

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
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## ***Closer to the Moon* (2013)**

NAE CARANFIL

### **Contents** (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

#### OVERVIEW

**Auteur** Nae Caranfil (b. 1960) is a highly acclaimed director, one of the first of the Romanian New Wave that emerged right after the fall of Ceausescu's totalitarian regime in the 1990s. The son of a reputed film critic, Caranfil graduated from the Theatre and Film Institute in Bucharest in 1984. During his youth, he took music lessons and drew comic sketches, talents that he has used for writing the score and the script of most of his films. His tragic-comedies about the Western dream have gained him not only national but also international recognition: the Critics Award for *Sundays on Leave* (*Èpericolososporgersi*, 1993) at Montpellier Mediterranean Festival, Golden Bayard Award for Best Screenplay for *Dolce far niente* (1998) at Namur International Festival of French-Speaking Film, and several accolades for *Philanthropy* (*Filantropica*, 2002). His other productions are *Asphalt Tango* (*Asfalt Tango*, 1996); *he Rest is Silence* (*Restul e tăcere*, 2007), for which he received a Gopo Award (a highly prestigious national award in Romania, similar to the Academy Awards in the US); *Closer to the Moon* (2014); and *6.9 on the Richter Scale* (*6.9 pe Scara Richter*, 2016).

**Film** *Closer to the Moon*, released in 2014, is a dark comedy that reenacts the true story of a robbery of the National bank that took place in Bucharest in 1959. The film is an American-French-Polish-Italian-Romanian co-production, and received multiple accolades at the Gopo Awards, including three nominations for Best Actor in Leading Role (Mark Strong –Max, Harry Lloyd –Virgil and Vera Farmiga – Alice); Best Directing and Screenplay (Nae Caranfil), Best Music (Laurent Couson) and Best Feature Film.

**Background** Caranfil based his script on a documentary (*Great Communist Bank Robbery*, 2004) about a 1959 bank robbery, an inconceivable anti-social action in a communist state, and also on another documentary—unknown to the Romanian public—made by Irene Lusztig, the granddaughter of the woman who was one of the thieves (*Reconstruction*, 2002). The reaction of the police and National Secret Services was ruthless at the time, and thousands of innocent people were interrogated and tortured, some of them even getting killed in prison for refusing to take the blame. The year of 1959 finds the world in the Cold War crisis, with the US and USSR in fierce rivalry for political and technological dominance including the space race, which may explain the 'moon' reference in the movie title.

In one of his interviews, Caranfil explains that his movie 'fictionalized' events, but that the basic story and protagonists were historically accurate. The script was initially written in Romanian, but the project took off only some years later when Caranfil had a 'chance encounter' with an American producer. The condition for his investment was that the movie be made in English. In consequence, the movie has an all-star, English-speaking cast: Vera Farmiga (Alice), Mark Strong (Max), Harry Lloyd as Virgil, Anton Lesser (Holban), Joe Armstrong (Razvan), Christian McKay (Iorgu), Tim Plester (Dumi) and Darrell D'Silva (Minister).

#### CINEMATIC NARRATION

Caranfil uses the movie-within-movie technique in *Closer to the Moon*, which heightens the suspense and the absurdist-dramatic undertones that mark the protagonists' life choices and fate. When the reconstruction movie starts, the camera close-ups of the protagonists capture the wide array of emotions expressed by their body language.

The telescope in the movie is a device through which not only the natural but also people's world can be observed. It may also be interpreted as a metaphor for the constant surveillance people were kept under by the National Secret Services.

The soundtrack is precisely synchronized with the images to add further dramatic or comical notes. Caranfil's art lies in his constant move of the camera to the background and foreground actions, which creates an ensemble picture of the protagonists' personal drama and also the historical reality they live in (communist propaganda through the portraits or slogans hung up on the walls, parade rehearsals, street banners, etc.).

