

A LATVIAN WEDDING

by Lauris Gundars



© 2013 Lauris Gundars

© 2014 Ieva Lākute (translation)

www.laurisgundars.lv

02@laurisgundars.lv

CHARACTERS

Anita (23) the bride

Kārlis (24) the bridegroom

Andris (45) Anita's father

Iveta (43) Kārlis' mother

Velta (65) Andris' mother

Alise (51) Anita's aunt (mother's sister)

Aldis (36) Kārlis' friend

Jānis (58) neighbour

Juris (26) Jānis' son

Edgars (40) musician

The play is set in Vidzeme, a central region of Latvia, in the present time.

ACT 1

SCENE I

Twilight, summer. A threshing barn in a yard, where a wedding is taking place.

Noises are coming from the outside – the wedding guests are having fun.

Enter ALISE and VELTA in a fast pace. VELTA shuts the gate tight.

ALISE's cheeks are flushed, she is laughing. VELTA is solemn.

ALISE. We're going to start some games soon – Edgars has thought of so many – it will be good if we manage them all before the morning! My heart is leaping out of my throat. Can you believe it! At my age...

VELTA makes no reply but opens a bottle of brandy that she has pulled out of dark a corner in the threshing barn. She pours the brandy into two glasses, gives one to ALISE.

ALISE. Are you crazy?! I'm at work.

VELTA. Shut up.

ALISE. The maid of honour isn't supposed to get trashed until the wedding is over!

VELTA'S serious expression silences ALISE.

VELTA. 12 years ago, at your sister's wedding I gave you a promise that tonight you and I would drink. You and me. I haven't made that promise to anyone else.

ALISE. Well?! Have you calmed down?... I mean, he's a nice lad, isn't he? If you were younger, you'd marry him yourself, eh?

VELTA. Don't talk rubbish.

ALISE. Then let's have one to your grandkids.

VELTA. They will exchange that kid for a guinea pig!

ALISE. Oh, stop it! Just look, Anita is so happy! My heart tells me that...

VELTA. That heart of yours told you the same about that last lover boy of yours.

ALISE. They will live long and happy.

VELTA. They will divorce quickly and painlessly.

ALISE. Anita is not a country girl anymore. And where does the countryside begin and the city end these days?

VELTA. They just don't get it yet – they're two completely different worlds.

ALISE. I'm raising a glass to your grandchildren! To Anita and Karlis' children!

VELTA. Well, I'm raising a glass to you...

ALISE. Just like a funeral! I don't want that!

VELTA. Come live with us. It's just us two now, plus a million bees. I want to grant you my son.

ALISE. *(laughs)* I already live and work...

VELTA. Are you going to spend your whole life fussing over those kids from that miserable school? You don't even like Geography.

ALISE. I teach Biology.

VELTA. Whatever. With bees there's a real job. What difference does it make if you live 20K this end or that?

ALISE. Have you lost your mind?!

VELTA. If you move here, it won't be long before you two end up sharing a bed.

ALISE. You're coupling me like I'm some kind of animal.

VELTA. But you like him, and the house will be empty now. And so what if you're older – you look 36-37. Your sister always looked older anyway.

ALISE. She was seven years younger than me...

Without realising, ALISE downs the whole glass.

VELTA. You didn't even bother to toast.

VELTA pours another drink for ALISE who is bewildered but laughs all the same.

ALISE. You have no idea, how much I wanted your son when Gita died.

VELTA. I did know. I just didn't like you back then.

ALISE. Since then, Andris has only had bees on his mind. And Anita.

VELTA. And now she's gone too. I will help. He'll like it.

ALISE. You'll have grandchildren, you can take care of them – you won't be alone.

VELTA. Even so, who would allow them to come here and play in this mud?

ALISE. For all these years Andris has never looked at me, not even once.

VELTA. You hardly ever visit.

ALISE. You didn't like me...

VELTA. I do now... We'll be here alone, you're alone too. Don't you think I can see how you're pottering about, that you want to live a little. See, you even dress like a young girl.

ALISE. He's the perfect man... But no. End of.

VELTA. I can always hang myself, if I get in the way. Andris deserves it though.

ALISE laughs, downs the drink again.

ALISE. Everyone must be thinking that someone's stolen the maid of honour by now.

VELTA. I will ring you next week.

ALISE exit.

VELTA downs her glass too.

SCENE II

As soon as VELTA has hidden her glass back in the corner, JĀNIS and JURIS enter the barn. All three are startled by each other.

VELTA. Can't manage the queue for the loo?

JĀNIS. When have I ever shat in your yard?

VELTA. Are you going to flog the boy?

JĀNIS. He's come here, genius, in his home clothes! ... Well, don't just stand there, Juris!

JĀNIS pulls out a shirt and a tie from a plastic bag and makes JURIS put it on over the coloured T-shirt he's wearing. JURIS obeys silently.

VELTA. It's too late already...

JĀNIS. You know, I don't give up just like that...

VELTA. You saw it, didn't you – nice, happy couple, straight to the city.

JĀNIS. Don't you think they'll come running back?

VELTA. They're married now.

JĀNIS. Don't you know it's cheaper to get divorced these days? I'm surprised.

VELTA. She didn't fancy your Juris.

JĀNIS. Because she fancied someone else the whole time.

VELTA. They're already married, what can we do anymore?

JĀNIS. We're going to talk to Andris. Juris is going to be a bee-master. He's already doing a course, he'll finish soon, then he'll need a job.

VELTA. When Anita runs back, this one will be there already – like a deputy host? Is that it?

JĀNIS. Ah! You think like a man! I respect you for that!

VELTA. As if I need that.

JĀNIS. Back in the day you needed it, so needed it.

VELTA. For giving him a job that one time, and stealing a tractor from that farm for us, Andris has been ploughing your potatoes for twenty years now.

JĀNIS. You assured me that you'd never forget.

VELTA. Your collective farm went out of business 20 years ago!

JĀNIS. An entire life is not just 20 years. I still look after your boss Nikolajevich's grave by the way. And how long ago did he die? Ohh. He valued me.

VELTA. I'll look after your grave.

JĀNIS. What's the matter now? Just a second ago, you wanted to give your granddaughter to my Juris...

VELTA. Eh, fancy having one?

VELTA pulls out the brandy bottle and the glasses again.

JĀNIS. Now you know, how it is for me. All by myself.

VELTA. They'll divorce.

JĀNIS. One to that, yeah? From your mouth into you know whose ear (*points a finger towards the sky*).

Both drink.

JURIS. I am going.

JĀNIS. Where?

JURIS. I'm at a wedding, I'm a guest, by the way.

JĀNIS. You should have beaten that boy Kārlis. Back in the Soviet days, this one guy poured a dung cistern into the wedding house – right through the window! You should have been grazing on moss – your perfect girl is getting married to another guy, but you're walking round slurping beer. If you get trashed, I'll kill you. First we'll talk it over with Andris and then let's go! And the tie?!

Without responding, JURIS exits fast.

JĀNIS. He's suffering...

VELTA. It didn't work out for us, Jānis.

JĀNIS. Did you see Aldis?

VELTA. Such a disgrace – the son of the biggest queer is the best man. And they wouldn't give in: it has to be him, no one else, and that's final. And I just have to keep smiling...

JĀNIS. And he wouldn't give in, it has to be him, eh? Called him from his job in England especially, eh? Did you see what he looks like now?

VELTA. He wouldn't wear a suit for shit. And those two in one voice – don't need to, this isn't some pensioner's club. Ugh!

JĀNIS. Trousers like tights, chest naked... do you get me?

VELTA. What?

JĀNIS. Haven't you noticed, he's started to walk like this... (*demonstrates a feminine walk*) Eh?... And where does our dashing young groom come from? From Riga's artists, painters, bohemians...

VELTA. The boy doesn't walk like that.

JĀNIS. Yet. Maybe Aldis is wearing eyeliner and what not in England, maybe that's how he got that nice job?

VELTA. Are you stupid or what?!

JĀNIS. See, you're already having doubts, are you? Best friend and his best man... The city golden boy best friends with a country bum – where's the logic in that? ...

VELTA. When you put it that way... No! No, no!

JĀNIS. Well if not, then not...

Finishes his drink and goes outside.

VELTA. Wait!

JĀNIS. I've seen this kind of thing in ministry departments so many times before!

VELTA. We could still work something out?

Both toast and drink another glass, VELTA hides the bottle again.

SCENE III

An energetic dance in the yard. After a moment KĀRLIS and ANITA – the newly-weds - run into the barn.

They are kissing for some time, they don't seem to be able to stop.

KĀRLIS. I can't believe it!...

ANITA. I can't believe it!...

They kiss again.

ANITA. Well? Well, when?

KĀRLIS. I'm scaaaarred!...

ANITA. The sooner we say it, the better – while everyone is still sober.

KĀRLIS. Maybe it's better when they're no longer sober?

ANITA. In that case, they will think that they'd dreamt it when the morning comes, and we will just have to repeat it.

KĀRLIS. You want to tell them yourself?

ANITA. You wanted to!

KĀRLIS. Yes, I need to say it. It will be a real bomb!

ANITA. Gran is tugging at me all the time as if by accident – saying, what a big belly.

KĀRLIS. Mum is grumpy again.

ANITA. When is she ever not?... Forgive me.

KĀRLIS. Forgiven!

They kiss again.

