

Lauris Gundars

RABBIT'S SONG

A comedy

Cast:

Arnold
Liana
Robert

All in their fifties

Translated by
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Arnold's and Liana's apartment, the living room: high ceilings, spacious, in need of renovation, with furniture reflecting various time periods. The curtains covering the large window are tightly drawn.

Along one wall lean mirrors of various sizes and shapes – they have been positioned so as to permit a continuous reflection. A mechanical metronome ticks loudly at a medium fast tempo – to its rhythm ARNOLD, observing his image in the mirrors, is performing dance step combinations. He repeats these several times – until he does not miss a step of the dance sequence. Then very swiftly he heads for the cupboard – emerging again from behind its opened doors having changed his pants: instead of jeans he is now wearing violet, rhinestone-encrusted flared pants. A bit too small for him, a string wound round his waist to hold them up. After studying his reflection from all sides in the mirror, Arnold turns off the dusty ceiling light and tips a floor lamp against a chair so that it illuminates him like a projector. On the cupboard Arnold leans a desk lamp in the opposite direction. Now he is at the centre where the light from the two lamps intersects – his pants glittering brightly at every step. Arnold alters the metronome to a faster tempo, thus increasing the drama of the dance. Apparently Arnold is satisfied with what he sees in the mirrors. He dances from the right to the left and from the left to the right. And back again. And forward again. Finally, not missing a beat, Arnold grabs a slender vase from a shelf – he lifts it to his mouth as if it were a microphone.

ARNOLD *(singing)*

*March forward, rabbit, forward march,
March forward, open the door, open wide...
To rai-rai-rai-rai-rai-rai-rai- di - ra-ra,
March forward, rabbit, forward march...*

While Arnold is singing. LIANA enters the room. She has obviously just come in, wearing her street clothes. For a good while she stares unmoving and unseen at Arnold's performance. Finally when Arnold catches sight of her in the mirror, startled he lets out a loud cry.

ARNOLD You should knock at least!!! ...

As if wishing to hide, he vanishes behind the closet door. In the light of the turned on lamps everything in the room seems to pale.

ARNOLD Why have you come?! It's only Friday! Only Friday, for God's sake?!

LIANA They let us go early ...

For a good while there is only the sound of the metronome ticking.
Arnold comes out from his hiding place to stop the metronome.

LIANA We worked later yesterday, so they let us go earlier – to be with our families, for Saturday ...

ARNOLD Then you should at least have called! Was it so difficult?!

Liana does not answer. But then Arnold suddenly hugs her, kisses her passionately, and lifting her, twirls her around a couple of times.

ARNOLD Guess three times – what is happening here?! One – two – three: you won't guess! Don't even try! Well, I'll give you some possibilities! I have gone mad, for example! Well, guess! Look, it's in the blood, in my genes! See! I tell you, sit down, sit! See – how feet remember!

ARNOLD One, and turn, two, three, to the left – one, and two, three, forward, turn around, spin the head around quickly! And one, and turn, head this way! And - back again! ... Do you remember?! Precisely: feet, head, arms, voice – nothing has changed, not a thing! Unbelievable! You see! You do see?!

Liana nods in agreement.

ARNOLD Answer me – you do see? Aloud! Something has happened? Has it? Has it not? Well then, please: - at least answer, if it's not too hard for you! As if you were here alone - as if I didn't exist?!

Liana opens her mouth to speak, but Arnold does not stop talking, not even for a moment.

ARNOLD Perhaps it surprises you, but not me – it's the same as breathing – you simply can't forget how. Wake up in the middle of the night – and you know how! One, and a turn, two, three, to the left – one – one ... I hate that word, but ... yes, professional. Terribly professional! When your balls don't get tangled up! No? Are you listening?! If you're not interested in this, you can leave! I'm not stopping you!

LIANA I'm listening.

ARNOLD Nobody is forcing you to sit here – leave! Get up and go! Go, I say!

And Liana in fact suddenly swiftly gets up and goes out of the room. Arnold stops mid-step, but eventually continues his dance but without his previous fervour. Then he reaches for the top of the cupboard and lifts down his guitar – coated with dust.

ARNOLD (*shouts*) Tune the axe! Do you hear?! I need it tuned! I'm going to play! ...

After a while Liana in fact comes back to fulfil Arnold's request. She has taken off her coat and boots, and has put on a simple housedress and slippers. Liana expertly tunes the guitar. Arnold in the meantime has begun voice exercises, which progressively become louder and louder, although they are not always very successful.

LIANA I can't hear.

ARNOLD Why don't you ask what's happening here? Is nothing happening? Life is continuing in its normal groove, is that it? Even a *tsunami* - an earthquake - would not wake you up, as I see it? Hey, wake up – what's happening here?

LIANA I see.

She doesn't stop tuning the guitar. Arnold is kissing Liana's neck and her back.

ARNOLD But why? Why is what's happening happening?! And what does not happen every day. And why? Well, ask – why do I have to prompt you!

LIANA Why?

But Arnold however does not answer right away. He relishes the lengthy pause.

ARNOLD We are going to be recorded. A disc. Two discs. Maybe. They're going to listen to us and then record ... Now you can ask, who?

LIANA Who?

She gives the tuned guitar back to Arnold.

ARNOLD It's the truth, honestly! They phoned me this morning: they know us, have known about us for a long time! They also said so:

Everything is clear about you: who's who! That's what they said!
No, you can, of course, not believe me!

LIANA I believe you.

ARNOLD At least don't lie!

LIANA Can I take the washroom mirror?

ARNOLD I could also become offended.

Not saying anything, Liana nonetheless takes the mirror she needs out of the row of mirrors. Having put down his guitar, Arnold hurries to follow her – the mirror is taken away from Liana. Arnold positions himself barring the doorway of the room.

ARNOLD Look, look – do you know this woman? Do you know her? I don't! Once I knew another! Not her! Look!

LIANA I'm tired ...

The mirror in Arnold's hands slips lower and lower.

LIANA Do you feel ill? Did you take your medicine today? Did you take it?! Do you hear me? ...

Suddenly Arnold puts the mirror down and embraces Liana passionately. He kisses her.

ARNOLD I'll feed you. I'll make supper for you! I'll set the table right now ...

LIANA You haven't eaten at all? In two days.

ARNOLD Surely you brought something, didn't you? Something tasty, isn't that so? Did you bring something? Strawberry yoghurt? Did I guess?

LIANA Yes.

Arnold continues to kiss Liana.

ARNOLD I'll unpack your bag, right away – sit for a while! I'll do it right now. I'm as hungry as a wolf. A-a-am: I'll eat this housedress, these pantyhose! ...

Liana bursts out laughing. Then she shrieks: Arnold has unexpectedly lifted her up in his arms.

ARNOLD You will never ever have to work again!

LIANA You're crazy! I'm heavy!

ARNOLD You'll live like a princess, a queen! I swear: you'll lack nothing!

LIANA I've gained three kilos! Do you hear? You haven't taken your medicine!...

And Arnold does in fact collapse, not being able to handle Liana's weight.

LIANA Are you feeling ill?! ...

However Arnold laughs – and they both are now lying on the floor.

ARNOLD Tomorrow you'll hand in your resignation! Yes, tomorrow! Enough is enough.

LIANA Tomorrow is Saturday.

ARNOLD Then the day after tomorrow!

LIANA It can't be done on Sunday ...

Arnold gets to his feet swiftly.

ARNOLD Are you even listening to what I'm saying? Don't take me for a fool!

LIANA We'll eat soon ...

Also she has got to her feet

ARNOLD I tell you: it's a new start in life, I slave day and night, but she – *Saturday is a holiday!* Thanks a lot! Of course, can I be believed?! I'm up in the clouds, a fool of a dreamer! But someone has to earn money for bread and yoghurt, don't they?! And then *Saturdays, Sundays with the family!* ...

LIANA When did you have lunch?

Arnold again grabs the mirror, and for a moment shoves it into Liana's face, only to throw it down afterwards with a grand gesture. The mirror shatters.

ARNOLD And don't forget: I'm without doubt hysterical as the whole world knows. *He'll scream and holler and then it will be over ...*

LIANA Dinner will be ready in three minutes.

ARNOLD Thanks, but no thanks. I'll manage. I'm not hungry. Go on: you're tired and hungry. Go.

Not responding, Liana heads for the door.

ARNOLD You must know that it will be very bad if you leave right now.

And Liana stops on the doorstep. She doesn't turn around. For a good while there is silence in the room.

ARNOLD I phoned all of them. Everyone. Tomorrow at five, here ...

Liana turns around swiftly.

LIANA Everyone?

ARNOLD Yes. Andrew lives somewhere else ...

LIANA And they agreed?

ARNOLD Tomorrow at five, here ... Now do you believe me?

LIANA And they'll be here?

ARNOLD They promised to be. All of them.

Arnold, laughing, wants to embrace Liana, but she evades him this time.

LIANA They're going to play.

ARNOLD First they'll come here. Tomorrow at five they'll have the greatest surprise of their life. They still don't know what you know.

LIANA They're going to be here?

ARNOLD (*laughing*) Your blood is starting to boil too, isn't it? And now guess who's going to listen to us, who will record us. I'll give you three guesses – I bet you won't guess! Well – the possibilities! You will never guess, don't even try! Please sit down, otherwise you'll fall down! At least hold on to something! (*ceremoniously*) And the lucky winners are! ...