## SYNOPSIS

Five friends—four men and a woman—actively involved in the resistance fight against the Nazis and former members of the Communist Party with important social positions, fall in disgrace in the late '50s when the Party decides to dispose of any elements that may harm their image. The friends are all Jews, so they are now marginalized and perceived as negative examples for the socialist society. Embittered and frustrated with the changes that have impacted not only their life, but the entire society, the friends decide that robbing the National Bank would be the best way to mock and humiliate the system. Aware that, if caught, such an action would mean a death sentence, Max convinces everyone, except for Alice, to go ahead with the plan. She eventually joins the gang in an attempt to spare her son, Mirel, who refuses to be left out of the action. To the delight of the onlookers, including Virgil, a waiter in the canteen across the street, the gang makes the armed robbery look like a gangster movie scene. The members of the gang are eventually caught by the police, but Ministry officials decide that a reconstruction movie should be made for educational purposes. As a result of a series of lucky circumstances, Virgil becomes the main cameraman to assist the director, Master Flaviu in first filming the trial and then making the reconstruction movie.

## MAIN CHARACTERS

<i>Virgil</i>	A young man who works as a waiter in a canteen but dreams of becoming a cameraman
<i>Comrade Holban</i>	A middle-aged man in the National Secret Services
<i>Max Radoiu</i>	A former police colonel and leading member of the gang
<i>Alice Bercovici</i>	Max's former lover and a member of the gang
<i>Iorgu Ristea</i>	A former university history professor and a member of the gang
<i>Dumitru/ Dumu Dorneanu</i>	Another member of the gang, an expert in atomic physics
<i>Razvan Orodel</i>	Another member of the gang and a formerly an important columnist
<i>Master Flaviu</i>	A drunkard director in charge of the reconstruction movie
<i>Mr. Moritz</i>	An elderly Jew, in whose house Virgil is a tenant
<i>Mirel</i>	Alice and Max's twelve-year old son
<i>Sonia</i>	Max's wife and the sister of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Virgil**

Virgil is an enthusiastic young man who, due to some lucky circumstances, becomes the main cameraman assisting the director in charge of the reconstruction movie. Virgil sympathizes with the members of the gang, and tries to help them by doing them several favors.

**Innocent** Virgil's innocuous character is highlighted by the unmalicious look on his face and his sympathetic attitude towards the gang. One of the most relevant examples of this trait is the canteen scene when he expects Maestro Flaviu to understand that the investigators' version of the bank robbery events was not truthful.

**Ambitious** The bank robbery movie-like scene impresses Virgil so much that he instantly takes to the idea of becoming a cameraman. He starts as Maestro Flaviu's assistant in carrying his vodka flask around, but after a while, he is shown assisting a cameraman with the video equipment. When his boss

offers him 'the lucky chance' of filming the reconstruction movie, he accepts with enthusiasm right away, promising him that he 'will not regret' his decision.

*Reliable* Virgil's reliability is most evident in the scene in which the filming is stopped and the five convicts taken back to prison on the Minister's orders. Just before the Minister's arrival, Virgil does not give in to Comrade Holban's threats and claims he has no clue about the address of Alice's son. Then, as the van drives away, Virgil slowly points to Alice's letter in his pocket to reassure her that he will fulfill her wishes.

### **Alice**

Alice is a beautiful and smart young woman, who stands out through her elegance, confident attitude and mental strength. She shows great dignity and bravery during the trial and imprisonment.

*Responsible* When the male members of the group make the decision to rob the bank as a form of rebellion against the system, Alice is the one who suggests that they should make it look like a scene from a movie. However, despite the fact that she is a rebellious spirit herself, she refuses to take part in their plan because she has 'a child to raise'. As soon as she finds out about Mirel's overhearing the robbery plan, she rushes to Max's house and pressures him into talking their son out of it.

*Caring* Alice's loving care for Mirel is highlighted when she accepts to act as the fifth gang member to fit Max's plan in the hope that she will keep her son away from taking part in the robbery. The moment she realizes that her self-sacrifice was futile, she pounces on Max, hitting him and blaming him for Mirel's presence in the robbery scene. She then bursts into a desperate sob, deeply concerned about her son's future.

*Intelligent* Alice has a degree in Political Sciences gained in Moscow, a particularly remarkable fact, given the historic context when women hardly ever got promoted. When, for example, the 'boys' are pondering over how they can rob the National Bank, she impresses them with her quick-witted suggestion that they should 'not attack the bank headquarters, but the van that delivers money to the branches'. She then continues by saying: 'If you want a crowd, you've got to make a show. We all wanted to become movie stars, remember?'. This makes everyone cheer and Max exclaim that she is 'an angel'.

