

## The Reformer

### SCENE

Mrs Measures. Here. You can help peel potatoes.

Daughter. I'm not feeling well.

Mrs Measures. It must have been the journey.

Daughter. Maybe.

Mrs Measures. Semester break is still before us.

Daughter. I've got reading week.

Mrs Measures. Missing your mother's kitchen?

Daughter. Can I do some washing?

Mrs Measures. I will put some water on to boil.

Daughter. I can do it.

Mrs Measures. The potatoes need peeling first.

Daughter. But I can do it myself.

Mrs Measures. There's nothing you need to hide from your mother, girl.

Daughter. I've got nothing to hide.

Mrs Measures. You're strangely silent.

Daughter. I am talking.

Mrs Measures. On your terms.

Daughter. What do you mean?

Mrs Measures. You think I am deaf or what?

Daughter. How do you mean?

Mrs Measures. In the bathroom this morning.

Daughter. Don't know what you mean.

Mrs Measures. All day yesterday.

Daughter. I told you I'm not feeling well.

Mrs Measures. I can smell it on you. Your aunts were the same. The same smell.

Daughter. What smell?

Mrs Measures. You have not had your cycle since the last time you were here I take it, because I noticed then – it was full-moon. How many weeks? That's why you're here, isn't it? I need to speak to the women. (They emerge from different places off-stage. They come to the table and sit around. They all bring food. It's plenty.)

Mrs Measures. She's pregnant. (There's a pause. The women get up and return to where they came from off-stage. Mrs Measures eats. They all return with different provisions. One of them is a jar of honey. The rest is 'medicine'. All the provisions pass through each pair of hands before ending up on the table. The end product is a jar of honey and a medicinal drink. Mrs Bunches brings on the honey. It ends up in Mrs Measures hands at the table. They all take it in turns to get a spoon of honey before they speak and suck on it gently.)

Mrs Lids. What's for lunch?

Mrs Measures. Rabbit.

Mrs Cobblers. First meat a baby eats.

Mrs Bunches. As delicate as a heel tap.

Mrs Cobblers. No less so than a rose.

Mrs Bunches. A thorn in your side.

Mrs Cobblers. You're a thorn in my side. A sin.

Mrs Bunches. Here. For food. (Hands over green stuff)

Mrs Measures. Thank you Bunches.

Mrs Cobblers. Angling for one yourself, Bunches?

Mrs Bunches. What's it to you?

Mrs Cobblers. Yeah, well, you know.

Mrs Measures. Here. Well, what is to be done?

Mrs Lids. You're not the first.

Mrs Cobblers. Neither will you be the last.

Mrs Measures. Drink this.

Mrs Bunches. (Scrapes opium off a flower) And eat this. Just put it inside your bottom lip, girl. Now go lie down. One of us will be with you in a short while.

Mrs Measures. And what!?

Mrs Cobblers. Nothing.

Mrs Lids. What does she say?

Mrs Measures. Hiding but not hiding. I would not be concerned if it were not for the fact of her hiding but not hiding. If the girl had the courage to come to me and tell me she was pregnant and wanted the baby I might think differently but she doesn't. Whether she wants to or not is of no matter to me now. If she can't tell me then I will do the telling for her.

Mrs Lids. Wants to what?

Mrs Measures. Have the baby. That's all. Just have the baby. She can't tell me what she wants to do I have to tell her what she wants to do so, so, she knows what to do.

Mrs Bunches. I do not know if I would have known what to do in her shoes.

Mrs Measures. Well, there are some of us who have walked her path before and we knew what to do.

Mrs Lids. Fuck, you can be indelicate at times!

*Stunned silence as Bunches and Cobblers look on.*

Mrs Cobblers. I don't know if I want to be made part of this.

Mrs Bunches. Me neither.

Mrs Measures. Well, at least you can both agree on one thing.

Mrs Lids. As delicate as a... - you're no better than that Mrs Short at times.

Mrs Measures. That perfidious whore does not know what she has coming.

Mrs Bunches. Shall we keep that to ourselves?

Mrs Measures. What? My rancour? You can can it for export for all I care.

Mrs Lids. Have you no care for your daughter?

Mrs Measures. She'll be out like a light by now.

Mrs Bunches. Or out with the vily.

Mrs Measures. Rusalka more like.

All three. Measures!

Mrs Measures. She's my child.

All three. Our children.

Mrs Measures. My daughter.

All three. Our daughter.

Mrs Measures. I am her mother.

All three. We are all her mother.

Mrs Cobblers. Here. Take this. She can hang it on a tree. (A ribbon)

Mrs Bunches. These she can place near the well.

Mrs Lids. And these, she can place next to the flowers. No more Rusalkas.

Mrs Bunches. For now.

Mrs Cobblers. No more talk at least.

Mrs Lids. But for our rusalkas.

Mrs Cobblers. There is much to do. (Leaving)

*All leave taking seemingly more with them than what they brought – each one of them.*

Mrs Bunches. I will be back in an while to look in.

### SCENE

*First Mrs Measures' daughter can be seen haning a ribbon on a tree branch. Next she lays the flowers and fruit next to the well. One after the other, ALL the women come to the well and do the same only in some cases instead of fruit a cake. Mrs Lids, Bunches and Cobblers leave. Remaining on the stage are Mrs Measures and her daughter in a loving embrace.*

### SCENE

Daughter. Why are you leaving?

Reformer. You only even wanted a fable, to make of me a fable, a fable you can hoard away in your fathomless soul, the seems of which will fray and come apart, will rot like one of your caskets in a wet grave, and not a body, but just some mush. I'll become a cloak of putrefaction in your creaking mortuary of memories. In your dead soul.

Daughter. Why do you need to say these things now? You have to say these things now. You tapped on the doors to my soul with kinder words than these, with tender smiles, tender eyes, many times. And you're right. I could not, and would not let you in, and if I did, it was only for the taste and not for a whole course. That would be foolish and you would be right there too because I can't know what will be, and despite some kind of love for you, I am not mine to give away for you. Where will you go?

Reformer. The University is/

Daughter. But your thesis!

Reformer. The committee said that a deferral is legitimate on account of my teaching in the regions.

Daughter. You won't finish.

Reformer. It's all incense and superstition. Nothing to push forward the cultural revolution. We must perform our part too.

Daughter. All that work.

Reformer. Assurances have been issued that there will be no obstacle to finishing and that the volunteering – it's practice. And anyway, the system itself needs reforming. The new committee has already begun to execute their plans for institutional reforms. As I am a casualty of the materiality of history, my defense is being re-evaluated.

Daughter. But I...,

Reformer. But what?

Daughter. So you did, then.

Reformer. How the committee will adjudicate I can't and don't want to guess. But because now I've been, but because of the secondment to the country-side to push for change, my defense is almost immune, and I am securing my boundaries in the new society. The rituals of the past: they're dead. Dead structures no longer require sub-mission.

Daughter. I am going to return to my town. My mother needs me. How long will you be away?

Reformer. Two years. Will I ever see you again?

Daughter. Hmm. (Pause. She walks away)

Reformer. Hmm. 'Maybe'. (He laughs. He walks in a different direction)

## SCENE

Priest. (Enters urgently) What's the matter now?

Digger. Says he's not dead.

Priest. Who says he's not dead?

Digger. The corpse. Aye, like. Says he's not dead.

Priest. Corpse can't say he's not dead because he's a corpse.

Digger. Well, the person thing that belongs to the corpse says the person says the person's not dead.

Priest. A corpse can't talk.

Digger. Ooff. Boss. Spurious

Digger. Spurious.

Digger. Been a matter of conjecture among us, like. At the peasant congress.

Priest. Corpses don't speak.

Digger. Well, in a manner of speaking/

Priest. /they do. They can't. OK, they do. They talk. But they don't speak.

Digger. Well the words that emanated from the body that is lying on the bed spoke/

Corpse. I'm not dead.

Priest. A body can't speak.

Corpse. I'm not dead.

Priest. Shut up.

Digger. A dead body can't speak.

Priest. That's what we mean.

Digger. But it's not what you said.

Priest. But it's what we mean – that a dead body can't speak.

Digger. And if that's true then this body still is a person.

Digger. I can speak.

Digger. And I can speak.

Priest. I can speak too, but I don't know if that makes you all persons in your cases, just because a person can speak.

Digger. A tad recriminatory! Bit harsh boss.

Priest. Well, you lot started it by saying this here corpse isn't dead on account of it's being able

to speak.

Digger. There you go again.

Corpse. I'm not dead.

Priest. Shut up, we're talking.

Digger. And we don't talk.

Corpse. And, I'm not dead.

Priest. Of course you're fucking dead. Shut up.... On account of the fact that this here body is in fact not dead but possesses only the appearance of being dead on account of the fact that it spoke to you claiming that it is not dead even when it is lying in state and rigormortis is setting in?

Digger. You mean a wake?

Priest. He's dead for God's sake.

Digger. Mixed metaphor of purpose there boss. And, we're not having you on.

Priest. The dead don't sleep.

Digger. But a person does.

