



**SVÄTOPLUK**

**EUGEN  
SUCHOŇ**

**SLOVENSKÉ  
NÁRODNÉ  
DIVADLO  
OPERA**



# SVÄTOPLUK

**EUGEN SUCHOŇ**

LIBRETTO

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EUGEN SUCHOŇ,  
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A MUSICAL DRAMA  
IN THREE ACTS IN  
THE SLOVAK LANGUAGE

WORLD  
PREMIÈRE  
MARCH 10, 1960,  
SLOVAK NATIONAL  
THEATRE

PREMIÈRE  
FEBRUARY  
24, 2023,  
THE SND  
NEW BUILDING

# LIBRETTO

KING SVÄTOPLUK (bas)  
MOJMÍR (baritone)  
SVÄTOPLUK II (tenor)  
and PREDSLAV (tenor), his sons  
DRAGOMÍR, the palatine (baritone)  
LŮTOMÍRA, princess of Panonia (soprano)  
ZÁBOJ, igríc [minstrel] and notarius (tenor)  
BLAGOTA, a slave of pagan lineage (alto)  
MILENA, her daughter (soprano)  
SPIRITUAL LEADER (bas)  
FORTUNE-TELLER (tenor)  
BOGAT, pagan Magnate (bass-baritone)  
1st and 2nd PRIESTESS OF MORENA  
(soprano)  
3rd and 4th PRIESTESS OF MORENA  
(mezzo-soprano)  
5th and 6th PRIESTESS OF MORENA  
(alto)  
ELDER (baritone)  
SOLDIER (baritone)  
The GUARD OF The PAGAN SANCTUARY  
(tenor)  
THE COMMANDER OF MOJMÍR'S  
TROOP NITRABOR (tenor)  
Highest royal officials in Hungary, dukes,  
elders, representatives of the castle troops of  
Great Moravia, members of the pagan family  
of Radvana of Zemlín, people, rabbis, soldiers,  
musicians, and trumpeters.

The choir of the royal court. An ensemble  
of pagan undertakers, dancers, priestesses  
of Perún, and masked dancers in the roles of  
the Devil. The story takes place in the autumn  
of 894 on the territory of the former Great  
Moravia: Act I at Velehrad, Act II a week later  
at the secret pagan sacrifice site in Zemlín.  
The 1st scene of Act III 10 days later at Modlín  
on the Danube, and the 2nd scene of Act III  
the following day at Devín Castle.

## ACT I

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A spacious hall at the Velehrad. The arches in the background overlook the castle walls and distant fields. There is a heavily gilded throne between the arches, with two armchairs arranged on the right and the left. The benches under the windows are covered with carpets. A small desk with writing utensils is in the foreground on the right. Zájboj is sitting in front of the table, strumming an ancient instrument. It is a ra brightnrning.

ZÁBOJ Veligrad, Veligrad, the seat of famous princes, the sun shone on you in ancient times. The sun was shining on you, Mojmir, young prince, when the surmas sounded over the castle walls. The trumpets have sounded in the towers of Veligrad, the drums have sounded in its proud castles, and it is Rastislav who sits proudly on his throne. Rastic has been betrayed, and he is perishing in a foreign land... He's perishing in a foreign land, with his sight burnt out... (Lutomira comes from the right and observes Zájboj for a while)

ZÁBOJ (joyfully) Lutomira! Princess!

ĽUTOMÍRA What is it that you are singing about? Is it about the betrayal of your king?

ZÁBOJ (awkwardly) Those days long gone are still spinning through my head right now. But I'd instead sing about you! Trust me!

ĽUTOMÍRA Hahahahahaha! And would you know how?

ZÁBOJ Do you want me to? Let me sing! (strums an instrument) Guelder rose, guelder rose, red guelder rose! Guelder rose, princess, lovely princess charmed the eye, killed the heart... Oh, dear! (approaches Lutomira, wants to hug her)

ĽUTOMÍRA (exasperated) Enough, Zájboj! How dare you! You forget that you are just an ordinary clerk!

ZÁBOJ Oh, forgive me, my noble princess, I am a wretch, I know it, but I am destined to desire mightily, so I shall die for you!

ĽUTOMÍRA Don't be delirious, Zájboj! I will pay you for every service in gold!

ZÁBOJ No! I don't want gold! I don't want gold!

ĽUTOMÍRA (impatiently) So what do you really want? Tell me!

ZÁBOJ Only to look...to look, to dwell on hopes, let me dream, only dream, to see you always in my dreams!

I'm not asking for more! (looks pensively at Lutomira)

ĽUTOMÍRA Hahahahahaha! Well then! If you love me so much, will you do everything I ask?

ZÁBOJ I will!

ĽUTOMÍRA Ok, listen then!

(whispers) You know that we want

to overthrow King Svätopluk and his sons so that my father Braclav himself may come to the throne! (anxiously looks around to see if anyone is listening) You have always served me faithfully. But now I ask you to bring rumours straight from the king! So join his company! Become his confidante!

ZÁBOJ A confidante of the king? Whoa! That's impossible!

ĽUTOMÍRA Then you can look at me! Look at me, minstrel Záboj!

ZÁBOJ And what will you give me if I tell you the important news I heard yesterday?

ĽUTOMÍRA A message? Tell me, Záboj! Tell me! Tell me! (Záboj looks around anxiously)

ZÁBOJ Our king is gathering his army on the other side of the Danube, and after handing over the government to his sons, he is preparing to attack the Franks!

ĽUTOMÍRA Záboj! Is it true?

ZÁBOJ Wouldn't you believe me? I overheard the King's secret conversation with the palatine Dragomír!

ĽUTOMÍRA (contemplates) Záboj, does that mean that Nitrava will be deserted?

ZÁBOJ Yes!

ĽUTOMÍRA I must tell my father immediately! Take the parchment and write! (Záboj sits down at the table)

ĽUTOMÍRA (dictates) Svätopluk is going to invade the Franks! Watch the progress of his troops! Nitrava will be deserted... Send out a troop of horsemen! And now the dove... (she runs into the adjoining hall, and returns with a dove. She ties a roll of parchment to the dove's foot, lets the dove out through the window)

(Mojmír enters from the right. Ľutomíra gets frightened.

After Mojmir comes Svätopluk II and Dragomír)

(Záboj awkwardly puts down his writing utensils)

MOJMÍR Be well, princess Ľutomíra!

SVÄTOPLUK II Be well!

DRAGOMÍR Be well!

ĽUTOMÍRA Welcome, princes!

Welcome, Dragomír!

MOJMÍR Your face is all tenderness, but your eyes, shine like the glowing Venetian jewels!

ĽUTOMÍRA This perhaps from the joy of today's festivity... I'll come to it, too. I will come in a beautiful dress!

(seductive) Will you take a look at me? Prince Mojmir! (Mojmír makes an impatient movement) (Ľutomíra looks seductive) Hahahaha! (runs off)

(Mojmír looks suspiciously after her)

MOJMÍR I don't like the princess!

Go, Záboj, find out what she's up to!

(Záboj bows and leaves)

DRAGOMÍR (after the departure of Záboj) Sons of the great Svätopluk!

Today, in this place, you will take your share of the reigns from the hands of the King himself! Well, drop the quarrels and lead our empire to glory, both of you!

MOJMÍR It's about time, my palatine Dragomír! The task that lies ahead of us is a difficult one! We can only save Great Moravia with the help of the Lord! The people have no trust in us! Torment, hunger, and plague are suffocating our serfs! While in our castle there is prosperity, new rebellion is growing in the mansions of the lords, the families are discordant, the serfs are abused, the slaves are whipped...and all because of the accursed Frankish priests, who have introduced foreign morals into our land...inciting divisions and schisms! Well, the guilty ones are you, the mighty rulers! Because you call them here, you host them here! It is you who have rejected the glorious legacy of Rastislav...

DRAGOMÍR Mojmir!

MOJMÍR... and the faith of Constantine!

DRAGOMÍR That is not true!

MOJMÍR But now I know that my moment has come to relieve our misery myself! I will release the slaves from their chains, pull my people out of their misery, and let the law of ancient rights rule over us!

DRAGOMÍR Mojmir! This is a rebellion!

SVĀTOPLUK II Hey, come on, stop it! Leave the scribbles! (towards Mojmir) You, prince, are wrong! Listen to me! Abundance is sprouting everywhere around you. Victory looms over the heads of the warriors... and all you see is misery?

Without poverty, my brother, there is no abundance; without hunger, there is no nourishment! Without the agony of slaves and the sweat of the people, no one can build walls! And why do you chastise your friends who attend Mass every day?

MOJMÍR (angrily) What kind of Mass? The Mass of the Latins, whom the Frankish king sent to destroy us!

SVĀTOPLUK II Oh, my brother! Don't disgrace your friends! Once you shall know well how our empire will shine under their hands!

MOJMÍR False glory! They shall blind your eyes with their splendour, just like the eyes of Rastislav!

SVĀTOPLUK II Not that way! Those will lose the sight, who go against them!