ANITA. Ok, ok, should I tell them?

KĀRLIS. No, I will! Me myself!

Outside the guests are chanting "Kiss, kiss!" The shouts are getting more demanding by the second.

ANITA. You're only supposed to do that at the table, right?

KĀRLIS. (*laughs*) Aldis is raving like a runaway dog! He's really good today – aunties are fanning themselves and fainting.

ANITA. Gran is shocked at his trousers.

KĀRLIS. They don't know that we're here.

Unexpectedly the gate opens, ANDRIS comes in laughing.

ANDRIS. This, kids, is not your bedroom, and it's not yet midnight!

He embraces the newly-weds.

ANDRIS. I just can't believe it!

ANITA. Thanks, dad.

ANDRIS. Nothing to thank me for yet!

ANITA. Are you going to give us something extra, I don't know – like, bars of gold?

ANDRIS. Well, something like that.

ANITA. Stop it! The trip is great by itself! Are you being serious?

ANDRIS. Later! It's a secret.

ANITA. You're joking?

ANDRIS. It will be a real... bomb!

ANITA. What is it?

ANDRIS. (to KĀRLIS.) Well, how's it going, city dweller?

ANITA. Dad, we already agreed that this is the very, very, very last time now.

ANDRIS. It just slipped out!

ANITA. What is it?

ANDRIS. La-ter!!!

From the yard, guests are shouting "Kiss, kiss!" again. The door opens wide, enter ALISE and ALDIS.

ALISE. You won't hide from us!

ALDIS. How much longer do we have to kiss instead of you?!

ANDRIS. That's right, Aldis – get them in the spotlight!

KĀRLIS. At the table, yeah?

ALDIS takes ANITA into the yard.

ALDIS. If anything, the best man can replace you.

ALISE and KĀRLIS run after them. The guests still calling "Kiss, kiss!"

ALDIS. Look, how you're supposed to do it!

ALDIS wants to demonstrate the kissing technique, using KĀRLIS as a model – the guests are in hysterics. Then – as if just having noticed he's made a mistake, ALDIS takes hold of ALISE. She is also trying to get away, but then she gives in and laughs: they kiss while everyone applauds. Then the newly-weds start kissing too.

As they close the door to the barn, VELTA and JĀNIS whisk inside.

JĀNIS. Did you see that?!...

VELTA and JĀNIS are now drinking the brandy straight from the bottle. Then they run outside again into the yard. The hustle and bustle of the guests is withdrawing.

SCENE IV

As the door opens, a flamboyant lady in high heels, IVETA, enters, with EDGARS: he always has an accordion strapped around his neck.

EDGARS. Here, by the walls.

IVETA. What?

EDGARS. The pictures, your exhibition. Everyone in the community agreed that art has to be, well, democratic and so that everyone can see it...

IVETA. My daughter-in-law's dad has already seen it.

EDGARS. Andris allowed to make, like, an exhibition hall in here – we'll invite people. See what distinguished people live in our community. Ideal exhibition hall: imagine, your flowers on these ancient, black beams. Culture...

IVETA. Edgars, I don't need anyone. You think that Kārlis has his own family now and I will shrivel up by myself? Without you.

EDGARS. I don't think so...

IVETA. That night I was really drunk, I'm sorry. And it's not true anymore.

EDGARS. I was only talking about the exhibition and some flowers...

IVETA. Ok, and how do you imagine it?

Instead of an answer EDGARS starts to play a French love song.

IVETA. I won't fall for this the second time.

EDGARS. What do I have to do?

IVETA. Well... First, you have to change the joists under my house – they're all rotten. Second, you need to give me a Jaguar, and third, you have to become Dali – you know, that crazy artist with the moustache. And finally, take me into Space...

EDGARS. And if I do all that?

IVETA. Then I will take your surname. And your name as well, if you like.

EDGARS. Deal.

IVETA. Fine. *(Laughs)* Listen, Anita used to go round with the son of that collective farm chairman, Juris. Was there something serious between them?

EDGARS. But Kārlis is...

IVETA. So what? How can Kārlis compare to a proper country boy?

EDGARS. What would she need him for?

IVETA. You don't know women, Edgars. She's caught a city guy, but in reality... Maybe it wasn't finished between those two?

EDGARS. And you would like that?

IVETA. Could you do like that?... OK, I'm joking! I'm just worried. Anita is lovely, very lovely, but... Could you find out what the people in the village are talking about?

IVETA leaves without waiting for a response.

IVETA. *Then we'll make an exhibition!*

IVETA exits.

SCENE V

Enter ALDIS and JURIS.

ALDIS. (to EDGARS) Everyone is looking for you out there.

EDGARS. We'll do the Spotty Dance next!

ALDIS. The one you infect each other with? Spots I mean...

EDGARS leaves while playing.

ALDIS. Well, what's wrong with you? If I'm telling you it's going to be fine, then it will.

JURIS. Can't I go tomorrow?

ALDIS. How will I arrange it over one day? There's only shitty jobs left in my firm – you can't even feed yourself on those wages.

JURIS. I don't care! I saw on the telly that in London people eat from the bins what we buy for money over here. And I can live with that.

ALDIS. And you will do anything, right? You are ready for everything?

JURIS. Anything that needs to be done!

ALDIS. Will you stand on all fours?

JURIS. Why?

ALDIS. Well, if everything, then anything!

JURIS gets down on all fours.

ALDIS. Idiot! Well, ok, tomorrow I'll work out something, if I don't have a massive hangover. I'll speak to some managers over there. But you don't need to go anywhere tomorrow, ok? Don't pack your bags yet.

JURIS. Day after tomorrow.

ALDIS. Your old man won't leave you alone?

JURIS. He's got an old passport, but he'll find me wherever I go here – friends everywhere.

ALDIS. Give him a lashing for once.

JURIS. We live together... He doesn't hit me...

ALDIS. Do you know any English? How are you? *(in a strong Eastern European accent)*

JURIS. Huh?

ALDIS. Right... Well, nevermind...

ALDIS exit.

JURIS pulls out the bottle from the corner, but, as soon as he puts it to his lips, VELTA and JĀNIS rush into the barn – the bottle gets ripped out of JURIS' hands.

JĀNIS. What were you doing here?

JURIS. Nothing...

JĀNIS. You've been standing on your knees – just look at your trousers!

VELTA. Oh Juris...

JURIS. I am always on my knees! Always!

JURIS rushes outside.

VELTA. Don't be so stern...

JĀNIS. He can't do anything by himself! And then it's so easy for someone to use the lad!

... To be a dad to a boy these days, it's just...

Both drink from the bottle that has been confiscated from JURIS.

SCENE VI

ALISE opens the door to the barn.

ALISE. Where's the best man? Not in here?

JĀNIS. Come in here!

ALISE. We'll have to go sit down at the table.

VELTA. Come in, damnit!

ALISE comes in.

ALISE. What's with the whispering?

JĀNIS. Aldis isn't quite normal, is he?

ALISE. The young couple wanted it to be like that. I was also told to dress like this, so I don't look like an aunt.

JĀNIS. You haven't noticed, how he is walking around?

ALISE. How? I don't even know him that well.

VELTA. And this, what happened here, in this same place, he proper made out with you. At this same barn, some twenty years ago, when Gita was still around.

JĀNIS. Eh? How old was the boy?

VELTA. Do you even appreciate it – I know everything about you, but I'm still offering you... well, what I'm offering.

ALISE. It was a mistake, and happened so long ago...

JĀNIS. Is there still something between you two?

ALISE. No!

JĀNIS. And why not? Why isn't he married yet?

ALISE. How am I supposed to know?!

VELTA. Ok, Jānis is joking. He just wants Aldis' trousers – he's jealous.

JĀNIS. Are you stupid?!

ALISE. Why are you making fun of me?

JĀNIS. If you had shagged him better that time, the boy wouldn't be the way he is.

ALISE. Like what?

JĀNIS. A boys' boy.

VELTA. Questionable...

JĀNIS. Ask him – nowadays you can.

ALISE. Then ask him yourself.

JĀNIS. I'm scared that I'll give him a black eye straight away – it's disgusting!

ALISE. And even if he was? What is it to you? Are you jealous?

VELTA. Have you thought about Kārlis?

ALISE. The bottle is empty. Between the two of you? And Andris' beer to wash it down, right? Isn't it a bit early?

VELTA. I will ring you next week!...

ALISE exit, there is silence for a moment.

VELTA. Maybe really we shouldn't ...like this...

JĀNIS. As you wish! Hmph! I'm jealous – yeah right!

JĀNIS exits, VELTA follows.

SCENE VII

After a moment ANDRIS and KĀRLIS come into the barn.

ANDRIS. Have you ever seen gran bolting around like this? Huge event, everyone is so cheery and happy. Let's go sit down.

Both sit down.

ANDRIS. Are you happy, son-in-law?

KĀRLIS. Yes!...

ANDRIS. Anita is nice.

KĀRLIS. Yes!...

ANDRIS. Both happy?

KĀRLIS. Yes!...

ANDRIS. Are you a woman?

KĀRLIS. Yes!... No!...

ANDRIS. (*laughs.*) Ok, sorry! I'm nervous myself today, it's such a big day for me too.

KĀRLIS. We need to tell you something...

ANDRIS. Don't worry, there's a long evening ahead of us.

KĀRLIS. I... I really will be... well, good to her, honest...

