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An Excerpt from the 2nd Act of CURRICULUM VITAE (A comical tragedy in two acts)

ANATOLIJUS KAIRYS

CHARACTERS

Svajūnas, a political refugee

Svajūnė, his wife,

Messenger Clerk

Lady in Black,

A Boy,

A Girl,

Voice from Audience.

Statists, male and female.

Time — the Present

Place — New York or a gathering place of the world's boot - blacks.

SVAJŪNĖ:

At last we shall have a room to ourselves! After so many years!

SVAJŪNAS:

If only he will understand our situation.

SVAJŪNĖ:

I have no doubts concerning this.

SVAJŪNAS:

And if he is so busy, how can we explain everything to him? Briefly! What can we tell him briefly?

SVAJŪNĖ:

Wouldn't it be better to express all our wishes in writing? What do you think about it, Svajūnas dear?

SVAJŪNAS:

In writing? Perhaps it would be better so.

SVAJŪNĖ:

And more comprehensible. He'll not forget it so soon. Principals are apt to change, and the memory of people is short. Let's write down a request to him?

SVAJŪNAS:

Would not a petition be better?

SVAJŪNĖ:

Or perhaps a resolution?

SVAJŪNAS:
A memorandum!

SVAJŪNĒ:
Pro memorial

SVAJŪNAS:
Curriculum vitae!

SVAJŪNĒ:
Curriculum vitae? Splendid! Let's set down our whole life in black and white.

SVAJŪNAS:
From Adam and Eve. No harm in that. Let all be known!

SVAJŪNĒ:
What a life!

SVAJŪNAS:
Unique! Down to work. You start writing while I change. (*Passes beyond the yellow wall*).

SVAJŪNĒ:
(*Writing in air*) We'll write it all up. Make diagrams. Engravings, too. In three colors. Then we'll frame it. Adorn it with hand woven sashes. The Life of an Exile! Curriculum vitae of an exile! Sacred! (*Ecstatic pause*) Now let us pray, all together...

A PRAYER

Oh, Sacred Statue, composed of two hundred twenty five tons of fine copper, bring to sense my life of tramping.

Have me dressed in clothes which neither heat nor freeze me. Still my hunger from empty vessels. Quench my thirst from empty glasses. Let me fall asleep on railroad tracks.

May I understand my friends, and when I don't — may I call them foes of mine and Thine.

May I never get to be lost, and if I do, never to return, as life can only once be lived.

Let me love reality, as what would truth become, knew I not how to lie?

I'm guilty, as I love myself much more than you, the same myself I do revere. May hanged I be by my feet, not head, so that my heart when close to earth should better sense what damage idealism brings in fighting for ideals of men. (*A pause, as her ecstasy vanishes*) Svajūnas? (*Searching about*) Now you continue the curriculum vitae.

(She disappears around the right edge of the low wall, while Svajūnas comes running in around its left corner; he is conservatively dressed and looks about ten years older. He is carrying a placard on which the Statue of Liberty is drawn, head downward. Excited about some message, he directly confronts the audience...)

SVAJŪNAS:

Well, now everything is going to be right! I have received a message. Though at the very last moment, still I got it. A letter from my brother! With our shoulders put together, o-oh! (*Produces his letter*) Yes, the answer to my request. From my dearest brother! (*Reading aloud*)

My dear brothers and sisters! (*To the audience*) Some words! these! You feel it with the first sentence that the heart is in the writing! A dictation of the heart! O-ho! (*Pressing the letter to his breast*) With all my heart I support your deeds and undertaking. (*To the audience*) My brother... What dedication to the welfare of society, how sacrificing! Oh brother, am I glad that you are rich! (*Continues reading*) Alas... . (*A pause*) I shall not be able to aid... That idea of yours is noble and attractive, yet... (*A pause, as he skips part of a sentence*) at the time being I cannot spare any... To be frank, brother, you have a smart head, your proposition is most unusual, only... (*Skipping*) lack of funds... I understand, the matter is urgent but it just so happens that I am leaving to the Bahamas for a vacation...

Don't take it ill that I can't come to help you open the door — I just have no time. Thank you for your invitation but I shall not take part in the convention — I have no time. Open it yourself, do it without me this time... (*Leaving out the beginning words of another sentence*) I cannot... shall not come... will not be present. .. have no time... have no spare money... have no time... no money...

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:
Hey, you!

SVAJŪNAS:
Yes, please...

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:
You are disgracing the ideal of liberty!

SVAJŪNAS:
I am only reading my brother's letter, sir.

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:
And how are you holding the placard?

SVAJŪNAS:
(Taking a look) I see nothing...

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE:
See nothing, you super-duper... Your liberty is head downward! What! *(Returning to his seat)*

SVAJŪNAS:
(Aware) Oh, excuse me... What a misunderstanding. .. *(Trying to set the placard right but it is always turning upside down again, and so for several times.*

SVAJŪNĒ appears from the left side of the low wall. She is now about 40 years old, yet she comes out dressed as a seventeen year old girl and is counting her steps)

SVAJŪNĒ:
And so, and so, and so...

SVAJŪNAS:
Svajūnē, what are you doing?

SVAJŪNĒ:
Don't you think it's time for *you* to change too?

SVAJŪNAS:
I have nothing against that, only this dress of yours...

SVAJŪNĒ:
I am modelling.

SVAJŪNAS:
Modelling?

SVAJŪNĒ:
We have tried everything, my dear. There is not much left to do. Take a serious look at me — I am altogether different now. *(She makes a full turn, walks across the stage, performs several figures, etc.)*

SVAJŪNAS:
Darling, to be a model at your age... Shouldn't we dim the lights ?..