MOJMÍR And those who surrender, those will not go blind? Well, what use is their sight, which they may not behold freely? Why do they need a voice that may not speak the truth? And tell me, why are their hands tied, why are their rights violated? Hey, my brother, I know you are only tempted by one thing, by selling the power that feeds your appetite! You seek

strangers, you favour the pagans,  
and bribe the wisemen so that you  
may gain victory as soon as possible!

So, tell me, where will you lead  
the empire, son of King Svätopluk?

SVÄTOPLUK II And where will you  
lead it? Into your own harness,  
hardship and loneliness?

MOJMÍR Only therein lies  
our salvation!

SVÄTOPLUK II Well, turn your  
cheek under the flaps of the whip!  
Let yourself be nailed to the cross!

(Mojmír attacks Svätopluk II,  
and he strikes Mojmír back)

DRAGOMÍR (jumps between them)

Princes! For God's sake, stop it! At  
that moment, when you are to rule  
together, let not faith nor Frankish  
foreign rule, but the hand of our king  
guide you!

(horns echo behind the scene)

(Záboj comes)

ZÁBOJ The King is coming! (four  
trumpeters enter the scene blowing  
horns. They stop at the door and  
keep signalling.)

(the king enters accompanied by two  
elders, followed by his bodyguard)

KING Be well, sons! Be well,  
Dragomír! Have you summoned  
the elders?

DRAGOMÍR I have! The dukes have  
come too! Even the supplicants are  
waiting! Everything is ready!

KING So, let them all enter!

The festivities can begin! (Dragomír

gives the sign to the trumpeters  
and timpanists. The king sits on  
the throne, and the sons sit on  
the chairs. Dragomír stands on  
the king's right.)

(Záboj brings a table closer to  
the throne and sits behind it)

(The Great Moravia castle troops  
come in. They are led by dukes and  
castle palatines. The door opens, and  
the elders and Roman priests enter)

(After a while, the other families  
come in.)

CHOIR Glory to you, O king! Praise be  
to your empire, mighty and vast; glory  
be to your power, indomitable and  
strict! Before your throne, a nation  
falls to the ground, your faithful  
nation! Hail, great king!

KING Princes, rulers, Slovenes  
are faithful to me! The hand of your  
king has hitherto held the sceptre  
of the Great Moravian Empire with  
a mighty fist! But today, when danger  
lurks on every side, it is necessary to  
divide power so that a firm hand shall  
rule on all our walls. Therefore, I, your  
king Svätopluk, declare in agreement  
with the will of the elders, that I have  
made known to the principalities and  
dominions that I have appointed new  
leaders of the empire, my sons Mojmír  
and Svätopluk II!

CHOIR Glory, glory, glory!

KING To them belongs loyalty just  
as to myself! Your princes are skilled  
in armour. The scholars of eminence

have trained their wit, and from their youth, they have instilled in them the justice of rulership! Their powers are equal. Therefore, I desire to bestow them equally.

CHOIR Glory, glory, glory! (Mojmír and younger Svätopluk get up)

KING Son Mojmír, to you I give the administration of the Nitra county, and to you, Svätopluk, the regions of the Danube!

The legacy shall be your unity, unity forever and ever!

CHOIR Glory, glory, glory, great king!

DRAGOMÍR (holding a document with a seal) Well, come closer, the sons of Svätopluk! Do you accept the title you are offered with gratitude?

MOJMÍR I accept, father!

SVÄTOPLUK II I accept, my king! (A choir of Roman priests blesses the documents in Dragomír's hands. Mojmír looks at them hatefully)

CHOIR OF PRIESTS Oremus! Deus cuius verbo sanctificatur omnia benedictionem tuam effunde super creaturam istam, et praesta, ut quisquis ea secundum legem et voluntatem tuam cum gratiarum actione usus fuerit per invocationem sanctissimi nomini tui corporis sanitatem et animae tutelam te auctore percipiat. (Dragomír returns the documents to the king, who gives them to his sons)

ELDER (after the ceremony) My noble king! Our mighty lord! Today, when You hand over the power of government to your sons, let them test their own skill, let them hear the supplicants, judge disputes, and bestow gifts.

KING Good! So be it!

DRAGOMÍR Let the supplicants come forward! (The door opens, and a crowd of supplicants rushes into the hall. The supplicants outrun each other, and finally kneel before the king)

THE CHOIR OF SUPPLICANTS Glory to you, O king! (Ľutomíra enters hurriedly, walking with Blagota behind her. She pushes her way through the crowd of supplicants.)

ĽUTOMÍRA People, back off! This woman was the first one here! (She stops with Blagota in front of the king)

KING (amazed) Princess Ľutomíra, whom do you bring? (Ľutomíra bows very low)

ĽUTOMÍRA My noble king, forgive my audacity! This woman has been with us for three days, waiting to be heard by you! I myself advised her to wait for this day of mercy, and I know that today you will surely listen to her!

KING Perhaps she has an urgent appeal. Let her tell the story first! (to Blagota) Who are you, woman? (Blagota looks around in fear) (Ľutomíra encourages her)



BLAGOTA I am Blagota, the slave of the pagan ruler Bogat of Zemlín!

KING Tell me!

BLAGOTA O noble king! O mighty lords, have mercy! The only daughter I have, a pure dove, the only flower I have raised on my breast, and she must fade away! A week ago, the son of our ruler Dragoš from Zemlín died. And here, the kinsmen of the mighty commanded that one of the enslaved women should be burnt together with the commander. (desperately) Milena, a child of my birth, was chosen to be the girl that would perish with the man... They are preparing the balefire in a maple grove; my daughter is being kept in a house behind bars! In the house behind bars, they keep my daughter, in hunger, in thirst; three inhuman executioners torture her with a whip! (sorrowful) I may neither see her, comfort her, wipe away her tears, or make her well! I can only hear lamentations. I listen to them during my sleepless nights. Rescue her, rulers, rescue her, O mighty ones! For here, you worship a God who does not want sacrifices. May he protect my child in his name! Have mercy! Have pity, rulers! Save my child! (falls on her face, weeping heavily. Everybody gets emotional.)

KING (comes out of his daydreaming) Well, decide you, Mojmir!

MOJMÍR My King! What a horror that even today, pagans still thrive

in our empire! The duty of a ruler is to send an army to rush to Zemlín, to attack the pagans, to disperse their carriages, to tear down the old idols, to rescue the girl!

KING (to Svätopluk II) And what do you think? Prince Svätopluk!

SVÄTOPLUK II Who cares about the slave girl! As a prince, I must resist! Perhaps a battle will have to be fought with the enemy. Let our army, therefore, be brave and fearless! Christian soldiers are cowards! Only the pagan hero wields the sword with valour! I mean, my advice: I'd rather suffer the old habits than lose a battle with a brave invader!

KING It is as you say! Now is not the time to shed blood! Men must be protected, even if they pay homage to pagan customs! Now that I have finally consolidated Great Moravia's power, I will attack the Frankish Empire!

SVÄTOPLUK II A raid against the empire!

MOJMÍR Do you prefer the pagans? Are you fighting against faith?

KING (shouts) Think about what is going on! You will be eternal slaves if you do not secure your independence!

DRAGOMÍR I beg you, my king, calm down!

MOJMÍR (comes forward)

I agree with the attack, but with one condition!

KING What? Are you giving conditions to me?

MOJMÍR If you will allow the followers of Gorazd to return!

KING What? Those! Who has led my empire to destruction with constant quarrels? Never!

MOJMÍR Don't you want the scriptures in your mother tongue?!

KING The Empire comes first! The King has power!

MOJMÍR You swear against God; his punishment will not befall you!

KING What punishment? Whose? Tell me! Are you threatening me?!

MOJMÍR A curse shall follow every step you take, and you shall perish for your sinful deeds!

DRAGOMÍR Mojmir, stop it!

THE PEOPLE Not like that, prince! You're forgetting that he's our king!

MOJMÍR By falsehood, wickedness, meanness, you have come to power!

You sold out your own brothers!

You have delivered uncle Rastislav deceitfully to the Franks; he had his eyes burnt out and pecked out! You have destroyed his

glorious inheritance, and therefore the prophecy of Method will be fulfilled. That is that you and all your devotees will be killed!

THE PEOPLE What a horror!

KING (at the height of the rage) You fury! You werewolf! I'll whip you!

(wants to throw himself at Mojmir, but Dragomir stops him)

DRAGOMÍR My king, for God's sake, let it be!

SVÄTOPLUK II You betrayed the Franks, too, so now you stand abandoned without the support of the mighty!

KING You? To me?! You dare tell me?! In my face?! Wolves on them! I'll whip you! (whips his sons) Coons! Slaves! Skunks!

THE PEOPLE What a horror!

DRAGOMÍR (throws himself desperately at the king) My King!

KING (expels the sons - there is general horror)

DRAGOMÍR (shouts) Everybody out of the hall! (the people flock out screaming) (the army pushes out the supplicants.

Elders, princes, dukes and priests leave the hall)

(Svätopluk II and Mojmir stand at the door. Blagota and Lutomira wait in the background. Dragomir and Záboj support the king, who has a heart attack).

SVÄTOPLUK II (threatens the king with his fist) Are you throwing me out? Well, may my humiliation fall on you! (runs off)

(Dragomir and Záboj take the king to the throne)

BLAGOTA (falls on her knees in front of Mojmir) Prince Mojmir, save my daughter!

