

START

[*Puts the child on bed.*] Now sit down here nicely, Lilly, be very quiet, because Irma is going to set the table for that darling big man. This good-for-nothing Irma is going to set it for that sweet, darling, angry man. It's just twelve o'clock. [*Opens a drawer—setting the table.*] Now Lilly, try to learn how to set a table. First, the cloth's got to be smoothed out nicely. Here is where that darling, angry one rests his elbow on it. You see? There are four spots on it. Two spinach, two tomato. The napkin we put at the right hand. That's what he wipes his mouth in, that darling angry one. [*Kisses the napkin.*] Lilly, sending him a kiss with the napkin post. This is a happy napkin, and I am the brokenest blossom in all Budapest. [*Crosses to bed.*] Understand, Lilly? I made up a poem for him. "Faded flower of the Spring, beaten blossom in the rain—all the leaves are whispering, that my heart is full of pain." Isn't it a beautiful poem? That's by me. But you've heard that often, haven't you, Lilly? [*Crosses to cupboard for plate, knife and fork.*] The plate has to be put exactly in the center. Fork to the left, knife to the right, spoon across in front. [*Placing tumbler.*] Glass here, right at his hand. He drinks from this, angel of my happiness, darling angry one. Here's where he drinks from it. [*Kisses tumbler.*] Sending him a kiss with the glass post. [*Orating.*] "All the leaves are whispering—that my heart is full of pain." Wine and soda water come only later. Right after the soup, otherwise it gets warm, do you understand, silly? You are the most stupid little grasshopper in the neighborhood. [*Crosses to bed.*] I

don't mean you, Lilly. I mean me. He sits here. My dear, angry master, the dearest angry one in all Budapest. [*Crosses to cupboard.*] Salt, paprika, toothpicks. Stab my unhappy heart, oh, happy toothpick. [*Orating.*] "Faded flower of the Spring, beaten blossom in the rain—All the leaves are whispering, that my heart is full of pain." There is a pebble in my shoe— [*Draws it off.*] You see, I am the brokenest blossom in all Budapest—but, nevertheless, just look at my ankle, and my foot is prettier than the Countess Guttman's. Isn't it, Lilly? [*Crosses to bed.*] There were two pebbles— [*Sits on chair at left of table.*] I have a pretty foot, but no one wants my poor little foot, so sad and slim. Where wouldn't you go to follow him—

[*Orating.*]

ADELE [*off stage*]. Irma! Irma! [*As IRMA is drawing on the shoe, ADELE enters from the courtyard. ADELE from door.*] What are you doing here?

IRMA. Setting the table for Mr. Sipos.

ADELE [*above table*]. With your foot?

IRMA. A pebble got into my shoe.

ADELE. Who were you talking to?

IRMA. Nobody. I was talking with Lilly, in my great unhappiness.

ADELE. Are you going crazy again?

IRMA. I am always going crazy, begging your pardon.

[*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

ADELE. Never mind, put on your shoe, and do your work quietly. [*Opens the door, calls out to courtyard.*] Kati! Got the table set?

END

THE GLASS SLIPPER ♦

[Hurries to take it, puts it away, rushes back bringing jacket.]

SIPOS. Don't want it now.

IRMA. Back?

SIPOS. Back.

IRMA. Sleeves?

SIPOS. Sleeves. [rolls up his sleeves.] Water.

IRMA [rushes to washstand]. Water. Fresh.

[Pours it in.]

SIPOS. Soap.

IRMA [hands it to him]. Soap.

[SIPOS washing his hands.]

"Faded flower of the Spring
Beaten blossom in the rain
All the leaves are whispering—"

SIPOS. Towel.

IRMA. Clean towel. "Beaten blossom in the rain."

SIPOS. What? [Drying himself.]

Slippers.

IRMA [brings them, panting].

Slippers.

SIPOS [sits down]. Shoes.

IRMA [takes off one of his shoes]. One shoe.

[Pats his leg.]

SIPOS. What are you doing?

[Still drying himself, extends other foot.]

IRMA. It's fate, Mr. Sipos, it's fate.

SIPOS. Other shoe.

IRMA [taking second shoe off]. Other shoe.

SIPOS. First slipper.

IRMA [puts it on]. First slipper.

And . . .

SIPOS. Second slipper.

IRMA. And second slipper.

[Putting it on him.]

SIPOS [stands up, holding towel in mid-air]. Towel back.

IRMA. Towel back. [Takes towel, pours water from wash bowl into

slop bucket.] Pouring out, putting back wash bowl.

SIPOS. Coat—

IRMA. House coat.

SIPOS [sits down to table meanwhile]. Newspaper.

IRMA [brings it from window]. Newspaper.

SIPOS [reading]. Soup.

IRMA. Soup.

[Rushes out, leaving door open.]

SIPOS [hollers while reading paper]. Door!

IRMA [rushes back]. ~~Door!~~

[Throws kiss, closes door from outside. Short pause. SIPOS reading paper. Enters with soup.] Soup.

SIPOS [stirring soup]. What kind?

IRMA. Noodle.

SIPOS. Cold?

IRMA. Hot.

SIPOS [after tasting it]. Cold.

IRMA [reaches after plate]. Take it back, and put it on fire?

SIPOS. No. Leave it here.

[Drinks soup. IRMA rushes out into court, picks sunflower, rushes back, takes jar from washstand, puts flower on table.] What's that?

IRMA. Just to make the table pretty, Mr. Sipos.

[IRMA takes napkin out of napkin ring, places it before him, pushes salt nearer, puts bread in place.]

