherwise.

It was the time when the revolution broke out. Huge masses were marching on the streets.



There was a man on fire amongst them. He wanted to tell a speech by all means, but no one in the revolutionary committee took him seriously.



The flaming man was left alone with no vocation, job, or money. He got to the point of being caught red handed trying to steal a sausage.

This eventually led to his excommunication by the revolutionary council.

This reminds me of the following story:

I/3. Sahara

The other day I popped down for a kebab at the Three Brothers, but there was a huge crowd marching on the street. They were protesting against something. I couldn't even cross the road, so I ended up retreating into the Sahara instead for a snack. There were all kinds of folk inside, in diverse strange costumes.



All of a sudden, as if a miracle had happened, everyone stared at the wall: they were gazing at a picture showing a desert with an oasis in the middle. They saw a mirage!



I/4. Negroes at the Zoo

Apropos, desert. Once upon a time, there was a tribe in Africa, living by an oasis.



One day a group of colonizing Europeans came to deport them.

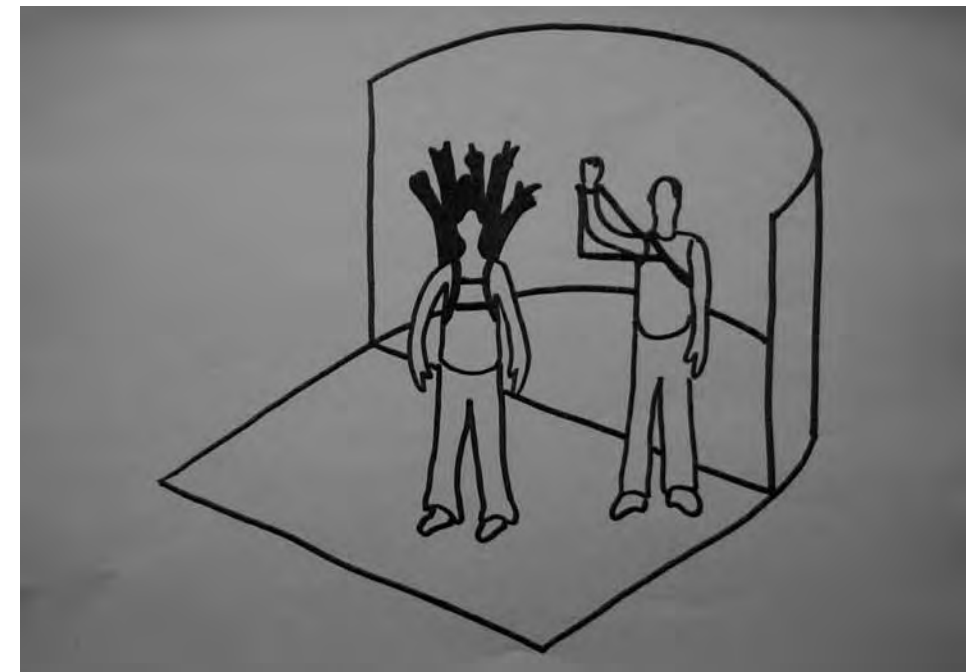
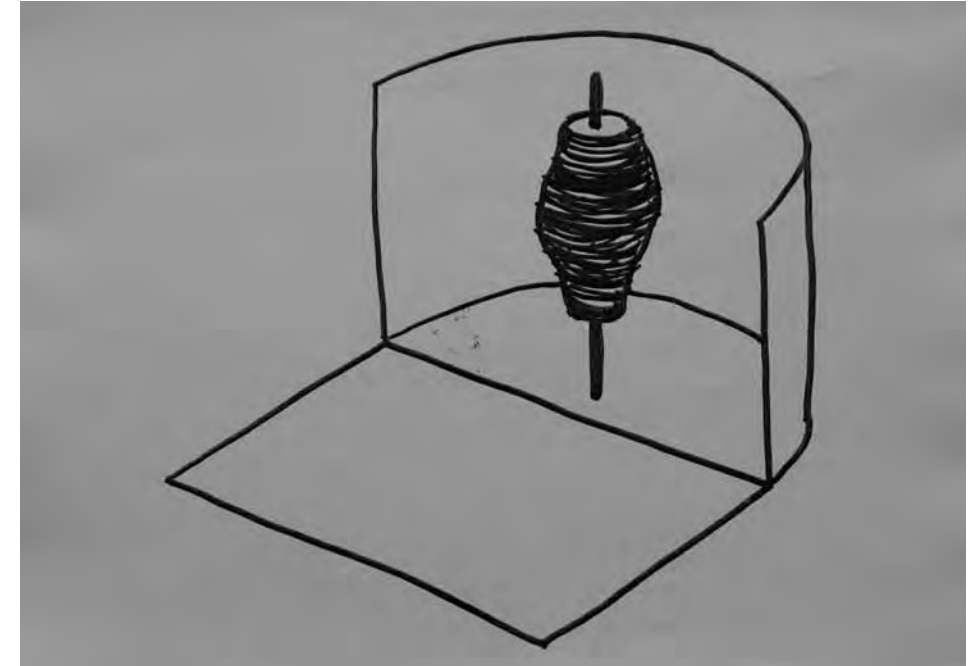
They were taken to a zoo in Budapest, where they became a spectacle in a cage, and people came from all over the country to see them.