SVAJŪNĒ:
We can never guess where our luck is awaiting, or at what moment. All my life I hoped to be a model. And what did you wish to be, my dearest?

SVAJŪNAS:
I wanted to be a professor, and I became a clown.

SVAJŪNĒ:
Now we are both equal.

(Enter the LADY IN BLACK. She is impersonating the deputy's deputy of the General Correspondent.

She is escorted by the Messenger Clerk. Her apparel is half feminine, half masculine, yet all in black. The Lady in Black proceeds slowly, posing, her head lifted as though to conceal her face, yet Svajūnas and Svajūnē recognize her).

MESSENGER CLERK:
Your attention, please!

SVAJŪNAS:
It is she? *(Turning the placard toward her)*

SVAJŪNĒ:
(Seized by fright) Yes...

MESENTER CLERK:
The deputy's deputy of the General Correspondent!

LADY IN BLACK:
(To the Messenger Clerk) Eh?

MESENTER CLERK:
She can hear and she can see, sir and madam, only she doesn't understand your language.

SVAJŪNAS:
How will we come to an understanding?

MESENTER CLERK:
I'll act as interpreter. Be curt and make yourself clear, please.

SVAJŪNAS:
(After a pause) Honorable ladies and gentlemen. Twenty-five years ago we came to this hotel and were given a hallway room. The room promised to ourselves is still being occupied. We implore your intervention! Remove the occupationist from our room! *(The Messenger Clerk signals him to halt).*

MESENTER CLERK:
(Translating) Mr. Svajūnas and his wife are expressing their cordial thanks to you, mister deputy's deputy of the General Correspondent, for the roof and shelter that you have provided them. They understandingly appreciate your friendly protective hand and wish to enjoy the same sympathy of yours in the future too. *(To Svajūnas)* Continue.

SVAJŪNĒ:
Svajūnas... *(She is trying to attract her husband's attention to the erroneous translation, only he is unheeding of her).*

SVAJŪNAS:
We are being deprecated as being sorrowful, discontented. We are reproached as lacking enthusiasm for life. That we know not laughter. Feel no gladness. We are not happy. Actually we are all that — because we are still living in a passage hall room.

MESENTER CLERK:
(Translating) Mr. and Mrs. Svajūnas have attached themselves, bodily and with their entire souls, to the exploitation of all their unlimited advantages, and with eyes that are sure of their faith they vision their future's brightness. Professing the principle of free enterprise, they only regret that the prices of automobiles have gone up, that the purchasing power of the dollar has deteriorated and that share quotations have catastrophically dropped on the stock market. *(To Svajūnas)* Continue.

SVAJŪNAS:
This is the reason why we are picketing. Sometimes with the heads up and sometimes with them upside down. And we shall continue to picket until the doors are widely opened to us — the same as to Arabians, Asians, Africans. .. For the freedom of Laughter! For independent Joy! We demand that the promises given us be kept! We demand a separate room!

MESENTER CLERK:
(Translating) Mr. and Mrs. Svajūnas in gratitude for their bread and salt solemnly promise to be good citizens, to work double shifts daily, honestly pay their state taxes and to vote for your honorable candidacy in the coming elections.

SVAJŪNĒ:
(In panic) Do you hear that, do you hear it!

MESENTER CLERK:
Your audition is over. Thank you.

(He is escorting the Lady in Black and leaves with her).

SVAJŪNAS:
The curriculum vitae of an exile.

SVAJŪNĒ:
Right down to a word.

SVAJŪNAS:

And I have had such faith in...

SVAJŪNĒ:

So have I.

SVAJŪNAS:

He spoke very diplomatically, however.

SVAJŪNĒ:

I couldn't understand a single word!

SVAJŪNAS:

We aren't diplomats, dearest. (*Suddenly*) The deputy's deputy is not the end of it. Prepare yourself for a journey.

SVAJŪNĒ:

A journey? To where?

SVAJŪNAS:

To search for the truth.

SVAJŪNĒ:

Around the world?

SVAJŪNAS:

Around the hotel...

Translated by A. Milukas

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF "CURRICULUM VITAE"

ANATOLIJUS KAIRYS, b. 1914, started writing at an early age. A two-acter of his for children was staged already in 1934. During the war years his concern was more for poetry and two collections of verse appeared, then: Windswept Leaves, 1946, and Golden Crops, 1963.

Afterwards, Kairys concentrated mainly on playwriting. Altogether 8 plays of his have appeared in book form so far: Liberty Tree, 1955; Diagnosis, 1956; Chicken Farm, 1965; Curriculum Vi-tae, 1966; The Light, indeed, 1968; Eldorado, 1968; Heritage, 1969; Two Little Brothers, 1970, and a novel The Faithful Grass, 1971.

Most of his fame A. Kairys owes to his three-act comedy, Diagnosis. It has been produced 5 times and performed over 20.

Zarinų Janis, a Latvian author translated Diagnosis into Latvian in 1966. It was published in full in issues 18, 19 and 20 of the Latvian monthly Treji Varti, 1970.

A. Kairys is the most criticized, discussed and described Lithuanian playwright during the last decade. His sudden celebrity in the theatres of exile has brought along many explanations. Some critics ascribe his popularity to the good knowledge of the psychology of his exile fellow men, others — to the element of patriotism, others still — to the author's deep insight, his voluminous readings and studies, the all round skill with which he has mastered the art of the stage, and his understanding to establish a literary artful criterion for the burning problems of our days.

A. Kairys received his diploma at the University of Vilnius. For one year he studied French and literature at the University of Kaunas. He continued his studies after the war at the universities of Innsbruck (Austria) and Tuebingen (Germany). He now lives in Chicago. III.