

# PILVAX

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**Tamás Jónás** has published numerous books including collections of short stories and poetry. He maintains a blog, [www.pepita.hu](http://www.pepita.hu)

## **A Letter to my Father**

by Tamás Jónás

(translated from Hungarian by Bernadett Haász & Aaron Hunter)

Finally you are sober, old and mindful.  
Sit and remember, but not how  
you lived through these things I have lived.  
Let me drive your thoughts now;  
let me  
tell you who the victim was  
and who, in this story,  
the protagonist will be.

Jaki street, Szombathely, the walls are mouldy.  
There are not enough beds and it's freezing. Winter is cruel,  
scratching me with its long nails. This quilt  
will not protect me, even if Arpi lets me  
cover myself with it. Then we swap,  
and he gets warm while I shiver with cold.

Four children have to sleep in the  
same room, all listening to your coitus, how you whisper  
nasty words to mum.  
If you're sober, this show lasts  
only fifteen minutes, but when you're drunk,  
a few hours. Mum can hardly stand it either.

The next day  
you hit my head with an old key—  
drops of my blood fall to the floor.  
You kicked Arpi in the stomach, spat on Mum.  
You stand in the doorway, and Zsuzsi has fainted

while pale Marim slowly wets herself.  
Even if we could, where would we run?  
There is no escape.

Slowly all the joy leaves you, I know  
the feeling well.  
Such a simple crime to take revenge today,  
But I can't be mad at you anymore,  
weak, toothless, old man.  
I can curse you, but who will give me recompense?  
Tell me, Father, who?

*More of Tamás Jonás's writing can be found in the SUMMER 2006 issue of PILVAX.  
Locally available in Budapest.*