Three brothers were born at the zoo.



They escaped as soon as they grew up.



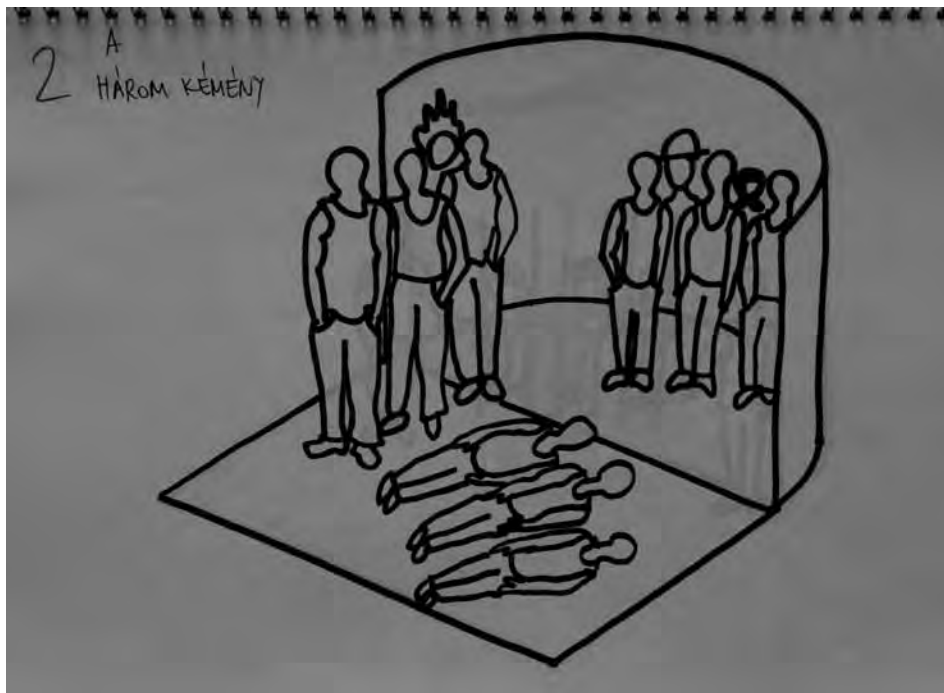
I/5. The Three Chimneys

I have another story.

It also begins with a huge protest. A formidable mass of people was flooding the streets and squares.



Three girls were trampled to death in the terrible scramble.

