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Title: Bearslayer

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Release date: January 2, 2006 [EBook #17445]

Language: English

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# BEARSLAYER

by

Andrejs Pumpurs (1841-1902)

A free translation from the unrhymed Latvian into English heroic verse

by

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## FOREWORD

Most societies seem to have epic heroes and events that define them as they like to see themselves: Even a young society such as Australia has Ned Kelly, Eureka Stockade, and ANZAC. Others have their Robin Hood, Siegfried, Roland, or Davy Crockett. *Lacplešis* (*Bearslayer*) is such a work. *Bearslayer* is patriotic, brave, strong, tough, loyal, wise, fair, and virtuous, and he loves nature. He embodies the strengths and virtues of the Latvian folk in a legendary age of greatness, before they were subjugated and corrupted by "Strangers".

The poem was important in the growth of Latvian self-awareness. As Jazeps Rudzītis, the eminent Latvian folklorist and literary scholar, put it, "There is no other work in Latvian literature whose story has penetrated mass consciousness as deeply or resounded as richly in literature and art as *Bearslayer*." Thus, it seemed worthwhile to me to make the poem available to people who wish to read it in English, and this volume is the result. It contains the fruits of two years' labour.

In writing *Lacplešis* Andrejs Pumpurs made an enormous contribution to Latvian literature. Thus, it may seem presumptuous that I have given myself equal prominence with him on the title page. After all, he is the author of the original poem, of which the present text is merely a translation. However, the task of translating a poem is much more than that of taking the words of the source language and replacing them with equivalent words from the target language. In Latvian, in addition to *tulkot* (to translate), there is a second verb *atdzejot*, which means approximately "re-versify". As I explain in the Technical Notes (p. iii), I have transformed Pumpurs's original Latvian work into an English poem in heroic verse: The result is an *atdzejojums*, not "merely" a translation.

The moral support I received from a number of people during the two years I worked on the translation was particularly important to me. I am especially indebted to Edgars Kariks of the Baltic Office of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, who gave constant encouragement and concrete support, and Ojars Kalnin of the Latvian Institute in Riga, who was extremely positive and supportive from an early stage in the project. These two gave me the courage to keep going. Among others, Rita Berzin read an early fragment and encouraged me to believe I was on the right track, and Jana Felder (née Martinson) responded enthusiastically to a presentation at a conference. Valters Nollendorfs encouraged me to trust my own feeling of what sounded right, and Guntis Smidchens showed interest in the translation from the point of view of a university teacher.

I am greatly indebted to my Latvian teacher in Adelaide, Ilze Ostrovska. Without her I would never have learned enough Latvian to read the original poem. Mirdza Kate Baltais edited the first version of the manuscript and helped me eliminate a very large number of errors, as well as making numerous suggestions for improvements. It is definitely not her fault that there are still errors in the text—quite apart from certain liberties that I have allowed myself (see p.iii). My colleague in Riga, Kaspars Klavin, read the entire manuscript and made a number of sensitive and insightful suggestions for corrections and improvements, for which I am grateful.

My son, Andrew Cropley, discussed the project with me many times, and suggested the addition of a Glossary (see p.164). He also built the *Bearslayer* website, with which some readers will be familiar (<http://web.aanet.com.au/Bearslayer>). My wife, Alison, was patient and encouraging throughout, as well as providing artwork for the cover.

Adelaide, January 2006 Arthur Cropley

## TECHNICAL NOTES

This is a free translation into English heroic verse of *Lacplešis* (*Bearslayer*) by Andrejs Pumpurs, first published in Latvian in 1888. The translation here is a corrected version of the original, which was published in 2005. *Lacplešis* has been translated into Estonian, Lithuanian, Polish and at least three times into Russian, as well as into Japanese! An English translation was published by Rita Berzin in 1988. This used poetic language, but the text was unrhymed and its metre irregular. It is also very difficult to obtain. Various prose translations of fragments also exist. The present translation is in rhyme and has a strict metre. As far as I know, it is the only existing translation of the entire poem into English verse.

In the interests of telling a good story in an easily understandable way I have omitted or shifted to a slightly different location an occasional line in Pumpurs's text, perhaps a dozen lines in the entire poem. I have also occasionally inserted lines that were not in the original text, again perhaps a dozen in the entire poem. My translation is also very loose in some places—an important priority for me was a poem that flowed well—and I have allowed myself some liberties. I apologize to those who are offended. I have, however, followed the sequence of events exactly as Pumpurs told them, and have retained virtually all Pumpurs's metaphors and similar poetic devices, such as the moon's rays being described as bars of silver, or mist as dripping like blood. I have tried to recapture in the English the moods

suggested to me by the original Latvian: rustic joy, horror, tenderness, or despair.

The translation is also free because I wanted to maintain a strict metre as well as to achieve the effect of an English epic poem. The latter goal involved using archaic-sounding words as much as possible, although I preferred words that would be familiar to educated native-speakers of contemporary English, rather than genuinely archaic words. I also employed devices such as inversion of the word order (e.g., "a hero bold") or using adjectives in the place of adverbs (e.g., "the sun set slow"). However, I avoided forms that no longer exist, such as "thou," "thy," or "doth" and the like: I believe that these now sound too artificial to modern readers' ears.

Despite the liberties just described, the organization of the work follows Pumpurs's original division into six cantos of widely differing lengths. However, as aids to following the story I have given the cantos titles, divided them into "scenes", each scene beginning on a new page, and inserted intermediate headings. The scenes and headings are entirely my own invention and, to make it clear that they do not come from Pumpurs, I have put my headings into italics.

Pumpurs used various stanza structures, ranging from four lines to passages of 250 or more lines without interruption. Where Pumpurs used four-, six- or eight-line stanzas, I have done the same. Later, where Pumpurs used very long stanzas, I have returned to an eight-line or four-line format, largely depending on the number of syllables in a line. I have also sometimes inserted four-line stanzas into sections otherwise consisting of eight-line stanzas, in order to mark a turning point in the action.

Pumpurs also used differing metrical forms, the number of syllables in a line ranging from six to eighteen. In my translation I have used the iambus as the basic metrical unit throughout the entire poem. The most common metrical form in my translation is iambic pentameter. However, where Pumpurs used eight-syllable lines I have done the same. In such cases I have also often switched to four-line stanzas, in order to increase the "staccato" effect of the shorter lines. The original Latvian is largely unrhymed. I have translated into rhyming verse, mainly using the rhyme scheme a, b, a, b, c, d, c, d. In the six-line stanzas the rhyme scheme is a, b, a, b, a, b; in the four-line stanzas a, b, a, b.

## **LATVIAN PROPER NOUNS**

With few exceptions, most noticeably Bearslayer's name (Latvian: Lacplesis) and those of the Black Knight (Latvian: Tumais bruninieks) and the Father of Destiny (Latvian: Liktena tevs), I have not translated personal and place names, such as "Perkons" or "Kegums", but have maintained the Latvian spelling. Thus, Laimdota remains Laimdota, not "Laima's Gift", and Koknesis is not translated into "Tree Bearer" or "Wood Carrier". This is because the original Latvian names have a heroic ring about them, whereas English translations run the risk of sounding ridiculous. Since the Latvian gods and spirits will be unfamiliar to most English speakers I have often inserted into the poem explanations of who they are (e.g., "The God of Thunder, Perkons").

## **NOTES ON PRONUNCIATION**

The poem, as I have translated it, is meant to be read aloud, although this is not essential. Because of the strict iambic metre of the translation, every second syllable must be stressed. In most places I have found English words for which this is compatible with everyday pronunciation, at least in the Australian dialect that I speak. However, it raises some problems for the pronunciation of Latvian geographical and personal names. In this poem, all such words start with a stressed syllable, as is usual in spoken Latvian. However, stressing every second syllable may offend against some readers' understanding of correct Latvian usage, I ask for forgiveness in advance. The work is, however, a poem in the English language, and the pronunciation suggested here and in the Glossary is essential for preserving the iambic metre of the English poetry.

The notes on pronunciation that follow are solely for the purposes of reading this poem, and are not meant as a general guide to pronunciation of the Latvian language. The syllable represented phonetically as "-a" should be pronounced as in "bad", and "-ah" as a very long "bad". The syllable represented as "-e" should be pronounced as in "bed", "-o" as in "hot", "-oh" as in "throw", "oo" as in "zoo", "ow" as in "bough", "-u" as in "hut" and "uh" as in "book". Syllables in boldface should be stressed.

(a) All untranslated proper nouns, such as personal or place names, start with a stressed syllable (e.g., Liga = Lee-gu). Where a name has more than two syllables, the first and third are stressed in order to maintain the iambic metre (e.g., Spidala = Spee-du-lu).

(b) The letter "o" is a diphthong ("oo-oh" or "oh-u"). However, as a rule I have adopted a shortened diphthong, to avoid giving the single letter "o" two syllables. Thus, it is usually pronounced "wo". For

example, the name of the Messenger of the Gods, "Vaidelots", is pronounced "Vy-du-lwots", "Perkons" is pronounced "Pah-kwons", and so on. Despite what has just been said, Laimdota is pronounced "Laim-dwo-tu", and "Koknesis" is pronounced "Kwok-ness-is", whereas Spidala is always pronounced "Spee-du-lu".

(c) The letter combination "ie" is also a diphthong, and is pronounced "ee e". Thus, the letters "liel" (as in "Lielvarde") are pronounced "Lee-ell".

(d) A final "e" is pronounced. Thus, for instance, "Lielvarde" is pronounced "Lee-ell-var-de".

(e) Although it does not involve pronouncing Latvian words, "Latvia" is pronounced "Lat'vya", "Latvian(s)" "Lat'vyan(s)", and "Destiny" "Dest'ny". Many three-syllable words are pronounced similarly: e.g., "Daug'va" "trav'ler", etc.

## GLOSSARY

To assist readers who are not familiar with Latvian geography and mythology, I have prepared a brief glossary of names and places (see p. 164). This includes guidance on how to pronounce the names for the purposes of the present work.

