

*Excerpt from the one-act play*

# **LADIES**

**by Justīne Kļava**

**translated by Ieva Lākute**

**LIST OF CHARACTERS:**

**MARIJA** (66)

**STANISLAVA** (42) – Marija's daughter

**KATHRYN OR KITTY** (17) – Stanislava's daughter

*An apartment building in Riga, Latvia. Midnight. **MARIJA** is stood by a gas stove, wearing a dressing gown. Her hair is done up with rollers. Her eyes dart between the kettle, the clock on the wall, and the kitchen door.*

*Before the kettle starts to whistle, **MARIJA** turns off the gas and pours the boiling water into a coffee mug. She takes the mug and tiptoes towards the kitchen unit. She bashes into a stool. The stool hits a bucket. Several plastic tubs spill from it, making a loud noise. **MARIJA** tries to push the stool aside, but her leg kicks the bucket again. The noise is even louder.*

*Listening out for anyone coming, **MARIJA** tries to open the door of the kitchen unit quietly. She takes out a pack of cigarettes and matches and tiptoes towards the window. But just before she reaches it, she steps inside the cat's bowl. An even louder noise echoes throughout the kitchen.*

*Loud, hurried footsteps. **MARIJA** manages to stuff the cigarettes and matches inside her dressing gown pocket just as **STANISLAVA** enters the kitchen. She stands in the doorway, wearing a dressing gown, with rollers in her hair.*

**STANISLAVA:** Don't even *think* about smoking inside.

**MARIJA:** But I can't take it anymore. It's gone midnight. Where is she?

***STANISLAVA** walks towards the stove and lifts the kettle. It's almost empty, so she walks over to the sink to fill it back up. **MARIJA** rushes over to help her. While **MARIJA** talks, she tries to yank the kettle out of **STANISLAVA'S** hands. **STANISLAVA** doesn't let her.*

**MARIJA:** Don't stay up for her, darling. If you don't get enough sleep, you'll have another headache tomorrow. And all because that airhead doesn't want to come home at a godly hour. Oh, my sweet angel... If you can't get to sleep, I've got some sleeping pills. Shall I fetch them for you? Just a quarter of a dose?

***STANISLAVA** doesn't reply. **MARIJA** is still trying to yank the kettle out of her hands.*

**MARIJA:** What tea would you like Mummy to make you?

***STANISLAVA** tries to fill the kettle from the tap, but **MARIJA** doesn't let go.*

**MARIJA:** Now, now... It's ok, everything's fine... Here, let me... I'll help you, my angel.

**STANISLAVA:** I can do it myself!

**MARIJA:** Just go and sit down, I'll do it for you!

*They fight over the kettle. STANISLAVA finally gains the upper hand.*

**STANISLAVA:** I said – I can do it myself!

**MARIJA:** Oh, for God's sake... what times we live in... My own daughter won't let her mother treat her to a nice cup of tea... All that pride won't do you any good, you know. You should let people do something nice for you every once in a while.

**STANISLAVA:** Mum, go to bed.

**MARIJA:** Would you like a pastry? Oh, they're so lovely. With raspberry filling, made fresh this morning. I bought them from that bakery round the corner.

**STANISLAVA:** Just go to bed!

**MARIJA:** You know perfectly well that I won't be able to get to sleep until Kitty has had a decent meal in her. That poor child walks around hungry for days on end. Skin and bones, she is. And I made these yummy meatballs earlier. Would you like a bite?

**STANISLAVA:** Don't start coming at me with your meatballs again.

**MARIJA:** Oh, I made them from this juicy cut of pork. Would you like some fried potatoes to go with it?

**STANISLAVA:** Mum, I have a gastric ulcer! How many times do I have to tell you that I can't have anything fatty or fried?

**MARIJA:** Don't worry, darling. I wasn't going to use much oil. Just a teensy-tiny bit. Just enough to heat it up. They'll literally melt in your mouth, you'll see!

**STANISLAVA:** I'm not going to have meatballs at half past one in the morning! Do you really want me to die?

**MARIJA:** There's no need to raise your voice. I was just offering, that's all. And, anyway, you said you went out to the *Lido* restaurant last week and had meatballs for lunch. They can't have been as good as mine.

*STANISLAVA pours herself some tea. She takes the mug and goes to her room, but MARIJA rushes over to help.*

**MARIJA:** Here, I'll carry that for you, sweetheart.

*STANISLAVA doesn't let go of the mug. MARIJA continues to pull it towards her until the mug falls on the floor. The scorching water catches STANISLAVA'S hands.*

**STANISLAVA:** Why do you have to rip things from my hands? Without your permission, I can't even touch a saucepan in this kitchen!

**MARIJA:** That's what happens when you try to do things for yourself. It's always better to let your mother take care of everything. Come, darling, let's run some cold water over your hands.