MOJMÍR (picks her up) Come on, woman! (both leave)  
(L'utomíra runs after them)  
KING (breaths heavily) I'm sick... The devil crushes... eats away at the insides... Kill me instead!  
DRAGOMÍR Help, Záboj!  
ZÁBOJ (jumps into the corner and fetches a glass of water)  
(whispers) Palatine Dragomír... I have a cure here! A little bit is enough... any pain will pass!  
DRAGOMÍR (looks suspiciously at Záboj but nods. Záboj drops the medicine) Drink half of it!  
ZÁBOJ (drinks hastily, Dragomír hands the glass to the king)  
DRAGOMÍR Drink this, my king! You'll get better!  
KING (drinks, leaning his head against the back of the chair) (slowly wakes up) What's wrong with me? I'm breathing... I feel better! The devil doesn't gnaw on the inside. The noise seemed to have disappeared. What did you give me?  
DRAGOMÍR The minstrel Záboj had the cure at himself...  
KING Záboj! A miracle cure. He drove the evil out of me...!  
DRAGOMÍR (Lovingly) Rest now, my king! (the king is satisfied)  
KING (remembers the argument with his sons, exasperated) I had to throw them out!  
DRAGOMÍR Leave it! Forget it! Look! The minstrel Záboj is here.

The minstrel Záboj is a good musician. Let him sing to you!  
KING (angrily) I don't want a minstrel! He's going to lie to me too!  
ZÁBOJ (timidly) Songs tell the truth, my king!  
KING (impatiently) I don't believe it! Ok then, sing! But the one that our people like most!  
ZÁBOJ (startled) Not that one!  
KING Sing! It's an order!  
ZÁBOJ (sits down and picks up an old lute) At Velgrade on a pitch black night, hungry wolves howl... wild wolves howl, the raven caws spookily! The clouds over Veligrad are gloomy; the owls are hooting under Veligrad, pity on your prince, pity... pity... (fearfully) Your seats... (stops singing)  
KING Why aren't you singing? Finish that song!  
ZÁBOJ I can do no more, my king!  
KING I know the song has something else to say...! Finish, but I swear to you, don't change a word...!  
ZÁBOJ (timidly) Your mansions have been plundered; your eyes, faithful eyes, (wildly) cruel executioners... have burned!  
DRAGOMÍR (appalled) Záboj! How dare you! (turns to Záboj)  
KING (not even stunned) Eyes... those horrible eyes...! (resigned) Leave it, Dragomír! After all, I know they're humming about him!

DRAGOMÍR They will be whining about you too!

KING About me? If my eyes also burn in the fire once?!

DRAGOMÍR Not like that, my king!

KING Dragomír! I'll take Zájboj to my troop! Everyone betrays me; only he gave me the cure... He even tells the truth! May he always be by my side! He will be my doctor.

DRAGOMÍR (looks threateningly at Zájboj) May he serve you faithfully! (the door opens, and a soldier hastily enters the hall. Salutes the king, And holds a shot dove in his hands)

SOLDIER My noble king! The guard from the right tower knocked down this dove. It carried a secret message... and flew to the Danube region. He unties a roll of parchment from the dove's foot) Look, this is the writing, indeed, given by your command...! Forgive...! He didn't know...! Mercy! Mercy! Mercy! (falls to his knees)

KING (surprised) I did not give the order! Show! (takes the roll, looks at it. He hands it to Zájboj) Read, Zájboj!

ZÁBOJ (looks horrified seeing the writing. He makes an effort and reads. Dragomír looks over his shoulder) Svätopluk is going to invade the Franks. Watch the progress of his troops! Nitrava will be deserted... Send out a troop of horsemen! (fearfully returns the roll to the king)

KING (surprised and then increasingly furious) What does it mean?! What is it?! Who wrote it? Whom?! Where?! Skunks! Treason! Treason! Treason! Treason is also here! Everyone lies to me! Everyone is revolting! Everyone is a fraud! They are spying everywhere! And I'm just lying here in idleness! I watch helplessly as the wolves tear my empire apart! Well, let them come! I'm still the king! I still rule myself! (to the soldier) Call in the troops! (the soldier runs to the left) Give me the guns! (the King's bodyguards enter. The guards bring the king's weapons and armour. They dress the King)

KING Dragomír! I'll launch my own strike against the Franks! You will take over the governance of the empire! You'll find the rebels! You will punish them without mercy! You're going to destroy them! Disperse them! Let's go! (The commander appears at the head of the troop, pays homage to the king, and gives the command to leave after receiving the sword. The troops march away. The king, Dragomír and Zájboj leave after the army)

The curtain falls quickly.

## ACT II

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A pagan sacrificial site in the middle of a grove. In the background is a large idol of Perún, and in front of it, an altar. To the left is a timbered hut, a dungeon of human sacrifices, and in front of it a fenced enclosure. Behind the fence sits (visibly to the audience) Milena, in a poor garment. In front of the enclosure by the gate, six priestesses of Morena, looking like witches, are guarding Milena. It's a dull grey afternoon. The whole scene emanates sadness. A few fringed women with scratched faces are hanging around the stage.

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA  
(Squeaking) Oioioi! How shall we release you, our mightiest, brightest commander?! We have prepared a delicious drink for your journey, sharpened the arrows, forged potent weapons, and made the girl cheerful for merriment! Oioioi!

MILENA (behind the fence) My mommy, my mommy, my faithful mother, can your mourning daughter still find you? (runs to the gate of the enclosure) Just a moment, a brief moment, let me live! After all, I am still young, still somewhat immature... will the fierce flame burn me? How am I to pity you, poor life! Not by dying! Not by dying! For the world

binds me with a bond, who shall make the undeveloped rainbow fall?

...

(tries to tear open the enclosure door - falls down helplessly) My mommy, my mommy, my faithful mother, or is the mourning daughter waiting in vain? (slams the door again) Morenas! You priestesses of Morena! Set me free out in the grove! Set me out to the meadows out in the sun! For I have not yet loved a guy, nor have I ever hugged a sweet little child! What is to die for, women? How shall I die?

V PRIESTESS OF MORENA (audibly)  
Freedom is awaiting you in the Heaven! And trust us, even the love will come!

I PRIESTESS OF MORENA  
(mockingly) You will have enough love in Heaven! Hihihih!

MILENA (urging) No, not in Heaven! It is lovely here! Look how sweetly the sun shines, how sweetly the limba smells! Let me go, let me go, let me go!

V PRIESTESS OF MORENA You ungrateful girl! Tell me, what girl has been so honoured as to be married to a military commander?

MILENA I didn't know him alive; what binds me to the dead?

I PRIESTESS OF MORENA Enough of this lamentation! The glass is here for you! A magic drink! Here you are!

MILENA (resists) No! I don't want to!  
I won't let you put me to sleep!  
I want to live!

I PRIESTESS OF MORENA Stop it!  
Think about Dragoš!

MILENA (manages to escape  
through the gates) I don't love him!

I PRIESTESS OF MORENA Back to  
the hut! Back! (fights Milena)

MILENA Oh no, don't beat me!  
(bites the priestess)

V PRIESTESS OF MORENA Stop it!  
She's fighting like a beast!

I PRIESTESS OF MORENA Are you  
going to bite too? Oh, wait a minute!  
There you go! There you go!

V PRIESTESS OF MORENA (beats  
her with a club) Be quiet! (Milena falls  
unconsciously)

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA Well  
done to you!

V PRIESTESS OF MORENA Get her  
out of here, don't let her lie here!

(the priestesses of Morena  
take the lifeless Milena behind  
the enclosure)  
(the drums of the funeral procession  
can be heard in the distance)

(A procession of mourners slowly  
approaches. Led by magicians with  
drums and majestic spiritual leader.  
Behind them, there are dancers  
and masked figures. Four hairy men  
carry Dragoš's corpse, wrapped in  
a white sheet. Behind the hearse  
walks with dignity the pagan leader

Bogat, members of his suite and  
the surrounding pagan dignitaries)  
CHOIR OF THE UNDERTAKERS You  
shall finish the battle in Heaven, our  
fierce commander, and your grave  
shall be a pure fire; oh, oh my, there  
you shall find a happy life! You'll marry  
a beautiful bride, oh my! A virgin,  
pure, chosen... (the procession  
arrives in front of the altar.

The hearse with the corpse is placed  
on the ground. The relatives stand  
behind the hearse in a semicircle.  
Silence settles down.)

(The spiritual leader steps up  
to the altar)

SPIRITUAL LEADER Children of  
the great Perún! (with noblesse)  
Mighty descendants of our great  
grandfathers! Morena, the priestess  
of human death, asks for a new  
sacrifice! She asks for Dragoš,  
the brave warrior who fought  
many battles for the clan and who  
protected us against the cursed  
cross! Today we accompany him  
into the pure fire so that in Heaven  
he may, live in love and delight!  
(the spiritual leader sits down  
with dignity)

(Everyone present takes a seat.

The priestesses in white robes  
surround the corpse, stretch their  
hands over it and face the audience,  
singing. The guys sit in a semicircle in  
front of them)

PRIESTESSES and WOMEN Morena walks through the nocturnal country... Her face is as mild as the new moon, her hands are soft as a woman's womb, and her gaze is silent as a winter's day; Morena walks through the nocturnal country.

