

'THE GLASSWORKS' WITH CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ANALYSIS OF THE WRITING PROCESS

WHAT IS AN IDEA?

How does an idea for a play arise? Harold Pinter (2005) says that his ideas often start with an image or a word. 'Dark' was the word that inspired him to write *Old Times* (Pinter, 1970). He took the word to be an answer about a woman's hair, resulting in the idea going from being a word to being an image. Later in the process the woman becomes a character, and the centre of the plot. The play was born through the act of writing. Other playwrights are more structured. David Edgar for example analyses what functions the scenes have for the plot (Edgar, 2007) and in plays with large casts he makes tables over the characters, their functions and their relationships (Edgar, 2008). This kind of writing builds on that you already have a clear idea of what to say.

My idea started with an observation of certain human behaviour. It was not an image, a word or a concept, but the notion of people being imprisoned by themselves. It seems to me that when people have got stuck in a certain way of approaching life, they stop exploring it. They hold on to a certain concept through which they will interpret the world, and will not contemplate facts that do not fit into this interpretation. By narrowing their world, they make it more

understandable and therefore more approachable. It is a way of making the world feel smaller, safer and more controllable, but it is also a way of restricting your mind and your opportunities.

To explore the idea, I started writing without knowing where it would lead me. I often work in this way. The reason for writing in this stage is not to create something that will be a part of the final play, but to research the idea. By forcing myself to write, I force myself to improvise and come up with ideas I didn't know I had. This process is for the playwright, what sketching is for the painter. Keith Johnstone (1981 p. 111) argues that an artist does not need to, and should not, try to control his content. Improvising spontaneously will reveal what is on your mind. '[T]he artist only needs to worry about the content if he's trying to fake up a personality he doesn't actually have, or to express views he really isn't in accord with.' (Johnstone, 1981 p. 111)

In my 'sketch work', I start in a situation that I associate with my idea and see where the improvisation takes me. The situation I started with might not turn out being a useful situation in the play, but the improvisation often leads to other insights around my idea.

One of the scenes I came up with while sketching took place between a son and his father (see Appendix). The son craves attention, but the father is stuck in front of his computer. The father is trying to write but it is not going well. He really needs to take a break and make some food, but his stress over that he hasn't been able to write anything makes him stay in front of the computer. He is not under the impression that he will be able to write more this day, but leaving without having done so would manifest his failure. When the son points out that it is time for food, he reminds the father of how much time he has spent without writing anything, and the father takes out his disappointment with himself on the son.

This scene laid the ground for what would become *The Glassworks*. What interested me in the scene was the contrast in attitude between the son and the father. How come the father has lost the interest in life, while the son has not?

It might seem odd to ask questions about characters I have invented myself, but the fact is that I do not know the answers before I ask the questions. Pinter describes the writing process as double: '*You arrange and you listen, following the clues you leave for yourself, through the characters.*' (Pinter, 1996, p. xiii) The scene I wrote was

based on human behaviour that I had observed. The observation can only give answers about what people do; to understand why they act as they do I have to use my imagination.

The playwright's work of interpreting the reality can be compared with the actors work of interpreting the role.

Stanislavski (cited in Toporkov, 1998, p. 161-162) means that the actor, can start in the physical actions to explore the psychological and emotional experiences of his character.

It is impossible to possess the role all at once, . . . There is always much that is vague, not easily understood, difficult to overcome. Therefore, begin with what is clearer, more accessible, with what can be easily established; that is, search for the truth of the simplest physical actions.

(Stanislavski cited in Toporkov, 1998, p. 161-162)

The playwright can in a similar way start by imagining what the characters do, in order to explore the motifs behind their actions and their superobjectives. By trying to imitate behaviours and conflicts from real life in my writing, I get to know and understand the characters. Because I as a writer take part of all the characters' positions in a conflict, the way to understand the conflict goes through understanding the characters.

To develop the idea that the father has lost something the son still has, I assumed that the son would find himself in the father's situation in forty years time. This seemed to suggest a vicious cycle in which the child inherits his parents' behaviour and made me interested in the father's parents. What were they like when 'the father' was a child? How are they now? Is the father's inability to appreciate life a result of the grandparents' way to approach it? To be able to explore these questions I choose to involve the grandparents in the play as well. What had started as a quite abstract idea about people being stuck in their own behaviours, had now turned into a family drama. The three generations represent family members, as well as three different stages in life. History seems to repeat, and the question is: Is there a way to break the pattern? Will the son with his presence and interest in life end up like his father, and his grandparents?

FROM CHARACTERS TO PLOT

Character or plot, where do you start? Aristotle states that the structuring of the incidents is the most important element because 'tragedy is an imitation not of men but of a life, an action' (Aristotle, 1970, p. 27). I agree that what you see on stage is what the characters do and not who they are, but can one exist without the other? Aristotle continues by stating

that '*they [the men] have moral quality in accordance with their characters but are happy or unhappy in accordance with their actions*' (Aristotle, 1970, p. 27). I do not oppose that consequences spring from one's actions, but what leads to the actions? Two people in the same situation are likely to act in different ways according to their previous experience, their views and, to use Aristotle's words, their moral qualities. An action is the result of that someone wants something. Actions are the means that actors use to communicate with the audience, but an action only gains meaning in the context of its reasons.

When I started writing *The Glassworks*, I studied a module called *Dramatic Structure*, which as the name reveals, was focused on the structure of plays. Dramatic structure is necessary for the final structuring of a play, but I found that thinking about it while still coming up with ideas was devastating for the creativity. Instead of starting with a vague idea about the structure and see where it took me, as I usually do, I wanted to pin down the structure of the play before I even knew what the play would be about. The ideas I couldn't place in a structure I discarded as meaningless and the ideas I could place in a structure, felt boring because they were simple and flat. The mistake I made was to think of the structuring of the plot as a starting point instead of a

tool that would be useful when I already had a clear idea about the story and the characters. In what end it's best to start depends on what kind of idea you have. My idea for *The Glassworks* started as a reflection over something I found interesting in the human psyche. In retrospect it seems that building the plot around the characters would have been the obvious thing to do, but I found it difficult to bring the two elements together. The inspiration to a solution I received in a course seminar, in which playwright Lin Coghlan (2007) presented a method for structuring the plot with the characters as basis. During the seminar Coghlan gave us a set of questions to answer about our plays. In brief these questions were:

Who is it about? (What character's journey should the audience follow?)

What does this person want?

What does this person need?

What would be the hardest for this person to hear?

What would be the hardest for this person to admit?

If you manage to place the main character in a situation where someone tells him what he doesn't want to hear and he is forced to admit the hardest thing to admit, you have a good framework for the plot.

The answers to these kinds of questions are not defined before the questions are asked. The questions provoke the answers. Still the questions are not the source for the answers, nor are the answers invented out of nothing. The answers spring from the idea of what you want to express. The process is not logic, but intuitional, and makes it possible to reveal sides of the characters you didn't know were there.

When I asked Coghlan's question about 'the father', from now on Mikael, I realised that the framework for the plot must be the father-son relationships:

What does Mikael want? To come to terms with his father and his past.

What does he need? To come to terms with his son and his future.

What would be the hardest thing for him to hear? That he is like his father.

What would be the hardest thing for him to admit? That he has lost control over his life situation.

The story that evolved from these questions is as follows: Because of Mikael's poor relationship with his parents he has not visited them for many years. Now he has heard from his brother that his mother is losing her memory, and decides to bring his son to see his parents over Christmas. Mikael's superobjective during the visit is to come to terms with his father, but it is hard to repair a lifelong relationship over

a weekend. Mikael is forced to accept that his relationship with his father is beyond rescue, but this makes him reflect over the relationship with his son and make the decision not to end up like his father.

The idea behind Coghlan's method is that a character based drama builds on a major change in one or more of the characters. The plot's function is to serve this change by forcing the characters to reveal themselves. In the beginning of my play Mikael is stuck in life because he blames others for his life situation not being what he wants it to be. The stress caused by him visiting his parents results in him taking out his aggressions on his son, an action that forces him to realise his own weakness and decide to take another approach to life.

GENRE

Genre is usually not something I reflect over while writing, but since I am influenced by plays written in genres it comes naturally that I fall into writing in genre myself. *The Glassworks* was originally influenced by two genres.

My focus on the characters' psyche and the family relationships points towards the naturalistic genre, while the role of the house and meaning of the objects points towards

symbolism. In the beginning these influences were unintentional, but when I became aware of them I started using the genre as a tool. Inspired by naturalistic plays such as *A Doll's House* (Ibsen, 1880) I wanted to work with a tension between the present and the past. The present is always dependent of the past and what is concealed in the past will haunt you in the present. The relationship between the concealed past and the present situation is double. The present situation dictates the circumstances for the revelation and the revelation has an impact on the present situation. In *A Doll's House*, Nora's secret bank loan in the past would not be threatened to be revealed if it wasn't for the present situation, a situation that is in risk of being overthrown by the revelation of the past. In *The Glassworks* the mystery of Mikael and his brother Stefan's childhood is the past, which threatens to be revealed during their visit over Christmas.

The use of symbolism in *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov, 1988)¹ inspired me to work with the character's relationship to the house as a connection to the past. The same way as Chekhov's characters all see different things in the cherry orchard, and

¹ There is a debate whether Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* should be seen as a naturalist or a symbolist play (Loehlin, 2006). I am not excluding either interpretation, but contend that there are certainly major symbolic elements of the play.

thereby charge it with different meanings, I wanted my characters to charge the meaning of the glassworks with their different attitudes to it. I choose a glassworks as the setting for the play since I associate it with a place that can be hard and hostile, as well as the space for a delicate and fragile art.

Later in the process I was also influenced by the gothic genre. The way my characters were negatively influenced by the house reminded me of Jack in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (2001) and Johan in Ingmar Bergman's *The Hour of The Wolf* (2004). The concealed past haunting the family invited for a ghost story to take place. I chose to let the son, from now on Daniel, reveal facts about a dead child through his reflection in a mirror in the glassworks. An actual ghost would take the focus from the family story, but having Daniel talk to a ghost would make the audience unsure if it was a real ghost he talked to, or if he was just playing. To make it clearer would remove the mystery of it.

Combining these three genres worked well in the set up. The characters' attitudes to the glassworks functioned as an expression for their attitude to their shared past. It was more difficult to find an ending that satisfied all the genres. If we compare the endings of *A Doll's House* and *The*

Cherry Orchard, the resolutions are of different kinds. In *A Doll's House* the mysteries about Nora's past are solved towards the end, but the play leaves us wondering about her future. We get to know what Nora did, and why she acted as she acted, but are left reflecting over moral dilemmas such as if the end justifies the means, if respect is more important than trust and if it's better to act according to the laws of nature or according to the laws of society.

In *The Cherry Orchard* there are no mysteries in the story to be solved. Even though the auctioning of the cherry orchard is determined before the play starts, there is still hope to save it in the beginning of the play. The play is not about Ranevskaya's family falling into debt, but how they will be able to save the estate. The questions lie in the meaning of the symbols. Since all the characters have a different attitude to the cherry orchard, they also have a different attitude to its destruction. In the end of the play the audience is presented different possible ways of how to feel about the fact that the orchard is being cut down. Is it sad that the old is destroyed, '*RANYEVSKAYA. ... My life, my youth, my happiness - farewell!*', or is it good that it has left room for the new to come in, '*TROFIMOV. Hail, new life!*' (Chekhov, 1988, p. 352).

I ended my first draft of *The Glassworks* by letting Jon be revealed as an evil assaulting family father. By doing this I answered the questions I had set up, but I didn't set up any new ones. I defined the symbols and downgraded them to icons. I had given way for the temptation of serving the audience everything in the resolution, the kind of writing that Pinter describes as prophesying:

Warnings, sermons, admonitions, ideological exhortations, moral judgements, defined problems with built-in solutions; all can camp under the banner of prophecy. The attitude behind this sort of thing might be summed up in one phrase: 'I'm telling you!'

