

THE KNIGHT
The Story of Krystov Sov, The Robber Knight

A play

by
Paweł Grajner

CHARACTERS

Krystov Sov,
The Robber Knight

A Medievalish Knight, Adult

Svejkar

Sov's Squire

The Little Girl

A little girl, 9–11 years old

Priest

A priest or minister

Wendy

A business woman who really
knows how to lean in

Jay

A guy in a suit

Ramparts of the Trosky Castle in the
Czech paradise. The year is 1438, or so.

AT RISE:

*Krystov Sov, THE ROBBER KNIGHT, enters still putting on his
costume: Some sort of medievalish garb. SVEJKAR, in less elegant
medievalish garb, comes out helping The Robber Knight with his
costume.*

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Holy shit, there are people here already.

SVEJKAR

That's what I've been telling you.

The Robber Knight fusses with his costume.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Does this really matter?

Svejkar helps The Robber Knight.

SVEJKAR

I have no idea.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Why not?

SVEJKAR

You ask too many questions.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

It's so much trouble.

SVEJKAR

It is what it is.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Why do we keep doing it?

SVEJKAR

Easier than farming, less dangerous than war.

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

It's so much work and it never turns out exactly as expected.

SVEJKAR

You're telling me. I wanted to be the knight.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You, the knight?

SVEJKAR

Yes, me the knight. Why not?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You're so, so, so... average.

SVEJKAR

Average.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Average. Standard. Typical. Underwhelming. The mean. If I were to add up all of the men in the world and divide by the number of men I added together—I'd get you.

SVEJKAR

And so you do...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What?

SVEJKAR

Have me, I mean.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Are we done?

Svejkar completes getting The Robber Knight into his costume.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Down below with you maty.

SVEJKAR

I believe that's on a ship.

Pawel Grajner

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What's on a ship?

SVEJKAR

The phrase, "Down below with you maty."

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I don't understand.

SVEJKAR

We are not on a ship. This is the parapet of the Trosky Castle. Out there is the landscape of the Czech Paradise waiting for the light of the sun. And you, you are Krystov Sov, The Robber Knight, who is terrorizing the people of this land as far as the eye can see and beyond. Living off the work of the peasants and the merchants who stray onto our roads.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

A pirate, if you will.

SVEJKAR

Except you're a knight in a castle.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I could be a libertarian?

SVEJKAR

Except you are not. You're a knight in a castle. A rogue, robber knight. But a knight.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I am a pirate.

SVEJKAR

Suit yourself.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

And you, who are you?

SVEJKAR

I am Svejkar, your squire. Your sidekick.

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I have a sidekick?

SVEJKAR

It's what's in the script we memorized.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

How is it to be my sidekick?

SVEJKAR

You don't really want me to tell you.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

No.

SVEJKAR

You're just passing time.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Better than passing gas.

The sun rises revealing the landscape of the Czech Paradise.

SVEJKAR

There, there's the sun.

A doorbell rings.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Remember to address me as skipper in front of anyone.

SVEJKAR

Skipper?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes, skipper.

SVEJKAR

Sure thing, skipper.

Svejkar exits. The Robber Knight turns to the audience. He is instantly anxious.

He turns toward where Svejkar went.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Damn it. I should've gone. Yes, well. I think it is customary that when a character is left all alone on a stage like this, that he express some inner truth or deliberate some point having to do with the drama at hand. But that also means more memorization for the actor... Goddamnit, I know enough not to get myself into these positions, but here I am. OK. Deep inner truth or point having to do with the drama...

The Robber Knight thinks.

He stops. Looks at the audience. Nope. No deep thought. He thinks.

He thinks.

He begins to fiddle with something on stage.

He finds something he doesn't like. He adjusts that.

He looks at the audience. Maybe there's someone in the audience he finds attractive. He smiles. He flirts. If he doesn't get a response, he shrugs his shoulders.

If he gets a positive response he goes over to the audience member.

Finally, Svejkar pushes THE LITTLE GIRL, in a nice flower print dress, onto the stage.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Oh, thank goodness.

SVEJKAR

You didn't do the soliloquy again.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

That's the last time I am getting left on this stage alone. What am I supposed to say to these people?

SVEJKAR

An inner truth or some point of deliberation about the drama at hand.

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I never have anything like that to say. Who's this ruffian?

SVEJKAR

Your first opponent of the day...

The Robber Knight glares at Svejkar.

SVEJKAR

...skipper.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What do you call yourself, you marauder?

