

A SMALL PLAY FOR A NURSERY

by

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translated from Bulgarian by

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Characters:

Zhana - writer

Laura - bar owner

Philip - actor

Dodo - lawyer

Oscar - waiter

A box in Lora's bar. Piano. Photos on the walls. This place is off limits to casual visitors. Permanently reserved for special guests only.

Zhana is dancing by herself. Philip enters. Watches Zhana who does not notice him.

PHILIP:What are you up to, Baby Jane?

ZHANA:You scared me out of my wits!

PHILIP:Are you alright?

ZHANA:I am OK.

PHILIP:Is Lora around?

ZHANA:Yes, she went for the glasses. She is always around, if you haven't noticed! This is where she works! Is Dodo with you?

PHILIP:No, but he is due any minute now.

Laura enters.

LAURA :Hi, Pippi! Nice to see you! All smiles as usual and smelling awfully sweet!

PHILIP:And you – the beautiful graceful exquisite little fairy!

ZHANA:Why didn't you compliment me like this when I came in?

PHILIP:You were in a withering trance and I did not want to break in.

ZHANA:I was dancing!

PHILIP:Oh! But now I can readily tell you that you are as dazzling as you once were.

ZHANA:Why did I bother asking!

PHILIP:How can I help?

LAURA:Don't touch a thing!

ZHANA:You bring the costume?

PHILIP:Sure thing! Stayed up till two to finish it!

LAURA: Let's hope Dodo won't forget the camera.

ZHANA: No Martini glasses!

LAURA: They are here! I brought them!

ZHANARight! But where do I find them?

PHILIP:(*To Laura.*) Find her a glass or she'll drive us crazy!

ZHANA: I heard you! Ah! There they are!

Dodo enters.

DODO: Hello. (*Hugs and kisses Laura and Zhana.*) And the actor! (*Hugs Philip.*)

LAURA: You got the camera?

DODO: I did! Yes! (*To Philip, aside.*) You finished the costume?

Philip signs it is alright.

DODO: Fine! Someone with a mike just stopped me outside to ask what in this world I liked most.

ZHANA: That's stupid!

LAURA: A reporter?

DODO: Yes, I think so – he was asking everyone in the street.

ZHANA: They are never down! Going around and asking things! What a question is this?

PHILIP: The question is quite alright – not whom but what! (*To Zhana.*)

What will you say if asked such a thing?

ZHANA: That I don't feel well, leave me alone!

DODO: No, really, what would you say?

LAURA:(*To Dodo.*) What did you say?

DODO: Something absurd! I was in a hurry, thinking about something else, so I said: Toast and butter.

ZHANA: No way!

DODO: Yes! Well, I was not prepared, it just popped out.

PHILIP:I take it to be a nice exhaustive answer. I'd have said: the minutes right after a performance.

ZHANA:You are never asked but you always wander the streets with the answers at the ready. You peacock!

PHILIP:(*To Zhana.*) Right, then! Name a thing you love!

ZHANA:I like stone skipping.

LAURA:Can you do it!

ZHANA:I learnt how to recently. You, Laura?

LAURA:I like bathing in boiling hot water.

PHILIP:I like big paper bags and... The Game!

ZHANA:The Game.

DODO:Sure - The Game.

PHILIP:Penguins.

LAURA:Pastries... and awls.

PHILIP:Christmas trees.

DODO:I like inflating rubber gloves like balloons.

ZHANA:I like balloons.

LAURA:It's impossible to give a one-word answer. You have to either enumerate or choose just one thing. I believe that buttered toast is the most delicious thing in the world. Do we all agree?

ZHANA:After coffee, yes!

DODO:Coffee is not food!

ZHANA:She didn't say food, only delicious!

DODO:(*Obvious annoyance.*) Dear Lord! Lets play!

Oscar offers drinks around.

PHILIP:Nothing for me at present. I want to concentrate on my game today. Not like last time.

DODO:Why?

LAURA:What was so bad last time, Pippy?

DODO:What was so bad last time, Pippy?

ZHANA:What was so bad last time, Pippy?

PHILIP:I was the victim of subversive tactics aiming at my elimination as a player!

ZHANA:You lost because you got drunk!

PHILIP:I was inebriated, intoxicated and poisoned by you after it became clear I was winning for a third time in a row. But this is not going to happen again! No more Stupid Philip!

LAURA:Come on, he's still here!

DODO:You just went over your limit. No one is to blame! Laura won absolutely by the rules. You see how Zhana is not affected by alcohol? She just keeps drinking and playing. You overdid it for joy.

LAURA:(*To Philip.*) I think you should eat. There are sandwiches if you want. So that won't happen again...

ZHANA:(*To Dodo.*) Zhana knows how to hold her drink. Writers know how to drink. And do not compare me to actors who cannot hold their success!... And then have us carry them to their places.

LAURA:(*To Zhana.*) Some of us do carry, others refuse to.

PHILIP:(*To Zhana.*) You were filling up my glass all the time because you were cross I was winning. (*To Laura.*) You too!

LAURA:That's not true! Dodo was bartender last time.

PHILIP:(*To Dodo.*) So, it was you, then? Your job is to defend, not to poison! Nice bartender you were!

DODO:Stop insulting innocent people! I am playing! And why should you suspect me?! Just think who won in the end? (*Pointing to Laura.*)

LAURA:Come on!

PHILIP:Tosh! I suspect everyone and I'm on the alert!

ZHANA:Pippi, give me the red one! How come you snatch it? It's mine!
They play silently and with intent.

DODO:I decided to marry Sarah.

They all stop playing.

LAURA:Is that for sure?

DODO:Yes.

ZHANA:How terrible!

LAURA:Zhana-a-a!

ZHANA:Oh, I need another drink. Anyone else?

DODO:Aren't you a bit uncomfortable reacting like this?! I'm telling you something serious! And important to me!

ZHANA:Don't worry! It is important to us, too! We just need some time to understand it. At least I do.

LAURA:*(To Dodo.)* Well, congratulations! At last you made a sound decision! Champaign?

PHILIP:*(To Dodo.)* Have you told her?

DODO:Yes, last night I proposed to her and she accepted.

ZHANA:Sure she would! What else could she do! After waiting for two years. Waiting and stalking.

PHILIP:*(To Zhana.)* You'll have to learn to like her. This is his choice. What remains for us but to accept it?

LAURA:I'll have one more too, Zhana. It seems I need it.

ZHANA:I was just wondering when you'll start to grasp the meaning of his words!

PHILIP:Dodo, you should know I do not stand for marriage and all that goes with it but since you've made a decision and you are happy, who are we to judge you?

ZHANA:How do you mean "who are we"? Who are we? We are "us" and it has lasted years. A long time before Sara appeared to take the wind out of our sails!

LAURA:Zhana!?

ZHANA: What?

DODO: I know you do not approve of her but I like her and I am going to marry her. I want it. She wants it. So, refrain from comments as if it is an irresolute decision.