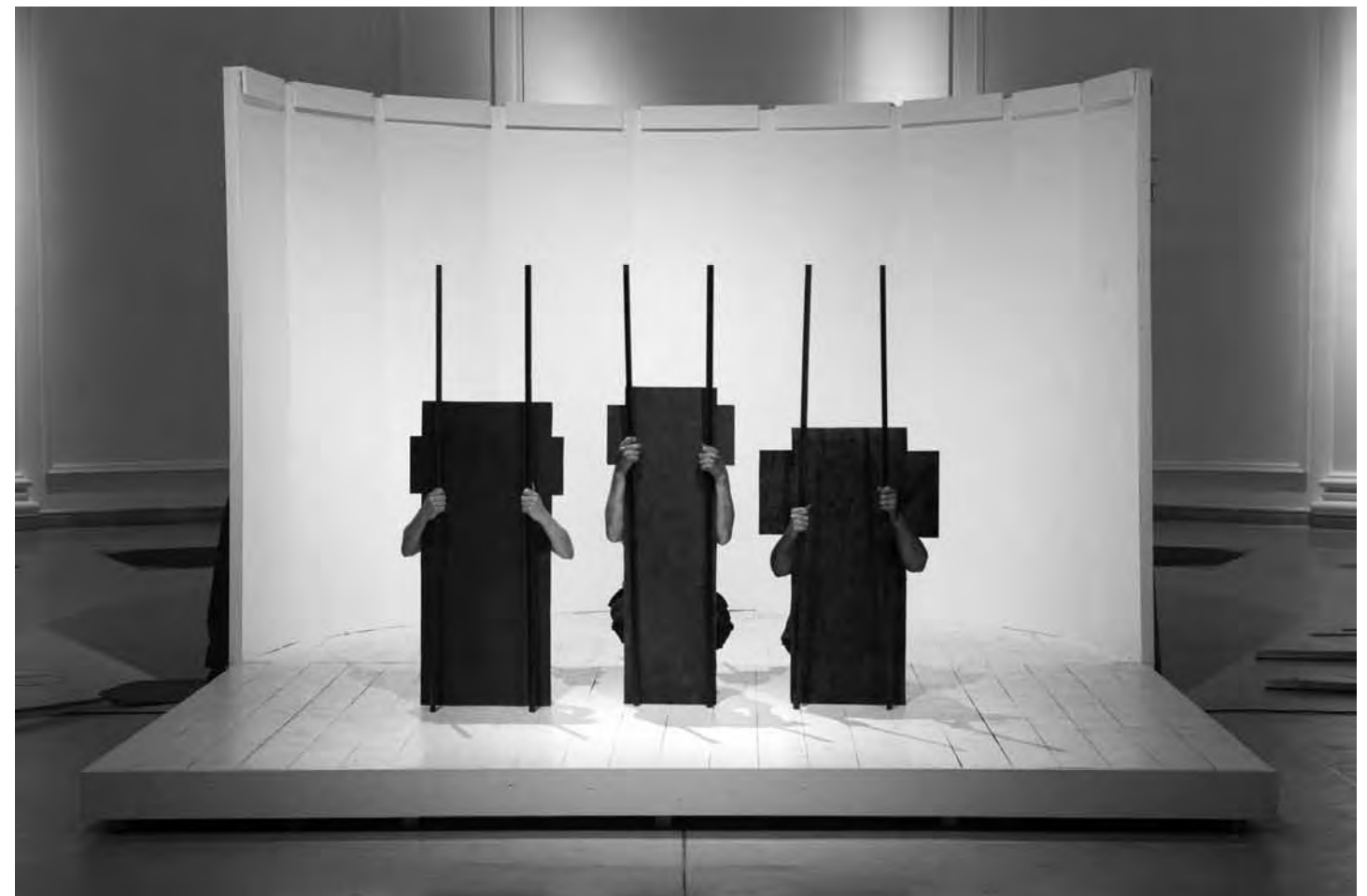


The trampers – the crowd – sought someone to blame.

They held three brothers responsible: they shut them up in a giant cage in the main square, to make an example of them for all eternity.



*They stood there motionless for so long that eventually
they froze into three ventilation chimneys.*



I/6. Living Statues in the Basement

Once there was a boy who earned his income as a living statue.
This was his only skill.