(Pinter, 1996, p. x)

The three genres made it hard to find the balance between saying to much and too little. While the questions about the family's concealed past demanded a resolution, the symbols would feel flat and meaningless if they were explained. The play had been building up towards a resolution of the mystery of the dead child, but to reveal exact what happened would ruin the ghost story and the magic feeling of the mysteries. In my second draft I ended the play by letting Sara tell a fairy tale which the audience was invited to interpret as the truth about the dead child, but this solution felt more like a compromise than an end true to the story. I had started using genre as a source of inspiration, but ended up letting it

control my writing. Keith Johnstone (1981) emphasises the importance of breaking the routines you set up. A routine is only interesting as long as it is interrupted, when you follow a routine to its end it becomes predictable and leads nowhere. The same goes for predictable stories:

Sometimes stories become so predictable that they become routines. Nowadays if your princess kisses the frog, it's probably better if she becomes a frog herself...

(Johnstone, 1981, p. 139)

The mistake I had made was to try to give the audience what I believed they would expect. In my last draft of the ending I have ignored the demands of the genres and tried to find the ending I find most true for my specific play. I still have Sara telling a fairy tale, but I have tried to resist the impulse of explaining too much and searched for a balance between asking and answering.

CHARACTERS

Aristotle (1970, p. 43) defines four things to be aimed towards when constructing characters. They should be good, appropriate (their features should be probable for their office), like human beings and consistent. To me this is a contradiction. If characters are good, appropriate and consistent they are not like human beings. Human beings are in

my experience sometimes good and sometimes bad, they often have qualities you wouldn't expect from them and they are not at all consistent.

It is impossible to illustrate characters as versatile as they are in real life. To reflect the range of different characteristics of a human being, I have tried to display features that contrast each other in the characters. E. M. Forster (2005) discusses writing characters for novels, but I consider his theories equally applicable to playwriting. Forster makes difference between flat (one sided) characters and round (versatile) characters. He defines a round character as a character that is '*capable of surprising in a convincing way*' (Forster, 2005, p. 81). He means that for a character not to be two-dimensional, it does not need to be round all the time, but must be '*capable of rotundity*' (Forster, 2005, p. 78).

My theme of people being stuck in their behaviour results in many of my characters being flat on the surface. To prevent them from falling into caricatures I have tried to place them in situations where they are forced to reveal their passive sides. Jon, who is mostly indifferent and cold towards his family lights up when his grandson, dressed as Santa Claus, takes the role of a judge and turns the handing out of

presents into a trial against his family. Sara is quiet and obedient throughout most of the play, but when Mikael and Jon let Daniel suffer for their conflict, she lets her pent up anger rush out.

In the preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg describes simple stage characters as a result of a '*bourgeois concept of the immobility of the soul*' (Strindberg, 1998, p. 59). He states that '*the summary judgements that authors pass on people ... ought to be challenged by naturalists, who know how richly complicated the soul is*' (Strindberg, 1998, p. 59). Still he describes Jean as '*the type who founds a species*' (Strindberg, 1998, p. 61) and Miss Julie as '*a man-hating half-woman*' (Strindberg, 1998, p. 60), '*a type who thrusts herself forward and sells herself nowadays for power, decorations, honours, or diplomas as formerly she used to do for money*' (Strindberg, 1998, p. 60). I am inspired by Strindberg's will to reveal the complicated soul, but this categorising in good and bad characters seem to leave little space for the soul's flexibility.

In *The Glassworks* I have tried not to define my characters as good and bad, hero and villain. Inspired by Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1966), I let Mikael try to take the role of the hero, but not be able to carry it off. Like Teddy in *The*

Homecoming, Mikael is the son that has dissociated himself from the unpleasant behaviour of his family and, like Teddy, he turns out to be no better himself. While Teddy ends up letting his wife work as a prostitute for his family, Mikael ends up treating his son the same way he accuses his father to have treated him.

A character is defined partly through her actions and partly through what the other characters say about her. In *Taking Care of Baby* (Kelly, 2007), Dennis Kelly lets two characters recount the same story about how Lynn came to pick up her grown up daughter Donna from a party. The function of the different versions of the story is to give the audience different impressions of the character Lynn. In the first version Lynn comes through as a caring mother who rescued her daughter from her friends' bad influence (Kelly, 2007, p. 38-39). Later we hear the story from Martin, Donna's former husband, and realise that Donna was not in need of help, but treated like a child and brought home against her will (Kelly, 2007, p. 96). Kelly does give the latter story more significance by presenting Martin as a more trustworthy character, but it is still up to the audience to find the truth between the two stories.

In *The Glassworks* I have tried to create a gap between what you hear about the characters and what you see them do. Family roles are often kept even though the family members change. In my experience, what a family member says about another is not based on who he is, but who he was in the past and what role he has been assigned in the family. Jon and Sara won't let Stefan set up the television, since they see Mikael as the technical one, but when Mikael tries to do it, we realise that he doesn't know what he is doing. Mikael describes his father as abusive, but Stefan seems to have a different view of their childhood. By letting the characters offer the audience different viewpoints, I want to present a world in which the closest you get to an objective truth is through summing up all the subjective ones.

SETTING AS ROOM FOR ACTIONS

A defined room is a condition for defined actions, room not meaning a room in a house, but a space that can be occupied. In my first draft of *The Glassworks* I had no clear sense of the setting and I often ended up writing long talkative scenes that didn't lead anywhere. The setting was in the background, rather than in the scenes themselves. You would easily have been able to place a scene in another setting by just changing a few words in the dialogue. I wrote short scenes and

alternated the setting between every scene. I still introduce a new setting in every scene, but the 36 scenes of my first draft has been reduced to four. Any concerns about the practical aspects I dispatched as an intriguing task for the director to solve. It's possible in theatre to take the audience anywhere with help of their imagination, but there has to be a meaning behind it. In my first draft, the first scene took place on a car park, the next in the kitchen of Jon and Sara's house, the one after that in the garden and so on, and the only reason behind these changes of setting was the convenience for me to be able to set the scenes wherever I wanted to. In between the scenes I let the characters read out their wish lists for Christmas in a kind of universal nowhere, a setting where there would be virtually nothing for the actors to relate to in the room.

Such simple things as entrances and exits are fundamental to build the physical framework for a scene and the physical logic of the play. Max Stafford-Clark (1990, p. 92) observes this issue and sees blackouts and the influence of film as reasons that contemporary playwrights don't tend to worry about the practicalities for the staging of their plays. I do recognise myself in his description:

Thank God your stagecraft is so good though,
George. It's a relief to direct a play where the

author takes proper responsibility for getting the characters onstage at the start of a scene and offstage at the end. Nowadays, the influence of films means that writers think they can cut from scene to scene and, all too often, conclude a scene with a stage full of characters and props. The next scene then begins with fresh impossibilities. Blackouts have done it. They imagine you can do anything in a blackout.

(Stafford-Clark, 1990, p. 92)

When I talk about defining a room I mean defining it for you. By imagining the room where the scene takes place or even the stage room where it will be played out, you will be able to determine the conditions for the actions in the scene. It is not about writing detailed stage directions, but by letting the actors and the director hear the actions through the dialogue. There will for example be a difference in how I speak if I speak to someone over the dinner table, or if I stand outside the bathroom talking to someone using the toilet. The opportunities for what can happen are, to a high degree, based on the room itself.

In the first scene of *The Glassworks*, Daniel's grandparents (from now on 'Jon' and 'Sara') are waiting for their family to arrive. The function of this scene is to set the tone of the play, as well as to introduce the setting and Jon and Sara's characters. The dramatic tension of the scene builds on Jon's and Sara's different attitude to the fact that their family

will soon arrive. Sara is excited and nervous and wants everything to be perfect, while Jon is indifferent and dispatches Sara's excitement by pointing out that 'it's only family'. In my first draft I chose to place this scene in the living room, having Sara cleaning and Jon solving a cross-word. The scene fulfilled its functions, but its energy and tempo were low.

In my second draft I wanted to make the beginning more engaging by raising the tempo and the energy. I found that the living room as a setting didn't invite much opportunity for physical actions, so instead I chose to set the scene outside the house. Jon is standing on a ladder and trying to reinforce the electricity box for the house, while Sara is standing underneath, holding the ladder to prevent it from falling. The setting itself does not create energy, but it allows for actions to do so. Below are two excerpts from the scene. The first one is from the first draft and the second one is from the latest draft. In both versions Sara is trying to make Jon prepare for the arrival of the guests.

Excerpt from the first scene of my first draft:

THE LIVING-ROOM. JON is sitting in the sofa, solving a cross-word. SARA enters and starts making sure everything is nice and tidy.

SARA I put on coffee. They should be here any minute.

JON Serial killer.

SARA What?

JON Hannibal. Eight letters.

SARA You are not even dressed yet.

JON Yes I am.

SARA Is that what you are going wear on Christmas?

JON It's not Christmas until tomorrow.

(Waldemarson, 22/03/2008)

The same episode in my latest draft is as follows:

Outside the house. JON is standing on a ladder, fixing an electricity box. SARA is standing at the bottom of the ladder, holding it.

/.../

SARA Do you think you will be done soon? They will be here any minute, and you still have to get changed.

JON Do I?

SARA I hope so. That's not what you are planning to wear for Christmas, is it?

JON It's only family.

SARA But we haven't seen Mikael and Daniel for years. Don't you want to look good when you see your grandson?

JON Give me another nail, will you?

(see p. 41)

Later in this scene, when Mikael and Daniel arrive, the format of reinforcing the electricity box becomes a tool to define the relationships between the characters. I want this scene to have the tense atmosphere that arises around people who haven't seen each other in a long time and don't know how well they know each other. In my first draft I let the whole family sit down around the table and drink coffee. This made conversation the only way of revealing the relationships and you could sense the playwright behind the lines, trying to force the dialogue to expose the relationships.

The choice to put the characters around the table to drink coffee was based on my concept of how it would be in real life. Drinking coffee is the first thing most Swedish families do when they get together. I have probably never seen anyone standing outside, reinforcing an electricity box, on Christmas. My focus when writing the second draft was no longer on how it would be in real life, but what would be an efficient means of expression for the stage.

The setting continues being an antagonist for the family throughout the play. Jon's reinforcement is not enough and storm makes the electricity box fall down. To keep warm the family is forced down into the small glassworks. This

confinement leaves no room for the family members integrity and is what brings up the conflicts to the surface.

SETTING AS CULTURAL CONTEXT

The setting does not only set the conditions for the actions, but also gives the play a context in the world. I am Swedish, but have been living in England for three years and have written my last few plays in English. When I started writing *The Glassworks* I had no notion of what country it would be set in. For me the characters were universal and because I was writing the play in English, it seemed natural that it would be set in England. On the other hand, the play is about family relationships and all my experiences of this kind are from Sweden. The play is also set over Christmas and I have never celebrated an English Christmas. This indicated that I should set the play in Sweden, but would an English audience be able to recognise themselves in my reproduction of a Swedish Christmas? What would be the differences be in how the play would be interpreted? What are the English views on Sweden? Will the audience be expecting a Strindberg or Bergman play, and if so, would this be a good or a bad thing?

I chose to set the play in Sweden. 'Write about what you know' is a worn out expression. The word 'know' feels to me quite

limiting, what then about all the things you imagine or fear or believe? It is, however, sensible to reason that if an audience will spend ninety minutes watching your play to hear what you have to say, you should at least know what you are talking about. 'Write what only you can write' is another worn out expression that might fit better. There are many playwrights living in England that can write about an English Christmas, but a relatively small number that can write about a Swedish Christmas.

Writing a Swedish play in English raises some problems. I find that the most useful tool when writing dialogue is imitating. The character borrows a way of speaking from someone I know or a specific way of talking. When I imagine my Swedish characters I know what words they would use in Swedish, but how would they express themselves in English? One way of approaching this problem is to find an English equivalent for the type of person. I have tried to do this to a certain degree, but since English is not my first language and I am brought up in Sweden, my knowledge about how certain kinds of people talk in England is quite poor. Jon is in his seventies, comes from a working class background and now runs a glassworks in rural Sweden. His English equivalent does not exist in my everyday life in Nottingham.

