

KUOLLEET LEHDET / FALLEN LEAVES
(Working title)

Version 2

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SCENE 1 / Hypermarket INT.

EVENING

Due to the late hour, there are only a few hundred customers in the five thousand square metre shopping hall pushing shopping carts larger than themselves along the aisles, picking up everything they want or need, each one according their preferences and wealth. Mostly foodstuffs, as we happen to be in the food section, which is not to say that there aren't other sections in the market. It is, after all, an enterprise serving not only the metropolitan area but also the smaller communities nearby. So it is open around the clock, except on Christmas Day, when the doors close before midnight and do not open until at six o'clock the following morning.

On the edge of one shelf row, a blonde woman in her forties (we assume so, because the person's name is Ansa and she is the main character of our story) marks with a yellow sticker the items approaching their sell-by date, altogether removing those that expire at 24:00, replacing them with new ones from her other cart, into the back of the shelf, following instructions to avoid unnecessary waste. Having finished with the current product group, she straightens up, looks at her watch, takes both carts and deftly pushes them between his colleagues doing the same work and customers, without paying attention to a security guard following her with his gaze, who, unlike Ansa, is of considerable size and wears his blue uniform with honour. The gaze following Ansa is inscrutable.

1B/EXT.

In the backyard's roofed waste area Ansa empties the outdated products into a bin reserved for them, glances indifferently at a young man rummaging in the next bin paying her no attention. Partly as a result of public pressure, partly as a result of wise judgment, the company's management has some years earlier decided not to intervene in the small-scale pilfering of unsaleable but edible foodstuffs in the waste area. Only spoiled products are put in lockable containers. This measure effectively minimises the risk of a potential food poisoning epidemic.

SCENE 2 / Locker room INT.

NIGHT

In the dressing room Ansa opens her locker and takes off her work coat. The woman at the next locker, of Ansa's age, ties the belt of her poplin coat, picks up her bag, and glances at Ansa.

WOMAN: Until tomorrow...

Ansa does not reply, but nods and flashes a small smile that momentarily illuminates everything within the distance of a metre and a half.

SCENE 3 / Hypermarket EXT.

NIGHT

Ansa comes past the cashiers out of the main door and walks through the parking lot towards a bus stop on the side of the motorway. She suddenly looks microscopically small as the hypermarket building the size of a paper mill looms in the background, inspired not only by Roman and Greek architecture, but also by the Byzantine Empire and Egyptian pyramids, all seen through the Bauhaus spectacles.

When the building was inaugurated a few years earlier, many exclamations of admiration were heard among the crowd of partly international invited guests, especially because the whole building has not a single straight angle. Speeches were made and toasts were raised to the young architect, who, however, was unable to cope with his sudden success and quickly fell into decline and became a human wreck despised by his profession.

SCENE 4 / Bus INT.

NIGHT

Ansa sits on the third to last row of seats in a nearly empty bus, next to the window, and looks out sideways into the darkness dotted by the lights of oncoming cars.

SCENE 5 / Street, backyard EXT.

NIGHT

Ansa walks along a deserted street in the old working-class part of central Helsinki, stops at a gatehouse, opens its metal gate and goes through a door between a garbage can and a carpet rack at the far end of the backyard.

SCENE 6 / Flat INT.

NIGHT

The flat with a room, a kitchenette, an alcove and a toilet measures approximately 18.5 square metres and is probably a former caretaker's apartment from the golden age when this useful profession still functioned in our city.

Ansa hangs up her coat on a peg, places her small bag, larger than a handbag but smaller than a briefcase, on the kitchen sink counter. She takes out a pre-package with a yellow sticker on it, according to the printed text the package contains a salad with barley seeds and cloudberry jam. She pops it into the microwave and turns on the battered-looking appliance.

She walks five steps to the flat's only window, glances past the carpet rack at the opposite staircase wall and absentmindedly presses on the transistor radio on the windowsill.

The war is still going on. The clink of the microwave oven sounds under the news broadcast. Ansa goes into the kitchen, takes the plate from the oven and realises that she has forgotten to remove the plastic wrap on the dish. A long day. She scrapes the melted mass into a bin, returns to the radio and switches the channel. "Takeda's Lullaby" in Japanese.

Ansa walks out of the picture. We hear the sounds of teeth being brushed, vague clatter and then the sound of a light switch. Now the only light comes from a yard lamp swaying in the wind. Then it too goes out. The music continues.

SCENE 7 / Metal workshop INT.

MORNING

All we can see through scratched glass in a metal double door is dust boiling in the air and a vague figure moving in its midst. After a while, the dust settles and the doors open. The fellow coming into view is dressed in a suit greatly resembling a diving suit, with an air hose running from the top of the suit to a compressor in the corner of the room. In his hands the person holds another hose, with only a little sand now dripping from its muzzle on a metal cylinder on the floor.

The man (let him be called Holappa) drops the hose on the floor, pulls off his helmet, hangs it on the wall and rolls out the shiny metal cylinder which, to the eye of an expert beholder, looks deceptively like the metal wheel of a loading pallet used on the RoRo ships. Holappa picks it up and adds it to the stack of finished pieces and walks through the open double doors out into the yard.

The metal workshop is located in the middle of a curved single-storey red brick building, as if in the left of the inner point of the arc, to be precise. The small industrial building itself has somehow been forgotten alone in the middle of a construction site bustling all around it. Right next to it opens up the East Pasila's unfinished skyscraper construction site. The city eats itself.

When Holappa sits down on a bench and starts to roll up a smoke, we have time to give our character a closer look: we do not need a mirror to prove that the face is slanted, elongated. Sympathetic in a rough way, if one is not too demanding when about classical aesthetics.