The rest Arnold whispers in Liana's ear.

ARNOLD *(after a pause)* Did you hear? ...

In comparison to what she has heard previously, whatever has been whispered by Arnold, obviously is not cause for any excitement for Liana.

LIANA Yes ...

ARNOLD Yes, I was also dumbfounded – they have not invited anyone from this latitude, no one! We are the first. No – the only ones! They have refused everyone, absolutely everyone. Even Little Alex. How he has turned himself inside out there, roasted whole pigs on a spit! And where is his disc? It's so miniscule that you can't even see it? ... Don't cry!. I myself also nearly bawled, I swear to God! Smile, why don't you!

Liana allows Arnold to embrace her, but she is not smiling.

ARNOLD It's so hard to be silent. For so many years, without a sound. To observe it all and to be silent. Not to degrade oneself. Not to become a fool, to hold oneself back. And you see: they have appreciated that! It's unbelievable. No, we're not dreaming – it's for real ...

LIANA I have a headache...

ARNOLD Yes, I also can't get over it: my head is abuzz! The first CD should have the following sequence: The title song – *Rabbit*, of course, then *Riverside*, then *Rocket*, and then soft, soft: *Aladdin's Magic Lamp*. But afterwards we begin to talk straight:
Night Knight ... (starts to sing)
Invisible power marches
Invisible and threatening...

But maybe *Knight* should be the title? *Rabbit* could also be misunderstood, but *invisible and threatening!* ... That's us! Are you listening?

LIANA Yes...

ARNOLD What – yes?! Are they your songs or mine, after all?! If you think it should be otherwise – please, let's discuss it! Do you again want your *Oak*? Please, of course, who can deny you, but it's not the right choice, you know that very well ... Perhaps you'll talk it over with me?

LIANA It's so unexpected...

ARNOLD Yes, it could even raise the dead! But not you. Because you're preoccupied with something more important. Where were we yesterday, the day before?

LIANA At my courses.

ARNOLD This time your bookkeeping has been so full of joy that you can't forget it? Or perhaps they were some other courses? Upgrading.

LIANA All the men there were married.

ARNOLD A more idiotic excuse, as we both know, doesn't exist. And how many were there? The married men.

LIANA Four hundred and thirty six.

 She bends down to pick up pieces of the broken mirror. Arnold, however, takes them from her and throws them again on the floor.

ARNOLD Forgive me. Of course, it's stupid! Excuse me. Everything has changed, but I don't get it yet – idiot that I am! I don't, don't want to be such a cretin any more! I don't want to be and I won't be!

 Having put his arm around Liana's shoulders, he gazes at their reflection in one of the mirrors.

ARNOLD Promise me – if I forget it even one more time, and I act like a cretin again – you'll leave me. You'll go ahead and leave me, promise! Without comment. Enough is enough! We have to live, not turn into midgets ... Well, at least solemnly swear that you'll punch me in the face. Alright?! ... Rabbit, we really suit each other. Still. Look! ...

 Also Liana finally raises her eyes and looks into the mirror.

ARNOLD Well? ... Only don't laugh, all right?! ...

 He starts to make silly faces.

ARNOLD Don't laugh! Don't laugh, Rabbit, a tiger is chasing you! A-a-ah!!!...

 And Liana really does laugh – but her laughter has a tinge of bitterness in contrast to Arnold's wild laughter. He no longer can stop attempting to make Liana smile – one grimace follows another.

LIANA Wait! ... I ... One day one can no longer ... Do you hear? Stop ... Maybe I'm wrong, but ... something has to be done – when there is no more sense in it, no matter what you may invent ... this self deception ... stop! Maybe I needed to do this long ago! I don't know ... This is impossible...

ARNOLD What?

LIANA Everything...

Arnold has stopped fooling around: he presses Liana even tighter to him. And she unexpectedly kisses Arnold passionately.

LIANA Do you understand?

ARNOLD Yes, we've been silent so long, but everything is possible, everything! We'll do it! Forward, Rabbit, forward march!

And he hurries behind the cupboard – Liana remains, mouth open, not saying a word. Behind the cupboard can be heard clatter and noise – Arnold is sorting things.

ARNOLD (*voice*) Little Alex is building a house – little, shy Alex. It must be true what they say about him, don't you agree? Could I in these times build a house? I would be ashamed to do so! We haven't become crooks and swindlers, and that's our capital. It's even odd that someone has noticed it, isn't that so? And who has noticed! ... Shall I put it bluntly? The greatest shits!

Grunting and groaning Arnold carries into the centre of the room a large, old tape recorder. Then, having vanished once more, he reappears with a load of tapes.

LIENE Did you hear?

ARNOLD What? ... Yes.

LIANA You really didn't listen?

ARNOLD Did you take your medication today? Shall I bring it?

LIENE I felt like that, I thought so! Yes!

ARNOLD Yes! It was exactly the same for me! Bah – like being hit over the head with a club: confusion, horror, despair. *And what will happen next, what now?* ... I asked myself?! You're not dead yet, but what's next – you don't know. And no one can tell you! But I can tell: it's all clear to me. *Bah* a second time, and it's perfectly clear

– some higher power, is that it?! No – simply blood, the blood content...

He has placed a tape in the tape recorder. However, when the recorder is turned on, it starts to whine unbearably. Arnold hits it with his palm, then his fist, from all sides.

LIANA Stop it! No need to do that!!! ...

But she can't shout out the whine of the old recorder and finally in exasperation she kicks the recorder with her foot. The shrill sound ceases. In its place music can be heard – the intro of a song. But it can only be heard with difficulty through a high level of static.

ARNOLD One thing is clear: we have been chosen for one and only one reason – our thoroughness and lack of pretentiousness. Simply put – for the basic values. You know, I feel sorry for Little Alex, believe it or not!

A man's voice begins to sing in the recording. The words can not be distinguished however. It could be Arnold. He joins in with the chorus of the song.

ARNOLD *(sings)*
And the rocket will propel us
Whether fat Joe says yes or no,
We'll drink firewater and push
The button ourselves, yo, ho.

Sit down, you're hungry. Yo, ho– we were ahead of our time even then, don't you agree? Not trendy, but with it. Today we can come out and shout : *Guys and gals, gold is right here! You don't need to explore the Klondike! Yeah! ...* Sit down, why don't you!

Liana, however, turns to leave the room.

ARNOLD What's happening?!

LIANA You're hungry, I'll prepare...

ARNOLD Thanks! Thanks to you! ... I am so happy...

He kisses Liana, turns out the overhead light and grabbing Liana, dances with her to the roaring rhythm of the song – as the chorus is repeated again.

ARNOLD You do still remember, don't you – it simply can't be forgotten!
...*(sings)*

*And the rocket will propel us
Whether fat Joe says yes or no,
We'll drink firewater and push
The button ourselves, yo, ho.*

It is obvious that a special choreography has been worked out for this song. Arnold, however, misses a step now and then, but it is more because he is holding Liana close to him in an iron grip. Liana is following him totally mechanically. But faultlessly. Although also a woman's voice can be heard on the tape, Liana herself is silent. When the song finishes, the static as well as incomprehensible clicking sounds continue for a long time. For a while, both the dancers stand frozen in their last dance step, their clasped hands raised.

ARNOLD Just imagine – if we had never met, what would you be, what would I be ... what a horrible thought....

LIANA I don't remember a thing, absolutely nothing!

ARNOLD It seemed like that to me too. But I wanted to, really wanted to. We were, we are a legend, yes – no need to be humble. That's why you're afraid: I already knew that beforehand...

Suddenly the doorbell sounds in the apartment.

ARNOLD *(whispers)* We're not at home! ...

He quickly turns off the tape recorder and the bright floor lamp

ARNOLD We're going to invest the money in houses, big rental apartments. A hundred people renting bring their rents to you each month with a smile. While you do whatever you like: sing, compose, scratch your stomach. Or fly.

The bell sounds again, more persistently.

ARNOLD Pig! Parasite! ... *(to Liana)* Did you not turn out the kitchen light?!

LIANA I was going to go ...

ARNOLD Going, going, gone! Well, then go, go yourself!

The bell rings again, and Liana heads for the door.

ARNOLD We'll also buy this house. It'll be the very first one. No matter what they ask: God, how I'd like to see their faces! Tell them that! ... Wait! They can only throw us out a month after the final court judgment. We have appealed – the term has not yet begun. I already was trying to explain that to him yesterday. No matter

what, don't let him over the door step: this is our apartment, ours!
Well, go on! ... Wait!

He quickly kisses Liana.

ARNOLD This is the last time, I swear to God! Enough is enough. We can also be sharks, Rabbit!

Not responding, Liana exits while the bell sounds another time. Having slammed the door shut violently, Arnold stares at his image in the mirror for a long time. Then he lifts up the discarded guitar and poses as if for an advertisement. But he does not succeed in doing so for any length of time – soon Arnold is pressing his ear to the door. The silence on the other side of the door is disturbing. Finally he throws down the guitar again and opens the door a crack.

ARNOLD (*with exaggerated nonchalance*) Who's there, love? ...