The other way of approaching this problem is to use a naked language, free from attributes, and let the actions define the characters. Beckett is known for using his bilingualism to reduce the language to what's universal (Beer, 1994). In *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett, 2006) he avoids defining the setting to a specific context and in this points out what's universal.

In *The Glassworks* I have defined a setting the audience will not be familiar with, but I hope to reach the audience through what's universal in the specific. There is an absolutely absurd Swedish tradition of watching Donald Duck at three o'clock every Christmas Eve. This is not just something that people do; it has become a ritual as holy as the Christmas tree and Santa Claus. At first I planned to exclude this event from the play, since I thought only a Swede would understand the context, but excluding the specifics would counteract the aim of creating something anyone would be able to relate to. I believe what's significant for Christmas in most western cultures is the random traditions tied to it. Traditions that everyone agrees are important to maintain, but no one really knows where they come from. The notion of television having a central role in family life and Disney taking over Christmas is something with which I think most English people would be able to identify.

CONCLUSION

Analysing my writing has made me notice how clearly my writing process is striving towards two different directions: inwards and outwards. The inner process is researching and the outer is expressing. With the writing process I do not only mean the actual act of writing. The writing doesn't start when you type the first word, but when you think your first thought.

The inward striving process starts in the reality. For me it starts with an observation. The observation is the first step towards the heightened reality that will be the play. In the observation I make my first choice, I say 'this is worth observing'. Creating art is generally a process of reducing. The observation is the most substantial reduction, when you sort out everything in the world that is not your idea. We say 'coming up' with an idea of what to write about, but really it's choosing among all the things you have seen, heard, thought or experienced. You can widen your concept of the world by researching it, however your aim as an artist is to express your observation of the world, rather than the world itself. I therefore see the research mainly as a research of my conception.

The expressing part of the writing process is also a process of choosing. Visual artist Katji Lindberg describes the

process of choosing a form as a singling out of the opportunities that appear:

The leap towards a materialisation can be resembled with the searchlight of love, through which the longing person scan all persons of eligible sort and discards and discards until suddenly the one who doesn't show any negative features is there. The same thing happens, during the artistic working process, when all the accumulated is about to take form; a number of formation models . . . is passing by and saying 'look at me, you can do like this!', while the artist, like the longing person, indifferent continues the search. 'Too boring', 'too ordinary', 'not nuanced enough', 'not suitable', 'doesn't at all express what I want to say' and so forth...

(Lindberg, 2006)

In my experience the search for a form is not indifferent, but an active effort. Otherwise, I agree with the view that the process of choosing form is a process of narrowing down the choices to the form that best expresses your idea. This of course builds on the awareness that the choices of forms to select from are almost infinite.

The task for the form is to express the universal in your personal idea, and thereby make it accessible for everyone. Making it accessible for everyone is not a process of widening the idea to make it more general. For an idea to become universal it has to remain personal. To know how someone else will perceive my idea, I should not try to see it through

someone else's eyes, but from my own eyes from the other side of the communication line: the audience.

In the writing of *The Glassworks* my focus started in the real world and has successively moved towards the stage. When I first started to write about the father and the son (see Appendix) I imagined the scene to take place in a real apartment and saw the situation through the eyes of the characters. Writing my last draft I have tried to imagine the scene taking place on a stage. Only when I can imagine the play from the audience's point of view, will I be able to see the effect the form of the play has on the audience's emotional and logical understanding of it. The better I can grasp the audience's understanding, the clearer will I be able to steer their imagination.

The process of writing an analysis of a play at the same time as finishing the play has been useful, but painful. Useful because it has made me see how my theoretical values of writing cohere with my practice, and painful for the same reason. Painful is not always a bad feeling. Sometimes pain leads to frustration and frustration is a good basis for creativity. I choose to finish this analysis with this pragmatic, but hopeful quote from Pinter:

I've written nine plays, for various mediums, and at the moment I haven't the slightest idea how I've managed to do it. Each play was, for me, 'a different kind of failure'. And that fact, I suppose, sent me on to write the next one.

(Pinter, 1996, p. xiv)

APPENDIX: EXCERPT FROM EARLY SKETCHING

This is a sketch of one of the first scenes I wrote when I started working on *The Glassworks*. I started writing it without knowing how it was going to end, only with a vague idea about the characters and the situation. I have chosen to include this sketch as an appendix to demonstrate the upwelling of ideas through the writing process. The reader is welcome to compare this scene with the finished version of *The Glassworks*, where Dick is a precursor to Daniel, and 'dad' to Mikael. I am aware that the language in this excerpt has many errors in it in, but I have chosen not to correct them since I want to show the sketch as it was before I started editing it.

DICK Dad.

DAD What?

DICK Do you want to know something.

DAD Yes.

DICK Do you know what Peter said at school to day?

DAD No.

DICK Guess.

DAD I don't know. I don't have time for this.

DICK What are you doing?

DAD I'm trying to work.

DICK I mean, what are you doing when you're trying
to work.

DAD I don't know. I'm trying to concentrate.

DICK Are you working on the computer.

DAD Well obviously. What does it look like?

DICK It looks like you're working with the
computer.

DAD Mmm.

DICK What are we having for dinner?

DAD Mmm.

DICK Dad.

DAD What?

DICK What are we having for dinner?

DAD I don't know.

DICK But Dad.

DAD What?

DICK I'm hungry.

DAD Have something to eat then.

DICK I don't know what we have.

DAD Neither do I. If even you don't know, who's
gonna know that for you.

DICK I don't know. *(Pause.)* Dad.

DAD What? Can't you just be silent for a few
moments, I'm trying to write.

DICK What are you writing?

DAD Nothing. I don't write anything, because you
keep shouting in my ear all the time. How
would you be able to focus on anything if I
kept disturbing you all the time.

DICK But I'm hungry.

DAD Well have something to eat then.

DICK I don't know what we have.

DAD Have a look in the kitchen then. I can't do everything for you.

DICK But we don't have anything in the fridge.

DAD Look in the freezer then, we must have something.

DICK Maybe we have have some pudding.

DAD Yes, maybe.

DICK exits. DAD sit in front of his typewriter. He lifts his fingers a few times to start writing, but nothing comes. He shakes his head.

Fuck.

He raises and starts wandering around the room.

A man has committed a crime in the past, which he now has to pay for. He did in in good faith, but didn't realise the consequences.

He sits down and try to write, but nothing comes. He stands up and lights a cigarette. DICK enters.

DICK Dad?

DAD Yes, what is it?

DICK Do you like carrots in bread?

DAD What?

DICK Like hot dogs, but without the hot dog.

DAD Yeah, sure.

DICK Mum says that smoking is bad for you.

DAD Does she?

DICK Yes.

DAD Well, mum isn't here now is she?

DICK No. (Pause.) Dad.

DAD Yes what!

DICK When I grow up I'm also gonna smoke
cigarettes.

DAD Mmm. (Pause.) What did you say?

DICK How old do you have to be to buy cigarettes?

DAD Dick, look at me. You are never gonna start
smoking.

DICK Why not.

DAD Because this is poison. It's not good for
you.

DICK Yes, mommy says so, but she's just stupid.
You always say it doesn't do you much harm
and that it makes you relax.

DAD Look. I started taking these things because I
was young and stupid and had a bad character,
okay. But it's bad for me and now I wish I
had never started.

DICK But why do you still do it then?

DAD Because. (Pause.) Because daddy needs it,
okay. Daddy get so easily stressed, you know.
Do you remember that time daddy tried to
quit?

DICK Yes.

DAD We don't want daddy like that, do we? It's
actually better that daddy slowly kills
himself, than that he tries living without
the cigarettes again.

DICK starts crying.

Don't cry Dick.

DICK I don't want you to kill yourself.

DAD No. I'm sorry, that was just something I said. Don't you worry. Cigarettes isn't that bad for you after all. Come on, give me a smile. It's just those people who smokes really much who actually takes harm from it. Taking one or two, or three per day as I do is really not that bad for you.

DICK Dad.

DAD Yes.

DICK Why haven't you written anything?

DAD What?

DICK You say that you sit and write all day, but you don't. I don't here the tapping from the machine and all the pages are empty.

DAD It's not that easy you know.

DICK You said that you were getting really stressed because of that person at you job who wants you to be done now. But you don't write anything, you're just sitting in front of the type-writer and pretending.

DAD That's enough, I'm not pretending.

DICK Why don't you write anything then?

DAD That's none of your business, okay. I have so much things to keep on top of. I have you to take care of and cook for.

DICK But you don't. My friend Sam says that in his family they eat cooked food every day.

DAD Well, Sam have a mother at home and his parents doesn't work as much as I do.

DICK He says his parents have real jobs.

DAD Real jobs? What do you mean real jobs, like I don't have a real job?

DICK I don't know what he means. Maybe such jobs you get money from.

DAD How many times are we gonna go through this,
Dad is doing this for a short period of time,
and during that time we have to live like we
do, but when I have finished this play
everything is gonna change. It will start
coming in money and daddy will be able to get
more normal jobs.

DICK Real jobs.

DAD Yes, real jobs.

DICK I if you're gonna finish this play...

DAD Yes.

DICK Then you have to start writing something,
don't you.

DAD Yes Dick, daddy has to start writing.
(Pause.) What's that smell?

DICK I think the carrots may be done.

DAD The carrots. Yes, they might be done. How did
you do them?

DICK In the oven.

DAD Okay, let's take them out now, shall we?

(14/10/2007)

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THE GLASSWORKS

by

Ivar Waldemarson

CHARACTERS

DANIEL, *ten years old*

MIKAEL, *Daniel's father*

STEFAN, *Mikael's brother*

SARA, *Mikael and Stefan's mother*

JON, *Mikael and Stefan's father*

SETTING

The play takes place in and outside of JON and SARA's house in a rural area of coastal Sweden.

The first three scenes takes place on Christmas Eve, the forth scene takes place on Christmas Day.

In Sweden the main Christmas celebrations take place on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day.

SCENE 1

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. JON is standing on a ladder, fixing an electricity box. SARA is standing at the bottom of the ladder, holding it.

JON Give me the hammer, will you?

SARA Which one?

JON The hammer. There's only one hammer. The hammer, for God's sake.

SARA lets go of the ladder to find the hammer.

JON Don't let go of the ladder, are you trying to kill me? There. Look. In the toolbox, in front of you. That's the one.

SARA Do you think you will be done soon? They will be here any minute, and you still have to get changed.

JON Do I?

SARA I hope so. That's not what you are planning to wear for Christmas, is it?

JON It's only family.

SARA But we haven't seen Mikael and Daniel for years. Don't you want to look good when you see your grandson?

JON Give me another nail, will you?

SARA And I still need to cook the ham.

JON How will you be able to do that without electricity?

SARA Don't you think that's enough reinforcement?

JON It wasn't enough for the last two storms. Another nail please. And they've said this one will be even worse.

SARA They should be here by now.

JON They say it will be the worst storm for years. But I will not let it have the box this time. I'm going to nail it to the wall till it sits like a rock. There can be a tornado for all I care, as long as the rest of the electricity net holds, this house will be powered as well. Give me the rope.

SARA What rope?

JON Isn't there a rope down there somewhere? Oh, it's over there on the table.

SARA goes to get it.

JON Don't leave the ladder.

SARA What am I supposed to do then?

JON You should have put it so you could reach it.
I thought you had prepared everything.

SARA I didn't know you wanted the rope.

JON I did.

SARA Can't we call that enough?

JON We can call it whatever we want, but that won't help when the storm comes.

SARA We haven't seen them for years. Are we going to stand like this when they come?

JON If we want the house to be powered while they are here, yes.

SARA We should have started earlier.

JON It's a bit late to think of that now.

SARA I didn't think it would take such time.

We hear a the sound of a car arriving.

JON Look.

SARA What?

JON It's their car, isn't it?

SARA Oh, God. And nothing is prepared.