Priest. I've told you, he's dead.

Digger. The person's dead.

Priest. Yes, the person's dead. A person who can't speak on account of their bodily functions no longer being in operation is technically dead.

Digger. Boss?

Priest. Yes.

Digger. Look!

Priest. Ah! Jesus, Mary, mother of God and all saints in heaven! What the hell are you doing up?

Corpse. I'm not dead.



Digger. That's what he said.

Priest. Why are you not... . I didn't even think that.

Digger. Yup, that's what he said.

Digger. Yup, that's what he said.

Corpse. That's what I said.

Priest. They did tell me, yes.

Digger. Yup

Digger. Yup

Digger. Yup

Digger. Yup

Priest. What are you doing up?

Corpse. Can't sleep.

Priest. Well, no. Course you can't. You're dead.

Corpse. Dead?

Priest. Dead.

Corpse. Dead dead?

Priest. Very dead.

Corpse. Is that why they're all dressed like that?

Priest. It's/

Corpse. I'm freezing.

Priest. That's because you're a corpse.

Corpse. Is it because I can't sleep?

Priest. You can't sleep because a corpse doesn't dream.

Corpse. Thought something was up.

Priest. Was that before or after you stopped living?

Corpse. Where's the difference?

Digger. Boss!

Priest. Subtle.

Digger. Good question.

Digger. Yup.

Digger. Yup.

Digger. Yup.

Priest. Yup.

Digger. Nice one, boss. How are we gonna solve this one?

Priest. You make it sound as if it's not a rare occurrence! Let me correct myself on that point. So how are we going to solve this one?

Digger. Don't mean for it to sound all..., you know?

Priest. I do.

Corpse. He does.

Digger. He does.

Priest. Dead man

Digger. What me?

Priest. No, not you. You.

Corpse. Yes, father.

Priest. That sounds so weird. Yeah, now look, dead man. Can you do some dead man acting?

Corpse. Dead man acting?

Priest. Dead man acting.

Corpse. All wooden and still like?

Digger. Aye, rigormortis.

Digger. Hey, hey.

Digger. All stiff like.

Priest. Not exactly what I had in mind. I was thinking of a far more subtler mind state.

Digger. Can wooden be subtle boss?

Priest. Like sleeping. Could you do sleeping, Dick?

Corpse. I can do that.

Digger. Dick Dead.

Digger. Dead Dick.

Priest. No snoring.

Corpse. No snoring. But what about dreaming. I'm afraid of dreaming.

Digger. Or sleepwalking.

Digger. Sleptalking.

Corpse. Yeah, like this. I can do sleepwalking.

Digger. No, no. Just sleeping. All you have to do is lie on the catafalque there, oofff.

Digger. That really is a nasty mess, eh boss?

Priest. I guess she must have meant it.

Corpse. Who?

Priest. Some things we just don't see coming, eh. Better that way. Dead man!

Corpse. Yes, father.

Priest. Do you believe in God?

Corpse. No, father.

Digger. Dead end, boss.

Digger. I'd wondered where this was going.

Priest. Do you believe in anything?

Corpse. Did I?

Priest. We're getting somewhere.

Corpse. Am I not supposed to be here?

Diggers All. Exactly.

Priest. Not quite.

Corpse. She didn't requite my love.

Priest. Neither could you requite hers, it appears.

Corpse. Pardon?

Priest. All sides.

Corpse. Not sure if I am ready yet.

Priest. Go on.

Corpse. Maybe I could sleep it over.

Priest. Great idea. Really. You'd never imagine this but, you're so well situated where you are just now to take up that idea that I would be loathe to deny you the chance.

Corpse. My head hurts. Or it did hurt. I thought it hurt. I remember thinking how intensely my head hurt until the hurt stopped. Quite pleasant. The stopping of the hurt. And that was that.  
Lights out.

Priest. Well, it's like that now. Lights out.

Corpse. Lights out? I can do that.

Priest. Of course you can.

Corpse. I'll do that.

Priest. Good man. Can I help you with anything, Dead Man?

Corpse. Will you observe the rites?

Priest. We'll have you in and out the right way round, don't you worry.

Digger. Boss!

Priest. Yes.

Digger. Trouble afoot.

Priest. Heavens above. Mr Short.

Corpse. I was dropping off.

Priest. Apologies.

Corpse. I am particular, father.

Priest. Get a move on. The fucker knows who he is again. Not that way!

Corpse. Everything alright there, father?

Priest. Just navigating a rather large rock here, Mr Shorts. Well done lads.

*They leave upstage right.*

## SCENE

**Funeral arrangements for one of the Big Men of the village are made. All the necessary pre-requisites are negotiated e.g. trousers, Cobblers, Bunches, coffin, cart. Coffin bearers. Food is brought in and laid on the table after each section of the \_\_\_\_\_ is completed. This builds up an on-stage picture of Renaissance kitchens with animals and**

**produce all over it. There have or are issues with the way in which the body is carried in to the room.**

**YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO HAVE Mrs Short' DAUGHTER IN THE SCENE. PROBABLY DOING MEYERHOLD ETUDES AS A FORM OF DUALING WITH MRS MEASURES DAUGHTER.**

Mrs Measures. It's a terrible day to have eyes.

Mrs Short. Thank you for the tea. (Cries her eyes out)

Mrs Measures. Would you like some food? Bring some food, will you. (Daughter goes to get food)

Mrs Short. (Ceases crying immediately) Oh, yes.

Mrs Measures. They'll be here shortly. With the body.

Mrs Short. (Cries again) Is it one of Nan's creations?

Mrs Measures. The body? No. We let her know as soon as you said you were coming.

Mrs Short. She's a wonderful cook. And not the body.

Mrs Measures. When she's standing. Here you go.

Mrs Short. Boiled ham?

Mrs Measures. Boiled ham. Some of your produce there too somewhere. Go get some pickled betroot for Mrs Short.

Mrs Short. She does those herself, too, does she? Always a bit of a treat to eat of Nancy's food.

Mrs Measures. So, as we were saying. He'll be needing a nice smart pair of trousers.

Mrs Short. The trousers?

Mrs Measures. Yes, trousers.

Mrs Short. Will anyone see the trousers when he's half in? Any meringues to go with that.

Mrs Measures. Go get some meringues.

Mrs Short. You needn't.

Mrs Measures. And bring some more potatoes. Would you like some more potatoes, Mrs Short?

Mrs Short. I'd love some more potatoes. These were warm.

Mrs Measures. Is it true then? We never had him in here for a fitting, but French chalk speaks of an unusual measure.

Mrs Short. You mean that thing?

Mrs Measures. That thing.

Mrs Short. Oh, that thing, yes.

Mrs Measures. Spoil you?

Mrs Short. Near ruined me.

Mrs Measures. Go fetch Mrs Bunches.

Mrs Short. She coming too?

Mrs Measures. They'll all here, somewhere. Want some more tea?

Mrs Short. A drop of 'the spirit' would go down nicely.

Mrs Bunches. Here you go, softly. (Entering with provisions. Pours Mrs Short a drink. Gestures to provisions)

Mrs Short. Nancy not coming out?

Mrs Measures. Thank you petal. On the table? No, she's not.

Mrs Bunches. Cobblers not here yet?

Mrs Measures. Not yet. Nancy's hard at it.

Mrs Bunches. Where's the body? Are they bringing it? How are you, Mrs Short, my love? You bearing up? Meringues are lovely, aren't they.

Mrs Short. How does she do that?

Mrs Bunches. Malt vinegar she says. We saw the windows closed, lovely. Sorry for your loss. But he was a bit of a prick.

Mrs Short. Well, he had a bit of a prick, yes.

Mrs Measures. We've just been over that.

Mrs Bunches. How sordid! He's dead.

Mrs Measures. Did you tell Mrs Cobblers she should shuffle her arse over here?

Mrs Short. She coming too?

Mrs Bunches. And what about the catafalque?

Mrs Cobblers. Mrs Lids is on the case so to speak. (Entering with provisions. Savoy cabbages. Bottle of spirit.)

Mrs Measures. Where did you sidle in from, Cobblers?

Mrs Cobblers. Been... . Don't even think about it you, blossom. And you Mrs Shorts – that's the last time. Here you go. Have a drop of this, too. Why?

Mrs Bunches. What particular arrangement has brought this on? (Mrs Lids enters)

Mrs Lids. Go configure. Did you send the catafalque?

Mrs Bunches. What's wrong with the catafalque?

Mrs Lids. Not the catafalque that's wrong. Hello, Mrs Short. Drink up. (Pours her another drink. Puts her bottle on the table) Talking of which. Just been to yours. Enjoy the spread. Here. Some onions, Mrs Measures. What is this? (Big sausage) In honour of your late husband Mrs Short. Nice and stiff was it?

Mrs Bunches. Here let's have a feel. Jesus, Mary and..., how the hell...? Try this for size Mrs Cobblers.

Mrs Cobblers. Heaven forbid!

All. Go on, go on.