But he doesn't get an answer even though a commotion can be heard in the corridor.

ARNOLD Has someone come, love? ...

LIANA (*voice, after a pause*) No ... yes, Superintendent...

Arnold falls silent, but the commotion in the corridor is becoming louder – it appears almost as if someone is shoving, something bangs and the door hinges creak several times.

ARNOLD I'm coming, dearest, right now! ...

Arnold, however, has no intention of doing so.

ARNOLD I'm coming! ...

However, when the noise of something heavy falling is heard, he finally hurries out of the room. But before doing so – in order to hide his shiny pants – he has pulled on a long, very worn, quilted satin housecoat.

Now the commotion on the other side of the door gets even more pronounced – Not only Arnold's and Liana's voices but the incomprehensible shouts of another man can be heard, interspersed with bangs and creaking of hinges. Then total silence for a good while. Finally sobs can be heard from the corridor, and, only after ROBERT enters the room, they turn out to be laughter – he obviously has been hit in the eye and now is massaging his right cheek. Following closely behind Robert, Arnold limps in – also laughing mid sobs: he has hit his leg. Arnold holds in his hands a white plastic bag, from which drips a thick red liquid. For a good while both men attempt to ease their sundry pains.

ARNOLD I look: she's hitting. The superintendent – the landlord's slave. I think he must have hit her first – logical, no? ... I punched in return!

ROBERT That's what it looked like – I tripped, fuck, somehow got hung up, twisted my ankle, fuck. Asshole, fuck!

Also Robert starts to limp, and to massage his ankle.

ARNOLD I had to act like a man!

ROBERT Rabbit I think tried to hold me up, fuck.

ARNOLD Just think of it! If I hadn't kicked the doorjamb, I would have hit kidneys?!

ROBERT I would be in my grave, fuck, in a black hole!

ARNOLD Still got power in these bones, no? I'm still fit.

Arnold embraces Robert.

ARNOLD Are you happy?

ROBERT Very, fuck...

ARNOLD I'm asking you seriously! I don't know, maybe its old age – I can say what I think! I can, I want to tell you! Right now, this moment, here and now! Yes, I'm happy to see you. And you? Seriously.

ROBERT Yes...

ARNOLD And I want you to know that for the first time in my life I'm really happy, seeing you. Believe it or not, I can say that. You're here, and I am happy, simply, stupidly happy.

ROBERT Fuck, I...

ARNOLD Let's promise each other: from this moment on, to be honest, open and ... positive! Even when we don't like something. You don't have to immediately make a face, scream: all can be talked out. With a smile. Promise!

ROBERT Well. We need to directly and clearly. And positively ... I ... Fuck, it's hellishly hot here, isn't it?

ARNOLD Well, spit it out, say it...

ROBERT I ... I, fuck, want you ... o, fuck! ...

ARNOLD You're turning blue!

For a moment he presses the small vase he previously had used in place of a microphone to Robert's eye.

ARNOLD Hold it! Tight! It'll pass! (*laughing*) Mr. Superintendent! (*suddenly*) Does she take me for a fool! (*calls out into the corridor*) Why "superintendent", fuck? ...

ROBERT I myself wanted to surprise you, I did, fuck! We wanted that you would have no idea, and then *hop*: I'd show up, fuck. What luck! And not the superintendent.

ARNOLD You know, I never, ever in my life have attacked anyone! But now, them – I can, fuck! Yes, strangle them. Yes, I know it's not good, it's bad, yes! But it's honest, isn't it?! I can bet they're singing our songs! They get drunk and in a chorus sing, fuck! Imagine their faces when they find out who is the author of their favourite songs! Me! We are! ... Are you happy?

ROBERT Well.

ARNOLD I also was stunned, for almost twenty-four hours: I couldn't sleep, smiled idiotically – at myself in the mirror! I'm still stunned! And now you feel the same!

Arnold again embraces Robert. But then he stops suddenly: he has noticed the plastic bag he himself brought in, around which a red puddle has now spread.

ROBERT There's a decapitated head in there, fuck!

Both laugh, even though Arnold does so somewhat uncertainly. Robert takes the bag and starts to take out of it groceries – bread and oranges, cheese and grapes, a sausage and cognac. Everything is stained red: a tomato ketchup bottle has broken in the bag.

ARNOLD (*laughing and singing*)

Blood, blood, blood, our soul blood! ...

(calls out toward the door) Bring a rag!

ROBERT Rabbit also fell, don't...

each other: they have both been smeared with red, drinking from the red bottle.

ARNOLD (sings)

Blood, blood blood, our soul blood! ...

Maybe we should have this as the last song? Yes! The last lines have been ringing in my ears all day: *Blood, blood, blood, our blood! ...* A person hums under our noses, but he – no matter where he goes – sees in front of him our photo: on the CD cover. Our soul blood! Fuck!!!

He throws off his housecoat, revealing his flashing, shiny pants.
Arnold grabs the guitar and stands in one of his previously tried poses.

ARNOLD And you'll stand here beside me. Here, below. On your knee. The right knee. (*about the pants*) Yes, I still have them! And I can still close them over my stomach! Yes, fuck! And I haven't forgotten anything – not a thing!

He dances a few steps proficiently.

ARNOLD It's in the blood, in the genes: you'll see that yourself!

ROBERT I ... don't know ... Maybe, fuck, I won't be able to. Clearly and directly, fuck.

ARNOLD Have you tried?

ROBERT I have, fuck, positively! You yourself said. You have to understand, fuck.

ARNOLD I can't hear.

ROBERT Then listen, fuck!

ARNOLD Yes, it isn't easy. You've deceived yourself - fooled, broken yourself. You've slowed down, adjusted, and now, fuck, please – it's again time to be yourself! Please, fuck! It's shitty. Frightening. But it will only be a moment for you – *hop*, and you'll get over it. Have you even thought of me: I have held on for years. Years, fuck! But I don't reproach you. Of course, I understand, of course. And forgive. Of course. Yes, for me it has been years. For you – a second! ...

ROBERT No, fuck. I'm talking about something else, I ...

ARNOLD About the same thing my dear, about the same.

He drinks some cognac himself and then gives it to Robert.

ARNOLD Go on and let's begin.

ROBERT Maybe you should eat something?...

ARNOLD A man who has eaten is a dead man! *Fed and dead!* The title of our second CD! A protest. We will create new things – on the second disc only new pieces. *Fed and dead!* Fuck!

Silently Robert takes a large gulp from the bottle. Meanwhile Arnold starts to sift through the tapes for the tape recorder, finding the ones he wants. Every once in a while the first bars of a song blare out. Now and then he has to pound the recorder again.

ROBERT (*with determination*) Listen, fuck! ...

ARNOLD I'm hungry and mad! Don't come near me, fuck! Don't come near, I 'm dangerous! Hungry and dangerous!!! ... Hungry and dangerous!!! ...

Arnold has been very loud and because of this Liana hurries into the room.

LIANA Don't! You can't do this!!! ...

She hurries to Arnold and attempts to clean off the red smears on his face, but then she notices that Robert's face is also smeared.

LIANA Rabbit, you?!!! Boys! Don't! We're adults, sane people! Everything can be talked out, boys! Make peace boys!!! ...

The men are obviously surprised by Liana's despair, but after a while both start laughing.

ARNOLD I punched him first!

ROBERT No, I did, fuck!

ARNOLD I did!!! He earned it!

Only now Liana understands that both their faces have not been stained with blood.

ARNOLD You yourself said: *his teeth need to be knocked in!* *Traitor!* I also had waited for this moment so long! No, he himself offered – guilty, hit me, fuck!

ROBERT Yes...

Although Liana is turning to go, Arnold embraces and kisses her.

ARNOLD We've settled everything – I've forgiven: all is fine. (*to Liana*) Are you happy? Well, tell me! Let me know how you feel.

And Liana actually suddenly bursts into tears. Now she also kisses Arnold.

LIANA Thanks! Thank-you! ... Forgive me, Honey Rabbit! Please forgive me! ...

ARNOLD Honey Rabbit! (*to Robert*) I haven't heard it now for five years!

ROBERT Look ...

LIANA Rabbit. It should have happened long ago, didn't it? ...

Arnold kisses Liana again. Both are laughing – she, in the midst of tears.

ROBERT Fine! Fuck, that's enough!!!

LIANA (*to Arnold*) I thought it would be so hard! It is hard, isn't it?! I imagined the worst about you, Rabbit, the very worst! Now you can think the worst of me!

ARNOLD It's clear, isn't it – that if someone is driven away, the one guilty is the one who has been driven away. Not me. See what he brought. He asked for forgiveness. Now he finally understands what it means not to be broken, not to be defeated for years, right? (*to Robert*) It's no news to us that you have been a traitor. It was important for you yourself to realise it.

LIANA Rabbit ...

ARNOLD It has to be said. Let's not ruin our nerves. Of course, he's a traitor. But please, let's be positive. I, for example, am totally positive. Let's promise never to talk about it again. Enough is enough: nothing has happened! We will forget all and never remind you of it unnecessarily. (*to Liana*) You have to promise also.

LIANA (*to Robert*) I don't understand ...

ARNOLD (*to Liana*) You can wipe it up later! Take it! (*about the cognac*) Rob's sins have cost him dearly.