One day he was standing on the main square when people appeared in uniforms.
They took him for a real statue and dragged him away from the square.



They carried him to a basement where he was met by many other statues.

He didn't understand anything.

The statues, among them the living statue, were left to repose for 20 years piled in a heap on the floor of the basement.

They were completely forgotten.

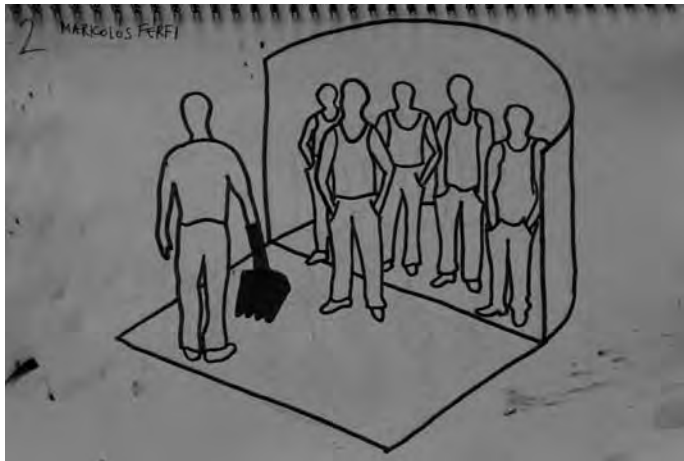


Eventually, they were put up for charity auction. The boy was sold along with the other statues.



I/7. The Man with an Excavator

There was a man with a special quality.
Practically, he was an excavator. Actually, only his hand.



It came to pass that he arrived at a village after wandering for a long time.
The village was surrounded by a beautiful forest.
He decided to settle, but the village folk were not welcoming.



He decided to stay nevertheless.
He found shelter in an abandoned caravan.

He offered his services for free, and of course all of a sudden the people became warm-hearted. After a while everyone was taking advantage of his work, and eventually they embraced him.

Gradually he became influential.
With the help of the villagers, he began to modernize.
The renovated village prospered. Shops and hotels were growing like mushrooms.



In the end, there was no room left for construction, and so the excavator man cut the entire forest down.

The villagers were so agitated by this that they excommunicated him.



In his frustration, the excavator man destroyed everything he had built and left the village in fury.

I/8. Two Patrols

Interesting.

I've heard of a village where two men were patrolling since forever.

They had been stationed there during the war.

No one had told them that the war was over, so they kept going around and around...



Everyone had forgotten why they were going around.

After a while, the villagers began to follow them.

More and more people were walking around and around...



II/1. Museum

I've heard about a museum that hasn't had any visitors for a long time. Only porters and guards loiter around the empty halls. They spend so much time alone in the museum that they have begun to feel at home.



One day, who knows why, a visitor showed up. The guards and porters were petrified at the sight of the newcomer, who thought he was in a sculpture hall, and became absorbed in scrutinizing the exhibited "artworks".



The guards and porters soon became accustomed to his presence and returned to their daily routines. The moving sculptures scared the visitor so much that he fled in panic. No one has set foot in the museum ever since.

II/2. Shame

Once there was a revolution that was violently crushed. The victorious general held 13 people responsible, executing them for organizing the uprising.



The general married a woman in the land of the rebels, and they settled in her home village, even though the general was loathed by the entire village for overthrowing the revolution and executing 13 people. Soon they begot a child whose entire body was covered in hair.



Suffering from genetic disorder, the little girl was constantly abused and tortured by the superstitious village folk. They mocked her and pulled her hair,

beat her head with shovels and tied her legs together,



eventually, they pulled a bucket over her head



and rolled her off a mountain. For years the girl had endured the ordeals, but ultimately, she passed away.



After the child's death, the general and her provincial wife set off on a European journey away from the horrible events, to mourn. However, the general was murdered along the way by an anarchist assassin.

Shortly afterwards, his wife remarried to a vicar in her village. Soon, they begot a male child. His entire body was covered in hair.