Mrs Cobblers. It's a terrible day to have ears, you lot. (She gooses Mrs Lids)

Mrs Lids. Saucy bugger. They'll be here any..., (Enter diggers with body and Yardstick on the catafalque. Yardstick is eating.)

Mrs Measures. I can't....



Digger . Where were you? (Mrs Measures' daughter i.e. Digger 4)

Digger . You were supposed to be with us today.

Digger . There is something wrong with you.

Mrs Measures. (So as not to let Mrs Short hear) You fucking morons.

Diggers. What?

Mrs Short. What?

Mrs Lids. Great job. Let's have him up then. (Diggers tip up the catafalque)

Mrs Cobblers. We'll do his feet straight away. (Pulls down the trouser legs. Supports herself for a moment on the erection)What size?

Digger . Size 12.

Mrs Cobblers. There's some girth there.

Digger . (Whips the tape measure out from the feet with a flourish)

Mrs Lids. Let me have that, would you? (Takes the measure. Hangs it over the erection. Hands a note-pad to Digger. Measures him up for the coffin) Make a note of that.

Mrs Cobblers. Do you have a pair you'd like him to wear? I can finish..., give me back that last I gave you, whatever you have done with it, because I thought you were measuring him up for new soles, not for a soling.

Mrs Lids. Got a lovely bit of oak in the workshop.

Mrs Short. Bit extravagant.

Mrs Cobblers. Hm, hm.

Mrs Short. A veneer, then.

Diggers. Ooohh. Tricky.

Mrs Measures. Shut it you lot.

Diggers. Mrs Measures.

Mrs Measures. Pour Mrs Short another glass. (Her own daughter) That was his last?

Mrs Short. (Gestures her daughter) In a manner of speaking.

Mrs Measures. Bring the book. Stomach. Done? Waist. Done? Hip. Done? Outseam. Tape at the top of the waistband and down to the ankle. Inseam. Top of the crotch to the bottom of the ankle. Bottom. Now the rise. Crotch to belt.

Daughter. High rise.

Mrs Short. We can keep the jacket.

Mrs Measures. Open the book. Name of deceased. Mrs Bunches?

Mrs Short. (Nods to daughter who with each nod from mother, puts more sugar on the table.)  
Richard. Richard Short.

Mrs Measures. Write child. Time of death. (Mrs Short nods to daughter)

Mrs Lids. Afternoon, Mrs Measures. You were saying, Mrs Bunches.

Mrs Bunches. Afternoon, Mrs Lids.

Mrs Measures. Date of death. (Mrs Short nods to daughter)

Mrs Lids. Yesterday morning.

Mrs Measures. (Pause) Cause of death, Mrs Lids?

Mrs Lids. Just a moment, Mrs Measures. Mrs Bunches?

Mrs Bunches. Baroque, Mrs Short?

(Mrs Short joins daughter and puts all remaining sugar on the table. A lot of it.)

All except Mrs Measures. Natural causes.

Mrs Measures. Natural causes. Naturally. That concludes business. (Diggers take the book away. It needs to be carried by two of them)

Enter the Reformer. Hello. I was told I could get a room here. (All the Diggers except 4 swarm him and all of them perform gestures which tell him they have long penises. He is turned.)

Digger 4. Where are you from?

Reformer. The Capital.

Mrs Measures. Bring me the book.

Digger. We are anti-art.

Digger. We are pro-production.

Digger. Pro-work.

Digger. Pro-manufacture.

Digger. Pro-duction.

Digger. We are the new tools of the Designing machine.

Digger. And the Designing machine is the new technology of our times.

Digger. Our time.

Digger. Our time.

Digger. Is a system. We're not just one kind of tool

Digger. And we know we contradict ourselves when we talk about being one type.

Digger. We're not a plurality.

Digger. We're a Design.

Digger. And when we work, we are the Designed, our material the available Design, and our environment the Redesigned. You. You are a node in the technology of the redesigning of the Designed. You too are part of the Design.

Digger. Objectively.

Digger. Concretely.

Digger. In the killign fields of cultural production only that is concrete which is indissoluaubly linked with the general task of appropriating from the available Design.

Digger. Art is finished.

Digger. Art is...

Digger. A machinic fata morgana.

Digger. Once the arts were indispensable to the redesigned. Today they no longer exist in isolation. They have already been rescued from isolation by the cultural appropriation machinic assemblage of the material nodal mind.

Mrs Measures. (Slaps the last speaker across the head) We need to register you. Name.

Reformer. Le Blanc.

Mrs Bunches. Length of stay? (Girls tease him sexually)

Reformer. Infinite. Indefinite. (Corrects himself)

Mrs Measures. Occupation?

Reformer. Reformer.

Mrs Measures. I didn't hear that. (Noise from the kitchen)

Mrs Lids. Oh, hell, Nan.

Reformer. 'Reformer'.

Mrs Cobblers. Oh, no. (Nan takes a few steps onto the stage upstage. A few pots and pans clatter percussively as she walks through them. And she falls flat on her face).

Mrs Lids. Bugger.

Mrs Measures. Mrs Short. That is a very generous offer. Mrs Lids.

Mrs Lids. Girls, ladies. Some preserves for Mrs Short. (Mrs Short and her daughter are overloaded with preserves)

Mrs Short. We can't possibly eat all that. And anyway, what will we do with such a gift if we've got so much?

Mrs Lids. Another bottle, Mrs Short. Please be our guest. Girls. Help Mrs Short.

Mrs Measures. Mr Le Blanc. Preserves, Mrs Short. Your preserves.

Reformer. Yes?

Mrs Measures. This way please. I will show you to your room. Just leave mine with the book.

Mrs Lids. Bunches! Would you?

Mrs Bunches. Let me see you to the door, Mrs Shorts. (They exit. Mrs Bunches daughter takes their share of sugar and cabbage and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_)

Mrs Lids. Thank you Yardstick. (Mr Short's erection recedes and Yardstick emerges with a broom stick.) Help me push the catafalque to the cold room.

Mrs Cobblers. Bunches!

Mrs Bunches. Cobblers.

Mrs Cobblers. Cunt. Children! (Everyone leaves at once leaving Nan sleeping on the stage and Mrs Measures' provisions on the table)

## SCENE

*Proclamation of the secularisation of funeral practices.*

Yardstick is washing in a Duchamp fountain. The Diggers arrive and all give Yardstick food and an object from their respective cottage industries.

Digger . Comrade. I'm not sure I get why it is you feel it necessary at this time in our history to suddenly want to reform all our work practices.

Digger . Neither do I.

Digger . Nor me.

Digger . Nor me.

Digger . Me neither.

Reformer. As you all know, what we are saying is that our project to reform funeral practices is your chance to curtail the influence of the institution over your everyday practices. We want to use this opportunity to give you the chance to level up, to be a new person with new values by

changing everyday practices.

Digger . What about my bonus?

Digger . Cur-Tell us that.

Reformer. Our reform of funereal practices is designed to/

Digger . (Do you know how long it's taken him) to work his way up to the path you're on? Years of back-breaking work.

Digger . Watch out the boss is coming.

Digger . How do you know?

Reformer. How does he know?

Digger . hit a lay line.

Reformer. Hit a what?

Digger . A lay line.

Digger . You can't 'hit' a lay line.

Digger . It's not like a lode or something.

Digger . But it can seam like it.

Reformer. Seem like it?

Digger . Seam like it, yeah.

Digger . Oh, yeah.

Reformer. Why can't I see/?

Digger . /new plot. It's a new build. Needs to accommodate who comes after; being of few means, but many mouths. That graveyard gullet will be licking its lips at the prospect of swallowing up this progenitor of capital - like some gannet of the clan whose site this is going to be.

Reformer. And what about you? Whose resting place are you digging up?

Digger . The/

Priest 1. / grave of our late hymnodist. It's his wife who is following him.

Digger . Sing to that. Father.

Digger . Father.

Digger . Father.

Digger . Father.

Digger . Father.

Reformer. Who are you?

Priest. Father.

Reformer. Whose father?

Digger . Our Father.

Reformer. Their father?

Priest. Their father. Your father.

Reformer. And you're their boss?

Priest. So to speak.

Reformer. I mean, you're in charge.

Priest. Can be. Could be.

Reformer. I'm glad you're here. You're the person I wanted to see.

Priest. Maybe. Are you sure?

Reformer. How do you mean?

Priest. Are you sure I'm the person you wanted to see?

Reformer. Are you in charge?

Priest. I might be.

Digger . Hmm.

Digger . Hmm.

Digger . Hmm.

Digger . Hmm.

Digger . Hmmm.

Reformer. What do you mean, you might be?

Priest. Did you ask them?

Reformer. Ask them what?

Priest. Who's in charge?

Reformer. Who's in charge here?

Priest. Who's in charge here?

Reformer. You're in charge here.

Priest. I'm in charge here.

Reformer. Yes, you're in charge here.

Priest. So what are you doing here?

Reformer. I've come to tell you about the reforms.

Priest. What reforms? I thought I was in charge here!

Diggers All. We thought you were in charge here.

Reformer. The funeral reforms.