ANDRIS. I see – otherwise I'll kill you, you know that!

They both laugh nervously.

KĀRLIS. It's fantastic that trip – Bahamas, it's always been a big dream...

ANDRIS. That I could die?... Ok, ok, I'm still alive! But what if I do?

KĀRLIS. Why?

ANDRIS. We will all die one day, sooner or later.

KĀRLIS. But you're not yet... you're not... I didn't mean... Why?

ANDRIS. (*laughs.*) Quit it, I was joking, just a joke!

KĀRLIS. We never thought of it like that!...

ANDRIS. But what if it happened? What would you do? Of course, you haven't considered it, but life is life, and suddenly it's the end. Well, are you a man?

KĀRLIS. Bury you...

ANDRIS. (*laughs.*) Oh, and I thought you'd feed me to for foxes on the farm. And then, how would you live?

KĀRLIS. I didn't get married because of money, Mum and I also have...

ANDRIS. Not that! I'm asking what would you do? You have a young wife, your wife's grandmother, about a million bees, about which you don't have a clue, some sort of a house, a barn...

KĀRLIS. I do have a clue...

ANDRIS. Stop. Forget that I'm Anita's dad. Realistically – what would you do?

KĀRLIS. You... are you terminally ill?

ANDRIS. Not that! Just say, I suddenly died, and you...

KĀRLIS doesn't manage to respond – the door opens, ALDIS comes in.

ALDIS. Oh, a top family meeting! The son-in-law is sweaty, the father-in-law is tense, he's going to kick off any minute now...

ANDRIS. (*laughs.*) I've been telling him to call me by my name, not father-in-law. I'm training him!

ALDIS. Everyone is disappearing, but we're about to start Spotty Dance.

ANDRIS. Spotty Dance! Let's go! But where did you get your cool trousers from?

ALDIS. Again...

ANDRIS. I want some too!

ALDIS. I'm a poof.

ANDRIS laughs, exit.

ANDRIS. Let's go, guys and rock this shack! Come on! The beer hasn't run out, has it?

Exit, it's quiet for a moment.

Scene VIII

ALDIS. Maybe that suit was needed after all... What is it? What did he say? Are you in shit? Do you need to pay a ransom for the bride?

KĀRLIS. Nothing, it's ok.

KĀRLIS tries to leave, but ALDIS grabs hold of him and doesn't let him.

ALDIS. Eh, you're not crying, are you? The girl is pregnant from daddy? Or did daddy molest you himself? You are one tasty bite!

Slaps KĀRLIS on the bum, but KĀRLIS rips himself free and leaves without saying anything.

A moment later ALISE rushes in.

ALISE. What happened?

ALDIS. He's a bit edgy, apparently doesn't want to get married anymore.

ALISE. Why?! What?!

ALDIS. He's realised his true calling...Yeah, yeah...

ALISE. Aldis, you're...

ALDIS suddenly shuts the barn door, embraces ALISE and, despite her resistance, kisses her for a while. Slowly ALISE calms down.

For a while it remains quiet.

ALISE. We're years apart...

ALDIS. It was a long time ago...

ALISE. How stupid it was...

ALDIS. Stupid for who?

ALISE. So you've never been married, why?

ALDIS. No one wanted me: too common, the son of a bum alcoholic. I was no use for you either.

ALISE. You were a boy.

ALDIS. Not a girl, obviously.

ALISE. I am a teacher. I would have been sued if I'd gone along with your teen dates.

ALDIS. Stupid teen dates.

ALISE. I didn't say that. Your offer to climb the water tower during a thunderstorm, wasn't, let's say, bad – see, I remember it even now: really wanted to do something so crazy.

ALDIS. Then you should have just climbed!

ALISE. And you'll tell me that I am the one who has ruined your life, yeah?

ALDIS. Yes! I've changed my orientation. What?

ALISE. Here... in the village they say, well... It's not true, is it?

ALDIS. What isn't?... It is. The truth, you know. In England I paint my nails and lashes too.

He lets ALISE go.

ALISE. No! I didn't mean it like that.

ALDIS. But I am! You want to make me bicurious? Ok, you can do that too!

ALISE. Stop it! I'm no...

ALDIS. But that's how it is, my dear! Can't you see how I walk now?

ALISE. It's not like that! Wait!...

ALDIS. The two maids of honour are coming already. We're coming, coming!...

ALDIS exit, ALISE follows.

SCENE IX

Enter IVETA with ANITA.

IVETA. Oh, a tornado! He'll shake that old lady's bones like there's no tomorrow.

ANITA. Kārlis said that you don't like Aldis.

IVETA. For years he was always around our house – as soon as we came down from the city, he was bang down on our sofa. Of course – from his slum to our house: huge contrast. Then Kārlis felt like he was a great man too – an older boy was admiring him: getting up and laying down together. At one point he wanted to learn how to paint – same as Kārlis, but what could have come from that. But, see, now in England he's become some kind of manager, well done. Knows the language, I guess. Are you shaking?

ANITA. No!... Yes. It's been such a day, I couldn't sleep last night! ...

IVETA. I was afraid of my mother-in-law too: I was too common for her. (*Laughs*) No, no. no – don't get me wrong, that's not why I wanted to talk. Are we too posh for you?

ANITA. I don't know, no...

IVETA. Rubbish, you're a great girl... You know, there's one thing I wanted to find out. No, it's clear that you're not a virgin: sorry, I don't have any illusions, and a while back there was this time when neither of you noticed that I was home too. Don't blush, come on! You should be happy about it. I'm talking about something else... Are you that experienced?

Well, in the past, before Kārlis?

ANITA. I don't know...

IVETA. Tens, hundreds – well, more or less.

ANITA. A few...

IVETA. That's bad. I don't know if you're aware but you're probably Kārlis' first: I have my suspicions. He is still so naive, he doesn't understand anything yet. You should teach him. For your own good – so routine doesn't set in after a month. In the bedroom. The more you know, the better.

ANITA. It's good between us...

IVETA. You don't have to lie to me. What are those country boys like? Kārlis can't compare to them?

ANITA. Look, of course he can.

IVETA. The boy must have been watching films then.

ANITA. I don't know. But I... I really don't know, but we've agreed – if one of us suddenly wants, well, to try with someone else, then we just tell each other honestly.

IVETA. Stupid. Really stupid. That's how I ruined my marriage, almost ruined – for just thinking alone Kārlis' dad would... he was a nice person. Basically, if anything, don't suffer alone, come to me, tell me, we'll work it out. Smile, it will be ok. Promise? Will you come?

ANITA. Yes, ok...

IVETA. Maybe you have something on your mind already? No? Nothing? Oh, come on...

ANITA. Kārlis' mum, we are both adults, we can live by ourselves. Kārlis maybe can't tell you right now...

IVETA. Why would he not be able to tell me something?

ANITA. He's like that, you know very well, but he would say this: it will be our life, our own life.

IVETA. Shh, shh, shh, shh... Oh, I recognise myself...

ANITA. Kārlis' mum, I...we're different.

IVETA. It only seems so.

ANITA. We are!...

IVETA. It's ok, it's ok...

IVETA embraces a sniffling ANITA, she lets her.

SCENE X

Enter EDGARS. Momentarily he plays a sentimental melody on his accordion.

EDGARS. A painting by Van Gogh: on the way to a bright new life...

IVETA. You can't even imagine how a woman feels in these days, what she's going through. For you it's just the same, like going for a piss... Spotty Dance and slurping on the beer.

EDGARS. I've arranged it with Dainis. I will give him logs from my forest, him and the other guys will do it by September.

IVETA. What?

EDGARS. To change the foundations of your house. You haven't heard – the best man for the job around here: Dainis. Isn't he, Anita?

ANITA tears herself away from IVETA's embrace and exits.

IVETA. Are you serious?

EDGARS. What's up with the girl? Did you interrogate her?

IVETA. She ran to me for help – alone, without a mum.

EDGARS. Now I'm searching for a *Jaguar*. The logs will be there, I'm telling you.

IVETA. You're a fool, honestly.

EDGARS. Juris is nothing in that respect – his old man would stand next to him with a candle.

IVETA. We'll see.

EDGARS. And you won't have to pay anything. I mean, to Dainis.

IVETA laughs, goes outside. EDGARS after her. Accordion plays as they leave.

SCENE XI

Enter JĀNIS and JURIS.

JĀNIS. Guilty as charged! Don't make me think like that!.. Living here, in this rut, you don't know about all this. You won't even notice when it's... done and over! Because, us – the normal ones, can't even imagine it, we just don't expect it. We think that it's a nice, lovely conversation, I don't know – about the weather, harvest – but he goes behind you: to grab a beer, let's say, and... There, in the city, they fuck anything that moves... Sometimes even anything that doesn't move. No, not tractors, let's say but... all kinds of things. Listen to me! Who else is going to tell you?! I know, I've been in departmental ministries... I swore to your mum...

JURIS. But it's not like that, dad!... I just tied my shoe, squatted down...

JĀNIS. You don't have laces!!! Did you tie his?!

JURIS. (*suddenly*) I got down on my knees and begged him to save me from you. So you wouldn't find me. To take me to England with him.