THE LITTLE GIRL

I'm a little girl.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

From what port did you sail?

SVEJKAR

Interestingly she hailed me by saying, "Ahoy."

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Is this true?

THE LITTLE GIRL

That's what everyone by the river says these days.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

But it's a nautical term?

SVEJKAR

I believe it is, skipper.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Then why does this little Bohemian girl use a nautical term here in the very center of the European continent?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Maybe it has something to do with river traffic and how the men of this region work in the seaport town of Hamburg after the harvest at the mouth of the Vltava, or Elba as the Germans call it.

The Robber Knight turns to Svejkar.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Off the bridge.

SVEJKAR

Are you sure.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Aye, maty. I can handle this buccaneer.

Svejkar turns to exit.

The Robber Knight clears his throat.

SVEJKAR

Aye, aye, skipper.

Svejkar exits.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

So you have come to challenge me?

THE LITTLE GIRL

I have not.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Then what have you come for?

THE LITTLE GIRL

To get back the food you took from my family.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Food?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Yes, because I am hungry.

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Hungry?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Are you going to just keep doing that?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Doing what?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Turn whatever I say into a question.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Some harmless fun.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Is that what you call it?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Don't you have food where you are from?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Not since you began stealing from us.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I take what is rightfully mine.

THE LITTLE GIRL

How can you say that? You take what you can. You steal. You kill.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I am more powerful than you are, isn't that true?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Yes.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Stronger?

THE LITTLE GIRL

Yes.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Smarter?

THE LITTLE GIRL

No.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Smart enough to have this ship and take what I want from whoever sails past? Because I am better than you, I take whatever I need. And I need whatever I want. It's the invisible hand of the market. You are too young to understand.

THE LITTLE GIRL

I did have a two-year-old brother before he died of starvation because you took all of the food.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Do you know what I do with impudent marauders like you?

THE LITTLE GIRL

You throw them over the wall.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Exactly.

THE LITTLE GIRL

I need food. I am starving.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Do you even understand what is happening here?

THE LITTLE GIRL

I'm a little girl. A very hungry little girl.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I'll explain it to you then.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Over a small meal?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I have the ability to tell the future through to the first few months of the year 2014.

The Knight

THE LITTLE GIRL

The world still exists in 2014?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes, yes it most certainly does.

THE LITTLE GIRL

How do you know?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I just have this ability.

THE LITTLE GIRL

You can foretell the future until the end of the year 2014?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Why 2014?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I don't know, that's how I am. That's how I was created.

THE LITTLE GIRL

But it seems rather arbitrary. Why not some other date? 1528? 1682? 1796? 1818? 3092?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I see what you're doing.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Me, I'm not doing anything, I'm just a little girl.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

OK. Enough. Here's what happens... If you correctly predict something in the future, you get to live. If you make an incorrect prediction, I kill you and we throw your corpse over the wall to rot with the rest of them.

THE LITTLE GIRL

But who will make the decision about whether my prediction is correct or incorrect?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I will.

THE LITTLE GIRL

You? I don't trust you.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You have no choice.

THE LITTLE GIRL

I saw you take my family's last bit of food, our last goat. I saw you slaughter, cook and eat it. All the while my brother begged you to give him a scrap.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I don't remember your goat or family. It's all a blur of creative destruction for me.

THE LITTLE GIRL

He died later that same day. Two years old.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Let's say you are not lying to me. Which I believe you are. But let's posit that you're not.

THE LITTLE GIRL

Yes.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Why hadn't your parents slaughtered that goat before my arrival and fed your brother with it if he was so hungry.

THE LITTLE GIRL

I don't know.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You should ask them why your brother died, then. Not blame me for taking what was my due by right and privilege of my station and ancestry.

THE LITTLE GIRL

I can't. They're dead.

She begins to cry.

The Knight

The Robber Knight takes out his sword and points it at the girl.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Enough with the nostalgia. Make your prediction.

The little girl hesitates.

The Robber Knight pushes the point of the sword into her stomach.

THE LITTLE GIRL

It will rain tomorrow.

The Robber Knight runs her through with the sword.

The Little Girl crumbles to the ground.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Tomorrow will be a glorious, sunny day. Every creature alive will feel that this paradise of mine is worth every sacrifice we make for it.

Svejkar enters.

SVEJKAR

Oh good, it's over.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

The scene was dragging a bit.

SVEJKAR

No, no nothing like that. You know she has to be done by 8:30. She has dance practice in the morning.

The Robber Knight is disappointed with Svejkar.