## SUMMARY

It is the turn of the 13th century, 800 years ago in Latvia. The Baltic gods have gathered to consult the Father of Destiny about their own fate and that of the Latvian people. Both are under threat from invading German knights, who have been sent by the Pope to christianize the Baltic region, under the command of Bishop Albert. Perkons, the God of Thunder, calls on all the gods to guard and nurture the Latvians, and they promise to do so, each in his or her own way.

As the council is breaking up the Goddess Staburadze reveals that she has rescued a young man from the River Daugava, where he was cast down by two witches. She has taken him to her Crystal Palace beneath the river in the whirlpool of Staburags, from which no human can emerge alive. Perkons reveals that this youth is Bearslayer, who will become a noble warrior under the protection of Perkons, and will strive mightily against the forces of evil.

At the beginning of Canto II the action goes back in time to the Castle of Lielvarde, shortly before the Council of the Gods described in the previous canto. The son of the Lord of Lielvarde reveals mighty strength, killing a bear with his bare hands. This first heroic deed wins him the name "Bearslayer." (This young man is the hero that Perkons revealed to the other gods in Canto I.) The youth is not the true son of the Lord of Lielvarde, but a foundling suckled by a female bear in the forest. (Although it is not directly explained until almost the end of the poem, it is important to know that Bearslayer has bear's ears, and that if these are cut off he will lose his bearlike strength.) Bearslayer was brought to Lielvarde as a baby by Vaidelots, a Messenger of the Gods, to be raised until he reached manhood. After killing the bear he is sent to study for seven years in the Castle of Burtnieks, in order to learn the ancient wisdom of the Latvian race. Accompanied by the good advice of his foster father, he sets off.

On the way to Burtnieks's Castle, Bearslayer visits the castle of the Latvian Lord Aizkrauklis, where he is stunned by the beauty of Aizkrauklis's daughter, Spidala. However, he watches her and discovers that she is a witch. He follows her by hiding in a hollow log on which she flies to the Devil's Pit, and witnesses evil rites, as well as seeing the false holy man, Kangars, promise to serve the Devil by working against the ancient gods and supporting Christianity, because Christians are easier prey for the Devil. On the journey back to Aizkraukle Bearslayer is cast down into the whirlpool of Staburags in the River Daugava by Spidala and another witch. From here he is rescued by Staburadze, as we already know from Canto I, and taken to her Crystal Palace beneath the whirlpool.

With the help of the beautiful and virtuous maiden, Laimdota, Staburadze nurses Bearslayer back to health. She reveals to him that he has been chosen by the gods to fight against evil, especially Spidala and Kangars, who are plotting in secret. Staburadze gives him a talisman, a magic mirror, and Laimdota gives him a ribbon decorated with an oak-leaf pattern. He leaves the Crystal Palace and is duly turned to stone, as are all mortals, but is restored to life by Perkons. He performs a second heroic deed, saving a boat that is sinking in the raging River Perse by rowing with his bare hands, and is befriended by a powerful youth, Koknesis. Together they ride to Burtnieks, accompanied by the curses of Spidala.

Canto III opens with Spidala hurrying to the hut of Kangars to warn him that Bearslayer was present in the Devil's Pit and saw the shameful deeds. To prevent Bearslayer revealing that he and Spidala are in league with the Devil, Kangars decides to lure the young hero into a trap by provoking a war against

the Estonian Giant, Kalapuisis, certain that Bearslayer will rush into battle against the invincible foe and be killed. As Kangars explains this plot to Spidala a terrible storm arises, and Spidala is unable to return home.

The storm was sent by Perkons to destroy a ship just arriving at the mouth of the River Daugava from Germany, in order to kill the German missionaries it is carrying. Led by the priest, Dietrich, they have come with the intention of forcing the Baltic people to accept Christianity. However, the Livian fisherfolk of the Daugava estuary rescue the passengers from the ship. Thus, they thwart the will of Perkons, who had planned to drown the newcomers, and save the very people who will eventually become their conquerors. The morning after the storm, a fisherman brings Dietrich to Kangars, and an alliance is forged, since both want to introduce Christianity, although for differing reasons.

Years pass. Bearslayer and Koknesis study hard in the Castle of Burtnieks. Bearslayer has a special reason to seek perfection: Laimdota is the daughter of Burtnieks and has returned home to the castle from Staburadze's Crystal Palace, where she and Bearslayer met. They fall in love, but just as Bearslayer is about to ask for her hand news arrives that Kalapuisis has entered Latvia and is killing and laying waste. Burtnieks offers Laimdota's hand to any warrior who can rid them of Kalapuisis, and Bearslayer rides out to face him: The plot seems to be succeeding!

Bearslayer faces Kalapuisis in single combat, and defeats him. However, just as Bearslayer is about to kill him, Kalapuisis reveals a prophecy told him by his mother that a bear cub from the Daugava, who is of noble rank and equal to Kalapuisis as a warrior, will come and save the Latvians from their conquerors. The two warriors realize that Bearslayer is this bear cub, and that they have a common enemy—the Germans—and make peace, so that they can work together against the invaders.

Successful in the Estonian war, Bearslayer returns to Burtnieks's Castle with the other Latvian warriors, and they are greeted in song by the local maidens. Laimdota places an oak-leaf wreath on Bearslayer's head and sings of his might, promising to make him a true and virtuous wife. Bearslayer replies in song that he will live and die for Laimdota. Amid great joy and feelings of brotherhood the warriors toast Bearslayer, and conclude that the gods personally intervened on his behalf. This divine intervention gives Bearslayer legendary status so that, instead of destroying him, the plot added to his fame.

Once again, time passes while Bearslayer studies at the Castle of Burtnieks. One night he notices in the fortress's undercroft a trapdoor, left half-open to reveal a stone staircase leading below. He goes down and follows a tunnel until he enters a large chamber that he judges to be beneath the centre of the lake. He is in the Sunken Castle that Laimdota had told him about. He discovers Laimdota reading an ancient book. She explains to him that if a mortal remains in the Sunken Castle overnight and survives until morning, the castle will rise once more into the light of day. Bearslayer resolves to carry out this heroic task and Laimdota leaves him.

Midnight passes and the Sunken Castle grows cold. Bearslayer lights a fire from broken wood lying around. Suddenly seven evil spirits enter the room carrying an open coffin, in which an old man with huge sharp teeth and long nails is lying. He begins to groan horribly and complain that he is cold. Bearslayer cannot bear the sound and hauls the man from the coffin to the fire, but the old man tries to bite off Bearslayer's ears, knowing that without them Bearslayer is weak. Bearslayer fights back and holds the old man in the fire, saying that he will only let him go if the Sunken Castle is raised to the surface.

At this, a whirlwind springs up and the seven evil spirits return, led by Spidala. They attack Bearslayer and he is about to be defeated when he remembers the mirror that Staburadze gave him. He pulls it out and holds it in Spidala's face. A howling fills the air and all the evil spirits turn to dust and are whirled round the room in the whirlwind. The spirit of Viduveds, a wise man of ancient times, appears in human form and greets Bearslayer, saying that the young hero will save the Latvian people. Viduveds's handmaidens make a bed for Bearslayer, and he falls into a deep sleep.

Next morning the people are amazed to see a castle standing on an island in the middle of the lake. Laimdota tells Burtnieks that Bearslayer has spent the night in the castle, and the old man realizes at once that Bearslayer has broken the magic spell and saved the Sunken Castle. Laimdota and Burtnieks enter the castle and wake Bearslayer. He claims Laimdota as his bride, and Burtnieks gives his blessing, saying that the union of the two clans (Burtnieks and Lielvarde) will save the Latvians.

One evening, later, Laimdota reads to Bearslayer from the ancient books found in the Sunken Castle. She reads how the ancient Latvians were led to the Baltic Sea from a land far to the east by Perkons. With the favour of the gods, they settled in a valley, built a castle, and established a golden age on Earth.

However, this made the Devil jealous, and he commanded a whirlwind to suck up a lake and deposit it in the valley. This was done and the valley, including the castle, was drowned. The people would have died too, but Liga, the Goddess of Song, saved them by using the music of her kokle to open up under the lake a tunnel that led them to safety. The castle is the one Bearslayer raised, and the tunnel the one he used to enter the castle.

On another occasion, Laimdota reads to Bearslayer the story of the creation. In eternal space there was once nothing except a celestial light. In it lived God and a second mighty spirit-the Devil. At that time the Devil still obeyed God, although he was already growing rebellious. God decided to create the Earth and sent the Devil to fetch a handful of slime. The Devil was curious and kept a second handful for himself, hiding it in his mouth. When he brought the slime to God, God commanded the slime to form the Earth, throwing it down. The slime began to grow, and formed the level plains of the Earth. However, the slime in the Devil's mouth also obeyed God and grew until the Devil could no longer hold it in his mouth. He spat it out and it fell to the newly created Earth, forming the mountains.

From His own substance God created the Sun and Moon. He was so pleased with the Earth and Sun He had just created that He also created the first living creatures: the Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of the Sun. The Moon took a gigantic Daughter of the Sun as his wife, and the stars are their thousands of children. The Sons of the Gods divided up the Earth among themselves.

The Devil grew more rebellious and began to defy God. A great rivalry grew up between them, and the Devil tried in vain to outdo God, who, however, always had the upper hand. Eventually, God created humans and made them capable only of good, but the Devil interfered and gave them the power to be evil as well as good. God grew furiously angry at seeing His creation ruined, and banished the Devil to Hell. There the Devil created evil demons and with them rose up from Hell and fought against God and all good spirits. Eventually, the Devil was defeated and driven back to Hell, after Perkons intervened in the fight

Later Laimdota reads from the teachings of the guardian of the Latvian race, in which he listed the tasks of worthy human beings: to seek perfection of the human race, to fight against evil by obeying the ancient teachings, to make just laws and drive out bad rulers, and to love nature.