ZHANA: And why didn't you tell us while it was still an irresolute decision? We could have done something to stop it.

LAURA: He, mind you, is not asking us, he's just telling us!

DODO: Did I react like that when you and Laura had to tell us you were getting married? In spite of what I was thinking.

LAURA: It was so long ago!

ZHANA: Why didn't you tell us! I counted on that! Laura, then me! I was counting on you! And just because you kept quiet, you know what the result was – complete failure!

PHILIP: Nobody is to blame, girls! It just happened. We were all young and stupid then!

ZHANA: And now we are only stupid.

LAURA: Stupid and diehard, meaning we are young.

DODO: Dear friends, if I was not tired and didn't know you so well, we'd have quarrelled by now and I'd have left. Red.

LAURA: Twice red. You can't leave, we are playing.

PHILIP: Didn't I do it once?

ZHANA: We all remember how you left. Once in so many years is acceptable.

LAURA: When was that?

DODO: Pippi left in the middle of the game because I told him he was a halfwit. Can't remember why but he deserved it.

PHILIP: *(Corrects him.)* Im-be-cile! There is a difference between "abnormal" and "you're not normal" – the latter is more insulting.

LAURA: It is, without any doubt.

PHILIP: You said that because you insisted I was out of tune singing “The Joke” and I was putting you off track.

LAURA: Good Lord, I remember!

PHILIP:

(Singing.) Over there just where
 My merry heart is singing.
 Over there my heart
 is singing merrily.
 Merrily my heart is singing
 over there. Tell me where
 my merry heart is singing.

The song is sung to the music of Humoreske by Antonin Dvorak. They finish the song, sit down and continue playing as if nothing happened.

DODO: Yes, I was right.

PHILIP: Well...

LAURA: We won't solve this problem soon, it's clear. We are playing.

DODO: Sarah keeps asking me about the rules of the Game. *(To Zhana.)*

Don't touch my cards!

ZHANA: We had enough of Sarah!

LAURA: *(To Zhana.)* Keep playing, don't get distracted!

ZHANA: Keeps asking, he says!

PHILIP: What about the rules? Clear and easy.

DODO: She can't understand them. After so many explanations. But she keeps looking for logic and consistency.

PHILIP: The underlying principle is no logic, no consistency. You explain it to her. Hope she gets it.

ZHANA: And you want to marry someone who cannot, after two years, understand the rules of a game invented by children?

LAURA: Truth is it's hard to explain. If someone tried explaining it to me now, I surely wouldn't understand a thing.

ZHANA: Come on. In two years... And what's it to her? She won't have to play! What's she asking and poking for!

DODO: Stop it, Zhana!

PHILIP: *(To Zhana.)* You're overdoing it! Play!

LAURA: When's the great day?

ZHANA: Going back to it again, are you?

DODO: I think it should be in April. We'd have been prepared by then.

ZHANA: A-ha.

LAURA: April is a fragrant, wonderful, flowery month. I got married in April, too.

ZHANA: And what good was to you your April wedding? In August you had lost it all. In spring people are up for stupidities only. Put it off for a later date, Dodo.

DODO: Alright.

PHILIP: You are talking as if it was you getting married then.

ZHANA: No, I got married in July. And I got divorced in July. So this month is out, too.

LAURA: Obviously unsuitable!

DODO: There are no suitable months, are there, Zhana?

LAURA: I had at least one advantage after the divorce – I bought the bar. Otherwise it wouldn't have happened.

ZHANA: The best thing of marriage, Dodo, comes when it's over. Gives you determination.

LAURA: That's exactly what I wanted to say.

PHILIP: Well deserved applause for Laura for buying the bar so we'd have our own place. Chapeaux!

They all applaud and shout “Bravo!” It’s obvious this happens always when the topic is mentioned.

ZHANA:(*To Laura.*) Your husband was also against the game on top of that. Mine, too!

LAURA:Fools!

PHILIP:Oh, I really did not understand it. Was it somehow in their way?

LAURA:They were dying of curiosity.

ZHANA:They were jealous.

DODO:Sarah, too, seems to be jealous? She does not seem pleased I come here without her.

ZHANA:You said it! I was wondering when she’d start messing. Tell her one of the rules is – without her!

PHILIP:Two yellow, three forward! Stop it, Dodo! Did she really say that?! This isn’t serious.

DODO:For me neither. But we’ll settle it.

LAURA:Maybe it seems to her foolish wasting of time because she does not know what it is, so she is angry. If you explain to her...?

DODO:Sure will!

PHILIP:What is there to explain? Everyone to his own! Ain’t I right?

ZHANA:She is up to organizing weddings, for example. And here we gather since our school days to play quiet games, everyone to his hobby.

LAURA:And only once a month at that!

ZHANA:Is it so dangerous to leave you out of sight for a couple of hours?

DODO:Just stop it! You really overdo it! Discussing her as if I am not in this room! I just told you I was going to marry this woman! And you, Zhana, are just like some dragon! How has she wronged you? She is wonderful, nice, clever and me liking her should be enough for you.

LAURA:Easy now, Dodo! This is just the way we discuss everything, you know?

Silence.

ZHANA:Clever, you say?! But can't understand the game?!

Dodo starts laughing.

DODO:(*To Zhana.*) Monster!

They continue with the game.

PHILIP:Do you remember Dodo shouting like this once back at school?

ZHANA:Hysterical!

LAURA:I was with him. I shuddered lest he'd hit her.

ZHANA:You mean Mrs Sarkisian, don't you?

PHILIP:She was going to explode! (*To Dodo.*) Were you aware of what you were doing or just without thinking... for the cause of justice?

DODO:She just pissed me off!

LAURA:She was doing her job.

ZHANA:I think he suffers from hysteria from an early age.

DODO:(*To Zhana.*) If we miss overlook that, I go crazy when someone opposite me talks nonsense and I have to endure it. The teachers, especially, think they have a permit and they have idiots in front of them. Then and there I just started listening and just couldn't bear it. A stupid story. And I gained nothing.

LAURA:You were sent away.

DODO:Oh, sure!

ZHANA:We were all sent away because we leaped to defending you. That's when, it seems, we invented the Game.

DODO:That's right.

LAURA:We started it. We laid the foundations.

DODO:It's just once I've been sent away from school and there's no way I'd forget it.

PHILIP:It's twice! The second one was with me – from ballet class.

DODO:I don't remember. But it's quite possible.

ZHANA:I never admit we studied ballet. It's incongruous. No one studies ballet as a regular subject with marks and all. It was only us... Why? You mention it and the questions start pouring in: How come ballet, why ballet? And there is no explanation. Physics, chemistry, maths... and ballet!

DODO:You were girls anyway, but us! Well, Pippi?!

PHILIP:To tell you the truth I adored ballet, but I was too shy to admit it. These were the most pleasant classes for me. And whatever you say, I learned how to dance. In spite of her sending me away all the time because I was a nuisance.