Arnold had offered the bottle to Liana, but he takes a drink himself and then passes it on to Robert, who, however, refuses the drink.

ROBERT We ... I, fuck ... I have to tell you, that...

ARNOLD Take some. For courage!

And Robert in fact takes the bottle and drinks from it somewhat desperately.

ARNOLD I'm not getting high! Not at all!

When Robert offers the bottle to Liana, she abruptly turns around and heads in the direction of the door. But right at this moment Arnold turns on the tape recorder – and the intro of a song begins to play. He manages not only to turn out the overhead light and push the guitar into Robert's hands, but also to grab Liana as she reaches the doorstep. She resists in vain.

LIANA I'm going to get a rag! A rag! Let me go! ...Rag!

Arnold sings out in unison with the voice on the tape. Also for this song he and Liana have their own choreography – Arnold is leading her as if she were an inanimate doll.

ARNOLD (*sings*)

*Cold eyes, cold hands,
Words which freeze in the sun
Cold our life, cold our smiles
Coldest of all our love*

*Aladdin, Aladdin, grant us
A new beginning, a life
Aladdin, Aladdin free us
From our shell of ice.*

The accompanying choreography is specially worked out – intricate and effective.

ARNOLD (*while dancing, to Robert*) Everything is as it was before! Yes!
Don't stand there with your mouth open! You'll swallow a fly!
Well, go on! Start! (*sings*)

*Pent up smothered desire
A heart and head on fire
Hot tears and whispers
Imprisoned in a shell of ice.*

Robert has obeyed Arnold – however, he is not playing the guitar, but is beating out the rhythm of the song on the back of the guitar. It is obvious that Robert knows what he is doing.

ARNOLD (sings)

*Aladdin, Aladdin, grant us
A new beginning, a life
Aladdin, Aladdin free us
From our shell of ice.*

As the song finishes, again for a good while there is static and odd clicks on the tape. Arnold kisses Liana.

ARNOLD This is your best piece. Not *Oak*. *Aladdin!*

Suddenly Liana collapses on Arnold's shoulder.

ARNOLD Everything is fine! Now it's fine! Don't cry please! ... Are you tired? Have you not eaten? I'll give you some food right away – you did bring something! Yoghurt! Right away! And Rob brought sausage! ... Stop! I do understand; I also cried for two days...

Robert suddenly and very purposefully puts down the guitar and turns off the tape recorder.

ROBERT I'll talk now, fuck!

ARNOLD You see, you also remembered it all! Immediately – after nine years! It's in the blood...

ROBERT There are more important things.

ARNOLD *Aladdin*, by the way, is the toughest, not *Oak*.

ROBERT I'm the one who is talking now.

ARNOLD Yes! Yes! Come here!

Arnold also embraces Robert with his other arm and now all three are close together in a tight little circle.

ARNOLD I love you! Do you hear? Have I said this to anyone ever? Have you heard me say it? I love you. That empowers one, doesn't it?

Even that you as a person say what you think out loud. And positively. *(to Robert)* How do you feel? I love you. And you?

ROBERT

Yes, truthfully...

ARNOLD

I'm so happy. We had to suffer so much to get to this point. *(to Liana)* You too are happy. And you love us. Me. *(sings)* Aladdin, *grant us a new beginning, a life...*

LIANA

Just don't piss yourself!

Arnold starts to laugh, but quickly falls silent.

ARNOLD

What are you on about?

LIANA

About you.

She forcefully attempts to pull away for the circle, but Robert does not let her.

ROBERT

(to Arnold) It's nerves. Forgive me. I wouldn't want that you would take everything so ... negatively, let's say. We both wouldn't want it ...

LIANA

What are you talking about?

ROBERT

About him. About us.

LIANA

Talk about yourself!

She again wants to pull away but Robert does not let her.

ROBERT

Enough! Fine! Enough, fuck! I'm going to talk: we love each other! There!

For a moment there is total silence. Then Liana starts to laugh.

LIANA

What are you on about?

ROBERT

About us.

ARNOLD

Well yes, I also am saying that. And that is so ... positive, isn't it?

Liana is already laughing loudly.

LIANA

Don't be cynical! He is talking about all three of us. Not the two of us! Stop it! You understand everything alright! For once get with it. Fine, I do understand: all these years I ... wasn't, let's call it,

positive. But we understand it now, don't we – I simply couldn't be anything else. It's time to forget it! Everything has changed. Everything. Love. And forget it all. You have to let yourself go, do you hear! We both are already positive. And you? ... Why not? Agree, for God's sake!

When Liana attempts again to free herself from the men, they both hold her.

ROBERT I will again, right away.

ARNOLD What?

LIANA Don't!

ROBERT (*suddenly, very firmly*) Stop it! Enough! I can't any more!

ARNOLD What are you saying?

ROBERT Not to you!

LIANA And also not to me!

This time Robert is forced to keep the circle together and not let it move apart.

ROBERT Let's look in each other's eyes! Directly! Eyes!!!

ARNOLD I'm already looking – directly!

ROBERT We love each other, fuck...

ARNOLD Yes...

ROBERT Shut up! Listen! I am talking about your wife! In the future we'll be living together!

ARNOLD I hadn't meant it so literally...

ROBERT Eyes! Look me in the eye! Well, you do see: it's the truth – what I'm telling you!! Yes, you're really hearing this! And look for any misunderstandings, any games! Saying it straight out and directly. And positively: I swear. We want to live together! The two of us! That's all, fuck!

LIANA (*to Robert*) Eyes! Look in my eyes! Well! Yes, it's the truth, what you see! It's too late! You yourself know – it's too late! (*to*

Arnold) And you too: look in my eyes! My eyes! You do understand everything! Everything.

ROBERT Why?

First Liana, then Arnold try to pull away from the tight circle, but Robert desperately tries to keep them together.

ROBERT We can't do this! Can't! If we don't talk it out now, we'll never talk it out! Never. We're not talking bullshit here – about old slippers or whatever: our future is being decided here! Yes, fuck, that's what this is!

LIANA Ah – ah – ah!

ROBERT Yes, and let's look, fuck, into each other's eyes!

LIANA Look! No, look into mine! His and mine at the same time!

ROBERT You're the woman, fuck, but even I understand it better that we do have to talk about this! No, stay where you are!

He even has to use force to keep Liana from leaving the circle.

LIANA That's a man! "*Fuck, fuck*"! I want to throw up!

ROBERT We'll talk, I, fuck, say so!

LIANA Fine, I'm going to throw up.

As the circle is almost about to disband, Liana and Robert, as if ordered, remain.

ROBERT *(to Arnold, in a whisper)* Are you feeling ill? ...

LIANA *(to Arnold)* Have you not taken your medication today! ... Well, answer me!

ROBERT There's no pulse!

LIANA You don't have any there either!

ROBERT None, anywhere!

LIANA I told you! I told you that this is what would happen!

ROBERT He's breathing! He is!

Liana kisses Arnold. Also Robert embraces both of them. After a moment Arnold just manages to pull away from the two – virtually out of breath. Robert hurries after him.

ROBERT Sit! Sit down! I beg you! We're adults, aren't we ...

Arnold tries to evade him, not letting Robert touch him.

ROBERT (*surprisingly loudly*) Big guy, fuck! Sit!!!

LIANA Scream in your own house! Leave us in peace!

Liana bars Robert's path. And he really does stop. Then Liana sits Arnold down and very pragmatically starts to feed him – with the still red-stained groceries brought by Robert. The sausage as well as the cheese are being bitten from the whole piece as they were brought.

LIANA There's also a little strawberry yoghurt ... in the kitchen. Chew it, please, don't swallow it like that – nobody is going to take it away from you! And you haven't taken your medicine today.

ROBERT (*to Liana*) Thanks! Thanks a lot!

He quickly turns to leave, but stops at the door. For a while there is silence.

LIANA (*to Arnold*) Are you thirsty? I'll make some coffee. Well, did you bite your tongue? You see – you don't have to hurry so, do you! ...

ROBERT Good-bye!

LIANA (*to Arnold*) That's all, all over now!

ROBERT I really can't leave now! You can't let me go, fuck! It's perfectly clear. It'll remain like a boil, for the rest of our lives. Festering, smelling, fuck, but you'll only smile: *nothing's happened!* You, fuck, will destroy your own lives. Not mine! Yours. I will go away and forget it! For sure! I won't lose anything.

LIANA (*to Arnold*) Don't wolf your food! Don't wolf it, I said!

ROBERT Out of heart, out of mind! Fuck!

LIANA I wish you all the best! Nothing but the best!

Robert, however, turns back again.

ROBERT Yes, I couldn't say it right out immediately! Cowardly?! *It's all too late!* Of course, I looked exactly like him every day! Snotnose.

With his lower lip trembling. Who is waiting for some divine power to make everything all right. Someone else will decide and will do it. Yes, I revealed myself, as I really am, fuck! For a moment - just human. But it already was *too late!* ... *(to Arnold)* You know, it already has been going on for three years. We're sleeping together. Regularly.

