

Script *The Transformations* (working title)

Drama in 1 act

by Lars Skoglund

English translation,  
script as it was 27.09.19

Cast:

**PERFORMER 1: female:**

- Madam Alexandra
- The Saleswoman, Ellinor Andreassen
- Madam Jasmine, Alexandra's twin sister
- The Cape-dressed (silent part)

**PERFORMER 2: male:**

- The Doctor. With white coat and thick glasses
- The Servant, Edvard. With (false) moustache. Plays the guitar
- Cardboard box A (silent part)

**PERFORMER 3: female:**

- The Maid, Dorotea, plays the flute
- Jostein, Alexandra's nephew. With false beard, only covering lower part of the face
- Cardboard Box B (silent part)

We are in a nice living room, Madam Alexandra's home.

A bouquet of withering roses stands on a table.

When the piece starts (before audience enters) we hear sound from the synth and the cassette player.

The servants, one male (Edvard, guitar) and one female (Dorotea, flute) play a kind of ghostly music for Madam Alexandra, seemingly unknowingly accompanied by the electronic music constantly heard discreetly in the background. The instruments are not amplified, neither are their voices.

Sound:

A synthesizer is visible in the room. It is programmed to play on its own, and it heard through a mono speaker stage right.

A cassette player is also visible in the room. The sound, prerecorded electronic music, is heard through a speaker stage left, and a speaker behind the audience.

The sound and music is made so that we always hear sound from the synth, and from the beginning until way out in the piece sound from the cassette player, which is being switched off when it falls to the floor.

(Note to composer: The soundtrack and the live music must work together in such a way that we don't get the "oil and water" effect. We won't know exactly when they are going to start playing after the soundtrack starts.

It might be possible to fade in more dedicated sound adapted to their live music as it goes along, the *meeting* of sounds may become an important point.)

When they have finished playing:

**Madam Alexandra:** I thought I heard somebody knocking on the door?

(We have not heard any knocking sound.)

**The Servant:** (wearing a false moustache) Let me have a look, Madam Alexandra.

(Leaves.)

(The Maid organizes her notes and wipes the flute for a really long time.)

(The Servant returns.)

**The Servant:** It is the Doctor, Madam.

**Madam Alexandra:** The Doctor? Now? At this hour? What does he want?

**The Servant:** One moment, Madam, I will ask him. (Leaves.)

(Returns.)

**The Servant:** He says he has something important to discuss with you, Madam Alexandra.

**Madam Alexandra:** So? This I find highly surprising. What would that be then?

**The Servant:** Let me hear, Madam. (Leaves)

(Returns.)

**The Servant:** He says he can only tell you in person, Madam.

**Madam Alexandra:** Very well then, send him in.

(The Servant leaves. PERFORMER 2 removes moustache, puts on a white coat and thick glasses, returns as The Doctor.)

**The Doctor:** (while entering) Good evening, Madam Alexandra.

**Madam Alexandra:** (rather chill) Good evening, good evening, Doctor.

**The Doctor:** I hope I'm not disturbing?

**Madam Alexandra:** Oh no, far from it. What is it you have to tell me that is so important that you cannot let my servants hear it?

**The Doctor:** I have been house-doctor here for generations, Madam; your father before you, and now also your nephew Jostein.

**Madam Alexandra:** (on guard) Jostein? What about him? Has anything happened to him?

**The Doctor:** Jostein has returned to the capital, Madam.

**Madam Alexandra:** What are you saying? When did he arrive?

**The Doctor:** Last Friday. He came with the boat from Copenhagen.

**Madam Alexandra:** Very well. This I find highly surprising, I must say. (To the Maid:) It seems to be knocking on the door again, Dorotea. (We have not heard any knocking sound.)

**The Maid:** I will look who it is, Madam Alexandra.

(The Maid leaves. PERFORMER 3 [female] changes to Jostein by putting on a false beard and male clothes. Returns as Jostein.)

