

FACTSHEET

EMPTYIES

European Cinema for Active Ageing

CINAGE

LIGHTS,
CAMERA,
ACTION!

65+



Title	VRATNÉ LAHVE (<i>Empties</i>)
Release date	March 8, 2007
Running time	104'
Director	Jan Sverák
Country	Czech Republic
Language	Czech
Producer	Eric Abraham and Jan Sverák
Writers	Zdenek Sverák
Cast	Zdenek Sverák as Josef Takloun, Tatiana Vihelmová as Helenka, Daniela Kolářová as Tkalounová.
Genre	Comedy-drama
Awards	Special Jury Mention for the screenplay at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2007; Audience Award at 2007 Ljubljana International Film Festival; Gold Dolphin award for Best Film at the Festroia International Film Festival in 2008; Audience Award at Cottbus Film Festival of Young East European Cinema 2007; Best Director: Czech Lions 2008; Best Screenplay: Czech Lions 2008; Audience Award: Czech Lions 2008.

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Plot

The opening scene takes us for a bus ride. The main character Josef Takloun is trying "to educate" a young man who does not even dream of giving up his seat to him, the much older Josef. This is an illustration of the cultural generational gap older people belonging to a different culture and being used to different types of relationships.

Josef is getting ever more bored by his teaching job. He is dictating a story about an old man, longing for love and understanding. Students are ridiculing him and joking about the story which does not appeal to them and is not worth in their eyes, so they are having lots of derogatory remarks. Their new values, new perspectives are opposing Josef's values and views.

Students often complain about Josef's teaching. There is a daring and shameless student. His father is rich and contributes financial means to the school which he thinks gives him the right to belittle the teachers. The headmistress asks Josef to write a letter of apology to the boy's parents for having been "rude" to him. This is too much to ask the humiliated Josef!

Josef gets home. He is trying to vacuum clean the curtains under his wife's stern eye. On one side, she considers him as being gawky while he is trying to hang the door on its hinges, and on the other side, he is not satisfied with her ironing and simultaneous watching a TV serial. "How can an educated woman watch such a show?," asks Josef bewildered.

Josef is sitting in a park on a bench and a group of older people pass by inviting him to join them. Josef declines their invitation. He does not feel like going with them. He does not agree with their style of life. He does not feel that he belongs to them and to their pointless way of life.

His wife is constantly reproaching him: "You are 65 years old and you are cycling through Prague! What an idea! You will get hit by a street car!" and "You do not like being at home with me!"

Josef has taken on a job of a speedy courier. He cycles through streets thinking about his past life. He has lived many things, but he still does not know what life is all about! What is right and what is wrong. He works as a courier, fine, but everybody is amazed at seeing him working and they all think he is insane. "Are you still working? keep asking his peers surprised.

Josef falls off his bicycle, ends up in somebody's garden and breaks his leg. His career of a speedy courier is at its end. His wife was right. This was not for him.

New generations do not communicate as he would like them to communicate. They do not greet each other. He goes shopping to a market and somebody wants to help him, thinking that he is handicapped. Older people are often thought about as handicapped. No, he does not need helps and is not handicapped!

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Back home, Josef finds his daughter moving in with her parents again, crying because her husband has left her. Josef is trying to calm her down. Helenka his daughter is depressed to the point that she believes that the end of the world is close. His step son is a doctor visiting older patients with mental disturbances, senile and with sight impairments, not being able to read-stereotypes about older people's health deficiencies. He is trying to reconcile his step son and his daughter.

Josef's colleagues want him to come back to school. He refuses. Josef takes on a new job. Now he is responsible for empty bottles customers return to the shop where he works. His wife is ashamed knowing that her husband has this kind of job. Moreover, his wife is grumpy talking to their grandson» You see, your grandfather could take you or a bus ride, but he prefers working! She never stops having derogating remarks.

A grumpy man called »The talkative« is introducing Josef to his new job. He is a retired major and is not talkative at all, he is not voluble, he does not use many words, but on the contrary, Josef likes talking to customers, they trust him and he shows great empathy. Older people are poor so he recommends them to buy this and that at a discount price and he even lends them money.

Josef is being asked about death by his grandson. He knows that he will definitely die someday, but not that soon. He is now »in the autumn of his life and old age is still to come, later«. There's a difference between being 65 and being at an advanced age.

Josef's wife is also retired and she teaches German Mr Wasserbauer, a middle aged man. One afternoon she finally wants to pay a visit to Josef in his shop, but she does not find him there. She gets jealous wanting to protect her marriage.

Josef understands the importance of family, He organises a balloon trip for his wife and himself.

Symbolically, they lift up in the air, towards a new way of living together. What counts are family ties?

Active ageing competencies

All the six competencies.