JON It's just family, it's not like we are
running a hotel.

MIKAEL and DANIEL enter carrying bags.

SARA Hello! How good to see you.

JON Don't let go of the ladder.

MIKAEL What are you doing up there dad?

JON I'm securing the power supply. They had a
warning on the radio that there will be
another storm tonight and it has already
fallen down twice this year.

SARA Come down now Jon, so we can say hello
properly and have a cup of coffee.

JON I'm just going to... Mikael, can you pass me
that rope.

MIKAEL Do you remember your grandparents Daniel?

SARA Of course he does.

DANIEL I don't think so.

SARA He'll just need some time.

JON Mikael...

MIKAEL Yes, the rope.

MIKAEL hands JON the rope.

Happy Christmas dad.

JON Yes, yes.

SARA I'm sorry we are not better prepared. I'm
going to put on coffee as soon as we're done
here. How is it going up there?

MIKAEL You are too old to climb ladders dad, don't
you want me to do it?

JON No, I want it fixed properly. You can't even hammer down a nail. I've asked Stefan to do it, but he never does. Hand me a nail, will you?

MIKAEL hands him a nail.

How is that small thing going to resist the storm? Give me one of the big ones. Where is Stefan, he should be here by now.

SARA The ones that live the closest always come last.

MIKAEL Are you going to nail the rope to the wall?

JON Yes I am. Why?

MIKAEL It doesn't look very stable, that's all.

JON I know what I'm doing.

SARA My arms are cramping. Do you want to hold the ladder for a while Mikael?

MIKAEL does so.

DANIEL Is this an old house?

SARA It's not that old.

DANIEL It looks old.

SARA Your grandfather built it himself when we started up the glassworks, nineteen fifty-seven I think it was.

DANIEL Wow, that's old.

JON And another one.

MIKAEL Are you sure you don't want me to do it for you?

JON I'm fine, give me another nail. I'm nearly done.

DANIEL Are there any ghosts living here?

MIKAEL Don't start Daniel.

DANIEL I'm just asking.

MIKAEL He saw *The Sixth Sense* the other day and
since then he's been a bit obsessed.

SARA Oh, I see. Yes there have been some strange
things going on here lately.

DANIEL What things?

SARA All kinds of things. Sometimes there are
strange sounds. Especially on a windy day
like this.

DANIEL What kind of sounds?

SARA Scary sounds.

DANIEL Like from someone being eaten alive?

SARA Yes, and if you listen carefully, you can
hear whispering voices.

DANIEL Can you? What do they whisper?

SARA That's personal. You will have to find out
for yourself.

JON One more nail and that should do.

MIKAEL Be careful dad, you are starting to look a
bit tired.

JON I never get tired. Isn't that Stefan's car?
That's about time, just when I'm nearly
finished.

We hear the sound of a car arriving.

SARA You do look a bit pale. Are you sure you
don't need a break?

JON Just because I've turned seventy it doesn't
mean I'm useless.

DANIEL These sounds, can you hear them in the attic?

STEFAN enters.

STEFAN No dad, what are you doing up there?

SARA You can, but there is no place in the house
where they are as clear as in the glassworks.

JON I'm just reinforcing this bloody box -

STEFAN I've said I will do that for you.

DANIEL The glassworks. Can we go there?

MIKAEL No Daniel.

DANIEL Why not?

*JON loses his balance and falls to the
ground. STEFAN tries to catch him, but isn't
quick enough.*

STEFAN Not again.

STEFAN sits down next to JON.

Are you all right?

JON I'm fine.

STEFAN What were you doing on the ladder? I've told
you I'll fix the box for you.

JON But you never do it.

STEFAN You know you get dizzy so easily, why do you
have to start climbing ladders? Look at you,
you're bleeding.

SARA I'll get tissues.

JON That's not necessary.

STEFAN Yes please mum, do that.

SARA exits into the house.

STEFAN How do you feel, nothing broken I hope.

JON I'm fine. I just lost my balance.

MIKAEL Has this happened before?

STEFAN We've been through this quite a few times,
haven't we dad? You lose your balance and
you're too stubborn to sit down when you feel
it coming, so you fall instead.

JON Stop making such a fuss about it.

MIKAEL Have you been to the doctor?

STEFAN Too proud. Don't think I haven't tried to
convince him.

JON stands up.

JON There's nothing wrong with me.

SARA enters with napkins.

SARA Sit down so you don't lose your balance
again.

JON I won't lose my balance.

SARA Please let me clean the cut for you.

JON I'm fine I said, why don't you listen to me?
I'm perfectly fine. I lost my balance, it
could have happened to anyone.

JON starts walking towards the ladder.

MIKAEL What are you doing dad?

JON There's just one nail left.

STEFAN Which I will hammer in for you.

JON I've been waiting for you to do that.

STEFAN I will do it as soon as you've gone inside
and let mum clean your cut.

JON All right, but don't blame me next time it
falls down.

*Everyone goes inside, except MIKAEL who stays
and lights a cigarette. Soon DANIEL comes out
again.*

DANIEL Dad, what are you doing?

MIKAEL hides the cigarette in his hand.

MIKAEL Nothing. Go inside Daniel, I'll come in a minute.

DANIEL Are you smoking?

MIKAEL No, I was just lighting one to feel the smell of it.

He stubs the cigarette and takes out a nicotine inhaler.

MIKAEL These fake ones taste like shit.

DANIEL You shouldn't swear.

DANIEL picks up a stone from the ground and sees how far he can throw it.

MIKAEL It will be all right Daniel, don't you worry.

DANIEL I don't.

MIKAEL Your grandparents can be quite irritating sometimes.

DANIEL I think they seem fine.

MIKAEL Oh, no, trust me, they can be quite irritating.

Pause.

What I wanted to say was that even if they seem irritating -

DANIEL I think they seem fine.

MIKAEL - they are good when it comes down to it.

STEFAN comes out from the house.

They just keep it inside. Deep inside.

MIKAEL sees STEFAN.

Oh hi there, I didn't hear you coming.

STEFAN You all right?

MIKAEL Yeah, how's dad?

STEFAN He'll be all right. I can't believe he's so stubborn.

MIKAEL As always.

STEFAN Yeah, I suppose. Drives me mad though. He wouldn't agree to rest until I'd hammered in the last nail.

DANIEL continues throwing stones.

DANIEL Dad look.

MIKAEL How are you anyway?

STEFAN Anyway?

MIKAEL Otherwise. I mean how are you?

STEFAN Yeah, I'm all right.

DANIEL Dad look!

STEFAN He's got big.

MIKAEL He grows fast.

STEFAN I hardly recognised him.

MIKAEL They grow fast that age.

STEFAN I haven't seen him for five years.

DANIEL You didn't look.

MIKAEL No, I'm talking to uncle Stefan.

STEFAN How's Linn?

DANIEL But you said you were looking.

MIKAEL I didn't say anything. *(to Stefan)* I don't know, why don't you ask Daniel?

DANIEL But you have to watch and see how far I can throw.

MIKAEL No, I'm talking to Stefan.

DANIEL You are talking all the time, can't you talk and watch at the same time?

STEFAN I'm watching you Daniel.

MIKAEL I see you've got a new car.

STEFAN Yeah, the old one was falling apart. (to DANIEL) Well done Daniel, you've got the technique.

DANIEL Have I?

STEFAN Your dad and I used to play like that. We would compete and see who could throw the furthest. Your dad always won, but then he was five years older than me. I tried so hard to beat him. I practised every day and when I thought I was good enough I challenged him. Do you know what he said?

DANIEL No.

STEFAN That he didn't play with stones anymore, that he was too old for that kind of games.

DANIEL That's unfair.

STEFAN Isn't it? You know what, why don't we have a competition?

MIKAEL No.

STEFAN Come on, it's fun.

Pause.

Or are you afraid you'll lose?

DANIEL Are you dad? Are you afraid you'll lose?

MIKAEL Of course I'm not.

STEFAN Then why don't we have a competition?

MIKAEL I don't know.

STEFAN Come on!

DANIEL Are you afraid you will lose dad?

MIKAEL All right, I'll have a go.

He finds a stone.

I haven't done this since we were kids.

He throws.

That wasn't too bad, was it?

STEFAN It's all right.

MIKAEL Let's see what you can do then?

STEFAN All right.

STEFAN throws.

DANIEL Wow, that's far.

STEFAN It's all right.

DANIEL It was really far.

STEFAN Enough to beat your dad. Now let's see what
you can do Daniel.

DANIEL Okay, watch this one.

DANIEL throws.

STEFAN Yeah, quite good.

DANIEL Yeah?

STEFAN You have to work on your technique though,
you're throwing like a girl.

DANIEL I'm not.

STEFAN Yes, you are.

DANIEL No, I'm not. You are.

STEFAN No, you.

DANIEL You.

STEFAN You.

DANIEL I'm not.

STEFAN Who throws the furthest then?

DANIEL Well, you but...

STEFAN But, but, but... Here, let me show you. Hold the stone like this.

DANIEL Okay.

STEFAN And then you throw it overarm like this. Not that direction, this. That's better. There you go.

DANIEL That's pretty far, right?

MIKAEL It's all right.

DANIEL It's much further than you have thrown so far.

MIKAEL It's not.

STEFAN It is Mikael. I think we have a winner.

MIKAEL What do you mean you think we have a winner? He's had two tries, I've only had one.

DANIEL Go on then, see if you can throw any further.

MIKAEL All right, watch this one.

MIKAEL throws.

No, I didn't focus enough there. Check out this one.

He throws again.

DANIEL Now it's Stefan's turn.

STEFAN No, you go on. I'm gonna hammer in that last nail so dad can get some rest.

MIKAEL I'm not finding the right stone. Look at this one.

MIKAEL continues trying. STEFAN goes to hammer the nail in. DANIEL gives up on the stone throwing and stands looking out over the sea.

DANIEL How come birds can fly?

STEFAN They have wings, don't they?

DANIEL But every time they go like this *(raises his arms like a bird)* it should make them go down.

MIKAEL What do you mean Daniel? Check out this one.

DANIEL Because every time they go like this *(lowers his arms)*, it makes them go up, but then they have to go like this *(arms up)*, to be able to go like this *(arms down)* again and when they go like this *(arms up)* it should make them go down.

MIKAEL I don't know Daniel. One more try.

He misses.

All right, I give up. Daddy is too old for these kind of games. You should have seen me when I was your age. I could throw a stone from here where we are now, all the way down to the sea.

STEFAN is finished with the box.

STEFAN That'll do. What do you think?

MIKAEL It looks like it's going to fall any second.

STEFAN I know, but don't say that to dad, or he'll be going on about it for the rest of the Christmas.

MIKAEL Shall we go inside then?

STEFAN Yeah, let's go into the warmth before the storm comes.

They exit into the house. Blackout. Sounds of the storm rolling in.

SCENE 2

THE LIVING-ROOM. The sound of the storm transforms into the noise of a television with no signal. MIKAEL sits on the floor next to a television, reading a manual. JON and SARA are watching him. STEFAN and DANIEL are looking at a box of chocolate.

MIKAEL No, turn it off. Let me see.

SARA turns the television off.

Introduction, important information, safety information, environmental information.

DANIEL I think that's the marzipan one.

MIKAEL Why can't they just say how to do it? Here we go, getting started.

STEFAN No, it's not the right pattern.

MIKAEL Insert batteries, connect television to power supply. I think we will be better off without the manual.

DANIEL (to MIKAEL) Can I have a look?

JON We decided it was for the best to wait until you came.

STEFAN turns the chocolate box upside down so that all the pralines fall out.

SARA Watch out!

STEFAN starts picking up the pralines and putting them back into the box.

STEFAN I was just trying to read on the back.

JON We haven't been able to watch television for months.

MIKAEL Couldn't Stefan have done it?

STEFAN I said I could have a look at it.

SARA We call you when the car breaks down Stefan,
when it comes to this kind of stuff we wait
for Mikael to come around.

JON Even though that sometimes means that we have
to wait quite a while.

MIKAEL It's not rocket science.