JĀNIS. How much can you bullshit?!... Really... Ok, basically – the situation is favourable to us. Andris saw that we're here, saw what kind of bottle I presented. He just needs to warm up a bit, then we'll go talk. That's one thing. The other – Aldis is a fag: that's for sure. And it means that... well, who is Aldis' best friend, eh? Think about what else it means! Do you get me now? Yeah!... Shh... We keep quiet! Whoever has the final word, that... for that one everything works out. Patience, patience, and once more – patience, as spoken by the great minds. Come on, smile and let' go. Just one small half-pint and no more for you, do you hear me?... Shit, two toilets on all of us, what a queue – heaven-knows-what women are doing in there: there isn't even a mirror in there! They've trimmed the bushes too – I guess they want us to do it in our pockets!

JURIS is leaving.

JĀNIS. Don't even think about telling Andris that you're allergic to bees!

JURIS exits.

JĀNIS. And the tie?!...

JĀNIS goes after him, exits.

SCENE XII

After a moment KĀRLIS and ANITA enter, she is trying to hide her tear-stained eyes – ANITA still sniffing.

KĀRLIS. What for?! Did someone say something to you? About what? Talk to me!... Mum, was it? My dear beloved mother, wasn't it? And what was it about this time?

ANITA. We just need to tell them, we need to tell them sooner, that... that this will be our life, that we have decided it this way, and that it will be so, and that no one can change anything, and that's it. Now, ok? At the table, ok? We need to start with that, ok? What ... what is it now?

KĀRLIS. Your dad... your dad wants to... commit suicide...

After a pause ANITA starts to laugh out loud.

ANITA. It's not funny! Yes, maybe he feels sad – to live without me now, but... it's my dad!

KĀRLIS. Honest!

ANITA. Are you saying this so that we don't have to tell what we've decided?! Is that your masterplan?.. That's it, the posh kid got scared!

KĀRLIS. When gran calls me that, you swear at her!

ANITA. I thought so.

KĀRLIS. No! He wanted to talk to me, and that's when he told me.

ANITA. Fine, so you want *me* to tell everyone what we've decided?

KĀRLIS. I can do it myself, but...

ANITA. No! I won't tell anyone either! If you can't, if you don't want to, then, then we... then we don't really need it, then there is nothing... it's like nothing ever was between us!...

KĀRLIS. But there was! And is! He asked me what I would do if he just died one day!...

ANITA. Do you even understand that for words like that...

KĀRLIS. Maybe not a suicide, maybe he's just ill, but isn't telling us?...

ANITA. Him? Ill? He's never even sick!

KĀRLIS. Then he must have meant suicide.

ANITA. Why?!

KĀRLIS. You're everything to him... his hands were shaking...

ANITA. He likes you too though!

KĀRLIS. I am taking everything from him – first, his daughter, he stays alone with gran, and then... then we're going to say what else we want to, but maybe his heart...

ANITA. I don't understand anything... You're not talking rubbish?

KĀRLIS. Yeah, April fools!

ANITA. But why would he tell you? Not me, not gran...

KĀRLIS. Maybe he can't tell you...

ANITA. (*about the yard*) What's happening there now?

KĀRLIS. Some kind of Spotty Dance, everyone is getting together...

ANITA. I will ask him.

KĀRLIS. And then I will be the gossiper.

ANITA. Then maybe I shouldn't even ask? Not even look? Again your honest word, like back then?

KĀRLIS. Are you going to remind me my whole life? You promised never to bring it up again! For one piece of shit like that...

ANITA. It was Lilith, not a piece of shit!

KĀRLIS. You don't believe me again?!

ANITA. I do! I do!...

KĀRLIS. Ok, I fucked Lilith this way and that, and I told Valdis to lie to you so you wouldn't be able to tell, where I'd been during the night! And now I'm worse than I was back then?

ANITA. I'm sorry, I do believe, I promised!

KĀRLIS. You're shaking! You're not ill?.. Well, what reason do I have to lie? I can come with you. Dad said so.

ANITA. I won't tell him that you gossiped, I will figure some way to get to it. Go, dance in my stead for a bit. Ask your mum.

KĀRLIS. What did my beloved mother do again?

ANITA. Jut asked, how many guys I'd fucked.

KĀRLIS. Her... no!

ANITA. I'm joking. No. Wished me to be bright and sincere.

KĀRLIS. Her? No.

ANITA. Told me about your dad, about her life – sweet.

ANITA has done her make-up again. Both kiss.

ANITA. But what if it won't be like that?...

KĀRLIS. I really want to tell everyone about everything tonight, honestly.

ANITA. If you don't, I'll divorce you.

KĀRLIS. Divorce me then.

ANITA. And I will!

KĀRLIS. Go on, divorce!

ANITA. You know, if I say, then...

KĀRLIS. Should I slit my wrists? Cut my leg? What else, so you would believe me?

ANITA. I love you!...

Both run outside, exit.

SCENE XIII

After a moment there is loud bustle, ALDIS starts to sing out of tune – “Come all you maidens young and fair...all you that are blooming...” VELTA can also be heard. The door opens swiftly as they both come into the barn. ALDIS is wearing a colourful lady’s dress.

ALDIS. Well, what is it? If Alise puts some trousers on, then we’ll have the best man and maid of honour again. Well, granny, what did you want to talk about?

VELTA. This is your best friend’s wedding! Have you been sniffing glue too much lately?! Or have you injected yourself with something, that you’re losing your mind?

ALDIS. No, I am a fag – not a faggot, not an alkie, don’t mix those up – and let’s stop hiding it, I agree! I have come out of the closet! That’s what we say. But everyone already knew it, didn’t they?

VELTA. Says who?

ALDIS. You! Who else can know it so well? After all, you know best and better than anyone else. And anyway – every village needs their fag, agree? It’s better to have someone who’s out of the closet, so there’s no stupid doubts, and during market days you can show him off for money. You’re saying that!

VELTA. Who, me? I’m not saying anything! Whoever says it... says it himself, ok!

ALDIS. But I’m saying I am, gran, so don’t you worry.

VELTA. *(Quietly)* Really?

ALDIS. Doesn’t it look like it? That’s who your granddaughter’s husband’s best friend is. No, that’s the whole reason we’re friends in the first place – haven’t you thought of that?

VELTA. Listen, stop talking rubbish for once! Go and get changed, and be quick about it! Once a bum, always a bum!

ALDIS. With that bum, who is this bum's father, you fucked like there's no tomorrow! Back then, bums were called faggots and alkies. Breathe, granma, breathe – has your poor heart stopped beating?

VELTA. You, swine!!!

ALDIS. Wasn't it so?

VELTA. You've seen it?!

ALDIS. And you liked it kinky!

VELTA. You, shut up!!

ALDIS. And sometimes you even took that Kārlis from Dzeņi to join you, remember? And in front of my eyes! The boy was three years old, and that's why now, see, I am bent...

VELTA. It's not like that! It... it... it's never been like that!!!

ALDIS. No one has simply ever known about it! But they will now – I will finally tell everything, as it happened.

VELTA. Who will believe you?!

ALDIS. Everyone. Everyone will believe me.

VELTA. Kārlis from Dzeņi was dead already back then!

ALDIS. Yeah, maybe there was someone else, that third one, it was so long ago, my memory fails me...

VELTA. It wasn't like that! Don't you dare!!!

ALDIS. What has a young girl like me got to lose?!

VELTA. Aldis, child...

ALDIS. I am not a child anymore.

VELTA. Let's talk? Please...

ALDIS. Like two little sisters?...

VELTA takes ALDIS by hand, takes him outside, exit.

SCENE XIV

When everything goes still, ANITA and ANDRIS enter the barn.

ANDRIS. How did Aldis get drunk so quickly?

ANITA. Let's sit down, dad?

ANDRIS. What is it? Something's wrong? Don't worry: everyone is used to Aldis, it will be ok. I don't even notice it, it's gran who always has a problem. What's with the frown? Eh?

ANITA. I need to talk.

ANDRIS. Kārlis? He's a nice boy, isn't he...

ANITA. I need to talk with you.

ANDRIS. I have to be really serious now?

ANITA. Dad? Are you ill?

ANDRIS. Am I sniffing my nose too loud, or farting too much?

ANITA. I'm serious!

ANDRIS. No. What's up with you?

ANITA. But I'm not dead yet!

ANDRIS. Well, you're not...

ANITA. I understand that it's difficult for fathers to let their daughters go, dad, but life doesn't end because of it. I understand – mum is gone, but I won't be far away.

ANDRIS. Of course...

ANITA. So you didn't tell Kārlis, that you want to commit suicide?

ANDRIS. No!

ANITA. You didn't talk at all?

ANDRIS. We did. You know, before giving your daughter away, you need to look your son-in-law a bit closer in the eye. Nice lad.

ANITA. And nothing about dieing?

ANDRIS. Life is only beginning now!

ANITA unexpectedly starts to cry. ANDRIS throws himself around her.

ANDRIS. Eh, eh, eh, what's up now? It's not... Kārlis isn't...

ANITA. No... We're getting a divorce.

ANDRIS. Already managed to fall out? Oh, kids...

ANITA. No, it's all fine... fine...

ANDRIS. See! Then let's go, let's go.

ANITA. I can't go like this... I'll be just a minute, you go...

ANDRIS. Really everything is fine?

ANITA. I'm just happy. Overwhelmed. Go.

ANDRIS. Don't be long. Some kind of Spotty Dance is coming up. Great fun!

ANDRIS lets go of ANITA and leaves.

ANITA. Dad. I love you very, very much.

