

THE PUPPETEER



THE PUPPETEER

(director's script and the structure)

Black screen. Offscreen, the childish voice of a little girl:

GIRL

One...two...three...four...five...six.

Seven...eight...nine..ten....

Ready or not, here I come, – she exclaims, in a louder voice.

The black screen disappears. The girl takes her hands off her face, and looks around.

EXT. A CHILDREN'S HOME TERRITORY. DAYTIME

The children are playing hide-and-seek. Before us is the image that the girl sees while looking around:

The old, quite abandoned building of the children's home, the shrubs, a small forest in the distance, the streets of a small town, the church ...

The girl is walking faster, looking for her friends in the game.

Someone of the game participants is hiding away in the bushes in the distance.

Another player has gone behind a nearby farm building.

Another is running toward the town buildings, looking for a place to hide.

FOOL (45 y.o.) is playing hide-and-seek with the children, too.

Paulius (10 y.o.) is going away toward the grove, looking around to see if he is being followed.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOME. DAYTIME

Children's playroom. Tadas (8 y.o.) and Dima (12 y.o. boy) are playing checkers. One of them has "checkers" of white chocolate squares, the other – of black chocolate. The boys are immersed in the game. At every turn, one or the other treats himself with the opponent's beaten checker – a piece of chocolate. Both of them burst with laughter in emptying the opponent's board.



FOOL

All of this is closely watched by Julia (6 y.o.). Dima catches her gaze and turns to the girl:

DIMA
Want some chocolate?

Julia shakes her head tentatively.

Come here, come, – both are inviting her in a friendly manner.

The girl approaches them timidly. The boys, as if in agreement, start to shout:

A king! A king!

One after another, they put the chocolate pieces into Julia's little mouth.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. EVENING

Alexander (40 y.o.) approaches the door of a café, and stops for a moment. Pulls out a round pocket watch from his pocket, opens the clock-face, glances at it, and walks inside the café.

INT. THE CAFE. EVENING

At the table, there is Alexander. In front of him, Xenia (35 y.o.). Both are sipping tea.

ALEXANDER
It's been a while ...

XENIA
Since last night...

ALEXANDER
Have you settled in?

XENIA
I've been thinking for a long time...there's a lot of things I didn't say last night... I even prepared the text... Where should I start...

ALEXANDER
Start from the main point.



ALEXANDER

Xenia's eyes fill with tears. Her fingers, holding the cup, start to tremble.

XENIA

It's been ten years that we haven't moved further from the main point. There, everything's been revolving around that point. Since ten years and two months...

ALEXANDER

You have counted.

XENIA

A lot of time I had. That life, it was not about living, but about counting ... There was no time for living, the ten years were short.

ALEXANDER

And two months.

XENIA

Yes. And two months. To you, it seems not much. To keep loving for ten years. And even, when one of the two loves stronger.

ALEXANDER

The one - is it you?

XENIA

Yes. And you know that.

ALEXANDER

I never knew it. Now, I hear this. You've weighed it all... You have it calculated.

XENIA

I had the time. And it was not even hard. But this is normal.

ALEXANDER

What is normal?

XENIA

That one of the two loves stronger.

ALEXANDER

So you've decided that this one is you ...

XENIA

I haven't. It is so. It was me who was waiting, not you.

ALEXANDER

What were you waiting for?

XENIA

Don't know...for things that were left untemplated. For all the things. That were promised. Not by you. By life. I always knew that it's not you who was promising. And it wasn't me who was naïve. The life itself, it kept promising me things. That's where it all lies. After all, I did not leave you...it was the life that left us, it just abandoned the two of us. For me, it was not our separation, but...it doesn't matter. Now we don't have to who of us has more grievances. The fact that we met in this café and will soon get on our own routes.

ALEXANDER

Those that we nearly know. Are you fine at your new place?

XENIA

Doesn't matter...I just want to...

ALEXANDER

Yeah, it really doesn't. In fact...many things just become irrelevant. Which makes our conversation easier, since we have a lot of irrelevances here.

XENIA

In any case, I will express this irrelevance. And you will see how differently we range between the important and not-so-important things. All of our life together, I was adapting to your list of important things. That's what I got tired of. That's why my strength gave out. Ten years of living by expectations. For a while, expectations give us strength to go on living and to plough our way. How long did you think it could last? Now, the moment has come. Haven't you sobered up? Did you ever think that there is something else, something that is more important to ME than to you? When you pass by our house – our ex-house – just lift your head up and look. Maybe you will see a happy family, having tea at their home, just like we are having it HERE at the moment. You may see just a normal happy family, who is happy just because it is normal, simply normal. Except that I don't know if anyone has moved in that place. It pains me to think that someone has already been walking around there.

After the ten years we'd spent in that place. Sure enough, it's easier on you. After all, your home has always been in the

theater. I was never afraid of poverty, and I'm still not. I just got tired of living for tomorrow. And I always knew it: I knew that your puppets matter to you more than I do. I also knew the fact that this doesn't mean that you didn't love me. I knew that with the help of the puppets, you could really love me (starts to cry).

After a pause:

I remember that movement of yours (shows the movement with her fingers, as the strings move in manipulating the puppets). That movement, and your voice – tick tock, tick tock.... Perhaps it was the moment when you first showed it to me (makes the movement with her fingers) tick tock...yeah, it was then that I fell in love with you...

Alexander smiles. The woman sees it and smiles, too.

XENIA

Do you remember your poems? I remember.... (reciting)

But there comes the time
when the earth doesn't think of the flower,
and the flower thinks not of the moth.
Solitude.

To me, it was a start for us. And now, it's the end. The irrelevant lyrics...

Love lyrics (bursts into tears), but those that gave no fruit. There's a full branch of void fruit. That's the way I feel now. Hollow. With no lifeblood inside, and no future...This womb did not do its job.

ALEXANDER

The night is yet young.

Xenia, weeping in a loud voice, stands up and walks out of the room. Alexander lights a cigarette.

BARMAN

It's a non-smoking place.

ALEXANDER

Sorry.

Alexander stands up and goes out.

EXIT. CHILDREN'S HOME TERRITORY. DAYTIME

The children, assembled in a circle.

DIMA

Hey, where's Paulius? He was hiding over there, toward the grove.

JUSTÈ

We should tell the housemaster.

DIMA

Don't you even try.

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE. EVENING

On the stage, Alexander and Igor (32 y.o.) are bowing to the audience.

Backstage. Alexander is arranging the puppets.

IGOR

Yeah, Alexander, the audience likes the finale. So perhaps, we shouldn't make any more changes.

ALEXANDER

Yeah, you may be right.

IGOR

So, I'd better go...

ALEXANDER

See you tomorrow, Igor. I'm going home.

IGOR:

Say hello to Xenia.

ALEXANDER

Thanks...

EXT. THE STREET. EVENING

Alexander is looking at the last spectators leaving the theatre. Next to the performance poster stand, there is Julija (28 y.o.). Alexander lights a cigarette and comes closer to Julija.

ALEXANDER

So, you're about to go to King Lear...

Julija startles in surprise.

JULIJA

Yeah. I go to all of your performances. Even to those for children.

ALEXANDER

My recent performances are not quite for children. Especially this one. I'm about to miss the deadline for the premiere.

Please, don't go to see it. If I could, I would cancel it. But, oh, your face... Please, don't be scared...

He pulls out a notebook and draws something, still casting looks at Julija.

JULIJA

Are you drawing me?

ALEXANDER

Yes. Cordelia. I was missing the puppet of Cordelia for this performance.

JULIJA

So, what happens to her? How does she end up?

ALEXANDER

She ends up in death. From great love.

JULIJA

Hah, death. After all, I can disagree to serve as her image.

ALEXANDER

No, you can not.

Julija smiles.

JULIJA

It's just what I thought...In real life, you tend to command others.

ALEXANDER

No. I prefer to request them.