...

GUYS Heaven, heaven, heaven finishes lives. You give birth to a new life; you liberate from agony! Heaven of oblivion, the Heaven of rest!

EVERYBODY Morena calls with a terrifying voice; her voice leads you to the realm of eternal winters... Under her palm, life completes, under her robe the eternal heaven, Morena cries out with a terrifying voice

...

Heaven, heaven, heaven finishes lives. You give birth to a new life; you liberate from agony! The Heaven of oblivion! The Heaven of rest! (shouting and the hustle and bustle behind the scene. They sound the alarm)

THE KEEPER OF THE SACRIFICE SITE (comes running) Prince Svätöpluk came! (Svätöpluk II arrived on a horse)

SPIRITUAL LEADER Welcome prince Svätöpluk!

THE PEOPLE Welcome prince Svätöpluk!

BOGAT My most faithful son, what brings you here?

SVÄTOPLUK II Leader Bogat! Forgive me for disturbing your sacred ceremony. Urgent reports lead me here!

WARRIORS Tell us, prince, tell us!

CHOIR Tell us, tell us!

BOGAT Tell us, prince!

SVÄTOPLUK II Magicians and the spiritual leaders! The glorious suite of Perún! The King hurt me to the depths of my soul some time ago. My father and I disagreed at the ceremony of the handover of power. The king drove me out with a whip like a filthy beast!

EVERYBODY Horrible rumours, horrible rumours, tell us how it was!

SVÄTOPLUK II In the fight with my brother, I defended your honour, I held the pagan altars from falling! The king has commanded to destroy you, tear down your idols, and pull down the altar of Perún!

EVERYBODY Horror!

SVÄTOPLUK II It is as I say!

EVERYBODY Shame on the ruler! Revenge upon Mojmir!

SVÄTOPLUK II Yes, brothers, let there be revenge! It is no longer enough to raise clenched fists, sharp swords must be drawn, and the harmful Byzantine fallacies must be rooted out from the ground up!

EVERYBODY Yes, that's right!

Let's tear down the proud crosses!

SVÄTOPLUK II Let's join forces with the Germans! They are our strength!

BOGAT Calm down, warriors! Prince Svätopluk! You told us serious news... We are grateful that you are protecting our righteous faith, for perhaps you have won loyal allies in the Germans! Tell me, are we going to win an open fight? The arrows of King Svätopluk are terrible!

SVÄTOPLUK II The moment is right! The king is now abandoned. He cast Mojmír out because he had defended Rastislav! The Royal Army is off to cross the Danube... I know the attack will begin at the full moon.

...

We shall recruit the Germans to invade from the rear. We will surround the King from two sides, conquer Nitrava and, with it, the Danube region!

WARRIORS (raise their guns enthusiastically) Fight! Fight! Fight for a justified faith!

THE PEOPLE Fight for the faith of Perún! (Bogat confers quietly with the spiritual leader)

BOGAT (To everyone) Our prince! Warriors, spiritual leaders!

I don't believe that we will win Nitrava in a fight! Let us choose another revenge!

SVÄTOPLUK II (amazed) Another kind of revenge? What do you mean?

BOGAT (with noblesse)

Let Perún decide!

THE PEOPLE Perún!

Let Perún decide!

SPIRITUAL LEADER Yes, Perún! The supreme Perún himself! (The spiritual leader nods to the fortune-tellers, which give instructions for preparing of the prophecy. On the altar in front of the idol of Perún, they make a fire.

The spiritual leaders are bringing the black sheep. The fortune-teller steps up to the altar. The people line up on both sides in front of the altar)

SPIRITUAL LEADER (in a powerful voice) Almighty Perún, show your will!

THE FORTUNE-TELLERS AND

THE PEOPLE Great Perún! Mighty Perún, your faithful people beg you with awe, reveal the truth, the true prophecy! The ancient Perún,

the glorious Perún, the thunderous Perún! Oioioi! The ancient Perún, the thundering Perún, show your will!

(The fortune-teller, hidden behind the idol, imitates the rumble of thunder on the metal plate)

(Milena wakes up behind the fence)

THE PEOPLE (in horror) Perún! Perún has appeared to us! (they all fall on their faces)

SPIRITUAL LEADER (Mysteriously, as if in Perún's voice) Old Believers, listen! The god Perún is calling you!

Know that you will not win Nitrava by fighting! Therefore send out the conspirators, kill the king at the full moon, and Great Moravia will fall into your hands! Let the man who ruined the Morena ceremony take



his revenge! Let him personally kill the king!

SVĀTOPLUK II (with horror) Shall I kill my father?

SPIRITUAL LEADER You have to kill him yourself! Vilan, Skrbeň, Vojan, Bolerád and Duchoň will go with you. If you do not carry out the command of the followers of Perún, you will perish by their hand!

BOGAT (after the prophecy) My prince, have you learned the wisdom of the almighty Perún? If you kill your father, you will be the ruler of Great Moravia. We will win the army of Svätopluk without a fight, and you will be our lord, as the god Perún commands!

SVĀTOPLUK II (thinks hurriedly, decides) I'll do as you command me!

THE PEOPLE Glory, glory, glory! (the conspirators gather in front of the altar) We will accomplish the will of the thunderer with glory! (they stand in front of the spiritual leader)

SPIRITUAL LEADER Well, march on to the glory, you pagan lads! Keep loyalty to the gods, and defend our rights with a heavy fist! Take cruel revenge for our injustices. May the mighty hand of Perún help you! (blesses a dagger with a pagan emblem, which he then hands to the Svätopluk II. The conspirators, led by the prince, leave. All eyes are on them)

SPIRITUAL LEADER (after a while) The gods have revealed an unspeakable miracle! Give them thanks; you owe them! Gifts that belong to them! (with noblesse) Let the body of Dragoš burn in flames, let the soul fly away with fragrant smoke in the Eternal Heaven! (several men bring Dragoš's corpse to the middle of the stage. The priestesses of Morena surround it, lamenting over the corpse)

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA Oioioi! How shall we release you, our most potent, most powerful, most brilliant leader! Oioioi!

SPIRITUAL LEADER Enough with the lamenting! Exorcise the devil! Prepare the burial feast! Summon the people! Feast and party at the posthumous wedding of Dragoš! (more people gather) Hey, yoo-hoo! (the masked figures bow, one of them drums on the cauldrons. People form a semicircle; masks get ready to dance)

(dance of the masks)

(the dance of the first mask symbolises the characteristics of the devil. The other masks join and then together attack the corpse; the warriors throw them back)

THE PEOPLE (choral lamentation) Oioioi! (the first mask drops. The warriors won a third of the battlefield. The second mask

falls. The warriors won two-thirds  
of the field)

THE PEOPLE How shall we release  
you, our mightiest commander?!

Oioio! (the warriors won. The masks  
lie helpless on the ground) (general  
delight of the people, they bring food  
and drink)

GUYS We beat the devil and  
redeemed Dragoš! (the bagpipers play  
the bagpipes, and the people begin  
feasting and dancing vigorously)

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA

Magic, witchcraft,  
abracadabra, magic witchcraft...  
abracadabra magic witchcraft!

WOMEN We've got a big wedding  
coming up...

WARRIORS Whoa, whoa, whoa,  
whoa, whoa...

GUYS Hey, our musicians play, play...  
Hey, our musicians, play, play  
a marry one...

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA

Magic, witchcraft,  
abracadabra, magic witchcraft...  
abracadabra magic witchcraft!

WOMEN This way here, this way  
here! This way here, this way here!

Whoa, here, whoa, whoa, whoa...  
(the masks revive unnoticed)

PRIESTESSES OF MORENA

Magic, witchcraft,  
abracadabra, magic witchcraft...  
abracadabra magic witchcraft!

(the masks rise from the ground,  
attack and want to kidnap  
Dragoš's body)

THE PEOPLE (retreat) The devils  
have come alive again and captured  
Dragoš... (the warriors attack  
the devils who light the cauldron  
in vain)

THE PEOPLE We want to lead  
the dead to Heaven; Morena will  
receive him to herself. She will receive  
him... (the main mask drums furiously,  
and the flame of the torch flickers  
with a high flame)

(the fortune-teller blows a long  
trumpet - everything goes silent)

SPIRITUAL LEADER Let Milena  
come!

THE FORTUNE-TELLERS and  
THE PEOPLE Let Milena come!  
PRIESTESSES OF MORENA (they  
drag the girl out of the hut) Come,  
Milena, come! Come, beautiful bride;  
the flame announces the wedding;  
the groom awaits you!

MILENA (struggles desperately)  
Let me go! Let me go! Where are you  
taking me? What a terrible glow!

THE PEOPLE The groom is waiting  
for you! Don't resist!

MILENA Yay! I don't want to die!  
I don't want to! I don't want to! After  
all, I'm still young.

...

THE PEOPLE That is the law! The law  
of Morena! Surrender to her!

MILENA No, no! No! No! (snatches out of the hands of the priestesses and throws herself at the feet of the spiritual leader)

Whoa, mercy! Whoa, mercy! It cannot be the will of the gods that I should die so young! I want to live! I want to live! I want to live!