ANDRIS embraces ANITA once more, then, wiping a tear off his cheek, quickly exits.

ANITA stares into the small mirror for a while but doesn't fix anything. Then she takes a long ladder, puts it up against the wall and climbs up to the ceiling. Once she has got up there, ANITA pulls the ladder up too.

ANITA disappears.

After a moment accordion starts playing, voices.

IVETA and EDGARS are coming closer.

IVETA. *(voice only)* Spotty Dance, Spotty Dance!...

IVETA swings the door wide open.

IVETA. Folks, Spotty Dance!... Nobody in here?...

ACT 2

SCENE I

JĀNIS and VELTA rush into the barn.

JĀNIS. Ouch, it hurts!!! What's wrong with you, why are you so aggressive?

VELTA. Because of you, the wedding is almost ruined! Best man in skirts!

JĀNIS. That's no reason to hit me!

VELTA. *Faggot, faggot – walks like this and walks like that!* You should be ashamed!

JĀNIS. And yourself?

VELTA. I had doubts! I didn't believe you!

JĀNIS. What did Aldis tell you? You two talked, and suddenly our granny has become a saint!

VELTA. He's just an unlucky soul.

JĀNIS. His father was so unlucky, so unhappy! Because of him I was called into the central committee: top man in the communist circles for his drinking and scandals. And for setting things on fire.

VELTA. He was my lover.

JĀNIS. Why are you putting on this lame act?

VELTA. Is it so hard to believe?

JĀNIS. You wouldn't have given yourself even to Gorbachev – just *my Arnolds, my hubby...*

VELTA. Gave myself to the alkie.

JĀNIS. What did you drink on top of that brandy?

VELTA. The one and only time I cheated on Arnolds. But it went on for six months – right here, in the bushes, around the sheds... I was losing my mind...

JĀNIS. Are you making fun of me?... He stank...

VELTA. You made it all up yourselves – alkie, alkie. He didn't just drink for the sake of drinking, like the rest of you.

JĀNIS. I was having a hard time, and the heads of committee needed it: to get funding, lobby reports...

VELTA. He was building an aeroplane, from veneer, to run away from that world he had all around him.

JĀNIS. What sort of jibberish some people come up with, just to open the legs of the righteous Velta, the wife of the righteous Arnolds.

VELTA. I mean, I had everything, nothing was missing, but... I was completely mad, but in the end... we're a peasant nation – nose in the ground, ass in the air, and keep working from dawn to dusk. And the village would talk.

JĀNIS. A vulgar bum. Alkie.

VELTA. You helped extinguish that Kalns' shed yourself – the veneer sheets, those were that same aeroplane: he set it on fire, when I told him 'no' for the final time. His wife didn't understand him – remember this Russian one?

JĀNIS. They were some sort of boxes, not an aeroplane.

VELTA. What boxes could he have had? Think about it... After all you, Jānis, also tried to get with me.

JĀNIS. I thought that you didn't even notice – not even once...

VELTA. Don't blush now! Shall we get together?

JĀNIS. You what?! Now?!...

VELTA. Got ahead of yourself already? Back then you didn't know how to flirt – I told Arnolds everything, we had a good old laugh.

JĀNIS. What was there even to tell, huh? I had a good wife. And I was drunk myself, I never... I just fluttered my eyelids at the girls, to have some fun while building socialism...

VELTA. Fine, or else we'll be sniffing like we're at some funeral. Maybe you need to apologise to Aldis – I told him that you filled my head with this kind of crap.

JĀNIS. You witch!

VELTA. Let's go, neighbour, and get drunk! All our plans are gone with the wind.

JĀNIS. And what should I do with Juris now?

VELTA. Let him go.

JĀNIS. Let go, yeah right!... Am I the one holding him? I'm letting him do whatever he wants, but he doesn't want to himself. I'm the only one he's got in this world.

VELTA. Just scared that he'll leave you.

JĀNIS. Come on, seriously – let's get together!

VELTA. How much shit can you talk in one night?! I wouldn't even know what to do anymore.

JĀNIS. Well, there are all kinds of educational films, educational magazines... You're by yourself, I am too...

VELTA. Nutcase!

VELTA leaves, JĀNIS after her.

JĀNIS. And why are you telling me all these secrets about your bum romance, huh?

VELTA. Aldis will ask you, if I told you. Otherwise he promised to tell everyone himself...

JĀNIS. And what if I tell everyone now?

VELTA. Go on. I should have done it years ago...

Both exit.

In the yard the accordion is playing, EDGARS and IVETA sing.

After a moment ANITA looks down from the upper floor of the barn – instead of the bride's dress she is wearing tattered old work clothes. ANITA quickly gets herself down the ladder, listening attentively if anyone is coming, and gets down. She doesn't manage to get rid of the ladder – someone is coming towards the barn. ANITA hides herself in the darkest corner of the barn.

SCENE II

ANDRIS rushes into the barn – as if looking for someone, but, when he turns to leave, JURIS also rushes in, breathless.

ANDRIS. Hello, Juris! We don't keep beer in here.

JURIS. Congratulations, uncle Andris!...

ANDRIS. You and Anita your whole life playing right here in this sand, eh? When are you planning to? Have you got a girl in mind?

JURIS. I have something to say...

ANDRIS. What's happened? I mean, you understand that Anita chooses by herself. You're upset, aren't you? Some kind of guy from the city just waltzes in and steals your girl, that's how it is.

JURIS. I'm allergic. Well, swelling. I can choke easily, and then I'm done for. From bees, if they bite me!

ANDRIS. Hang on, hang on – you were at the hive? Deliberately, so they would bite you? Then you should have done it yesterday – now they're married... Oh, Juris!...

JURIS. Two will do it!

ANDRIS. Is it because of Anita?

JURIS. I want... to be happy, like...

ANDRIS. I have this cream at home... You're feeling sick already? Now, can you talk, look at me! Juris, just don't faint!

JURIS. Don't hire me!

ANDRIS. Lay down a sec, I'm going to get gran!

JURIS. I am going to England!

ANDRIS. You will, you will, just lie down...

JURIS. It's fine, I didn't get bitten! I am telling you - don't hire me!

ANDRIS. We haven't talked... What have you been drinking?

JURIS. That's the only reason why my old man is even here! He signed me up to some bee keeper school. He will talk and talk all night, you know!...

ANDRIS. You have an allergy...

JURIS. And then, when Anita divorces Kārlis, apparently I will have filled his shoes already!...

ANDRIS. Nightmare!...

JURIS. He can not find out that I have been saying all these things that I am saying. Promise?!

ANDRIS. What are you going to do?

JURIS. Aldis will take me with him to England! I don't care what I'll have to do there.

ANDRIS. Dad doesn't mean anything bad...

JURIS. If you tell him about England, I... I'll ruin this, your wedding here!

ANDRIS. Woooahh...! I won't, I have no need for it!

JURIS. Promise?!

ANDRIS. Promise. But you're going anyway.

JURIS. He never forgets anything, never.

ANDRIS. Go. When you come back, you'll make up.

JURIS. Never!

ANDRIS. Don't you need money for the way?

JURIS. I'll earn my own! Pounds!

ANDRIS. I'll keep my fingers crossed!... You haven't seen Kārlis? Who's left this ladder here?

ANDRIS goes towards the dark corner of the barn, where a moment ago ANITA was hiding. He runs into something there – something falls and tumbles. ANDRIS swears.

ANDRIS. Help me!

JURIS runs to help ANDRIS – both very carefully carry a humming metal bath tub with a blanket covering it, out from the corner.

ANDRIS. I caught a cluster this morning, didn't have time to do anything with it. Let's get it out, otherwise there are people here – someone has already been rummaging around...

JURIS. These ones bite.

ANDRIS. Oh, put it down! Or else I'll have to go to jail if they bite you!

JURIS. But I don't get swollen – I made it up. Put a needle in and some proper fertilizer in: arm is like a log for a week! For dad.

ANDRIS. Ok, then let's carry it out.

JURIS. Uncle Andris, if you blab to *anyone*, I am telling you, honestly, ok?

ANDRIS. Go, have a proper pig out, while you haven't got to pay for anything with those pounds. Do you know English? (*In a strong accent.*) Shut the door.

JURIS. Eh?

ANDRIS. Shut the door!

Both carry out the humming bath tub.

After a moment ANITA rushes out from the darkness – she has an old, dirty hat on her head, which hides her hair and eyes.

When the barn door is closing, ANITA has nowhere to hide. IVETA and ALDIS come in – he is wearing his own clothes again.

ANITA. (*in a deep voice*) Hello, neighbour! Where's that darned barrel?...

ANITA runs out and exits.

SCENE III

IVETA. What home was this one from? Like flies to a pile of dung...

ALDIS. Well, I fucked up your son's wedding, yeah? Just came over me... my old man always went mental, nerves... Really ashamed...

IVETA. You should never suppress spontaneity – we are people, not rational machines... You too like Anita? Don't, don't be so shocked – you and Kārlis are like brothers.

ALDIS. That's not why I'm mad!

IVETA. You've also slept with her?

ALDIS. No! No!!!

IVETA. Assuming I believed you... Tell me, is Kārlis marrying Anita out of spite for me?

ALDIS. He... he loves her, like.

IVETA. See, you don't even know what that word even means.

ALDIS. Well, they're both happy... There's no other... no other girl like Anita.