II/3. The Conjoined Sisters of Szőny



I also know a story about strange children.
A long time ago in a village, twin sisters
were born, Helen and Judith, conjoined at
their buttocks.



Judith was strong and healthy, Helen weak
and sickly.



If one of them moved forward, the other had
to go backward.

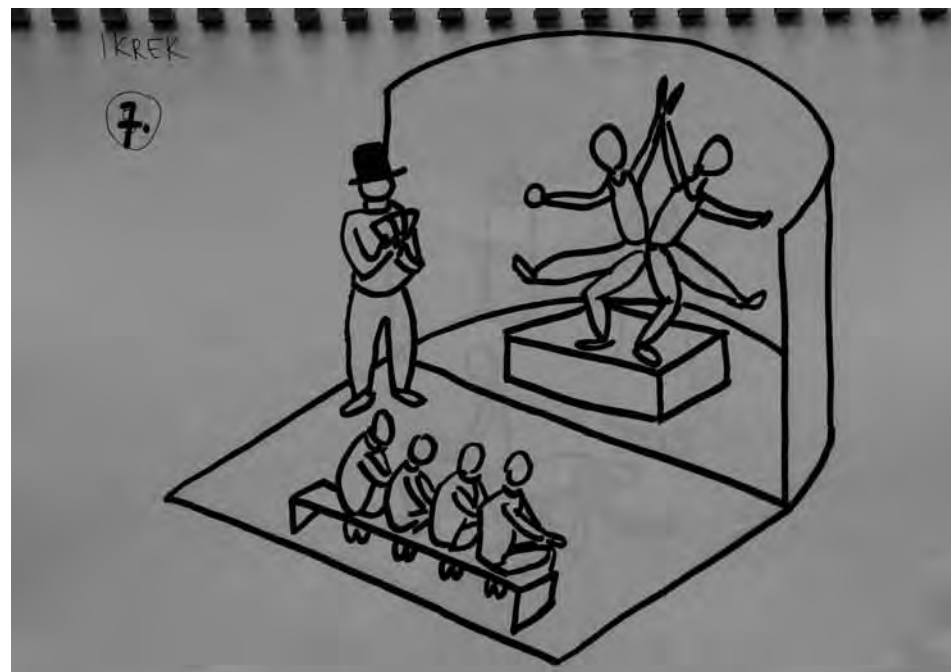


When one of them slept, the other
was wide awake.

Sometimes they hassled,
other times they hugged.



A doctor heard about them and visited the village, making promises to their parents to let him
take them to see the wide world, and of course make a fortune in the process. He made a tour-
ing spectacle out of them, and they were exhibited in big cities across Europe as living statues,
singing and playing music. An English poet wrote an ode about them.



One day a priest found them and decided to redeem them from the doctor for good money. He placed them in a convent so that they would not have to put up with the intrusive curiosity of people any more. At the convent they studied languages, reading and writing, and embroidery. One day Helen fell ill and dragged her sister to their mutual death.



They were preserved in formalin at the collection of the Museum of Natural History.

II/4. Museum II

All sorts of weird creatures were floating in formalin in the basement of the Museum of Natural History.



One day the revolution broke out and the rebels clashed with the authorities on the main square. As usual in such cases, looters were sieging the Museum of Natural History that was located at the square. A small group formed a human chain to protect the museum, so eventually the looters didn't get in.

Nevertheless, the creatures preserved in formalin vanished. Word is out that they escaped on their own feet.



II/5. Zoo Runs Loose

A war was going on in the country. The city was under siege. The military leaders took refuge in the zoo, which was therefore bombed and taken over by the enemy.



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The laws of the jungle prevailed at the occupied zoo. The animals were not fed, and there was nothing to eat in the city. The soldiers eventually lowered themselves to gorging on the defenceless, starving animals. All hell broke loose: humans hunted animals and animals hunted humans. Amidst the pandemonium, a tiger broke free from the destroyed, uprooted zoo.



A lot of time has passed, order prevails in the city. **However, the tiger hasn't yet been found**, and the people are still in terror.