SVEJKAR

Oh, I'm sorry Krystof, you want to maintain the pretense of it all. Of course, of course.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

No. It's not that.

SVEJKAR

Not that.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

A little girl.

SVEJKAR

Yes. A little girl.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Not exactly a formidable opponent.

SVEJKAR

An opponent is an opponent. What's the difference. She's dead.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

She's pretending to be dead.

SVEJKAR

Yes, but for the sake of the narrative...I saw you kill her.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Well, I cannot kill her in my mind. She will stay alive there forever. The image of her little body crumbling after I impaled her with this sword. If you offer me a choice between soap and toothpaste, I will choose soap to wash these hands of the guilt.

SVEJKAR

I'll get some soap.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

No, get toothpaste.

SVEJKAR

Because you were lying. You don't really care about her at all.

They both start laughing.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What's one more or less peasant girl to me. She chose to be poor, stupid and now dead. She only has herself to blame. She could've been anything she wanted. What a waste.

The Knight

SVEJKAR

You almost had me there.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT.

Let's get her body out of here before it starts to stink up the deck.

SVEJKAR

The parapet?

They pick up her body.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Is that what you call it?

SVEJKAR

I'm not sure. But I know that a deck is on a ship.

They throw her over the side of the wall. She falls onto a mattress.

SVEJKAR

She didn't fall far.

The Robber Knight reaches over with his sword and pushes her.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

There she goes.

SVEJKAR

What's that?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Someone climbing up the port side.

SVEJKAR

I told you the bodies were piling up too quickly. We should've burned them.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

It sends a message.

SVEJKAR

Yes, come climb up the bodies into the castle and kill Sov and Svejkar. That's the message.

Paweł Grajner

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Who is he?

SVEJKAR

I can't make him out through the swarms of flies.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

He slipped and fell into that pile of maggots.

SVEJKAR

That's a collar.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Is it a priest?

SVEJKAR

Ha. A priest.

The priest, dressed in modern, contemporary clothes, clambers over the battlement and cleans himself of maggots and human meat.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Identify yourself, priest, now that you've climbed over our gunwale.

SVEJKAR

Battlement.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What?

SVEJKAR

That's a battlement. A gunwale is the top edge of the side of a ship.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Now that you've climbed over the edge of the...

SVEJKAR

...battlement...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Identify yourself.

The Knight

PRIEST

I am Father Felix Mouton.

SVEJKAR

Ha.

PRIEST

Why do you laugh?

SVEJKAR

Your name means sheep meat.

PRIEST

And what is your name?

SVEJKAR

Svejkar.

The priest turns to face The Robber Knight.

PRIEST

Then you must be Krystov Sov von Helfenburg.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I am.

PRIEST

It is said that you can foretell the future.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

If I put my mind to it, yes.

Svejkar turns to leave.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Where are you going?

SVEJKAR

You want me to stay, I'll stay.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

No, go.

Pawel Grajner

SVEJKAR

Father Mutton, I have to tell you, it always ends the same way around here.

PRIEST

But now god is making his presence felt.

SVEJKAR

How? Where?

PRIEST

Through me.

SVEJKAR

A maggot and meat covered priest named sheep meat in a land where hardly anyone except the eldest of peasant ladies crosses the threshold of your religious edifices?

Svejkar turns.

PRIEST

I understand, my son.

Svejkar looks at the priest, shrugs and leaves.

PRIEST

You are from Helfenburg in Bohemia, not the Helfenberg in Austria. That is clear.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Why is that clear?

PRIEST

That pile of corpses is not the work of an Austrian.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I have seen much worse.

PRIEST

I agree. But that pile of corpses...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

More than in the emperor's name?

The Knight

PRIEST

Don't be silly, the numbers are paltry. But the organization...

Svejkar comes out with a mop and pail.

SVEJKAR

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought for sure...

PRIEST

Thought for sure what?

SVEJKAR

That this scene would be over.

PRIEST

By god's grace it is still in progress.

SVEJKAR

Let me know when to come back. OK?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Aye, aye maty.

Svejkar shakes his head and leaves.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

The organization?

PRIEST

What you've done with the bodies.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

It's a very neat pile, a few hundred feet up the side of the vessel.

PRIEST

Yes, a Slav would call that neat.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What do you want priest? You know I have killed your kind before.

The priest looks around.

PRIEST

Oh yes, I saw Brother Novak's body on the way up. I almost didn't recognize his bones. But his cassock still showed off his shape. That I recognized. I kissed his bones and prayed over him.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Is that what took you so long getting up here? A kiss.