**Jostein:** (with a low voice) Hello, auntie!

**Madam Alexandra:** Jostein! What are you doing here! (Calls to the Maid as she was offstage:) Dorotea! Why did you let in Jostein?!

**Jostein:** And here we have the Doctor too, I see.

**The Doctor:** (fatherly) Welcome home, Jostein.

**Madam Alexandra:** Where did Edvard go? (Shouts:) Ed-vard! (falling major third, relating to the sound track.)

**Madam Alexandra:** (to herself:) What a terrible beard he has grown! He looks completely insane! (To Jostein:) For how long have you been home?

**Jostein:** (dreamy) Home. What is home.

(Pause, long unpleasant silence.)

**The Doctor:** (to Madam Alexandra:) Perhaps Jostein would like some refreshments.

**Madam Alexandra:** Yes, yes of course. (Shouts:) Dorotea! Dorote-a!! (To Jostein:) What are you drinking, Jostein?

**Jostein:** You know that, aunt.

**Madam Alexandra:** I do?

**Jostein:** Yes, you do.

**Madam Alexandra:** (thinks about this in silence for a long time:) No, I don't think I do.

**Jostein:** Yes, I am completely sure that you do.

**Madam Alexandra:** No, I most certainly do not.

**Jostein:** (offended, but not surprised) Do you know me that badly? Do you remember so little?

**Madam Alexandra:** (to The Doctor:) That beard does not become him at all. (The Doctor does not answer.) Is this how they dress down there in Berlin nowadays?

**Jostein:** Would you ask Dorotea to prepare the bathtub. And put in a triple dose of bathing salt.

**Madam Alexandra:** Well, where is she!?

**The Doctor:** I will have a look in the kitchen. Is it apple juice with green tea and pineapple juice that you drink, Jostein?

**Jostein:** (to Madam Alexandra:) You see, aunt? *He* remembers.

(The Doctor leaves. PERFORMER 2 changes back to The Servant. Removes coat and glasses, puts on moustache.)

**Madam Alexandra:** (to herself, surprised that The Doctor is going to serve drinks:) Well, he has always felt at home in our house, this doctor. (To Jostein:) I can see that my twin sister still has not managed to raise you properly. Bah, which kind of perfume are you using! It smells worse than worst.

**Jostein:** Dear aunt Alexandra, you have never followed the times (??). – You are still keeping servants, I see. Is Edvard still here? Is he playing that grisley (?) guitar of his?

**Madam Alexandra:** I don't need to tell *you* that, but as you can see, the guitar is still lying here.

(The Servant returns.)

**The Servant:** I am sorry I was away for so long, Madam, but there was someone at the door.

**Madam Alexandra:** Yes, and I can see that you let him in too. (Nods to Jostein.)

**The Servant:** Oh no, no, there is a lady here, a door-to-door saleswoman. Dorotea is trying to get rid of her now.

**Madam Alexandra:** What woman? A door-to-door salewoman? (frekkhetens nådegave) It must be at least ten years since we last had a door-seller here. I thought that species died out with the internet!

**The Servant:** She says she is selling encyclopedias.

**Madam Alexandra:** (short, whiny laughter:) Hah! Encyclopedias! Hah! Hah!

(Jostein leaves.)

**Madam Alexandra:** (sharp, to Jostein:) Where are *you* going?

**Jostein:** I'm just shortly going to the corridor. [another way of saying he's going to the toilet, find better] [or keep]

(The Servant picks up his guitar and tunes it to a tuning with quartertones.)

**Madam Alexandra:** You know, Edvard, it might almost be fun to meet this saleswoman, this ghost from the 20th century. Just imagine! Encyclopedias in the year 2019! I am going to have a word with her myself. Leave the door open, Jostein! (Leaves. PERFORMER 1 changes costume to The Saleswoman.)

(The Servant plays solo guitar (along with the constant electronic track) as long as needed for the costume changes backstage, and then even longer, to make the audience turn slightly impatient.)

(Jostein returns.)