Diggers All. Ooooooooooh.

Digger . On the level?



Reformer. Can't you help...

Digger . Help.

Digger . Heelp.

Digger . Heelp.

Digger . Heeeelp. (Emerges sat on a handle of a shovel)

Priest. I thought I was in charge here.

Reformer. Isn't that...? Is that regulation?

Digger 1. Is what regulation?

Digger 2. Sitting at work?

Reformer. No, the length of the tool?

Diggers All. Oooooohhh.

Priest. You did ask. Am I in charge or not?

Diggers. Did ask.

Priests. What you were saying?

Reformer. About what?

Priest. About reforms.

Diggers. Don't ask.

Reformer. Ah, yes. Well, we're trying to push forward a new way of living. It's called evidence based living. Scientific man.

Priest. Not in charge, then.

Digger 2. Scientific?

Digger 4. Where's the proof for that, then?

Reformer. And because of the current wartime conditions/

Digger 1. Tough.

Digger 2. Very tough.

Digger . Yup.

Digger . Yup.

Digger . Yup.

Priest. Go on.

Reformer. /and our new policy of raising standards so that we/

Digger 3. On the level?

Reformer. With whom?

Digger 1. Ooooh.

Reformer. No, no.

Digger 5. Ooohhh.

Reformer. I mean yes.

Digger 5. With us?

Reformer. With you, yes. Level with you.

Digger 1. Difficult job.

Digger 2. Difficult job.

Digger 3. Difficult job.

Digger 4. Difficult job.

Digger 5. Difficult job. Needs the long handle.

Digger 3. Hmmm.

Digger 2. Where's yard-stick?

Yardstick. You called?

Digger 1. Yardstick.

Yardstick. Yes.

Digger 1. Yardstick. What do you think?

Yardstick. About what?

Digger 5. About our current standards.

Yardstick. Your current standards?

Digger 1. Are you being cute with us?

Yardstick. Why would I be cute with you?

Digger 1. I can't get the measure of you.

Yardstick. What do you want?

Reformer. Me?

Yardstick. Yes, you.

Reformer. To raise standards.

Yardstick. Whose standards?

Reformer. Your standards.

Yardstick. My standards? What's the Father doing here?

Reformer. Their standards.

Yardstick. Their standards.

Priest. It's my parish.

Reformer. Ah, yes. Well/

Priest. Well what?

Yardstick. On the level?

Priest. For all the celestial beings' sake in this world, will you stop going on about being on a level. And yes, it's my parish.

Yardstick. On the level?

Priest. Aahhhhhh. Heaven relieve me of the company of this flatulent clown! Idiot.

Digger 5. What him?

Priest. Not him, no.

Digger 4. Get no, 'how's yer father' today, father?

DIGGERS ALL ENACT VULGARITIES SIMULATING SEXUAL ACTS

Digger 1. We'd like to interrupt this carnival to/

Priest. My mother would turn in her grave.

Digger 4. Don't speak too soon.

Priest. 'You're dead to me.'

Digger 1. Don't be like that, boss.

Digger 5. Sorry boss.

Digger 4. Sorry boss.

Digger 3. Sorry boss.

Digger 2. Sorry boss.

Priest. Not me-no, not you. My mother. You jerk-offs.

Digger 5. Thank God for that.

Priest. Ah, now you've got me all tangled up with...,

THERE'S A SIMULTANEITY OF DIALOGUE THAT ENSUES.

Reformer. Is it always like this?

Priest. Like what?

Reformer. Like that - like before. Your work culture?

Priest. Yardstick?

Yardstick. Yes, boss.

Priest. Yardstick, this is a question for you. Don't call me boss.

Yardstick. No, boss.

Priest. God help me.

Yardstick. And?

Reformer. Yes?

Yardstick. Your question.

Reformer. My question?

Yardstick. That's right.

Reformer. Is this/

Yardstick. Yes?

Reformer. Normal?

Yardstick. Hold on to this.

Reformer. What for?

Yardstick. I need to go.

Reformer. Go where?

*Yardstick squats behind a grave-stone. Sticks head out around the side and carries on the conversation.*

Yardstick. You were saying.

Reformer. I can't have a conversation with you like this.

Yardstick. Like what?

Reformer. This. You. Like. This.

Yardstick. But you are.

Reformer. Look, how do you know which plot you're going to work on?

Yardstick. I don't. 1?

Digger 1. Yes, Yardstick.

Yardstick. The choice of cemetery plot: the further away from the church or the entrance to the cemetery...

Digger 1. Oh, yes. Well as you can see, the further away from the church or entrance, the cheaper the graves.

Digger 5. And the poorer!

Digger 1. And the poorer, yes. All in keeping with the social standing of the newly lying. Mr Short's grave is here right up next to the church.

Reformer. Well, under our new scheme.

Digger 2. 'Scheme'!

Digger 4. 'Scheme'

Digger 3. Scheme.

Reformer. Reforms. Under the new reforms. The quality and quantity of funeral accessories, the scope of the procession, and the choice of the cemetery plot: all these things in under our reformist levelling policies will enshrine/

Digger 2. The enshrining of the civic. That's a bit of cross-cultural polination going on there.

Digger 1. Cultural mis-appropriation. Convene? (All are attentive) Is there a synthesis from an oxymoron?

Reformer. It's the same society! Anyway, the civic funeral that has long been awaited by all free-

thinking people like us...

Digger 1. Over my dead body.

Reformer. No longer will the cheapest funerals need to be sponsored by parish churches, mis-appropriating funds collected from top-rank ceremonies. This is a bold step towards equality. For too long there has been a monopoly on the provision of the performance of services for the dead.

Priest. Are you saying that you want to...

Digger 5. After your job, boss.

Digger 3. There'll be no more offerings.

Digger 4. No more bonus.

Digger 5. No more bonus. But what about the Friday sit-down share-out?

Digger 2. Mounds mown.

Digger 4. Stones cleaned.

Digger 5. Square feet dug.

Digger 1. Caskets kept intact.

Priest. Words uttered in solace?

Diggers all. Exploitation/Exploitation.

Reformer. We're streamlining the service.

Digger 5. Save the tears.

Reformer. There will be efficiencies and/

Digger 2. You can't enshrine the civic.

Digger 5. They'll be after the Bunches next.

Digger 2. Oxymoron.

Digger 5. Who me?

Digger 3. Not you.

Digger 2. You moron.

Reformer. In the space of the new reforms, no-one will be left out at funerals. Everyone will be able to participate. That's what our agenda is all about. Full participation.

Digger 1. Yeah. On the level. Boss! That's deadly. Boss. Did you know about this?

Priest. Swear to God. Not a whisper.

Digger 1. What about Mrs Measures?

Digger 3. Cobblers?

Digger 4. Bunches?

Digger 2. Lids?

Digger 5. Horse and carts?

Diggers. Our family businesses?

Digger 1. Mother's not going to be happy about this.

Digger 3. This is cobblers, mate.

Digger 5. Reforms putting the cart before the horse.

Digger 4. There's no resting on your laurels in this world, eh.

Digger 2. Sounds like the final nail in a casket, that, my friend.

All. Yardstick!

Yardstick. You summon.

All. What are we going to do without you?

Yardstick. With..., well, that was fucking quick. You lot didn't take long to acquiesce! What the hell have they got on you?

Digger 1. Good question.



Digger 2. Good question.

Digger 3. Good question.

Digger 4. Good question.

Digger 5. Good question.

Reformer. I need to be getting off. Need to find my way back to my digs. No-one could tell me how to...

Digger 4. Where are you/

All. Hmm,hmm (All silence 4)

Yardstick. Soft head.

Digger 4. What!

Yardstick. Take care!

Priest. Blessed be the poor in spirit.

Digger 5. Meak!

Digger 1. Weak.

Digger 3. Weak.

Digger 2. Weak.

Digger 5. Meak!

All except 4. Weak.

Yardstick. For they/

All Diggers. Shall acquire/appropriate the monkey on the back.

Yardstick. Who said 'appropriate'. You can't appropriate the monkey on the back.

Priest. Yardstick! Here we go again. ....

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## SCENE

Mrs Lids. Porridge brains!

Mrs Bunches. Like trying to have a fumble around naked on an oily leather sofa.

Mrs Cobblers. The nerve!

Mrs Bunches. I'll have a bite of that. Feed my disdain - and for what? What? Zimmer-frame tenderness? Perhaps I wasn't so audible. Maybe I can be heard now. Maybe. Just in case. Just in case, because I wouldn't want anyone not to be able to hear me.

Mrs Cobblers. The sensitive ones.

Mrs Bunches. Loves like a violin solo.

Mrs Cobblers. Drummers on oil drums.

Mrs Bunches. Crude little devils.

Mrs Lids. Little candles.

Mrs Bunches. Little Bunches.

Mrs Cobblers. Horrible.

Mrs Bunches. Squish little bunches.

Mrs Lids. Or prize them out.

Mrs Cobblers. Little perverts.

Mrs Lids. Little candles.