But you...Who are you in real life, except Cordelia?

JULIJA

A nurse.

ALEXANDER
Excellent.

JULIJA
What's so excellent?

ALEXANDER
Cordelia loved her father more than she loved the crown.
The nurse has an obligation to love others.

JULIJA
My patients are children. I don't love them enough. This is
not what you want.

ALEXANDER (with a smile)
It has been decided.

Julija also smiles.

ALEXANDER
What is your name?

JULIJA (smiles)
Cordelia, after all...

ALEXANDER
In real life.

JULIJA
Julija.

ALEXANDER
Ok. Tonight I will make your puppet. Tomorrow, I'm going
to show it to you. Where should I look for you, miss?

JULIJA
No, don't you look for me. So, she ended up in death... What
a touching story...

ALEXANDER
Like most of the stories of great love. Please, allow me to
see you. I have to complete the portrait.

JULIJA
I have to read King Lear. Then, it may be... Now I have to go.

Alexander is watching Julija go.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. NIGHT TIME

Alexander is walking without looking at anyone. He comes to the front door of a house, and pulls the door handle. Perplexity in his face: his legs have led him to his former home. He walks a few steps backwards. Then lifts his head up and stands around for a while. There are lightened up and dark windows of the house. We can see silhouettes of people, their daily life.

EXT. ON THE BRIDGE. NIGHT TIME.

Paulius is leaning above the railing of the bridge, looking down at the flowing river water. He is silently weeping, trembling with his whole body. After some time, his sobbing stops. He stops shivering. Paulius climbs outside of the bridge railing, and stands up on the ledge.

The figure of someone approaching the bridge. It is Alexander. When walking down the bridge, he spots the little figure of Paulius balancing on the bridge ledge. He slowly approaches Paulius without been seen. He keeps whispering silently to himself, shocked by the scene:

ALEXANDER

There now...there now, don't you...

Paulius turns to Alexander. He begins to weep, louder, holding on to the railing, and balances above the river. Alexander takes a few more cautious steps, and stops a few meters away from Paulius.

ALEXANDER

There, now...don't you...there, now...little fellow...

Paulius' eyes wander between the river at the bottom of the bridge and the stranger. He is still weeping.

ALEXANDER

There, now...don't you rush...hey, can you see me? Keep looking at me...don't do that...look...here...

After a pause:

Look ... here...a joke ...

In quick movements, he starts to delve in his jacket pockets...Takes out a white handkerchief. Raises one hand, with the handkerchief in it.



PAULIUS

Look! Here! See the handkerchief? Now...it's gone!

The handkerchief disappears from Alexander's hands.

Look again... Here it is...gone!

Paulius stops weeping and tilts his face, looking toward Alexander. Once again, he turns to the river. Further leans above the water.

Alexander, in spontaneous movements, begins to delve in his pockets. Out of his trousers' pockets, he pulls out the round pocket watch. He cries out to the boy:

Hey, look...

Alexander opens up the clock-face, gives it a look, then brings it close to his ear, and shakes it.

Oh. It doesn't work ... it stopped on four and fifteen...but where was I then? ...

Again, he puts the watch against his ear, making a step closer to Paulius, and when next to him, leans against the bridge railing. Saying, as if to himself:

Ah...what can a man do...what do I need it for?...the stubborn thing...

He makes a sweeping motion of the arm and hurls the watch to the river. Both of them gaze after the watch hopping into the river. Then, they look at each other. Alexander smiles, nodding his head.

ALEXANDER

Why would I need it...it's too stubborn... see, it has stopped...

Indeed, should I coax it to go...there, it's stopped... and keeps standing still.. and what is more, at four fifteen... but where the heck was I then...yeah, in the theater...oh, by the way...I was eating ice-cream...well...so, it's just frozen, that watch of mine. Sure enough. In one hand, the ice-cream, and what is more, a watch...

What a gawk I am...But hey, there, what's your name?

Paulius turns his face away.

Alexander has already sidled up to Paulius. Quietly, slowly:

ALEXANDER
Come off here...come on...

He lifts the boy, and puts him down on the ground, on this side of the bridge railing.

Continuing:
Yeah. Let's go.

Paulius and Alexander walk away down the town street that goes further from the bridge.

EXT. THE TOWN. NIGHT TIME

The little figures of Paulius and Alexander, walking down the dimly lit and empty town streets. They approach THE PUPPET THEATRE.

ALEXANDER
That's my home...see? A very big place...
Ah, how many residents it has! If you only knew!
All kinds of them – from this tiny (shows a grimace) ...
to old people (walks a few steps, imitating an elderly person's pace), all sorts of creatures ...
All in all, it's a jolly crowd...but where's your sweet home?

Paulius winces.
What's your name, buddy? Are you frozen? Like that watch of mine...Shall we...go to have a look at my friends?...
I'm the puppeteer...the puppet master...Alexander...

PAULIUS
I have seen you...with the rabbits...

ALEXANDER
Ah...The Rabbits' Uprising...I showed it...Yeah, I did...
Would you like to...snap a couple of rabbits quickly, and all of us take you to where you need to go? Give me a moment...

Paul slowly shakes his head in disagreement.

ALEXANDER
Ok, then come over here, before the rabbits have started to rage.
There's a whole mass of creatures here, of all kinds.
You will meet them... you'll get to shake your head for a while to say hello to each...you know, they're all like that...they feel sad if there's no one around to pull their ears...so, come on...

Alexander unlocks the door, and both of them disappear in the doorway.

INT. PUPPET THEATRE. NIGHT TIME

Alexander turns on the corridor light. The two of them go down the theater corridors, until they appear in the theatre's little hall. Behind the stage curtain, there are a few square meters of space. It has a table and a chair made of a bigger and smaller cubes – parts of the stage scenery.

ALEXANDER

So, it's right here, my home...it's kind of small...

Over there, I have my friends...well, not all of them are always so jolly, sometimes we do quarrel...wait...

He disappears briefly in the corridor. Returns with two rabbit puppets.

(Continuing)

These ones you must know.

Starts to wiggle the puppets in his hands.

Hi...I am Mr. Rabbit. And me, I am Mrs. Rabbit...

Hey, we have guests here. Would you like some tea? Yeah, let all the baby rabbits have some tea. Right now. Will you have tea with us?

Paulius nods approvingly. Alexander goes out and soon returns with a jar and two cups. He puts a coil pipe inside the jar. The water starts to boil. Meanwhile, Paulius is slowly strolling through the theatre hall. Alexander brings another cube for the chair.

ALEXANDER

Ok, come closer. Take a seat. What's your name?

PAULIUS

Paulius.

Both of them are sipping tea.

ALEXANDER

Ok. I see the rabbits are dozing off. And you too, as I see.

Alexander goes away and comes back with some rags in his hands. Next to the table, he stretches one of the rags on

the floor, from another one, makes a pillow, and from the rest, a bedcover.

ALEXANDER

You can sleep, Paulius. I'll be right here, in the puppet room.

He comes out of the space, where Paulius stays alone.

INT. THE SCENERY STORAGE. NIGHT TIME

On a piece of cloth for the scenery, Alexander is lying. Twilight. He is smoking.

INT. THE THEATRE'S LITTLE HALL - NIGHT TIME

Paulius is lying on his improvised bed. Sobbing quietly.

INT. THE SCENERY STORAGE. NIGHT TIME

Alexander rises up from the cloth, slowly approaches the theater hall door, and goes across backstage, stopping briefly next to the sleeping Paulius.

INT. PUPPET THEATRE. NIGHT TIME

Alexander, trying to make it as quiet as possible, slowly walks down the theater corridors, passes across the stage of the bigger hall, and comes up to the theater guard's little room. Through the glass, we can see Guard (60 y.o.) lying on the couch, illuminated by dim light. Alexander goes back by the same route, reaching the emergency exit from the theater. Steps out of the theater, and pulls the key out of his pocket. Locks the front door.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. NIGHT TIME

Down the street, Alexander is walking on. Somewhere near, Fool is hovering about. Alexander is approaching him.