**Jostein:** Oh Edvard, Edvard.

**The Servant:** (keeps playing while he speaks) Yes, Mr. Jostein.

**Jostein:** How long have you been playing the guitar?

**The Servant:** I started when I was nine.

**Jostein:** Have you never wanted to perform professionally?

**The Servant:** In a way, I do. Your aunt Madam Alexandra hired me and Dorotea on the condition that we play for her several times per week.

(The Saleswoman enters.)

**The Servant:** What! Are you still here?

**The Saleswoman:** (triumphantly) The lady of the house asked me to come in.

**Jostein:** She just wants to make fun of you.

**The Saleswoman:** That's what you would think, but I explained to her that my agency (?) is not for just any ordinary encyclopedia.

**Jostein:** So? What is this supposed to mean? And where is she? Why does she not come back inside?

(The Servant still plays.)

**The Saleswoman:** My encyclopedia is also called "*The Book of Transformations*".

(The Servant stops playing when he hears these words, and quickly leaves.

PERFORMER 2 puts on a big cardboard box, becoming Cardboard Box 1.)

**Jostein:** (annoyed, to himself:) Where is my aunt, and the damned doctor? I need a drink. (To the saleswoman:) (sarcastically:) Are you selling transformations? You don't think it is enough with how nature runs its course? Look at this beard, I have been grooming it for more than half a year.

(Cardboard Box 1 enters from the left, crawls across the floor behind them. The others do not react to the cardboard box.)

**The Saleswoman:** Not all cultures operate with an idea of time that runs from the left to the right.

**Jostein:** Is that what your book is about? (shouts:) Doctor! Where is my damn drink?

(The action stops until Cardboard Box 1 is out of sight, and PERFORMER 2 has changed back to The Doctor. Jostein and The Saleswoman await motionless, take care not to look at the cardboard box.)

(The Doctor returns with a large glass full of green liquid.)

**The Doctor:** Here, dear Jostein, is your drink.

**Jostein:** Well, that was not one second too soon. What are you fooling around with back there? And where are the servants? One would think they had other things to do than playing this grisly ghost music for aunt Alexandra.

**The Doctor:** (to The Saleswoman, suspicious:) Who are you representing? There is something familiar about you.

**Jostein:** (Studies her with half-closed eyes.) Yes, you are right, doctor.

**The Saleswoman:** (importantly:) My name is Ellinor Andreassen.

**Jostein:** Doesn't ring any bell.

**The Saleswoman:** You may remember me from the game show "Double or nothing" in the television.

**Jostein:** (tastes the drink, cannot swallow) This is way to strong, Doctor. I need more ice.

(Jostein runs out, PERFORMER 2 changes to Cardboard Box 2, a different size than nr. 1. He also has a slide whistle.)

**The Doctor:** (warningly:) I don't watch television. I have seen you somewhere!

**The Saleswoman:** I have also been in the olympic games. (Pause, to herself, somewhat disappointed, sighing:) But that was mostly behind the scenes, I'm afraid. (Cardboard Box 2 crawls across the floor from right to left, opposite of before, while PERFORMER 2 plays slide whistle.)

**The Saleswoman:** (after a short break, becoming self-assured and "salesperson-like" again:) But now I can offer you this fantastic encyclopedia. You can of course pay in rates.

**The Doctor:** I don't need an encyclopedia. And neither does anybody else in this house. (To himself:) *They* need other kinds of remedies.

**The Saleswoman:** I sell that too. Remedies, I mean. Or I can get them. I know a guy out on Nesodden. If you can wait a bit, I left my suitcase out in the corridor. (Runs out, comes back immediately with a suitcase.)

**The Saleswoman:** Here. Watch this. (Looks through the suitcase.)

**The Doctor:** (sarcastically, in an "oiled" way of speaking, like old playboys:) Are these crystals that protect the daughters against playboys in the summer evenings?

**The Saleswoman:** (does not answer, has not paid attention) (keeps looking) (To herself:) Oh, where did I put it then!?

(Digs into the suitcase, throws things over her shoulders, socks, shoes, papers, an audio cassette, a VHS-cassette, a roll of yarn that rolls across the floor, etc.)