***MARIJA** takes **STANISLAVA** by the hand and leads her to the sink, but **STANISLAVA** breaks free.*

**STANISLAVA:** Can't you see it hurts?

**MARIJA:** Shh, Mummy will make everything right again. Oh, my sweet angel, how did this happen? Let me make you another cup of tea.

*The front door slams. **KITTY** walks into the kitchen, dressed in nothing but bra and sweatpants, holding an open bottle of lager in her hand. She takes off her trainers, ready to go to her room.*

**KITTY:** Hey! Got any grub?

**STANISLAVA:** Kathryn, come here right now.

***KITTY** steps back, but **STANISLAVA** grabs her by the hand and pulls her into the kitchen.*

**STANISLAVA:** Where's your top?

**KITTY:** Haven't got one.

**STANISLAVA:** What do you mean: you haven't got one?

**KITTY:** It split.

**MARIJA:** *(Sighs in mock exasperation.)* Just give it to me, I'll mend it.

**KITTY:** I said I haven't got it. I chucked it.

**MARIJA:** You threw away that nice T-shirt I gave you? It wasn't some cheap rag, you know. I bought it from a brand store.

**STANISLAVA:** Mum, stay out of it.

**KITTY:** Yeah, chill, Nan. I've got other tops.

**MARIJA:** Tell me where exactly you lost it. I'll go and find it.

**STANISLAVA** *(to **MARIJA**):* Calm down.

**KITTY:** Er... Dunno.

**MARIJA:** Right. I go out and buy her a nice, pretty top from *my pension*, and she 'chucks it' at the first opportunity! Why? So you can prance around half-naked like some hooker? I'm surprised you've still got trousers on, my dear.

**STANISLAVA** (to **KITTY**): What's that in your hand?

**KITTY**: Beer. Obviously.

**STANISLAVA**: Give me that.

**KITTY**: No way! Go to the petrol station and get your own.

**MARIJA**: Darling, I have half-a-bottle of cognac in my room, if you need something to help you get to sleep?

**STANISLAVA**: No. I don't want any alcohol.

**KITTY**: Well, I do.

**MARIJA**: *You* don't deserve my expensive cognac. Carry on drinking that shit. Did you know that they only sell moonshine in shops these days? Aidis Tomsons was talking about it on Channel 1 just the other day. That's right. I might be ancient, but I like to keep my finger on the pulse.

**STANISLAVA** (to **KITTY**): Where were you?

**KITTY**: Got stuck. In my own arse. (*Burps loudly.*)

**MARIJA** (to **KITTY**): Right. You should eat something first. What would you like, darling – I've got meatballs with some fried potatoes, and a nice raspberry pastry to go with it..

**KITTY**: Meatballs with pastry.

*MARIJA starts fussing around the gas stove.*

**STANISLAVA** (to **KITTY**): Why did you switch off your phone? I was worried sick.

**KITTY**: So you'd leave me alone. Thank fuck Nan doesn't have a smartphone. I'd literally kill myself if she did.

**MARIJA**: Don't you feel sorry for your poor mother? She can't get to sleep when you're out late.

**KITTY**: She can't get to sleep because you're sitting in the kitchen all night, keeping a watch.

**MARIJA**: Someone has to do it while you're getting up to God-knows-what.

**STANISLAVA**: Stop shouting, Mum. It's the middle of the night, for Christ's sake.

**MARIJA**: Well, I'm only saying the truth.

**KITTY**: How many times do I have to say that I'm totally fine?

**MARIJA:** And how are we supposed to know that?

**KITTY:** You just have to know, that's it.

**MARIJA:** Oh, you just wait until you have your own children. Then you'll see.

**KITTY:** I'm not going to have any.

**MARIJA:** Because you're selfish. Just like your father.

**STANISLAVA** (to **MARIJA**): Don't start harping on about it...

**MARIJA:** We had nothing back then, not even a shower. I had to carry water up the staircase to our flat. And I asked him...

**KITTY:** Nan, stop stirring.

**MARIJA:** ... to help me – and he keeps saying *just give me a minute* but he sits by his books all day, doing nothing. Just like you. Your mother tells you to come home at a decent hour, and you keep saying *just give me a minute*. Next thing you know, it's one in the morning. Well, I guess you don't love your mother. Just like your father never did.

**STANISLAVA:** Mum, go and fry your meatballs, and stop talking rubbish.

**KITTY:** Just because I love her doesn't mean I have to do every stupid thing she tells me.

**STANISLAVA:** If you're not prepared to do "every stupid thing I tell you" then go and live with your father.

**KITTY:** Argh. You're such a demagogue!

**MARIJA:** What's a demagogue?

**STANISLAVA:** Mum, I told you to stay out of it.

**MARIJA:** And how can I possibly do that, when we share the same roof? We should be able to discuss everything together. And in case you've forgotten it, I'm the grandmother around here; you're my flesh and blood.