All Souls' Eve comes. The people of Burtnieks's Castle celebrate this in the traditional Latvian way. Next morning, however, Laimdota and Koknesis have vanished, and Bearslayer sets off to find them, vowing never to return unless he is successful. Meanwhile, a German ship has arrived at the mouth of the Daugava, and Dietrich and Kangars persuade the the local Latvian Lord, Kaupa, to return in it to Rome with Dietrich. Kangars stays behind, but knows that the Germans' friendship is only a trick to gain control of Latvia.

The ship sails. Just then Bearslayer rides up. He knows full well that Kangars and Spidala have kidnapped Laimdota, and demands that they give her back. Spidala tells him that she is on the ship just vanishing over the horizon. Kangars says that she and Koknesis are lovers. Bearslayer does not believe this lie, although he experiences some doubts, and rides off in deep despair. Spidala gloats over his sorrow. She has her revenge, and Bearslayer's life is worse than death.

Bearslayer returns to Lielvarde, his home. He is greeted warmly, but his father sees that something is wrong. Bearslayer tells him all, and his father consoles him with wise words of hope: Perhaps Laimdota loves him still and will yet be saved. Bearslayer spends his days roaming the cliffs above the Daugava brooding, and longing to go with the waters down to the sea to fight against the North Wind and meet the North Wind's Daughter. One day he vanishes, and no-one knows where he has gone.

Canto IV opens with Kaupa in Rome. He is seduced by the wealth and power he sees, doubts the old gods, and decides to embrace Christianity and convert the Latvians. Back in Latvia, the people labour long building a walled city for the Germans, who are now present in large numbers-Riga. Once they have their fortress the Germans begin to plunder everything they can get their hands on, to pillage and to destroy. Full of bitterness, the Latvians realize that they have been tricked.

Meanwhile, in Germany Laimdota is being held captive in a convent. Spidala had tricked her into leaving her father's castle back in Latvia by pretending to be her mother. Laimdota was then seized by Spidala's minions, brought to Riga, and placed on the ship to Germany as a prisoner. During the journey Dietrich tries to calm her and tells her that she will soon be the Bride of Christ. Laimdota replies that she loves Bearslayer, will not be forced to become anyone else's bride and is, in any case, a mortal and not fit to become the bride of Christ. Although hardened and without pangs of conscience, Dietrich blushes at her virtuous answer, and leaves her. Kaupa refuses to help her on the grounds that it is the will of Destiny that she go to Germany. Soon both Dietrich and Kaupa forget about her.

The convent prioress tries to persuade Laimdota to accept Christianity and threatens to allow her to

be seized by a local count and used as a concubine. To escape this fate Laimdota pretends to accept Christianity but, despite this, one night armed men break into the convent and seize her. As they are about to carry her off an unknown warrior appears and fights all the kidnappers on his own. He kills all except one, and rescues Laimdota. She recognizes him as Koknesis and they flee into the mountains. Along the way Koknesis explains how he too was tricked into going on the ship to Germany. Once in Germany, he heard that a Baltic woman was being held in the convent and decided to rescue her, without knowing that it was Laimdota.

The action turns to the Northern Sea, where Bearslayer is wandering in a ship, lost on the way to Germany to seek Laimdota. The North Wind's Daughter hears the sailors calling upon her in song, and she comes to them in her own ship. She says that it would be best if they came to her island to rest, before continuing their journey, and Bearslayer agrees. They avoid the Castle of the North Wind, where he is sleeping, perhaps for another month. Once he is awake, the winter will set in and they will not be able to escape because of the ice and storms.

The island is warmed by fires from the centre of the Earth, and the sailors enjoy a pleasant stay. Eventually the North Wind's Daughter tells them that her father is about to wake up and that they must leave. She warns them not to return by the route that they came by, because Bearslayer's enemies now know that he is using that route and may be too strong for him. She describes an alternative route, but warns of its great dangers, including the land of the dog-snout ogres, the Kingdom of Dreams, the Hill of Diamonds, and the Enchanted Isle. The sailors set off in the nick of time: The North Wind has woken up and they are involved in a fearsome storm, from which they barely escape.

They reach the island of the Dog-Snout Ogres, where they tie up. Bearslayer goes ashore with a party of men to cut up and share the meat of some deer he has already killed. They are at work when suddenly the Dog-Snouts pour out of a cave and attack them. They tear the men apart with their teeth and even Bearslayer is scarcely able to save himself. He is wounded and seems doomed, until he notices that no more Dog-Snouts are coming out of their cave. He slips in to the cave and is able to defend himself with his spear in its narrow opening. The Dog-Snouts then bring up large boulders and block the entrance, trapping Bearslayer inside.

Back at the ship the sailors wait in vain for their comrades. Their orders forbid them to go ashore and search for them. At the last moment Bearslayer appears and tells them to disembark at once. They do so, and escape the Land of the Dog-Snouts. At sea Bearslayer explains what happened. He got out of the cave by digging a hole at the rear with his spear. This took several days, but he found some raw meat in the cave, and lived on that. The Dog-Snouts were busy watching the front of the cave, and thus did not see Bearslayer as he escaped at the rear.

They sail away, and reach the Kingdom of Dreams. This is where Heaven and Earth come together, the gates of Paradise standing alongside the entrance to Hell. This land is the location of the Gardens of the Sun, where the Sun returns at dusk and rests at night before setting off each morning. Under the protection of the Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of the Sun they stay in the pleasant Kingdom of Dreams for some time, but eventually set off again.

They travel in pitch darkness at first, but later see a tiny glint of light, towards which they sail. They come closer and sight the Hill of Diamonds, its peak glowing brilliantly. The ship docks and the sailors rush on shore. Despite Bearslayer's warning, a sailor climbs to the peak and vanishes. A second does the same. A third ties himself to a rope and is pulled back by his comrades as he is vanishing. He is saved, but never speaks again.

They sail away and encounter fair winds and weather. Fog obscures the course and they suddenly emerge close to a beautiful island. Bearslayer realizes that this is the Enchanted Isle the North Wind's Daughter warned against, from which no ship can escape. They try to sail away but are drawn to the island until the ship runs up on its shore.

Canto V continues on the Enchanted Isle. There is no sign of life, except for a track leading from the forest to a bridge and, at the seaward end of the bridge, a beautiful palace. Inside is a sumptuous meal, and in a second room soft beds for all. The sailors fall upon the food and then all go to bed. Bearslayer arms himself and stands guard at the end of the bridge.

At midnight a rider comes out of the forest. It is the Three-Headed Demon. He speaks aloud, revealing that he hates Bearslayer, but believes that his enemy is far away, trapped on the Northern Sea. At this Bearslayer roars that he is there. The demon challenges Bearslayer to fight and show his strength. They ride into the thick forest where the demon blows down the trees, so that they will have a clearing in which to fight: One breath clears an area three miles across! They fight and the demon's blows drive Bearslayer into the ground up to his knees. None the less, Bearslayer prevails. He then returns to the palace at the bridge and lies down to sleep. Nothing further disturbs their rest that

night.

The next night Bearslayer again stands guard. Again, at midnight a rider comes out of the forest. This time it is the Six-Headed Demon, who also hates Bearslayer and believes that he is lost on the Northern Sea. Again Bearslayer challenges the demon, who clears the forest by blowing down trees, this time six miles around. They fight and Bearslayer is driven into the ground to his hips, but still wins with some difficulty.

The third night, before going on guard, Bearslayer tells the others that he may need their help. He places Staburadze's mirror on a table alongside a bowl of water, and tells them that if, during the night, the water turns to blood, they must bring the mirror to his aid. At midnight the Nine-Headed Demon appears at the bridge. Bearslayer and the demon fight in a clearing nine miles across, and Bearslayer is driven into the ground to his armpits. He looks in vain for help from his shipmates, and is about to be defeated. Desperate, he throws his club three miles through the window of the palace where the others are sleeping. This wakes them, they see that the water has turned to blood, and they hasten to bring Bearslayer the mirror. In the nick of time he shows the demon the mirror, and it falls down frozen. Bearslayer climbs out of the ground and kills it.

To be sure that the island is safe they search it, and discover a beautiful valley in which is a well of clear water, alongside it a leafy apple tree with magnificent fruit. The men want to drink, but first Bearslayer thrusts his sword into the water, marking a triangle. There are screams and the water turns to blood, but soon clears and they drink in safety. After this, the men want to eat apples, but Bearslayer grows angry, saying that they are not there to pick fruit. He threatens to cut down the tree with his sword, but suddenly a voice from the tree begs for mercy. Bearslayer steps back in surprise and the tree turns into a beautiful young woman. To Bearslayer's horror, it is Spidala.

Spidala throws herself at his feet and begs for mercy. She swears to make good all her wicked deeds, and never to do evil again. Bearslayer grants her her life - he fights demons and giants, not women! Spidala tells him that Laimdota and Koknesis are loyal and pure, and reveals how she and Kangars tricked them into going to Germany. She also reveals how the Old Witch cast a spell on the island to draw in ships. Once trapped on the island's shore the ships' crews sink into a deep sleep. This is the spell that drew Bearslayer's ship to the island, where the witch intended to trap him. The three demons were her sons. On hearing of their death the Old Witch set a trap by changing herself into the well and Spidala into the apple tree. However, when Bearslayer plunged his sword into the well he killed the witch, and thus broke the spell on Spidala.

Spidala reminds Bearslayer that it is his duty to return to Latvia and drive out the marauding Germans. She yearns to help, but is trapped in a pact with the Devil. Bearslayer realizes that she is truly repentant and wants to help her. Suddenly he remembers the little package that he brought with him as a souvenir of the Devil's Pit, and orders some sailors to fetch it and give it to her. When Spidala sees it she is overjoyed: It is her contract with the Devil, and she is now free! They go to the beach, where Spidala releases the ships and sailors trapped on the shore. Suddenly, among the people released, Bearslayer sees Koknesis and Laimdota!

Koknesis and Laimdota tell the story of their escape from Germany. They too were drawn on shore on the Enchanted Isle by the Old Witch, and put into a long sleep. Spidala hangs back, but Bearslayer tells the others that it was she who broke the spell on them: They thank her, and the four swear eternal friendship. Spidala shows them around the island, which she knows well, and some of the awakened people decide to live there for good. Eventually, however Bearslayer, Koknesis, Laimdota and Spidala decide to leave.