FOOL (tentatively)

Sir, would you find a cigarette for me?

Alexander stops, pulls from his pocket a pack of cigarettes and hands it to Fool. Fool takes a cigarette from the pack, and asks, even more tentatively:

FOOL

Can I take one more?

ALEXANDER

Please do.

FOOL's face shows amazement. Timidly, he picks up a cigarette. Puts it in the pocket of his frayed jacket.

His face brightens, lit up by an idea. He patters:

FOOL

Hey... Are you cold? I'll be right back – he exclaims cheerfully.

Runs around the corner and soon returns, with a pair of gloves in his hands.

Take them, sir. I have a pair like this, they are brand new... Please, sir, take them, put them on, your hands are cold.

Alexander, surprised by the gesture, is trying to stop him, but soon gives up, when he sees Fool's willingness to give presents. He changes his mind and accepts the gift – takes the gloves, and puts them on his hands, even though the weather is not cold.

ALEXANDER

Thank you...Take care...I got to go...

And he goes away, followed by Fool's eyes.

INT. THE CAFÉ. NIGHT TIME

Alexander is sitting at the table, alone. At the other tables, there are a few visitors. Alexander pulls the notebook out of his jacket pocket, writes down something, strikes through something. Puts the notebook back into his pocket. Swigs off a glass of drink and walks out of the café.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. NIGHT TIME

Alexander is walking down the street slowly. The passers-by. A few cars passing. Two Drunk women (55–60 y.o.) are speaking up to the passers-by. They come up to the passing Alexander.

DRUNK WOMAN

Erm... please, gimme some...I'm missing some for a...

Alexander waves his hand, as if in defending. After a few more steps, he stops. Returns to the drunk women, scratches up some coins from his pocket, and puts them in the woman's hand.

DRUNK WOMEN

See...foreigners are passing...saying something...
Me, I don't understand a thing in English ...
Anyway...the guys gave me some pennies...so...

Shouting out to the walking off Alexander:

Thanks for your understanding.

INT. THE BAR. NIGHT TIME

A few people are sitting at the tables, drinking. Doctor (50 y.o) is leaning against the bar. Next to him, there is a Fellow of uncertain age. Alexander enters the bar. Waves his hand to the barman. Doctor turns toward Alexander upon his entering.

DOCTOR

We've started to see each other more often. You, too, cannot sleep?

DOCTOR

ALEXANDER

Why, I can. But I cannot get used to my new place.

DOCTOR

So, I will have a companion. If you are not tired of my stories.

ALEXANDER

You're a good story-teller, you have sharp eyes. That was a great story last night, about the tramps as the city angels. I'd never have thought of this.

DOCTOR

I didn't tell you then, but I've seen even more authentic angels.

Tramps are not actually angels, because I'm sorry about them.

But once, I had my internship in a nut hospital.
The night watch...



CUT TO:

INT. THE CORRIDOR OF A MENTAL HOSPITAL. NIGHT TIME.

Offscreen, Doctor's voice:

In my dream, I have a reminiscence of the hospital.

Deep night, an empty corridor... Suddenly, one of the ward doors opens and a patient comes out.

The second one opens, there's the second patient. He looks all white, like the first one, in his underwear. After him, the third one...

And they floated down the corridor, all at the same time.

An empty corridor, lit by neon light. On the left, there are doors to the wards. The closest door opens. In the doorway, comes the first patient in white underwear. In a moment, the second door opens, and a second patient shows. In another moment, the third door opens, with a patient in white underwear. They start to approach Doctor's silhouette in the dark, all of them at the same time.

INT. THE BAR. NIGHT TIME.

Doctor continues his story.

DOCTOR

At that moment, I thought - yeah, I have seen angels. Tchekhov would have squeezed something out of this.

ALEXANDER

Me, too, I've seen an angel. He was hanging on the bridge ledge.

Fellow, who is standing at the bar next to them, switches on a small record-player.

A song in Italian starts to sound. Alexander and Doctor turn toward the sound.

ALEXANDER (smiling)

What is he singing about?

FELLOW

Ah...yeah...this is poetry.

ALEXANDER
Is that Italian?

FELLOW
Internet has the translation.

ALEXANDER
But what does it say?

FELLOW
For a start, just listen, sir.

He makes the music louder. Everyone listens.

DOCTOR
So, I'll get going. It's time to...

ALEXANDER
You've been running about...

DOCTOR
I've got urgent things to do. But, after all (to the Fellow), what is he saying?

FELLOW
Ah... (points up his finger) You'd better guess it. Or do some work to find it.

ALEXANDER
I'm starting to get it...

Fellow pricks his ears up.

It says that if you think you've lost it all,
You don't need much to start it all over again.

Fellow grins in amazement.

FELLOW
Ok! Fine fellow!
That's a long way off. But a nice one.
I will remember that. Respect, man. Let's have a drink.

ALEXANDER
I have to run now. I have to start it all over again.

Waves his hand and goes out along with Doctor. Doctor takes out a cigarette.

DOCTOR

I must admit it. Back home, I've got a capsule of morphine waiting for me. The night dose.

Alexander's face shows amazement.

ALEXANDER

How long have you been taking it?

DOCTOR

Since two years. But that's not enormous. It's a professional privilege.

To doctors, that happens.

ALEXANDER

Freud could not sleep at night because of the pain.

DOCTOR

Yeah. Bulgakov. A Young Doctor's Notebook. Ok...Good night.

ALEXANDER

You know, Doctor, I've just thought that – people do love you.

DOCTOR

It may be. What about you?

ALEXANDER

They are scared of me.

DOCTOR

Why?

ALEXANDER

Because they cannot understand me.

DOCTOR (smiles ironically)

I'm not scared of you, Alexander.

ALEXANDER

That's why you and I get along. By the way, there is someone who's not scared of me – the women that I have serious relationships with.

DOCTOR

But why?

ALEXANDER

Because they can see things through. And, when they see through, there's nothing left to be scared of.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. NIGHT TIME

The theatre's front door. Alexander is approaching, carrying a plastic bag full of packages.

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE. NIGHT TIME

The dark corridors of the theatre. Alexander is walking, until he gets into the smaller hall. Alexander goes to the backstage of the small hall. Alexander's face shows amazement and scare, when he sees Paulius' empty sleeping place. Alexander's eyes are looking for Paulius. In quick steps, he enters the scenery storage, this one is also empty. He freezes on the spot, and listens up. From somewhere, he can hear a silent weep. Alexander, trying not to make noise, goes toward where the cry is heard from.

INT. PUPPET THEATRE STORAGE. NIGHT TIME

Among the scenery pieces, squeezing himself into the corner of the room, Paulius is sitting. Holding a puppet in his hands.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF PUPPET THEATRE. NIGHT TIME

Alexander has taken out of the plastic bag and is setting on the cube table the things he bought. Next to him, on the smaller cube, Paulius has sat down.

ALEXANDER

Here, cookies... for everyone...some fish...
My favourite chocolate...is it to your taste?
I didn't inquire.

He sets up the square black and white pieces of chocolate on the top of the cube.

ALEXANDER

Ok...grab it...

Both of them are silent. After a while, Paulius smiles. Takes a black chocolate piece, and moves it over the white piece, as if on a chess board.

PAULIUS
I leap over! A king!

He puts the chocolate piece in his mouth.

ALEXANDER
Is it?

PAULIUS
It is! A king!

ALEXANDER
The king!

INT. PUPPET THEATRE. MORNING

In the backstage of the theatre, there are Alexander and Paulius. Alexander is looking for something among the puppets. He pulls out a hat. Puts it on, takes it off, takes a look at it, then puts it on again.

ALEXANDER
Here, try it on. Let's get dressed up.