LAURA:Now you admit it after twenty years.

ZHANA:I dance well when I am alone.

DODO:Well, that's very good.

ZHANA:Especially of late. I feel the need... wholeheartedly ... a kind of world dance... My own magnificent dance! It's so nice!

PHILIP:Is that it?

DODO:I'd pay to see this dance of yours. Why have you kept it from us for so long?

ZHANA:I mentioned it once and you drove me crazy! Since then it's a secret.

LAURA:Secret, my foot!

PHILIP:I think I saw the dance coming in. It's stupendous!

ZHANA:You've seen nothing! Because it happens in a space parallel to yours. It's invisible to you!

LAURA:We all know our dances! Dodo, is Sarah a good dancer?

ZHANA:Oh, I had just forgotten all about her. *(Loudly.)* A wave!

They all make a wave with their arms and change their places. This is part of the game. They do it in a matter of fact manner, it's the natural thing to do.

DODO:Yes. She likes dancing. I do, too, you know. But it doesn't look the same. I danced in reverse at school out of spite and it stuck. But we'll have to dance at the wedding, so Sarah suggested we took some lessons together.

PHILIP:You don't say!

DODO:Why? We'll have to do it in front of others?

LAURA:You'll drive us crazy with news tonight.

PHILIP:Dodo, are you mad? What are you saying? You are a perfect dancer, I have seen you! How come she suggested lessons? It is a violation of your nature.

ZHANA:It will spoil the whole wedding!

DODO:I need to put on a human image at one time or other, don't I? I don't find it funny!

ZHANA:But it is!

PHILIP:You were the one mocking Zhana for signing in to standard dancing.

ZHANA:True.

DODO:That's quite different. I mocked the "standard", not the dancing. For me Zhana is the embodiment of everything non-standard. Why should she suffer? To say nothing of the misery of her partner! There was no need! How can you make her keep the rhythm? Didn't you hear her: she dances like crazy because she is crazy! (*Kisses her hand.*)

LAURA:I can dance.

DODO:In a normal way?

PHILIP:You can?

ZHANA:She was the best at school. Sure she can.

LAURA:Do you want me to teach you, Dodo? You don't have to sign in for lessons.

ZHANA:(*To Dodo.*) If you had let me then, I could have helped you now. Let Laura teach you, Dodo! This will save you the humiliation of going to lessons for bridegrooms. It's not normal!

PHILIP: You are crazy!

DODO: But I don't mind, if I can convince Sarah. She wanted to join me.

ZHANA: You can rehearse at home. Just like me!

DODO: Are you "the both of you" when you dance alone?

ZHANA: It's "the three of us."

PHILIP: Come on, Laura, show us, I'm very keen!

DODO:(*To Philip.*) It's me she has to teach, not you!

LAURA: Right now?

PHILIP: Sure! There's got to be a start.

Music starts playing. Lights gradually fade out.

Laura alone in the box.

LAURA: I made my first cake at school, in a competition for works of art. I don't remember the occasion but we were keen on inventing competition for different things. The only condition was the objects to be handmade. Zhana had written a song in the form of twelve letters. Philip brought a theatre costume he sewed by himself and Dodo set up lighted bottles and played an operetta on them. I appeared with my Cake Suzanne! For Cake Suzanne you need a soft crêpe. If you prepare it by yourself you need flour, baking powder, milk, butter, sugar and eggs. You mix the ingredients to get a thick millet-ale. It's a treat to mix it in a blender because the blades produce beautiful concentric circles and eights. And when you pour it into a buttered pan you have to write the name of the person you're in love with or one wish. The pan should be round. You can write the name in raisins,

they sink in during baking, so that your secret won't be revealed. You bake the crepe in a preheated oven, in the meantime licking off your finger the rest of the mixture because it is delicious and banned to eat. In twenty minutes a splendid aroma starts coming out of the oven, filling the house with pleasant sensations and fantasies. leave the pan to cool after taking it out of the oven. The crepe should never be hot when you start the cake. Then there is the preparation of the vanilla cream. The vanilla cream is one of the wonders of the world. I suppose the eighth one. It is made from farina, milk, an egg, sugar and vanilla extract. Vanilla, Cinnamon and Cream are three wizard sisters but I'll keep this... for later. Mix the farina and sugar in cold water. Separately bring the milk to boil and stirring slowly pour the mixture into the boiling milk. And keep stirring on. I believe that the flavour of vanilla will save the world. While stirring try to draw animal shapes: different, invented, with many feet, with wings, with big eyes, with scales, with antennas. And always make the next devour the previous. This could only be done with a wooden ladle. The other advantage of the vanilla cream is it could be any colour. at first I just let it be pale yellow – that's how I liked it. But then I discovered the violet, the orange, the blue and now I always make it different after my thoughts of the moment. When the dye is added at the end and isn't stirred much it remains in stripes. If the crepe is cold, you cut it in two, take one half and sprinkle it with the syrup of cherry compote. It better be home-made, because anyone making strawberry or cherry compote is a good man. It's best if there is something of that in your cake. And when it soaks in you arrange the cherries – in circles or just randomly but close to each other. It's most important to count while arranging them: it will come true. it won't. It's a must to have more cherries, so it will always “come true.” Have you ever seen anything thickly covered by cherries? Incredible beauty! On top of them, using a pallet or a wide knife you spread the

vanilla cream, on the edges, too. Then you cover it with the other half of the crepe. Just like the second storey of a sugar palace. And you sprinkle it with the juice of pineapple compote. Now comes a very important part of the preparation: The fruit of the pineapple should be in the form of moons and stars. It takes time, but it's worth it. In this way the second crepe turns into a sky with pineapple constellations. Don't try with any other fruit – it's meaningless! That's where the cream comes in. You beat it continuously adding small quantities of icing sugar and lemon juice. That's how the snowy fluffy cirrous clouds are made. I never knew what cirrous was until I beat the cream. Mountains of snow and clouds. Think of when you notice the clouds and the snow. Only when you feel good. Always prepare more cream to beat because half of it always gets eaten during preparation. And in the only possible way – poking your finger into the bowl. You spread the fluffy cream over the pineapple sky and the whole cake, until it looks like a white planet. Then start arranging fresh strawberries round the top rim keeping to the beat of a favourite song. If the circle is completed at half the song, you continue with a second, then a third until you get it right. At the end you sprinkle the whole cake with roasted walnuts and when the last piece falls you shout loud and clear: “Welcome, Suzanne!” And then everything is alright, just like at a kid's birthday party.

The game continues.

PHILIP: You know how the staff here call us?

LAURA: You mean my staff?

ZHANA: The weirdoes?

PHILIP: No.

DODO: They call me “sir.”

ZHANA: Because they suck up to you.

DODO: Because they respect me for leaving them huge tips.

LAURA: They respect you because this is my bar and nobody dares say a word edgewise. Don't they call us by our names?

ZHANA: I am sure we seem strange.