### **Max**

Max is the leading member of the gang. He is a dreamer with a revolutionary spirit through which he manages to persuade his friends to rob the National Bank, as an ultimate act of rebellion against a system they fought for but now has failed them miserably.

*Perceptive* Max knows that a divorce from Sonia would mean losing his high-rank position within the police department. Soon after his filing for divorce, he is warned by his colleague, Boris, about his prospective replacement. On a very light-hearted tone, Max appears only to confirm with Boris that he will be the replacer. Max then warns him about a lower shelf in his office desk that would not close properly, most likely hinting at the surveillance system installed there to monitor his activity, and of whose existence he is fully aware.

*Assertive* Max's assertive personality comes forth from the first to the last scenes of the movie. One particular example of his self-confidence is when he realizes that Maestro Flaviu is too drunk to continue filming. He takes over the job and starts giving everyone directorial instructions in such a confident way that makes one of the police officers whisper to Comrade Holban: 'He seems knows what he is doing'.

*Dignified* Max's execution scene is perhaps one the most dramatic and illustrative examples of his strength of character; he remains dignified even in the face of an implacable and unfair death sentence. He refuses to have his eyes covered and he appears to look forward, straight into the eyes of those preparing their guns to shoot him.

## THEMES

**COMMUNISM** The storyline is set in 1959, a few years after Stalin's death, with Romania's political system still heavily controlled by the Soviet Union. Any form of rebellion against the Communist Party's ideology is ruthlessly suppressed and punished by the 'Securitate' (National Secret Service), as happens with Max and his friends, who receive the death penalty for their bank robbery. Their crime is judged as a political case, and thus as a grave offence against the state authority and socialist values. The evening the five friends celebrate Dumitru's fortieth birthday, they also talk about possible ways to fight against the system. Max bitterly remarks that they 'now live in a crime-free society', with no 'murderers, robbers, thieves' left, but Joe interrupts him to add that communism means 'there is nothing else left worth stealing'. Max then says that 'communism means the right of the people to walk down the street without being robbed'. Iorgu comes up with idea of robbing the Bank of Romania if they want to commit a 'crime in style'. Max finds the suggestion 'brilliant' because, as he explains, a bank robbery is perceived as 'one of the capitalist evils', which does not and 'must not' happen here'.

**PROPAGANDA** The movie approaches the theme of communist propaganda by shifting the camera focus from the main storyline to the background preparations for the August 23<sup>rd</sup>. On this date in 1944, Romania turned against its then fascist, pro-German government, and since then that day was heavily ideologized by the communists and celebrated as Romania's National Day with grandiose massive street parades and propagandistic media shows until the fall of Ceausescu's regime in 1989. It is also the date the Soviet Union and Germany signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact in 1939, when they also secretly divided their spheres of influence over Eastern and Central Europe. In Max's view, it is only an unprecedented event like 'robbing a bank' that may make people 'stop work in the factory' and wonder if there was 'any truth' in the authorities' claim of 'progress and plenty'. The bank robbery event, however, becomes a tool of propaganda. The prosecutor accuses the robbers of being 'in the service of foreign, imperialist and Zionist organizations' and showing 'deep hatred of the country's socialist institution' through their 'heinous criminal act'. After the trial, the Secret Service officer in charge with the case explains to the filming director and cameraman that their mission is to make an 'educational movie' in which 'innuendos' about the robbers' Jewish identity should be included 'with great finesse'. As the prison interrogator has it, the movie 'will be shown across the country' after the prisoners' execution so that 'everyone can spit in their stinking reactionary faces'. In addition, there are several camera stop frames of the wall portraits of the 'greatest' communist leaders of the times and of the propagandistic slogans of the socialist values, such as 'We build socialism through work and culture'.