The Reformer. (Entering with Mrs Measures) You must have seen the cable. We were explicit.

It is all in the cable.

Mrs Measures. They want to make this world a warmer, brighter place? And what? Are we supposed to rush in and celebrate? What most people who are not in my position don't understand is one of the most overwhelming experiences of being where I am.

Mrs Lids. What do they want?

Mrs Measures. The Book! The Book is what they want.

Mrs Lids. Oh, do they. Hah! And we'll all join hands and freely sing and dance to celebrate the State that set us free. You! There are always more problems than you can possibly address.

Mrs Bunches. As if we were the lightest birds on wings. It's a disgrace.

Mrs Cobblers. As if the nightingale were back and for us he sings.

The Reformer. This is the historical nature of reform.

Mrs Bunches. He's a merry piper, this reformer. Waving around a cable!

Mrs Cobblers. Brought his magic flute to play for us: our freedom's youth?

Mrs Measures. He must have heard something encouraging from someone.

Mrs Cobblers. Happy is the road we march in joyous throngs. There is no reason to hand over the book to him.

Mrs Bunches. Only see how individual beauty shines when it is, when it is... I was away. I got it back-channel.

Mrs Cobblers. Knock knock. You heard?

Reformer. Freed by the state and free of all former wrongs. And your time has come. Your captors cast away. Today, you're free to leave. Chains exist no more. And to spite all jealous men, many of whom remain, your proud beauty glows.

Mrs Bunches. If ever we be soiled by some immodest glance. A paragraph of double talk.

Reformer. We wish to give the world a blossoming of Design. Our aim is to grasp the wisdom born of scientific knowledge.

Mrs Measures. I thought there was a legal requirement. To make our bliss expand and last forever thence. We take our punishment. You demand from us we hand over to you our Book, our livelihoods: cloth, shoes, flowers, wood, nails, garlands. And the arrangements: the grave diggers, the cart. The catafalque! He'll be after our home next!

Reformer. As I claim, this has been done administratively. And the father has agreed. As part of our new design. It is not in your interest to do this on legal grounds. There were two cables from the Presidium. You can't tell me you have not seen them.

Mrs Lids. What has he agreed?

Reformer. He told me he had informed you: that you already knew. It was in the cables.

Mrs Lids. Knew what?

Reformer. The reforms.

Mrs Measures. What reforms? This will have a devastating impact on us.

Reformer. It is in the cables: Standardised services for all citizens. No more paying for cemetery plots. Standardised funerals for all.

Mrs Bunches. Who says?

Reformer. There will be no more funeral ranks. There will be no more paying for processions. There will be no more arbitrary burial plot selection. There will be no more need to skim off top rank ceremonies to pay for the peasantry.

Mrs Bunches. This is major league stuff.

Mrs Lids. And we are going to lose big.

Mrs Cobblers. The new powers say they're going to help us.

Mrs Measures. Fuckwit. I don't care about their processes, I only care about the kids.

Mrs Lids. Procedures! I thought we'd hailed a blossoming of the arts.

Mrs Measures. No one has complained that this is aggression.

Mrs Bunches. The State reaches its arm into our communities – when was the last time we protested that? And then tells us knowledge is its goal, that there is no better path.

Mrs Measures. It cannot be that requisitioning our total services is for your employees to run in the name of reforms on their terms only?

Reformer. You have an obligation to the state now. Where we buy equipment from, whomever supplies it or not: I get no rake-off. But you, let me reiterate, have an obligation to figure out how

to serve your new administration. Should this fail to meet your grasp, you're all welcome to a stay at one of our luxurious State run holiday camps.

Mrs Measures. Bunches! Lids.! Cobblers! Please be so kind as to attend to business whilst I show the Reformer here out. (Walks outside with him) Turned out well, don't you think Mr Reformer?

Reformer. There's nothing like it - oxygenating the blood to stimulate dialogue, Mrs Measures.

Mrs Measures. Certainly helps to promote a perception of where one's scope begins and ends, don't you think, citizen Reformer.

Reformer. Most clearly, Citizen Measures. In broad sweeping strokes.

Mrs Measures. It appears we have a picture of how the scene really looks.

Reformer. Indeed. It is very encouraging. Apropos 'encouraging': We can have them mass printed.

Mrs Measures. What?

Reformer. The scene; at one of our cultural production factories. Your daughter can deliver at the end of her holiday? Alternatively, you hand me over the Book!

Mrs Measures. What do you need?

Reformer. We'll be through this backwater like dysentery on a spoon. (Slaps a pamphlet in her hand) Had these printed myself.

Mrs Measures. And you'll forgo the only ever chance you'll get of the marriage to my daughter you appear so ardently to desire.

Reformer. You misconstrue me.

Mrs Measures. You think she could hide anything from me?

Reformer. You must be mistaken.

Mrs Measures. Your re-education in the country, the waiver, the changes in the contents to her semester provisions, things she'd never been fond of. And of course, the pregnancy! You didn't know? You think I am going to bring up some little bastard from I don't fucking know where what? You little fucking prick. You think I hadn't noticed the change in mood since your arrival.

Reformer. I get ten per cent.

Mrs Measures. Perhaps I did.

Reformer. You can take that to press.

Mrs Measures. I'll send it to the printers. For now, we're done.

## SCENE

Dancer 1. They don't want to fuse the energies of art and design, they only want to drive a wedge between them both. That is what is going to happen in the long-run – you'll see. We'll all go back to the world of the beau-arts.

Dancer 2. The Redesign will split us open wide and we'll be left fighting for the new unity of art and technology.

Dancer 3. There'll be no more unity in the Redesign unless we take hold of the Available Design and re-configure a new technological landscape which incorporates the core of our Redesign. Already they want to replace the word 'studio' with 'institution'. We are the drivers of cultural production – the studios. The studios are the manufacturing workshops of cultural production. The institutionalisation of the studio will ossify our practice.

Dancer 4. Our existence as agents of cultural production is at risk of petrification. The arboreal canopy of our studio mind – it is now the architectural canopy of the technological mind – the redesigned mind of our new age is what will take this movement of ours forward.

Dancer. 3The existing pedagogy no longer works. It is no longer the pedagogy of our age. Our age is the age of technological revolution for which we need a revolutionary pedagogy. We no longer need an academic method. We need a revolutionary design pedagogy which will serve as a vehicle for venturing into the unknown. *(Clay's shapelessness and materiality taps into what psychologists call "embodied cognition," allowing one to depart from the familiar and make a cognitive jump, ultimately arriving at new forms. They were given assignments (written instructions) and were asked to translate these into form. Humans are conditioned to learn faster through social interaction. The notion of "performative soci-ality" used by archeologists for describing the evolutionary advances in material culture, perhaps applies to VKhUTEMAS as well.*

## SCENE

**Institutionalisation of equal services for all citizens by the soviets. Introduction of equal funerals for all. Ban on paying for cemetery plots**

Reformer. Yes! We are making politics out of corpses. We must bury them in public in order to assert their power. This is the significance we attribute to the body now it is dead.

Daughter. The calculations are incidental and incorrect. You haul them in – the all-encompassing, all-encompassing. Spread rumours so that the streets will be destroyed the next day. And we're like passers-by, confused in our legs, in the shadows of the wicked. Even the horses are now scared.

Reformer. Yet, you question our courage to make a performance of the dead. "Turning the dead into one of our theatricals"? What if your avant garde get hold of all that?

Daughter. There is a West wind when you kiss me.

Reformer. You will see the stage that will turn into a mausoleum. Who does not want to know what has happened to a loved one? Have you got no heart? We're carrying out exhumation from mass graves in order that we can inventory justice for the dead.

Daughter. And this is what you call political mourning? Your politics of corpses. You fancy yourselves as lion tamers in a very public circus.

Reformer. Justice for the dead.

Daughter. For purposes of inventory. Pah!

Reformer. The memorialisation of mass graves completes the process. Today we honour the workers who died in the struggle. Look, those clowns, they'll walk without fear over the dead. They won't cry over the corpses of the fallen. They won't stain ashes with a single tear. No hymns are needed for the dead, no tears.

Daughter. Grandmothers of my grandmothers, great-grandmothers, how many there were of you before me. How much they did spend on my flesh from ancient times to this day. A long, difficult, heavy staircase, many things, dark darkness – all of them – will not leave, will not disown. Whether I build, break, beat or love – with drops of sweat, blood drops, they grow into my will. When I become an old and boring and unloved wife to you- about what, so heart aches – you will not talk to me. There will be my question and your answer in my simple compliance: I will put my hands on children's heads with a cross.

Reformer. What do you want? Forgiveness? Forgiveness is hatred for what we loved. A tear of repentance? Sinning with me might relieve your sense of oppression, and regret for what is done might die, but, but your sin will not be forgiven. And your pity will not pass to what we could have done – but rather what you did not do. Look, I've only just returned from the mortuary at the hospital in Rehevsky.

Daughter. And is it as bad as people say?

Reformer. 150.

Daughter. 150?