II/6. Old Man and His Chickens



My story is about an old man who bred chickens. Each year someone climbed into his garden and stole his chicks.



One day he got so fed up that he set up a high voltage fence. The thief died from the shock.



The old man was arrested. He brought a basket of chickens to the trial. The heart of the judge was softened by this naïve gesture so much that he took pity on the old man and acquitted him.

II/7. The Lawn



There was a terribly poor village. So poor that the children were playing in the cemetery among the wooden grave markers.



One day a charity organization came to the village to offer help. They built a football court next to the cemetery for the children to have somewhere to play.



The children voluntarily stood guard to protect the freshly laid lawn.

At night, however, the air cooled down, and they were cold, so they made a bonfire out of the wooden grave markers.



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Flyer announcing the third 'The Heroes of the Shaft' performance, performed on 15.04.2011, at Kunsthalle, Budapest.

Múcsarnok, Budapest

2011. április 15., 20h

A TÁRNA HŐSEI

Előadja:

Bársony Júlia, Bukovics István, Forgács Anna, Kaszás Tamás,
Katarina Šević, László Gergely, Müllner Péter, Nagy Szilvi, Rákosi Péter,
Schnee Beatriz, Selmeczi Bea, Simon Kati, Sipos Dániel,
Váradi Zsófi, Vass Viktória, Zafir Dániel



Katarina Šević & Tehnica Schweiz (László Gergely, Rákosi Péter) projektje

A Tárna Hősei egy mélyben rekedt bányásztársulat. A csoport tagjai, hogy elüssék az időt a sötétben, történeteket mesélnek és adnak elő egymásnak a zord külvilágról, együttélésekről, elszigeteltségről, gyarlóságról, bukásról, szerencséről és reményről.

'Best of' előadás: 2011. április 22., 19h

III/1. Kunsthalle Budapest- Hospital

Did you know that Kunsthalle Budapest also functioned as a hospital in World War I? Some halls were furnished as hospital wards, exclusively for artists and their relatives. The walls were adorned by the paintings, the halls by the sculptures of artists who had died, fallen ill or were wounded in the war.



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Later, the museum became a pilgrimage destination for sick artists. They say it has healing powers.



III/2. Saint Sarah - Pilgrimage / The Black Angel

I know a story about the holy place of the gypsies, and Sarah, their patron saint. Sarah was the maid of one of the Three Marys in Upper Egypt. In the year 42, they fled in a boat with Lazarus and Martha to Gaul. Sarah collected alms for the poor and the Roma adopted her as their saint.

Since the 1930s there is a tradition of carrying her small statue, the Black Madonna down to the Mediterranean Sea in Southern France, former Gaul, re-enacting her arrival. More than ten thousand pilgrims attend the event which ends in a huge festival.



However, members of the French elite live in the neighbourhood of the holy place, and they resort to every means to hinder the gypsy pilgrimage. They withhold water and electricity; they don't let them park and camp; they protest with signs.



On one occasion, when the statue was carried down to the sea and set afloat, a hassle broke out between the protesting locals and the gypsies. In the confusion the statue vanished. According to eyewitnesses, the Black Madonna silently set sail.

III/3. Magic Hill

I know a man who is the most prosperous entrepreneur of the region.
He owns fishing lakes and horse parks.

He once realized that he could sense energies with his hand. One day he discovered a hillock on the plain. According to tradition, an ancient town is buried there. He felt a strange tingling sensation and discovered that the hill had magic powers:



the obese lost weight,



the crooked straightened up.



Naturally, the medium made a prosperous enterprise out of the hill as well. He fenced it and began to charge an entrance fee. He built a huge castle in the middle with a restaurant, and established a horse park. Millions of people visit the magic place and the millionaire has become a billionaire.

III/4. Society of Light Eaters

Well, this is really interesting! The other day I read about the ruins of a town that were found buried in a hill, together with lots of bodies, but they couldn't make sense of the mass extinction.



However, a researcher has recently discovered an old codex that mentions this town as well as a sect whose members feed on light. Their name was Society of Light Eaters.