**CONFINEMENT** The theme of confinement is explored on the physical as well as abstract level. There is a subtle association between the country and the prison, since people could leave neither of them at will. The hard communist propaganda created the illusion that the proletariat ruled the country, and thus they were entitled to severely reprimand Western decadence and the intellectuals suspected to have dabbled with it. Max, for instance, is forced to 'make his marriage work' because, as his brother-in-law, the Minister, threatens him, a divorce would be the end of his military career. On the abstract level, the movie conveys confinement by likeningspace and opinion restrictions to stifling and rigid socialist ideology, which required people to 'work hard' for the progress of the country and report on anyone whose actions may disturb it. The state keeps vigil by holding its citizens captive to a generalized sense of division, mistrust and mental terror of being reported on by anyone in their close proximity. This is the case with Iorgu's neighbor who eavesdrops on one of his phone conversations with a school colleague. She then reports him to the police: 'My neighbor has a treasure hidden up in his attic, probably gold', which leads the secret police investigators to catch all the members of the 'gang'.

**CRIME** In a society that has an almost zero crime rate, the theme of crime is used to highlight a subtler facet of crime as a rebellion against a totalitarian political system. When asking Virgil to help with the investigation by befriending the gang and finding out their secrets, the Secret Service officer responsible for the bank robbery case shows himself intrigued by what could have 'driven the gang into battle'. As he admits, the five thousand pages of the case file provide 'only ridiculous speculations' about that particular question. The scene of the friends celebrating Dumitru's birthday is clearly illustrative of the lack of pecuniary motivation behind their crime. When Razvan asks what they will do with the money, Max replies airily: 'Nothing, keep it, spend it, or give it to you [Razvan]'. Robbing the National Bank—with

dramatic consequences they are fully aware of—will show the national authorities ‘what fools they have been’, as Max puts it. For the five friends, especially since they are all intellectuals who have occupied high social positions, crime thus becomes a political weapon to demonstrate the system’s weaknesses, that it is not as indestructible as it has led people to believe. Max even hopes that the news of the crime will show everyone that ‘the impossible can happen’ and make ‘workers in factories stop working’ and ‘question’ the state’s legitimacy.

**DESIRE** The theme of desire is dramatized especially in relation to women. There is a scene when Virgil helps the main cameraman film a group of teenage girls rehearsing for the National Day parade. Instead of packing the filming equipment up as instructed, Virgil encourages one of the on-scene workers to look through the camera lenses. The man zooms in the more intimate parts of some of the girls and makes some offensive comments about them. Virgil himself frequently takes close-ups of Alice when the reconstruction movie begins. Unlike his colleague, Virgil’s attraction to Alice is gentle and innocent, as implied by his camera zoom-ins that follow her face, especially smiles. Virgil is clearly infatuated with Alice, and he shows her that by following her with his camera. She observes his special attention, and responds to it with flirting gestures, which flusters him. After spending the night together, Virgil’s affection for her turns out to be genuine since he does not betray her confidence by revealing her son’s address, even when threatened by Comrade Holban.

**FREEDOM** The theme of freedom (or rather the absence of freedom because of the harsh restrictions on free movement imposed by the communist regime) is present throughout the movie. The absence of freedom is represented mainly through the prison, the police and Securitate (the National Secret Services). On Dumitru’s birthday party night, Max uses Dumitru’s telescope to look around the neighborhood and sees a man being arrested by ‘the boys’ in his own home. Besides its scientific role, the telescope may stand as a metaphor for the citizens’ unspoken sense of inescapability from ‘the boys’ permanent surveillance and immediate repression of any subversive activity. The theme is also closely pursued in the main characters’ discussions and attitudes. The gang’s well-informed decision to commit the most serious type of robbery, regardless of the fact that their ‘chances of pulling it off are almost zero’ and that they could be sentenced to death, points to their freedom of thought and spirit. It could also be viewed as the protagonists’ subversive reaction to the communist system’s growingly paranoid delusions and inhumane ways of purging the society of ‘capitalist evils’ and non-conformist intellectual values.

**FRIENDSHIP** The friendship connecting the five members of the gang stands in sharp contrast to the generalized sense of mistrust that was deeply ingrained in the Romanian society’s collective consciousness at the end of the 1950s. Their close relationship is based on several shared life experiences that have kept them together throughout time: their common anti-bourgeois fight right after the war; respect for one another’s intellectual abilities; Alice and Max have a son together; and their fall into disgrace as the Party started to dispose of members that did not fit into their socialistic pattern, which they did not because of their Jewish identity. One particular scene that shows the strong bond between them is the evening they all gather in Max’s house to watch an interview with Dumitru. When the TV presenter introduces him as a reputed astro-physicist and spaceship expert, they all start cheering and applauding him, with a look of pride and respect on their faces. Their decision to rob the bank as a way to undermine the state, and then sticking together during the trial, the robbery reconstruction movie making and, eventually, facing death by the firing squad, reflects an unbreakable human connection between some individuals who risk everything for their beliefs. There is an undertone of wishing for ‘the impossible to have happened’, and for the entire society to have begun to question the state’s actions. The conclusion underlying the movie storyline is that friendship is a human value, which was vital during the dehumanizing years of the communist regime.