PHILIP: And we do. *(To Zhana.)* You especially.

DODO: *(To Philip.)* And you – never?

ZHANA: Thank God! Or I'd turn up most ordinary. I like not been liked by everybody. That's how it should be. Laura, how are your cakes? Any left for a second helping? I take red.

LAURA: A blue sequence! I have to check. In fact I think they all come here for the cake. It turned out a strange bar but I like it. I'm so fond of making them, it sure catches up and people recognize they are delicious.

PHILIP: They are really fantastic! Pure genius! I could only dream of being so good at something. But let's go back to what I heard. They call us "the masons."

DODO: Why masons?

LAURA: Who does?

PHILIP: Your staff.

LAURA: Us?

ZHANA: I like it, though people use expressions without having a clear idea of their meaning. It is not offensive, quite the opposite.

PHILIP: Perhaps they mean it to be offensive. Do we know?

LAURA: Is that what they call us? First time I hear it.

PHILIP: Yes, yes. I overheard the bartenders and I thought it was funny.

LAURA: Funny to you! Masons, you say!

ZHANA: This is not funny, it's strange.

PHILIP: It's funny because masons are men only.

ZHANA: Laura, they have not registered that we are female.

LAURA:How terrible!

PHILIP:It's obvious we have to have a name and this is their choice. Be grateful!

LAURA:I'm always the last to learn the news in this joint! How wonderful!

ZHANA:I'm very pleasantly surprised by the staff. Bravo, Laura! If we take they didn't know about "men only", they used their fantasy which brings some hope. I'll talk to them on the way out.

LAURA:May be it's because they call this box "the lodge."

ZHANA:Is that so? It's becoming boring.

LAURA:Yes, but it from before me. They say "up there in the lodge."

PHILIP:The masons are a secret organization. Do they think we are hiding, plotting and scheming?

DODO:The masons are not a secret organization but an organization with secrets. Keepers of secrets.

LAURA:But what secrets do we keep?

PHILIP:You keep the recipes of your cakes, for instance, and Zhana – her own age.

LAURA:Keeping the recipe secret is part of the cake. If not – it's a failure.

ZHANA:It is top secret, especially for my classmates.

PHILIP:But this should not leave "the lodge", right?

DODO:We are the keepers of these photos, too. Not that they merit so much being shown. (*Looking intently at the photos.*)

LAURA:Nice photos.

ZHANA:Kid's photos.

PHILIP:We keep our stories and our toys.

DODO:And the real ones? They have also invented their Game. Part of the condition is that it stays secret, but theirs is on a larger scale and for more people.

ZHANA: My, Dodo, aren't you tired of being so claver all the time? I take the blue.

LAURA: I'll go find out about some cake. Wait for me!

PHILIP: Mason – pastry chef!

Laura leaves. They stop playing.

DODO: I am not clever, just well informed because I read. So I can reason and decode the strange tongue of humans. Zhana, you're having much to drink tonight, you feel alright?

ZHANA: I won't be sick, don't worry! take care of your masons. Some read, some drink – the pleasure is the same.

Laura comes back.

LAURA: We're out of cake. Next time I'll make you a special one.

Sweetmeat or Suzanna?

PHILIP: Both.

ZHANA: Suzanna! It is fabulous!

LAURA: What swept the marzipana?

ALL: Suzanna tutta panna!

DODO: I'm not sure if I would make it next time. Sarah and I have too many tasks to do.

ZHANA: And you're doing them on Friday evening in a month?

PHILIP: Dodo, what's up?

DODO: We'll see, I'll try to make it. We're playing.

LAURA: But Fridays we always play. We all plan it like this. Or we'd miss the game and this is forbidden, you remember?

ZHANA: I like forbidden, that word disciplines me. If it wasn't present in the conditions I'd be the first to avail myself. But it works for me. This is the only occasion when I gladly keep a ban.

LAURA: It's valid for all of us.

DODO:I just meant a particular Friday, not the principle. What would happen if we miss it just once?

LAURA:We do not know. That's why we don't miss.

PHILIP:We don't want to risk it.

DODO:As if someone will rob us just then.

PHILIP:We're not afraid of being robbed. We are afraid there would be a first Friday after which it won't be banned anymore. We have managed evading it so many years now!

LAURA:Or at least postponing it.

DODO:Cheers, then! I'm talking rubbish.

ZHANA:You're saying startling things! Especially at night. When everything seems so dramatic.

PHILIP:Do not pay attention to him. He is horrified by his coming wedding and takes it out on his closest friends. It's the typical bridegroom syndrome, isn't it, Dodo?

LAURA:(*To Dodo.*) Are you afraid, honestly?

DODO:What?

ZHANA:Take it easy. Laura and me – we been through this. It will be my pleasure to explain to you the absurdity of marriage, and hers – the joy after it. You blend the two viewpoints and try to bypass the expandable, at least.

LAURA:This way you'll just frighten him!

DODO:I'm not afraid. It's your fancy! Red line.

PHILIP:You behave like a frightened man and talk blasphemy. You're trying to sabotage the Game, which is just a pleasant obligation and being "a must" gives it great value. At least for me.

ZHANA:(*To Philip.*) You talk dramatic.

DODO:Bu I don't like it. Having it as my only secure and valuable thing.

PHILIP:So you are trying to invent others, but you can't make the horse drink. If it was that easy, I'd have my basket full by now! I draw!

DODO: *(Stops playing.)* I am so used to just going on that when Sarah appeared with her questions, I felt uneasy being asked. But with time I found them meaningful and started asking myself. Then I got frightened that what I was clutching to shouting “it’s mine, I won’t give it up”, is my worst impediment. Shouldn’t something be changed?

ZHANA: Why? What’s wrong with anything classic? Why do you need poking in the deep? It is full of mud and bores. I don’t want to change and who knows what I’ll turn into!

DODO: May be it’s Sarah who will succeed in doing it. Perhaps I should let her.

The lights slowly fade, the box vanishes.

Philip is alone.