Paulius twiddles with the hat, then puts it on.

INT. THE CORRIDOR OF PUPPET THEATRE. MORNING

Alexander looks around the corridor. It is quiet.

EXT. THE TOWN. MORNING

Alexander and Paulius are walking down the street. They enter the door of an apartment block.

INT. THE COMMUNAL HALLWAY INSIDE THE APARTMENT BLOCK. MORNING

Alexander unlocks his post box. It is empty.

EXT. THE SQUARE. DAYTIME.

A bunch of various aged teenagers. They are sitting about and chatting, some are smoking. Among them, there is Dima. Principle is passing by. Dima sees him at a distance, and hides himself behind his friends' backs. Principle is coming closer. In the group of teenagers, Vitaly (16 y.o. boy) stands up. He puts his feet on a skateboard and rides toward the Principle. At full speed, Vitaly crashes into Principle. Both of them fall down on the pavement. Vitaly jumps up and goes further away, dropping to Principle:



PRINCIPLE

VITALY
Didn't mean it...
After a pause:
next time, I'll kill you.

Principle gets back on his feet and follows the passing Vitaly with his eyes.

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE. EVENING.

Alexander pulls the notebook out of his pocket. Has a look through. Leaves it open and walks out of the room.

Returns to Paulius. Paulius is leaning over the notebook. When Alexander enters, he tilts his head. His face shows amazement.

PAULIUS
Hey, I know her...

Amazement in Alexander's face.

ALEXANDER
Where from?

PAULIUS
She's.. our nurse...

ALEXANDER
Julija?

PAULIUS
Julija...

Alexander goes out to the other room, and soon returns with two puppets – those of the children's home Principle and Doctor.

ALEXANDER
So you know these ones, too...

Paulius does not say a word. After a moment, he nods.

EXT. THE STREET. EVENING.

Toward the entrance to the bar, Alexander is approaching. He steps in.



FOOL AND NERINGA

INT. THE BAR. EVENING.

Alexander is walking among the tables. At a distant table, there is Neringa (32 y.o.) and Fool. He stands up and moves out, passing Alexander. Amazement in Alexander's face.

ALEXANDER
Hey, do you know him?

NERINGA
I do.

ALEXANDER
What have the two of you been discussing?

NERINGA
As usually. Our living.

ALEXANDER
Got many things to discuss?

NERINGA
Oh...you don't tell me.
I'm attracted to loonies...as much as to you...

ALEXANDER
So I am a loonie to you...

NERINGA
You're not, but you behave loonishly.
Hey, have you heard him sing?

ALEXANDER
I've got the puppet of him that I made. In my "King Lear" performance, he will be the Fool.

NERINGA
A great solution. Who are the other characters?

ALEXANDER
I don't have the king, but today, I found Cordelia.

NERINGA
Is she beautiful?

ALEXANDER
You are the most beautiful.

NERINGA
Come on...

Neringa leans over and kisses Alexander.

INT. PUPPET THEATRE. EVENING.

Alexander and Paulius inside a workroom. Alexander is manufacturing a puppet. In his hands, he is holding a mask that already shows Julija's facial features.

PAULIUS
Yeah, I can see it. It's Julija.

ALEXANDER
That's true. It's her. So, the puppet has succeeded.
I'll visit her tomorrow.

Paulius' face freezes. Alexander notices it and smiles.

ALEXANDER
No, don't be scared, I'm not going to tell her.
No one knows that you are here. Only the guard has seen us.

But he will not tell anyone, he's like this.

I have something to do in the town. So, you stay alone for a while. Here, you can construct something. And now, let's go to the little hall, if you like. I'm going to rehearse over there. A piece of something. See, my job is so ridiculous - I never have time to work in the day, so I've got to do it at night.

INT.THE THEATRE STAGE

Feeble light. There is Alexander walking slowly around, holding the puppets of Cordelia, still faceless King Lear, and Knight. There are some pieces of scenery fiddled around the stage. Paulius is sitting in the front, in the first row.

ALEXANDER
It's what the actress has to say. Not me. Around them, there will be a lot of puppets, soldiers, some smoke, and my king.

He's already lost his mind, thinking his own daughters don't love him.

Paulius sits down further from the stage. Alexander is on the stage.

ALEXANDER (recites King Lear)
Alack, 'tis he! Why, he was met even now
As mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud,
Crown'd with rank fumitor and furrow-weeds,
With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flow'rs,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.

Alexander puts the Cordelia puppet on the ground.
Takes the faceless puppet. He moves it, singing a melody.

ALEXANDER
Guess what, Paulius? I still don't have the king's face.

Alexander locks the theatre door.

EXT. THE STREET. NIGHT TIME.

Alexander is walking away, further, down the street.

INT. NERINGA'S PLACE. NIGHT TIME.

Alexander and Neringa are making love.
Both of them in bed, after the act.

NERINGA
So, I'll ask you a question, like in a bad movie.

ALEXANDER
Well, I like phrases from bad movies.

NERINGA
Do you love her?

ALEXANDER
Who is her?

NERINGA
Ok, Xenia...
Or that one, Cordelia...

ALEXANDER
Neringa, what's up? What can I tell you now?...
You want a conversation on my marriage, or about a
woman I met in the street. I don't know what to say. I'll
start to be scared of you.

Neringa puts her palm over Alexander's face.

NERINGA

Don't be scared. I told you, the question is from a bad movie.

ALEXANDER

So let's ask questions from good movies. As for Xenia...
To speak about this is the same as to look for survivors
after the earthquake...

As for the stranger, that woman who reminded me Corde-
lia...

Yeah, I've fallen in love...just like you fell in love with Mon-
te Cristo back then...

As for Neringa...words, words, words...

I'd better give you a kiss.

Alexander leans over and kisses Neringa on the neck, then
on the nipple, and on her lips.

ALEXANDER

Don't ask the name of love, as someone wrote...I'd better
tell you a love story from a good movie.

It happens in the after-war Poland. A beautiful girl of some
nineteen years old is preparing to take vows in a convent,
where she had grown up since she was a baby.

It turns out that she, as a baby, was found at the convent
door, abandoned by a stranger. The convent's reverend moth-
er invites her for a talk, and the girl finds out that she has a
relative, whom she should visit before taking the vows.

NERINGA

Ok, tell me the finale.

ALEXANDER

Ok, but without the story, you will not dig the finale.

NERINGA

Anyway, it's the finale that makes the story.

ALEXANDER

Oh well, ok. I guess you'll understand nothing...but still...

I'll get to the finale now...So, after the hero's aunt commits
suicide, the girl takes off her convent clothes, puts on on of
her aunt's dresses, smokes the cigarettes her aunt has left,
and drinks the vodka that she finds in her house...Next day,
she finds a musician that she fancies, and spends a night of
romance with him. They dance together, and they are happy.

Then, they spend the night together. After making love, they are talking, when the guy invites the girl to leave together in the morning: "If you like, you can go with me. You can spend some time at the sea – you told me that you have never seen the sea..."

"And then, what shall we do?" "Then we will have a dinner together".

"And then?"

"Then we'll come back to town."

"And then?"

"Then we will buy a dog and walk it together."

"Ok, but then?" "Then we will get married and have children..."

"And what's going to happen then?" The guy pauses, thinks it over, and after a long while, he sighs and says: "And then... And then, it will be trouble all the way..."

Neringa rises from the bed, and leaves the bedroom.

INT.THE KITCHEN AT NERINGA'S PLACE. NIGHT TIME.

Neringa comes up to the sink, full of unwashed dishes. Opens the tap. Takes a plate and rubs it slowly.

Offscreen, we hear Alexander's story.

ALEXANDER (louder)

Can you hear me?

After a pause:

Early in the morning, both of them are sleeping blissfully next to each other.

Then, she rises quietly, trying not to wake him up, puts on her convent clothes, takes her suitcase, and leaves.