A forklift turns the corner, drives into the hall and lowers a pallet of rusty metal wheels on the floor. The driver turns off the forklift's engine and comes to sit on the other end of the bench. The man, about fifteen years older than the fortysomething Holappa, is a dark-skinned stump of a man called Huotari. He watches Ismo's smoking with a critical eye.

HUOTARI: That will be the death of you.

HOLAPPA: It won't. Black lung will get me first.

HUOTARI: I see. Well, it's your decision.

He digs a snuff-box out of his overalls pocket.

SCENE 8 / Barrack somewhere EXT.INT.

EVENING

At the time of writing this, it is unclear where the barrack in question is located, but most likely at the edge of the East Pasila skyscraper construction site, not far from the metal workshop in the previous scene.

The lightweight barrack, already seen in its best years, has two storeys, with an external wooden staircase leading to the upper floor.

The floor mentioned contains a table, four chairs, a sink, a fridge, a toilet, a Tom Jones poster on the wall and four steel frame beds. Holappa lies on his back wearing jeans and a moss-green T-shirt, staring at the ceiling with a tattered Superman magazine (4/68) open on his chest. He is a man of letters, but not in reading mood. The travel radio on the fridge blares out war news in its mechanical voice.

Two of the barrack's other residents, speaking among themselves some foreign language, Ukrainian, Russian, Korean or Swahili, are dressed in their best (which, in these circumstances, means the item of clothing that is not being worn on the site) are going out through the door onto the stairs, their voices fading into the distance until disappearing altogether. The resulting silence, pleasant but regrettably momentary, is broken by Huotari's appearance from somewhere to stand beside Holappa's bed, dressed in a poison-green Terylene blazer, a yellow collared shirt, and a pair of straight trousers.

HUOTARI: Let's go.

HOLAPPA: Where?

HUOTARI: To karaoke. It's Friday.

HOLAPPA: What's that got to do with me? Tough guys don't sing or do the twist.

HUOTARI: You're not a tough guy.

HOLAPPA: I could be.

HUOTARI: Somewhere abroad perhaps. In Denmark...

HOLAPPA: I enjoy it here. I like loneliness.

HUOTARI: You'll change your mind when you reach my age.

HOLAPPA: I won't live to be that old. You're the only one.

HUOTARI: If we leave now we can catch the last taxi.

Holappa has put on an originally dark confirmation suit, gives his spiked shoes a swipe with a rag, water combs his hair with his fingers, takes a bottle of clear liquid from his cupboard, takes a long swig out of it, hands the bottle to Huotari, and glances at the broken mirror taped to the door of his cupboard as if expecting a miracle. In vain.

SCENE 9 / Karaoke bar INT.

EVENING

On the stage of a karaoke bar, a small man stands askew singing loudly but out of tune the song "Born To Be Wild". We are fortunate to arrive on the scene only during the final notes, mostly hearing sparse applause and a single cheer. But the man seems satisfied, having overcome his stage fright after nine years of deliberation and, bowing lightly, leaves for his friends' table, where he is profusely congratulated.

The bar itself is not much to describe, as it is similar to all of its kind: worn and barren, yet full of decorations. The only thing missing is sawdust on the floor. The atmosphere, however, is perfect for the nature of the occasion.

The hall is half full. Huotari zigzags between people with six schnapps glasses in his hands and sits down beside Holappa at a corner table. There are so many empty glasses at the table that we seem to be arriving late.

A new performer has taken to the stage. The song is unknown, also to the performer. But Huotari nods approvingly and glances at Holappa, who looks at his glass.

HUOTARI: You don't dare to sing.

HOLAPPA: I do, but I can't, I have no voice.

HUOTARI: You talk a lot, considering that... but I have a good voice, a bass-baritone.

He browses through the list of songs found on every table.

HUOTARI: What would I perform?

HOLAPPA: Don't perform anything, or "Paranoid" if you do.

HUOTARI: Preferably something Finnish National Romantic... listen and admire.

Holappa is content to admire his rapidly emptying glass (he is an alcoholic, but we'll come back to that in more detail later) while Huotari, on the other hand, climbs up on the stage with the air of "a man of the world", says something to the karaoke technician and then clears his throat loudly to get the undivided attention of the hall.

Huotari then sings "Autumn Under A Rowan Tree" in a most unimpassioned, beautiful and heartfelt way as only Janne Hyytiäinen can do (the author has no precise knowledge of his singing skills) and receives a reasonable round of applause for his performance.

When he returns to his table, he looks questioningly at Holappa.

HOLAPPA: You're a soprano, after all...

HUOTARI: A tenor at least...

HOLAPPA: That went well. You'll make a record yet.

HUOTARI: Someone should discover me first...

WOMAN: You sang so beautifully.

The latter voice belongs to a woman sitting at the next table, whom we immediately recognise as Ansa's colleague from the hypermarket. Let her name be Liisa. Ansa sits next to her, drinking a dark red drink from a round glass with a natural straw (sic). Huotari immediately changes tables, sitting down at the women's table without asking permission.

HUOTARI: It was easy, I was just watching you.

LIISA: For such an elderly man you have a well-preserved voice.

This silences even Huotari for a moment, but after a while they continue their conversation, which however fades into the distance with the rest of the commotion as Holappa glances at Ansa from behind his glass, realising right away that she is out of reach for someone like him. Ansa too looks quickly at Holappa and thinks that there is something touching in his melancholy camel-like figure. Accidentally, their eyes even meet, but both look away.