DANIEL It says here you should connect the box to
the television using a SCART cable.

MIKAEL Well, obviously.

DANIEL I'm just saying what it says.

JON Maybe we should let Stefan look at it
instead, but we thought you are kind of the
expert.

MIKAEL Did you?

SARA It's what you do, isn't it? Film and
television?

MIKAEL I'm doing CGI mum, I'm not a television
technician.

JON No need to tell.

MIKAEL Look there's the start screen. Insert country
code. That should be two for Europe.

JON Does anyone want a drink?

SARA This early?

JON It's Christmas.

MIKAEL Strange.

DANIEL What's strange?

MIKAEL I've pressed two, but I can't press enter.

JON Do you want a drink Mikael?

MIKAEL No, I'm fine thank you.

JON Are you sure?

MIKAEL Yeah, I don't drink alcohol.

JON You've always drunk alcohol.

MIKAEL Not anymore.

JON That's a shame. You want one, don't you Stefan?

STEFAN Yes please. Does anyone want the last marzipan piece?

JON starts pouring drinks.

JON Sara, do you want to go and see if you find something alcohol free for the children.

STEFAN holds out the chocolate box for DANIEL.

STEFAN Daniel?

DANIEL No, you have it.

SARA We have Coca Cola if you want?

DANIEL Yes please.

SARA Mikael?

MIKAEL Yeah, that's fine.

JON hands out drinks.

JON So what are we singing?

SARA Are we doing that as well?

JON Otherwise it wouldn't be much of a Christmas.
What's that funny one called, the one with the man from Taiwan?

SARA hands MIKAEL and DANIEL Coca Cola.

MIKAEL Maybe we should save that for later.

JON I keep forgetting the lyrics.

MIKAEL That's probably for the best, they were quite inappropriate as I remember them.

STEFAN Let's just drink dad, we can sing later.

JON Yeah all right, happy Christmas then.

SARA Happy Christmas.

STEFAN Happy Christmas.

DANIEL Happy Christmas.

They drink.

JON How is it going Mikael? Are you sure you
don't want Stefan to have a look at it?

MIKAEL I know what I'm doing, we just need to change
the language settings.

DANIEL Can I have a try?

MIKAEL Let me just try this Daniel...

JON Otherwise you can act it out for us. I'm sure
you would do it better than Disney.

MIKAEL I'm doing special effects dad, it has nothing
to do with acting.

DANIEL Can't you let me have a look?

MIKAEL And Disney is not the one doing the voices
either.

SARA He's dead, isn't he?

DANIEL I think I know what to do.

MIKAEL It's not easy Daniel. The menus are quite
hard to understand when they are in Chinese.

JON Let him try, he can hardly make it any worse.

MIKAEL Yeah all right, you have a try.

MIKAEL hands DANIEL the remote.

DANIEL If we just go back to the start screen and
put in country code forty-six... There you
go.

STEFAN And Christmas is saved.

SARA Bravo Daniel.

JON Now you have deserved your presents this year
Daniel. Do you think Santa will come tonight?

DANIEL I can be Santa this year.

JON What do you mean Daniel?

DANIEL Like Stefan was Santa last time we were here.

STEFAN That wasn't me.

DANIEL I can have a beard and come down through the
chimney.

STEFAN It was the real Santa.

MIKAEL Daniel hasn't believed in Santa for years
Stefan.

JON But you believe in ghosts?

DANIEL Only the ones that are real.

STEFAN That's a good distinction to make.

DANIEL Is the ghost in the glassworks real?

JON The ghost in the glassworks? I don't know,
why don't you go down and ask him?

DANIEL Can I do that?

MIKAEL Not on your own. It's too dangerous down
there.

DANIEL Please.

JON I was only joking Daniel, there's no ghost in
the glassworks.

DANIEL Of course there is, what else would the
whispering voices come from? Who lives there,
is it a king?

SARA What do you think?

DANIEL I think it is. I think he was the king of
winter.

SARA The king of winter. Yes.

DANIEL Tell me about him.

SARA When he was young he was just an ordinary man, but one day something happened that made his heart freeze.

JON It's bad enough you make these stories up yourself, don't get Daniel into it as well.

MIKAEL What stories?

JON She has started making up these fairy tales which she keeps telling.

SARA His heart started to pump out cold blood in the veins and his entire body went cold. So cold in fact that you could see his breath, and everything he touched froze to ice.

JON I've told her to write it all down, but instead she keeps boring me with it.

MIKAEL Can't you be quiet dad?

JON If she kept it to fairy tales it would be all right, but she keeps mixing it up with reality.

DANIEL Shhh!

SARA The man had a hard time getting used to his new condition. He couldn't drink a glass of water without having sharp icicles scratching his throat, and when he tried to step into a hot bath, his foot just bounced against the hard block of ice that the water had turned into. But as time passed, the man started enjoying his cold environment. He found that the hard ice was perfect to sculpt in, and he quickly became very good at it.

JON Does anyone want another drink?

SARA He started by sculpting simple things like jewellery and statuettes, but soon his sculptures became both bigger and more complicated.

JON Stefan?

STEFAN Yes please.

SARA He also sculpted practical things like
cutlery and furniture and soon he had made an
entire house out of ice.

JON Mikael? Are you sure you don't want one? It's
Christmas for God's sake.

MIKAEL No, I want to hear this.

SARA When other people saw how beautiful the house
was, with its shiny ice walls and frozen
garden, they asked him to build their houses
as well and after a few years the man had
build an entire town out of ice. His own
house he made into a castle and so it felt
natural that he would become the king of the
winter land he had created. They called him
the king of winter.

JON Now I remember it. *(sings)* There once was a
man from Taiwan -

MIKAEL Not now dad.

JON *(sings)* Who said to his girl, 'You're a tight
one' -

MIKAEL Dad!

JON *(sings)* She said, 'Pardon my soul,
But you're in the wrong hole.
There's plenty of room in the right one.'

Cheers then!

JON drinks.

DANIEL Which was the right one?

MIKAEL I think it's time for Donald Duck, should we
see if the television still works.

JON How I laughed when I heard that song for the
first time. I think it was Roland who sang
it.

MIKAEL All we should need to do is to push this button and...

Nothing happens.

And... shit, it worked five minutes ago.

JON God, how we laughed. Everyone except Roland's wife of course. She just turned around, left the room and slammed the door.

MIKAEL Let's see. What happens if we push the button on the television.

And it works. On the screen there is an old man lighting a candle.

SARA Bravo.

JON Well done Mikael, maybe you should aim for a career as television technician after all.

TELEVISION And now over to what we all have waited for. It's time for Donald Duck and his friends to wish us a merry Christmas...

STEFAN Now it feels like Christmas.

We hear about five seconds of the jingle of Donald Duck, then we hear a crash, the power cuts out and everything becomes dark.

JON I told you. I told you it would fall. Did you hammer in that last nail Stefan?

STEFAN Yes, of course I did.

JON I should have done it myself.

MIKAEL Do you have a torch somewhere?

JON No.

STEFAN Yes you do, I bought you one after the last power cut. It should be next to the fridge.

JON It's out of batteries.

STEFAN What's the point of having an emergency torch if you don't have any batteries in it?

DANIEL What is that?

SARA What Daniel?

DANIEL It was the ghost.

MIKAEL There's no ghost Daniel, it's just a power cut.

DANIEL But I saw it. I swear I saw it.

MIKAEL Wait Daniel, where are you going?

JON See what you've done Sara, Daniel already thinks he's seeing ghosts.

MIKAEL Daniel! Did anyone see where Daniel went?

JON It's too dark, you can't see a bloody thing.

MIKAEL Daniel? Daniel?

STEFAN He's probably just hiding somewhere, waiting to jump out and scare us.

SARA The kingdom of winter was said to be the most beautiful kingdom in the world. During daytime the transparent walls would let the sun through and everything became bright and shiny, and during the night the entire kingdom sparkled from the reflections of the stars, which jumped from wall to wall as if the houses were made out of mirrors.

DANIEL Hello?

SARA But one day summer came and the kingdom melted.

DANIEL Hello? Are you there? Where is everyone? Why don't you say something?

The light comes on again, but something is not right. Everyone but DANIEL is gone and the room looks different. Instead of being in the living-room he now stands in the glassworks. He has no clue of how he got there.

DANIEL Hello? HELLO? Where are you? Hello everyone!
Okay come out now. It's not funny anymore.
What is this place? What's up with all the
glass...

*DANIEL realises where he is. Under a
chandelier stands an old-fashioned mirror.
DANIEL goes and stands in front of it. He
talks to his reflection.*

DANIEL Who are you?

You know who I am.

The king of winter?

I am your uncle.

My uncle? But you are not older than I am.

Only when you see me in the mirror.

Where are you then?

I'm hiding underneath the thousand stars.

What stars? What thousand stars?

The power cuts again. It's dark.

Hello?

SCENE 3

*THE GLASSWORKS. MIKAEL and STEFAN enter.
STEFAN carries a torch.*

STEFAN It's even colder down here.

MIKAEL It will warm up as soon we've got the oven lit.

STEFAN At least there was a tiny bit of light coming in through the windows upstairs, here's pitch black. And the smell...

MIKAEL Dad is right though. This is the only place we will be able keep warm without the electricity.

STEFAN I really looked forward to a hot Christmas meal. Pickled herring is great, but not without potatoes and not when you are already freezing.

MIKAEL Point the torch over here.

STEFAN He should get a proper electrician to fix that box, but he won't let anyone else touch the house.

MIKAEL I've been dreaming of this place.

STEFAN Have you?

MIKAEL Do you know how to work this oven?

STEFAN Not a clue, I'm never down here.

MIKAEL Don't you ever watch dad working?

STEFAN He doesn't want me to.

MIKAEL Shine here.

STEFAN He doesn't want anyone around when he's working.

MIKAEL This is the gas control, but first we need to put in the coal.

STEFAN Do you know how to use it?

MIKAEL I used to sit and watch dad working.

STEFAN He never let me near the glassworks.

MIKAEL See if you can find a barrel over there in
the corner.

STEFAN What for?

MIKAEL It's where he keeps the coal.

*STEFAN points the torch at a pile of broken
glass in different colours.*

STEFAN Look at all this glass.

MIKAEL That's all the failures. I tried to convince
dad to put up a shelf for seconds in the
store, but he refuses sell anything that's
not a hundred percent perfect.

STEFAN has found the coal barrel.

STEFAN How much do we need?

MIKAEL Just a few shovels.

STEFAN starts to shovel coal into the oven.

STEFAN Do you know why there are two ovens in here?

MIKAEL This is the one he uses to melt the glass.
The other one is not as hot. That's where he
puts the glass to cool down. Otherwise it
breaks.

STEFAN How do you know all this?

MIKAEL That should be enough.

MIKAEL pours lighting liquid on the coal.

Do you have a lighter, I've quit smoking.

STEFAN No.

MIKAEL Actually I might have one still. Oh, here it
is. Do you want to light it?

MIKAEL hands the lighter to STEFAN, who lights the oven.

MIKAEL Good. Now turn that wheel.

STEFAN turns the control and gas starts blowing out on the fire. The room becomes lighter.

STEFAN That's cool. And warm! Still a bit dark though.

MIKAEL We need to light the thousand stars.

STEFAN The what?

MIKAEL The chandelier. Dad made it for mum for her fortieth birthday. It was supposed to hang in the living-room, but it was too heavy. The only ceiling that would hold it was the one down here.

MIKAEL starts lighting the thousand stars.

STEFAN Look at all those tools. What do you use this for?

MIKAEL That's the blowpipe. You use it to blow air on the fire to make it hotter.

STEFAN I can't believe you know all this.

STEFAN puts the blowpipe into the fire and tests it.

MIKAEL Just be careful when you take it out, it's extremely hot in there.

STEFAN You sound just like dad. What's this?

MIKAEL It's called a punty.

STEFAN A punty?

MIKAEL That's what he used to torture me with.

Pause. MIKAEL smiles slightly and STEFAN starts laughing.

STEFAN You nearly got me there.