The evening before they depart, Koknesis wanders back to the well in the valley. He sees Spidala burn her pact with the Devil. She asks him to keep this a secret. He agrees, but in turn tells her his secret: He loves her and wants her to marry him. She eventually agrees. The four set off back to Latvia on Bearslayer's ship, and on the way Koknesis and Spidala tell Bearslayer and Laimdota about their love. These two are overjoyed. After a long journey they sight Latvian shores, and eventually sail into the mouth of the Daugava.

Canto VI opens with Midsummer's Eve in Latvia. The people are called together by the Midsummer Priests. They bring offerings for the gods and gifts for each other, and gather around fires on the Azure Mountain. They pray for blessings for the coming year, and pay respect to the spirits of their ancestors. The oldest priest calls on them to live together in harmony, and many grudges are settled with a handshake. The young men and women begin to dance together.

While the young people celebrate, the Clan Chieftains meet in council on the Azure Mountain. They are concerned because the prophetic writings kept in the Sacred Grove on the mountainside predict calamity. Lielvardsis arrives and reveals that the German knights have captured a number of Latvian



stockades and built their own stone castles, and are imposing Christianity at the point of the sword. His own fortress, Lielvarde, has been seized. Bishop Albert is bringing more knights from Germany to take over all Latvia. At this moment Bearslayer appears, together with Koknesis, Laimdota and Spidala. Bearslayer is elected leader of the Latvian warriors. All pledge themselves to fight to free their land, and return to their homes to prepare for war.

Bearslayer and Laimdota, as well as Koknesis and Spidala, are married at the Castle of Burtnieks, Laimdota's home. There is a great wedding celebration, but this is cut short by Burtnieks, who tells them that they will soon be at war. The new couples have little time for wedded bliss before the men have to set off to fight the German invaders, and Laimdota and Spidala, refusing to be separated so soon from their new husbands, set off with them. The Latvian host gathers and marches on Turaida. On the way, they eliminate German infestation whenever they encounter it.

Alarmed by the Latvian uprising, many Germans have fled to Turaida and taken refuge in the stone castle built there by the Germans. The Latvians lay siege to the castle, and eventually are able to scale the walls at night and fight on the ramparts. A fearful battle ensues, with heavy losses on both sides. Bearslayer kills many Germans and, realizing that he is too strong for them, the Germans surrender. Among those captured is Dietrich, who is handed over to the locals for punishment. However, he tricks them into setting him free. They now march on Lielvarde, Bearslayer's home, where the German knight, Daniel, has built a stone castle. Just before they arrive, Daniel invites the chieftains of some Latvian clans that had fled into the forest to a parley. However, once he has them in a great pavilion he locks them in and sets fire to it. The elders cry for help as Daniel and his men watch in glee from the castle walls.

In the nick of time Bearslayer arrives with his army. He rescues the chieftains and attacks the German castle. The Germans fight hard but are defeated, and all except Daniel are slaughtered. He is handed to the local people for punishment, and they throw him into the Daugava tied to a plank. Bearslayer re-establishes himself at Lielvarde

Meanwhile, Albert has returned to Germany to recruit more knights. He leaves Kaupa in charge in Riga, to where most Germans have now retreated. All seems well for the Latvians, and Bearslayer and Laimdota settle down to married life together. The others too return to their homes, thinking to live out their lives in peace.

Springtime comes, and the Latvians have little thought of war. Even Kangars is working in his garden. His life is bitter: He receives no honour from any one, any more. He knows that death will bring him the torments of Hell, while his remaining days of life are wracked with the knowledge of his own wickedness. One day Dietrich comes to him and asks him to communicate with evil spirits to discover the source of Bearslayer's strength. Kangars says that it is no concern of his that Bearslayer is killing Germans, but that he has his own reasons for wanting to destroy the young man. He wrestles with demons for three days and nights without sleep, and they reveal to him the secret of Bearslayer's strength-his bear's ears.

Among the new knights brought back from Germany by Albert is the Black Knight. He is already experienced in doing wicked deeds in Germany. He claims to be the son of a witch and immune to harm from wounds. One day Kaupa takes a party of knights, including the Black Knight, to Lielvarde, and asks for admission, saying that he wishes to make peace between the Latvians and Albert. Bearslayer wants peace and the Germans are admitted. They are treated well, and Bearslayer organizes a tournament to entertain them.

In the tournament, both Bearslayer and the Black Knight defeat their opponents, and the Black Knight suggests that they fight each other. Bearslayer refuses, although he does not want to insult the Black Knight. The Black Knight then says that it would hardly be a test of his strength to fight Bearslayer, any way, despite all Bearslayer's boasting. Stung by this, Bearslayer seizes his sword and the two fight.

At first Bearslayer thinks that it is mere sport, but the Black Knight fights with great vigour, and suddenly cuts off one of Bearslayer's ears. Enraged, Bearslayer now attacks in earnest, and with a terrible blow of his sword splits open the Black Knight's armour and wounds him. However, his sword breaks. Seeing this, the Black Knight attacks again, and cuts off Bearslayer's other ear.

Terribly angry, Bearslayer seizes the Black Knight and they wrestle together. In their fight they stumble to the very edge of the high cliffs above the River Daugava. Bearslayer's men look on, grown pale with apprehension and rooted to the spot with fear. Three times Bearslayer lifts up the Black Knight, but each time the German kicks free. Finally, Bearslayer throws him over the cliff into the river's depths, but the Black Knight drags Bearslayer with him. Weighed down by the knight's heavy

armour, they sink to the bottom. At this moment the waves roar and an island rises up in the river. In the castle, Laimdota, who had had a premonition of disaster, shrieks and ends her own life.

Soon, the Latvian heroes are defeated one by one by the Germans, for whom they are no match without Bearslayer. The Germans establish themselves as harsh masters, and the Latvian people are plunged into centuries of slavery. However, for them Bearslayer is not dead, but sleeps beneath the island in a golden bed.

Even today, sometimes at midnight boatmen on the Daugava see two shadowy figures locked in struggle on the cliffs above the river, while in the ruins of the old castle of Lielvarde a little flame burns. The figures struggling on the cliff top are Bearslayer and the Black Knight, and the flame in the castle is Laimdota. Each time they fight the two warriors plunge together into the river. There is a terrible scream in the castle, and the flame goes out.

However, the day will come when Bearslayer will defeat the Black Knight and cast him down alone into the river to drown. On that day, the Latvians will be free!

## **BEARSLAYER**

### **CANTO I THE REVELATION OF BEARSLAYER**

#### **Scene 1: The Council of the Baltic gods**

The gods gather

In azure vaults of heaven soaring bright,  
In lofty castles filled with endless joy,  
The God of Thunder, Perkons, dwells in light,  
And pleasure knows whose sweetness cannot cloy.  
The Baltic gods in council gathered there,  
Of Destiny's Father tidings to debate.  
His will decides the hues-both dark and fair-  
And sets the fickle course of mortal fate.

The steeds of Perkons saddled in the court,  
With trappings glowing waited in the morn;  
The sun's first rays a dazzling glitter brought,  
As polished harness glinted in the dawn.  
And Patrimps, God of Plenty, held in yokes  
His beeswax-yellow steeds with flowing manes;  
Of golden stalks his wingèd chariot's spokes-  
Its course ensures the timely suns and rains.

Dread Pakols, God of Death, had horses black,  
Yoked closely to his sledge of human bones;  
Of ribs the runners, driver's seat and back,  
Shinbones as shafts, arrayed in sombre tones.  
While Antrimps, of the Sea, had steeds all scaled,  
And chariot swift of reeds of ocean green.  
Of shells whose beauty yet was still unpaled  
Its supple seat was formed, as could be seen.

And Liga fair, the Goddess of sweet Song,  
In flower-decked chariot seated high in state,  
By swiftest horses queen-like drawn along,  
With Pukaitis passed through the Rainbow Gate.  
The Gods' proud Sons, all mounted brave and bold,  
On fiery steeds into the courtyard rode.  
Their saddles shone, their bridles gleamed with gold,  
With diamond bits their snorting horses glowed.

Soon Austra, Morning Goddess, came in haste,  
And Laima too, the greatest Goddess there,  
While Tikla, Virtue's Goddess stern and chaste,  
Thence travelled fast, bedecked with roses fair.  
Last, drawn by prancing stallions swift and strong,

Up came the beauteous Daughters of the Sun.  
Firm holding golden reins they dashed along;  
A flower-strewn course their chariots thence had run.

And Destiny's Father, grizzled deathless might,  
Was seated high upon the Diamond Throne,  
With Perkons there and Patrimps on the right,  
While Pakols stern and Antrimps stood alone.  
Close, Pukaitis and Liga both were near,  
Then of the Gods the Sons, arrayed as one.  
With Austra, Laima, Tikla standing clear,  
And last, the beauteous Daughters of the Sun.

Behind, a host of lesser godlings stood,  
Who to the Council with the rest had come,  
Because all Baltic spirits fair and good  
With earnest presence added to the sum.

#### The grim tidings

Then Destiny's Father, grizzled deathless might,  
Arose up lordly from his sacred throne-  
In godly throng yet still a noble sight,  
This warning message spoke in sombre tone:  
"To life a new eternal light was born!  
On Earth there walked a wondrous form sublime.  
A mighty spirit now was come to warn,  
And bless the Earth in His appointed time."

"Both wise and holy, fitly men He taught  
That mortal folk the gods all honour owe.  
To seek to live like gods themselves they ought,  
And virtue pure with seemly goodness show.  
The evil ones, who deeply feared His strength,  
Rose up against Him in a demon pack.  
But Hell itself though fighting fierce at length,  
Yet could not stop His march nor hold Him back."

"This hero rose from death upon the cross,  
He lived again and found surpassing fame.  
His fate well known will live and know no loss;  
In human parlance 'Christ' now is His name.  
Now, many peoples living on the Earth  
Accept His word but see not what portends;  
For humankind in shame denies His worth,  
His message twists to serve unworthy ends."