SPIRITUAL LEADER Calm, girl, calm down! Be aware that this sacrifice is demanded by the god Perún himself!

THE PEOPLE The supreme Perún himself! (Morena's priestesses shut Milena's mouth, knocking her to the ground)

(the spiritual leader nods to the trumpeters and raises his hands to the idol of Perún)

(trumpets sound)

SPIRITUAL LEADER Almighty Perún, accept this sacrifice! (To the priestesses) Strangle her! Let her die! (Morenas approach Milena. The moment they rush at her, the girl screams, and that's when the beating alarm sounds)

SPIRITUAL LEADER (surprised) Mighty Perún! What does it mean? (...alarm noises continue to sound. The people moan in dismay. The priestesses of Morena drop the fainting Milena on the ground)

THE GUARD (comes running) Nitrans! The Crusaders have discovered the stash!

THE PEOPLE Damn us! Damn! Run, people, help yourself!

WARRIORS Fight! Let's get them! Let's get them! (chaos breaks out on stage. Women back down.

The guys gear up for a fight, and take up arms. The spiritual leaders and the fortune-tellers run to the altar. Bogat gives orders)

(The pagan warriors rush to the right corner of the stage; here, they encounter Mojmir's troop. A fight begins and lasts until Mojmir's arrival)

MOJMÍR (appears. At his command, the fight ends. Both troops fall silent; only the mask in front of the altar drums with all its might. Mojmir

inspects the pagan sacrifice site with majesty) Wretched are you idolaters!

Did you celebrate the funeral feast here? Are you serving a living sacrifice?

SPIRITUAL LEADER (proudly) A woman dies with a man!

THE COMMANDER OF MOJMÍR'S TROOP Not true, you vampire! Let everyone live their lives freely! Leave the offerings! Destroy the idols! The living god Perún is calling you!

WARRIORS (pagan) Hahaha!

SPIRITUAL LEADER (mockingly) What kind of god? Naked, nailed to a wood! Oh, man! Poor guy! A fool!

WARRIORS Hahaha!

THE COMMANDER Enough! Put your neck on the cross!

**SPIRITUAL LEADER** Never, you cross-believers! Beat them, fellows! (they sound the alarm)

**WARRIORS** Let's get them! Let's get them! (attack Mojmír's troop)

**WOMEN** Perún, help! (A fierce battle breaks out between the Christian and pagan armies. Mojmír's soldiers push the pagans backstage. When the priests see that the pagans are retreating, they throw themselves into the fight, but the Mojmírs drive everyone behind the stage, where the battle continues.

Morena's priestesses and other women run to the altar and raise their hands to the idol)

**PRIESTESSES OF MORENA** and

**WOMEN** Glorious Perún! Thundering Perún, don't let us perish. Save your people from destruction!

(Mojmír returns to the stage with several warriors. He has the women surrounded and taken backstage, then preaches the destruction of the pagan sacrifice site. He destroys the idol of Perún with his own hand)

(The scene is in ruins. Among the ruins lies fainting Milena, whom nobody has noticed yet)

**BLAGOTA** (backstage) Milena!

Milena! Child of my birth! (returns to the stage) Milena! Milena! (looks for her) Where are you, my child?

Milena, my child, where are you?

Where are you? Where are you! (Sees her) Oh, what a horror! Milena! You

hear me, Milena! My daughter! My poor baby! (Listens near the heart) She doesn't breathe! She died! (looks around, looking for help. She sees Mojmír, runs desperately to him, grabs his hand and pulls him towards Milena) Oh, help me, Prince Mojmír! They killed my baby! Those inhuman executioners!

**MOJMÍR** (leans towards Milena)

No, woman! The girl is still breathing!

Pass the water! Quickly! (Blagota runs for water, and Mojmír splashes Milena's face) (Milena wakes up and looks around in amazement. She sees her mother)

**MILENA** Mum! My mum of my birth! Didn't I die in a blaze of burning flames?

**BLAGOTA** No, my child! You're with me again! Your saviour has come!

**MILENA** Who are you, you big shot? What is the judgement that led you to us? How much compassion shines from benevolent eyes, and how much love and warmth hides the face! How grateful should I be to you? My lord! If there is nothing more to give, I put my fate in your hands!

**MOJMÍR** Not that way, my girl! I do not ask you to serve me... I came not to take in plunder, but to deliver - as the brothers of Thessalonica preached, so there is no more suffering of slavery among our people. (Lutomíra enters hurriedly.

When she sees what's going on, she retreats into hiding)

MILENA No, my lord! I'll go with you! May he serve you faithfully!

BLAGOTA Accept her, prince! She will be your faithful servant! (Mojmír gently lifts Milena)

(soldiers from Mojmir's troop arrive from the left)

NITRABOR Prince Mojmír! You have destroyed the nest of the idolaters; you have overthrown the stronghold of the unbelievers! (troops gather)

You're the one who's loyal to Rastic! You alone honour the legacy of the holy brothers! It shall be you

to become our ruler! (soldiers lead a group of freed slaves) (slaves and slave girls greet each other joyfully)

SOLDIERS Glory be to Mojmír! Long live our new king!

NITRABOR (pointing to the freed slaves) The multitudes of these slaves you have freed will now march together with our army! Well, lead us into battle against Svätopluk!

SOLDIERS Well, lead us into battle against Svätopluk, the traitor of his own blood! Death to King Svätopluk. Fight! Fight!

MOJMÍR Not like that, brothers, not like that! My father is king! I will not allow you to lay a hand on his life! I don't want him to be condemned by the prophecy of the followers of Mojmír! My father himself knows that he must humble himself before our

truth... before our warrior force, he will bow down obediently! But I will lead you for the glory of Rastislav! EVERYBODY Fight! Fight! Go fight for our rights! (more slaves and slave girls arrive and join in the singing) (they hand out guns to the slaves) Go fight for our rights! Hey! (Mojmír departs at the head of his army... Milena goes after him. Blagota escorts them)

(L'utomíra comes out of hiding, and looks at the departing people) L'UTOMÍRA Hahahaha! Go farewell, Prince Mojmír! Thoughts of glory! For you will arrive at Nitrava only in handcuffs! Dragomír knows about everything right away! I'll give you away myself! I'll kill your father and brother myself. And finally me! Only me! Only I will be a princess of Nitrava! Hahahaha! (looks mockingly at the scene, her hands with outstretched fingers raised threateningly to the sky)

The curtain falls quickly.

## ACT THREE

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### SCENE I

The camp of Svätopluk's army across the Danube. In the foreground, there is a dying fire. In the background, on the hill of the king's tent. It's a dark night. Clouds float across the sky, occasionally obscuring the starry skies. Two soldiers sit silently by the fire. (the King and Záboj arrive slowly from the left. Both of them are wrapped in robes. The king nods to the soldiers, who immediately leave)

**KING** We're on the spot, Záboj. Oh, it is so cold. Chills come down my limbs.

**ZÁBOJ** Rest now, my king! It is unhealthy for you to go through a night camp on such a late autumn day. Sit closer to the fire. Curl up here in the robe. (hands the king his robe)

**KING** The robe won't help... I'm not fainting with age, only in my soul... in my soul, I'm miserable... (reflects) I'm thinking about the sons! I shouldn't have driven them away. I dreamt of them today. Like little boys, they stood at my feet, and my hands stroked their hair, as they had done long ago, in moments past, when all my hope was reflected in them. But then the feud of wars drove me to the field; my sons grew up loveless and lonely. Rebellion and hatred, malice and self-will have made cruel enemies of my children! Let's hope

we will reconcile one day. Hopefully, everything will get better eventually! If fortune is with me - I will win this war. I will summon my children and arrange a feast for them up there on Devín, such that the sound of it will fly to the sky! (looks up at the sky) Look out! The stars have gone out in the first cold dawn... Oh, shall my dawns also fall that way?

...

Oh, the cold is crushing me... Maybe sleep will ease my aching soul...

**ZÁBOJ** Rest now, my king! Don't be upset; we will win! You shall also regain the sons. Come here to your tent (escorts the King)

(trumpets can be heard from far behind the scene)

(Záboj returns - sits on a stump, and thinks)

(stars are shining)

**ZÁBOJ** What? Ah, the stars... How I envy you stars, you shining bright stars! You are allowed to look at her... Ľutomíra! Ľutomíra! I'm not allowed, sisters! May I further betray the king? (reflects)

(Ľutomíra comes)

**ĽUTOMÍRA** Záboj!

The minstrel Záboj!