MIKAEL I think you can put on another shovel of coal.

STEFAN doesn't do anything, so MIKAEL shovels more coal on the fire instead. STEFAN takes over MIKAEL's previous task of lighting the candles in the chandelier.

MIKAEL Do you remember anything from our childhood?

STEFAN Of course I do.

MIKAEL What do you remember?

STEFAN I don't know, loads of things.

MIKAEL Like what?

STEFAN Loads of things. Most things I suppose. Why, what do you remember?

MIKAEL Do you remember this place?

STEFAN This place?

MIKAEL The glassworks.

STEFAN I was never down here.

MIKAEL I was.

STEFAN Yes, you said so.

MIKAEL He never took you here?

STEFAN I wasn't allowed to go down here, was I?

MIKAEL I don't know, that's why I'm asking.

STEFAN I wasn't allowed down here, I told you. What are you on about?

MIKAEL Nothing, I'm just chatting. Asking you what you remember of our childhood. We never get the chance to talk.

STEFAN No, 'cause you're never around.

MIKAEL I've been dreaming of this place.

STEFAN Yes, you said so.

MIKAEL About a boy.

STEFAN It's starting to warm up.

MIKAEL I think we're done. Do you want to go
upstairs and tell everyone to come down?

STEFAN Yeah. Sure.

STEFAN exits. MIKAEL walks around the room, looking at all the glass. He finds a bottle of vodka. He opens it and smells it, then screws on the cork and puts it down. Then he screws off the cork, fills a glass and drinks it. JON and STEFAN are coming down the stairs carrying a table.

JON Two more steps. And now you are down. A bit
to the right.

STEFAN Yours or mine?

JON Yours. No, your other right. Great, now we're
stuck.

MIKAEL What are you doing out there?

STEFAN We're trying to bring down a table.

JON If we push it this direction.

STEFAN No, it's just making it worse.

MIKAEL Do you need help?

JON No, I just need to push it hard enough.

MIKAEL Be careful dad, shouldn't you let someone
else do that for you?

STEFAN Watch out.

STEFAN falls backwards into the room, followed by the table.

JON There we go.

JON, SARA and DANIEL enter.

SARA At least it's warm down here.

JON Hopefully the heat will have time to spread
to the rest of the house before we go to bed.
Then Stefan will fix the box first thing
tomorrow morning if the storm is over.

STEFAN Why don't we call for an electrician instead,
and get it fixed properly?

JON And spend a thousand krona for them to do the
same thing as you can do in five minutes?

STEFAN Otherwise it will just fall down again as
soon there's another storm.

JON Not if you do it properly. But if you don't
want to...

STEFAN It's not that I don't want to.

JON What is it then?

STEFAN It feels pointless putting it up the same way
time after time when it keeps falling down.
Maybe it needs to be completely
reconstructed.

JON There's nothing wrong with the construction.

STEFAN I can pay for it.

JON If I thought someone else could do a better
job, I would pay for it. Don't worry about
it, I'll just have to fix it myself.

STEFAN No, I'll do it.

JON All right then. Who wants to join me for a
game of Christmas poker?

MIKAEL Christmas poker?

JON It's a new tradition we have. Every Christmas
Eve we play a game of poker.

SARA If you win we say it brings you luck.

JON But if you lose it means there is a
misfortune awaiting you. So who's in?
Everyone puts in two hundred krona for
bidding.

MIKAEL Two hundred?

JON We could of course lower the stakes for the beginners.

MIKAEL No, I don't need any special treatment.

JON So you're in then? What about Stefan?

STEFAN Of course.

DANIEL Can I be in it?

MIKAEL You can be on my team Daniel.

DANIEL I don't want to be in your team, you suck at cards.

STEFAN I'll put money in for Daniel.

MIKAEL No, you shouldn't do that.

STEFAN Don't worry about it, I'll win it back.

DANIEL We will see. I'm in league with the ghost.

MIKAEL Great, we're teaching my son to gamble.

JON Better to start early and become good at it.

STEFAN Shall we start then?

JON Not with empty glasses. You sure you don't want a glass Mikael?

MIKAEL I don't drink alcohol.

JON Sara, why don't you get some Coca Cola for Daniel and Mikael.

MIKAEL No, I'm fine thank you. I'm not thirsty.

JON Suit yourself.

JON starts pouring vodka for himself, SARA and STEFAN. SARA hands DANIEL a bottle of Coca Cola. STEFAN shuffles and deals.

STEFAN Texas hold 'em. Does everyone know the rules?

MIKAEL I don't think Daniel does.

DANIEL Yes, I've seen it on the telly.

STEFAN Everyone gets two cards, we bid, then three cards on the table, bid, then one card, bid, one card and final bidding.

JON puts a glass full of coins in the middle of the table.

JON Help yourself to change if you need it.

STEFAN So, everyone look at your cards, decide what you think of them and we'll start bidding. I dealt, so Daniel goes first. You can either say pass or raise the bid.

DANIEL I bid fifty.

MIKAEL That sounds a bit much Daniel.

STEFAN Yeah, we usually start with ten or twenty.

DANIEL I want to bid fifty.

STEFAN Remember we are five people playing Daniel.

DANIEL I know.

SARA I think Daniel knows what he's doing. Don't forget he's in league with the ghost.

MIKAEL Just don't make a habit of letting the ghost decide how to spend your money, all right?

DANIEL I know what I'm doing.

JON The bid is laid, let's continue playing.

MIKAEL I won't challenge that.

JON I'll see your bid Daniel, I think you're bluffing.

SARA I fold.

STEFAN I'm in.

SARA Are you sure you don't want something to drink Mikael?

MIKAEL Actually, I wouldn't mind a glass.

JON Coke I suppose.

MIKAEL No, it's Christmas after all.

JON Vodka?

MIKAEL It's Christmas after all. I guess one glass
couldn't hurt.

JON pours MIKAEL a glass of vodka.

DANIEL You don't drink alcohol.

MIKAEL I know Daniel, I'm just having a glass to
celebrate Christmas.

DANIEL Can I have a glass of vodka to celebrate
Christmas as well?

MIKAEL No, it's bad enough that you are gambling.

*STEFAN deals another card. JON hands MIKAEL
his drink.*

MIKAEL Thank you.

DANIEL I raise by fifty.

JON Again?

STEFAN Then you're down to half of your money, do
you really want to do that?

DANIEL Yes.

JON I can't let you get away with this. I raise
by twenty.

STEFAN This is madness, I fold. Daniel, are you in?

DANIEL puts in twenty krona.

MIKAEL You better have some good cards now.

STEFAN Let's see the last card.

STEFAN deals the last card.

MIKAEL Don't bid any more now Daniel.

DANIEL Thirty.

STEFAN You must have some incredible cards.

SARA Please fold now Jon.

JON thinks about it.

JON No, he's bluffing. I can't let him get away with it.

JON puts in thirty krona.

SARA This is nerve-racking, I can't watch.

SARA goes over to the fire and puts another shovel of coal into it.

STEFAN So let's see what you've got. Daniel first.

DANIEL lays down his cards.

DANIEL Pair of fives. I was bluffing.

MIKAEL Shit Daniel. Shit. I really thought you had something.

DANIEL What do you have Jon?

JON Pair of threes.

SARA What?

JON I knew he was bluffing. I had to see what he had.

SARA Well done Daniel, I knew you would beat him.

SARA gives DANIEL a hug.

STEFAN I should have stayed in.

MIKAEL You just earned a month's worth of allowance
Daniel, you still shouldn't take such risks.

DANIEL I didn't, I just listened to the ghost.

MIKAEL I should take you to a psychiatrist after the
Christmas break.

JON I need a drink, does anyone else want one?

MIKAEL Yes please, I'll just have one more to
celebrate my son's success.

STEFAN shuffles and deals.

STEFAN Are you sure Mikael?

MIKAEL Oh, come on. I haven't even had half as much
as you tonight.

JON Are you trying catch up with the rest of us?

MIKAEL I wouldn't be able to do that in a decade.

STEFAN I'm just thinking of the last time.

JON I think Mikael is old enough to take
responsibility for himself. What do you think
Mikael?

JON pours himself and MIKAEL a drink.

Aren't you?

He hands MIKAEL the drink.

MIKAEL Cheers then.

MIKAEL drinks.

STEFAN Yeah, do whatever you want. Mikael you start
bidding.

MIKAEL I say twenty.

JON I'm in, I'm going to beat you all this time.

MIKAEL You aren't strong enough.

JON Pardon?

MIKAEL You aren't strong enough to beat us.

JON What's that supposed to mean?

SARA I'm in.

JON What the hell is that supposed to mean?

SARA Don't swear Jon.

MIKAEL Nothing.

STEFAN I fold.

JON I said I was going to beat you, not give you
a beating.

MIKAEL I didn't say you did.

DANIEL I fold.

SARA Listen to that one. You could think he had
played for years.

STEFAN deals.

MIKAEL I just meant that your hand wasn't strong
enough. I raise by one.

JON What do you know about my hand?

MIKAEL Nothing. I'm merely speculating.

JON I'll prove you wrong. I'm in.

STEFAN Was that your last coin dad?

JON I'll win it back.

SARA I fold.

STEFAN Dad's out of money, so I suppose that means
cards on the table.

MIKAEL Three of a kind.

JON Haha, straight.

MIKAEL Fuck.

DANIEL Dad!

SARA You shouldn't swear Mikael.

JON I told you I was going to beat you.

MIKAEL It's not over yet.

JON No, you'll know it's over when that pile in
front of you lies here.

SARA It's just a game you two. Don't get so competitive.

STEFAN Another round then? Dad you start bidding.

JON I'm on a roll, I say two.

STEFAN Sara?

SARA I fold, you never give me any good cards.

JON It's not about the cards, it's about the bidding.

SARA Does anyone want a drink?

STEFAN Yes please.

MIKAEL Yes please.

JON No, I'm gonna win this.

MIKAEL That's not like you, saying no to a drink.

JON I need to focus on the game.

STEFAN I'm in.

STEFAN deals another card.

JON So almost everyone's in, I'll say three.

STEFAN What are you looking at Daniel?

DANIEL He's saying something.

MIKAEL Who?

DANIEL The boy in the mirror.

JON Is that how you know whether to bid or not, you're looking in the mirror?

MIKAEL Don't be silly dad, there's no way he can see your cards from there.

JON What's he looking at then? That's qualified cheating if you ask me.

SARA I don't think anyone has.

MIKAEL You can't see dad's cards, can you Daniel?

DANIEL No.

JON What is he looking at then?

MIKAEL Stop looking into the mirror Daniel, let's
continue playing.

JON What are you looking at Daniel? I'm not
playing with someone who's trying to cheat.

DANIEL I'm not looking at your cards.

JON What are you looking at then?

DANIEL I'm listening to the boy.

MIKAEL What boy Daniel?

DANIEL The boy under the thousand stars.

JON He's gone mad.

SARA What's the boy telling you?

JON Don't you start now as well.

DANIEL He says it was an accident.

JON *(to SARA)* I can't believe you're encouraging
this.

SARA What was an accident Daniel?

DANIEL His death. And he tells me to bet on this
round. I'm in.

JON Good, then maybe we could focus on the game
and stop talking nonsense. Mikael.

MIKAEL What?

*SARA stands up, goes over to the mirror and
looks into it.*

JON Are you in or not?

MIKAEL I'm in. Daniel, can you tell me what this boy
looks like?

STEFAN lays out another card.

DANIEL He is short. Shorter than me. Blonde. Dressed
in black jeans and a red turtleneck.

STEFAN What do you say dad?

JON What are you looking at Sara, it's just a
mirror.

SARA I know it's just a mirror.

STEFAN It's your bid dad.

JON I'll go all in.

SARA It reminds me of the time you made it.

MIKAEL That's the boy I've been dreaming about.

STEFAN I fold.

MIKAEL I have started having these dreams lately.

DANIEL I'm in.

STEFAN Are you sure about this Daniel?

SARA He knows what he's doing.

MIKAEL puts in money.