"The Baltic too has reached the fateful hour  
When Strangers bring the faith once taught by Him-  
But ancient gods possess the boundless power  
To bend the mortal mind to suit their whim."

#### The pledges of the gods

Now Perkons rose, his strength at last to wield,  
And spoke: "Immortal and almighty both,  
Yet still the gods to Destiny's will must yield.  
But none the less I offer here this oath:  
In my strong care the Latvian folk I hold,  
And all good teachings here permit to stand.  
Though good, Christ's message clearly yet is old,  
For from the East these teachings reach our land."

"But those who bear His message to our shores  
Have come to us to serve a different view.  
To conquer Baltic regions is their cause,

To make our people slaves their purpose new.  
I will oppose their plan against our folk,  
And, surely as I split this mighty rock  
Or shake asunder trees of stoutest oak,  
This goal the Baltic folk will safely mock."

"With passing time, its passage soon or late,  
My bolts of lightning on the foe will rain,  
On all who seek as slaves my people's fate  
And strive to crush our spirits for their gain.-  
But when the springtime comes with climate fair,  
To Latvia's folk sweet showers I will send,  
By day will give them clean refreshing air,  
And to the darkness sparks of light will lend."

"To them in nature I will stay close by;  
My voice of thunder in the sky will ring.  
Of Perkons strong the name will never die;  
The Latvian folk will ever of it sing.  
I wish here now you other gods, apace,  
Will follow close upon my guiding will,  
And each one swear, at proper time and place,  
For humankind a promise to fulfil."

Now Patrimps, speaking, rose and left his seat:  
"The Baltic is a fruitful, fertile land;  
I give its people golden ears of wheat,  
That, richly growing, ripen where they stand.  
The Latvians here from fecund Baltic fields  
Will gather in a harvest full and rich.-  
But foreign ploughs and sickles seeking yields  
Their blades will break upon the rock-strewn ditch."

Then Antrimps spoke and gave this message sage:  
"The Baltic waters boil and heaving swirl,  
The winter winds in endless anger rage,  
And round great rocks the currents lashing whirl,  
And ships of foreign foes dash on the crag.  
The Baltic Sea will smash them as I please,  
Until the Baltic people's noble flag  
Throughout the world will wave upon all seas."

Then, adding more, grim Pakols sternly spoke:  
"Brave Baltic souls will soar to Heaven's space,  
A joyous home for Latvia's gallant folk.  
But Hell for Strangers is the proper place-  
Beneath the Northern Lights, though fighting still,  
Their craven hearts will tremble with my fear.  
But I will show accordance with your will,  
And bless the souls of Latvia's children dear."

#### Liga's gift of song

Soon all the gods, in proper order each,  
Had sworn an oath to Perkons in his might.  
Now Liga rose, to all her view to teach,  
And spoke as follows in the Council's sight:  
"I truly count myself as near the least,  
Among the gods who love the Baltic race.  
But in my name the Latvian people feast,  
For Destiny gives to me a favoured place."

"In Latvians all through long eternal time,  
Will never die the spirit of sweet song;  
They will endure in every age and clime,  
Their spirits sing through joy and sorrow long.

Of Liga here the name will stay alive,  
Eternal in the people's joyous rhyme.  
The ancient gods will surely still survive,  
Who otherwise would fade with passing time."

"You Perkons, Laima too, and all the rest,  
Will live on, known forever in your fame.  
The Baltic people will at my behest  
Sing songs heroic that preserve your name.  
Throughout the future, song will bring them cheer,  
And give them lightened spirit that, once more,  
They take up arms to serve their homeland dear,  
And for the cause of freedom go to war."

## **Scene 2: Bearslayer's destiny is revealed by Perkons**

Staburadze tells of a wonder

These vows the Council brought now to its close-  
Their homeward paths the gods departing sought.  
When Staburadze last of all arose,  
And with these words portentous tidings brought:  
"I came this day straight from my palace home,  
With eager news of what my eyes there saw.  
It happened in the seething waters' foam,  
The raging vortex of the maelstrom's maw."

"I sat aloft and spun the mists of night,  
On Staburags's crag enthroned on high.  
The shuttle filled and in the morning's light,  
At cock's first crow the blushing dawn was nigh.  
Then came two witches riding in the air,  
Lit by the sun they flew in dawn's pale gleam;  
On oaken branches twisted, gnarled and bare,  
Across the Daugava sped above the stream."

"And down into the pool a staff they cast,  
One of the two they through the heavens rode.  
Then on the other homeward sped off fast,  
To seek again their dread and drear abode.-  
To learn the reason for this secret deed,  
To look into the whirlpool's depths and see,  
I flew down straight, and took of all good heed,  
And drew the whirling branch secure to me."

"Then what strange sight before my eyes took form!  
A handsome youth revealed in morning's grey,  
Who lay within the log, his skin still warm,  
Though swooning in a deathly faint he lay.  
Forth from the log I drew the gasping lad,  
And bore him to my home beneath the swells,  
Within its crystal halls now warmly clad,  
I laid him down upon a bed of shells."

"When signs of life with surging joy I saw,  
To tell of this I hastened hence to you;  
To learn great God of Thunder of your law,  
To know your will and seek your further view.  
For humankind within the maelstrom's jaws  
Must lie for ever, turned to lifeless stone.  
Our Staburags, augmented without pause,  
Has by such plunder ever vaster grown."

"This youngster now I do desire to take  
To dwell with me inside my castle gate.  
For if he venture from the sacred lake,

To turn at once to stone will be his fate.  
But in my Crystal Palace he can bide,  
In human form the bloom of youth to see,  
There, raised to safety from the river's tide,  
To live his life in harmony with me."

Stern Tikla chaste, with strict words ever rife,  
Spoke thus, fair Staburadze to berate:  
"Perhaps to have eternal godly life  
Our sister now does judge a tedious fate.  
She does not wish so long alone to mourn  
And wash the cliff with flood of bitter tears.  
She wants the youth of human parents born,  
And with him yearns to spend the passing years."

Though Staburadze blushed at Tikla's word,  
She did not yield nor shrink back from the blow.  
"You err, stern Tikla, make a charge absurd.  
The circumstances clear and plainly show,  
The youth is not a normal mortal man.  
I want to keep this lad with me alive,  
That, chosen by the gods, his life's whole span  
He will against the powers of darkness strive."

Perkons reveals his purpose

At last wise Laima uttered up her view:  
"To me its plan the future must reveal.  
Thus, I will look to see what it will do:  
His lot from me the fates may not conceal."

"Women, enough! Yield place! Be silent all,"  
The Thunder God in raging anger cried.  
"This youth is chosen not to heed your call,  
But serves the goals of my surpassing pride.  
The witches down into the whirlpool cast  
Bearslayer, son of Lielvarde's Lord;  
You, Staburadze, wisely hastened fast;  
You rescued him and this must all applaud!"

"Depart at once back to your Crystal Throne,  
And take him in and give him seemly care,  
That this fair lad may not be turned to stone,  
But mend apace and flourish with you there.  
You Laima too will care for this young man,  
And guide him rightly, so that soon or late,  
His life will follow and fulfil my plan,  
To serve the gods and meet a hero's fate."

To close the Council now the time was right;  
The Baltic gods in pomp departed all.  
Will Destiny's father, grizzled, deathless might,  
Again such sacred wisdom ever call?

## **CANTO II BEARSLAYER BEGINS HIS LIFE AS A HERO**

### **Scene 1: The first heroic deed**

The slaying of the bear

Since ancient times, in fruitful Baltic lands,  
Where flows the Daugava in its winding bed,  
And in the fields the barley ripening stands,  
A life of joy the Latvians all have led.-  
Upon the bank once stood by Kegums town,  
Of Lielvarde's Lord the famous halls.

There yet today a cataract pours down,  
And through the cliffs into the river falls.

Where springtime's spirit kind on nature smiled,  
A wonder came on its appointed day:  
The land was waking fast from winter mild,  
And cheerful folk their labours deemed but play,  
While tones of youths and maidens blushing coy  
Mixed with the song of birds to greet the morn.  
All felt within them nature's perfect joy,  
In ancient times to blissful freedom born.

The Lielvarde Lord strolled in the field,  
Together with his son, a lad full fair;  
But eighteen youthful summers was the yield,  
The span of time that graced the Lord's young heir.  
The old man ever sought his son to show  
In nature how the Godhead close by stands,  
And in its rhythms mighty powers flow,  
In heavens, waters, forests, and the lands.

Conversing thus, unmarked their path they found  
Into the shadows at the forest's verge;  
The old man sat to rest upon the ground,  
Beneath the oaks where woods and meadow merge.  
When all at once, with angry gnashing jaws,  
A savage bear from out the forest ran.  
To save himself the old man had no pause-  
His life's last breath due in a moment's span.

The young man turned in haste with swiftness rare;  
He seized the creature by its gaping jaw,  
With mighty strength he tore apart the bear-  
A baby goat had troubled him no more.  
When thus his son revealed such godlike power,  
The old man trembling uttered up this view:  
"You are the chosen hero, shown this hour,  
As prophesied in ancient times for you."

Bearslayer's origins are revealed

"Full eighteen years ago, this very day,  
A little boat ran up upon the land,  
And from it stepped a sage both old and grey,  
Who held secure an infant in his hand.  
Though aged, still with youthful step he strode,  
My task in Fate's great purpose soon laid bare:-  
To take this sturdy boy to my abode,  
And raise him, teach and train him as my heir."

"This sage was Vaidelots, sent by the gods,  
To tell how, deep within the forest wild,  
A human babe was found against all odds,  
And that a she-bear's milk sustained the child.-  
For him, as told, it is the gods' firm will,  
To be a hero and to strive for right;  
His name with fear the wicked heart will fill,  
And evil-doers, trembling, put to flight."

"'There in the West,' his further wisdom said,  
'Against the God of Thunder risen stands  
A fearsome herd of raging monsters dread,  
Whose cross-shaped horns rip at the eastern lands.  
The gods will fight, and they will live on all,  
But from our people freedom will be lost.  
Our famous heroes struggling brave will fall,

Against the foreign foe will pay the cost."