**IDEALISM** The gang of ‘heinous traitors’ as called by the authorities is made up of highly intelligent intellectuals, which makes Comrade Holban wonder about the real motivation behind their action. What he finds most intriguing is that the five friends were all ‘heroes’ during the war since they fought for the Anti-Nazi Resistance and prominent members of the Communist Party and the society right after the war. The year of 1959 finds the protagonists struggling bitterly with the loss of their privileges and high rank positions because the Party started its ‘spring cleaning’, and disposed of them, too, because of their Jewish identity. Nostalgic about their ‘good old days’ when they had an ideal to fight for, they feel stifled

and marginalized in a society where the communist propaganda erased all democratic values and individuals' creativity, independent action and thinking. Consequently, they are ready to take all risks to contribute to the society one final time by showing the defects of the political system they live in. They choose to do so by robbing the National Bank, a gangster-like action which Max and friends naively imagine will 'humiliate' the system and make workers 'sit up in factories and say 'hang on a minute''.

**MARRIAGE** Alice and Max share not only a revolutionary past, but also a son, Mirel, whom she takes with her when sent on a study scholarship to Moscow. In the meantime, Max has to marry Sonia out of convenience, at the Party's insistence that he 'acquire a marital status worthy of his rank and social position'. At the New Year's party, when Sonia's brother, the minister, approaches Max and demands that he stop that 'nonsense about divorce', invite his wife to dance, get back together and 'make him an uncle', Max makes an effort to comply with the request. Sonia, however, mocks his attempt of reconciliation, thinking he has done it only because her brother asked him to. Their emotions flare up while dancing, she slaps him in public and he has her arrested for assaulting an officer on duty. Max's filing for divorce soon after the New Year's party comes with his liberation from an unwanted and disastrous relationship, but, at the same time, with negative consequences for his position as his brother-in-law threatened him would happen if he dared leave his sister. Interestingly, apart from Max—the most rebellious of all—none of the other members of the group is married because as young revolutionaries they promised themselves that they would fight for freedom all their lives.

## SCENES

### Chapter 1: Virgil

**An unexpected movie shoot** An armed robbery at the National Bank movie scene is shot under the curious eyes of the customers of a canteen across the street. One of the customers wonders how the filming of a 'gangster movie' is even possible. The robbers put the bags of money in the car and leave the scene saluting the cheering onlookers.



**Dinner time** Virgil has dinner with his landlords, Mr. Moritz and his wife. Mr. Moritz complains about the Bolsheviks and how they jam 'The Voice of America' radio station to which he tunes in every day. When Virgil tells them about the movie shoot that day, Mr. Moritz remains skeptical and takes some magazines out of a drawer to show him how movies were made before the war.



**The Sahia Movie Studio** Virgil hangs around the Sahia Movie Studio when he sees Master Flaviu approach the bushes to throw up. Master Flaviu asks Virgil to buy vodka to fill this thermos and 'never leave his side' if he has not got anything else to do that day. Virgil complies eagerly.



**A lucky change** Virgil assists the cameraman filming the rehearsals for the National Day parade when he is called in the boss's office. The boss tells Virgil about a 'mission' to make a 'short film about a rather special event', and introduces him to Comrade Holban from the State Security Services. Virgil says he is 'honored' to be given the chance to work with Master Flaviu on the new film.



**The trial** Virgil is in court where five prisoners are accused of 'having attacked and robbed' the National Bank. The prosecutor claims to plead 'on behalf of the people' who ask that 'an example be set' and the harshest punishment be given to 'these infamous snakes'. The five prisoners are sentenced to death by firing squad.