Neringa opens the water tap. Alexander's voice drowns in the sound of running water. Alexander enters the kitchen and hugs Neringa from the back.

NERINGA

You're just like that hero...you pack your suitcase and leave.

Neringa turns her face to Alexander. Gives him a long look in the eyes. Kisses him.

EXT. THE TOWN. NIGHT TIME.

Fool, paying no mind to the people passing by, is dancing his weird dance. He is followed by the looks of the local people, who are used to seeing his curiosities.

Puppet Master, standing nearby, is very focused on observing Fool's behavior, and then slowly walks away down the street.

Fool stops dancing. He speaks up to one, then another passer-by, asking for a cigarette. No one even stops. Suddenly, he remembers the cigarette that he'd hidden inside his frayed jacket. He takes it out and lights it up in delight.

EXT. THE TOWN. MORNING

A small bus, riding down the main street of the town. The little bus comes up to the children's home. A bunch of people gets off the bus, with various packs in their hands.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOME. MORNING

Children, with their noses pressed against the window, are looking at the people coming closer with the packs.

A few of the children, cheerful and pleased, hurry up to the bus, along with their relatives, and get inside. In a moment, the bus leaves.

EXT. THE TOWN STREET. MORNING.

A funeral procession.

A few men are carrying the coffin.

An elderly woman in black, with a scarf on her head, is laying down branches of fir-tree in front of them.

People are moving slowly, along with the coffin. Many are either crying, or holding their weep. In the end of the funeral procession, a pipe orchestra is marching. They are playing a vaguely recognizable version of Chopin's funeral march. The faces of the town's musicians.

The children's home. Upon hearing the sound of the orchestra approaching, the children start to bustle about, shutting the windows.

EXT. THE TOWN'S LITTLE CEMETERY. MORNING.

Two gravediggers – men of middle age. One of them is working on making the pit deeper, the other has settled himself on the slope. The latter addresses his colleagues, rather casually:

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Yeah, dig a deeper one.

GRAVEDIGGER ORESTAS

Why? Was this one a suicide?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS
Don't know, just make it deeper...It's not often that we dig it for children...

EXT. THE CEMETERY. MORNING.

A flock of people next to the grave pit: among them, Principle, Housemaster, and Doctor. Orestas and Audrius are taking the little coffin down to the grave. They cover the pit with sand. From the crowd, Priest steps out.

Orestas and Audrius are walking away from the crowd. Orestas stops for a moment.

GRAVEDIGGER ORESTAS
That story is full of shit...

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS
You mean, the kid?

GRAVEDIGGER ORESTAS
I mean, the gang. All kinds of rumour have it. Have you seen the guy with the hat? He's the Principle. And the bald one...the Doctor...

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS
So what...Don't wanna be in the rumour network.

GRAVEDIGGER ORESTAS
Ok. I'll keep quiet.

He takes in his hands the camera, hanging on his neck. Points it at the crowd around the grave (with the Priest in the front), and hits the button.

GRAVEDIGGER ORESTAS
I will call the picture "Nice People's Society".

INT. CHILDREN'S HOME. VAIKŪ NAMAI. DAYTIME.

A small room. The concentrated face of Irena (7 y.o.). Nastė (6 y.o.) is sitting on a stool.

Justė is counting something. From times to time, she glances at the clock on the wall.

JUSTĖ
Fourteen... Fifteen... That's it.

IRENA
Hey, Nastè, I'm the winner.
I've found seventeen lice.

Nastè takes out a bun and hands it to Irena.

NASTÈ
That's not fair. I have more hair.
I'm not playing that anymore.

Footsteps behind the door. The girls freeze. Housemaster enters the room.

HOUSEMASTER
So, you're playing again...The day after tomorrow, we will stop your silly game.
We'll wash your hair with liquor, or cut off everyone's hair.

He grins.
Nastè touches her long hair with her hand.

INT. THE BACKYARD OF THE CHILDREN'S HOUSE. DAY-TIME.

Dima and Saulius (12 y.o.), in front of each other, are playing a guess game: which hand has a hidden match in it.

DIMA
Right one.

The open palm shows the match.

DIMA
Left one.

Saulius opens up an empty hand.

DIMA
Left one.

Once again, the palm is empty.

After a few answer combinations, the guesser pulls out a cigarette bud from a matchbox.

He lights it up thoughtfully. Inhales the smoke. Looking somewhere, into the distance.

DIMA
Look! That's just fascinating...just think of it...
You were holding the match in your right hand...

I made a guess and guessed it right, then I thought you'd switch it to the left one, but you left it in the same hand..

Then you switched it to the right hand...but you could have left it in the same one, because I could have supposed that you also suppose what I was going to guess...I know that you know what I can suppose...how strange is that!, - taking the smoke in, - the first time is like the thousandth...the hand is always either full or empty.

The game continues. The other boy is guessing.

SAULIUS

Right one.

The palm is empty.

SAULIUS

Left one.

Towards them, Principle is approaching. Having come closer, he slowly utters:

PRINCIPLE

So, don't you want to tell me something about Paulius?

SAULIUS

After the hide-and-seek, no one has seen him.

Principle walks away.

INT. THE TRADE UNION HOUSE. EVENING.

Alexander is climbing up the stairs. Opens the door. The hall is full of seated people. An amateur theatre performance is going on. On the stage, there is Gravedigger Audrius. He is holding an animal skull in his hand. Stops in the middle of the stage and recites in an amateurish manner.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

To be or not to be? Well, probably, to be. Let's go, the drowned man. How much longer can we drink this water, if there are just three miles to get the brandy bottle that we have buried with Rosencrantz?

On the side of the stage, Vidas is sitting in the chair. He stands up and comes up to Audrius.

VIDAS

There's one thing you're wrong about. There are three miles up to that sweet brandy bottle. It's about five kilom-

eters, in our numbers. Yeah, and another tiny inaccuracy – Rosencrantz has been hanged a long time ago. His soul departed as long ago as your Father’s.

Alexander leaves the hall. Walks down the corridor up to its deep end. Looks around himself. Lights up a cigarette. We can hear applause. People start to mass in the corridor and go down the stairs from the hall to the corridor. Alexander drops the cigarette on the floor.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF AMATEUR THEATRE. EVENING.

Gravedigger Audrius is putting on his shirt, doing up the buttons. Next to him, there is Vidas, putting his trousers on. Alexander is smoking.

ALEXANDER

Did you crack that monologue, or was it the director?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

That’s me. I convinced the director that it’s more geniune. Because actually, Hamlet’s monologue...even kids know it. But I’ve come up with it long time ago. When I was still working as a first aider. I made it up at my night watch. Reading that “Hamlet“ just pissed me off..

ALEXANDER

Yeah, so you improved it...

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Ah, you must know it better than me – with Shakespeare, you can only make it worse...

ALEXANDER

That’s what I am doing. In my “King Lear“....Look, man, could you pose for me? For two minutes.

From his handbag, he takes out a bottle of cheap sweet red wine and hands it to Gravedigger Audrius. Takes the notebook and pen out of his pocket. Audrius makes a few grimaces, then freezes in that pose. In quick motions, Alexander is drawing in his notebook.

ALEXANDER

That’s all. That’s what I came for. It’s been a long time I wanted to do it.

Enjoy your wine. I got to run now.

He presses both men’s hands.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Keep running. But not too fast. (grins to Alexander).

Alexander stops for a while, when opening the door.

ALEXANDER

By the way...was it you who buried the child? The one from the children's home?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Yeah, I had the occasion. With Orestas, the photographer.

ALEXANDER

What do you have together? A crew of artists?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Yeah. How else can you survive? But we're not the worst ones. I'm a star in amateur theatre. Orestas is a great photographer. I've got some of his pictures here. Come over, I'll show you.

ALEXANDER

Ok. Can you tell me all you know about that funeral?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Orestas knows more than me.

ALEXANDER

Yeah. Let's go to see the photos.