"I Vaidelots a lengthy life have had,  
In Romove's sacred grove of oak;  
A thousand joyful messages, or sad,  
I brought to chieftains or to lesser folk.  
This is the worst, this news I bring,  
Make known to you, oh Lielvarde's Lord,  
More difficult for me no other thing,  
That is a part within my life's rich hoard."

"Yet do not grieve, oh countryman, but know:  
Remembering the deeds of men of yore,  
As ages pass the people's strength will grow,  
And battles won will free our race once more.  
Though Destiny now not even lets me see,  
How long the yoke that on our people falls.-  
Behold, the fading sunlight summons me,  
The golden Baltic sun my farewell calls!"

"Wise Vaidelots now ceased, his message brought,  
And in his boat he hastened to depart.  
Upon the bank I stood in deepest thought,  
The herald's passage marked with heavy heart.  
The Daugava now, in Kegums rapids' spray,  
Tossed hard the little boat upon the stream.  
A fading light came from the sun's last ray,  
The herald's boat fast faded in its gleam."

"The years since then are gone in time's long span,  
While Destiny's will I solemnly bore through.  
The gift of Vaidelots is grown to man,  
You are that sturdy boy; the child was you!  
From this day forth, in honour of your deed,  
'Bearslayer' is your name, most surely meet.  
You saved your father in the hour of need;  
The world has seen your first heroic feat."

## **Scene 2: Bearslayer is sent out into the world**

He is given the task of learning

"I give you now a colt with saddle fine,  
Trim steed and sword of heavy metal true,  
A spear, a shield and silver spurs once mine,  
And headdress trimmed with fur of martens too.  
Upon the morrow you will haste away  
To Burtnieks's famous castle gate,  
Where dwells my friend of happy boyhood day-  
In Burtnieks's Castle lies your fate."

"Both greet and hail, and tell him you aspire  
To learn in famous Burtnieks's school,  
Sent by your father knowledge to acquire,  
Where virtue true and cunning wisdom rule.  
Old Burtnieks will take you as a friend,  
And in his ancient castle clear will show  
The chests where sacred tomes the ages spend,  
That secrets deep of Destiny's purpose know."

"These sacred books our lofty morals teach,  
And tell about the history of our land,  
Explain the gods, and faith and duty preach,  
And sing about the Latvian hero band.  
Of all this sacred knowledge, and much more,  
There learn as seven seasons passing go;



How heroes bold acquit themselves in war,  
When they in battle strive against the foe."

He departs from Lielvarde

Next morning, fitted richly as a lord,  
Bearslayer stood at Lielvarde's gate.  
He buckled on his massive trusty sword,  
Took up his spear and shield and felt their weight.  
He placed his fur-trimmed cap upon his head  
And, standing there before his father dear,  
Made sad farewell, although no tear was shed.-  
Though brief and stern, the parting was sincere.

The old man spoke of Lielvarde's fame:  
"Our ancient clan throughout the folk is known;  
No shameful stain attaches to our name,  
Our fathers past their heroes' worth have shown.  
And you, my son Bearslayer, at your birth,  
By Destiny's will were marked for honour too;  
If you pursue his plan and show your worth,  
The gods will guard you well and cherish you."

"The world's seductions young men's minds soon reach,  
While youths, unwitting, oft themselves deceive,  
So hasten not to do what others teach,  
But let them seek your counsel to receive.  
To recognize the truth is passing rare,  
To speak it plain unvarnished harder still;  
In life who learns true witness brave to bear  
Becomes attuned to virtue's righteous will."

"Maintain in struggles stout your people's way,  
Your grandsires' teachings always give respect;  
And never heed what hypocrites may say,  
Who urge you freedom's spirit to neglect.  
Such people for themselves good fortune seek,  
In finding victims God's name oft employ,  
But later with the Devil's poison reek;  
They serve but evil and-at length-destroy."

"The Latvian people on their own fair shore  
Do not bow down to lords high-born as sage;  
They choose themselves their chiefs in time of war-  
The magistrates in older, peaceful age.  
The people know of those who earned great fame  
By toiling hard in mighty labours long;  
To these come lasting praise and honoured name,  
As heroes known they live in endless song."

With earnest soul Bearslayer heard his lord,  
The heartfelt words of life's wise teachings large.  
Into his breast an urgent feeling poured,  
The wish that he fulfil his father's charge.  
And so he promised to observe all that,  
Embraced his father, pressed his hand so stout,  
Then leaped into his saddle, doffed his hat,  
And, raising shield and lance, rode boldly out.

### **Scene 3: Bearslayer meets Spidala at Aizkraukle**

He arrives at the castle

Within the castle, watching from his chair,  
Sat old Aizkrauklis wrapped in thought profound.  
His only daughter, Spidala the fair,

Sat at the pane with beads and rings decked round.  
Her face possessed a haunting beauty rare,  
But yet her eyes showed wildness without bound.

And so that tender spell she did not weave,  
That gently draws and steals the young man's heart;  
Her ardent eyes too swiftly could deceive-  
To gaze into them risked a burning dart.  
"Oh, Spidala," her father sought her leave,  
And slowly raised his head in thoughtful art:

"I wish to know an answer still this morn:  
Whence come those finest jewels that, preening vain,  
You wear your neck and hands thus to adorn?"-  
That Spidala then started he saw plain,  
The question shocked her that his voice had borne,  
Yet in a trice her answer came again:

"Godmother gave to me these jewels to own,  
When last into our village she came here;  
In golden caskets more I have been shown."  
The old man spoke: "Alas my daughter dear,  
Such gifts to take I cannot more condone,  
And in the future must forbid, I fear."

"She is a witch, and in the people's view,  
A fearsome dragon shelters in her care;  
She feeds it on the flesh of humans too.  
The dragon brings her jewels and objects rare,  
Dark evil things, and so I say to you,  
A pious girl her gifts should never wear."

Now Spidala, to hide her blushing face,  
Looked out into the courtyard, near too late,  
And spoke as though his words she gave no grace:  
"A visitor is hither come in state.  
Look where a youthful knight has reached this place,  
And down below will pass in through the gate!"-

The Castle of Aizkraukle lonely stands,  
Far distant from the Daugava's verdant bounds,  
And in the forest roam wild bears in bands,  
While in the night the howl of wolves loud sounds.  
Uncertain paths lead through these risky lands,  
And strangers seldom reach the castle's grounds.

Thus Spidala with wonder took good heed,  
To see what rider thence the path had brought,  
Who rode into the castle on his steed.-  
Aizkrauklis too from out the window sought  
To test of him his measure and his breed,  
As young Bearslayer reined within the court.

He bowed towards the window, then, polite,  
He said his path to Burtnieks must run,  
His neighbour's care he sought thus for the night.-  
Aizkrauklis hurried out, his friendship won,  
And warmly told his pleasure at the sight  
Of famous Lielvarde's mighty son.

Bearslayer falls under Spidala's spell

The handsome youth dismounted lithely then;  
A stable lad swift to his stirrup ran.  
He pressed the old man's hand once and again,  
And entered straight the castle's lofty span.-

But soon as Spidala approached the men,  
Within his bones a shivering cold began.

Such beauty in his life had had no peer!-  
The deep, dark eyes of Spidala grew wide,  
And in their depths enchanted flame burned clear.  
With outstretched hand a greeting warm she cried:  
"A stately knight so bold is welcome here.  
A future hero's presence swells our pride."

His tongue struck dumb, Bearslayer found no word.-  
Of jewelled beauty fit to conquer men,  
In his short life he had not seen nor heard.-  
No answer came, so Spidala turned then,  
With gliding liveness serpentlike she stirred,  
And deeply gazed into his eyes again.

Her body moved with strangely supple grace,  
So lithe it made the young man's senses swim.  
But then Aizkrauklis sent the girl apace  
To make at once and serve a feast for him.-  
So soon her sensuous beauty left the place,  
Bearslayer's mind returned to matters grim.

When later fitting words he found at last,  
Then Spidala made answer in fair guise;  
The frightful swooning moment now was past.-  
The young man, heeding wisdom's counsel wise,  
Firm armed himself, though piercing looks flew fast,  
That burning shot from Spidala's dark eyes.

The night drew on; the fleeting time soon went,  
And Spidala, uneasy at the hour,  
Soon said she felt within her limbs the bent  
Before the midnight's chime to seek her bower.  
And if Bearslayer too were weary spent,  
To bed she would direct him, in the tower.

The young man went, by Spidala struck deep,  
But by Aizkrauklis with "Rest well," consoled.  
She led the youth across the castle's keep,  
Into a jewelled bedroom hung with gold.  
"This night in godlike comfort you will sleep,"  
She smiling said, "Bearslayer, hero bold."

Bearslayer gazed with wonder at the sight:  
As soft and fine as drifted snow the bed,  
With purple covers decked, and sheets of white,  
And trimmed all round with ribbons of blood red.  
Sweet-smelling breezes wafted through the night,  
And like enchantments circled round his head.

He stared at Spidala's lush beauty rare,  
Bewitching charms that drew his yearning praise.  
Forgetting straight all caution's wisdom there,  
The young man dared his arms to her to raise.  
At once a shadow dark flew through the air,  
And Spidala straight vanished from his gaze.-

The midnight sky a host of stars had brought;  
From heaven shone the moonlight's ghostly glow,  
That in the valley bars of silver wrought.  
Within his room the youth, with spirit low,  
Threw back his shutter, gazed out on the court,  
And heavy air breathed sadly, deep and slow.

Once more it seemed to him that in the air

Dark shadows high across the moon flew hence.  
Perhaps foul witches from the Devil's lair  
To blackest work flew out, he knew not whence.  
At once Bearslayer firm resolved to dare,  
And seek how Spidala had gone from thence.

Spidala is revealed as a witch

Next morning soon the youth made this request:  
It pleased him in the castle there so well,  
He wished to stay a few short days as guest,  
There in his neighbour's pleasant halls to dwell.  
Aizkrauklis straight agreed that he should rest,  
With pleasure felt his heart begin to swell.