PRIEST

So this is it?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

This is what?

PRIEST

The view.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

The whole of the Czech Paradise spread out in front of you like a willing virgin.

PRIEST

Yes, well...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

A willing choir boy.

PRIEST

I've seen better views, then.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Enough with your insults.

PRIEST

Ready to kill me.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

To be honest, yes.

PRIEST

Aren't you going to challenge me to a contest?

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You would like to test your luck?

PRIEST

With god on my side, it will not be luck.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Very well. You tell me three events between today and the first few months of 2014 that will really occur. If you are correct, I let you live. If you are wrong, even once, your body will be added to that pile of stiffs on wet side of the hull.

PRIEST

May I pray first?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

If you hurry.

The priest kneels and whispers prayers.

PRIEST

Dear god almighty, may you bless this day of creation with your bountiful love and mercy on this and all of your creatures. May they find...

The Robber Knight moves closer to hear what the priest is saying.

The priest notices. And lowers his voice.

PRIEST

May they find peace and comfort, despite the sufferings brought on them by their own imperfection...

The Robber Knight moves closer to hear what the priest is saying.

The priest lowers his voice even further.

PRIEST

...Or the suffering brought upon them by the imperfection of others.

*The Robber Knight pulls out a dagger and slashes the priest's throat.
His body collapses on the stage.*

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Svejkar!

Svejkar runs on eating a sandwich.

SVEJKAR

I just started eating. I knew I should've waited. You didn't even get to the contest, did you?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I didn't like the tone of his prayers. That looks good.

Svejkar gobbles down his sandwich.

SVEJKAR

Don't worry, I'll make you something later. Let's clean this up first.

He reaches down to pick up the priest. The Robber Knight is hungry.

SVEJKAR

I said I'll make you something after we clean this up. I can't carry him over the battlement by myself.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

The what?

SVEJKAR

The battlement.

The Robber Knight shrugs.

SVEJKAR

The gunwale, skipper. Over the gunwale.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Ah, of course.

The Robber Knight comes over. And together with Svejkar, they lift the body of the priest up and over the battlement.

SVEJKAR

So he lost?

The Knight

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

His prayers annoyed me.

SVEJKAR

Doesn't seem fair.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I don't mind prayers as long as they don't get in the way of my schedule.

SVEJKAR

Your schedule.

The Robber Knight laughs.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I do crack myself up. I don't have a schedule. The only principle that matters here is that I make all this possible. Without me this world, as you see it right now, would disappear. And what a disaster that would be. Svejkar, it is our duty to make sure this state of affairs continues for ever.

Svejkar thinks.

The doorbell rings.

SVEJKAR

Someone's at our gate.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Lower the gang plank, I will welcome them onboard.

SVEJKAR

Suit yourself.

The Robber Knight exits pulling out his sword. He returns and waits.

The doorbell rings again.

SVEJKAR

Skipper.

The Robber Knight exits.

Svejkar walks over to a rope tied to a wheel and unfastens it. The rope uncoils rapidly. The dull thud of a wooden bridge dropping sounds.

SVEJKAR

I know what you're asking yourselves: How can I take this? Right? Can't I see what's going on? Or that, at the very least, if I just start asking the right questions then I could reason my way through all of this. I could make up my mind to end this insanity? So why don't I? Why don't I ask the right questions, get angry and do something? Isn't that what you are wondering? Well, here's what I am wondering: I am a character in a play set in the middle ages. You are an audience sitting in a Republic. You are letting very real sociopaths actually really rule you. Sociopaths, like our good ole Krystov here, are celebrated and held up as paragons of leadership. You elect them, on a regular basis, to the highest offices in the most powerful institutions of your society, all the while knowing that they are fully contemptuous of those very institutions, and especially, of you. And just like Krystov, they don't lie. They tell you exactly what they want to do: Empower a small extremely powerful elite at the expense of everyone else. They say it. I have to ask you, how can you tolerate this? Why aren't you doing anything about such an obvious danger to your society?

A nautical whistle announcing the boarding of an important person onto a ship sounds.

SVEJKAR

As for me, a fictional character in a play about a sociopath, I know what I have to do. The real question is, do you?

Svejkar abruptly stops when The Robber Knight leads WENDY JOHNSON, arranging her sensible business skirt, and her assistant JAY SPENCER, in a modern dark fashionable business suit and carrying a briefcase, onto the stage at the end of his sword.

