

Ecce homo - Meeting my father once again  
by Gyorgyi Galik  
2011



Here are my parents: Sára and János.  
They loved each other.



My name is János Gálík.  
I was born in 1955. I was one year old when my  
brother was born.



Following my brother's birth my father wanted to please my mother by bringing her some cherries to the hospital. While he was climbing up the tree one of the branches broke off. He couldn't be saved.



My mother worked as a teacher in the nursery school of Somogyeszti. She became the lover of the school's director. She wanted to become a wife and to have a family again. Finally the director chose another teacher as his wife.



Mother couldn't bear the idea of living alone again. When I arrived home one evening she was lying on the floor. She took too many pills. I tried to help her but being only fourteen I didn't have enough strength to lift her. Rain was streaming down. I started to run towards the village but my feet were always caught in the mud.



Mother was pensioned off. I had to leave school.  
I became the head of the family, my brother's  
father as well as my mother's husband.  
I wished I could have remained a child.



From time to time I wrote poems. Some of them  
were published in a newspaper in Kaposvár.

I missed studying. I read a lot.

One day I decided to become a sailor.

I loved travelling, I loved the Danube.



When I was twenty, I married Erika, my first girlfriend. One month later, I had to start my military service. Once, on a day off, I went home to give her a surprise. She gave me an even bigger one by lying next to that man in our bed.



I was twenty-two when I met Mari. I was smoking on board when she passed me by. She seemed different from the empty-headed girls I had met before. She was reserved, yet exciting. She made me want to know her. We ended up making love one night. At the end of the journey I scribbled my address on a piece of paper and gave it to her. I thought I would never see her again.



The next time we saw each other was eight months later. There was a book market on the quay. That's where we met. The week before I had received a letter from her saying it would be nice to talk. It alluded to a previous letter she had sent, but which I had never received. I was leafing through a book when I saw her coming towards me with an enormous belly. She was in her last week.



On the 19th March 1978 my son was born.  
I was twenty-three and Mari thirty-two.  
We left the hospital together.  
I became a husband and a father.



My daughter was born a couple of years later.  
I tried to love them although I did not know  
how to do it. I was always away.  
After work we would party on board.  
Beer always relaxed me.  
I felt stronger and funnier after a couple of  
drinks.



I started drinking more and more, and consequently I made more mistakes. The more I made the more I had to drink to be able to forget. I finally could have had a family, but I didn't care. They tried to love me for a long time, but I chased them away. I became aggressive and I hurt them a lot.



I got up every morning feeling ashamed. It was always mixed with the same familiar feelings: deception, the sense of being hurt and that of a profound emptiness. After twenty years of marriage Mari bought me a flat in the neighbourhood. I didn't want to go but they made me leave.



After the divorce, I drank even more and worked less and less. I spent every night at the bar next to our old flat. At times I didn't even drink, I would just sit there as long as possible. I had my usual spot at the counter. Sometimes I just fell asleep, at other times we would watch TV until the waitress told me to go home. I hated going home. I never thought I could be as lonely as I was.



I used to go to our old flat and ring the bell to see if they would let me come back. I saw them looking out the window. They didn't talk to me. One Christmas I left a necklace in the mailbox.

I bought it for my daughter. There was a red rose on it. I hoped she would like it. I also left a message saying "to Györgyi" so that they knew it was from me, but they didn't call.

They never called me anymore.



I used to wait in front of the house to see her. Once she was coming home at such a moment. When I saw her I started to cry. However hard

I tried, I couldn't stop it. I asked her why I should go on living. She turned her back on me and entered the staircase. She said I couldn't ask this from her if I didn't know the answer myself.

I stood there for a while but she didn't come back. She always told me that if I accepted that

I needed help and if I tried to stop drinking, we could talk again. But I didn't stop drinking.



We lived next to one another for years. A couple of years later I was throwing up in front of the bar – I think my body couldn't absorb any more alcohol – when a girl passed me by on a bicycle. I followed her with my eyes. She stopped at the corner and looked back. It was her, my daughter.

I recognised her. She didn't say anything. She looked at me and then left. Maybe she didn't recognise me. I only reminded her of a father I had been once before.



I spent almost a whole day at the front door.  
The neighbours thought I was just drunk again,  
but I wasn't drunk at all. I had fallen into a  
coma. My body couldn't bear it anymore.  
The night was cold. I had lost consciousness but  
I could feel the cold entering my body.  
In the morning someone called an ambulance.  
They managed to bring me back to life.



I waited four days for my daughter to come. I didn't let the doctors treat me.

I didn't want to go on living this way. At least I should be strong enough to die if I was lacking the strength for all the rest. She was thinking for four days if she should come to see me. Finally she decided to come. I sensed she was bending over me and I opened my eyes. She had always been waiting for me to love her. By that time, my liver was so badly poisoned that I couldn't speak anymore. I tried to breathe loudly so that she could see that I was aware of her presence. Despite everything she was my daughter. I felt the tears running down my face. She couldn't look at me. She burst into tears and ran away. She thought we would still have time to talk.

I died that night.



These fifty years seem so long now.  
I regret having lived this way.  
I wanted to be a good son, a good brother, a  
good husband and a good father.  
I always wanted to be someone special.