PHILIP: Some time ago I met a girl. An exceptional girl. I did not understand it right away, unfortunately, but much later! We met after one of my shows. An acquaintance had brought her to watch and after we finished we went to dinner together – he, she, me and other people. A noisy crowd. I was the noisiest of all, of course because I wanted applause and I got it even after the play was over. The girl sat silent in the midst of it all and watched. If I had not thought about it, I’d have said she was boring or bored, embarrassed, timid. But mostly that I was not interested in her because she was not playing up to my glory at the moment. But I stared at her and I felt uneasy. I cannot describe it any other way but as very uneasy. I imagined that that whenever she looked at me I was like an X-ray transparency. All that I kept secret was fully revealed in her eyes. I felt I was unmasked and I felt embarrassed. Without thinking I started making up to her, to flirt and to win her over by cheap tricks. She didn’t mind and

readily went for it but her face still kept that embarrassed half-smile which showed my efforts failing. In a couple of days I called her. And we started going out and talking. Just talking. About things I heard existed for the first time. She knew a “dead” language, unique and unknown to other people. She used it to answer questions I thought unanswerable. Was she beautiful? Would better say – no! She looked imperfect which made all other things even more significant. I was swimming in a strange state between our dates. Without realizing it I became dependent to a degree to feel pain if I didn’t see or hear from her. Now I think she made an effort to change me. She began rearranging me carefully, slowly with the manic precision of a jeweller, with an experienced hand which I let lead me and depreciate all that was mine before meeting her. I did not resist. It was something new, something I knew should happen, but I didn’t know how. The most important thing she gave me was the awareness that there was potential in me, a place where I could generate a sound which could muffle my doubts. A strange period – uneasy but pleasant. The theatre became the horn of plenty where I dove with the conviction I could swim to perfection. And everything ended in a blink! Quick and cruel! Sudden and boring. She fell in love with me. And told me. Then I fell in the absurd situation of running like mad from the spot I should never leave. Why? Because I was scared. Because for me the important thing was to have this sacred zone of human emotions. because I was selfish and wanted to receive only. because I thought I was strong and could dispose of my energy source. Because after she proved to be the ordinary girl I did not need her. Because it was years ago. Because she never ever called me. Because I didn’t dare do it all this time. Why? Because if you want to change, you have to commit suicide first. That’s all about change. I could not endure it.

They are all in the box. Playing. They make the wave and rotate seats.

ZHANA: Well, Philip is an expert on fears. Isn't that right, Pippi?

PHILIP: What are you talking about?

ZHANA: How many girlfriends have you had so far! Ten? You don't remember their names even. Dumping them because of fear?

PHILIP: Fear – no. I was just dying of boredom.

ZHANA: What expectations did you have? It's always boring.

LAURA: A wonderful optimistic thought!

PHILIP: Years ago I had expectations, now I am fully appeased. Boredom reigns and we cannot shun it. So let's just stop trying.

DODO: That isn't true! There is no boredom with Sarah!

LAURA: What is there, then?

DODO: Many things. Anything but boredom. Love?

PHILIP: You are at the very start, my friend. just wait a couple pf years to pass and see what you'll sink in. But when you realize it, it'll be too late.

LAURA: A rain of optimistic reflections. That the way just before a wedding, go on!

DODO: *(To Philip.)* May be we can't all follow your patented formula. People are different.

PHILIP: You are right. People are different but love always ends one way or another. And it isn't the "way" that matters but the "end." Love ends. Finishes. Gets exhausted. Vanishes in thin air. Why, then, waste so much time on it?

LAURA: I don't go for this.

ZHANA: *(To Laura.)* You are a romantic. For you love is a medicine you need to prevent you latent madness burst out. To love!

DODO: To love! Though I do not concur. I am happy that Laura, at least, believes in love. *(To Laura.)* We are the last defendants of love, right, Honey Bun?

ZHANA: This is ridiculous!

LAURA: I have dedicated so much time to love – thought of it, dreamt of it, researched it, that I was left speechless! I have no way of defending it but whatever she transforms into, it does not vanish. May take a different form, but does not vanish.

PHILIP: Fiddlesticks!

LAURA: This is something I feel but cannot explain. I never suspected it existed before reaching it. It's like a place where all obligations are shed, all conventions, all names. And you walk about freely, without setting conditions and without expecting any. A kind of tranquillity turned space which you have the right to inhabit.

ZHANA: Laura, dear, sometimes you manage to sugar-coat the conversation and make everything look like a pink cake. Even this room.

DODO: I think she's right and I like it this way. Love be a chameleon changing its colour all the time.

ZHANA: The chameleon matches the colour of the environment and blends in. Becoming invisible. What's that got to do with her statement?

LAURA: Everything! This is also a possibility.

ZHANA: I understand it but I don't like it. In this way love does not change its form, it simply hides away. Romantic verbiage.

PHILIP: Nothing wrong in being a romantic. Long live the romantics! If it wasn't for them, there would be no love because they invented it. They coined this word and add to its meaning all the time. They have difficulties because they never have enough of it. The rest of us *(Turns to Zhana.)* simply use the ready material. *(Recites.)*

Remember all the shades of grey
before you start a colour dream.
The palette in your eyes, I say,
without my eyes will not be seen.

Applause.

ZHANA: And by this you say you are not in love with me?

PHILIP: That's right, Zhana, dear. But I adore you! (*Kisses her.*)

ZHANA: You were my last hope. May be once I was in love, for I've been your friend for so long.

LAURA: What did you say?

DODO: That's nice.

PHILIP: I can't have enough of you, sweet girls, all these years. To me you are still mysterious enigmas, sirens, enchantresses. Whenever I would fall in love with one of you, I'd understood how dear you were to me and I'd fall out of love with you then and there. This is my only chance to keep you forever.

LAURA: What are you saying, Pippi, do you really think it?

PHILIP: I don't know, I just had a brainwave.

DODO: In his own strange way he confessed being in love with both of us at the same time. Which is quite a feat! Proving, at the same time, what he refuted just a while ago. This is the different kind of love, Pippi. You said it yourself – you are the chameleon in love posing as a friend.

PHILIP: Not posing as, I really am! And if this is a proof for Laura's words, then I give up. I am in love with only you, girls, and that is quite enough for me! (*To Dodo.*) and with you, too!

LAURA: Rubbish!

DODO: You are an idiot!

ZHANA: You spoilt it all!

PHILIP: *(To Dodo.)* Ti amo.

DODO: That's exactly what I needed tonight.

PHILIP: *(Recites.)*

Beloved one, I feel enormous pain,
to you confessions true I send -
my unrequited love is slain,
I choose to stay forever your friend.

LAURA: People can, people do!

ZHANA: Well, he loves you! Beyond any doubt! But he failed to convince Laura and me.

LAURA: He is a master of word, he can take anyone for a ride.

DODO: I love you, too, my friend, but I am in love with someone else.

ZHANA: Yes, unfortunately.

DODO: There was no way we'd intermarry. Philip just confessed his reasons. Mine are a bit different, but one way or another – she materialized. I never looked for her. I just met her!

LAURA: If you stopped when you met her, you surely were looking... I think.

PHILIP: How did you recognize it was her?

ZHANA: Yes, Dodo, what's so special about Sarah?

DODO: That's not the issue, dear, it's strange how much you dislike her?

ZHANA: Why should we like her?

LAURA: Why shouldn't we?

PHILIP: I don't even know her.

DODO: No, you don't, really. *(To Zhana.)* Come on, explain why you are so peeved I could be happy with someone else? Can you?

PHILIP:She's jealous.

ZHANA:Right you are, I am since we are having this conversation. I have personal reasons to doubt that you can be happy with exactly her. And not anyone in general.

DODO:Because you have more sensors than me?

ZHANA:Because I, too, have been confused in the past, but none of you, my friends, did not tell me or stop me!

LAURA:As I said before, we were too young and incredibly stupid.