- LIANA You were getting ready to leave.
- ROBERT *(to Arnold)* Since that night, when you, you high-and-mighty soul, told me to fuck off.
- LIANA Sweet revenge.
- ROBERT She needed a man. A man.
- LIANA And what, pray, is a man?
- ROBERT She said that...
- LIANA *(interrupts)* Men also have souls!
- ROBERT *(to Arnold)* Also souls. Not – only souls!
- LIANA There is no boil! It's not bursting nor does it stink. Enough, you're free!
- ROBERT Yes, I'm free, totally free. Because I have another sign of a man – money.
- LIANA *(to Arnold)* Never, never have I said that! Never! Lies!
(to Robert) And don't you smirk! *(to Arnold)* Spit it out! Out! We have everything we need! Strawberry yoghurt...
- ROBERT Bought with my money – don't choke!
- LIANA I bought it with my own money – the yoghurt!
- ROBERT *(to Arnold)* With blood money!
- LIANA *(to Arnold)* Never! Never have I taken anything from him!
- ROBERT You have a blood sausage *bought with blood money* in your stomach! That's what you said that time, isn't it? In a low, terrible voice. *Traitor...*

LIANA (to Arnold) Could you even imagine such a thing? It's ridiculous: him giving me money! And me taking it! Honey rabbit! You know me better than that, don't you?!

ROBERT (to Arnold) Look, look! You know her after all, do you?!

LIANA (to Arnold, about Liana) Today he would no longer call it *blood money*, I can bet on that! Most certainly! Are we blind after all? The music recording industry is the only one that gets to human souls. Directly. To young, green souls. And that, in reality, is ... a blessing in the end. (to Arnold) It's even clear to an idiot, don't you think? Let's say it's the noblest of money grabbing ways! (he laughs much too loudly) No, I'm totally serious!

ROBERT Now you also will be able to take part in this holy mission.

LIANA Don't compare! You are simply a salesman. Without us you would be ... fuck! Forgive me please! And this is objective. Nothing can be done about it: someone is creating it all. With a divine spark unknown to you. Yes. Nothing funny in that. Is there something to laugh at here? Nothing funny! Stop! ...No, you're smirking after all!

ROBERT I'm just happy. Honestly, positively happy. That you're happy. Like, I'd like to climb a wall, that's how happy you are. That they'll be buying you.

LIANA Us?! Buy us?! We can't be bought!!!

ROBERT If I'm a salesman, then you can be bought.

Liana again becomes too loud.

LIANA We can't be bought! Never! (to Arnold) Well, tell him, for God's sake!

ROBERT Of course, it's terribly complicated, practically impossible. Really, a major trap has to be constructed ...

The laughter quickly stops and Liana becomes almost threateningly calm.

LIANA Idiotic. Stupid.

ROBERT Can we talk it all out now?

LIANA Enough.

ROBERT Look life straight in the eye, why don't you, fuck!

LIANA *(to Arnold)* Stop wolfing the food! Here, drink something!

She shoves the bottle of cognac at Arnold. Before that Liana has managed to drink herself – now her lips have become bright red: stained.

LIANA *(to Robert)* Does the boil need to burst?

ROBERT Of course.

LIANA Does it have to stink?

ROBERT It can't be otherwise!

Liana kisses Arnold.

LIANA *(to Arnold)* We agree. Isn't that so, Rabbit. The boil has to burst. Make yourself comfortable.

ROBERT *(to Arnold)* Forgive us, it'll hurt for a little while. But it can't be done otherwise. You yourself won't want to torment yourself for the rest of your life: *what did they have there? For three years? What was, what wasn't? For money or just because? ...*

LIANA Look life in the eye! Fuck!

ROBERT Well, yes! ...

LIANA Forgive us, it'll hurt you for a bit.

ROBERT Please, don't make a circus out of it. There are moments in life that stick in the brain, in the heart. To the grave.

LIANA For example.

ROBERT This would be one of them

LIANA And the first time that you saw me...

ROBERT Yes, for example.

LIANA When?

ROBERT It was ...was, was. It's impossible to forget. *(to Arnold)* Forgive us.

LIANA You didn't even notice me then. You beat your boring drums and thought that I was a little groupie.

ROBERT (*about Arnold*) You yourself gave all your pieces to him...

LIANA If you had known what I really was, you would have paid attention to me!

ROBERT You were lovely...

LIANA (*about Arnold*) When you got married to all his wives, one after another, you only saw my face in front of you!

ROBERT All! A hundred!

LIANA And they both tied you up so tightly that you couldn't even with bloody feet run to me!

ROBERT Yes! They both chose me themselves!

LIANA (*to Arnold*) He still thinks that Frieda is his daughter.

ROBERT Stop it, fuck! Stop!!! We're talking about today. And ultimately about our tomorrow, fuck!

LIANA We have to understand today, so that...

ROBERT (*to Arnold*) They left you themselves, didn't they?! We all know that! And I am very grateful that you could be above it all. That, fuck, is real friendship. And perhaps, fuck, I did betray you that time. Maybe. *Blood money!* That rings in my ears every night, believe me. A person who doesn't care doesn't scream so. I just don't want to admit to myself, that...

LIANA So, you really didn't want both of them, but...

ROBERT And Frieda is mine! And last year – for your information – they all three took on my surname! (*to Arnold*) That's truly not so important, is it? After all I feed and clothe them. Also little Lina, poor thing.

LIANA (*to Arnold*) When you didn't know where to shove them, that was the best alternative, wasn't it? He wanted to achieve everything that you had achieved. To have everything that his hero had. Even with all of the children and Lina's crazy mom in the bargain.

ROBERT Shut up, fuck!!!

LIANA (to Arnold) Well, wake up for once! Your pulse is normal – don't pretend! And everything has been settled already.

ROBERT (to Arnold) No, you tell her, fuck: I beat you! You yourself admitted it each time. Remember?! Talk, fuck, tell her! Wipe off your face for once, I can't look at it!

Having licked his finger, he himself starts to clean off the dried tomato ketchup off Arnold's face.

LIANA Wash his feet off too! Lick them!

ROBERT Excuse me – a person can have a hero, like - I don't know – Einstein and Eisenstein, fuck! But not him. A hero! Why would I wish to be like this little man who only got you when the little groupie had been had by all of us. Two rounds.

LIANA Except for you. In both the rounds!

ROBERT He is not my hero! He isn't, fuck! (to Arnold) Wake up, for once! Don't play the traumatised dog!

LIANA Do you still want me?

ROBERT You?! Fuck!

LIANA Wait, don't hurry! Sit down. Take a deep breath. Say it straight out and clearly: do you still want me?

Liana's calm exterior truly cools down Robert.

ROBERT What do you want me to answer?

LIANA I want you to think first, to ask yourself. And then also answer yourself. Honestly.

ROBERT Haven't I been honest enough?

LIANA I don't doubt it. But now help me. And also him. And yourself. So we don't have to torment ourselves: *Do I want this, or is this simply a need? Do I want this because it's cowardly to throw in the towel, to call it quits? Or...*

ROBERT Enough! Be silent. If only for a moment! ...

Closing his eyes, he is silent for a good while.

ROBERT Honestly? ...

LIANA And clearly.

ROBERT I can't...

LIANA Now, right now – do you want me? Still want me?

ROBERT No...

LIANA Thanks.

ROBERT It was so hard, so very hard. Believe me!

LIANA Thanks – I'm so glad that you're honest. Believe me! You had to be that.

ROBERT Inside – I'm bleeding: I have, I have wanted and loved you, I swear to God! (*to Arnold*) Forgive me: they were honest feelings – you should not be angry at all. Not at all. I swear!

LIANA And now it's over...

ROBERT And now it's over. That's life.

LIANA When you have obtained what you desire.

ROBERT Yes, maybe ... No! I, myself, gave you up, I did! (*to Arnold*) You won, you did.

LIANA I too am still here.

ROBERT I lost you, really lost you – I'm so confused...

LIANA You've proven to me that I need you more than him. That you're more worthy. You did achieve what you wanted. Again you have beat him.

ROBERT You forced from me what you wanted: I don't...

LIANA I knew after all! I knew and knew that I knew. What a fool! (*to Arnold*) Truthfully there has been no one else, do you hear me, no one: only you. From the time when I was seventeen years old. I have not really wanted any one else – that's the main thing. (*to*

Robert) Remember, you exploded: *how can you read a newspaper at a time like this?! ...*

ROBERT When? ...

LIANA *(to Arnold)* You know that, Rabbit, don't you! Do you want the strawberry yoghurt? And to drink something? How have you got yourself so dirty? What is it?

 With a finger wet in her mouth she starts to clean Arnold's face.

LIANA You have everything, absolutely everything – I don't need anything else – I'm neither an African queen nor a Madonna. You do know me Rabbit, don't you? You do know me! And I know why I'm alive – yes! Here, now, beside you. All these years. And you also know. Now, everything is all right! Yes? Well, say it. One word. My little princess...

 She kisses Arnold. A calm and long kiss. Meanwhile Robert takes a large gulp of the cognac, and takes one of the pieces of clothing hung up by the mirrors to wipe his dirty face and silently starts to leave. But when he is already on the doorstep, Arnold quickly disengages from Liana's embrace.

ARNOLD Wait! We have to start right away! Let's call the group together – and let's start today! Why tomorrow and why at five p.m.? I couldn't wait that long. I would die from impatience. *(to Liana)* Rabbit, phone them! All of them!