SIPOS. What the hell are you jumping around for? [Eats.] You do everything with twice as many jumps as necessary. Now go easy about it. Slowly, like this: one, coat; two, water; three, soap; four, shoe; five, slipper; six, soup;—slowly. [Eats.] You might have learned as much as that in eight years.

IRMA. I was only eleven eight years ago.

— START

SIPOS. Well, what of it?

IRMA. You said I could have learned that much eight years ago. Well, now I'm nineteen years old, then I was eleven.

SIPOS. What is this? Trying to make conversation?

IRMA. Just a little happy chat, Mr. Sipo.

SIPOS. Don't you open your mouth again.

IRMA. I won't open it. It's closed.

SIPOS. See here!

[Eats. Pause. IRMA is standing looking at him happily.]

IRMA [after pause, softly]. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS. Where are you going?

IRMA. Nowhere. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS [stares at her]. Why do you keep on begging my pardon?

IRMA. Out of respect.

SIPOS. Then take this plate out, out of respect, and bring the meat, out of respect.

[Reaches for newspaper.]

IRMA. Yes, Mr. Sipo. [Takes plate.] Veal cutlet with spinach.

SIPOS. I didn't ask you.

IRMA. No. But the others are getting only hash. Only Mr. Sipo gets cutlets.

[IRMA goes out.]

SIPOS [without turning]. Door.

IRMA. I haven't even left it open yet!

SIPOS. You will.

IRMA. No, no.

[Opens door, from threshold, throws kiss, forgets to close door, hurries away.]

SIPOS. Door!!!

IRMA [frightened, rushes back]. Door! [Slams it from outside. SIPOS

shakes head, continues reading. Comes in, with seltzer and steak.]

Ice cold. Beautiful, blue bottle. A little bit after the soup. [Putting meat before him.] Steak with potatoes.

SIPOS. Just before you said, "Veal cutlet with spinach."

IRMA. That's what I thought, but stupid Irma was mistaken. Excuse me.

SIPOS. That's a grave error.

[Starts to eat.]

IRMA. Why?

SIPOS [pours drink]. Because now I have to switch my stomach over to steak and potatoes. When you said I'd have veal with spinach, then the stomach got ready for . . . [Drinks.] . . . veal and spinach.

IRMA. What?

SIPOS. That is to say, it started that chemical action which is necessary to veal and spinach. Now it's received a sudden surprise. It was preparing for calf and it receives cow; now it must manufacture different digestive fluids such as are suitable to a cow.

[Eats.]

IRMA. You have a beautiful mind.

SIPOS. Don't be flattering me all the time.

[Eats. Pause.]

IRMA [without any reason]. Dear, beautiful aviator.

SIPOS. Who is the aviator?

IRMA. Mr. Sipo.

SIPOS. I am a carpenter.

IRMA. For me you are an aviator. All people who have beautiful dreams are aviators.

SIPOS. What do you know about my dreams?

IRMA. You are my soul's most beautiful dream. You are my avia-

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SIPOS.

IRMA |

THE GLASS SLIPPER ♦

♦ 633

tor who flies down from the clouds to the flowery meadow, to seek his bride.

SIPOS. What the hell are you talking about?

IRMA. Every night I dream that my bridegroom is an aviator and he flies up into the clouds and falls into the sea. And in every one of my dreams, the aviator looks like Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. And falls into the sea. And what do you do?

IRMA. I roam up and down the seashore in a white sheet and my hair is flying in the wind—I hold out my arms toward the sea and sing my mad songs to the storm. Like this—
[Sings.] Isn't that beautiful?

SIPOS. What! That—

IRMA. No. Everything. Life is so beautiful but so sad and my dreams are so sad. And Mr. Sipos is always in—

SIPOS. In the sea.

IRMA. No, in my dreams.

SIPOS. What you need is a good spanking, my child. You've begun to fidget too much. I'd know how to stop your dreaming, if I were your father.

IRMA. Oh, if you were only my father, Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. That's all I'd need.

IRMA. Filial love must be so beautiful. You darling aviator.

SIPOS. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Trying to flatter me.

IRMA. I'm not ashamed of myself, Mr. Sipos, I'm very proud that I can flatter Mr. Sipos. Dear, beautiful aviator.

[Takes plate and goes out, leaving the door open.]

SIPOS. Door!

IRMA [frightened]. Yes. Door.

[Closes it. SIPOS pours wine and seltzer, reads paper. IRMA comes in with dessert, whispers close to his ear.] Jelly pudding with nuts and sugar.

[Puts it down.]

SIPOS. Stop tickling me. Jelly pudding.

IRMA. Sure. The others got it with bread crumbs, but only Mr. Sipos is getting nuts.

SIPOS [eating]. Ah yes, that reminds me. All over the city they're saying that you danced naked in the yard at dawn.

IRMA. They're talking about it there, too?

SIPOS. I had some business in City Hall to-day and the mayor was talking about it.

IRMA. Oh—oh—

SIPOS. The members of Parliament were mentioning it, too. The government offices were also full of the news.

IRMA. The government offices?

SIPOS. All, all the secretaries of state talking of nothing else.

IRMA. Mr. Sipos, you are joking, I know. But I know where you got this from. Mr. Szasz is saying all these things about me, although it was in secret that I bathed in the rain barrel. Nobody could have seen me.

SIPOS. Yes, yes. And who was it that adopted the kitten? You were nursing the kitten and the whole neighborhood is laughing at you.

IRMA. They're talking about that, too?

SIPOSA. Every one in Budapest.

IRMA. That is Mr. Szasz's doing, and I know why—he tried to kiss me.

END