

# "Brava! Brava!"

by Andrew Stancek

I woke to a crash and the sound of coins rolling along the linoleum.

"Mom?"

She did not look up. Her shaking hand was gathering up the single crown coins, the fifty heller pieces. Triumphantly she rescued a ten crown note from the piggy bank shards.

"Mom?"

"Time for you to get up for school," she said, ignoring the cut on her hand, the turned over drawers, the nighties and underwear on the dirty floor.

"You...have an appointment?" I tried.

"Hairdresser, first thing. I could not pay her last time but today I must. Ten o'clock audition. Your father...did not send anything this month."

I went to help her up, passing the poster from her appearance as Norma in Vienna, her photograph with Karajan, the plaque for thirty years of distinguished service to Slovak Opera. Her eyes were wild. "I don't have enough, Kamil, and Maestro likes the women to look stunning."

I caressed her gray hair, the face with the drooping eyelid.

"Try not to excite yourself, Mom. I will look after the hairdresser." The doctors warned me about agitated states, the stroke coming after the dementia. My father divorced her forty years ago; she had been retired for twenty-five. "No money" was a frequent fit; that was about the only thing not gone.

She looked around her, startled, "Did you have an accident?"

"Yes, Mom, I dropped some things but I will clean it up. Let me help you back to bed."