**A new mission** Comrade Holban explains to Virgil, Master Flaviu and their boss that comrades from the Ministry have decided that the trial episode should be only one scene of a more complex educational movie that will provide a 'detailed reconstruction of the events that took place' the year before.



Tovarășii din minister au decis...  
Mersi, drăguță !

**Drinking out** Master Flaviu and Virgil drink at the canteen. Virgil tries to tell Master Flaviu that the robbery events did not happen as described by the authorities. Master Flaviu reminds him that in Bucharest, Romania, 'we first arrest the comrades who make trouble, and then we assign them a crime'. He urges him to forget what he thinks he saw.



Maestre, ce spun acum  
rămâne numai între noi.

## Chapter 2: Max

**The New Year's party** Max and other officials, together with their families, celebrate the New Year in a posh restaurant. Max is approached by his brother-in-law, the Minister of the Internal Affairs, who summons him to stop divorce proceedings and make up with his wife. Max invites Sonia, his wife, to dance, but they start to argue fiercely. She slaps him in public. Max orders his subordinates to arrest her for assaulting an 'on-duty police officer'.



### Chapter 3: The Gang

**Another party** Max continues the New Year party together with three friends and some prostitutes in another restaurant. They discuss various theories about how the year 1959 could make history. They then talk about their memories as members of the anti-Nazi resistance, how the country has changed for the worse, and how the revolution has failed them. Alice makes a dramatic entrance and the men are very happy to see that she is back.



**The next morning** The friends walk in the street after the New Year party. Alice says that she would like to become an actress, but her friends put her in the picture: the Party views Jews as 'enemies of the state, aristocrats and speculators'. Iorgu sarcastically suggests that they should all become actors as they seem to be the right fit for those parts. Max plays along and says that 1959 could be 'the year we all became movie stars'.



**In prison** The prison investigator tells the five convicts that they will be shot dead after the entire country has seen the movie of their 'criminal actions as gangsters and traitors'. Back in the cell, Max and his friends decide to accept to act in the movie so that they can enjoy 'sunshine, fresh air, green grass and girls in summer dresses' for the last time.



**Movie-making directions** Comrade Holban cannot figure out the real motive of the robbery since, as she points out to the filming crew, the protagonists are 'highly intelligent' people with important positions after the war until the Party demoted them. He counts on Master Flaviu for the movie to include 'subtle innuendos' about their Jewish identity.



## Chapter 4: The filming

**The cast preparation** The prisoners are escorted to the movie set, and then to a salon nearby where they have their appearance groomed and prison uniforms changed into smart clothes. Alice behaves like a movie star and pretends to be very distressed when one of the officers pushes her away from the camera.



**Max's directorial instructions** Master Flaviu falls asleep because of drinking too much vodka. Comrade Holban gets anxious as no scene has been shot yet. Max confidently takes over the director's job and gives Virgil and the acting extras instructions on how they should proceed and perform in the taxi theft scene. Max looks through the camera at one point and secretly gives Virgil a list of addresses and phone numbers.



**The night phone calls** Virgil makes a phone call to a number on Max's list to let the family know that their loved ones locked up in the Jilava prison are still alive and in good health. Mr. Morritz, sitting in the dark, interrupts Virgil's attempt to make a second phone call, and asks Virgil to tell him the truth. Virgil is surprised to hear that Mr. Morritz already knew about the robbery which he thought was a state secret.



**Bourgeois opulence** Max and his friends are now smartly dressed up for the scene meant to show how aristocrats splash out the people's money on fine dining meals. Dissatisfied with the food on their plates, Max places another order which says is relevant to 'the state's vision of bourgeois opulence'. With Comrade Holban's approving nod, they order fine dishes and wine.



## Chapter 5: The Visit

**A night visit** Virgil gets woken up in the middle night by an officer from the National Secret Services and taken to Comrade Holban, who now lives in Max's house. Comrade Holban thinks Virgil is the 'ideal messenger' since he has gained the prisoners' trust. He wants Virgil help him find the sixth member of the gang, whom he has identified as Alice's son, and who took part in the bank robbery by pretending to film the scene.



**Master Flaviu's crisis** Master Flaviu suddenly stands up and starts yelling at everyone. He is frustrated that a highly acclaimed director like him has been asked to make such a movie. Alice takes advantage of everyone's watching Master Flaviu's outburst, and walks away, with Virgil quietly following her.



