

ENDRE FEJES: SCRAPIRON YARD

A play in Two Parts

First performed: November 14th 1963 at the THÁLIA THEATRE in Budapest. Directed by Károly Kazimir, sets and costumes designed by György Rajkai. Music by Imre Prokopius.

26 male and 11 female parts

János Hábetler Jnr kills a man, his brother-in-law, in the scrapiron yard of a Budapest industrial enterprise. Hábetler is arrested, there were no witnesses and Hábetler is not willing to confess, nor is he willing to answer a writer's questions who goes to visit him in prison. The writer therefore investigates the family's history, hoping to throw light on the reasons for this murder. He accompanies the investigation throughout, as narrator. The story begins during the First World War, when a stray bullet kills János Hábetler Snr's mate next to him, and he, not much later, while on leave meets Mária Pók, in "The Green Huntsman" a Budapest restaurant, and marries her later. Events roll on, like a film: White Terror, slum tenement, soup kitchen, a home in a shed. The children are born in quick succession, Jani amongst them, the only boy. Hábetler Snr who is no genius but an honest and hardworking man in his own way, finds employment as an office-messenger in a Protestant Parish Office, as a result they can move to a better home. His wife, Mária Pók has a filthy tongue and a heavy hand, she holds the family together and lives by the most petty-bourgeois variant of the "my home is my castle" maxim, an enclosure which does not allow anyone to break in, or out. Her good instincts allow her to scent the right way, and a kind heart is concealed behind her rough exterior. It is she who keeps the flightly lot in check that waltzes around the family, men whose idea of a good time is exhausted by drink. The members of the family go for each other also, that is why there is so much screaming, so much emotion and shouting that fills the whole home. Jani falls in love with a Jewish girl, Kato Reich, and she bears him a child within a year. Mária Pók gladly gives shelter to the girl, and her father also, Old Reich, but when the family moves to the country at the time of the bombing during the War, they forget about them. Jani is a serving soldier, and Kato Reich and her child become victims of racial persecution. The lot of the family significantly improves after the Liberation, but they take as little notice of events as before the war. That is when the degeneration of the family sets in. Jani's

flighty sisters contract had marriages, they are divorced and they are corrupted and depraved. Zentay is the worst of the brothers in law. He's got some brains, but he's a drunkard and a rowdy. Jani does not understand much about the world, still he's the only one who knows what is going on around them. In the course of time the consciousness that the interests of life and their way of life are in opposition is strengthened within him but he still lacks the strength to break away from the grip of the family. Swallowing his bitter anger he continues to live a life well below human standards. The tension inside him however continues to grow, and all that is needed before the cup runneth over is a single drop. That is when he meets his drunken brother in law Zentay in the scrapiron yard. Zentay, breathing fumes of drink starts talking to Jani about the lying low life his family leads and the debauchery of his sisters, and he tells Jani to his face that he curses the others in vain, he is no better than they are. Jani feeling that his brother-in-law is cruelly right and that he is responsible and impotent himself, strikes him in embittered anger and kills Zentay with a single blow.