**ZÁBOJ** (surprised) Ľutomíra! Where did you come from?

**ĽUTOMÍRA** Shss! I went around the guards. Záboj, is it true you're in the king's suite?

**ZÁBOJ** Yes! Is it true!

ĽUTOMÍRA (caustic) Is it because of me, Záboj?  
ZÁBOJ Yes, because of you.  
ĽUTOMÍRA Well then, tell me! Tell me, what are they up to?  
ZÁBOJ (defiantly) I won't tell! I cannot! I disgust you!  
ĽUTOMÍRA Záboj!  
ZÁBOJ For daily, you make me feel more and more that I am not your equal but just a mere clerk to you!  
ĽUTOMÍRA Don't be stupid! You'd better admit that you've been generously bribed!  
ZÁBOJ (exasperated) Ľutomíra!  
ĽUTOMÍRA (urging) Tell me, what did they give you? I'll give you more! Gold! Gems! Precious stones!  
ZÁBOJ (longingly) Your kiss! I'll tell you everything about it!  
ĽUTOMÍRA (seductive) Záboj, you'll have it!  
ZÁBOJ (surprised) Oh, no! I don't believe you. I haven't been able to even look or keep any hope. It is not possible!  
ĽUTOMÍRA (turns her face towards him) Look at my lips! You can kiss them! (Záboj hugs and kisses Ľutomíra passionately)  
ĽUTOMÍRA (breaks away from his arms) Now speak!  
ZÁBOJ What do you want to know?  
ĽUTOMÍRA Just one thing! Tell me, when will the army of Svätopluk move forth?

ZÁBOJ Is that what you want to know? Well then. I'll tell you! The army of Svätopluk will move today at the full moon.  
ĽUTOMÍRA What? Today already? I must tell my father immediately!  
SOLDIER (backstage) Stop! Password!  
DRAGOMÍR (backstage) Blatnograd!  
ZÁBOJ Someone is coming!  
ĽUTOMÍRA (not surprised) It is Dragomír who brings Mojmir chained up. He stood up at the head of the Gorazd's followers. I gave him away myself. (looks behind the scene) Hahahaha!  
ZÁBOJ (in amazement) What have you done?  
ĽUTOMÍRA You don't understand? (with a triumphant smile) Death awaits Mojmir, but I am at the finish line! (Dragomír and a group of soldiers arrive, carrying the chained Mojmir, followed by Milena)  
ZÁBOJ I don't understand! I don't understand anything! (the escort stops)  
DRAGOMÍR Záboj, where is the ruler? I want to speak to the king!  
ZÁBOJ King Svätopluk fell asleep. You cannot wake him up!  
DRAGOMÍR I am bringing urgent news. You need to call him!  
ZÁBOJ (jumps in his way) Oh, no! You cannot, no way! He forbids any entering! Let the king rest!  
DRAGOMÍR Let me go! Let me go!

ZÁBOJ I cannot!

DRAGOMÍR Get out of the way when I tell you!

ZÁBOJ I cannot! I will not let you!

(the king appears in front of the tent)

KING What is all that rumour?

Why all the screaming?

MOJMÍR Father and king!

Let me tell you...

KING No! Dragomír, you tell me!

DRAGOMÍR King Svätopluk! I have exposed a sinister conspiracy against you! Prince Mojmir slaughtered

the followers of the house of Zemlín, and beat up the thieves, and distributed the weapons

among them. Masses of resistance fighters directly from Zemlín set

off on a march, marching to Nitrava.

The serfs of the other districts joined them so that I could barely repress

the rebellion! The work of your son, the revenge of Mojmir!

KING Mojmir!

MOJMÍR No, my king! It was not

revenge that drove me! I honour you as a father, and I honour you as a ruler. I have sworn that not one hair of your head shall be crooked! Yes, I have destroyed the idol worshippers, and I have set the thieves free.

For I want their eyes to see freely,

I want the chains to fall from their hands forever so that we may

faithfully preach our truth! You

demanded the people you govern; you demanded the morals you rejected.

My own conscience told me to send the arrows against Nitrava and so to convince you, O king, of the truth of Rastislav!

DRAGOMÍR Look, you can see for yourself - Mojmir is a dangerous

rebel; it is only thanks to princess Lutomira that we have stopped him! LUTOMÍRA (comes before the King)

Yes, my king! I heard myself how he was rebelling against you! He wanted to lay his perfidious hand on your life!

MILENA (catches her off guard)

Not true! Not true! Don't trust this woman! I was there too. Listen to me! (she falls on her knees in front of the king)

KING (surprised) Who's that?

DRAGOMÍR Ah, only a slave of the Zemlín family, who always follows the prince...

LUTOMÍRA But she is deluded!

KING Tell me what you want, girl!

(Milena is emotional first falls at the feet of the king, then stands up)

MILENA I'm just a humble girl, Milena from Domašie. My plain words shall not be weighed in gold; they shall not be covered with a name, and they shall not be adorned with a garment.

I will only lay my heart, my heart in your hand, that you may hear, that

you may believe my words, gentlemen!

I lived by my mother's side, in joy and in sorrow, when one day the fortune-tellers came, the priests of Perún, who took me as a wife to the dead



lord, Mr Dragoš... I was torn away from my home, and dragged to the dungeon, with no tears and no kiss on my mother's cheek... Oh, how I envied the birds out in the wild; oh, oh, how I longed for the grove by the ford, for the meadows, for the shrubs, for the sparkling water! And suddenly, the day came they were going to burn me. My young life has been taken by storm by the loot! I have lamented in vain that the world shall bind me with bonds, for who orders others to step on the unfolded bull! I was gathering my strength to flee again, and the Morenas whipped me with their clubs... And when the cruel executioners wanted to take me, I moaned in agony; I struggled in torment. Suddenly - a sound of thunder came from the border, and a mighty, threatening voice boomed from afar:

"Old Believers, listen, the god Perún is calling you - go to Nitrava before the full moon, assassinate the king!" King! Not Mojmir, but the one whom Perún sent; he will be your murderer! Stay safe, and watch out for Perún! (everyone freezes in surprise)

(Lutomira sneaks up towards Zabo)

LUTOMIRA (speaks quietly to Zabo)

Zabo, if you swear to me now, tomorrow at the castle, I'll be all yours! (Zabo nods indecisively)

LUTOMIRA (stands in front of the king) Hahaha! For

she's delirious, she's delirious like a madwoman! Don't you believe her, my king! She doesn't know what she's talking about! Me, I'll prove your son's guilt to you! I know well that Mojmir has been betraying you for a long time! He sent a secret message to his conspirators before the festival. In hiding, I overheard him instructing them to write such a letter:

"Svätopluk is going to invade the Franks... Follow the movements of his troops, and Nitrava will be deserted... Send a troop of horsemen!"

(Zabo looks at Lutomira in amazement)

DRAGOMIR (surprised) The letter that the dove carried?!

MOJMIR King, listen to me! This woman lies!

KING (exasperated) You're not my son anymore! Here the deeds speak! Guards, get him out of here!

MILENA (desperately) Don't judge! You don't know! He's innocent!

(the soldiers take Mojmir away. Milena desperately runs after them)

(Lutomira triumphantly leaves)

(the king sits down devastated on a nearby stump)

ZABOJ My King, let me go!

My head is spinning. (the king nods in agreement)

(Zabo goes away)

DRAGOMIR (silently, thoughtfully)

The moon is coming out soon... And what if the girl was telling the truth?

This moment was determined by the conspirators, supposedly.

KING (surprised) Dragomír, do you trust her?

DRAGOMÍR My King, let me give the orders.

KING I don't mind. (Dragomír gathers the guards, consults them silently, and finally tells the soldiers where to hide. Then he goes backstage and returns a moment later. He motions to the king to lie down.

The king moves towards the tent, but Dragomír shows him the place in front of the tent. King lies down and wraps himself in a coat)

(Dragomír hides in the tent)

SOLDIER (backstage) Stop! Password!

SVÄTOPLUK II (backstage)

Blatnograd! (Svättopluk II and the masked conspirators from Act II creep in. They freeze and look around on all sides. They move. They stop again in a bit.)

(Svättopluk II sees the king. He approaches him cautiously.

The conspirators are watching him from the side. Svätopluk II silently stands above the king, raises his dagger high and prepares to stab)

(Dragomír jumps out of hiding and grabs his arm. They both freeze. Soldiers run in and disarm

the conspirators - Dragomír rips the hood off the head of Svätopluk II) DRAGOMÍR (appalled) What a horror!

That's cruel! (the king stands up in astonishment and, at first, doesn't understand what's going on)

(Svätopluk II looks sullenly down at the ground)

KING Hail, my son Svätopluk... What disrespect! you're not thankful to your father? (violently) What? So what is it going to be?!

(softer, as if hesitating) No, I don't think so! It's a dark night!

Don't you recognise me!? (shouts) I am your father! Hug my knees! (gazing at his son steadily)

(angrily) What? Are you petrified?!

Is my son tolerating the hands of the guards on him? Where is your pride? Get out of their hands!

(the anger escalates) Not true! A lie! A mistake has been made!

SVÄTOPLUK II (rebelliously) I am a pagan by birth! I will perish with a smile, but I will not hide slyly! I am the leader of the conspirators!

KING How? What? And you, my son Svätopluk? (explodes) Oh, horror! First one and now the other! (raging like a madman) Collapse, heavens! Smash my chest! Split the earth and devour my body!

Birds of prey, come, tear out the wounded heart of a father!

DRAGOMÍR (approaches the king)

My king, come to your senses!

KING What are you saying?

Who am I?

DRAGOMÍR King Svätopluk!  
KING (chuckles) All right, then! Am I the king? Am I still the king? (rises commandingly) Palatine Dragomír! Do you have empty dungeons at Devín Castle?

DRAGOMÍR I do.

KING Grids, chains, bolts that hold firm?