Reformer. Lying partly on shelves and partly on the ground; right on the ground. On one

another across the entire barn area. It's a flagrant violation of the standards we have implemented to level up on the treatment of the dead. And this is far from unique. Our reforms have staved off economic collapse. We get no help from you.

Daughter. I have ridden to death in the last few years dozens of your questionnaires. The machinery of the soul is wearing itself out. We love less now. Reforms dare more. The splitting of everything. My..., our destruction. Then comes the day of amortisation of heart and soul in the books, the amortisation you dread most: To balance our posthumous accounts. Against the background of Rehevsky: the body as discharge and interest. Our penalty is living. Our compliance is your resurrection and immortality, darling. "But it needs a work ticket.!"

Reformer. Four increases in the costs of funeral services and in the price of all accessories related. Between 20 and 50 per cent. Do you know how scarce the variety of funeral accessories available in the warehouse of the communal department is now? We have two bureaus, and despite their smooth functioning, we can now only offer mousseline for shrouds. There is nothing else. Catafalques don't function because there's no horses to draw them. We have to ask for a carrier to take bodies to the cemetery. And you won't help. Your family won't do a thing.

THIS SCENE NEEDS EXPANDING.

### SCENE

Mrs Measures. I am sympathetic to your problems. I wouldn't want you to misconstrue my sentiments on this particular front.

Reformer. What is it that you want?

Mrs Measures. We are both pragmatic people, citizen.

Reformer. We should be expedient.

Mrs Measures. Are you enjoying your new accommodation in the home?

Reformer. It's very comfortable.

Mrs Measures. And the new hot water pump?

Reformer. Apparently, it was mounted the wrong way round.

Mrs Measures. Oh really.

Reformer. Your daughter is somewhat confused, let's say.

Mrs Measures. I will send someone round to fix it. Fucking workers!



Reformer. We would like to have children.

Mrs Measures. My cousin's daughter requires some occupation.

Reformer. I will change my name as part of the marriage to your daughter. I will take on your family name.

Mrs Measures. I wouldn't go so far as to do that.

Reformer. It's already been registered. In the Book.

Mrs Measures. She'll be a welcome addition to your department.

Reformer. I'll look forward to collaborating with her.

## SCENE

B=Beauraucrat

B1. Citizen.

B 2. Yes, citizen.

B 1. I have a death report from the notarial department. Who's responsible for issuing burial orders?

B2. Let's have a look.

B1. Here.

B2. Ah, yes, citizen. I've put in a purchase request for apparel, flowers and other accessories.

B1. Ah, citizen.

Reformer. (Shakes hands with B1 and B2. Tries to do the same with a Digger. He/she gives him the "fuck you". The women sit around playing cards). Morning.

B2. I was saying how I have put in a purchase request for funeral apparel.

Reformer. Has it been approved?

B1. Yes, I have a... . Can I approve it?

Reformer. Go ahead.

B1. It's approved.

B2. Thanks.

B1. Welcome.

B2. No issues.

B1. Citizen!

Reformer. Yes. How can I help?

B1. The workers. What about the workers?

Reformer. What about the workers?

B1. They're not doing anything.

Reformer. Why aren't you doing anything?

Digger. Waiting.

Reformer. He's waiting. Is there a PO?

B1. Have you issued a PO?

B2. For what?

B1. For the apparel.

B2. I'm on it.

B1. Why aren't they fighting?

Reformer. Who?

B1. Them.

Reformer. Them?

B1. Them.

Reformer. Where is it? Here. (Reads) "The Department for Funeral and Sanitary Arrangement hereby categorises all funeral-related jobs "Labour Conscription" and as such under the aforementioned requests kindly that all staff members of the department be considered enlisted in the military. Any workers in the latter category are forthwith contracted to the department and face sanctions if they try to leave."

B1. So why aren't they doing anything?

B2. Here's that purchase order.

Reformer. For the apparel?

B2. For the apparel.(Hands to Reformer)

B1. (Receiving it) Can I approve it?

Reformer. Approved.

B1. Approved.

B2. Thank you.

B1. Welcome.

B2. No issues.

B1. For fuck's sake.

Reformer. What?

B1. Nothing. What's this?

B2. A request.

Reformer. What for?

B1. For the transport.

Reformer. Have you told them?

B1. We told you to take care of the transport. Why aren't you taking care of the transport?

Digger. Is there a work-ticket?

Reformer. Is there a work-ticket?

B2. Here.

Reformer. What?

B2. A work-ticket.

B1. Is it approved?

Reformer. Approved.

B1. Go do your job.

Digger. Can't

Reformer. What do they mean they can't?

B1. What do you mean you can't?

Digger. The catafalque's not ours.

B1. The catafalque's not theirs.

Reformer. I heard.

Digger. Belongs to Mrs Measures.

Reformer. Fuck. I thought I told you to requisition it?

B2. Wasn't on the books.

Reformer. What?

B2. Wasn't on the books.

Reformer. Fuck! Bitch!

B2. Who me?

Reformer. Not you.

B2. I should report that.

Reformer. There's a political execution at 10. I should attend. Go get Mrs Measures.

B2. Mrs Measures. The Reformer would like to see you.

Mrs Measures. We're having tea, tell him.

B2. They're having tea.

Reformer. Mrs Measures. I need the catafalque.

Mrs Measures. Not in my scope.

Reformer. Then whose scope is it in?

Mrs Bunches. Mrs Lids.

Reformer. Where is she?

Mrs Cobblers. Passing water.

Reformer. Charming.

Mrs Lids. As always. What is it?

Mrs Cobblers. Needs the catafalque he says.

Mrs Lids. Dug the grave yet?

Mrs Cobblers. Dug the grave yet?

Reformer. Not yet.

Mrs Cobblers. You're gonna need labour.

Mrs Lids. He's gonna need a ticket.

Mrs Cobblers. Got a ticket?

Reformer. For the catafalque?

Mrs Bunches. For the grave.

Reformer. In earnest? Citizen.

B1. Citizen.

Reformer. Take care of this. I can't deal with these people.

B2. Here. The ticket for the labour.

B1. Approved?

Reformer. Approved.

Mrs Lids. Price has gone up?

Mrs Bunches. My price has gone up.

B1. Why can't she do this?

Reformer. She's taking care of the books. I've got to prepare.

B2. I have the report here.

Reformer. Thank you.

Mrs Lids. How many men do you want?

B1. How many do I need?

Mrs Lids. One per grave. If you want it done faster, two.

B1. This needs to be expedited.

Mrs Bunches. Need flowers?

Mrs Lids. Then two. This is the rate.

B1. Yes, flowers. We need two men.

Reformer. Why two?

B1. Needs to be expedited.

Reformer. You get one.

B1. But it's for an/

Reformer. How much? What did we give them last time?

B2. This much.

Reformer. They had this much last time. Hmm. (Shows her) They had this much last time. (B2 puts his cloak on him. Goes back to table)

B1. It's twice that now.

Reformer. Push them hard. It's all running out, but don't tell them.

B1. And the flowers? That too?

Reformer. Everything. And when you've finished, give citizen the receipts. Here.

B1. What's this?

Reformer. Your limit. I have a political execution to attend. Keep an eye on her.

B1. Will do.

Reformer. (Leaving) Citizen!

B1. Yes, citizen.

Reformer. Did you forget something?

B1. I don't think so.

Reformer. Think harder.

B1. I'm trying.

Reformer. Try harder.

B1. But what?

Reformer. It has wheels.

B1. The catafalque!

Reformer. Citizen will give you the details.

B1. How many people?

Reformer. Don't forget about the horse.

## SCENE

On the catafalque, Yardstick is fast asleep, surrounded by bottles, cabbages, and a huge hambone gnawed to the bone.

## SCENE

Upstage centre a half-naked female statue facing stage right holds a flag aloft. The flag is long and reaches off-stage left. It flutters.

Upstage right enter 4 civilians bearing a coffin A train carrying soldiers arrives at the same time. 4 soldiers join the citizens to become coffin bearers.

Soldier 1. Where are you going citizen.

Cit 1. To the town square.

Soldier 2. We'll help you.

Cit 2. Aren't you tired from your journey?

Soldier 3. We commandeered the train.

Soldier 4. He was an train driver.

Cit 4. You can take my place.

Soldier 2. I can't take your place, citizen, neither you mine. Where would we be without each other?

Woman. (Enters stage left) Hah! Obviously they're telling you they are fighting for your liberty, but they are carrying guns, and even machine guns. What kind of liberty is this, then?

Cit 1. Don't worry. We won't let any bastard discredit your honour.

Sol 4. Our honour!

Cit 2. Where is home comrade?

Soldier 3. I lost it in the restructuring.

Cit 3. You/

Cit 2. This will not be the last act of conveyancing today. I know where she lives. And where what her name is on the cadastre. Here we are.(Set coffin down)

Soldier 1. I can't.

Soldier 2. Yes, you can.

Soldier 3. Yes.

Soldier 4. And you will.

Corpse. (Getting out of the coffin) Fuck this. You.

Statue. Who me?