## Chapter 6: Alice

**Sounding the alarm** Comrade Holban wants the filming to continue without Master Flaviu, but a police officer informs him that Alice and the cameraman have both vanished. Comrade Holban orders him to sound the alarm. In the meantime, Alice stops by a gate and tells Virgil that she has to pay a visit. When she comes back, she is visibly distressed, with her make-up ruined by tears.



**Dinner at Virgil's house** Alice and Virgil have dinner with Mr. Moritz and his wife. Mr. Moritz comes to realize who Alice really is. He looks out of the window and sees that they are kept under surveillance by the Secret Services. Then Alice and Virgil retire to his room where they spend the night together. Alice recounts how the events happened in reality.



### **Chapter 7: The Robbery**

**The father-son meeting** The morning they return from the New Year party, Alice takes Max home and introduces him to their twelve-year-old son, Mirel. Mirel does not remember his father, but in the following weeks Max wins him over through little games such as having the boy arrested in front of the school or polygon shooting.



**At Max's house** Max invites his friends over to his house to watch Dumi's televised interview about space exploration. When Max ignores Sonia's invitation to take a seat at the dinner table, she gets angry and throws a rocket-shaped statue at the television. Max then calmly lifts his wife up in his arms and throws her out of the window into the pool.



**Filing for divorce** The next day Max sends a copy of his divorce application to his brother-in-law, the minister. A little later, one of Max's colleagues, Boris, comes to warn him that he will be removed from his position once he has finalized the cases he has been working on.



**The bank robbery idea** The five friends celebrate Dumi's fortieth birthday on the roof of a building. While talking about ways of fighting the system, Iorgu comes up with the idea of the National Bank robbery. They joke about it for a while until they realize that Max is serious. After further reflection on their revolutionary past and death sentence prospect, the men decide to go ahead with their plan.



**Alice's anger** Alice is angry with Max because Mirel has overheard the men talk about their bank robbery plan and now wants to take part in it. Alice begs Max to talk Mirel out of it, but Max says that the boy will not listen. Alice decides that she should be the fifth person that Max needs for the plan to be carried out—that way Mirel can stay at home.



**The bank robbery** The gang members wear gas masks when they attack the bank van. At some point, realizing that the drivers do not even have guns, the 'gangsters' tell them to act as if they were in a movie. Alice fires her gun upwards in despair when she realizes that Mirel is on a balcony nearby, pretending to film the entire scene.



**Leaving the crime scene** Alice pushes Mirel into the stolen taxi and then drops him in front of the school. In the meantime, Max and Dumitru, who have driven away in another car, let the bank van drivers go free. When the friends reunite, Alice angrily punches Max, accusing him of lying to her. Max swears that he has not betrayed and tries to calm her down, by saying that Mirel will be safe at a secret address with fake ID papers.



***Iorgu's involuntary mistake*** Iorgu talks on the phone with one of his colleagues about two brilliant students whose families have been persecuted by the system. His remark, 'you wouldn't believe the treasure they're hiding up there' (in the sense that they are very intelligent) is overheard by a neighbor who turns him in to the police for hiding a treasure in his attic. The police arrest all the members of the gang.



## Chapter 8: The wrap-up party

**Back to the movie set** In the morning, Alice hands Virgil a letter to be opened after the movie is finished. Alice and Virgil return to the movie set in the secret security officers' car. Comrade Holban takes Virgil inside the canteen and asks him to write Mirel's address down, but Virgil claims he does not know it.



**The minister's arrival** Max's former brother-in-law arrives on the movie set. Finding Comrade Holban asleep, the minister threatens him with 'an extended holiday in a work camp in the mountains'. The minister tells Max that the movie idea was his because he wanted future generations to see what a criminal and traitor he was. Max's suggestion that the entire group be put on a space rocket for the use of science infuriates the minister, who orders that the prisoners be taken back to their cells and the movie ended right away.



**The execution** One by one, the male members of the group are executed by the firing squad. Alice's death sentence, however, is commuted to life imprisonment just a few days before the execution because she is found pregnant.



**The 1964 amnesty** In 1964, an amnesty freed all political prisoners, and Alice was allowed to emigrate together with Mirel and his little sister to Israel.