 But Robert is already opening the door.

ARNOLD You won't go anywhere, that's for sure!

 Arnold hurries after him.

ARNOLD You don't have to be afraid! We're human after all, adults, reasonable people. Positive people. So you hear? I thought so, I really thought so! Well, do I still have to prove it to you? Please, I'll do what you tell me? Jump out of a window? Please. Well tell me. I'll show you.

 Suddenly Arnold very unexpectedly embraces Robert and resolutely kisses him on his mouth. Then he laughs hard and long.

ARNOLD I prove it the way I know how. Only one thing is important to me: that you can feel – that I love you. We cannot start anything again with cold hearts and cold hands. With cold words. You won't go anywhere, won't run away! I will pass it on to you, I swear to God! *(to Liana)* Rabbit, did you phone? *(to Robert)* I will

pass it on to all of you today, fuck, don't run away! You'll get infected! With love! It sounds stupid, doesn't it? Truth is banal – words, words, words! That's why we're not fuckty writers nor poets. (*sings*).

*You speak a different language,
In your rustling leaves I hear “my love...*

Arnold has by force made Robert sit down in a chair and has placed another tape on the tape recorder: through the static a song can be heard again. This time Arnold is not dancing, he only sings. Even though a woman's voice can be heard on the tape.

ARNOLD (*sings*)

*I press my bloodied cheek
Against your gnarled trunk, I
Who feel so small at your feet when
Your arms reach into the universe.*

Oak, oak, o mighty oak
You speak a different language
In your rustling leaves I hear “My love ...

He suddenly turns off the tape recorder.

ARNOLD My loves! We finally have to do something! We don't have much time left – life is limited by time... Did I say it well?

He throws to Liana the totally out-of-tune guitar which he has picked up from the floor.

ARNOLD Go phone! Tell them to come right away.

ROBERT It's the middle of the night. Two a.m.

ARNOLD You all must be atrophied, calcified! Won't you be ashamed to beat your skins? You have to be in shape, my dears ! It's a thing that you have to work at!

ROBERT The audition will only be next year – it's still seven months.

ARNOLD How self-assured you are – I want to throw up! You'll start immediately, dear, right now! Playing is not making sales! A musician who isn't starving is a dead musician!

He runs out of the room laughing. For a good while it is silent in the room. Liana and Robert don't even turn their heads to look at each other.

Somewhere inside the apartment Arnold is rattling and moving things. Suddenly Liana throws herself at Robert and very passionately kisses him. But a moment later she is back in her place, with her back turned to Robert.

ROBERT *(whispering loudly)* I don't understand...

LIANA *(also in a loud whisper)* Shut up!!!

ROBERT Tomorrow ...when? Same place...

LIANA Forget it!!! Sit down!!! ...

Making plenty of noise, Arnold returns – he is bringing with him six various size pots. Arnold places them around Robert – as if they were a set of drums. In place of the drumsticks – wooden spoons. The noise is overwhelming.

ARNOLD *(to Robert)* I'm going to make you, make you play! Fuck! You're going to be a human being again!

ROBERT It's the middle of the night – three am: people are sleeping!

ARNOLD People – real people – aren't sleeping.

Arnold himself starts to beat out a rhythm on the drums.

ARNOLD *(sings)*

*And the rocket will propel us
Whether fat Joe says yes or no,
We'll drink firewater and push
The button ourselves, yo, ho.*

Robert does not succeed at stopping Arnold from playing, but Liana does – she pulls the wooden spoons from Arnold's hands in one swift move.

LIANA Shut up!!! ...

Surprised, Arnold laughs aloud. Because of this, Liana rushes at him with the wooden spoons. Arnold tries to evade and resist her, and finally he hugs her tightly to him.

ARNOLD Uh, uh, uh, uh, uh! *(to Robert)* Nerves, nerves! It was also terrible for me the first day: I was punching the walls with my fist!

Can you imagine it – from happiness, joy: I won't hide it! (*to Liana*) Let's take our medicine. I also forgot to take it today, yes, Rabbit. (*to Robert*) She isn't crying, no, she isn't ...

ROBERT It's late...

ARNOLD Soon everyone will be here, soon. Rabbit phoned them. (*about the pots*) Start, start quietly. Cover them with a blanket and start! ...

ROBERT They will listen to a recording first – it's enough to have electronic sound only.

ARNOLD A person live, voices live, eyes, hands – that's our trump card. Why have they chosen us otherwise? Use your head!

Arnold releases Liana. She silently heads for the door, but Arnold again stops her and pushes a guitar in her hand.

ARNOLD (*to Liana*) I'll play!

ROBERT But they're not guaranteeing anything – that's what they said.

ARNOLD Yes, that's what they said! It's standard. That's what they say to everyone. And that's as it should be – it stimulates us! We work more intensively, the end product is so much the better!

ROBERT (*to Robert*) Do you see me?! Do you see?!

He suddenly has jumped to his feet.

ARNOLD I'm happy, yes...

ROBERT Do you hear me?! I'm talking! Do you hear?!

ARNOLD I'm not deaf...

ROBERT And you've got a brain, fuck?!

ARNOLD You consciously are trying to ruin this evening for us, aren't you?

ROBERT Well, ask! Why don't you ask?

ARNOLD What?

ROBERT You've been wondering for a long time, fuck, haven't you? Ask! Yes, the answer can destroy this evening, this night, this week! And all your life! But if you'll remain silent, it will happen

nonetheless: after seven months! Then, for certain. The invalid doesn't have much time left, fuck.

ARNOLD Go away. We don't want ...

ROBERT Well, yes! That's what I also say! Well!

ARNOLD We don't want to ask you anything. Absolutely nothing! Fuck!

ROBERT Yes you do! (*to Liana*) He really hasn't said anything to me: not about the telephone call, nor the recordings, the CD's or about all the idiotic conditions – seven months, for example! Nothing! But, you see, I know! He only phoned and very mysteriously whispered: *tomorrow, rabbits, at five, at my place, ok? There's a thing ...* Thing, fuck!

Arnold laughs, obviously too loud.

ARNOLD What would I have to ask you, Mr. Salesman? It somehow still isn't clear to me, fuck!

ROBERT (*to Liana*) I couldn't possibly know, know anything! And he knows that, fuck!

ARNOLD You're all swimming in the same pool of sharks, fuck: you said you knew all those procedures extremely well. (*to Liana*) We simply had the same conditions put to us as everyone else! And that's all.

ROBERT (*to Liana*) He doesn't want to believe it! No matter what, fuck!

ARNOLD (*to Liana*) He'll soon start to brag, fuck, that we have nothing in common! I couldn't have known!

ROBERT He writes, I sell: we, fuck, have nothing in common! I couldn't have known!

ARNOLD It's one pool of sharks, I say! Clear as day, fuck!

LIANA (*to Robert*) Stop!

ARNOLD It's not the truth (true), fuck! No matter what you would invent, fuck! And that's not funny, fuck!

ROBERT In the eyes, look life straight in the eye!!!

LIANA Stop it!!!

ARNOLD Stupid jokes, fuck! You no longer understand what is a joke and what isn't, fuck!!!

ROBERT (screams) I don't want to scream at you! I don't! And I won't scream! We are reasonable, civilised, grown-ups! Adults!!!

Arnold and Liana actually fall silent.

ARNOLD It's the middle of the night – four a.m. . .

For a moment both of them are silent.

ROBERT Rita, my saleswoman called. She's capable of lying about anything, without blinking an eye. I agree: she idolised you too much – got carried away. I didn't want that. The hard fact is that it would be simply enough if you stopped drinking vodka and would take a bath. That's all.

The silence continues.

ROBERT I suggested we talk it all out, please. Yes, I'm guilty. That's for a beginning. Please, now you go on.

However, Liana and Arnold keep silent.

ROBERT I agree: you have to get accustomed to the idea. Let's not be over anxious. . .

Robert cannot stay in one place any more – his footsteps resound in the room like the beat of a metronome. They all are still silent, however, when Robert, in passing Arnold, has turned his back to him, Arnold in a flash grabs the largest pot and attempts to hit Robert on the back of the head. The mirrors however reveal his intent, and Robert noticing the intended hit, jumps aside and the aimed pot, lands with force against the ground. Arnold flies with it, into the mess of pots. The noise is overpowering. Robert only comes to his senses after a while.

ROBERT *(to Liana)* How can you sit through this so calmly! I saw you: you weren't even startled! You didn't even tremble! Of course, I have to be killed, fuck, haven't I? Me! He would have done it! I would be cold already! How convenient! You didn't even close your eyes! He is depressed, poor bugger – fine! But you? You are a killer, fuck, a cold-blooded killer! A silent killer !!!

He disentangles Arnold from the pile of pots, and props him up in a sitting position.