Corpse. Yes, you. (Takes off shirt so it hangs from trousers.) Get off. That's my plinth.

Statue. The fuck it is.

Corpse. Get off there.

Statue. Get me off here.

Corpse. Give me that.

Statue. It's mine. Fuck off.

Corpse. Give it me.

Statue. Fuck off.

Citizens. Hmm, hmm.

Corpe. (Pulls at the flag, which pulls the statue off. She's caught by the rest.)

Statue. Assholes. (Exits stage left)

The rest of the group re-enact an historical photo/image, idea of an image, from the French revolution.

### SCENE

Priest. Look, that asshole is coming to inspect the work tomorrow.

Digger 1. Did you hear about the public execution?

Digger 3. These aren't for one of those, are they?

Priest. No. But still. Talk about digging a grave for oneself, boys.

Digger 2. Where is Yardstick?

SILENCE

Priest. I don't know. We... . No-one has seen him for a while now. He was here, and then he was gone. Just like that. Disappeared.

Digger 2. How am I supposed to pay tribute, boss?

Digger 3. And me.

Digger 1. And me.

Priest. The regime call my church degenerate, boys.

Digger 1. There always used to be bonus, boss.



Priest. I'm sorry boys.

Digger 1. We too, boss. But go on. You were saying.

Priest. They took all the art. All of it.

Digger 3. Burn it or what?

Priest. No. No. That's just it. Uncanny. It's all locked up in the morgue.

Digger 1. Strange place to hoard your loot.

Digger 3. And to think that the mind these paintings painted has been put into cold storage. You don't seem to have so much time for us of late, boss.

Priest. I don't know how to say thanks. Really, I don't. I need you to do one last thing for me before that fucker marries himself into the parish. I want you to eat these.

Digger 1. Oh, no, really!

Digger 3. What is it?

Digger 2. I'm not looking forward to this. You don't seem to have much time for us of late, Boss.

Priest. I'm taken up with other duties just now.

Diggers . Boss.

Priest. Eat up. He'll be here soon.

Digger 2. How are you to absolve us of our misdeeds?

Priest. Who is to say they are misdeeds in this juncture of time?

Digger 2. Boss. We need to convene.

Priest. Do I have a say in this? A synod.

Digger 3. The synod.

Priest. Don't answer that. I'll be back now.

Digger 1. Don't look good.

ALL. It's of your making.

Dig 4. He's got the gloves.

ALL. Hedging gloves.

Dig 2. Gloves on.

Dig 3. Gloves on.

Dig 1. Gloves on.

Dig 4. I don't want to fight.

All. Cmon. It'll be fun. Enjoy it.

Dig 4. You can't hit a priest

ALL. You'll soon find out. Watch out. He's got the gloves on.

Dig 3. The cassocks's off.

Priest. 3 rounds.

Dig 4. I'm really not sure about this.

Priest. Is he ready.

ALL. Ready. Fight.

Dig 4. I don't want to fight.

ALL. Fight.

Dig 4. I told you, I don't want to fight.

Priest. You've got to fight. (Punches him on the nose)

Dig 4. You hit me.

Priest. Protect yourself at all times.

Dig 4. But I wasn't ready.

ALL. Eh. Digger 4!

Dig 4. What?

ALL. Watch this?

Priest slaps him round the back of the head with a glove.

Priest. End of round one.

Dig 1. Drink boss.

Priest. Thirsty work.

Dig 2. 4?

Dig 4. Not thirsty.

Priest. Sulking.

Dig 2. Hungry boss?

Priest. Famished.

Dig 1. Been fasting boss?

Priest. Busy.

Dig 1. No food on the table?

Priest. Bloody reforms.

Dig 2. Kids alright boss?

Priest. (Stuffs himself) There's another one on the way.

Dig 1. Been super busy, boss.

Priest. Saucy so and so. Round 2. (Priest gets up and shakes himself off) Let's see if we can beat some sense out of this miserable little creature.

Dig 3. Careful boss. You'll have to submit a retraction. Who knows who he's in bed with.

Priest. You've dropped your guard.

Dig 4. Where?

Priest. There. (Twats him over the head.K.O..)

ALL. Let's go. (They catch him as he's falling just off the ground, though. They upright him. Splash him with water. Fan him with a towel. Put an orange peel in his mouth. 4 protests. All nod. 4 protests. All nod. Meanwhile, priest has been writing a sermon)

Dig 1. You never rest boss.

Priest. Need to explain these reforms to the parish in God's terms.

Dig 3. Oohh.

Dig 2. Tricky.

Dig 1. Tricky.

(4 is in the ring. An abject figure.)

Priest. Oh, Jesus.

Dig 4. Can I just... . (Takes orange out. Other are all reading the sermon) Oh, for Christ's sake!

Priest. That's the spirit. (Gets ready.) Defend yourself.

ALL. You can do it. (4 struggles against himself to put in his mouth guard and get his hands up to defend himself. He does and..)

ALL. Yey! (4 Turns to ALL and smiles. He gets sucker punched. They have to catch him

again.)

Dig 1. Oh, boss. Cmon. That was not in good faith.

Priest. Not exactly. It was an object lesson in bad faith performed in good faith.

Dig 2. He's sly.

Dig 3. Slippery.

Dig 2. As an eel.(They carry 4 to the catafalque)

Priest. Is 4 alright?

Dig 2. Not come to, yet.

Dig 1. Let's not slap him.

Dig 3. Been twatted enough for today.

Dig 1. Boss man.

Priest. Yes son.

Dig 1. Are they going to requisition the catafalque?

Priest. You know they have the Book now.

Dig. 2. The ledger?

Priest. Yup.

Dig 1. Jesus.

Priest. You said it.

Dig 3. We made moderations.

Priest. To the ledger?

Dig 1. No, the catafalque. Before the reforms. You know. When the work was ours still.

Priest. Show me what you've got then.

THEY TIP THE CART UP. THE VEIL BECOMES A CURTAIN. VOILA. A THEATRE.

Priest. Come and sit here, 4.

Dig 4. If the dead could speak, what would they say?

Priest. You left these two goons in charge of funeral arrangements.

Dig 1. Mr Yakubovic takes the stage. It's 1919 this instant. The war, a society in transition, and the ongoing creation of a new citizen with new values: we're in the midst of a revolutionary experiment. It is the history of participation. Come in. What is it?

Dig 2. We have a crisis on our hands.

Dig 1. Tell me.

Dig 2. The weather, Anatoly. The humidity. There's an epidemic spreading along the railroad. The soldiers returning. It's rife with typhus. Being brought back from the front. People are dying from cholera and dysentery everywhere.

Dig 1. And what are you doing about it?

Dig 2. We have a crisis on our hands, Comrade Yakubovitch. I've just returned from visiting the mortuary. You can't possibly imagine how I found it.

Dig 1. You'd be correct in that assumption.

Dig 2. I'm in character. Komrade. The telephone.

Dig 1. Hello. Hello.

Dig 2. Hello.

Dig 1. Hello.

Priest. You can't get the people any more.

Dig 3. Labour conscription, boss.

Priest. On the level?

Dig 3. All 'enlisted' now.

Priest. I missed that.

Dig 1. What do you mean the last remaining catafalque?

Dig 2. There aren't any more catafalques. They're now extinct.

Dig 1. Halfwit.

Dig 3. Comrade. Reporting for duty.

Dig 1. How long have you known about the catafalques?

Dig 3. The last remaining catafalque?

Dig 1. The last remaining catafalque.

Dig 3. We're experiencing wider issues.

Dig 1. If I don't do something to deal with the rising numbers of bodies mounting up, this will be seen as a gigantic failure of the new relations.

Dig 3. The conscripts are hard at work in the cemeteries. How will we manage without our own?

Dig 2. Comrades.

Dig 3. It's our colleague from the neighbouring presidium.

Dig 1. What is it, colleague?

Dig 2. We need your catafalque.

Dig 3. Do you have a ticket?

Dig 2. A ticket?

Dig 3. A work ticket?

Dig 2. A work ticket.

Dig 3. We have no job ticket open requesting the requisition of our catafalque. And that is bad luck because if you want to sequestrate our property/

Dig 1. Commandeer.

Dig 3. Speak for yourself.

Dig 2. Despises polysyllabic labour.

Dig 1. I belong in that category, I would say.

THE STAGE SEPARATES LIKE A WALTZER. THE CATAFALQUE TURNS IN ONE DIRECTION. AROUND IT AN OUTER CIRCLE TURNS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION TILL BOTH ARE BACK IN THE SAME PLACE.

Dig 2. Can't afford the principle?

Dig 1. I'll be hanged.

Dig 3. No need for a ticket for that.

Priest. You must keep this for yourselves. I include myself in that. Or we will be hanged. Company.

Reformer. Good to see progress is being made.

Priest. Hello, my son. Are you ready for the wedding?

Reformer. Ah. That. Yes. Marriage.

Priest. Yes. Marriage.

Reformer. They are insistent. The family.

Priest. Can't quite get rid of us, yet. We were fully taken by surprise when we received the work-ticket for this job. We had no idea.