Holappa is so shocked by this that he drains his glass, gets up and goes outside for a cigarette. Through the window their eyes almost meet for a second time, but not quite. Holappa goes to the curb to lean against a taxi stand and takes a long swig from his hip flask. A taxi drives past.

Someone begins a new song on the stage.

SCENE 10 / Hypermarket INT.

NIGHT

Ansa is finishing her work on the left-hand side of the hundred-metre yoghurt shelf. When her cart is full of products with yellow labels but already expired beyond that, she sets off to take them to the waste point. This time the store security guard, who has been watching her from behind the pyramid of pea soup cans, goes after her. He watches through the barred storage window as Ansa sorts the products into different bins.

Later, in the changing room. Ansa has already changed her clothes and is about to go home with Liisa and a third woman when the security guard marches in behind a man of about 54 in a grey suit who, judging by his later demeanour, is some kind of Personnel Manager or Supervisor. The man comes over to stand before Ansa.

MAN: I'm afraid I must ask you to open your bag, Miss Grönholm.

ANSA: Why?

MAN: Some doubts have been raised... you have been under surveillance.

Ansa glances at the store security guard, who seems to know his worth. She dumps the contents of her bag on the table and leans against the wall. The personnel manager (or something) takes a packet of four yoghurt jars with a yellow sticker on them from among a brush, a packet of tissues, a telephone and a key ring. The man shakes the package like a winning lottery ticket.

MAN: You should be grateful we're not taking this to the police.

LIISA: That's past its date, you can't sell it.

MAN: It doesn't matter. It belongs in the dustbin.

ANSA: Then I suppose I do, too.

MAN: You're fired. Without notice.

ANSA: We don't have a notice period. We're on a zero hours contract.

MAN: Wisecracking will only make things worse for you.

LIISA: Then I guess you'll want this too.

She digs a small rye bread out of his bag.

LIISA: It expired last week, but it was still on the shelf. Someone could have died.

MAN: It's due to your own negligence.

The third woman intervenes.

WOMAN: Not hers, mine. I've been in the bread section. I missed it. I'm sorry.

MAN: Since you confessed, you're forgiven. You can stay.

WOMAN: I don't think I want to. You get the same wages in a soup line.

All three women leave, walking between the men. Ansa is the last to go, because she has to collect her things. She looks at the store security guard in astonishment.

ANSA: You'll go far.

The guard smiles, satisfied with the appraisal.

SCENE 11 / Metal workshop EXT./INT.

MORNING

The morning sun casts its long shadows across the yard of the metal workshop as Holappa at 07.04, dodging various piles of metal, walks towards the door of his workplace where his supervisor, a tall male figure with an uptight air about him and three pens in his overalls breast pocket, leans against the doorframe. The trousers are straight, following the logic that in a company with more than three employees, the manager does not kneel.

But he is nevertheless a nice man, basically, like small entrepreneurs in general. His name is Tompuri, though it will never be mentioned.

TOMPURI: You're late. Four minutes past. Third time this week.

HOLAPPA: Today's Monday.

TOMPURI: Very well then, but you could pick up the pace a bit. The client breathes down our neck.

HOLAPPA: I certainly could, if the compressor didn't break every other hour. We have to get a new one.

TOMPURI: And a company car?

HOLAPPA: It can wait. No driver's license. If you don't mind, I'd like to go to the work site now.

Holappa has put on the diving suit, but without a helmet. He sees Tompuri disappear around the corner. He looks at his hands. They are shaking. He wipes the dry corner of his mouth with the back of his hand, goes to the electrical cabinet in the corner of the sandblasting pit, takes a half-bottle of unlabelled, clear drink, takes a long swig, then another, glances at the door with the guilty look of a secret drunkard in his eyes, and pulls on his helmet. After a moment, all we can see through the glass is a sandstorm.

SCENE 12 / Ansa's flat INT.

MORNING

Ansa leans her back against the counter, drinking black coffee from a turquoise cup, when the overaged mechanical doorbell burrs. Outside stands a lady a generation older than Ansa, a scarf draped over her narrow shoulders.

LADY: Forgive me for bothering you about the rent at this hour.

ANSA: That's all right, I was already up, I'll get it.

Ansa leaves the picture and returns immediately with wallet/purse in hand, and gives the woman some banknotes.

ROUVA: I don't want to rush you, but you know my son... he is expensive. He'll be the death of me.

ANSA: They always are... thank you for letting me live here.

The lady smiles a little and leaves. Ansa looks appraisingly at the coins she has left.

The coffee bar is rather minimalistic: Twenty-two square metres, tables, chairs, a counter and a few cacti on the windowsill. Ansa enters, a bell rings beside the door. A bearded man of uncertain age puts down a magazine and looks at Ansa.

ANSA: You have a computer here.

MAN: Yes.

ANSA: How much does it cost?

MAN: Ten euros per half hour.

ANSA: That's rather expensive.

The man looks hurt.

MAN: They are expensive and wear out in use. Ours are the best quality.

ANSA: I didn't want to offend... is eight euros enough, I can bring the rest later.

MAN: You didn't mean to, but you offended me anyway. That's what's wrong with you people. The discount is included in the price. So is the coffee.

He takes from the counter a laptop-type computer, which indeed looks quite new, taps a couple of keys and pushes the machine to the counter in front of Ansa. She empties her purse on the counter.

ANSA: Thank you.

MAN: One minute gone already. Money is time.

Ansa sits at the window table with her cup of coffee in front of her. At this rate, she'll get caffeine poisoning before she gets to the poorhouse. Computer screen: Helsinki Employment Office. Tourism and the restaurant industry.