As night there deepened, Spidala soon said:  
"Our guest the castle's passages now knows,  
And when he wants can go alone to bed."  
She left the room and wished them sweet repose!  
To follow her Bearslayer then was led,  
And full of purpose from the table rose.

But afterwards he crept back down below,  
Outside within the courtyard dark to wait,  
From whence his watching eyes could clearly show  
Who through the doorway passed in darkness late.-  
At midnight hour the portal opened slow,  
And Spidala came out with silent gait.

Her body clad in clothing deepest black;  
Her feet with golden shoes were firmly bound;  
Her hair hung loosened free around her back;  
Her eyebrows arched, her gaze was to the ground.  
Her eyes he saw, where burning did not lack,  
Her hand gripped tight a magic staff around.

A twisted log lay at the courtyard's rim,  
And Spidala climbed up upon it high.  
She spoke a spell and three times struck the limb,  
Firm with her staff she smote its surface dry.  
And, answering the hissing witch's whim,  
At once the log rose up into the sky.

Long stood Bearslayer at the courtyard's verge,  
For Spidala's return he looked in vain;  
To seek her out he felt a mighty urge,  
To see the Devil with the witch in train.  
But such a task beyond his strength would surge,  
And so he went back to his room again.

By morning's light within the courtyard still,  
He saw the log back in its former place;  
And looking close he saw with firming will,  
Within the log an empty hollow space,  
A space a man could crawl in and not fill.-  
At once a purpose formed for him apace.

Next evening Spidala set off to bed.  
Bearslayer swiftly hastened to his room;  
He put his cap of marten on his head,  
With sword in hand sought out the courtyard's gloom,  
And, watching out for Spidala's light tread,  
Concealed himself within the log's dark womb.

Again at midnight hour she left her cell,  
And in her garments black her body dressed.

Astride the log she spoke a magic spell,  
Struck with her staff, and then at her behest,  
The branch bore both to where he could not tell,  
Above Aizkraukle's forests on her quest.

#### **Scene 4: In the Devil's Pit**

The Devil digs the pit

At time's beginning, so is often told,  
To birds and beasts gave Perkons stern commands,  
To dig the Daugava, come from nature's fold,  
To gnaw, to scratch, to peck in toiling bands.  
Alone the peacock sat and did not work.-  
The Devil, passing by, then asked the bird:  
"Where is the place the other creatures lurk?"  
"They dig for Perkons," answer then he heard.

"But why," he asked, "do you not labour too?"  
"To save my yellow feet," the peacock said!  
Then to the river bird and Devil flew,  
And dug a chasm in the torrent's bed,  
Which down into this pit poured straight away.-  
From fear all creatures lost the power of speech;  
They all commenced to run and jump and bray,  
And each one found a voice with which to screech.

The bears roared fierce, the wolves and dogs all howled,  
The pigs made grunts, the oxen lowed unmuted,  
The horses neighed, the strident cats all yowled,  
The blackbirds shrieked, the owls all harshly hooted.  
The cuckoos called, the hornets made a hum,  
The little birds sang loudly all around!-  
The noise rose up, a riot of such sum,  
That, high in Heaven, Perkons heard the sound.

He soon grew angry with the Devil's wit,  
Cast lightning down and blocked the water's track;  
A hill with high steep slopes enclosed the pit-  
Since then the peacock's golden feet are black!

Today the people all avoid this place.  
Should travellers in the night risk passing still,  
Their eyes behold foul spirits in the space,  
That now is called the "Devil's Dark Pit Hill."

They enter the pit

Straight Spidala swooped down to this dread place,  
Across the starlit sky flown swiftly thence.  
Bearslayer crouched within the log's dark space,  
And struggled for his breath with swooning sense.  
Fierce fork-tailed dragons coiled around them there,  
With gold and treasure flying through the night,  
And breathed their fiery sparks into the air,  
While other witches joined them in the height.

If but a movement caught the witches' view,  
To save his life no mercy would be found.-  
Down to the Devil's Pit the witches flew,  
And planted each her staff into the ground.  
A dozen staffs stood upright by the hill,  
Twelve witches entered in the Devil's Pit.  
Soon bold Bearslayer had regained his will,  
And entered too the cavern through a slit.

Within the pit a thick deep darkness reigned,  
And round his head bats fluttered in the gloom;  
Until at length a glimpse of light he gained,  
And, going further, saw a lofty room.  
All kinds of things inside were found in store,  
Too many far the name for each to learn:  
With skulls and bones, and teeth and pelt and claw,  
With mounted heads and antlers all in turn.

Round ladles, cauldrons, wooden bowls and pots,  
And dippers, wicker baskets, mortars, urns,  
Great hammers, pitchforks, rakes, in heaping lots,  
Cartwheels, old whetstones, broomsticks scorched  
with burns,  
Black books and parchments that all good defiled.  
A corner dim held plants and dried-up grass;  
On shelves stood boxes next to baskets piled,  
With herbs and potions stored in jars of glass.

Upon the hearth a sullen fire dull burned,  
And in its light the walls unpleasant glowed;  
Hung from a crooked hook a cauldron churned.  
The fire's pale gleams foul toads and black cats showed,  
While in the corners snakes writhed round the room,  
And through the smoke flew bats and jet-black owls.-  
Bearslayer started, hidden in the gloom,  
When all at once the creatures all made howls!

They hissed, and croaked, they whistled, such a roar!  
And soon a crone, a witch all old and bowed,  
Into the chamber entered through a door,  
Who, since the room seemed empty, called aloud:  
"What foul ill wind has brought base spirits here?  
When clear is known that all who tread this place  
A broken neck and dreadful fate must fear!"  
These words the creatures silenced in a trace.

The witch then took a ladle in her hand,  
And going to the cauldron thrust it in:  
"The time has come to supper to command.  
The meat is cooked. The meal can now begin."  
And thrice upon the cauldron's side she beat.  
The twelve came in, a place for each reserved,  
Their portion was a sausage and some meat.-  
Bearslayer thought that suckling pig was served.

A door into a second chamber led;  
This room held but a chopping block alone.  
The walls and ceilings like the floor were red,  
And on the block a blood-red axe was thrown.  
The room was starkly empty but for this.  
And further yet there led another door.-  
Into this open chamber, without miss,  
The witches went with bowls of meat, he saw.

Horrors are revealed

Bearslayer followed silently behind,  
And through the door he saw a chamber bright,  
With pallid chairs and tables it was lined,  
And all the walls were of a colour light.  
Two stoves of like pale colour at one side,  
One glowed with coals, and one held beans of white.  
The witches at their meal he here espied;  
Who ate in deathly silence every bite.

Again, a door a lofty room clear showed,  
Where vaulted ceilings stood on pillars tall,  
And all the room with golden colour glowed;  
Inside the room he saw twelve beds in all.-  
The sated witches each removed her dish,  
Cleared up the table, swept the bones from view.  
"Into the kitchen," was the old one's wish,  
"And sharpened sight my spells will give to you."

"Your suitors soon will come hence to this place,  
And all the brides should thus themselves prepare."  
On hearing this, the youth went back apace,  
Hid in the kitchen, in the corner there.-  
The old one took a pot of powder then,  
And brushed it in their eyes with touches light.  
Then afterwards they all went out again;  
Their eyes, enchanted, now were glowing bright.

Bearslayer sought for Spidala at last,  
But still her form he could not recognize.  
The pot of powder he had noted fast,  
And with its contents smeared himself his eyes.-  
It was as though a veil fell from his sight,  
And now he saw unblinded, without whims:  
Still in the cauldron, from the meal that night,  
There lay the scraps of little children's limbs!

And where he thought a sausage to have seen,  
Were foul black snakes, boiled squirming in their gore.  
In that red chamber, where he first had been,  
Of copper pure were ceiling, walls and floor.  
And on the block the axe was copper too,  
Although its use he did not understand.-  
Of silver pure the second room on view,  
Both chairs and tables, lanterns, all at hand.

What seemed like stoves were silver chests, he saw,  
In one gold jewels, the other precious pearls.  
Still further, gazing through the final door,  
He saw the ceiling glittered gold in swirls,  
Of gold the beds between the pillars tall.-  
Back in the silver room the robes they bore,  
As in a bath-house, down each witch let fall;  
Just golden slippers on their feet they wore.

From cupboards now the old one gave the girls  
Bejewelled broaches, bracelets for their arms,  
And dressed their hair with softly shining pearls.  
A wonder to the youth, for with her charms  
Now Spidala among the witches too,  
Revealed herself in all her beauty there.  
Fair were the witches: To his wondering view,  
They all possessed a devilish beauty rare.

Thus fine adorned they took their robes in hand  
And to the copper chamber hastened fast,  
Where round the log they gathered in a band,  
While Spidala her robe upon it cast.  
Then, taking up the axe she struck it there,  
And spoke these words aloud in hissing tone:  
"Today as first I strike the block full square-  
Tomorrow to this deed I will not own."

Forth from the log a demon's form was led,  
Clad as a lord, whom Spidala took hence,  
They sought the golden room, and chose a bed.

The others did the same, and soon from thence  
With lovers to the other room were gone.  
Each lordling wore a coat of velvet black,  
Three-cornered hat and boots that brightly shone,  
But from their ears small horns grew in the back.

Kangars promises to serve the Devil

The old one struck the log, now left alone,  
And boldly said: "Today I strike as last-  
Tomorrow to this deed I will not own."  
At this, with howling, Lucifer came fast.  
The greatest chief of witch and devil too,  
A cap of human fingernails he wore.  
"Is all prepared?" he sought the old one's view.  
"All ready, Lord," the crone then answered sure.

Then Lucifer struck hard with action bold,  
And in a trice the chamber filled with flame  
That turned the log into a carriage gold,  
The axe a dragon harnessed to the same.  
The two then rode together through the door,  
And sought the golden chamber, in which spot  
The dragon lay and rested on the floor,  
And from its mouth both smoke and flame forth shot.