DRAGOMÍR Firm, my king!

KING (shouts mercilessly) Well, chains on them, on the failed traitors! King Svätopluk's sons will be brought to Devín in chains! Take them out of my sight! (Soldiers bind Svätopluk II and the conspirators. They take them away)

(The King lumbers to the forefront of the stage, holding his heart. He is really wound up)

KING Dragomír! So we have found the rebels who are undermining our empire! (threatens desperately to heaven) Let Perún damn this hour!

DRAGOMÍR No, my king! Don't curse them! For they are your own sons!

KING (painfully) These? These? those are supposed to be my sons?! If only they hadn't been born! (barely audible) If only they hadn't been born! If only... (falls to the ground and bursts into heavy, settled weeping)

The curtain comes down very slowly.

## SCENE II

The wide terrace at Devín Castle. The walls at the back overlook the Danube and the castle tower. On the left, there is the entrance to the royal chamber, and on the right, the entrance to another chamber. A wide staircase leading to the terrace finishes at the far right. By the door of the king's chamber, there is an armchair covered with bearskin. Outside the entrance, there is Záboj sitting on the ground with an instrument in his hand. It's late afternoon. The rays of the sun illuminate the scene.

ZÁBOJ (strums an instrument) At the castle of Devín, an old eagle is perishing... His wings are broken, and his heart is wounded. And the heart that is ill, two wolves are tearing, and those old eyes are lamenting the sons. And the sick heart the predators have in their teeth, and those old eyes curse the sons! (drops the instrument) I won't sing anymore! Ľutomíra is coming! She's coming anytime soon. She'll offer me, love... Those rose-red lips... the pale flesh! (resistance awakens in him) Oh, no! I mustn't! I cannot! I have to tell the truth! Save Mojmir! (desperately) Oh, passion be damned! What have you made out of me!  
SOLDIER (enters)  
ZÁBOJ What?

SOLDIER The palatine Dragomír sent me to guard here. When the king wakes up, I am to call him.

ZÁBOJ (points to the door) The king is unconscious. Who knows when he'll get up. Nothing helps him...

SOLDIER (mysteriously) Záboj, I might know the cure!

ZÁBOJ (amazed) What kind?

SOLDIER Offer sacrifice to the god Perún. A living sacrifice!

ZÁBOJ (gets scared) A living sacrifice?

SOLDIER A human sacrifice.

ZÁBOJ (appalled) Watch out, Turoň! They punish pagan victims with death today.

SOLDIER I know. But Perún would help.

ZÁBOJ (terrified) Go! Now go, in front of the gate! I'll call you. (the soldier leaves)

(Ľutomíra appears)

ZÁBOJ (he spots her) Ľutomíra, have you come?!

ĽUTOMÍRA Yes, I have, Záboj. I came to look for you. (meaningfully)

You know... Well, first of all, tell me one thing... Where are the castle guards standing?

ZÁBOJ Guards? Where are the castle guards standing? Now is that what you want to know?

I won't tell, Ľutomíra! I won't tell you anymore! (freezes)

ĽUTOMÍRA Záboj, what happened? Have you forgotten my kiss? My love?

ZÁBOJ (revives) Oh, no! Oh, no! Your kiss burns my lips! But your love is a curse to me, yes, a curse.

For it was only for her sake that I lied and betrayed, indeed, betrayed despicably! But today, protect me! I'll hug you again today, but my kisses will be deadly poison!

ĽUTOMÍRA (bossy) Záboj, I order you! Tell me, where are the castle guards standing?

ZÁBOJ No, go away! Leave me alone, you serpent!

ĽUTOMÍRA You bastard! How dare you? But there's no point in your resistance. Your defiance is useless!

I don't need you anymore! I know everything I need to know! The king is sick; the army is gone, Devín is deserted! (points down) And there, beyond the Danube, our army is waiting. They are waiting for my signal! Now, I'll wave them... You can watch it yourself. (she starts running towards the castle wall)

ZÁBOJ (jumps in her way) You won't do that! Ľutomíra! Stop it! Don't do it! (wants to hit her)

ĽUTOMÍRA (shouts) What? Are you threatening me?! You gutless coward! (takes the whip and beats Záboj, who throws himself at her. It's a fierce fight. Ľutomíra frees herself from

Záboj's hands and runs to the castle wall. She's about to wave her scarf)  
ZÁBOJ (takes a crossbow, and aims it at Ľutomíra) Well then, die! You shall be the human prey of Perún! (Záboj shoots, and Ľutomíra screams a shrill death cry. The princess falls through the castle wall into the depths) (Záboj holds his head, runs to the walls and looks down) Ľutomíra! Ľutomíra! My one and only love! You are drifting down the Danube; you will disappear forever, you wild white gosling! (returns to the foreground of the stage, falls to the ground and weeps heavily)  
(the king appears in the doorway. He is transformed, sickly, and aged; his grey hair is shaggy. He is dressed in a long white robe)  
KING What was that, Záboj?  
A crossbow on the ground?  
A human cry?!

ZÁBOJ The girl squealed...  
I wounded her dove. I offered the sacrifice to Perún.  
KING A sacrifice to Perún? That won't help anymore! Nothing will help anymore! All hopes are in vain... (sits down on a chair, Záboj sits at his feet)  
Minstrel Záboj, your medicine is weak! The serpent on my heart overpowered the drink. My soul longs only for heaven. After all, what's the point of this vain struggle... Why break and struggle when there is nothing left of me anyway! Only bare hillsides...

a soft wasteland... a collapsed tumulus... (Dragomír enters)  
DRAGOMÍR Hail, O king!  
KING Dragomír! How did you get here?  
DRAGOMÍR You've fainted. We've carried you by night to Devín seat.  
KING Really... I remember! Dragomír, what's up with them?  
DRAGOMÍR As you commanded. The military court is prosecuting them! But I beg you for the last time, let them be judged by the council of elders. For they are your own sons! The military verdict knows no mercy!  
KING (exasperated) No! I won't allow that!  
DRAGOMÍR So, release me from the leadership of the court.  
KING You yourself shall lead it, as I have commanded.  
DRAGOMÍR All right then! But when your hand seals the sentence, the executioner shall slay me here before your throne at my command!  
KING Even so, I swear to you, you must judge them yourself! (Dragomír freezes but silently bows a moment later. He wants to leave, but Záboj stops him)  
ZÁBOJ Palatine, Dragomír! Judge me too!  
DRAGOMÍR Why shall we judge you too?  
ZÁBOJ I wrote the letter that the dove carried!

DRAGOMÍR Zájboj! What are you saying?  
ZÁBOJ By the order of Princess Ľutomíra!  
DRAGOMÍR (angry) It was Ľutomíra! I thought so! I knew it! I will have her eyes burnt out!  
KING (in amazement) Not eyes! Do not burn out any eyes on my court! (covers his eyes)  
ZÁBOJ (quietly) There is no more Ľutomíra. (Dragomír looks at Záboj in amazement, then at the King. He finally understands)  
DRAGOMÍR Come, Záboj (leaves with Záboj)  
KING (thinks) I'm all alone. I'm poor, abandoned... A harsh military court will sentence my sons... Proud heads will fall... Rebellious heads shall fall under the terrible hand of the executioner. (gets up and comes to the front) And I carry on my miserable life plagued by curses... day and night I flee from the horrible shadow, where I walk, all death and bloody footsteps behind me on the road!!!  
...  
(turns in horror. He's having a spasm. He fumbles for his chair, and can't breathe)  
(shouts)  
Come on, people, help! My heart aches with grief! (has a spasm, crawls on the floor, approaches the chair again)

(Predslav arrives via the stairs. When he sees his father on the ground, he runs to him, helps him into the chair, shakes him, and covers his legs. The King slowly recovers from his fainting spell; Preslav looks at him pityingly)  
PREDSLAV My father! My own! Don't torture yourself... calm down! I'm right here! Your son, Predslav!  
KING My son Predslav? Have you returned to me?  
PREDSLAV Yes, my father. I heard what happened in the camp. I could not rest! Well, so I have come to beg you to forgive my brothers!  
KING You know I've never forgiven anyone in my life! I know only revenge.  
PREDSLAV (urging) My father! My dear father! You have to forgive them! You are their father. You are Christian!  
KING I am! I have to be! I would not stand as a pagan ruler in the world today.  
PREDSLAV (impatiently) Well, what draws you to pagan morality?  
KING Tough law! Merciless law! I would like to have an eternally victorious army. A nation of heroes, not a flock of timid doves. (resigned) Eh, Rastislav shouldn't have invited Constantine until he had a solid empire.  
PREDSLAV He meant well! He wanted us to be ruled by law, which is the only way to overcome human evil.

KING Not me! Not yet! I wanted to have an army of mighty... eagles...falcons!

PREDSLAV And yet you must admit that the truth of love will embrace the whole world one day.

KING (with anger) True love?! Where is it? Where does it rule? And don't you see that the world is moved by hatred, anger and dislike? Or have your brothers betrayed me out of love?

PREDSLAV Oh, my dear father, seek no more revenge! Forgive my brothers! For what will become of the empire if you do not forgive them? Your work will perish.