IVETA. Original. He's got a hundred other Anitas at the university. If you'd seen those girls, you'd see it the same way as me.

ALDIS. Anita is studying, too.

IVETA. It's funny, but you know – every school is just a little bit different.

ALDIS. I've seen those other Anitas – we barely got away once. All the same...

IVETA. Oh, you poor boys. Barely escaped the horrible girls from the Academy of Art! From all the girls, they really are special, each and every one.

ALDIS. He's not marrying out of spite.

IVETA. But neither of them look genuinely happy. You know more about Anita...

ALDIS. She's not just some commoner.

IVETA. I'm not asking who she's not, but who she is.

ALDIS. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays she stands by a shop, over there. Then in that shed over there in the yard, by the bins, she sells herself. There's quite a crowd, over a week.

IVETA. Fool! How can you not understand, that a woman might wish her child to be happy?! A lonely woman!...

She wipes a sudden tear off her cheek and exits fast.

SCENE IV

After a moment ALISE opens the door cautiously. Then she comes in.

ALISE. Urgh!... I listened... accidentally... We have to go, best man, I was looking for you... You still don't believe me that I didn't intend it this way... You're just... Ok, let's go! Some organisers we are – no one will even remember the young couple, they'll be talking about us shouting and arguing! Come, no one is angry anymore. It's important to you, isn't it? You're just acting all tough.

ALDIS. No one smiles in our village, not in the community either. You were the only one. I was thinking about it just now, here, why is it so: why did I go mad back then, and why I did now. Why do we even notice that someone, and not others...

ALISE. And what now?

ALDIS. I wasn't making a joke –for months I thought that we'll be kissing tonight.

ALISE. Stop! If you just want to snuggle up to someone tonight – then say so.

ALDIS. I don't. No, I do, but don't even wait for it. I mean, tonight. Otherwise you won't believe me.

ALISE. I don't believe anyway, because... because it just can't be.

ALDIS. Let's go to England. I'm not your next door boy over there.

ALISE. You've become a big person over there, haven't you?

ALDIS. Yes. Aldis. I've been eating out of bins for the last six months, but over there it's not so bad. I changed three places before then, but I didn't see a point to work – for what? For who? I slouched around, but at least I wasn't that boy. I will find work both of us, honest.

ALISE. If you don't change your mind by tomorrow.

ALDIS. You'll keep me warm tonight? Or you don't want anything to do with homeless bums and bullshitters?

Both laugh, then kiss clumsily.

A worried KĀRLIS interrupts them.

KĀRLIS. Have you seen Anita?

ALISE. Just now she was...

ALDIS. You're both invited to a wedding! In England. Both of us. What are you looking at?!

ALISE. *(laughs)* Don't listen to him!

ALDIS. I bet we'll be the first ones to have a kid!... What?!

KĀRLIS. Anita's nowhere to be found.

ALDIS. I'm a total idiot! If this was my wedding, I'd run away myself!

Tries to leave but ANDRIS is coming towards him.

ANDRIS. (to Kārlis) Come over here, we need to talk.

KĀRLIS. Where's Anita? With you?

ANDRIS. Come!

Both exit.

Before leaving, ALISE looks into the mirror and smiles at it. Then she leaves too: singing – in the yard the accordion is playing.

SCENE V

It is coming closer, and after a moment IVETA and EDGARS enter the barn. EDGARS is playing a tragic ceremonious song.

IVETA. What's up now, my tragic lover?

Having finished playing, EDGARS puts a red car model in front of IVETA.

EDGARS. *Jaguar.*

IVETA. Well?

EDGARS. The second of four: the logs for the house – that's one, *Jaguar* – two, Dali with moustache – three, and Space. And then you take my surname and maybe my name too. Number two – *Jaguar.*

IVETA. But this is... ridiculous!

EDGARS. You can't stand people who make promises, but never get round to fulfilling them.

IVETA. But you didn't promise anything.

EDGARS. Not me. But you did.

IVETA. (*laughs*) Where did you get this so suddenly, and a *Jaguar* too?

EDGARS. I carry in my pockets all kinds of brands, just in case. Not the old Soviet old-timers – girls don't want anything to do with those.

IVETA. Why haven't you got a girl?

EDGARS. Not true – I love only girls.

IVETA. (*laughs*) I've tested it myself that it's not true.

EDGARS. But back then maybe it was just as a formality – what's the difference where you do it, if it's a woman or a crack between two planks...

IVETA. It wasn't very formal.

EDGARS. Apparently you were really drunk back then.

IVETA. And if we're talking seriously.

EDGARS. Musicians don't dance, we just play. But afterwards everyone is either too drunk or gone.

IVETA. Life is too simple here for you?

EDGARS. Then I wouldn't be here – I'm a townie, from Riga. And so are you.

IVETA. Sometimes it really does seem that here is best. No one has to play any games...

EDGARS. But you can't admit that. It's not proper.

IVETA. I'm so proper?

EDGARS. Yes.

IVETA. Then that's what you like about me?

EDGARS. No.

IVETA. What then?

EDGARS. Usually you are not yourself.

IVETA. And where am I myself?

EDGARS. In your pictures.

IVETA. There anyone can paint whatever they like.

EDGARS. But not you. You don't pretend there.

IVETA. How do you know?

EDGARS doesn't manage to respond – KĀRLIS runs inside: he is very worried.

KĀRLIS. Anita isn't here?

IVETA. (*about the Jaguar*) Look at your mum's new car!

KĀRLIS. Anita's disappeared.

IVETA. (*laughs*) Stolen! Wait, Kārlis, let's talk a bit.

KĀRLIS. Need to go looking!

IVETA. Edgars is going too, isn't he? When you find him, we'll do one of your... Pimple Dance!

EDGARS. (*about the car*) Don't lose it.

EDGARS exit.

SCENE VI

KĀRLIS. Mum, let's go!

IVETA. Can I beg for just thirteen seconds out of your day? Sit down, please.

KĀRLIS sits down grudgingly.

IVETA. For me too, by the way, this is a special day, and not just because you seem to be happy. It's nice, what else can I say anymore. But have you consider just for a minute how my life is changing? No, no, no – I'm not going to whine about my loneliness! I wish I could. No, today I need to tell you what I promised your dad, before he closed his eyes for the final time. That I will raise you until this day, and then I can be free. Yes, that's right. I am getting married... You don't even want to know who he is?

KĀRLIS. An artist... a poet...

IVETA. Wrong! He's a biker. In black leathers, drives a Harley – I sat at the back of it once: can you imagine?

KĀRLIS. Ok.

IVETA. That's all you can say to me?

KĀRLIS. Why is there a ladder?

IVETA. I'm going to get very upset in a moment.

KĀRLIS. You could have married the whole time.

IVETA. I made a promise to your dad...

KĀRLIS suddenly gets up and climbs the ladder, disappears at the top of the barn.

IVETA. You're interested in bats more than me, is that it? Kārlis, life is a lot more complicated than it seems at first, believe me...

Suddenly KĀRLIS appears again with ANITA'S wedding dress in his hands.

IVETA. Right! She's dumped you!... Why?...

KĀRLIS rushes down.

KĀRLIS. It was a misunderstanding!

IVETA. Hang on, in life there are no misunderstandings and accidents! Wait a minute!

She pulls KĀRLIS back forcefully from running away.

IVETA. Maybe it's a sign? Do you hear me? Brides don't just run away like that!

KĀRLIS. I talked it over with dad – with Andris – I had misunderstood everything, I'm a fool!

IVETA. You're not a fool, Kārlis! If your dad was here today...

KĀRLIS. (*interrupts*) My dad? My dad refused to come here, he didn't want to shock you.

IVETA. Oh, hilarious! How could he...

KĀRLIS. He's not dead! And I've known about it for the last five months! Anita and I looked for him, she found him. He's a great person, promised you that he would never bother you again – you made him swear.

IVETA. I didn't!...

KĀRLIS. For you... nothing was ever enough!

IVETA. Yes, nothing is enough for me!

KĀRLIS. You have never believed, trusted!

IVETA. I've always been honest!

KĀRLIS. He has too!

IVETA. What did you talk about?!

KĀRLIS. He is a simple builder.

IVETA. I know!

KĀRLIS. You do? Been following him all these years?...

IVETA. Just don't say that he was too common for me!

KĀRLIS. But it's true!

IVETA. I don't stereotype people!...

KĀRLIS. Why did he have to swear?!

IVETA. If he had wanted it so much, he could have called – big deal that he swore! I even hoped, yes... He wanted it? Married me! He married again - already six years later!

KĀRLIS. You know, there's another thing: I ran away from the Art Academy in my very first year. To the repulsive Technical, to computers, to the insane IT!... Sorry.

KĀRLIS rids himself, but IVETA caught him again and squeezes him tight.

IVETA. Wait!... I... love you.. very, very much! Do you hear! Very much!...

KĀRLIS rushes outside, exits.

KĀRLIS. Anitaaaaaa!...

IVETA. Shit, shit, shit!!!... Idiot! Stupid cow! Idiot! Stupid cow!

Then she too runs out of the barn.

In the yard from all around the wedding guests are calling ANITA's name. The mood is noticeably nervous, despairing.

SCENE VII

After a moment VELTA and JĀNIS rush into the barn. He is stooped again – like he’s just been hit.

JĀNIS. Stop with your fighting!

