

Kathy and the Cooperative Store

At the end of Lower Bereck
where the stony creek flows
Under the shade of a linden
Stands Michael Horvat's family home.

If a wagon rumbles from the fields,
or if the herd comes back home,
the redtiled roof of the little house
shines and sparkles from far away

Throughout the village everyone knows
their house is small, but the work they do is great
and this year was also a good one
for there's grain in the sack, and money on the table.

And how much money! Good aunty Borch
thinks about her slavish past, and cries.
And the beautiful rays of the moon
bathe her tears of joy in silver.

Sorrow has really gone! The little collective farm
and their cheerful new life wipe away her pain.
She gets to work, for the evening is growing on,
and she hasn't yet made dinner.

Work burns through her clever hands,
and little Katy nimbly assists
and would improve the good soup
when they discover they're out of salt.

They search the kitchen high and low
perhaps there's a little pinch somewhere
and a dusting's not much, but there's not even
that much to show for their attempts.

So her mother tells Katy:
"You'll have to bring some, and the store is sure far
just be quick, for the dinner will be cold."
And Katy jumps so fast, it was as if she had never been there.

A minute later she's in her kerchief
and is opening the little door with a great pull
Katy's rushing, and the dust after her,
but the long, long road, takes its time.

She crosses creeks, she crosses ditches,
her face turns red, she rushes so,
and she's already tired when finally she sees
her goal: The Agricultural Workers' Cooperative.

A hill of ants probably does not
scramble as much as the sea of people
who, swarming in and out of the store,
push little Katy to one side.

They push her aside, and she's already frowning:
"Have I come all this way in vain?"
And her tears arise as from a wellspring
but the stream of people pays no heed.

And as she sorrows within herself
and wonders what to say at home
she feels a light hand on her head,
and turns: Why it's Itsa!

She's the store manager
Katy knows that about her, but no more,
but she's so friendly and warm,
that Katy's complaint simply spills from her.

Itsa doesn't waste a minute,
She breaks through the loud crowd
and when she brings the package of salt
she whispers something sweet in Katy's ear.

The clever girl understands at once
and her big blue eyes shine happily
And Itsa would like to say much more
But there's no trace of Katy now.

She hurries home on the long road
so her father won't have to wait so much,
she chatters to herself in her good mood
when suddenly a dog barks at her

"Bodri, pup, it's a shame to be angry.
Ask as you might, I won't tell you!"
and she runs on laughing so loudly
she doesn't hear what Bodri sasses.

And by the ditch a cat asks
her to share the happy secret with it,
but her kittenish mind cannot grasp it
because Katy's heart is hard.

And a big sow and a bigger cow
get angry at little Katy
"You can ask and ask, but I won't tell,
even if a hundred cats and cows beg me."

And if little Katy had looked up,
she'd have seen that the moon was nodding too,
But to her heart's joy she sees nothing else
than the lamplight from their dear little house.

And in front of the house
who is that waiting for Katy?
Her mother, and she'll only get
as many kisses again when she's a woman, perhaps!

"Where were you, tell me, what took you so long?"
says her mother as she takes her in.
They sit at the table, all three of them
and hear what happened to Katy.

And Katy tells everything cleverly,
and clearly, just as it happened,
and just as she was about to tell her secret
a twinkle of joy snuck into her eyes.

When her father hit the table
with his bony fist in fury,
so hard that glasses and plates clack,
and in his anger argues:

“What sort of store is it, where
a child has to suffer so much for salt!
And isn't the Agricultural Workers Collective
set up for the rights of workers?”

The store is at the end of the village
though there's an empty lot right here!”
and he shows them the empty lot
as it swims in the light of the moon.

His face and his heart are blackened
from his very righteous anger.
And little Katy dumbly watches her father
as his emotions burn within him.

But her surprise and the silence,
don't take little Katy's heart captive.
Her face begins to shine, and almost burn,
as she bravely steps in front of her father.

And not without reason, and not to be a brat,
for she's always done what she was told
good news spurs her on and makes her brave:
The great secret Itsa gave her.

And her mouth falls open to utter musical words,
her eyes proudly and bravely shine
as she shouts out that:
“The Cooperative will build a new store!

And just so we won't have to go far
the new store will be built on the empty lot.
We won't have to wait a minute in line,
and the store will never be crowded!”

At first her father stares and stares,
then laughs aloud with a great shout.
“What are you saying! Where will the Cooperative
get all the money it will take to do that?”

As she had learned from Itsa,
little Katy answers nicely.
“Every old and young worker
should join the Collective”

Father and mother now look at one another,
the small child has spoken out plain.
Their eyes are enchanted with clear light,
the true hope of step by step change.

Every forint will buy a brick or two:
That's how collective will becomes a store.
Thousands of hearts work modestly
and lay strong walls in cement,

So that they can show in burning light,
as a million sparks in the sky:
so that they can show how, through collective strength
the people will be richer and happier!

Father in his sudden joy
gave Katy a kiss upon the cheek,
and mother promised that she too
would help in the work.

She took on some twenty houses,
and swore she'd gather new members.
She'll explain to one and all
that only cooperation will build a new life.

And as is proper to set a good example
tomorrow she'll also buy a share.
And that's how through our happy work
the Agricultural Workers Cooperative will build a store!