Ansa watches the dirty window of "CALIFORNIA PUB" for a moment, but then with the eternal humility of an unemployed jobseeker she goes through the gatehouse to the back door.

The hair of a man looking like a weasel or a ferret is greasier than the dirty kitchen where he is counting through a wad of banknotes. When he has finished counting and slipped the notes into his back pocket, he looks at Ansa waiting in the doorway.

MAN: What do you want?

ANSA: You had an opening for a kitchenhand...

MAN: Still do. The previous one died. Can you do the dishes?

ANSA: I can.

MAN: You'll have to do, even if you look like a weakling.

Ansa digs a couple of papers out of her bag and hands them to the man, who glances at the top one.

MAN: What are these?

ANSA: Hygiene pass and income-tax card... I thought...

MAN: You won't get paid for thinking.

He pushes the papers back to Ansa.

MAN: Keep these for now. I'll pay in cash every Monday. Take it or leave it.

Ansa looks at the dishwasher, buried under a mountain of dishes, mostly glasses, and nods.

MAN: Can you start right away, the work has started to pile up...

ANSA: Where can I change my clothes?

MAN: There's a toilet down the bar, shared.

Ansa hangs her coat on the nail of a calendar hanging on the wall and digs her work jacket out of her bag.

About three hours later the dishes are washed, as well as the dishwasher. Ansa sweeps the floor. A dubious-looking man appears at the back door. The owner, called Raunio, looks at Ansa sharply.

RAUNIO: There's work to be done in the dining room.

Ansa enters through the swinging door into the dining room where a group of assumed males sit, most of them alone at their own tables, with faces that would without doubt provide Balzac with a fitting addition to his "The Human Comedy". The only woman in the room stands behind the counter looking as if she had been born there, and also planning to die in the very same place.

Ansa starts to collect the empty beer glasses (beer seems to be a throw-in product of the place) into a high tower leaning against her left shoulder. The jukebox begins to play Olavi Virta's version of "Mambo Italiano" by itself. The rhythm of the song and the almost complete immobility of the customers create a strange contrast.

When Ansa goes back to the kitchen with a stack of beer glasses as tall as herself, she catches a glimpse of Raunio giving something to a new, but not prettier than the previous, man in the doorway and receiving a banknote in return. Raunio shoves the man on his way and looks inquiringly at Ansa, who is already unloading glasses onto the counter with her back turned to him.

SCENE 15 / Tram stop EXT.

NIGHT

City centre. Almost deserted streets. Ansa walks towards a tram stop. Three minors seem to be hovering around a figure sitting under a canopy. Ansa hears the phrases "passed out" and "he doesn't have anything".

As Ansa gets closer the youths leave, either in disappointment or out of respect for the older female. The figure's head droops. Ansa moves closer and touches the man, for a man he unmistakably is, on the shoulder.

ANSA: Is everything all right?

No answer. The man is in danger of falling off the bench, so Ansa pushes him back against the wall of the booth and sees Holappa's face. She naturally does not know his name, but remembers him from the karaoke bar and the fact that something inside her stirred at the time. He has passed out, he is not unconscious. The tram comes. With her back half turned Ansa gets on, shows his ticket and turns to look through the glass at the lone figure. When the tram starts to move, the window frames move like bars on his face.

A 46-second "urban symphony" of the deserted Railway Station Square and the rapid awakening of the city, metro platforms, pavements, buses dumping their passengers. After all, we are in a northern metropolis, a city whose beauty is rivalled only by the legendary Odessa.

SCENE 17 / California Pub EXT.

DAY

Ansa is on her way to work along the Third Line when she sees a uniformed policeman stretch a crime scene tape across the door of "California Pub". A crowd of curious onlookers stand on the other side of the street. Ansa stops, too. Another uniformed officer accompanied by a plainclothes officer escorts Raunio towards an unmarked police car parked on the curious side of the street.

Indomitable despite his handcuffs, Raunio spots Ansa and smiles wryly, as if on stage in a theatre.

RAUNIO: Take a week off! Or two! With full pay...

The last sentence is cut off as he is pushed into the back seat of the car. The car leaves. People speak as is the custom of their species.

SOMEONE: They say they were dealing drugs there. Hashish, too...

Ansa starts to walk slowly away and almost bumps into Holappa at the corner. The latter looks first at the Pub and then at Ansa. He is originally from the countryside and in the city everything happens very fast.

HOLAPPA: I guess it's closed.

ANSA: It is. And I think it will stay closed.

HOLAPPA: I'd have gone there for a small beer.

A silence ensues, as if all the things in the world have already been said, but neither of them moves.

HOLAPPA: Would you like a coffee? Somewhere close by... if you have the time...

ANSA: I have the time, but no money. Today was supposed to be payday. I worked there.

HOLAPPA: I'd be happy to buy you one.

A moment of silence. Ansa nods, even smiles. A little, to be sure, but even that nourishes Holappa's withered soul.

Coincidentally, the nearest café is the first "Internet Café" we have already met. Holappa stirs his coffee. He doesn't seem to be a great communicator because he says anything. We see an amused twinkle in Ansa's eye. Finally Holappa looks out the window.

HOLAPPA: It hasn't rained for a while.

ANSA: No, not for a while.

HOLAPPA: If you haven't got your wages, you must be hungry?

ANSA: A little.

HOLAPPA: Have a pastry.

Holappa's idea of the place's confectionery quality is overstated, but Ansa gets up and goes to the counter. Holappa takes the opportunity to spike his coffee from his hip flask. Only to escape his hopeless shyness, he thinks, but fails to notice that there's a mirror behind the counter.