PHILIP:(*To Zhana.*) When you have your mind set on something, could we stop you?

ZHANA:No, of course, but a try would be appreciated. Think I can stop Dodo now!

DODO:You are right, you can't! But here I am listening to you! Tell me what you think of Sara. Let's see what you're trying to save me from.

ZHANA: Sara is ambitious, beautiful and predictable. Growing up girls like her turn into beautiful beasts. They take it for granted to have a life out of a magazine. And once set on it they just do it. With her things do not happen, she arranges them. She does not know you enough to fall in love with you. She has chosen you for things that make you so ordinary that, believe me, the fact that she has chosen you is nowhere near a compliment. I even think you awe her because at this moment you are cheating. You are cheating that you answer all her requirements for an ideal husband but I don't know how long you can endure. You decided you were I love, you liked the idea and started playing the part. perhaps you really are!?! But you are in love with a woman you don't like. It turns out it is possible! And Sara won't settle down before she captures you in a pristine wedding photo. She really doesn't know you. She doesn't know us either, but she already hates us. because she feels threatened. We confuse her idea of full visibility of your life. You have no right to secrets or to anything not of her doing. In

this case I can't see what you are doing there! She doesn't know you! She can't be in love with you! Because, Dodo, without all this, (*Pointing around.*) without us... without the violin, without these pictures, you are just a successful lawyer, nothing else. That's what she saw.

LAURA:Terrible!

PHILIP:Oh!

Zhana gets up and walks out enraged.

DODO:I read recently that for a certain sum of money you can have a hurricane or another such element be given a name of your choice. Some time ago children made a gift to their father – naming a natural disaster which devastated a couple of towns, after him – Kiril. Was the father pleased? I think of giving Zhana the same gift for her next birthday. Hurricane Zhana! She will surely be happy.

Silence.

DODO: I don't want history to preserve only the bad witch's prophecies. (*Looks in the direction where Zhana went out.*) Don't think I have no similar things in my head. But in fact they are quite different from what Zhana was talking about. Sarah is not like us, not like me. Thank God for that! But this does not make her a monster. For quite a long time I have been champion of the cause that the world outside is not as sinister as we are trying to prove. Sarah is normal, down-to-earth and consequently very stable. In this way I have finally found a bearing and can keep my balance. And I like it. All the rest is very taxing.

LAURA:I'll fetch the sandwiches.

Laura goes out. Philip and Dodo stay in the box.

PHILIP:You're in a strange phase.

DODO:A mixed-up phase. Everything outside seem quite alright before I come here. After we start playing everything else starts to seem useless.

PHILIP: You talk funny, confuse us because you are confused. *(Pause.)*

When are you going to spill it out?

DODO: What?

PHILIP: What you are trying to say from the very beginning.

DODO: It's hard for me to combine what I want with what I think I want. It starts to be more difficult to leave to come here, but on the way I run to get here faster. I don't know what I want.

PHILIP: Then don't say anything.

DODO: I won't.

The stage is darkened.

Philip is alone.

PHILIP: A couple of years ago New Year's Eve fell on the last Friday of December. We agreed to move the Game to next day so that everyone could stay where he had planned. I was invited to a party in a big night club. Dodo was going with colleagues to the Lawyers Ball, Zhana was having an affair with a reporter who wanted to take her out of town and Laura said she'd stay in the bar and keep watch over service and order. I went to my party all dressed up and in high spirits. The music was loud, people were over excited, there was everything in abundance! A girl smiling at me looked very much like Laura. And I remembered Laura. I wondered what she was doing at the moment, was she happy, what she was wearing. Then I remembered she was alone. meeting the New Year alone. And I panicked. So far it had seemed quite natural for her to be there, but then I realized she had no one to go anywhere with. I took my coat and rushed outside in the cold. It was snowing but I ran and laughed and felt happy. I stormed in the bar like a madman. I found her sitting alone,

singing to herself and arranging the Game. I didn't know what to say, just stood looking at her. She was startled, glanced up, recognized me and stood up. Without smiling she came to me and kissed me. She kissed me like no one had ever kissed me before. With such affection that only this kiss remained in the world and nothing else mattered. Only then she smiled and said: "I'm going for the drinks." I just stood there, out of breath. After a while Dodo came in. He was all snowflakes and confetti. He found me playing, melted and kissed. What he thought then I don't know, because we started laughing hysterically and had no time for words. Then the three of us played, sang, fought with cakes, played quite drunk and so into dawn. This type of a celebration. The best New Year's Eve of my life!

Lights fade out.

Everyone is back in the box. The Game continues.

PHILIP:(*To Dodo.*) When did you decide to marry her? Last night?

DODO:No, of course! Some time ago.

ZHANA:How long ago? Why wait to tell us now?

DODO:For months it was in my mind, as an idea, improving all the time. I would have told you when I sure of it.

ZHANA:So, you proposed first and then it turned out you were sure.

LAURA:What about a ring?

ZHANA:Dear God, he gave her a ring! There's no going back!

LAURA:He was in a hurry, before telling us. That was a good move.

DODO:She mentioned something of the kind and then I realized she was expecting it.

ZHANA:Didn't I tell you?

DODO: But it was not something ominous or obligatory, just natural to expect. I thought I had flipped because it never occurred to me, so...

PHILIP: So, you've been thinking and last night you launched an attack? It took you quite long! Two blue!

DODO: The truth is I tried right away. This, in fact, is my second proposal.

LAURA: How come - second?

DODO: The first time I placed an advert in the paper and thought: if she reads it, that's the moment!

ZHANA: And she didn't, of course.

DODO: Seems she did not understand it was for her.

LAURA: What was the advert?

PHILIP: Why didn't you tell us? That's mighty interesting! You know we played adverts for years on end. I feel robbed somehow.

ZHANA: Thief!

LAURA: You played without us.

DODO: It was just a whim. And I didn't tell you because I failed.

LAURA: What was the advert?

DODO: It doesn't matter, obviously the idea was no good. People are not obliged to take part in games that only I am keen on.

PHILIP: Zhana, remember how I invited you to the ball?

ZHANA:

Let's put the crowns on -
we're going to the ball.
Without the Queen Moreau
we'll have no fun at all!

Sure the advert is in my files.

PHILIP: But your answer was very good, too!

LAURA: It was quite complicated. A lot of searching not to miss a thing, and in rhyme, too!

PHILIP: And make it special – coded, yet clear for the addressee.

LAURA: A remarkable way to say the important things, yet tricky to read it correctly.

ZHANA: It was so long ago. How did you think of using the classified column again? I had completely forgotten it!

DODO: I remembered and thought it appropriate and original, but I was wrong.

LAURA: I like making a proposal like this. What if she didn't understand? It's still a good idea.

DODO: But it's not universal.

ZHANA: Not at all. It's for special people only!

PHILIP: *(To Laura.)* Would you understand it's for you if you read something similar now?

DODO: Yes, I think she'd understand.