MIKAEL About a small boy, lying on the floor.

STEFAN lays out the last card.

STEFAN Dad's down to zero again, so let's see what
you all have.

MIKAEL There's blood everywhere.

MIKAEL puts down his hand.

STEFAN Full house, well done Mikael. Dad?

JON Full house, in threes and... (as he lays them
out) ace.

MIKAEL And it keeps returning to me. The dream.

JON starts collecting the money.

STEFAN Wait dad, let's see what Daniel has first.

MIKAEL It returns to me so often that I have started
contemplating the fact that it might not be a
dream at all, but a memory.

DANIEL Four kings.

SARA The four kings.

JON That's cheating. You must be cheating.

SARA Diamonds for summer, clubs for autumn, spades
for winter and hearts for spring.

JON No one gets four of a kind the first time
they play.

SARA Diamonds for money, clubs for luck, hearts
for love and spades for death.

JON Shut up, will you?

DANIEL What does it mean?

SARA The four spirits want to tell you something.

JON Stop rambling, will you. Please.

STEFAN Dad.

JON What?

MIKAEL And now when Daniel sees this boy in the
mirror, it all seems to come together.

JON Am I not allowed to say that? That she's
rambling.

STEFAN You are just in a bad mood because you lost
the game.

JON No, but I think someone should represent some
normality in this family.

SARA And that would be you?

JON Don't you think Daniel is a bit old to
believe in ghosts?

MIKAEL Why don't you ask him how he died Daniel?

JON But instead of telling him they don't exist,
you feed his imagination with even more
rubbish.

MIKAEL The boy. Go over to the mirror and ask him
how he died.

JON Look Daniel. Maybe you had some extreme luck
tonight, or maybe Stefan was fiddling with
the cards, but there was no ghost helping
you, and four kings means nothing but a
really good hand.

*MIKAEL grabs DANIEL and pulls him over to the
mirror.*

MIKAEL Do you see him? Is he there?

DANIEL I don't know.

JON I know you love your father and your
grandmother Daniel, and so do I, but your
grandmother is growing senile and your father
is a bit of a lunatic.

MIKAEL Ask him Daniel, ask him how he died.

DANIEL You're hurting me.

MIKAEL I'm not hurting you.

STEFAN Let him go Mikael.

MIKAEL He killed him, didn't he? Dad killed him and
burnt him in the oven.

JON Especially when he's drinking, he's never
been able to handle alcohol very well.

MIKAEL Why don't you tell me what you see?

DANIEL I don't see anything.

MIKAEL You could see him five minutes ago, why can't
you see him now?

DANIEL Because there is nothing to see. There are no ghosts, only a lunatic would think it was a real ghost.

MIKAEL hits DANIEL, who stumbles into the mirror. Both the mirror and DANIEL falls to the ground. DANIEL runs out bleeding. STEFAN runs after him. MIKAEL sits down.

MIKAEL It was an accident.

Pause.

JON Who wants a drink?

MIKAEL Yes please.

SARA I don't think you two should have any more.

JON I think we're old enough to decide that for ourselves.

SARA Haven't you caused enough trouble as it is tonight?

JON It was an accident.

SARA The ceiling wasn't strong enough, was it?

MIKAEL What?

JON She's rambling again.

SARA But you were the one who built the house, how could you not know that the ceiling wouldn't be strong enough?

JON It's all the stories she comes up with, it's gone to her head. 'The four kings', what was all that about? One for luck, one for money, one for love...

SARA And the last one for death. That's a story my mum used to tell me when I was a child and since Daniel is so fascinated by ghosts I thought he might be interested. But I suppose that's not simple and square enough for you to understand. You've never been smart Jon, but I have accepted that and learnt to live with it. But there are situations in which you should accept that you are stupid and just shut up, and this is one of those.

STEFAN enters.

STEFAN He was too quick for me, I lost him.

MIKAEL I'll find him.

MIKAEL stands up.

SARA Don't go after him.

MIKAEL Why not?

SARA The way you've behaved tonight, I think he'll be better off alone.

MIKAEL It's pitch black up there.

SARA He knows where the torch is.

MIKAEL He was bleeding.

SARA Not too badly.

MIKAEL And there's a storm outside.

STEFAN I think he'll be all right.

MIKAEL Oh, you think so, do you?

SARA It doesn't help to get upset.

MIKAEL That's good to know. It doesn't help to get upset. That's a great advice, isn't it? But it's not your son that's lost.

SARA Yes, since a long time ago.

MIKAEL Is it all right if I smoke in here?

SARA No.

MIKAEL lights a cigarette.

STEFAN I thought you'd quit.

JON Should we play another round then?

STEFAN You don't have any money left.

JON I can add some.

STEFAN We don't play for more than two hundred dad.
You were the one who made up that rule.

JON Did I? Let's do something else then. It's hot
in here. Isn't it hot in here?

STEFAN It's quite nice actually.

JON stands up and walks towards the oven

JON I have to turn that oven down a bit. How much
did you set it to?

MIKAEL Not more than usual.

JON God, it's hot.

JON stumbles, but catches the balance.

STEFAN Dad, are you all right?

JON Yeah, of course I am. Stop looking at me, I'm
fine. It's just too hot in here, I got a bit
dizzy. I think I need a drink. Can someone
turn down the heat?

*JON sits down. STEFAN goes to turn down the
heat.*

SARA Have a glass of water.

JON I want vodka.

SARA You can't have any.

JON I'm thirsty.

SARA Have a glass of water.

JON I don't want water, I want vodka.

SARA Well you can't have any.

JON This is ridiculous, give me a glass of vodka.

JON stands up.

STEFAN Sit down dad, you're all red in the face.

JON There's nothing wrong with me.

STEFAN Then why do you need to hold on to the chair?
Sit down dad, you look like you're going to
fall again.

JON I just need a drink, it's too hot in here. A
fucking drink, is that too much to ask for?

STEFAN Have a glass of water.

*JON sits down. STEFAN pours a glass of water
for him.*

JON I don't want water.

*A sack of Christmas presents falls down the
chimney of the oven that isn't lit.*

STEFAN Fucking hell!

*DANIEL falls down on the sack, dressed as
Santa Claus.*

MIKAEL What's happening?

SARA I don't know.

JON Daniel just fell down the chimney.

MIKAEL Oh my God, are you all right Daniel?

DANIEL Daniel, who is Daniel, I don't know a Daniel.

STEFAN Daniel?

DANIEL Ho ho ho.

STEFAN I think he's got a concussion.

JON It's not Daniel, it's Santa Claus.

MIKAEL Daniel. Are you all right. Are you hurt?

DANIEL Who's Daniel? Is this Seaside Street?

MIKAEL What were you doing on the roof Daniel,
you're not allowed to be up there.

DANIEL I don't know a Daniel. Is this Seaside Street
near Surahammar?

JON Yes.

DANIEL Then you must be Jon, is that right?

JON Yes, that's me.

DANIEL You have made yourself guilty of lying, is
that correct?

JON No, I -

DANIEL I can see in the record that you as late as
today claimed that ghosts do not exist?

JON Yes.

DANIEL Do you regret this crime?

JON What?

DANIEL Will you ask righteous Father Christmas for
forgiveness?

JON No.

DANIEL You will therefore receive no presents this
year. Instead I will give your presents to
Stefan.

MIKAEL Daniel, what are you doing?

DANIEL I don't know a Daniel. Do we have Mikael
here?

MIKAEL Yes.

DANIEL Have you been a good boy this year?

MIKAEL Yes, well, I think so.

DANIEL Did you not promise your son you would stop smoking?

MIKAEL Oh, you mean this, this is just -

MIKAEL stubs out his cigarette.

DANIEL And you stink of alcohol.

MIKAEL Is this some kind of trial?

DANIEL You've got yourself blind drunk on Christmas Eve.

MIKAEL I'm not blind drunk. Look, I'm sorry I pushed you -

DANIEL I will therefore give all your presents to Stefan.

SARA Is he getting all the presents?

DANIEL Do we have Sara here?

MIKAEL Daniel, listen to me.

DANIEL I don't know a Daniel.

MIKAEL I'm not blind drunk, I've just had a glass or two. Daniel, listen to me. You know I never drink.

DANIEL Do we have Sara here?

MIKAEL goes and pulls DANIEL by his arm.

MIKAEL Daniel, listen to me. I'm trying to say I'm sorry. I didn't mean to push you into the mirror.

DANIEL I'm not afraid of you.

JON Leave your son alone Mikael.

MIKAEL let's go of DANIEL.

MIKAEL I just want to talk to him. I just want to tell him I'm sorry.

STEFAN Why don't you get some rest Mikael.

MIKAEL I don't need a rest, I need to talk to my son.

STEFAN You can talk to him when you're sober.

MIKAEL Daniel -

DANIEL I'm not Daniel. I will have to ask you either to sit down and be quiet, or to leave the room. You are disturbing the present giving.

MIKAEL goes to sit down.

Okay, where was I? Do we have... Do we have... Fuck it, who the fuck is next?

STEFAN You don't have to continue Daniel.

DANIEL Who's Daniel? I don't know a Daniel.

SARA tries to put a hand on DANIEL's shoulder, but he pulls back.

DANIEL Leave me alone. Do we have Sara here?

SARA Yes.

DANIEL Okay. Where did I put the sack?

SARA It's there.

DANIEL Where?

SARA Under the thousand stars.

DANIEL Under the thousand stars?

SARA Over there.

DANIEL Is that the thousand stars?

SARA Yes.

DANIEL I've heard you've been a good grandmother, you can have the rest of the presents.

STEFAN What about my presents?

DANIEL You've already got dad's and grandpa's presents, isn't that enough?

STEFAN Yeah, I suppose -

DANIEL Does anyone else want any fucking presents,
or have you had enough?

JON I think we've had enough.

DANIEL Fine then, see you next bloody fucking
Christmas.

DANIEL runs out and slams the door.

SARA I'll go after him.

STEFAN I'll come with you.

SARA and STEFAN exit.

MIKAEL I should make sure he's all right.

JON No, leave him be. He's stronger than you
think.

MIKAEL I hope so.

JON I can see a lot of myself in that boy. We
might be tricky to deal with sometimes, but
we're survivors.

MIKAEL I can't believe he wouldn't give us any
presents.

JON I'm sure you can get them back if you want
to.

MIKAEL No, let's keep it the way Daniel wanted it.

JON I must say I enjoyed it though. I think
Daniel was the best Santa I've ever seen.
Much more inventive than Stefan used to be.

MIKAEL He is unique, isn't he? He's a genius,
really, but sometimes I worry for him. He's
too smart for this world, he doesn't fit in.
He has so many questions I'm not able to
answer. I just feel stupid when he asks them
because I realise that he already knows more
about the world than I do, do you know what I
mean?

Pause.

Dad are you listening?

MIKAEL realises JON has fallen asleep.

Dad!

JON wakes up. He is slurring when he talks.

JON I must have fallen asleep.

MIKAEL Great.

JON What?

MIKAEL Nothing.

JON You said something.

MIKAEL I just said great.

JON What's great?

MIKAEL I don't know.

JON I'm tired.

MIKAEL You're drunk.

JON What time is it?

MIKAEL You can't even speak clearly. You make us all
act like you are dying, but you're just
drunk. You make everything revolve around you
and that's exactly how you want it.

JON I'm tired.

MIKAEL Yeah, you're tired and you're drunk and you
haven't listened to a word of what I've said.
I don't even know why I'm speaking to you. I
don't even know why we are here. Dad?

Pause.

Oh, you're sleeping again.

*MIKAEL goes to the table, empties what's left
of the vodka bottle in a glass and drinks it.*

We'll get you to bed soon, I'm just gonna get some help from Stefan to get you up the stairs. I'll be back in a minute, don't try to stand up on your own. Dad? Dad!

JON What?

MIKAEL I'll be back in a minute, don't try to stand up.

JON falls back into sleep. MIKAEL exits. A few moments later DANIEL enters.

DANIEL So this is the thousand stars. Why, didn't you just say so to start with?