VELTA. You? You?!!!

JĀNIS. I’ll have to hit a woman for the first time in my life!

VELTA. Stole the bride?! To make Andris give Juris a place here! We had agreed that no one would steal the bride – I hate traditions like that! You! You?

JĀNIS. Are you even following what you’re saying?! Maybe I’m bald but I’m not stupid yet to go around stealing brides!

VELTA. Then I’m the stupid one?

JĀNIS. Yes, you guessed it! What, I would have to force Andris to do it? Juris is so good, he could easily get that place anyway.

VELTA. I’m stupid!... We need to search!

JĀNIS. You really didn’t plan to steal the bride?

VELTA. No. But you never know what you’ll get from Aldis.

JĀNIS. And he’s pretending to be looking for her! I’m going to give him a good bashing in a minute! Let’s go!

VELTA. I’m sorry, Jānis. It didn’t hurt much, did it?

JĀNIS. My Mary too used to do it too... but rarely and not so much...

VELTA. This is the first time I’m hitting someone actually. You don’t believe me?

JĀNIS. If you hit someone, it means you love them.

VELTA. Idiot!

JĀNIS suddenly notices ANITAS left wedding dress.

JĀNIS. Wait! If someone did steal her, they wouldn’t have stolen her naked, would they?

VELTA. Madness!...

JĀNIS. Ran away herself? Doesn’t add up, it can’t be. Then...

VELTA. Madness!!!... Anitaaaa!!!...

VELTA runs ahead, JĀNIS runs after him out from the barn, but there he sees ANDRIS and KĀRLIS in front of them.

SCENE VIII

ANDRIS. Where was it?... That's what I was wondering – who's put the ladder up?

VELTA. Andris, Kārlis – Anita is... no one would steal her while she's naked!...

ANDRIS. No one?! No one?!...

He grabs JĀNIS by the shirt.

Where is your Juris?!

JĀNIS. What's the boy got to do with it?!

ANDRIS. I should have given you a beating long ago – to twist the boy's mind like that!

JĀNIS. What's wrong with you?!

VELTA. Andris, leave Jānis alone!

ANDRIS. Sweet, innocent Jānis? His little Juris promised to ruin this wedding!

JĀNIS. It can't be true! He's not bothered about girls that much yet...

ANDRIS. What do you know about him? What?! The boy is shooting up fertilisers just so you'd leave him alone and wouldn't boss him around! I would have exploded a long time ago if I were him, probably stabbed you! You're not letting him live!

VELTA. Leave Jānis alone!

ANDRIS. You should kiss him too!

VELTA. And I will!

ANDRIS. Go on, mum, kiss him then!

VELTA. And I will kiss him, son.

ANDRIS. Kiss!!!

VELTA kisses JĀNIS.

VELTA. Yes, he sometimes chastens the boy a bit, but he wants, to make it better, so that... How could you even think such a thing?!

ANDRIS. Twice Juris promised to ruin everything...

KĀRLIS. But without the dress!

JĀNIS. He wouldn't... no, it can't be.

ANDRIS. What do we know about what goes on in that boy's head. You don't know anything about him...

JĀNIS. *(To Kārlis)* Why aren't you protecting your wife, hero?!

ALDIS and ALISE rush in.

ALDIS. Quiet! The guests still think it's just a joke...

ALISE. We've been dancing so much!

JĀNIS. *(to Kārlis, about Aldis)* See, this one is more likely to be a rapist! The young billionaire comes down from England, and the girl is head over heels!

ALDIS. But I'm a faggot – you have the proof apparently!

JĀNIS. But what if you like both... I mean, don't mind either?!

ALISE. Will you shut up?!

JĀNIS. O-ho, what's this here? Kiss!!!

VELTA gives JĀNIS a loud slap.

IVETA and EDGARS rush in.

IVETA. Everyone's disappeared now – the guests are by themselves!

ANDRIS. *(to Edgars)* Then go and play another dance – it has to be merry!

EDGARS. We need to look! Some bum was wandering around here earlier.

IVETA. I saw him! He was in here!

JĀNIS. And where's Juris?

ANDRIS. What did that bum look like?

IVETA. Trousers... blazer... a hat...

VELTA. From Paulēni!

ALDIS. So they walk around naked anywhere else?

EDGARS. *(to Andris)* Take my car! Let's say that my accordion is broken – that we need to go into town quickly to fetch another one!

ALISE looks into the yard through a crack in the wall.

ALISE. Juris is nowhere to be found...

ANDRIS. Let's go, Kārlis!

ALISE. Oh, look who's coming over there – it's Juris with... with that bum!!!!...

As the door opens, JURIS and ANITA come in – she takes off the hat only once she is in the barn.

KĀRLIS runs to embrace ANITA.

VELTA. Grandad has been resurrected – the old trousers...

KĀRLIS. You don't understand! I didn't understand, forgive me!...

JĀNIS. *(to Juris)* And what are you doing with her?!

VELTA. Leave him alone for once!

ANITA. We ran away, both of us...

ANDRIS. I'm sorry, I'm completely stupid...

VELTA. What's up with all this moaning? What is it?

ALDIS. Because of me, yeah?

ALISE. It was a misunderstanding!

VELTA. Right, ok, now they're gonna start crying too! Out, everyone, out! The young ones stay – Anita, child, get dressed, now! Out, I'm telling you! (*To Edgars.*) Go and start that Shitty Dance, come on! Out, out!

JĀNIS. Come on, one by one – so it's not suspicious. Nothing's happened, dear wedding guests, it's all ok, it's ok! Come on!...

JĀNIS leads everyone out of the barn one by one. The last ones to remain are JĀNIS and JURIS.

ANITA. Thank you, Juris.

ANITA kisses the shy JURIS on the cheek.

Uncle Jānis, they're waiting for you there!

JĀNIS. I'm not going to do anything to the boy, what are you on about?

ANITA. He is a very good person.

JĀNIS. I know that myself. My son!...

JURIS. Well, go on!

JĀNIS. Go on what?

JURIS. You go first.

JĀNIS. (*laughs*) Are you going to shoot me in the back?

ANITA. Well, Juris, tell him already! Well? Or I will.

JURIS. I am going away... I'm going away tomorrow...

JĀNIS. You? Away?... Well, finally then, boy! A man, a real man! My son! Let's go!...

Both exit. In the yard the wedding guests start to dance, accordion is playing.

SCENE IX

ANITA embraces KĀRLIS, he is fighting against it for a good while.

KĀRLIS. Need to get dressed...

ANITA. He talked me out of it...

KĀRLIS. He can talk, can he?

ANITA. He didn't even talk me out of it, simply told me, while we were walking to the bus, told me about himself, where he was going. To England... To be honest, we don't have any problems.

Finally ANITA manages to hug KĀRLIS, he lets her do it.

KĀRLIS. Honestly, I misunderstood.

ANITA. I know! Will you forgive me?

KĀRLIS. Forgive *me!*

ANITA. I was so mad at you. I'd get a divorce! I had already decided! I'd strangle you!

KĀRLIS. Dad meant something else – he really has a real bomb for us.

ANITA. What?

KĀRLIS. I promised him that I wouldn't tell anyone – he wants to say it himself.

ANITA. I'll divorce you!

KĀRLIS. He made me swear!

ANITA. I'll strangle you!

KĀRLIS. Then strangle me! I made a promise my father-in-law!

ANITA. Did you tell him about our bomb too?

KĀRLIS. No. When everyone will be together. Andris will gather everyone, and then we will too. I want to, really, I will tell, you have my word!

ANITA stifles KĀRLIS's mouth with a kiss...

ANITA. I believe you. And it's not even that important.

KĀRLIS. It is! And that Lilith that time...

ANITA. I believe you now and always, and always – that's important. Nothing else.

In the yard the accordion stops playing suddenly. The wedding guests start to chant together "Kiss!"

ANITA. The dress! Someone could come in – stand on guard!

ANITA rushes to change her dress in the darkest corner of the barn. KĀRLIS is looking through the window where the guests are still chanting "Kiss!"

KĀRLIS. You know... mum is getting married.

ANITA. No way! And you believe her?

KĀRLIS. Yes. We talked. Some kind of biker.

ANITA. Did you tell her about dad?

KĀRLIS. Yes. She... she said she... loves me...

ANITA has changed – she embraces KĀRLIS from behind, presses herself against him.

ANITA. You're happy now?

KĀRLIS. A girl. The first one will be a girl.

ANITA. A boy! A boy, I'm telling you!

KĀRLIS. Girl!

ANITA. Boy!!!...

When ALDIS opens the barn door, both are kissing again.

ALDIS. Can't get used to it? Now you are allowed to kiss, even when the adults are watching! ...

As the guests call "Kiss!" the young couple kiss.

Then everyone exits – the accordion is playing, everyone sings.

SCENE X

Moments later, JĀNIS and JURIS walk in.

JĀNIS. Hit! Come on then, hit me!... Haven't got the guts?! Come on hit me if I tell you!

JURIS. Why?

JĀNIS. Or else I will!

JURIS. You promised.

JĀNIS. I lied. Come on!

JURIS awkwardly punches JĀNIS.

JĀNIS. Do it again! Haven't I deserved it? You want to – then do so! More, I tell you!

JURIS hits again. Then again and again.

JĀNIS. Feel better? More!

Then JURIS' punches don't stop anymore – JĀNIS starts to dodge them, but JURIS has got into a frenzy.