(Jostein walks fast back inside. The liquid in his glass has changed colour from green to red, this is not commented on.)

**Jostein:** (worried) It was mama who called. She is coming here.

(We have not heard any telephone.)

**The Doctor:** What?! Madam Jasmine? Madam Alexandra's twin sister?

**Jostein:** Oh dammit, what do we do now??

**The Doctor:** Maybe we can try to confuse her. If you pretend to be Edvard, then I can pretend to be Dorotea, and then we say that we are not here.

**Jostein:** But what if she meets *them* when she rings the doorbell?

**The Doctor:** We'll have to make sure they are somewhere else. (Thinks about this for an unrealistically short time, lifts his index finger in the air to indicate that he has gotten an idea:) We can send them into the garden to pick berries!

**Jostein:** But then she will see them from the garden path. Let's rather send them in the basement to fetch brandy.

**The Doctor:** No, then they will just come back again. We'll send them up to the attic...

**Jostein:** ...to get the family protocols...

**The Doctor:** ...that are locked up in the library...

**Jostein:** ...in the safe!

**The Saleswoman:** (has finally found her thing. Holds up a handle from a ski pole.) Here! Look here! This is it!

**The Doctor:** (runs out) (His voice is heard from offstage) Dorotea and Edvard! You have to go to the attic and find the family protocols. There is something we have to investigate. Hurry up! They are in the safe... (says it wrongly)... eh, I mean, they are in the attic!

**The Servant's voice** (offstage, also PERFORMER 2): (let the ways of speaking be as similar as possible at this point): No, you are wrong, doctor. They are locked up in the library.

**The Doctor's voice:** (offstage) It does not matter! Hurry up to the attic!

**The Servant's voice** (offstage): But I have to prepare the bedroom for Madam Jasmin. She can be here any time.

**The Doctor's voice** (offstage): Yes! Yes! Perfect! Hurry up to the bedroom and prepare it really well, and use a lot of time for this. A lot of time! And take Dorotea with you!

(Jostein is sipping at the strange liquid in the glass, makes a grimace with his nose, is unable to swallow it.) (If the time of year permits, put a long piece of rabarber inside, with the leaf on.)

**The Servant's voice** (offstage): But she went to the supermarket to buy bathing salt for Mr. Jostein.

**The Doctor's voice** (offstage): Ok, yes, perfect. Then we won't see her for a while. (The Doctor comes running in with his arms full of clothes.)

**The Doctor:** Jostein! Here are the clothes!

**Jostein:** It's perfect, my dear doctor. I heard everything. (to The Saleswoman:) Can you please leave while we are getting undressed here.

**The Saleswoman:** With this remedy from a skipole you can...

**The Doctor:** (shouting, interrupts:) Out!

(The Saleswoman leaves, PERFORMER 1 changes back to Madam Alexandra.)

**Jostein:** (while putting on servant's clothes, whatever that may be) I think the plan might succeed, Doctor.

**The Doctor:** (less optimistic) It has to, otherwise we are put in a very difficult situation.

(They get dressed in silence. Jostein, now dressed up as The Servant still has his beard on, plus a moustache not particularly similar to The Servant's. The Doctor keeps his thick glasses even while supposed to be The Maid.)

(Madam Alexandra returns just when they are finished. She holds the skipole-remedy, puts it next to the roses.)

**Madam Alexandra:** (surprised to see them:) But...? Are you here? (Believing they are the servants.) Weren't you Edvard supposed to prepare the room for my twin sister? And you Doreotea, didn't you leave to get bathing salt?

(The Doctor winks "unnoticeably" with his eye to Jostein.)

**Madam Alexandra:** Well well, since you are ready now, then I would ask you to play something for me.



(They get restless, looks at each other.)

**Madam Alexandra:** Take "The Tango of Death". I need to calm down a bit after all these surprises.

(They pick up the instruments and play something as best as they can. (The flutist now plays guitar, and vice versa.))