Audrius goes to a small room nearby, Alexander follows him. The room is lit by dim light. On the walls, there are a few photographs. In one of them, Audrius holds a skull in his hand. In the other, Orestas is lying face down on the coffin, with his arms spread wide apart.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS (pointing at the photo)

For this one, I pressed the button.

ALEXANDER

I have to meet that Orestas.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Meet him as a gravedigger, or as a photographer?

ALEXANDER

I want him to tell me something from the other side of the pit.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Ah, that's a nice way you put it...from the other side of the pit...

ALEXANDER

I have to talk to him about the kid from the children's home. The one you have just buried.

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

Just buy a photo from him. Then, he will unburden his mind.

ALEXANDER

That's a good suggestion. Let's go, the drowned man, how much longer can we drink this water?

GRAVEDIGGER AUDRIUS

That's a nice line, eh?

ALEXANDER

It's excellent.

Audrius switches off the light. Darkness. The door opens, all the three men slide out of the room.

They walk away further down the corridor and go down the steps.

INT. THE CHILDREN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT TIME.

A room with the children's beds made of steel, arranged in neat rows. The moon is looking into the room through the window.

KĘSTAS

And then, they had to run, 'cause the forces were unequal...

That's because of the treachery...who would have believed that he can blurt out where all the survivors were hiding... he looked like a loyal friend...for so many times he had helped them... so many times he was brave... they started off early in the day...they only took the weapons...some food and water...

Here, Kęstas stops telling the story.

KĘSTAS

Ah, ok, I'll finish it tomorrow, there's not much left...

CHILDREN'S LITTLE VOICES

Come on...finish it now.

KĘSTAS

I'm tired now...tomorrow..let's sleep.

A LITTLE VOICE IN THE DARK

Hey, look! The moon's shining right through the window.

It will make us sleepwalk...

Right away, the children cover their heads with blankets.

One of the boys starts whistling a simple motif of a few notes. The other children catch it, until, in the end, all the children in the room make up a whistling and thundering choir.

At that time, Housemaster approaches the room door, slowly and quietly.

He leans over to listen.

A LITTLE VOICE IN THE DARK

Hush.

Everyone falls silent.

INT. THE THEATRE. EVENING.

On the stage, there is Alexander, holding the Fool puppet. Its mask has features that resemble Fool's facial features.

PAULIUS

I know him. He plays hide-and-peek with us.

ALEXANDER

Can he hide well?

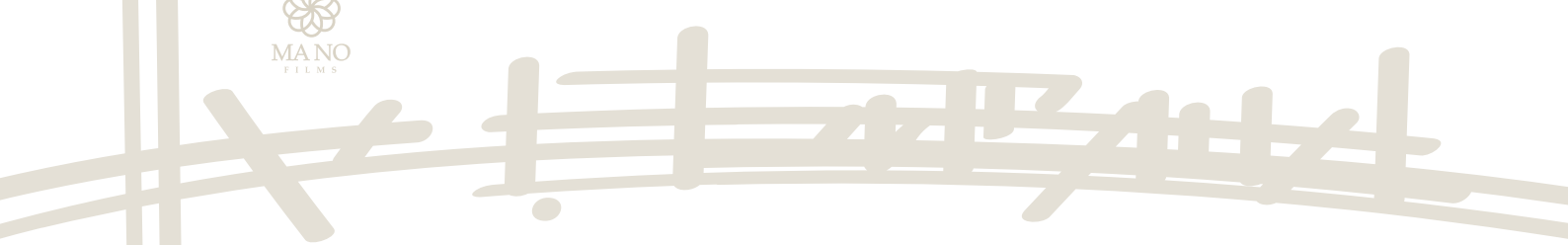
PAULIUS

We always fail to find him. He vanishes into the town, but the Principle wouldn't let us go there. So, he always wins. That Fool is smart.

ALEXANDER

Ok, now we're going to dance. Last night, I saw our Fool over there, dancing in the streets.

Alexander wiggles the Fool puppet, as if it was dancing.



CUT TO:

INT. THE STREET. EVENING.

In the street, Fool is performing his dance.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE. EVENING.

Alexander puts the Fool puppet down on the stage.

ALEXANDER

Don't you think that he is dumb. In my performance, he is the Fool. Perhaps he's more clever than the King. The king was dumb. He went insane, because his love got no response. You probably know how it happens sometimes – you love someone with all your heart, but you're not loved back. That king had it even more horrible. What he wanted was love, but what his two daughters wanted, was the kingdom. Only his youngest daughter loved her father more than anything else. Cordelia. I'll show you now. When you were sleeping, I made her puppet.

He leaves the stage. Soon, he comes back with the puppet in his hand.

ALEXANDER

Here she is. Julija, the nurse. She's so sweet, I thought Cordelia could be her face. Actually, I fell in love with her. (smiles)

PAULIUS

We're in love with her, too.

INT. THE STREET. EVENING.

Fool, paying no mind to the people passing by, is dancing his weird dance. He is followed by the looks of the local people, who are used to seeing his curiosities.

Alexander, standing nearby, is very focused on observing Fool's behavior. We can see amazement in his face, when he realizes that Fool's bouncing around has its own inner choreography.

NB.: Slow-motion shot of Fool dancing.

Alexander walks away slowly down the street.

Fool stops dancing. He speaks up to one, then another passer-by, asking for a cigarette. No one even stops. Suddenly,

he remembers the cigarette that he'd hidden inside his frayed jacket. He takes it out and lights it up in delight.

Alexander is walking down the street. He approaches a pub. In dim light, he sees a trampish-looking Old man (60 y.o.) Alexander is approaching – in a moment, he will pass Old man. He glances at Old man's face and stops. Comes closer to him. Old man is smoking.

ALEXANDER

Please, don't get scared. Allow me to draw you.

OLD MAN

Go ahead. And if it could bring me a sort of small economical benefit...

ALEXANDER

Sure.

Alexander takes out his wallet and gives Old man a bank-note. The man takes a hard look at it and puts it in his pocket.

ALEXANDER

Your face will serve as a king's face for me.

OLD MAN

Ah, you have hit it. I am a king, in a sense, well, you know.

Alexander scrabbles something in his notebook, casting a glance at Old man from time to time.

ALEXANDER

I would be pleased to invite you to my performance about that king. It's in a week. At Arkliq street, there is a small puppet theatre. Just come up to the staff, tell them that you have to see Alexander, and I will let you in.

OLD MAN

Ok. So, I will have to put on my uniform.

Alexander goes on drawing.

OLD MAN

Ok. From now on, I will introduce myself like this. What is the king's name?

ALEXANDER

Lear.

OLD MAN

Sounds good. Back in my young days, they used to call me Berlioz. You know, like in that book.

ALEXANDER

Yeah, I do. We all have read it. Well, take care.

Alexander extends his hand, and then walks away, further down the street.

INT. THE THEATRE STAGE. NIGHT TIME.

Alexander is sitting in the stage, smoking, holding a glass of wine in his hand, twiddling it in his fingers, until the agitated liquid spills out on the stage.

Alexander lies down on the stage floor.

ALEXANDER (from "King Lear")

O me, my heart! My rising heart! But down!

CUT TO:

INT. A HOSPITAL. INSIDE THE WARD (Paulius' dream).

The ward has only one bed, with Paulius lying in it. Next to him, Julija is standing. Enters the Doctor. Comes up to Paulius.

DOCTOR

So, what's up? It all will be fine.

He leaves.

Alexander enters the ward, wearing a different mask each time:

As Doctor...

As Priest...

As Fool...

As Paulius' mother...

As his sister...

Finally, as an angel.

CUT TO:

INT. THE THEATRE STAGE. NIGHT TIME.

Alexander tilts his face to the side and sees Paulius.

ALEXANDER

Hey, Paulius, you're not sleeping...It's my king Lear speaking. Let's go to sleep. I thought you've been sleeping.

