

The Pig, or Václav Havel's Hunt for the Pig

ACT I

(An AMERICAN JOURNALIST is interviewing VÁCLAV HAVEL. The CAMERMAN has her on camera and will follow her throughout the show. Also involved is a GRIP, a man in a cheap suit who seems out of place. Occasionally THE GRIP writes things in a small notebook, in a vaguely ominous way.)

In the New York production, a news crawl occasionally appeared below the live feed projections, as part of the live broadcast from the fictional network, NNC. At the point, the crawl included the following headlines:

Congressional committee prepares final report on the Iran-Contra affair.

Ronald Reagan nominates Douglass Ginsburg to be the next Supreme Court Justice; Democrats promise a battle.

Gorbachev accused of fostering a cult of personality at a party meeting to discuss Perestroika.

Stock prices begin to recover after record plunge.

Soviets say antimissile system would give U. S. a decisive military advantage.

JOURNALIST

Good evening, ladies and gentleman. You are about to witness a strange and wonderful ritual of the Czech people, something that they call a zabishka.

(listens at earpiece)

Sorry, that is a...za-bee-yach-ka. A traditional Czech Pig Festival, in which a whole village comes together sometime in late autumn or early winter to celebrate the slaughter of a pig.

(listens at earpiece)

Sorry, I am told that it is a close group of friends and family who come together for a full day to celebrate the slaughter—

(listens at earpiece)

Yes, I see. It is not exactly the slaughter of the pig that is being celebrated. But a pig is involved. And it is slaughtered. And then prepared. And I'm pretty sure they eat it. There is a lot of beer drinking involved, that much I can say for sure. Listen now, as they sing a traditional zabijačka song:

Chorus 1

CHOIR

Why not make a celebration?
Why not make a celebration?
God has given us our health, us our health
God had given us our health, us our health
God had given us our health, us our health

They are happy who know how to
make each single minute count, minute count

(JOURNALIST listens at earpiece)

JOURNALIST

I am being told that what we heard was actually an excerpt from *The Bartered Bride*, a 19th century Czech operetta. Still, it certainly is celebratory, isn't it?

(listens at earpiece)

I am being told that I am not here to report on the zabíjačka at all. I am here to interview Mr. Václav Havel, a famous pig farmer.

(listens at earpiece)

I mean to say that Mr. Václav Havel is a famous Czech playwright and one of the main figures behind Charter 77, the human rights movement in Czechoslovakia. Welcome, Mr. Havel.

HAVEL

Good afternoon.

JOURNALIST

Mr. Havel, I have heard that you were engaged in trying to help a People's Self Help Library known as The Tomb.

(listens at earpiece)

For those watching, I want to mention that though the Self Help Libraries are emblematic of the government's Communist ideals, this particular Library has a reputation for being a harbor for dissidents. And you were organizing a zabíjačka for it, is this true?

HEADLINE: Self Help Library a front for dissidents.

HAVEL

Yes, this is true. I was, for a certain period, involved in the effort to acquire a pig. I would like to emphasize that my participation was limited in time, and limited to certain particular aspects of that effort.

Chorus 2

Pigs inspire celebration, soon we'll have our zabíjačka
Pigs inspire celebration, soon we'll have our zabíjačka
Wives are in the kitchens cooking, husbands in the backrooms drinking

JOURNALIST

When exactly did this participation begin, Mr. Havel?

HAVEL

I started to involve myself at the point when I realized that some pig farmers who had previously pledged to donate a pig to the People's Self Help Library known as the Tomb, had, at the last moment, reneged on that promise in regard to the aforementioned pig. They were probably afraid that they might be linked to an event that might in some way discredit them—in other words, a zabíjačka at Havel's summer estate at Hrádeček.

Chorus 3

CHOIR

Oh no (Oh no) no no (no no) Oh no
soon our joy will end, soon our joy will end
with our cares descending
soon our joy will have its ending
irate, irritated, irate, irritated, irate, irritated, irritated
Oh no...

JOURNALIST

What's this opera about?

HAVEL

It's about a Bartered Bride.

JOURNALIST

Oh...

CHOIR

The next pig will come, who knows when
The next pig will come, who knows when
Shall we be so happy then, happy then?
Shall we be so happy then, happy then?
Shall we be so happy then, happy then?

HAVEL

I felt like it would be a point of honor or personal prestige to demonstrate that I could find a way to overcome this very Czech tendency to shift ground whenever it seems expedient. But I did not then realize what was in store for me...

Chorus 4

Irate, irritated, irate, irritated, irate, irritated, irritated
Oh no...

JOURNALIST

But Mr. Havel, I am interested in knowing the exact moment when these incidents began.

HAVEL

Last Wednesday, when I visited the pub at Vlčice.