KING Let it perish! There is no mercy for them! Go away if you have come only to protect the traitors. Go, go away, go! Get out!

PREDSLAV (appalled) My King! Where is your justice? (leaves)

KING (stares fixedly after Predslav, then freezes, hurts) It will die! My empire will cease to exist... (clutches at his heart, screams horribly) The devil... the devil is torturing me again! (stands up) No, I don't want to die! Not yet! I will die when I want to! Oh, no! (looks tensely to the right corner of the stage) A ghost! Who are you? What do you want? (with immense fear) Out! Go away from me! I don't want to see you! No! No! It's Perún! The most dreadful Perún himself! (begs) Oh, no, Perún! I'm

not to blame! I have not abandoned you! I had to, Perún! Terrible Perún! Your punishment for my betrayal is cruel... for I abandoned you... for that, I rejected you... and I sold you out to the Christians... (yowls painfully) Oiiiiih! (looks tensely to see the vision) No, it's not Perún! That is... Him! He is the one who reveals the face... reveals the eyes... the bloody eyes... the faded bloody eyes! Guards, for God's sake, don't let him go! (the vision haunts him - the king resists) Oh, what a horror! Help, people, help! (wants to run away, freezes on the spot. He falls to the ground)

KING Rastislav... Mercy! Let me be... I have sinned... I have sinned... Forgive me... Let me die... Give me peace... Please forgive me, Rastic, for I am in pain...

(loses consciousness)

(comes to himself, gets up, looks at the chair, and sits down on it with an effort) (military court officials arrive on the stage led by Dragomír and the Roman priests. Behind the court, the guards in arms lead the chained sons of Mojmir and Svätopluk II. A special soldier brings Záboj)... (Another soldier signs towards the staircase, and the chained soldiers of Mojmir are brought onto the stage, and then the people enter. Milena hides among the people.

The procession stops in front of the king. Dragomír comes forward)  
DRAGOMÍR We have pronounced the sentence according to your command. We request your signature. (hands the parchment to the king, who accepts it silently)  
KING (points at his sons) Take off their chains! Hand them your weapons! Also, give them the shields! Mojmír my son, come to me! (Mojmír stands on his left) My son Svätopluk to the other side! (the younger Svätopluk comes from the right) You too, my Predslav, come closer! Guards, leave! (speaks to his sons) I have granted you mercy! (tears up the document) (speaks tiredly) A little while ago, prince Rastic was here. I have committed such a cruel offence against him. He himself has commanded me to preserve descendants for Great Moravia! For the good of the empire must be placed above the revenge of pride... the good of the empire for so great a price obtained... I am old, I am tired, and my fist, which once ruled mightily in this empire, has grown weak. Well, take the sceptre in your young hands; what I have made, you shall keep! (takes the wands in his hands) Look, here are three wands, one by one, each one bends easily, bind them together in a bundle, no one can break them! It's the same

with you! If you persevere in love and unity, your enemies will never defeat you. But if out of discord and jealousy, you divide into three governments, disobeying the eldest brother, you will ruin yourselves, and the neighbouring enemies will crush you to the ground! My son Mojmír! I give you the royal crown! The Pope himself granted it to me. Svätopluk my son, you shall receive the dukedom of Nitra. Predslav, my son, chose to become a priest himself. That's my legacy! Dragomír, have my will draw up.  
DRAGOMÍR So be it! (Dragomír looks at Záboj in amazement, then at the King. Záboj throws himself at the king's feet, the king graciously motions to him)  
KING You are free, my Záboj! (Záboj kisses the king's hand gratefully, then retires to the background. There is silence for a while)  
SVÄTOPLUK II (comes forward) My father, and my king! I do not accept sharing!  
KING (astonished) What? What do you mean by that?  
SVÄTOPLUK II (comes closer) We are both your sons equally! We have borne the same burdens since our youth. Why should I be deprived now in the moment of division? Divide the empire in two!  
KING No! I won't allow that! I made my decision clear!



SVÄTOPLUK II That's how I get my sword right. I have already been promised help from the Hungarians!

MOJMÍR Prince, I warn you! You threaten your enemies in vain, I'll block your way with a weapon.

SVÄTOPLUK II Well just try it, brother! You shall never cross my path with a Methodist cross! (confronts his brother combatively)

KING (gets up in outrage) Poor, dissolute offspring! Even at this moment you cannot be united!? Listen to what awaits you! You will put our families into slavery! You will tear up the ground, what you plant, others will take away from you! Your language shall be that of a servant! Centuries far away you will be cursed! For the last time, please come to an agreement! (sits back in his chair, exhausted)

SVÄTOPLUK II I accept my share with one condition!

KING What conditions do you impose? What are they?

SVÄTOPLUK II Don't retract the verdict against Mojmir!

MOJMÍR You bastard! Are you waiting for my death?! Has the enemy blinded you with a promise, that you are willing to shed your own blood out of self-will, pride, and greed?

SVÄTOPLUK II Yes! If the court does not kill you, I will kill you myself! (the younger Svätöpluk attacks Mojmir with his sword, Mojmir draws

his sword and confronts him. Tight fight)

DRAGOMÍR Svätöpluk!

Mojmir! Unfortunate boys!

PREDSLAV For the love of the Saviour, stop!

THE PEOPLE Horror! Oh, my God! (Dragomír and Predslav attempt to split the combatants in vain)

THE PEOPLE People, oh, alas for us!

KING (stands up. Extremely outraged, he curses in a loud voice) Damn you! Perún will kill you! (the younger Svätöpluk and Mojmir freeze)

For a thousand years you will be slaves! Beggars without a motherland! (grabs his heart, falls helplessly into a chair)

(Dragomír and Predslav help him, horrified)

THE PEOPLE (desperately) Damned us, he has cursed us, oh, what a horror! (Svätöpluk II unexpectedly attacks Mojmir again. He knocks the sword out of his hand, he wants to strike the defenceless man down, but Milena jumps in front of Mojmir)

MILENA (catches the punch of Svätöpluk II, shouts) Yay! (sinks to the ground)

SVÄTOPLUK II (horrified that he stabbed a woman, he runs away)

MOJMÍR (kneels down to Milena, who sinks to the ground and lifts her head) Milena! Did he hurt you?!

MILENA No, Mojmir! I'm alright!  
I just won't hear the birds chirping  
anymore... I won't see the sun  
anymore... I won't smell the flowers...  
(increasingly more quiet) I'm sad...  
sad... but for you, Mojmir, I'll  
gratefully, gratefully die...(die)

MOJMIR (amazed) Did she die?

DRAGOMIR (who hitherto bowed  
over the king, turns his face to  
the people, majestic, but moved  
to tears)

The famous ruler, the great king  
Svätopluk died.

MOJMIR (cries out desperately)

Father! (throws himself on his  
father's body and weeps heavily)

THE PEOPLE Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Oh, dear!

ROMAN PRIESTS (responsive)

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison...

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison...

Miserere ei Deus secundum magnam  
misericordiam tuam...

THE PEOPLE Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Oh, dear!

PREDSLAV AND SOLDIERS OF  
MOJMIR'S TROOP (responsive)

Lord, have mercy on us! Jesus Christ  
have mercy on us! (together) Saviour  
of all peace, save us and hear our  
voices, O Lord. Grant us all, Lord, life  
and peace in the land.

Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy!

Lord have mercy!

THE PEOPLE Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Oh, dear!

MOJMIR (recovers. He puts  
Milena's body next to his  
father's corpse)

DRAGOMIR Mojmir! By your  
father's command, you shall take over  
the government of Great Moravia.

MOJMIR (holds his father's hand  
with one hand, the other resting on  
Milena's hand) I, Mojmir II! By the will  
of King Svätopluk, the ruler of Great  
Moravia, I swear by the death of my  
dear father and the death of this  
girl, both heroic and humble, to lead  
our empire in justice, in the spirit of  
the testament of love and unity of our  
great teachers from Thessalonica.

I want to rule as our famous kings  
have done! May the wisdom of  
Rastislav and the strength of  
Svätopluk be united in me. (pays  
tribute to the dead king)

THE CHOIR OF THE ROYAL COURT  
Peace be with you, King! May you find  
everlasting sleep where the discord  
of wars no longer disturbs your  
peace! Sleep, noble king! (the king  
is saluted by the dignitaries and all  
the people in turn)

(the corpse of the king is placed on  
a stretcher, eight men carry it high on  
their shoulders. After the king they  
take away the body of Milena)

(the procession walks slowly down  
the stairs. Everyone leaves the stage,  
only Záboj remains in the background)

THE CHOIR and THE PEOPLE Glory  
be to your great work! Wisdom to your

noble family! Wisdom to your noble family! (Záboj comes to the staircase) (the scene gradually fades to black)

(the procession disappeared)

ZÁBOJ (absently gazes after the procession. He comes slowly to the forefront of the stage. He covers his face with both hands - he stands motionless. He sinks to the ground, slowly lifting his face to the sky.

The scene is in twilight)

(quietly)

You have gone, my king, into eternity, cursing and unreconciled. But I believe that the people in this land will overcome your curse, and grow freely when the millennium is over and the time is fulfilled...

(Complete darkness)

(Záboj covers his face with his hands and cries softly)

The curtain comes down very slowly.

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