Reformer. These are my former comrades.

Priest. We'll/

Dig 1. Boss!

Priest. What is it?

Dig 1. The job. It's pressing boss.

Dig 2. Hard boss.

Reformer. Are the men alright. Comrades. Are you/

Dig 3. Merely desire to honour your comrades.

Priest. The urgency is a measure of the hope we carry into the work. (Gently manoeuvres the Reformer back to where he came from)

Reformer. Our hope is for the lifting of sanctions, to see our industries develop quickly again. Presently, we're handicapped by the lack of machinery and skilled labour. But the peasants are backward and deeply imbued with petty bourgeois spirit. They hoard their surplus so that we are compelled to resort to requisitioning. This is an unpleasant system forced upon us by the times.

Priest. I see.

AWKWARD PAUSE. THE MEN SQUIRM ALMOST INDECEPTIBLY.

Priest. Would you like me to bless you my son?

Reformer. Ah. No. No, thanks. That won't be necessary. But perhaps you'll keep my blessings and distribute them more equitably in future.

Priest. Of course. Of course. Noted, citizen. Duly noted.

Reformer. My work never ceases, citizen. (He tucks a belt with a buckle into his bag and takes a look at the cat's tail the priest is surreptitiously tucking into his bag.)

Priest. Citizen. ( He leaves)

Priest. Not yet.

Dig 3. Is he coming back.

Priest. Don't think so.

Dig 1. He'd be back by now.

Dig 2. Cruel bastard. (All crawl to the edge of the grave on their hands and knees moaning)

Priest. And now.

Diggers ALL. Ahhh. (They drop their pants and all experience dreadful diarrhea

defecating into the grave. The priest takes a dead cat out of his bag and nails cat to a cross. Two and Three pass out.)

Priest. Boys! Boys? Alright son?

Dig 1 is making noises, is simulating.

Priest. One? One!

Dig 1. I couldn't boss. Last time I thought I was going to die.

Priest. It's alright one. Help me get them out of here. Up onto the catafalque then. And, yup. You can push them home as a punishment. I've got a wedding to attend to. They'll be alright once they've slept it off.

Dig 1 leaves the stage.

Priest. No, no, no, no, no.

## SCENE

Reformer. I didn't know you were both friends. Of course.

Peasant. It's our only horse. How are we to plough our field to plant potatoes?

Reformer. You will be... . See this?

Peasant. Yes.

B1. I didn't know you were getting married.

Reformer. This is a written obligation. It's proof of our good faith. This is a government bond. The reforms need ambitious people.

B1. Who said I was ambitious?

Reformer. Aren't you?

Peasant. But what about the harvest? Potatoes will be left in the ground.

B1. But, you're getting married.

Reformer. I don't understand.

Peasant. What is not to understand?



Reformer. Not you.

B1. The catafalque?

Reformer. Written obligation that the government is in good faith. Those papers will be honoured as soon as the crisis is over.

Reformer. I should be at the cemetery already.

B1. I want your... . I want your child.

Reformer. You see. Here. The stamp is official. See here. Here is the date. That's when the government will make good its obligation to you.

Peasant. But I need my horse.

Reformer. And I need reform. (To B1) Some people still manage to avoid arrest for conspiracy. But rest assured, we know they are still plotting. You can't be sentimental. I remember how hard it was for me when I arrested my best friend. Yes, with my own hands. (Peasant leaves) But what will you? The reforms impose stern duties on us. We can't afford... . We cannot allow ourselves to become sentimental.

B1. I want your child.

## SCENE

Mrs Measures is doing the finishing touches to her daughter's dress.

Mrs Measures. You will do well.

Daughter. I hope so.

Mrs Measures. It would have been preferable to have had this earlier perhaps?

Daughter. Mother, dear. Your persistence in your application of force has not gone unnoticed. Why all these ends towards securing my compliance?

Mrs Measures. We have to utilize every resource.

Daughter. I am aware of how much you try to hide your hand in our affairs.

Mrs Measures. You must learn.

Daughter. I gave up a child for you. I don't even know if I can have children now.

Mrs Measures. What do you mean?

Daughter. I stopped having my period.

Mrs Measures. When?

Daughter. Ages ago.

Mrs Measures. You didn't say.

Daughter. You didn't ask.

Mrs Measure. Why would I have?

Daughter. You were stopping too.

Mrs Measures. And to think I did not notice.

Daughter. My presence. How to say... . You seemed... . The make-up, the new look. New clothes.

Mrs Measures. You seemed to lose interest in your movement.

Daughter. I couldn't understand your apparent abandon. And we are so short on everything. All are short. It made me feel awkward and mistrusted.

Mrs Measures. So long as it doesn't cost anything.

Daughter. But we had so much. You..., not even I knew where the new cloth came from . It brought shame on me.

Mrs Measures. Most of them only work when it is necessary for them to do so. This is something your future husband understands well. When the working class are poor, they remain obedient to authority. He is slick.

Daughter. I think I have the measure of him.

Mrs Measures. I should hope you do if you so much want to marry him. Drink this.

Daughter. I wasn't sure I did. What is it?

Mrs Measures. Medicine.

Daughter. I was surprised he asked.

Mrs Measures. He's clever. Subtle.

Daughter. It's my cousin I need to watch out for.

Mrs Measures. She's your best friend.

Daughter. She's living in that place left to her by my aunt.

Mrs Measures. Do you know how she got it?

Daughter. No.

Mrs Measures. It was supposed to be mine, and our grandmother gave it to me, but we

had enough. I had enough, so I gave it to her and said she could live in it. Because you will have the funeral home.

Daughter. How will I have the funeral home?

Mrs Measures. You will have it when they hand it to him and thereby return it to us.

Daughter. But they've requisitioned it.

Mrs Measures. You take care of the books.

Daughter. Yes. I do.

Mrs Measures. You can kill two birds with one stone. You won't want for anything. Mrs Short's tributes will do justice for some time to come.

Daughter. They are the preserve of the family now.

Mrs Measures. I will talk to your cousin.

## SCENE

The Wedding Ceremony.

Priest. My apologies. I was just saying goodbye to my wife and children.

Reformer. They're leaving?

Priest. No, no. Just a short weekend holiday, you know.

Reformer. Well, we wouldn't want to see them get caught up in affairs – what with the war going on.

Priest. No, indeed. They need some respite from the woes of this world just now.

Reformer. Going far?

Priest. Not at all. Just to the lakes.

Reformer. Well, that's nice for you, I imagine.

Priest. Do you have everything you need to pay your bride-wealth? Well, let's go.

They circle the stage to arrive at the bride's doorstep.

Reformer. Knock knock.

Mrs Measures. What is it?

Reformer. I have come for my bride?

Mrs Measures. Child. There is a man here says he has come to take you off to be his wife.

Daughter. Him? He doesn't have enough!

Mrs Measures. She says you don't have enough.

Reformer. This is not enough?

Mrs Measures. It's a mere gambit.

Reformer. And this, too.

Mrs Measures. He'll have to do better than this.

Daughter. Can't you do better?

Reformer. Can I do better?

Priest. You'll have to do better.

Reformer. Here. Take this. But there is not more. I can't give you more.

Daughter. What do you mean there is no more? You can't come here and expect to take me as your wife with such an excuse.

Mrs Measures. And how am I supposed to survive without my daughter on what you're giving?

Reformer. Well, maybe I have something else here in my trousers somewhere but I don't know where exactly.

Daughter. I don't know why you're taking so long about it all.

Reformer. Just one moment. I know for sure I have it here, because I put it there all myself. So you'll just have to wait for a few moments until I find it again because I am sure you wouldn't want to miss out on this because it will pay for a new house for us.

Mrs Measures. But we don't need such an expense on account of us.

Daughter. Yes we do!

Reformer. Here you are.

Priest. Then perhaps we can leave, and conduct the rest of the marriage at the church.

*The couple follow the priest around the stage in a circle twice. Two friends hold crowns over the couple's heads. The Priest stops upstage right. From here he begins the church ceremony. He blesses the Daughter and the Reformer. He turns and the Priest goes behind orthodox church frame, but out comes Yardstick in a suit. Yardstick*

*conducts the rest of the marriage.*

Yardstick. I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment why I Joseph Measures may not be joined in matrimony to Tamara Measures.

Daughter. I call upon these persons here present to witness that I Tamara Measures do take thee Boris Measures to be my lawful wedded husband. I promise to care for you, to give you my love and friendship and to respect you and cherish you throughout the rest of our lives together.

The Reformer. I call upon these persons here present to witness that I Boris Measures do take thee Tamara Measures to be my lawful wedded wife. I promise to care for you, to give you my love and friendship and to respect you and cherish you throughout the rest of our lives together.

Yardstick. You may kiss the bride. *(They kiss. The crowns have already been taken down. The bride and the groom lead everyone off the stage, stage left.)*

The stage is by now empty of people. There is no-one left, not even behind the screen doors of the orthodox church set used in the marriage ceremony.

The Reformer. (To the audience) You can leave now.

END