ROBERT *(to Arnold)* She has kept on at me for all of the three years – we’ll break your heart, she said! I was forbidden to be honest with you – for your own sake! How convenient, you must agree?! Now her soul, I ... Are you listening to me, fuck? Don’t close your eyes: you do have a pulse, yes you do! It seems to me ... You have to hear the truth, fuck! Only ten seconds more! Listen! In short: I don’t feel guilty! I’m not guilty! She said – you ought to have some compensation, so you don’t break your heart: well, because of us. What we want! Well, that which we no longer want! Do you hear, we don’t want it any more! And this recording has compensated you, hasn’t it?! You walked up walls, talked to mirrors, fuck! That was the only alternative: if Rita hadn’t called you would have rotted here. With all your soul. And heart, fuck. Sit quietly, don’t make such a face, fuck! I came to purify myself. She was not supposed to be at home. This was supposed to be a man-to-man talk. *(to Liana)* I had courage, I did! Why did you drag yourself into this? You said, you’d be here Saturday! Yes, of course, you would have wanted that I continue to lie, for years. That was convenient for you. For both of you, fuck! But I?! No, of course, I’m not even human: I have to be killed like a lice-ridden dog with a shitty pot!!! ...*(to Arnold)* Your children, by the way, are proud of having my last name! ...

Arnold and Liana are silent. Robert crawls to the cupboard and remains sitting leaning against it. For a long while no one speaks.

ROBERT In those seven months you would have been convinced, that ... you are too late. Forgive me. But this is the reality. You would have started to do something and yourself understood – that it is too late ... Do you understand? Of course, you understand. You’re not a fool...

But no one answers him.

ARNOLD *(to Liana)* Rabbit ... the medicine. I haven’t taken it today.

But Liana keeps sitting as if she hasn’t heard.

ROBERT You don’t need medication: you do hear me well enough. I tell you tomorrow will be tomorrow, not yesterday. D’you hear?

ARNOLD Rabbit ...

ROBERT I’m also here! I still am here! No matter how much you don’t like that. And I’ll be here also tomorrow, I will. You can kill me the day after tomorrow, all right. And what then? The sun won’t rise again?

ARNOLD Rabbit, I've cut myself. Wounded myself ... blood.

 He gazes at his raised finger.

ARNOLD Rabbit, are you listening? ... Are you listening, Christ?! Blood!

 Liana finally moves, but she doesn't go up to Arnold – still holding the guitar, without a word, not looking at the men, Liana heads out of the room.

ARNOLD Rabbit ...

ROBERT Show me!

 He examines Arnold's hand.

ROBERT Tomatoes. Ketchup.

ARNOLD Blood! I've been wounded ...

ROBERT By what?

ARNOLD The mirror!

ROBERT (laughs) Scared yourself?

ARNOLD Idiotic! I'm bleeding!

 From below the heap of pots he has pulled out a glistening, previously shattered, piece of mirror.

ROBERT Ketchup.

ARNOLD Blood!

 Robert licks Arnold's finger.

ROBERT Tomatoes...

ARNOLD Blood also is salty!

ROBERT With chillies.

ARNOLD Go away! There's nothing more you can do here! I will wake up soon – you are my nightmare! Go away!

 Robert suddenly slaps Arnold.

ROBERT Are you awake? Wide awake, fuck! Do you hear me?!

ARNOLD I don't want to! I'm not!

Robert slaps Arnold sharply again.

ROBERT If you're asleep, then it mustn't hurt!

ARNOLD Don't! Enough! You have no right! ...

ROBERT I'll wake you up! Be human, for God's sake!

Unexpectedly Arnold presses the piece of broken mirror to his neck.
Robert throws himself at Arnold to take the piece of mirror away.

ROBERT Sharp, sharp, fuck!

ARNOLD Don't intervene!

ROBERT You'll cut an artery!!!

ARNOLD Yes! I am human now!

Finally Robert is able to subdue Arnold and take the piece of mirror
from him.

ROBERT An idiotic drama, fuck! I want to help you, but you ... That's
unfair to me!

ARNOLD That's unfair to me!

ROBERT I'm honest!

ROBERT You're totally honest, I'm unfair!

ARNOLD Yes, fuck!

ARNOLD For three years you've regularly screwed my wife, you've taken
away my last...

ROBERT We're not talking about that right now, fuck!

ARNOLD I'm talking, fuck.

ROBERT But there's no need.

ARNOLD About what then?

ROBERT About ... you yourself know, fuck! Life is ... a bit complicated, isn't it?! ... We have to talk about life, fuck...

ARNOLD (*suddenly very calmly*) Let's make money.

ROBERT What are you on about? ...

ARNOLD You're all swimming in the same pool of sharks, we already agreed on that – to make a recording is nothing – you know that. Tomorrow it's Saturday, then it's Sunday. We can start on Monday.

ROBERT What are you talking about, fuck?

ARNOLD About life, fuck.

ROBERT As if I owed you anything, fuck!

ARNOLD You created a human being. God usually takes care of everything. I prayed – everything is as it should be.

ROBERT Demagogue!

ARNOLD God?

ROBERT Enough! Forgive me, I really have been wrong! I wish you well.

He heads for the door.

ARNOLD I wish you success!

ROBERT All the best!

ARNOLD Be happy. The best to you.

ROBERT And what are you going to do?

Robert, however, has stopped at the doorstep.

ARNOLD You wouldn't be interested in it.

ROBERT That's not so! And you know that very well! ... And I, for what it's worth, with a totally clear conscience can say that I ... love, love people. Yes, and I'm not ashamed to say.... Oh, fuck...

For a good while both are silent.

ROBERT Rabbit vanished...

The silence continues.

ROBERT You haven't taken your medication...

Arnold again doesn't answer Robert.

ARNOLD But what are you going to do? I really want to know!

ARNOLD Me too...

ROBERT For a moment, a short moment, at least believe that I'm speaking seriously ... from my heart. When I think of your circumstances, I really don't know – what you can do next? You are at a total dead end. Are you listening? At a dead end, I tell you.

ARNOLD (*after a pause*) Now, can you breathe easier, that you've got that off your chest?

ROBERT I really am thinking of you! And don't smirk!

ARNOLD I'm not smirking.

ROBERT You simply don't believe me!

Again both are silent. The bottle of cognac is already empty.

ROBERT Fine. Then listen. You don't have to say anything. I won't ask you anything – I'll simply tell you. Don't answer – this will simply be material for further thought. So, to continue... only, please, don't think that I owe something to you! Nobody owes anybody anything, even if the other thinks so. You agree, don't you? Don't you? ... Well, listen! Continuing ... I, fuck, organised the recording possibility. Fine, let's assume that I'm in the same pool of sharks. Take it for granted that I can do it. *The Legend Returns*. Very well: a sign at the Railway station square, a presentation at the minister's discotheque, fuck. You come out ... we come out and begin! What do we begin? Advertise matches in a laser era? Yes, yes, yes – that's how it could sound, exactly like that. You do agree with me, don't you? Don't you? No, wait, don't say anything, wait! I'm not talking about instruments – we'll buy new ones! In the worst case, we'll borrow them from Little Alex. Wait, I haven't asked you a thing, have I? But where's the essence, the essence – I ask. A beautiful wrapping, but rotten inside! No, I am not...

ARNOLD This is my house, still mine!

ROBERT You don't need my philosophising, do you?

ARNOLD Comeback of a legend.

ROBERT Stop!!! Stop, fuck! ...Don't spit fate in the eye! Yes, I understand: I have been unfair to you. See – I understand, I admit it. Yes, also you have been unfair to me. Of course, I swallowed that. If both of us understand it, we can talk like human beings, really, like two adults. I am going to suggest how we can do that: I shall ask, you can answer. Only to a given, specific question. Emotion, fuck, aside. We have to help you! Do you agree? Otherwise I don't agree to do this. Now then: my first question is – do we not need a new, modern – please note that I'm not saying stylish – modern repertoire?

Arnold keeps silent.

ROBERT I am your last chance – you do know that, don't you? I repeat: do we not need new pieces?

ARNOLD No ... because we have...

ROBERT (*interrupts*) Answer – yes or no, and to the given question! The first answer is obvious. Of course, we need new pieces. Of course. Life goes forward, that, fuck is how it is. I don't want young girls to see from which end sand is sifting from me.

Arnold does not join in with Robert's awkward laughter.

ROBERT Question number two: must start with Rabbit. In how long a time could she get it done – at least four, five new pieces. Then the Legend will truly have returned! Yes please – we aren't dead! Greying, but alive! Let's say with our own perspective of today's world, fuck! A wiser, yes, a wiser perspective, don't you think?! And now the most important – question number three: nothing, no-one will return, nothing will turn out alright unless we will love each other – agreed! Question number four: The Rabbit is yours. Forever and ever ... just don't misunderstand: I, you see, don't need **her** any more, I give her back to you – that's not how it is. I need ... that is, really don't need ...but ... oh, fuck! You do understand, understand very well ... yes or no! Only don't stay silent – we won't have a comeback for the legend then! If you won't answer, I'll get up and go, I swear to God, fuck! Are you listening?! It's too serious – we're not just blabbering about - I don't know – old socks, for example?! Question number five: how

shall we continue to live? ... No, for God's sake, I'm leaving, fuck...

ARNOLD Forget about Rabbit. ...

ROBERT Do I have to put that in writing, fuck!

ARNOLD She won't take part in this.

ROBERT Fine. We just need the pieces.

ARNOLD That won't fly..

ROBERT Her heart is open, open to tomorrow.! Perhaps even too much – it could be even too hard to bear for some – forward, forward, something new, on and on! ...Why should I have to tell you – you yourself know it well!

ARNOLD You don't know her.