He goes to the cracked mirror, which now lies under the chandelier, and raises it. He talks to his reflection.

I'm under it now, I don't see you.

Yes you do.

I do?

You are looking straight at me.

So this is you?

Yes.

But it's me.

Yes.

And you are dead.

You are missing something Daniel. Straight in front of you.

You are in front of me.

Between us Daniel.

The mirror.

Look at the sign carved into the frame.

'To Daniel on his third birthday'. Is this my mirror?

Read the date.

'Second of April, nineteen sixty eight.'

SCENE 4

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. The scene is covered with snow. The electricity box lies on the ground. It is morning of the next day. STEFAN comes out with a snow shovel and starts to shovel a path from the door. DANIEL follows him with a smaller shovel and tries to help.

DANIEL Does the universe have an end?

STEFAN Everything has an end.

DANIEL But our teacher says it's infinite.

STEFAN What's infinite?

DANIEL The universe.

STEFAN What we want is a path so you can walk from
the house to the garage.

DANIEL Does infinity have an end?

STEFAN Everything has an end.

DANIEL Does an end have an end?

STEFAN An end is an end.

DANIEL But how does it look? The end? Because it's
nothing. It can't be black because even black
is something.

STEFAN I think that if you looked at nothing, you
would see nothing.

DANIEL And what would happen if you passed it?

STEFAN You are doing a good job Daniel. Try to aim
for the garage door.

MIKAEL comes out with his and DANIEL's bags.

DANIEL If you passed the end of the universe? What
would there be outside?

STEFAN I don't know Daniel.

DANIEL sees his father, puts the spade into the snow and leaves the stage without saying a word. MIKAEL puts down the bags and lights a cigarette. STEFAN continues to shovel.

STEFAN So, you've woken up now.

MIKAEL I can't sleep in this house.

STEFAN Too many ghosts haunting you?

MIKAEL Too silent.

STEFAN Not like Stockholm out here, is it?

MIKAEL No.

STEFAN It's easy to forget where you come from.

MIKAEL I never liked the silence.

STEFAN So you're leaving right away?

MIKAEL Don't want to get caught in the rush hour.

STEFAN I promised Daniel to take you to McDonald's
in Surahammar on your way home.

MIKAEL That's generous of you.

STEFAN Have you talked with him today?

MIKAEL Do you always shovel here?

STEFAN You don't expect mum and dad doing it
themselves, do you?

MIKAEL Doesn't the ploughman come here?

STEFAN It's private property.

MIKAEL Can't you pay him?

STEFAN With what money?

MIKAEL You shouldn't have to do that.

STEFAN Someone's got to do it.

MIKAEL They should be able to get home help service.

STEFAN If you want to suggest to dad that they need home help services, then why don't you go ahead and do it?

MIKAEL I still don't think you should have to do it.

STEFAN They've got to be able to get out.

MIKAEL Do you come here every day?

STEFAN If it's snowing every day.

MIKAEL I couldn't stand that. Don't you have a life of your own?

STEFAN What have you got to do with it, you haven't been here for five years.

MIKAEL I'm not welcome here.

STEFAN Mum misses you.

MIKAEL Dad hates me.

STEFAN Dad's dad.

MIKAEL I can't stand him.

STEFAN Mum's losing her memory.

MIKAEL Yes you said so in the letter. I think she seems all right.

STEFAN You don't notice it when you talk to her.

MIKAEL I like all these stories she comes up with, she never told us any stories when we were kids.

STEFAN Once she went shopping and came home with five kilos of minced meat and nothing else. Dad's not well either.

MIKAEL You mean the dizziness?

STEFAN He insists on doing everything himself, but he keeps losing his balance and falling.

MIKAEL He likes to make a scene out of it.

STEFAN It's just luck he hasn't broken anything yet.
I'm here every weekend making sure everything
is fixed so there won't be anything left for
him to do, but he always finds something.

MIKAEL You shouldn't worry too much.

STEFAN He keeps complaining about the storms, but
really I think he enjoys them. They always
give him a reason to climb ladders and hammer
things and be adventurous.

MIKAEL I would be more worried if he stopped.

STEFAN And you haven't even called to say hello.

MIKAEL I came here after you wrote to me.

STEFAN Just to get drunk and accuse dad of murdering
a child. What's gotten into you?

MIKAEL I don't know.

STEFAN Then you left him in the glassworks, when he
was too weak to stand up himself.

MIKAEL Did I?

STEFAN He said you'd told him to stay, that you'd be
back in a minute? He must've been sitting
there an hour before I came down.

MIKAEL Yeah?

STEFAN And throwing Daniel into a mirror, it's only
luck he didn't hurt himself more than he did.

MIKAEL I know.

STEFAN What's wrong with you?

MIKAEL I don't know.

STEFAN You don't know?

*STEFAN has finished shovelling. He exits into
the house. MIKAEL lies down in the snow and
makes a snow angel. JON comes out from the
house with a toolbox. SARA comes after him.*

SARA No you shouldn't do it yourself.

JON I want my morning coffee.

SARA Stefan told you to wait for him to do it.

JON I can't wait all day, can I?

Sees MIKAEL.

Is that Mikael? Is he still drunk?

SARA looks at MIKAEL.

SARA He is making a snow angel.

JON He's gone mad. Now where's that bloody box?

SARA Please make sure you don't get electrocuted.

JON goes to the electricity box and uncovers it from snow. STEFAN comes out from the house with a banana in his hand.

STEFAN Dad, what are you doing?

SARA I told him to wait for you.

JON I always do this myself.

STEFAN And you've nearly killed yourself. What's so difficult with letting me do it?

JON No one would be happier than me if you did it.

STEFAN Then why don't you let me?

JON Because you never do it.

STEFAN I was just about to, I only went in to get a banana.

JON There is always something, isn't there?

STEFAN I haven't had any breakfast yet.

JON Yeah, I'll do it myself, don't you worry about it.

JON takes a hammer and a nail from the toolbox, lifts up the electricity box and starts climbing the ladder.

STEFAN All right, I won't eat it. If the electricity can't wait half a minute while I'm eating my banana, I guess it's better that I go hungry.

JON I want my morning coffee.

STEFAN puts down his banana and takes the box, hammer and nail from JON.

STEFAN Give that to me.

He climbs up the ladder and starts nailing the box to the wall. SARA goes over to MIKAEL and looks down at him.

SARA So you are leaving?

MIKAEL Yes.

DANIEL enters the stage. He is making snowballs and trying to see how far he can throw them. He does not take any notice of the others.

SARA Did you know the king of winter had three sons?

MIKAEL No.

MIKAEL lights another cigarette.

STEFAN Hand me another nail, will you?

JON hands STEFAN a nail.

SARA The two firstborn were twins. One was the prince of autumn and the other one the prince of summer.

STEFAN How's that small thing going to help, give me a proper one.

SARA Later they had another son who became the prince of spring.

JON gives him another nail.

STEFAN That's better.

SARA The sons kept complaining that the castle was too cold, but if the king had put the heating on, the castle would have melted. The prince of spring and the prince of autumn always froze, but the prince of summer had worse problems. Where ever he went things melted around him. He always moved around, because if he stood still on the same spot for too long, the floor would melt under his feet.

STEFAN Another nail please.

JON You have to nail one to the right as well.

STEFAN I'm getting there.

JON You have to place them evenly, otherwise it won't hold.

STEFAN I'm not finished yet.

SARA As the prince grew older he also grew warmer and one day he was so warm that the ground wouldn't stop melting beneath him. He sank deeper and deeper and soon his entire body was enclosed by the water that had melted around him. The king of winter tried to help him, but as soon as he came to the pool where the prince had sunk, the water on the surface froze to ice and prevented the prince from swimming up. So it was through a layer of ice that the king saw his son drowned.

STEFAN Nail.

MIKAEL Is that the end?

SARA What is an end?

JON You need the rope as well.

STEFAN The rope won't make a difference.

JON It couldn't hurt, could it?

STEFAN All right, give me the rope then?

JON I can't reach it.

STEFAN Just go and get it.

JON I'm not leaving the ladder with you up there.

STEFAN Mum, could you come and give us a hand please.

SARA goes to the ladder.

SARA What do you want?

JON Could you hand us the rope?

SARA The rope won't make a difference.

STEFAN No, but it couldn't hurt either.

DANIEL is still throwing snow balls. MIKAEL makes one himself and throws at DANIEL.

DANIEL What are you doing?

MIKAEL Want to see who can throw the furthest?

DANIEL You won't have a chance.

MIKAEL You want to give me one?

DANIEL Come on then, let's see what you can do.

STEFAN Nail please.

MIKAEL All right, watch this one.

MIKAEL throws.

DANIEL I know about it.

MIKAEL Your turn.

DANIEL You're not my dad.

MIKAEL I've not been the best dad, have I?

DANIEL You're not my dad at all.

DANIEL throws.

STEFAN Nail.

MIKAEL Good throw Daniel.

DANIEL I read the inscription on the mirror. It was
a present for my third birthday. I was born
in nineteen sixty five.

MIKAEL throws.

MIKAEL Were you?

STEFAN Nail.

DANIEL I died when I was ten years old, that's why I
don't look any older, even though I'm really
forty two.

DANIEL throws.

MIKAEL Really?

DANIEL The boy in the mirror. It's me dressed up in
stupid sixties clothes.

MIKAEL Wow, Daniel. That's really something.

STEFAN Nail.

MIKAEL throws.

DANIEL But I wasn't ready to die, so I came back to
haunt the house. But grandpa, who's my real
father, didn't want me around, so he let you
take care of me instead.

MIKAEL So I'm really your brother?

DANIEL Read the inscription yourself if you don't
believe me. 'To Daniel on his third birthday,
second of April, nineteen sixty eight.'

STEFAN Nail.

DANIEL throws.

MIKAEL Is that what is says?

DANIEL That's why you tried to kill me yesterday,
when I started looking at the mirror. You
were afraid I would find out. You can try
again if you want to, I'm a ghost, I'm
already dead.

MIKAEL I won't try to kill you again Daniel.

DANIEL Won't you?

MIKAEL No.

DANIEL It's your turn.

MIKAEL No I give up, we have to get going.

MIKAEL goes to pick up his bags. STEFAN flicks the power switch and the house lights up from the inside. He climbs down the ladder.

STEFAN What do you think?

JON It doesn't look very stable.

STEFAN It's the best I can do, if you don't like it you'll have to call for an electrician.

JON Maybe just a few more nails.

MIKAEL I think there are enough as it is.

JON You don't know what you're talking about.

STEFAN Are you off?

MIKAEL Yes.

SARA Don't you want to stay for lunch?

MIKAEL No, we don't want to get caught in rush-hour traffic when we hit Stockholm.

JON takes the hammer and a few nails and climbs up the ladder.

STEFAN Dad, what are you doing?

JON I can't stand seeing a job being left half done.

STEFAN Well I'll have to leave now as well. I've promised to take Daniel to McDonald's on the way. I can't stand here watching you all day just because you want to climb the ladder.

JON You do whatever you want. I built this house,
don't you think I'm able to hammer in a few
nails without your help?

STEFAN And what if you fall?

MIKAEL I think dad's old enough to take
responsibility for himself.

JON Finally a wise word from someone.

STEFAN Well, I might just leave you here.

JON See you on Saturday Stefan.

STEFAN See you dad. Love you mum.

STEFAN gives SARA a hug.

JON Can someone hand me a better nail?

No one does.

MIKAEL Bye mum, it was lovely seeing you.

DANIEL Bye mum.

MIKAEL Happy new year dad.

JON Yes, yes.

DANIEL Bye dad.

*STEFAN, DANIEL and MIKAEL exit. We hear the
sound of two cars starting and leaving.*

JON Hand me a better nail will you, this one's
crooked.

SARA If you built the whole house yourself, I'm
sure you'll be able to handle a crooked nail
without my help. I want a cup of coffee.

*SARA exits into the house. JON tries to
hammer in the crooked nail, loses balance and
falls to the ground. He remains lying still.*

The End.