By the time only crumbs are left of Ansa's cinnamon roll/Boston cake, the coffees have been drunk too. She looks Holappa straight in the eye.

ANSA: Thank you. Now what?

The question is so direct that Holappa seizes on the first and most traditional option.

HOLAPPA: Would you like to go to the cinema?

ANSA: That would be great.

HOLAPPA: What would you like to see?

ANSA: You choose.

SCENE 19 / Cinema INT.

EVENING

On the silver screen, two rural policemen fight in a graveyard against a zombie army. The more zombies they manage to shoot, the more crawl out of their graves.

Ansa watches the film, Holappa side-eyes her and hopes the choice of film was a successful one.

The cinema located on the edge of a small square. Our main characters come out and stop in front of the illuminated ads. Glances are exchanged.

ANSA: There's no way the cops could have handled it. There were simply too many zombies.

HOLAPPA: Did you like the film?

ANSA: I did. I've never laughed so much.

HOLAPPA: So we'll meet again?

ANSA: Would you like to?

Holappa nods seriously and looks at the ground.

ANSA: I'll give you my number.

She digs a small calendar out of her bag, writes down the number, tears off half a page and hands it to Holappa, who tucks it into his coat pocket.

HOLAPPA: I don't even know your name. Can I walk you home?

ANSA: I will tell you next time. I live nearby. Good night.

She reaches out to give Holappa a light kiss on the cheek and makes her way diagonally across the street. Holappa looks after her and, deep in thought, digs out his cigarette. He fails to notice that the slip of paper falls to the asphalt as he does so, from where a small gust of wind carries it away.

Holappa smokes and feels something he associates with the concept of happiness.

SCENE 21 / Barrack INT.

MORNING

The residents of the barrack leave in disarray, each going their own way. After making sure he is alone, Holappa takes out his phone and digs for the piece of paper in his coat pocket. With growing desperation, he searches the pockets one by one, and then the trouser pockets. In a daze, he even looks under his pillow and throws the blanket on the floor like Gaston Modot in Bunuel's "The Golden Age" (although it had a giraffe instead of a blanket). Nothing.

The radio broadcasts war.

SCENE 22 / Ansa's flat INT.

MORNING

The war news continues from exactly the same point from the travel radio on Ansa's windowsill. For her part, she drinks coffee with the phone in one hand, looking out through the window. She checks her messages. Not a single one. She smiles to himself to dampen a possible disappointment.

SCENE 23 / City EXT.

MORNING

Wide shot (fix) over the city's rooftops. In the background, silenced chimneys. The sound of the radio fades out under Sergey Prokofiev's Symphony No. 1.

The music continues. Holappa stands in front of the cinema, slightly off to the side, in the shade. The last screening is over, a handful of spectators come out and go on their way. Lights in the lobby go out. Holappa sucks in the last smoke from his cigarette and drops it at his feet, where there are already fifteen butts.

Just as he has disappeared around the corner, Ansa appears on the other side of the street and looks across it as the cinema's last lights go out. She stands still for a moment and then turns towards home.

An ambulance is parked on the corner of the metal workshop. A paramedic wraps a bandage around Holappa's bloody forearm. Blood seeps through the bandage. Holappa is even paler than usual.

Huotari and Tompuri watch the operation from the side.

HUOTARI: Holappa has said many times that the hose should be replaced.

TOMPURI: They've always been replaced every four years, it should have lasted.

HUOTARI: Yes, it should have. But it didn't. How much did you save?

TOMPURI: That means at least a week's sick leave, where do I come up with a bloke for this?
The job goes to shit.

From the ambulance comes another paramedic with a breathalyser in his hand.

MAN: Let's do this too.

HOLAPPA: Do we have to?

MAN: It's always done when an ambulance comes to the scene of an accident.

He pushes the tube between Holappa's lips and he blows sluggishly. The man looks at the reading.

MAN: I see. Let's go and do a blood test right away.

Tompuri curses and comes over to stand in front of Holappa.

TOMPURI: Damned drunk. Don't bother coming back. And empty your bunk by tomorrow night.

Holappa looks at the agitated man like some exotic insect.

Holappa empties his cupboard somewhat frantically and stuffs his things into a cloth bag. They are not legion. He puts his only book, "Arctic Hysteria, Vol. II", on the table in front of Huotari.

HOLAPPA: You inherit that. Stories for children. Can I leave the bag in your locker until I find a place for myself?

HUOTARI: You can leave it.

Holappa sits down on the other side of the table, takes a bottle of clear liquor from the floor, opens it, downs a long swig and pushes the bottle in front of Huotari. Huotari drinks too.

HUOTARI: What will you do?

HOLAPPA: You can still get a job as a handyman on a construction site without schooling, if you agree to a lower pay.

HUOTARI. What about the union?

HOLAPPA: Nothing, because I belong to the Metalworkers Union. Come to the bar? I may otherwise turn mean and pick a fight with the jukebox.

HUOTARI: Let's go. You're buying.

Any corner table in any bar, the shadiest you can find. Only a few empty glasses. Both men are in deep in thought. The TV is on the edge of the ceiling, but on mute. Somewhere a new war has begun.

HOLAPPA: Listen, Huotari...

HUOTARI: Speak.

HOLAPPA: Remember the night you sang karaoke?

HUOTARI: Fine?

HOLAPPA: Fine.

HUOTARI: But I'm still waiting for Atte Blom and the tour manager to call me from the record company.

HOLAPPA: Maybe he wasn't around...

HUOTARI: The word should spread about a performance like that.