**Madam Alexandra:** (after having listened for a while, they keep playing, she speaks *much* louder, to be heard above the music) I don't know what I would have done without you! (Sighs joyfully.) Ahhh! And that music. I hear something new in it every time. (Pause) Oh, Edvard. I wouldn't be surprised if they name a price after you one day.

(Puts her hand to her ear:) Oh no, it is somebody at the door *again*. (No knocking has been heard.)

(Madam Alexandra gets up to leave, trips over the cable so the cassette player falls to the floor. (Pyro effect?)) They stop playing. Jostein as Servant puts down the guitar and runs over to clean up, turns off the cassette if it has not stopped by the fall. We now only hear the sound of the synthesizer, about 20 % of the total music that was there before.)

**Madam Alexandra:** Oh no, so clumsy of me!

**Jostein as Servant:** It will be alright, Madam. These old fashioned cassette players can handle a bang-bang.

**Madam Alexandra:** (leaves) Well I shall go and see who it is myself now. If it's my sister I better receive her myself.

(Madam Alexandra leaves, PERFORMER 1 changes to The Cape-dressed by putting a blanket over her head, or similar. Face not visible.)

**Jostein as himself:** That was close, Doctor!

**The Doctor as himself, in Maid-gear:** (annoyed by her silliness) Bah, I would not worry about *her*, she does not understand anything. But I wonder if your mother will be as easy to fool. I assume we may have her here any minute now. And even though her and Madam Alexandra are the spitting image of each other, it is not for granted that...

**Jostein:** (interrupts) Don't be afraid, doctor, she has become so near-sighted after she got into the menopause. [????] Maybe we can try to lift the glasses off her, then she won't see us so clearly.

(**The Cape-dressed** enters while they talk, the costume hides her face. They don't notice, but keep talking. **The Cape-dressed** turns the knobs on the synth so the sound changes, but is still audible. Does this for about 10 seconds, then leaves.

PERFORMER 1 changes costume to **Madam Jasmine**, which is the same as Madam Alexandra, only with very black sunglasses.)

**The Doctor:** But how are we going to do that without her noticing?

**Jostein:** If we can find uncle Rudolph's old fishing rod...

**The Doctor:** (interrupts) It is never going to work! And besides, she *knows* that you are here.

**Jostein:** How can she know that? I didn't tell her anything.

**The Doctor:** They must have told her when she called. Why would she come here otherwise? She and Madam Alexandra have not spoken together for years.

**Jostein:** (hectic) I'm going to hide. Didn't I see a cardboard box out in the hallway? (Runs out.)

**The Doctor:** What about me then?

**Jostein:** Now everyone has to save himself.

(**Jostein** runs out. PERFORMER 3 changes costume to **The Maid**, removes the beard and the moustache.) (**The Doctor** walks indecisively and nervously around the room, wondering what to do. Still holding the flute in his hands.)

(**The Maid** enters quickly. She does not take note of the Doctor, but walks straight to the suitcase of The Saleswoman. She digs into it, finds a bicycle pump, checks that it works, and runs out with it.)

(PERFORMER 3 changes back from The Maid to **Jostein, dressed as the Servant**, with something meant to resemble Madam Alexandra.) (It does not matter if these costume changes take long time and the audience has to wait long for something to happen.)

(**Madam Jasmine** enters. She is dressed exactly like Madam Alexandra, but is wearing dark glasses because she is snowblind. She cannot see, feels her way forward and walks very carefully.)

**Madam Jasmine:** Anybody here? I thought I heard flute playing.

**The Doctor as himself, still dressed up:** It is just me... eh... (unsure of who to pretend to be for a moment, then remembers)...it's me, Dorotea, the maid. I will soon have your flambé cutlets ready, Madam Jasmine.

**Madam Jasmine:** (matter-of-factly) Thank you, it is very nice of you to serve my favourite food when I for once decide to pay my sister a visit.

**The Doctor:** Tell me, are you alright?

**Madam Jasmine:** I have been skiing in Geilo with Viggo, Rosalind and the nephews, and now I have become snowblind. I can't see the hand in front of me.