PAULIUS

I was. I saw my Mum and sister in my dream. I always wake up when I dream of them.

He pulls a small photograph out of his little pocket. Comes up to Alexander and hands it to him tentatively.

PAULIUS

Please, make a puppet.

Alexander takes the photograph. Takes a look at it.

ALEXANDER

Ok. I will. So, this is your Mum...

INT. INSIDE A HOUSE. EVENING. (Alexander's dream)

Dim light illuminates the room in a house, where in an old-fashioned bed, an elderly man is lying. Next to him, around the bed, the patient's family has gathered – there is his wife, an elderly woman, and their few children. The Doctor puppet is leaning over the patient's bed. It is "observing" it, and "reflecting" on something.

Finally, Doctor straightens his back. He slightly tilts his head as a sign to the patient's wife, and the two of them go out to the hallway.

They are talking to each other quietly, so that the other could not hear them.

The woman burrows her face into the handkerchief, and starts to cry quietly.

The Doctor puppet leaves, silently.

The same room of the same house. Early morning.

In the same patient's bed, the puppet of the same old, dying man is lying. It is surrounded by the dying man's family.

The women (his wife and daughters) are weeping, his sons control their tempers.

The dying man puppet starts "saying" something that we can barely hear. The family lean over him as low as possible in trying to hear him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE STORAGE. NIGHT TIME.

Paulius is in the dark. He finds the light switch. Switches on the light.

Paulius is staring at the puppets arranged around him.

He takes in his hands the King Lear puppet, wearing the mask of Old man. Then, he puts it back. Takes the Doctor, and finally, the Fool puppets. Suddenly, he spots the Principle puppet. Enraged, he starts kicking it.

INT. THE PUPPET THEATRE. NIGHT TIME.

Alexander makes a sudden motion, jumping up in his couch. He can hear a noise coming from somewhere.

INT. THE STREET. MORNING.

Alexander is walking down the street, approaching the children's home.

INT. THE WORK ROOM. MORNING.

Housemaster is repairing a wooden chair. He covers it with glue. Puts the last pieces back in the shape as it should be. Whistling to himself the same melody as the children were whistling at night, before their sleep.

Enters Principle.

PRINCIPLE

I'll be brief. If he doesn't show up today, you'll go and look for him.

HOUSEMASTER

Ok. But I think he will be found.

PRINCIPLE

Let's wait another day.

INT. THE CHILDREN'S HOME. THE WARD. MORNING.

Julija casts a glance at Simas (9 y.o.), who is lying in bed. Enters Doctor, carrying the clinical record in his hands.

DOCTOR (to Julija)

Once again, a movie episode.

JULIJA
I didn't get it.

DOCTOR
It's from that Russian film, you know – "I fall down, I wake up, oops – I'm in plaster".

Julija looks at Simas, then, at the Doctor.

JULIJA
I haven't seen that movie. Isn't life here like a movie?
Or is the movie like life?

DOCTOR
That's a good question. But the answer is short – both of us, you and me, are a pack of lies. And that has been pressing upon me, especially, after the funeral.

Julija bursts into tears. Doctor glances at his watch. Someone knocks on the door.

DOCTOR (murmuring to himself)
As usual, he is very accurate.

Enters Housmaster.

HOUSEMASTER
May I?

DOCTOR
Yeah. I have been waiting for you. Let's go to my work-room.

Julija leans over Simas. He is crying silently.

JULIJA (softly)
Hey, why are you crying?

SIMAS
And you, why are you?

JULIJA
Vilius is gone...

INT. DOCTOR'S WORK ROOM. MORNING.

Doctor sits down on the chair. He lights up a cigarette. Housemaster does the same.

DOCTOR

Let's not speak about Vilius. It's almost all clear.

HOUSEMASTER

Yeah, ok... We'd rather smoke, be silent, nod our heads, smoke again, and go to our quarters.

DOCTOR

It's not what I invited you for.

HOUSEMASTER

Oh, it's not what I came for. It's four seconds...

DOCTOR

What do you mean...

HOUSEMASTER

From the third floor to the ground. Of free falling. For a body of forty kilos. According to the laws of physics. It's exactly four seconds.

DOCTOR

Any suggestions?

HOUSEMASTER

That's why I came here. Because I don't know.

DOCTOR

I made a decision. After Paulius disappeared, I decided to go and...

HOUSEMASTER

Well, well...

He looks around himself. Continuing...

What are you reading here?

He takes a book from the table and opens it.

HOUSEMASTER

So you've submerged yourself in theatre...

When children are flying, or disappearing to nowhere, it's crime news. Ok, King Lear...that's also criminal...in a way... Why did you choose to read this very play?

DOCTOR

A friend of mine is staging a puppet theatre performance, King Lear.

But that's also something I want to understand – how it's possible to go insane with pain.

I've been interested, medically...

Housemaster flips through the pages. He stops for a while. Soundlessly, he reads something to himself.

Puts the book back on the table.

HOUSEMASTER

It's for us to choose...

DOCTOR

Between what?

HOUSEMASTER

Between crime news and theatre.

Doctor is chain-smoking.

DOCTOR

What did you expect when you came here?

HOUSEMASTER

If I knew it, I wouldn't have come. I suppose I know...

DOCTOR

Ok, let's suppose, or let's go to see King Lear. The premiere is about to show up. Eventually, we all will forget it, we'll start to sleep peacefully, and go on living our lives. Paulius will be found, and the little flowers on the little grave will be treated well.

HOUSEMASTER

What is it that you want from me?

DOCTOR

Perhaps it's something I cannot demand from myself. But, maybe I could...

Housemaster takes the book again. Turns over the pages.

HOUSEMASTER

Ok then...let's turn to the classics...this one here, it's about us:

Reads out:

I pant for life. Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature.

EXT. THE CHILDEN'S HOME TERRIRORY. MORNING.

Doctor, his head thrown back, is looking at the building of the children's home.

DOCTOR

One...two...three...four...yeah, so it's four seconds...

Tears blur his eyes. He brushes his hand against his eyes. Narrows his lids and looks into the distance. We see the territory with the children playing hide-and-seek. Doctor lights a cigarette. He finishes it in a few puffs.

DOCTOR

Four...

He leaves through the gates and walks away further, toward the town.

INT. THE HOUSEMASTER'S PLACE. NIGHT TIME.

The room. Next to the open window, Housemaster is smoking. He drops the bud. Takes a guitar put against something next to himself. Runs across the strings with his fingers. He is tuning the instrument. Playing and singing a song by Viktor Tsoy (1990's Soviet rock star), quietly. When he finishes, he starts playing the melody that the children whistled in their bedroom before sleep. Suddenly, he stops playing. Stands up and crashes the guitar against the wall, as fiercely as possible. The guitar breaks down to pieces. Then, he throws the pieces out of the window.

EXT. NEXT TO THE BAR. NIGHT TIME.

Near the entrance to the bar, Old man is standing. Doctor is approaching him. Old man is rolling a cigarette.

OLD MAN

Hey there, Doctor! Hi! What do you drink? Today, I'm inviting you.

DOCTOR

That's something new.

OLD MAN

You don't have the latest news.

He lights up the cigarette. Doctor takes out one, and lights it up.

DOCTOR
So, what's the news?

OLD MAN
I have been promoted. From a tramp to a king.
Your friend has just christened me as King Lear.
You know that one?

DOCTOR
Yes, I do. So you have spoken with the puppeteer.

OLD MAN
It was him who drew a picture of me.

DOCTOR
Ok, let's go inside, but I will invite you. It's improper for
a king to invite.

Old man smiles.

OLD MAN
You may be right. So, some whiskey.

At the bar, Fellow is sitting, with a tape recorder
switched on.

OLD MAN (to the Fellow)
Hey, give me my favourite one.

Fellow pulls out a cassette. Puts it on the recorder. The
melody starts playing. It's Vladimir Vysotsky (1980's Sovi-
et dissident singer).