HOLAPPA: There were the two... women.

HUOTARI: Danes, gals, skirts, Judies... I wasn't good enough. Too old, I was told.

HOLAPPA: I met the smaller one later. Almost got married.

HUOTARI: Why didn't you? A pretty girl, though a quiet one...

HOLAPPA: I lost her phone number.

HUOTARI: Why don't you ask for the directory assistance?

HOLAPPA: I don't know her name.

Huotari looks at Holappa, but does not say what he thinks.

HUOTARI: That is certainly a slight problem.

HOLAPPA: Did the other one say where they worked, or anything.

HUOTARI: In some market, I guess. Or maybe. I don't really remember what he said after I wasn't good enough.

HOLAPPA: Shall we have another one?

HUOTARI: The sixth ones. I'll have the same.

The hall is one hundred metres long and about fifty wide. There are large double doors at one end, through which trucks bring in plastic waste and dump it into funnels the size of a detached house, from which the journey to the building materials of a new and braver world begins. Magnets remove first everything metallic from the plastic and divert it to another process. The waste then passes through a series of various sensors, which control robotic arms picking up debris from the conveyor belts and transfer it to other belts according to some divine or artificially intelligent, but in any case mysterious, logic.

Only at the back of the hall, at the end of the belts, does a human being, the initiator of everything, intervene. Four or five workers per belt with goggles, masks and hearing protectors pick from this stream of the River of Hades, nevertheless is 'on its way to the land of the morning' (Katri Vala), everything that does not belong there. Sometimes even a car battery or a tennis racket has defying all odds made it this far, but is now mercilessly picked out.

In this work, vital for the process, we also see Ansa.

SCENE 29 / Waste management plant EXT.

EVENING

The evening is already getting dark and the shift changes. Ansa comes out with the others and heads for the gate, now in her civilian clothes. Only now we see the true scale of the facility. It is immense. Even the trucks arriving in an unbroken convoy look like children's toys next to the plant itself.

SCENE 30 / Train INT.

EVENING

Ansa sits on the window seat in a commuter train. The evening darkens in a geometric series.

SCENE 31 / Bar EXT.

NIGHT

Holappa steps out of the bar, stops to light a cigarette. His hands shake a little, so he can't be very drunk. Having got his cigarette lit, he steps out of the left side of the picture.

SCENE 32 / Construction site EXT.

DAY

The day is as grey as Holappa's mind as he dumps the contents of his concrete mill into a wheelbarrow. He turns off the mill and pushes the wheelbarrow into the mesh-walled construction lift standing on the outside wall of an unfinished apartment building. Halfway up, he digs a flat little bottle of clear liquid out of his overalls pocket and takes a quick swig. When the elevator stops at the top floor level, the bottle is already back in his pocket.

Holappa has made it a habit to visit the cinema a few times a week, although he doesn't believe that chance favours the dedicated seeker. There he is again tonight, like Lot's wife, but unlike her he is already leaving his post when he hears at the last minute a voice behind him.

ANSA: You never called.

Holappa turns. Ansa looks at him with a hint of a smile in her eyes.

HOLAPPA: I lost your number the minute I got it. I've been looking all over for you.

ANSA: I thought that you found someone you liked more.

HOLAPPA: Would change my mind like the wind? You want to insult... Look at my shoes. This is the third pair already.

Ansa looks at Holappa's shoes. They are worn indeed, but probably the same as the last time.

ANSA: You're lying. Will you come to my place for dinner?

HOLAPPA: I will. When?

ANSA: Tomorrow night at eight o'clock, say. I don't get off work until six.

HOLAPPA: Give me the address. I'll be there five minutes before.

ANSA: Why would I, you will lose it anyway.

Despite her mocking words, she writes her address on a piece of paper and watches as Holappa folds it into his wallet, stuffs the wallet into his breast pocket and zips it up carefully like an elementary school student during the first week of school.

ANSA: Don't get mugged. See you tomorrow.

A moment's silence ensues, neither knowing how to part. So they shake hands awkwardly and go their separate ways. Prokofiev.

SCENE 34 / City EXT.

NIGHT

The city at night, the distant tram, the music continues.

At exactly five minutes to eight the next evening, Holappa walks diagonally across the courtyard of Ansa's building, wearing a jacket he has snagged up from somewhere, his hair water-combed, a vague bunch of flowers in his hand, and rings the doorbell.

Close-up of the same flowers in a vase on a small, neatly set dining table. Holappa seems to have taken off his coat and put it on the hallway coat rack behind a small section of the wall. Ansa sits down on the other side of the table (the third is attached to the wall and the fourth to the drainboard). She pours a golden yellow drink into small glasses. They clink foolishly, and then Holappa empties the glass in one gulp.

HOLAPPA: What was this?

ANSA: Sherry.

HOLAPPA: Such a small glass...

ANSA: It's called an aperitif.

Ansa pours water from a pitcher for both of them and goes to the stove.

ANSA: Have some salad. This will soon be ready.

Holappa takes some salad on his plate, but gets up and goes to the "hall". He pulls a flat bottle from the breast pocket of his jacket, takes a long swig and twists the cap silently closed. When he turns to go back, he sees Ansa leaning against the doorframe a few feet away, looking at him with a look between sadness and disappointment in her eyes.

ANSA: My father died of drink. So did my brother. My mother died of grief. I like you a lot, but I don't care for an alcoholic.

HOLAPPA: And I don't take orders.

A long silence. Then Holappa takes his coat off the peg, pulls it on and closes the door behind him. Ansa stands still for a moment until she starts to clear the table, as if waking up. Holappa's plate, which she bought the same day, she drops into the rubbish bin.