**The Doctor:** (interested) OK, I see! Snowblindness can last for many days.

**Madam Jasmine:** 48 hours, doctor Kruskakli said.

**The Doctor:** (forgets himself) 48 hours, yes, that's completely correct.... eh, I have heard.

**Madam Jasmine:** So I hope it will be over soon. Now it has been two days since we came down from the mountain, and I think that maybe it starts to clear a bit and come back now...

**The Doctor:** (interrupts) Oh no, no, it is very important not to hurry this, then it can get worse. I recommend you to tie a ribbon in front of your eyes at least until tomorrow morning.

**Madam Jasmine:** (somewhat surprised) I have to say you know a lot about this, Dorotea...?

**The Doctor:** (more or less as himself) My father was optician during the war.

**Madam Jasmine:** (uninterested again) Well well, we'll see.... I hope. (Giggles a bit at her own wordplay.) (Pause.) Where is my sister, by the way? Can you go and get her? And bring me a large glass of jus d'orange, if you would be so kind.

**The Doctor:** Yes, one moment. (Walks out.)

(The Doctor returns immediately with a large glass of orange juice. Jostein also enters, now he is going to pretend he is Madam Alexandra, simultaneously as wearing The Servant's clothes, and both beard and moustache. He should also wear something that makes one think of Alexandra, whatever that could be.)

**The Doctor as the Maid:** Here is your juice, Madam Jasmine. And here is Madam Alexandra.

**Madam Jasmine:** Is that you, Alexandra?

**Jostein as Alexandra:** So you found the way here, little Jasmine.

**Madam Jasmine:** Remember you are only born eleven minutes before me. (Pause.) What's with your voice? You sound like an old woman. Do you smoke cigarillos under the fullmoon?

**Jostein:** (coughs a bit) It... yes...

**The Doctor:** (interrupts) Anything else I can do for you, Madam Jasmine?

**Madam Jasmine:** Something is smelling here. (Sniffs.) That perfume... (Sniffs)

**Jostein:** These servants are flushing themselves with body lotion and hair polish. Last year I almost could not breathe! I had to fire him! I thought I was gonna die!

**Madam Jasmine:** But Alexandra, didn't you use to have servants that were so musical?

**Jostein and The Doctor:** (at the same time) No no / Not at all / Absolutely not!

**Madam Jasmine:** (more friendly) Oh, no false modesty now. I could hear both flute and guitar when I came up the alley to the house.

**Jostein:** No, they have quit.

**Madam Jasmin:** Rubbish! Pick up your instruments and play me some music! I need to hear a tango now! Do you know the one by Asparagus Johnsen, what was it called again... something with the sun over Spitsbergen... (more and more talking to herself) Spitsbergen? Or just Bergen? Sarpsberg? Is that a name? Somewhere over there on the west coast. West... east? (Quoting) "The sun rises, and I brush my teeth." It was the guy with the thin little moustache who used to sing this in television when we were children. Do you remember, Alexandra?

CURTAIN / BLACK OUT

(The synth continues for a little while, maximum 10 seconds, then it is being turned off, best if we don't see it happen.)

## UNUSED IDEAS:

the Doctor and Edvard plays for Jostein's mother

the Doctor pretends to be Edvard, puts on his moustache, which falls to the floor when Jostein (who was wearing it) runs out. (Meaning he pretends to be himself!!!)

THIS WE MUST HAVE

The Mother: I love this music by Asparagus Johnson / Johansen [relation to the saleswoman??]

I find it so unfair that so few people have heard his music.

something more needs to happen with the thing from the ski pole, and the Saleswoman must come back.

it could be she was someone else than who she said. (someone else than Alexandra of course.) [what does this mean???

"the perfume" Jostein uses has to come back too, in some way - - somebody sprays themselves with an old flask (?) and the 3. person sort of believes that this is Jostein?

perhaps the Mother (Jasmine) discovers the scheming not visually, but via the smell. maybe the Doctor has to spray himself.