WENDY

Who's in charge here? I demand to know who's in charge here.

The Robber Knight pokes her with the end of his sword.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Be quiet, landlubber.

The Knight

JAY

Aren't we still on land?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Quiet.

The Robber Knight holds up a small pistol.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You would not believe where I found this?

Wendy pulls down her skirt a little showing where it was.

Svejkar is not amused

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Ah, we are disturbing you.

SVEJKAR

No, it's OK.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Are you sure?

WENDY

What the hell is happening here? Who is in charge?

SVEJKAR

He is.

WENDY

You?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes.

JAY

We were expecting someone...

The Robber Knight threatens Jay.

JAY

...exactly like you.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

How dare you attack Trosky Castle with this canon?

WENDY

That is for personal protection only.

JAY

The roads are dangerous.

WENDY

The whale-roads...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Dangerous because of me.

WENDY

Look, Mr. Sov.

She takes a step forward. The Robber Knight points his sword at her throat.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Take this and throw it over the side.

Svejkar gingerly takes the gun from The Robber Knight.

SVEJKAR

I'll make you a sandwich, skipper.

Svejkar exits.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

That would be nice. I am hungry.

JAY

Look, Ms. Johnson is a busy woman.

The Robber Knight points his sword at Jay.

The Knight

WENDY

Captain Sov.

The Robber Knight smiles. Wendy approaches.

WENDY

Captain Sov, the oceans are rough. The land is far. But old sea dogs like us can come to an understanding.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Can we?

WENDY

Of course, we can. Jay.

Jay pulls out some papers from the attaché case in his hand and gives them to Wendy.

Wendy hands them to The Robber Knight.

WENDY

Men like you and I get along. Actually, I like to think of myself as one of you. One of the people that make this world actually work.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Go on.

WENDY

People like you and I, we are the people that give all those others the reasons, the plans they need to do the things that need to get done. They need to be told what to do, when to do it, how much to do it. And men and women like you and me, we are the ones that give them that information. Otherwise, there would be chaos. No progress. Stagnation. Think of the GDP!

JAY

It makes me shudder.

WENDY

Show the captain the numbers.

From just offstage, Jay pulls out a large chart with a big curved line going up across it.

WENDY

If I may?

Wendy takes The Robber Knight's sword from him and uses it as a pointer.

WENDY

This is right now.

She points to the left side of the graph.

WENDY

This is the situation if we work together. Your force and my will united can increase both of our positions innumerably.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Innumerably?

WENDY

That's right.

The Robber Knight takes his sword back.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You are merchants from the city?

JAY

Dresden.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Dresden.

WENDY

We are high tech. A new model of prosperity. Completely different.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Completely different.

WENDY

Of course, we recognize power for what it is. That hasn't changed. You. You have the power. Your actions here prove that.

The Knight

JAY

Your interference in our affairs. They are...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Costly, I bet.

WENDY

But together... Together...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Together we can rule the world.

WENDY

Well...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Our little corner of paradise.

WENDY

Together we can rule, maximize the opportunities of our little corner of the Czech paradise.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

And him?

WENDY

Who?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Him.

The Robber Knight points at Jay.

WENDY

What about him?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Is he one of the leaders or the followers?

JAY

Leader.

WENDY

Follower.

Pawel Grajner

The Robber Knight points his sword at Jay.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Then you won't mind?

WENDY

No, not at all.

The Robber Knight runs Jay through.

Jay collapses in a pile of flesh in clothes.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Well, then, that makes the situation clearer.

WENDY

It does?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes.

WENDY

My dear Captain. How?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Because I'll treat you like I treat everyone else.

WENDY

But...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You are about to say that you are not like everyone else.

WENDY

But...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Am I right? Isn't that what you were about say?

Wendy nods.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Here's the deal, Wendy. I can foretell the future until the first few months of the year 2014. Please don't ask why. That's just the case. But it doesn't even matter whether it's true or not. Here's the deal. You predict something true about the future up to the first few months of the year 2014, and I will sign your document and let you live. But if you predict wrong, you will walk the plank.

WENDY

What plank?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I will kill you. And add your body to the pile on the other side of the gunwale.

WENDY

The battlement?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

The gunwale.

WENDY

Gunwale, of course.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Ready.

WENDY

No.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You have 15 seconds. 1-one thousand. 2-one thousand. 3-one thousand. 4-one thousand. 5- one thousand. 6-one thousand. 15-one thousand. Go.

WENDY

In the year 2014 there will be a Republic.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes.