SCENE 36 / Park EXT.

DAY

White text on black: **A U T U M N**

The wind beats dead leaves around along the deserted pathways in the park.

SCENE 37 / Bar INT.

NIGHT

A corner table in an empty bar. The doorman shakes the sleeping Holappa, who wakes up and flails in the air.

DOORMAN: We closed half an hour ago. Get going so you can be back in the morning.

Holappa goes out. The door is locked. He remains standing in the dark as the bar lights go out in a moment. The glow of a cigarette momentarily illuminates his bloodshot eyes.

Ansa lies in her bed with her clothes on, looking up at the ceiling. The lights are turned off in the flat, but the blue glow of a courtyard lamp shines through the window. The sound of the waste plastic conveyor belt starts and rises steadily.

SCENE 39 / Waste incineration and recycling plant INT.

DAY

Five parallel conveyor belts transport waste plastic. The noise is almost infernal. Mechanically and expressionlessly Ansa picks up objects that do not belong on the belt. It looks as if she is part of the machine, and would like to be.

Ansa comes out of the staff door and, while waiting for a suitable gap between the trucks, she happens to notice a dirty and melancholy little yellow dog attached to the gutter with an orange-coloured plastic cord. One of Ansa's colleagues crouches next to it, urging the mutt to drink from a dirty plastic container, but the dog doesn't seem to want to.

Ansa moves closer.

ANSA: Where did that come from?

MAN: She' s been hanging around the area for a couple of weeks looking for food before we caught her.

ANSA: What will happen to her now?

MAN: The boss is calling the pound. I guess she'll be put down. She can't stay here, she may get run over by the machines.

Ansa looks at the dog and the dog looks at Ansa. She is small, thin and tired.

ANSA: Could I take her?

MAN: Why not. I would take her myself, but I've already got six and the kids and the wife on top.

The dog sits on the train seat beside Ansa, dangling her tongue, alternately looking at Ansa and the passing scenery.

SCENE 42 / Courtyard of Ansa's house EXT.

EVENING

When wet, the dog looks even thinner. She almost resembles a skeleton. Ansa soaps her vigorously up in the corner of the courtyard next to the storm drain. The dog doesn't seem enamoured, but what can you do when you have a woman with a stern attitude and a dressing gown belt around the dog's neck, tied to a carpet stand.

SCENE 43 / Ansa's flat INT.

NIGHT

On the floor next to the bed, an old quilt has been turned into a bed with a water bowl next to it. Ansa sleeps. The dog listens to her steady breathing until she thinks her moment has come. Silently, like the last snow leopard in Nepal, she creeps up to Ansa's feet, curls up on a ball, sighs contentedly and closes her eyes.

SCENE 44 / Bar EXT.

DAY

Holappa stops at the door of the bar and looks through the large window into the barren hall, where his companions, one might even say friends, are enjoying their daily bread. Holappa looks miserable: dirty hair, thin, grey face, bags under his eyes. He lights a cigarette, but needs three matches because his hands shake too much. Someone in the hall notices him and beckons him inside.

Holappa is about to grab the door handle, but the movement stops, everything slows down (48 f/sec). He looks at his reflection in the dirty glass of the door. After a seemingly endless time (15 sec), he lowers his hand, turns and walks away.

Through the gatehouse one can enter the courtyard, where the double door at the back is topped by a slightly worn, ascetic sign that reads "Pension".

The room on the second floor has a bed, a table, a chair, a birch plywood chest and Holappa. The latter is lying fully clothed on the bed, sweating even though the room is cold. On the bedside table is an opened paperback book (Tapio: "The Glass Washing Board"). Less than a third of it has been read.

Holappa lowers his hand and picks up a half-empty bottle of something else than water from the floor. He flings his feet on the floor and digs out another, unopened, bottle from his bag and goes into the corridor with both. He empties both bottles into the sink of the common toilet on the floor, drops the empty shells into the trash, goes back to his room, lies down again and turns his face to the wall.

The travel radio in the next room plays a muffled version of the classic Radio Theatre audio drama "The Ladies' Paradise" (Zola). It grates on Holappa's ears, but he is too drained to knock on the wall.

Fade to black.

SCENE 46 / Small park by the sea EXT.

DAY

The easterly winds raise fairly high waves, which nevertheless shatter on the shore rocks. The trees in the park are already almost bare, depending on the species. Autumn will soon be over.

SCENE 47 / Pension INT.

AFTERNOON

Holappa has come out of the shower and shaved. He pulls on a clean blue-striped collared shirt, sits on the edge of the bed, picks up the battered phone and hesitates for a long moment before pressing a series of numbers.

SCENE 48 / Ansa's flat INT.

AFTERNOON

Ansa is giving food (some kind of pellets in a bowl) to the dog when the phone rings.

ANSA: You answer it.

The dog, lying on her back on the floor, doesn't respond, so Ansa puts the food bowl next to it and answers the phone herself. (The call is cross-cut between the pension and Ansa's flat).

ANSA: Ansa.

HOLAPPA: It's me...

ANSA: Who's me?

HOLAPPA: Me, the drunk you left to die alone.

ANSA: Oh, the wino?

HOLAPPA: The same man.

ANSA: How are you?

HOLAPPA: I'm as sober as a desert rat. I get a frequent flyer discount at the AA club.

ANSA: What changed your mind?

HOLAPPA: You. Can I come?

ANSA: Come right away.

Ansa hangs up the phone. Her face lights up. With joy, perhaps. She looks at the dog.