OLD MAN
So...You look kind of upset...

DOCTOR
I don't have a thing to be happy about.

OLD MAN
Come on, be a fool for a while. Just laugh at all things.
Like that one at Lear's place did.

DOCTOR
So you know the fool...

OLD MAN
Oh, that's...there was a guy, Vytas, he gave it to me, that
Lear one, just to browse through.

It had a list of characters. Ok, so I stopped there, at that list. King Lear, Adelia, the Fool, and so on. What's been pressing you up?

DOCTOR

There's some monkey business going on around me, but I am silent.

I got used to it. I made peace with it. Let us drink – for you. For the king.

Both of them empty their glasses.

OLD MAN

So, we're unfortunate, both of us...

Doctor grabs the Old man's hand and kisses it.

OLD MAN

Ah, come on, brother.

DOCTOR

That's what I need. To make it easier on me. Indeed, I would never go to church.

OLD MAN

Why not? You'll light a candle. For your soul. It'll make it easier.

I do this, when I have spare change.

He grabs Doctor's hand and kisses it.

OLD MAN (to the Fellow)

Hey, gimme that song!

INT. PLAYGROUND AT THE CHILDREN'S HOME.
MORNING.

Alexander among the children's swings. He sees Juste walking.

ALEXANDER

Hi, little miss, where's the doctor's room?

Juste waves her hand.

JUSTE

It's over there.

Alexander is walking down the corridor. He opens one of the doors cautiously, closes it, opens the other one, and closes it. Behind his back, he hears Julija's voice.

JULIJA
Looking for your beddy-bye?

Alexander turns at the voice. He is smiling.

ALEXANDER
Yeah. I got lost. I was playing on the swings, and it made me feel dizzy. Can you help me find my beddy-bye?

JULIJA
I guess your bed is elsewhere, sir. We only have children sleeping here.

ALEXANDER
Ok. I came to see you. I was just trying to avoid the other staff.
Looks like I have succeeded.

JULIJA
The Doctor will be back in a moment.

ALEXANDER
I am here for a moment. I had a wish to meet you.

JULIJA
Concerning Cordelia...

ALEXANDER
Concerning you.

JULIJA
Me...I thought it's art you're concerned about.

ALEXANDER
I do not know what art is.

JULIJA
Have you really come to see me? Or would you like to ask me about something? Are you looking for someone? Here, everyone keeps looking for...

ALEXANDER
I have been looking for you.

JULIJA
Did it take long?

ALEXANDER
Quite long, yeah. I'm not a young person.

JULIJA (anxiously)

Please, you have to leave. The Doctor will be here soon.
And please, don't use my face.

EXT. A FIELD. DAYTIME.

Alexander is walking in the field.

He brushes his hands against the tops of high grass. In front of him, there is a precipice, with the town on the other side of it.

EXT. THE TOWN. DAYTIME.

The church bells are ringing. Three people of different ages, in different spots of the town, upon hearing the church bells toll, cast a glance toward where the church is, stop for a moment, look at their watches, and continue walking.

The meeting with the children's home Principle.
The agreement upon showing a new performance.

INT.THE STAGE.EVENING.

The concert hall at the children's home is full of children and adults.

The stage scenery. In the middle of the stage, there is Narrator. He is addressing the audience:

NARRATOR

You are going to see a story as old as the world...as you or me...come here, dear ladies, that's not about you, that's about a story that I heard long ago, when I was a child. So I forgot the words, and the characters, the only thing I remember is the finale, and that salty taste of the tears running down my gawk (pointing at himself) face – can you see?

This is a story that is not going to teach you anything... and if all those puppets try hard to play it well, you will have forgotten it as soon as this curtain falls...and the thought that comes first to your mind, after you come out of here, will be brilliant. You've got to hold it tight, don't lose it...and when you come back home, bury it in a garden-bed, it might grow some crop...So, enough of my crummy twaddle...I am disappearing...vanishing...they are calling me...

Narrator disappears from the stage.

In the course of the performance, the Principle puppet keeps hitting the children puppets – in a comical manner, which even makes the children laugh.

At the doors of the children's home, Julija is waiting for Alexander. Julija asks him where Paulius is. She gets no answer.

Julija invites Alexander to her place. They make love.

On his way back home, Alexander meets Doctor. Doctor tells Alexander that he knows where the boy is.

Night time. Someone is knocking on the door. Alexander opens the door and sees Principle. "Where's the boy?" is Principle's very first question. Their conversation inside the theatre. Paulius, concealing himself among the puppets. A fight between Alexander and the Principle. Paulius comes out of his hiding. With a metal bar, Paulius hits the Principle on the head. The Principle is lying in a pool of blood.

Alexander tells Paulius to run away from the theatre and go to Julija's place.

Paulius is travelling across the town at night to meet Julija.

Alexander goes to the police office and pleads guilty for killing a person.

The police in the theatre. Among them, two criminalists: Audrius and Andrey.

Principle is taken to hospital. He is still alive, but Alexander doesn't know that.

The criminalists interrogate Alexander.

The criminalists are inside the children's house. They are speaking up to the children. They find out that Paulius had been missing.

Alexander is in the pre-trial detention facility. Out of paper and old magazines, he is making collages of the puppets.

The daily life in the town. Fool is performing his dance in the street...

The criminalists interrogate Housemaster, Doctor, and Julija the nurse.

Julija visits Alexander in the jail. Julija declares her love to Alexander and promises him to wait, as long as it takes, for him to come back from the jail.

The criminalists interrogate Principle, who has come back to his senses.

Three months later:

Alexander is released from the jail.

Julija is walking toward the prison gate. Inside the jail. The guard tells her that Alexander had been released an hour ago.

The children's home. The children's games. The children are watched over by Housemaster.

Julija is walking around the town, looking for Alexander.

Alexander is in the puppet theatre, watching the King Lear performance that involves the puppets he has made. In the audience, there is Principle.

After the performance, Principle waits around for Alexander. Alexander comes up to him. For a very long while, they look each other in the eyes, without saying a word.

Alexander is wandering around the town at night – old bars, familiar faces.

The meeting with Doctor at the bar. Doctor tells him that he has quit his job at the children's home.

The children's home. The children are seated outside, watching a puppet show given by Paulius. Among the puppets, there are those of Paulius' mother and sister, as well as Fool. Alexander, without anyone's notice, takes a seat in the audience. Finally, Paulius spots Alexander.

Julija comes up to Alexander.

Alexander at Julija's place. They talk. They make love.

Julija invites Paulius to live together with her and Alexander. Paulius rejects her request.

INT. AN ABANDONED CHURCH. THE BREAK OF DAWN.

The crumbled-away murals. The crashed-down altar (for instance, St. George church in Kaunas). Principle is looking around himself. The dawn light gets inside through the windows. He walks up to the devastated altar. Out of his raincoat pocket, he takes a piece of rope, and places it upon the crashed-down altar. The domes of the church. We hear Principle scream, then weep.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH. AT THE BREAK OF DAWN.

Principle is going further away from the abandoned church. A sudden gust of wind takes his hat off. Principle stops for a moment to stare at the hat rolling around. In a few seconds, he starts running after it, catches it, and puts it tight on his head.

EXT. A RIVERSIDE. AT THE BREAK OF DAWN.

Principle is walking along the riverside. In the distance, there is a bridge.

EXT. THE BRIDGE. AT THE BREAK OF DAWN.

Principle is on the bridge ledge.

PRINCIPLE

One...two...three...and that's it...

A gust of wind tears the hat off his head. The hat's long flight to the water. The hat is floating away down the river.

Julija and Alexander at the train station: they are leaving the town.

Fool's dance in the street. Neringa comes up to him. "Alexander has left the town..."

Fool and Neringa are dancing in the street.

The children's home. Paulius is manufacturing puppets.

END