ZHANA: *(To Dodo.)* Wasn't that enough for you to stop trying?

DODO: I thought I had the wrong approach, not the wrong person, Zhana! And I am still convinced.

ZHANA: Fiddlesticks! You are not, I'm sure!

LAURA: Obviously he is, being so stubborn and secretive.

DODO: For a moment I thought - if I failed I shouldn't retry.

ZHANA: Right you are. Why didn't you keep that though longer? It was the right one!

DODO: Then I let things follow their natural course. I decided to wait in peace and so I did - till last night.

PHILIP: And what happened last night?

DODO: Nothing. I felt the moment was right and I asked her. With no experiments, just did it.

LAURA: That's not bad either.

PHILIP: A bit boring, though.

DODO: It wasn't boring! It was solemn and classical.

ZHANA: And who was rattling about standard dancing? Is there more standard than that, you confused lawyer's head! Three forward?

DODO: She was pleased and I was pleased that I was understood and that she accepted. Full stop. I am glad.

ZHANA: If I were you, I'd have stood for my initial idea. It is not you being confused, it's Sarah not being eligible! It was just like in Cinderella – the glass slipper situation.

DODO: You think she'll turn into a pumpkin?

ZHANA: No, I think that being in a rush, you'll marry one of her sisters.

DODO: I think Zhana is simply envious!

ZHANA: Why should I envy you?

DODO: Because I am not alone!

PHILIP: Then the logical thing is all of us to envy you!

DODO: It's quite clear! Otherwise you wouldn't launch such a fierce attack against me.

ZHANA: I don't envy you, I simply see the future. There I see two people speaking different languages trying to understand each other. At the moment they pretend everything's alright, but soon they'll start suffering.

DODO: Pippi, do you share these thoughts?

PHILIP: Yes. No. (*Sets down the cards.*) I am confused and I don't know what I'm thinking. On the one hand I am happy you'll have a family and prove to yourself you are able to achieve it. On the other I am not sure you understand why you are doing it. You give us a set of reasons, but I think they are different. I think you devised conditions you intend fulfilling and Sarah is just the way to check if you'll succeed. May be that's not true at all. I don't know!

DODO: Do you all think like him? Laura?

Pause.

LAURA: The one most confused here is me, so do not ask me. There is something in what Pippi said, but it's not quite the... May be you want to have children?

ZHANA: Yes, Dodo, tell us about the children. My favourite topic. None of us have, but none of us want.

PHILIP: Talk about yourself.

ZHANA: It's the first time I hear you want to have a child.

PHILIP: I do not want, because I am still young, but the others my think different.

LAURA: I think different! Black line! Draw!

DODO: Sarah wants children.

ZHANA: Did anyone ask you what Sarah thinks? Tell me about yourself!

DODO: It doesn't matter.

PHILIP: O-oh, my friend, this was just about the only wrong answer.

LAURA: It does matter, Dodo! This is one reason no one would dispute. It will make us shut up.

DODO: It seems I have to justify myself all the time. Why don't you just accept that I am in love and I want to get married? That's what I'm asking of you: be happy and support me.

LAURA: That is what we are doing!

ZHANA: Because you owe us an explanation.

DODO: I don't owe you a thing if I don't want it myself. And on the topic of children I don't know if what I am going to say is right or if tomorrow I won't think differently.

PHILIP: Answer now, it's now we are asking you!

DODO: Alright! I am not ready for children. Are you happy now?

LAURA: Why?

DODO: Now, you see? It's the same whatever I say. That is why I tried to skip the answer.

PHILIP:I am fully satisfied. You couldn't be more clear.

LAURA:Does Sarah know?

DODO:No. I'm afraid if I'm that honest with her it'll frighten her.

LAURA:You should tell her. if this is important for her, it may bring a total change.

DODO:This is the thing I don't want to tell her. And I don't want any changes. I'd rather change my point of view. And just now I got awfully confused.

LAURA:So, where do you stand with your point of view?

DODO:Nowhere, I just told you.

PHILIP:You are talking gibberish! You cannot, knowing you are afraid of heights and always aware of it, run with closed eyes to the edge and jump. You don't prove a thing in this way.

DODO:But you can! Why say you cannot?

PHILIP:Because if you are jumping, you should look! That's the point!

The stage gradually darkens. The box vanishes.

Zhana comes out. She is very serious and concentrated. She is dressed in a ballroom gown. Music comes up. Zhana waits for her partner, they take their positions and start a slow dance. It gives her enormous pleasure. She is all smiles, beautiful and happy. This is her world, she is the goddess there and she is flying.

The music ends. Oscar goes out. Zhana takes long curtain calls. The light slowly fade out.

Dodo is alone in the box.

DODO: One evening I went to an opening of an exhibition. There was a big crowd, reporters, lights, Champaign. I started walking trying to have a look at the pictures and I saw something strange. Zhana was standing in front of a picture deep in serious conversation. She was agitated, argumentative and also she was laughing. The strange thing was she was alone with the picture. I watched her for a while, something familiar came over me and I was moved. I didn't want to interrupt her. It was obvious she needed this conversation. I spent the rest of the time there watching over her so no one would see or startle her. I never told her I was there. The next day I bought a violin. I needed a violin. Though I couldn't play I had the feeling I had to have one. So that was that. When I mentioned this to the others Zhana told me she thought I had done it long ago. Playing music is magic difficult to explain. It is a secret and intimate space you go to with music. Music people are like drug addicts. Just a look is enough to know they are victims of the same passion. I have a friend who studied the cello for twelve years. First at school, then he graduated from the music conservatory. He was invited to play for a big orchestra and just before starting he declined. To become a financial broker. And a good broker, too. Later I asked him what happened. What made him take the decisive step. That's what he said: "I adore playing but let's be honest, I am a middling cello player. I changed my profession the minute I realized it. Now I can continue playing just for the pleasure of it." Sometimes we get together and play. That's how we talk. Other than that we don't have much to say. Will Sarah let me play when I feel like it? She hasn't got a clue about the violin. It's better like that. Perhaps instead of the ring I should have given her a cello and pray the magic would happen.

Again everybody is around the table, the game continues, they make the wave and exchange places.

PHILIP:Hop, hop and I am “blue”!
DODO:Hop, but it’s not you. It’s me here, don’t you see?
ZHANA:Haw – haw – haw.
PHILIP:Stop laughing. You can’t move either.
ZHANA:Says you?
LAURA:Me? Where is my line?
DODO:Where did it go? Let’s take a spin.
ZHANA:This is taken!
LAURA:What did you do, Dodo? It’s not allowed!
ZHANA:Stop spinning!
PHILIP:It doesn’t fit this way! I am confused!
DODO:It just jammed!
LAURA:Nonsense! Let me think. Here...
ZHANA:How come? You want me out? No way!
LAURA:Alright, I got it, I’m pulling back.
ZHANA:You all are to blame!
DODO:That’s quite absurd! How about this?
PHILIP:You’re stepping on my head!
LAURA:It’s a fixture! What happened?
ZHANA:The Game does not work! *(To Philip.)* You damaged it by pushing too hard!
PHILIP:Pipe down!
DODO:I don’t know, we are in a mess.
LAURA:Pippi, where did you start to pop up there?
PHILIP:There’s not room enough!
DODO:Nonsense! There’s got to be!
ZHANA:It’s Sarah’s fault!
DODO:That’s right, Zhana.