ROBERT I don't know her?! ... No, well, of course, not, but...

ARNOLD (*about the pants and the tape recorder*) I have already forced her to bring all of this back from the garbage.

ROBERT You don't know her! Rabbit only needs to have perspective: concrete and tangible...

ARNOLD She was here only for the sweet sake of peace: after all, I'm like a small child...

ROBERT I know her...

ARNOLD Not one sincere step, not one smile, she didn't even start to sing nor did she listen!

ROBERT See, she also understands – a Legend can't make a comeback through static and whining. Let's say a Legend has to make a comeback renewed, fuck!

ARNOLD She would prefer to live like ... a grey field mouse! But she'd at least have a life.

ROBERT You're surely not talking about Rabbit!

ARNOLD Why did she need you?

ROBERT All right, all right! I needed her! Please sit! Quickly, right now! There's no more time!

ARNOLD But she didn't leave me! Three years...

ROBERT That was so humiliating...

ARNOLD I won, I...

ROBERT Go on – I don't know how to talk to her...

ARNOLD We could also maybe do without a female voice. That alone would show that we are different: new, not the old. The old, but ... wiser, you said, didn't you? That would be noticed. Already in the recording we would be different. I can also sing *Oak* on my own. I agree – tooth and nail we have to keep up with the times. And when the concerts begin, I can, of course, train someone else. To be able to sing is not a must.

He dances in front of the mirror with an imaginary partner.

ARNOLD A young girl, very young! That would be significant, so significant! That's what you want – so please! We are making a comeback! New, renewed, powerful and fresh! But wiser!

Humming out a beat, he has pulled Robert to his feet and is pulling him across the room in place of a partner. Robert tries to evade him and is laughing. For a moment, however, Arnold quickly comes to a stop.

ARNOLD But let's agree on something – let's not take anything from Little Alex, alright!

ROBERT Why?

ARNOLD I do have some principles after all, don't I, fuck?!

Arnold hugs Robert tightly.

ARNOLD Thanks, thanks to you! I would have truly rotted here, that's for sure. Let's look life in the eye. That is it, fuck?!

ROBERT I also am so ... happy. Banal words, words ... That's old age, don't you think?

ARNOLD Becoming a child again!

ROBERT And not to be ashamed of it!

They both laugh.

ROBERT I'm going to ask one - as you call them - of *the sharks* for the audio: let's buy out the copyrights, and go from there!

ARNOLD We are still with it! We are!

ROBERT And you didn't believe me, fuck!

ARNOLD Hit me, hit me! I don't believe that I'm alive! Well, whack me a good one, fuck!!!

Robert just slaps him lightly on the back, but he changes very quickly.

ROBERT Forgive me! You yourself told me to do it! Do you hear! Medicine?! ...

ARNOLD From whom? Buy them?

ROBERT Enough, fuck! Money is not ... bad if the end result is good. For you, for society. You've earned it...

ARNOLD What copyrights?!

ROBERT Rabbit's, logically. She won't refuse, will she? Especially if we both beg her, what do you think? On our knees, yes?! (*laughs*)

ARNOLD We don't even have to beg!

ROBERT They're her pieces: the law...

ARNOLD Look at yourself, look! Do you not feel anything?!

Arnold has moved Robert in front of the mirror.

ROBERT That's ketchup...

ARNOLD I don't recognise you any more! You are from a different planet!

He hits Robert on the chest.

ARNOLD Do you all have something here?! Or is it a vacuum. No, microschemes, lights are rattling! Laws! Paragraphs are jangling! ... They're our songs! All our songs! A legend cannot be the property of one person! No, be so kind as to listen, fuck! Your

comments don't interest me! Be still and listen! You have a live human being beside you! Not ... fuck!

ROBERT Nobody is going to work with you, no one!

Robert, however, cannot escape Arnold's tight grasp.

ARNOLD Am I going to want someone, is more the question! They are my songs, mine! Without me they wouldn't exist, and you know that – let's say that I am their source. Their creator. They have been born from love, isn't that so! Have you ever heard this little word, have you?! If it wasn't for me, there wouldn't be Rabbit's songs, there wouldn't be legends! And you know that very well.

ROBERT Fuck, I'm leaving!

ARNOLD And I know very well why! In three years not one song! Yes, yes, yes – only now you're you're getting it, isn't that so?! Songs are born from love, not ... forgive me, from fucking! You couldn't even hurt me or harm me. Was any song dedicated to you? Is there something that hasn't been heard! Let's look life in the eye! Let's all of us look at the same time! And even then we won't see! She loves me. See, you have nothing to say!

ROBERT Songs are born while loving...

ARNOLD Yes! Forgive me, excuse me, I'm sorry, pardon, *scusa me*, sorry! Loving!

ROBERT I totally agree with you.

ARNOLD You can't deny it!

ROBERT You're absolutely right.

ARNOLD Yes, I do know something in this world!

ROBERT That's how it is for sure.

ARNOLD What?

ROBERT That, what you said.

ARNOLD What was it that I said?

ROBERT Where there is no love there are no songs.

ARNOLD Birds are silent, exactly so!

ROBERT It isn't so: silent.

ARNOLD Who?

ROBERT The bird. With the sweet voice.

ARNOLD What are you talking about?

ROBERT About you. You have been silent already for a long time.

Arnold is quiet for a good while.

ARNOLD But you didn't even have any ... I had them!

ROBERT *Had* – in the past tense.

ARNOLD They don't die. Songs are eternal!...

ROBERT Powerful even when everything is over.

ARNOLD Powerful ... Thanks, that's enough. You can go. You're free. I don't need anything from you. And never have needed anything. You are the one who needs. But I say no. Go. Go, go.

But Robert doesn't even make a small move, he simply continues to look at Arnold.

ARNOLD And now you're going to be silent here, are you?! You waded in, trampled the grass, and now you are going to be silent! ... At least admit that you have been unfair! ... Without me, truth to tell, there wouldn't also be you, you as you stand there today! Have I ever shoved that in your face? ... My children, by the way, carry your name with pride! ...

Robert continues to be silent.

ARNOLD I'm not going to start philosophising here. Yes it's that kind of an age – there are no songs. And so what? And what can I do here – there's the potential - noise but no songs, no real songs. I hate to philosophise. Especially about things that every old woman on the street is aware of. No one will ever sing to either one of us again. We have to come to terms with that. Without long philosophising. It's that kind of an age...

He turns on the tape recorder, but no matter how he tries, it no longer turns – only static and rattling noises can be heard from it. Arnold is silent for a good while.

ARNOLD Could she ask much?
ROBERT I'll be able to knock her down, don't worry.
ARNOLD It would be the honourable thing to...
ROBERT You really are unfair!...

Both of them start laughing at the same time. Increasingly more and more and louder, wiping away tears.

But suddenly Arnold grabs Robert's hand – for a moment they both are silent. From the other side of the door, from inside the apartment the sound of a guitar can be heard – the person playing gradually finds the right chords, creating a melody. Then also a voice is heard – Liana is singing. However, the words are incomprehensible from so far away.

ARNOLD It's a new one, new...
ROBERT Hold on, quiet!!!...
 Both are whispering.
ARNOLD A new piece! ...
ROBERT (*trying to repeat as much as he can hear*)
 ... *do that, which is of most use to you...*
 ...*march forward, rabbit, forward march...*

ARNOLD The beat. Pay attention to the beat! *Rabbit* is not drawn out like that...
ROBERT ...*march forward, open the door* ... It's the same! *Rabbit!*
ARNOLD The same words! But the song! ...
ROBERT Did the Rabbit know how to play? ...

They both listen to Liana's song frozen to the spot. Arnold suddenly hurries to the nearest mirror – quickly spruces himself up and pats his hair.

ARNOLD Wait, if...
 He heads for the door, but Robert gets in his way.

ROBERT You shouldn't go yet – after all that...

Also Robert quickly glances at the mirror, but now Arnold grabs him by the arm. Their whispers become quite loud.

ARNOLD After what? Answer me!

ROBERT I will call you right away – I'll confess everything: I have to convince her, so she understands and forgives you. Wish me luck!

ARNOLD I can do it myself!

ROBERT Do you want everything to start again, fuck?

ARNOLD What's starting again? What has been?!

ROBERT Do you want it to repeat again?!

Robert has already reached the door, however Arnold pulls him back, but he himself can't get very far because Robert is holding on tightly to his sleeve.

ROBERT Without me you would have rotted anyway – you said so yourself!

ARNOLD That song is for me, do you understand, for me! Rabbit is mine!!!

They're already jostling in the doorway.

ROBERT That no longer is that *Rabbit*! Yours was the old one!

ARNOLD *Rabbit* is mine! With all of Rabbit herself!

ROBERT That's the new *Rabbit*!

ARNOLD That's it!

ROBERT No, that's not it!

ARNOLD No, that's it! And it's not it!!!

ROBERT That's it!

ARNOLD Me!!!

ROBERT No, me!!!...

For a while they attempt to prove to each other that they're right making incomprehensible sounds, then they finally run out of the door. On the other side of the door there is noise of something falling for a good while. However, that does not stop Liana from continuing her singing further away, inside the apartment. Only the old tape recorder remains in the room – still emitting sounds of static and useless rattling.

CURTAIN

1999.

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