

# Moving On

by Andrew Stancek

When Mother plonks herself down at the rickety outdoor restaurant table to wait for Father, I am warmed by the two hundred-crown notes I liberated from her wallet. Two years after divorcing him, she is handing me over. She tells me she loves me but. My teacher has reported on my absenteeism, the police on the newspaper kiosk robbery accusation; in my room she finds her long-lost ruby ring, the rubbers, my teacher's glasses.

In the family meeting she cries. "You are fourteen, Mirko. What has become of you? Reform school or your father's?"

She orders a beer, switches to mineral water. I order a beer, watch her look, laugh. She glances over, cannot stand the sight. I start whistling "All You Need Is Love". "You could...try a little," she exhales.

In the bathroom I throw the toilet paper in the garbage, take the lid off the tank. When I return, Father is with her, face stinking with cheer. "So, how have my two favorite people in the world been?" he asks.

Her eyelid twitches. "You have to do it, Lado."

"Aaah, don't you worry. He's a chip off the old block. I'll show him what he needs."

Rising, she knocks her chair over. "Maybe he'd be better off in reform school after all." But they agreed: they will try the father.

She pats my arm. "Call me if..."

I nod. "You will bail us out, won't you, sweet Mami?"