PHILIP: Alright, how do I pass over there if this is...

LAURA: It's me...

DODO: Take it easy, we'll manage!

ZHANA: *(To Dodo.)* I Think you should give way on the red...

DODO: Should I!

ZHANA: ...I'll slide over to Laura, make a line and then Pippi can go ahead.

DODO: You are superb!

LAURA: Zhana, I think you're too perky!

ZHANA: I just wanted to help.

PHILIP: Just helping – lying and stealing!

ZHANA: Then you do it alone!

PHILIP: Let's take a break. *(Stretches.)* I have to rationalize my further strategy.

ZHANA: I agree. My play is also out of focus and I make mistakes.

LAURA: Doi you want anything else? Zhana?

DODO: Pippi, lets play some, it's time for some music.

LAURA: Come on, Pippi, just to relax a bit.

ZHANA: No need to make him do it! He is all eager – songs and costumes!

LAURA: Zhana, come help me with the glasses, we need some space here.

They all exit. Only Oscar remains in the box.

OSCAR: Masons are tall people with long beards and big red cone hats. To the crowd, though, they look like normal people, but the truth is – beards and hats. Masons do not try hard to be like that, they are simply born like that. I.e. to be a mason is not hereditary, it is not something you learn, it just - you either are one or you are not. The question is how to understand if you are one. Very easy. In your childhood, at a certain time, instantly,

night or dream, you suddenly realize, accept, take a deep breath and things take their normal course. Because that explains everything. Then you stop worrying and start waiting. and you wait until you are found or you meet others who are just like you. Masons have different professions. Usually they look just like ordinary people, but this is only disguise. In reality they are quite special and they take up special things which they dedicate their lives to. Every month they gather in a secret place, lock themselves up and start go through their magic séances. In whispers. Well, we should not delude ourselves, masons are wizards in a way. At their gatherings they discuss important issues concerning only them and especially the one issue: how to never let out what they are discussing there. When all of them assemble they sit around a King Arthur's table – huge and comfortable. It is an obligatory and very important element of the setting. After the discussions and the whispering they have a lavish dinner on recipes that are also kept top secret and then they pass on for the principle component of the meeting - The Game. The game is the reason for the masons to be masons, the masons are the reason for the game to exist. In your childhood, at a certain time, in one night, one instant or one dream, you suddenly realize that you know how to play. It just happens. No one teaches you, no one warns you. From this moment on the most important thing for you is to hide and keep your skills because this is one part of the condition. In fact that is when you start playing. The Game: in the game each of the players is dressed in a different colour and plays in the name of this colour. There are no names, no characters – just colours. And then – there is dancing. Wholehearted. That's how progress and movement materialize. Dances and colours. Dancing colours. Waves of yellow, red, blue and orange which surge, spill over and merge. Wholehearted dancing – great and universal. Long dancing sessions help the player achieve something like a trance. Then their bodies stop participating and each transgresses into an air level,

non-material, semitransparent, but bright. The colours spread over the table and the game continues up there. The eyes are awake and watch the play to be fair. They observe splendid pictures and direct the action at the same time. And there, over the table, the colours conquer territories, murmur, spill out and run wild. The new territories are tinted in the colour of the winner and in some cases, when there is parity, space fills with swelling magic hues. From a certain moment on everything starts happening round the whole room. That's the most interesting part. The better mason (player) you are, the larger the territory you manage. If the Game lasts long enough, the colours spill out of the room and start moving over cities, countries, until in the end the players have entire disposal of the enormity of space. Then the emotion is indescribable, the level is universal. There are no boundaries, no form, no explanation. The conditions change on with the progress of the game, the combination of the colours and the possibilities of million variations over billions of miles of territory. The game continues until the players are tired and the next game begins from scratch, because of the dancing, you know.

For the masons playing the Game is like breathing which keeps the brain alert, the eyes open and sharpens senses you never suspected exist. There is no way to learn or explain this. The masons possess these skills and their task the rest of the time is to keep this game secret. Because if the others learn about it, they will take it away, they will damage it and everything will come to an end. Whatever they do to keep it secret, they know that one day they will be found out and that is why they keep their mightiest weapon – the secret which no one dares say: to play the Game you have to be a mason, to be a mason you have to know how to play the Game. No one else can, however hard they try.

Exits.

Philip and Dodo arrive. Philip looks at the photos on the wall.

PHILIP: And Laura?

DODO: Laura is not a child. She's much stronger than me or you.

PHILIP: You are a fool! A blind fool!

DODO: If you hold someone dear to you and you don't want to lose them, you play blind. Because if they discover you can see, things become complicated.

PHILIP: Then what were you talking about this whole evening?

Laura and Zhana enter dressed as French courtesans. Funny, dishevelled, wigs askew, a lot of rouge and smudges of lipstick. Dodo and Philip die of laughter. This is part of their game. Every time this moment comes the girls come in surprise costumes. The boys also do it, having prepared it in advance. This has been running for years. And they always make photos to hang later on the walls.

ZHANA: Ta-ra!

Laura and Zhana spin around and demonstrate the costumes.

DODO: What are you tonight? Queens?

PHILIP: Where did you find these dresses? You are glamorous!

LAURA: Raped courtesans!

ZHANA: Hag bags!

DODO: Exquisite!

PHILIP: Oh, then wait now! Come on, Dodo!

DODO: I'm flying!

Dodo and Philip go out.

LAURA: Dodo seems strange.

ZHANA:Dodo is leaving!

LAURA:How do you mean?

ZHANA:He is leaving us, leaving the Game, but he does not dare do it so abruptly.

LAURA:Why is he leaving?

ZHANA:Because he felt he was dependent somehow, I suppose.

LAURA:And he's not telling us? No courage or what?

ZHANA:I think he doesn't know it yet, but he has taken a subconscious decision.

LAURA:Perhaps he has lost interest in the game. Just fed up with it.

ZHANA:He hasn't lost interest! He realizes it is his only interest and that scares him. He wants to fill his life with other meaningful things so he could have a choice.

LAURA:How is this an impediment?

ZHANA:The change should be definite! This is the attitude of anyone who has decided to finally grow up. Pure nonsense if you ask me!

LAURA:What about us? We are going on playing, aren't we? Even without him? It won't be the same.

ZHANA:We will go on because we have no choice. Our duty is to stay here so he would have a place to come back to! Just like to a nursery!

The boys come back in funny fantasy costumes. They all laugh, hug, take the picture for the wall. Dance.

The End