The constitution and code of ethics of the society stipulates that in addition to being constrained to consume nothing but light, the members are obliged to bestow all their wealth on the "Church". According to the author of the codex, their leader was a fraud who lived secretly like a king while the sect members were impoverished, and after a while the entire town starved to death. The leader fled to a faraway land.

III/5. Fritz – or Who's Whose Who

I know a boy,

- who is his own uncle,



- whose stepmother is his grandmother,



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- whose father is his grandfather,



- whose mother is his older sister.

III/6. The Captain's Seven Sons

Once there was a captain who had seven sons.



The captain had whimsical habits. He lived in a tent in the garden of his castle. He brought virgins from faraway lands as bodyguards for fear of being murdered by his own guards. He had himself crowned as king of kings by the people. Six of the seven sons led the empire. They fulfilled all the ministerial positions.



The seventh, youngest son lived a high life, travelling and wasting his money, dispersing charities, racing sports cars on the streets of Paris. He became a film star, a football star, a rock star.



Meanwhile, civil war broke out in his homeland; the people had rebelled against the rule of the captain and his six sons. Father and sons didn't understand the ungratefulness of the people. The youngest son returned and stood by the protesters against the will of the family, in the struggle for democracy.



Eventually, the rebels overthrew the captain and his six sons and had them stand before military court before being executed. The youngest son was appointed as president. Time passed, and the youngest son moved into his dad's tent.

III/7. Mao and the Sparrows



The leader of a faraway country decided to shake up the economy and exterminate all pests. Besides rats, flies and mosquitoes, sparrows were considered the most harmful, because they ate grain seeds. The leader therefore ordered the total eradication of sparrows.



He failed to reckon with something, though: sparrows ate more insects than grain. With no sparrows to eat them, locust populations ballooned and razed the entire crop yield, resulting in the collapse of the economy. The population was decimated by starvation.

The leader had a solution for everything: they deployed a brand new pesticide developed by the weapons industry. However, in the hustle, no one read the impact study thoroughly, which warned in a footnote about the side effects of the pesticide on the reproduction of bees.

After the mass extinction of bees, no fruit-bearing plants remained and the population of the country was now on the verge of extinction. Miraculously, one bee was left alive, who taught people how to do the job of bees.



III/8. Bears



I know about a dictator who populated the mountains with bears in order to hunt them, and granted himself exclusive rights for bear hunting. Moreover, he bred and fed selected specimens at his estate, for bear roast. During his life he killed over 400 bears and gave himself awards for it.



He forced the bears to dance and do other productions at fairs.

Once he shot at a fair bear, but missed because the cycling bear pedalled away.

Since the dictator's death, there is an overpopulation of bears in the forest for lack of hunting. They pester photographing tourists and steal foreign passports and cell phones. For some time now, the city has been infested with bears, and people have fled to the forest.



III/9. Granny Cuts the Cable

An old lady used to collect metal on a hill. One day she accidentally cut a piece of cable out of the ground, severing the main TV, telephone, internet and electricity cable. For a long time, the country remained in silence.



Our time has passed in good humour, another day is over. Who knows how long we will be here, when we shall see sunlight again. Still, as opposed to the horrors of the outside world, there is peace and quiet down here. And though the power of fear is strong, the burden of hours spent in suffocating darkness is lighter if borne collectively.



The Heroes of the Shaft

project by Katarina Šević & Tehnica Schweiz (Gergely László, Péter Rákosi)

Performed by The Heroes of the Shaft Company:

Júlia Bársony, János Borsos, István Bukovics, Gábor Döme, Krisztina Erdei, Anna Forgács, Tamás Kaszás, Katarina Šević, Nóra Lajkó, Gergely László, Júlia László, Ágnes Éva Molnár, Péter Müllner, Szilvi Nagy, Péter Rákosi, Beatriz Schnee, Bea Selmeczi, Katalin Simon, Dániel Sipos, Zsófi Szemző, Gábor Szohr, Zsófi Váradi, Viktória Vass, Dániel Zafir.

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and

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