JĀNIS. Enough, enough, enough! Stop, stop, stop!...

But JĀNIS can only stop his son by embracing him tightly.

For a moment they both stay still.

JĀNIS. Mum wasn't even at the wheel when... well, when we crashed. I just thought, what good will it do, if I tell them, how it really was, that I was guilty. They'd put me away, you too – in some kind of orphanage... I killed mum. And all these years... it's worse than prison. We were both totally pissed – we were simply driving to get more vodka. I only remember how she didn't want to... I made her, because I wouldn't have been able to buy it, to go into the shop. You waved to us with your little hand – you were doing something round the shed. I killed her. Mum has never appeared to me in any dreams or anything, but even now I wait every night... What will I tell her, what will she say about you, about the

way I've... Forgive me, but I've always wanted only... In our day, kids weren't in fashion, well, just like a dog, who sits at home and that's it – I didn't know, didn't understand...

JURIS. Dad, I'm not going anywhere...

JĀNIS. Go! Get away from here! Live by yourself, live for real! Not like... I too used to be a big guy around here... Go! You will be too – see, even you, the little tramp Aldis can. Go!!!...

Now JĀNIS is punching JURIS playfully.

JURIS. No, I... now we've talked and I... And you know, you confessed to me a while ago, you just don't remember, you were really wasted... I was eleven and I swore on that one day that I would... definitely would...

He doesn't manage to finish, JĀNIS embraces him. JURIS also embraces his father. Then VELTA comes in suddenly.

VELTA. That's what I thought – you're torturing him again!

JĀNIS. Juris, this woman... I love her!

VELTA. He's totally drunk now!

JĀNIS. It wasn't an aeroplane – some cheap postal boxes: he was brainwashing you.

VELTA. Juris, take your dad home!

JĀNIS. Life isn't over yet!

VELTA. We are old people, Jāni!

JĀNIS. Juris, stay here a while. Don't go home until I come back. Velta, I will show you something – I have this thing at home...

JĀNIS embraces VELTA, she resists.

VELTA. To hell with you!!!

But then the door opens, and all the others come in, except EDGARS: he plays another wedding song to all the guests.

SCENE XI

ANDRIS. We were looking for you, mum! We have this family thing here that we need to talk through, the new family thing, I should say.

JĀNIS. We're going.

VELTA. Stay, stay – you're no strangers.

ANDRIS is very tense, that's why he can't stop laughing.

ANDRIS. Let's all sit down, so I don't fall over!.. I wanted it, so that it's only us, the closest ones, because I have something to say to the closest ones. We're a large family now. The best man and the maid of honour are sort of like family members too, aren't they?... I... On this day I... I made up a whole speech but now... Every night I was practising... Ok, right. In two words – I'm getting married!

Silence for a while.

ALDIS. There were three words...

ANDRIS. You don't know her. Mum, you might remember but probably not: we studied together at the academy, and now five years ago at the Song and Dance Festival, by chance, suddenly .. Solveiga is her name...

VELTA. That fat one?

ANDRIS. Yes, I've fallen in love!

VELTA. Five years and... How did you?...

ANITA embraces ANDRIS, kisses him.

ANITA. That's great, dad!

ANDRIS. But that's not the main point. No, well, it is important, but... I don't know how to say... Well, basically – we live only once and so I thought... We get attached to a place, so much that it becomes like our wife, mother, lover – but after all, it's just a place... the land has been, it is and will be, what can we do... No, this is the land of my birth... And everything remains with you anyway... I don't know how to say. All these years we've lived well, and we have a million bees, and everything is going really, really well...

VELTA. You sold... our home?...

ANDRIS. Yes, I give it up!... No! I leave it all to the young ones, I am leaving!...

Quiet for a moment.

ALDIS. Now that was a real bomb.

ANDRIS. I've thought it all over, everything is prepared – the children just need to take over, to carry on.

JĀNIS. And what will you do? Just with that Solveiga, I mean...

ANDRIS. She has ostriches, a farm! Like elephants! Ostriches suit me better than bees, eh? Anita knows everything around here, Kārlis picks things up quickly, rather quickly...

IVETA. But they... but they won't even be here, they'll live in the city.

VELTA. The old hag will do everything, won't she? Shouldn't we have talked it all over sensibly, huh?

ANDRIS. If it was talked over sensibly, it would never get done. And it's not a funeral, is it?

VELTA. Has it been so bad for us to live here?

IVETA. Kārlis, put on those wellies!...

Suddenly ANITA starts to laugh out loud – she's laughing and she can't stop.

VELTA. (*to Andris*) Now, you see – the child is in hysterics! You made this happen! You selfish person! Only thinks about himself! Now there's only that Solveiga for him... Come, child!...

ANITA. Kārlis wants to... we too have a bomb, real bomb.

KĀRLIS. We have decided... before all of this happened, we would have said it anyway, because we had already decided, that let's say...

VELTA. Right, I am going to hang myself!...

KĀRLIS. We will live here, we are moving here...

IVETA. Kārlis!...

VELTA. Let's both go and hang ourselves...

ANDRIS. But then... I didn't know, I was afraid: that's why I tried to interrogate you!...

ANDRIS embraces KĀRLIS.

IVETA. Kārlis, but what about your studies, work can come later?...

ANITA. They have a 4G tower here now, but... we want to be here, we both do, Kārlis' mum!

IVETA. (*to Andris*) You arranged it with them on purpose?! There is no Solveiga, is there? It was all made up just so would seem like that there is no other way out, right?

ANDRIS. I really didn't know, I just... Are you actually alive? You... well, just fall in love for once!

IVETA. Like I need to?! And then carry around a hulk like you my whole life...

ANDRIS. I am taken!

ALDIS. (*to Kārlis*) Then you will need workers – I am staying here.

ANITA. And what about England?

ALDIS. We have a couple of bombshells too. (*embraces Alise*). We are staying here.

ALISE. I haven't even had the chance to think...

ALDIS. What is there to think? One look at me and everything decides for itself!

VELTA. Circus! A real circus! Then I have a bomb too, the mother of all bombshells! (*drags JĀNIS in the middle*). I am also getting married!

IVETA. You are all insane, is it some kind of virus? Juris, don't even look at me – I won't marry you.

VELTA. Well why not – if everyone, then everyone!!!

JĀNIS. I am happy with that, my dear neighbour!

JĀNIS kisses VELTA. She breaks free.

VELTA. But what will happen now?! Are you even following?! What will be, how will it be?...

ANDRIS. We will be happy... Sounds stupid, I agree. But that's how it will be.

VELTA. And what if it won't be?! And it won't be – our land is staying here, our land! Our sacred land!!!

Awkward silence for a moment,

ANDRIS. Muuum, the guests are waiting again! Are we ever going to sit down at that table?! Some nightmare wedding...

VELTA. Everything has turned on its head! We don't even have a clue, what will happen now! But we have to go and put smiles on now?

ANDRIS. Yes! Why not? What will happen then? It's all clear that it will come true.

JĀNIS. It's clear that it's clear!

VELTA. You too?!...

VELTA runs ahead, JĀNIS follows.

JĀNIS. Velta, I will show you something...

Laughing, ANDRIS opens the barn door, everyone else spills out into the yard.

ANITA. Dad! It's not true, is it? I'm dreaming. Or having a nightmare.

ANDRIS. I think it will get worse... I understand gran: all standards have been torn away, having to think with your own head, when nothing is told in advance... And what's that with her and Jānis? Two adults but acting like fools, huh?

ANITA. You were fooling us too – for five years. How could you?

ANDRIS. Solveiga will come over tomorrow. Don't be angry. I was really scared: it's not how people should behave. It was just an excuse that you should get married first, so that our sacred land gets sorted...

ANITA. That's so good, dad!...

KĀRLIS. Mum, let's go! I know, I understand, that today for you all this is a bit... a bit much...

IVETA. I'll just stay here and ... cry for a moment. Ok? Go! Go!!!...

All exit, IVETA stays by herself. There is bustle in the yard, the guests shout “Kiss!” again and sing.

SCENE XII

IVETA wipes the tears away quickly, then takes her heels off, throws them away, at the top of the barn. Then she messes up her elegant hairdo.

When IVETA has gathered herself, she is about to go outside, when EDGARS comes into the barn. He is wearing a big, droopy fake moustache.

IVETA. Oh! The real man?... We have to go to the table?

EDGARS. Dali. That artist with the moustache which you ordered. The third thing.

IVETA laughs out loud.

IVETA. Dali didn't have a moustache like that! You haven't seen Dali?

EDGARS. What kind did he have then?

IVETA. His was pointing upwards!

EDGARS. Even the moustache?

IVETA. The moustache was pointing upwards, you fool! What else is there?

EDGARS. That's the fourth thing – to take you into Space. With the moustache, or without?

IVETA. Stop it!

EDGARS. Everyone else went to the table. Shall we?...

He stands by the ladder, which still hasn't been taken down.

IVETA. A bit quick, isn't it?...

EDGARS. When will be the right moment?

IVETA stays a while, then climbs up. EDGARS follows her. Both disappear into darkness.

After a while fireworks blossom in the yard with a loud bang.

One rocket, then another, then third, and finally a whole cluster.

The wedding guests are cheering louder with each explosion.

Through the cracks, light pours into the old barn – it's glowing.

* * * * *