ANSA: Get to work. We have to clean up.

SCENE 49 / Pension EXT.

AFTERNOON

Looking at Holappa dashing through the pension courtyard, he could almost be described as presentable if the face didn't make it impossible to use that term in relation to him.

He runs out of the gateway into the street and disappears from sight, the braking of the tram, a scream, silence.

SCENE 50 / Ansa's flat INT./EXT.

EVENING/NIGHT

Ansa looks through the window at the yard and then at the wall clock. Two hours have passed since the phone call. Along the route, wherever Holappa is coming from, are several establishments serving alcohol.

When dusk has already fallen, Ansa sits on the stairs outside her door with the dog by her side. It looks worried too, although not really knowing what's going on.

Finally, Ansa gets up heavily, walks in with the dog at her feet and closes the door.

SCENE 51 / Waste incineration plant INT.

DAY

Ansa works even more mechanically on the belt. Molok does not slow down, day or night.

SCENE 52 / Street EXT.

AFTERNOON

Ansa walks down the street with her dog and almost runs into Huotari, who comes out of the corner market with a paper bag (sic) in his hand. The dog growls in a low voice, but stops when Ansa starts to talk to the stranger.

ANSA: Oh, hello.

HUOTARI: Hello, you still remember.

ANSA: You sang so beautifully...

HUOTARI: Honest talk is so seldom heard, that makes me happy. My friend was looking for you.

ANSA: I haven't seen him.

HUOTARI: I would think not. He got hit by a tram.

ANSA: Was it bad... did he die...

HUOTARI: Not really, but they're still keeping him in coma.

ANSA: Which hospital?

HUOTARI: The Surgical.

Ansa is already going, then she turns around.

ANSA: What's his name?

HUOTARI: Holappa. I don't know his first name. Don't go yet, coma patients can wait for five minutes or more. Because your friend had some misunderstanding about my age. I'd like to correct that.

ANSA: I'll give you Liisa's number.

The pooch is tied by her leash to the hospital entrance railing. She waits faithfully like a dog. Ansa stands in the stark hospital lobby, waiting for the nurse behind the counter to have time to pay attention to her.

ANSA: You have a patient here called Holappa.

NURSE: First name?

ANSA: I don't know that.

NURSE: Are you a relative?

ANSA: I'm his sister.

The nurse looks at her with a slightly wondering expression.

ANSA: In faith.

NURSE: All right. That corridor, room thirteen on the left. He is still in a coma. Try talking to him or reading to him. It helps sometimes.

SCENE 54 / Hospital corridor and room INT.

EVENING

Ansa takes an obscure tabloid from the magazine rack in the hallway and enters the room. Holappa, with a compress around his forehead, is attached to a respirator and various monitors. Ansa sits cautiously down on a chair next to the bed. She looks at the man on the other side of sleep for a long moment. Then she remembers the nurse's instructions and opens the paper.

ANSA: A doctor ate his girlfriend. The man was caught when the body he had cut up was discovered in the freezer in his flat...

Ansa throws the paper on the table.

ANSA: Finland has sensationally made it to the World Cup finals. The opposing team will be Brazil, but the betting agencies have Finland as the clear winner...

She thinks she can see a little flicker in Holappa's eyelids.

Ansa looks at a man she really doesn't know at all, but still feels a deep affection for this character, so rough to begin with.

The respirator hisses, the night grows dark outside.

SCENE 55 / Foundry, train, hospital

DAY, EVENING

A short six-shot montage of Ansa at work, on the train, and in hospital by Holappa's bed.

SCENE 56 / Ansa's flat INT:

EVENING

Ansa comes to her flat. The dog is ecstatic. Her love for her new, and first, mistress is boundless.

ANSA: Come. Let's go and wake the master.

SCENE 57 / Hospital EXT./INT.

EVENING

Ansa waits until the hospital lobby is temporarily deserted because of an urgent patient brought in by an ambulance, and smuggles the dog into Holappa's room. She sits in the chair, the dog on the floor. Both look intently at Holappa. Ansa gets up and leans over to give the man a light kiss on the forehead. Since the following might be considered medically impossible by some sceptics, let us call it a miracle. For Holappa opens his eyes and, after a moment of confusion, focuses his gaze on Ansa.

HOLAPPA: Am I dead?

ANSA: On the contrary.

HOLAPPA: I've been waiting for you. I had a dream where we were walking together towards the civil registry office.

ANSA: You're still confused.

She presses a button that summons the staff.

SCENE 58 / Restaurant terrace EXT.

AFTERNOON

Ansa sits on the small terrace of a small restaurant in the company of her dog and Liisa. Ansa glances at her watch every thirty seconds.

LIISA: What time will he get out? Will you take a taxi?

ANSA: He can already walk on his own.

LIISA: Maybe even think.

ANSA: That remains to be seen, but it doesn't take two. Did the Karaoke King call you?

LIISA: Yes. I'll see him tomorrow. He told me he's had rejuvenation surgery and he's eating Ginseng root.

Ansa looks at her watch again.

ANSA: It is time already.

LIISA: Get going. You're making me nervous.

SCENE 59 / Hospital EXT.

AFTERNOON

Holappa comes out through the hospital's front door with a bandage on his forehead, leaning on crutches like a wounded sailor. Ansa waits with her dog on a leash. Their eyes meet. Ansa turns and starts to walk. Holappa catches up with her, clumsily with his crutches. They head towards the concrete jungle imitating a city.

We can still hear their voices, but distantly, as if no longer meant for our ears.

HOLAPPA: Does the dog have a name?

ANSA: Chaplin.

THE END / FIN