WENDY

On a continent in the Western Hemisphere... One soon to be rediscovered from the perspective of people on the European subcontinent...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Yes. Add some detail now.

WENDY

It will be called the United State of America...

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Very good.

WENDY

And after 93 years of having the right to vote, women will have equal rights as citizens of this republic.

The Robber Knight runs her through.

Svejkar returns with a white bread sandwich on a plane plate. He looks at the two dead bodies.

SVEJKAR

What happened?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

She really didn't get that as long as she played by my rules, there was no real way for her to win.

SVEJKAR

Did you tell her that?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Now, c'mon. That wouldn't be unfair.

SVEJKAR

Do you want this now?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Let's clean up this mess.

The Knight

Svejkar puts the plate down. He and The Robber Knight pick up and toss the bodies over the wall.

SVEJKAR

How long are we going to go on like this?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Forever, from what I can tell.

SVEJKAR

Don't you think we are just lucky?

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

That's outrageous.

SVEJKAR

And just because we are lucky, we shouldn't squander everything by ourselves. And maybe make the world more useful for everyone.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Where did you get these ideas? You and I work hard for everything we get. We use our wits and our brawn. Anyone could do it. They're just not smart enough or strong enough. Who should benefit from paradise - the weak? The leeches who just take, take, take but have no perspective. Look at that perspective. You think just anyone can have that?

SVEJKAR

But this castle.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

What about it?

SVEJKAR

We didn't build it ourselves. Actually, at all.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

So?

SVEJKAR

It was built by all the towns and villages around here in order to safeguard the area for the safe passage of goods and services to the benefit of all.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

You can't prove that the presence of this castle benefits every single person in this paradise. Like the presence of a lighthouse at the mouth of a harbor, you cannot quantify the benefits of such a construction for the miller up the road from the port town. How much does the miller benefit because some number of sailors that don't drown? Most of whom smoked or had heart disease anyway. Those sailors were on death's door. Not worth saving. And anyway, from the miller's perspective, those sailors are not his patrons. Why should the miller pay for the saving of the lives of those sailors. There is no way to quantify the benefits to the miller.

They are done with the body tossing and cleaning.

The Robber Knight sits down and starts to eat his sandwich.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Who put those ridiculous notions in your head?

He motions towards the audience.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Did they put you up to it?

SVEJKAR

If only.

Svejkar pulls out the gun.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

I told you to toss that over the side.

Svejkar points the barrel at The Robber Knight.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Don't do that.

SVEJKAR

I think you are just lucky.

He spins the barrel.

The Knight

SVEJKAR

And you have some number of chances you will survive the pulling of the trigger. One chance you will die.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

This is absurd. I am Krystov Sov von Helfenberg, the Robber Knight. This is the Czech Paradise. Zitou is that way, and Gorlitz that.

SVEJKAR

Then you won't mind.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Let me eat in peace, Svejkar.

He pulls the trigger. After a moment, the sound of the gun going off sounds.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

All is lost. All is lost.

The Robber Knight is dead.

Svejkar turns to the Czech Paradise.

SVEJKAR

The revolution has begun. All is new again.

He lets the bullets drop to the floor.

He runs to the battlement and, holding his gun high, yells out to paradise.

SVEJKAR

The revolution has begun! All is new again!

After a moment, bloodied Krystov Sov, The Robber Knight stands up.

THE ROBBER KNIGHT

Don't be alarmed. I am an actor. A highly trained professional in the art of coming back from the dead.

Svejkar turns and lowers his weapon and joins The Robber Knight downstage.

SVEJKAR

This ending was medieval. The castle stands, a new skipper at the helm, if you will.

The Robber Knight smiles and welcomes Svejkar.

The bloodied Little Girl joins Svejkar and The Robber Knight.

THE LITTLE GIRL

But the ship and direction—like the steady flow of the Vltava toward Hamburg—is being controlled toward an avoidable disaster.

The bloodied Priest joins the chorus.

PRIEST

One could say this ship has already run aground.

The bloodied Wendy joins the chorus.

WENDY

A hierarchy is only as good as the service it provides.

The bloodied Jay joins the chorus.

JAY

How much suffering it alleviates.

ALL

(except Svejkar)

The bloodied...

SVEJKAR

And the apparently unbloodied.

ALL

Stand together...

THE LITTLE GIRL

And command you...

The Knight

ALL

Stop worshipping sociopaths. It ain't a ship. It's democracy.

THE END



PAWEŁ GRAJNERT is a writer and filmmaker working in Poland and the US.