The younger witches, summoned by the sound,  
All greeted Lucifer in prancing pack;  
They entered then the kitchen at a bound,  
Seized pitchforks in their hands, and hastened back,  
The pitchforks heated in the dragon's throat,  
And then all made a ring around the coach.  
The old witch stood and with her staff firm smote  
And cried "Come forth!" in tones of sour reproach.

At this, at once a wall burst open wide,  
And hairy demons forth a man now brought,  
Who, deathly pale, was led in at their side;  
The witches formed a ring to seek their sport.-  
On seeing him, Bearslayer too knew fear;  
It was the famous holy man and good,  
As Kangars known, a hermit who lived near,  
Up on the hills, within a mighty wood.

With monstrous voice foul Lucifer then swore:  
"Oh sinner, know your course is run this day;  
Your wage receive now in the dragon's maw-  
The pitchforks of the witches show the way."

But Kangars, prone, made pleadings to implore:  
"Prolong, oh Lord, my life a tiny span,  
And I will truly serve your will once more."-  
A moment's thought and Lucifer began:  
"In vain your begging, but my urgent plight  
Could save your life and further time ensure:  
The faith of Perkons yields a harvest light,  
A daunting task, their souls to us to lure."

"A gift of fortune that to Baltic lands  
A foreign force is coming from the west,  
That seeks to seize the Baltic in its hands.  
To plant an alien faith-this is their quest.  
I too desire to see that faith sown free,  
Because its growth will yield a harvest sure,  
For many priests already cleave to me,  
The bearers of the faith, whom all think pure."



"This task I give you: Help that faith to come,  
And spread it wide upon the Baltic shore.  
Of years I give you three times nine in sum!  
So swear, oh traitor, on this dragon's maw,  
The faith of Perkons wholly to eschew,  
And be a traitor, with the folk at odds.  
You must destroy the heroes tried and true,  
And bring in priests who serve strange foreign gods."

"Go urge the people Strangers to obey,  
And burn and slaughter all who would oppose.  
Your final goal: That slavery hold sway.  
Do thus, and live until the day I chose."

False Kangars echoed all with solemn vow:  
To Lucifer he gave his yielding praise,  
And made an oath unbreakable, and now  
All looked at Kangars with a kindly gaze.

Here Lucifer announced the night at end.  
Together with the witches he strode sure,  
Into the copper room his way to wend.  
The ancient witch the black-clad lovers bore  
Out to the field, then sank into the ground.  
Down to the earth the bowing witches bent;  
In surging sulphur flames forth at a bound,  
Vile Lucifer with thunderous roaring went.

Bearslayer is discovered

Bearslayer left his hiding place to go,  
And, passing through the rooms, he took with him  
A document he saw, as proof to show  
His presence there to witness evil grim.  
Although his fear grew less in starlit light,  
Regret and bitter feelings seized his heart.-  
Within the log once more he hid from sight,  
While Spidala to journey home made start.

And as they flew, the crone her news revealed:  
"Bearslayer saw our feast this night," she said,  
"And watched your lovers, in the room concealed."-  
Straight Spidala grew pale and then turned red.  
In her impassioned heart love's traces died,  
And wicked hatred in her breast hard smote.  
"Why did you not say sooner? Then his pride  
Had ended in the dragon's fiery throat!"

"Our master chose not thus to interfere,  
Because Bearslayer's life will soon be done.  
He hopes your log will bring him home from here-  
Instead your course to Staburags will run,  
With Sereniete thence flying fast.  
Through magic's spell then on her log escape,  
Your own into the whirlpool downward cast,  
From whence comes forth no-one of human shape."

## **Scene 5: Bearslayer in Staburadze's Palace**

Bearslayer meets Laimdota

Divinely worshipped Staburadze fair,  
With jewelled adornments on her robes decked round  
But with a weight of sorrow and deep care,  
From Destiny's Council home her path had found.

Upon the Daugava's bank she bitter weeps,  
For Latvia mourns, the land she loves so well,  
That Staburags's might eternal sleeps,  
And lonely she with mortal folk must dwell.

When future ages come, will she still weep  
And mourn the Baltic people's bitter lot,  
When from the very people she loves deep  
Their ancient fame has passed and been forgot?-

But where our grandsires' faith still holds firm sway,  
She plays a part in life that never stops:  
On freezing morn she melts the frost away,  
And saves from harm the ploughman's tender crops.  
She warns the boatmen at the midnight moon,  
Lest they should fall into the whirlpool's grip.  
To shepherds and to travellers at the noon,  
She gives from bubbling springs a cooling sip.

Since time began, one task she loves of all:  
She seeks chaste maids born on propitious days,  
And gives them shelter in her palace hall.  
She guards their virtue with her wisdom's ways,  
And teaches them, gives gifts, and clothes to wear.-  
Good fortune stands upon the mother's side,  
Into whose hearth there comes, surpassing fair,  
From "Staburadze's maidens" now a bride.

Bearslayer's senses woke apace:  
He lay in Staburadze's bed,  
And gazed in wonder round the place,  
And pondered whence his path had led.

To him the bed seemed soft to sway,  
As though it rocked on gentle tides.  
The crystal walls revealed the day,  
As blue-tinged light passed through their sides.

The room was rich with objects rare,  
A host of gold and silver bright;  
In pristine state each treasure there.  
Their beauty was a wondrous sight.

Remembering, Bearslayer lay,  
And thought how with a witch he flew;  
When through the opening door's display  
A beauteous damsel came in view.

Her face and form were sweet to sight,  
That at a glance was plain to see.  
Like silver moonbeams in the night,  
Adorned with poppies, thus was she.

Her dark blue eyes at his first look,  
Seemed gentle as the dawn's soft light;  
But when a closer glance he took,  
Their whirling depths now met his sight.

Her clothing's folds of pale sky-blue,  
Close to her body brushing clung.  
Her glowing hair fell freely too;  
Down to her knees in locks it hung.

On seeing her, Bearslayer thought  
A goddess now was in the room.  
To stand and greet her straight he sought,  
To thank his saviour from the tomb.

But this the maid would not allow,  
And said his strength was sure to lack.  
So harsh his fate had been, and now  
His body's strength was not yet back.

"Oh heavenly being, tell me true:  
What place is this? Where am I now?  
I beg you, tell me, who are you?  
To pay you honour, this I vow"

"Of 'Staburadze's maidens' I,  
Her Crystal Palace home this here;  
Cast in the whirlpool down to die,  
She rescued you and brought you clear."

Bearslayer knew a joy profound  
That seemed to fill his breast and mind:  
The maiden's charm now knew no bound,  
For she was born of humankind.

She brought in food for him to eat:  
She gave to him both milk and bread,  
A fitting meal with honey sweet,  
Then from the room departing sped.

Bearslayer recovers and leaves Staburags

Time passed until one day, again,  
He woke and donned his clothes aright.  
The door soon opened wide and then,  
Fair Staburadze came in sight.

Politely then she bade him tell,  
If rest had brought his strength of yore.  
Bearslayer bowed and thanked her well,  
And then a fervent wish he swore:

He yearned to stay within her court  
There with the goddess long to dwell.  
A secret look her eyes then brought,  
On hearing what he had to tell.

"We will, perhaps, meet as you ask;  
Eternity were not then long.  
But first you have the gods' stern task,  
A lifetime charge to right the wrong."

"To strive in virtue's noble cause,  
To serve your homeland and your folk,  
To seek for fame without a pause,  
To free their breast from sorrow's yoke."

With joy Bearslayer's eyes then glowed.  
He spoke with youthful courage grand:  
"I thank the gods for having showed  
This way to serve my Fatherland."

"New strength I have, all to perform,  
Since I have seen now, face to face,  
The heavenly Staburadze's form,  
Most beautiful of female race."

"Unswerving goals to me impart,  
And guide my aim as targets near."  
"I grant you both with all my heart,"  
Said Staburadze smiling clear.

"Heroic youth, harsh is your lot:  
To fight these foes of false renown.  
The hidden ones dark secrets plot:  
Strike Spidala and Kangars down."

"This little mirror with you take,  
To keep and hold, a sign of me.  
When evil ones grave danger make,  
Quick hold it up for them to see."

"Their power will fail at your behest,  
When they the face of Perkons view!"  
And Staburadze, from a chest,  
As gift for him a mirror drew.

She gave it, but a warning brought,  
To keep it and to guard it true.  
Bearslayer thanked her, but more sought:  
A keepsake from the maiden too.

The maiden blushed and then her hand  
A ribbon loosened from her hair,  
His cap adorned then with this band,  
And, glancing shyly, spoke out fair:

"Although of gifts I have no store,  
My talisman I grant this day;  
In kinship now I greet you sure,  
And wish good fortune on your way."

Bearslayer, touched, no words could find  
To thank the maiden with full truth.  
Then Staburadze spoke her mind:  
"Now hasten forth, heroic youth."

"The cliff-top path I now will show,  
Out through the Crystal Palace gate.  
This maiden as Laimdota know,  
To meet again will be your fate."

"With acorn pattern in its weave,  
She gave a ribbon from her hair,  
Perhaps to that more wonders cleave,  
Than to my mirror that you bear."

Bearslayer at the door turned slow,  
Regarding then Laimdota keen.  
It seemed that in her eyes' deep glow,  
Unbidden tears were plainly seen.-

For further thought it was too late,  
His consciousness from him had flown.  
He fell down at the castle gate,  
And on the ground lay turned to stone.

## **Scene 6: Bearslayer is returned to the world**

Perkons restores Bearslayer to life

The sun's first light already glowed;  
Upon the Daugava's banks it lay.  
The sky was clear and plainly showed  
Fair weather for the coming day.

But yet one cloud now took its course,  
That higher climbed above the land;  
And at its front, upon a horse,

An old man rode, with whip in hand.

He let run loose the prancing grey,  
To Staburags's cliff it dashed;  
His whip he cracked and straight away  
Great bolts of lightning brightly flashed.

Vast thunderclaps in deep tones rumbled,  
And Staburags shook to its core,  
Along the cliff the boulders crumbled:-  
Bearslayer stood, alive once more!

He found it hard, clear to recall,  
And real the memories did not seem.  
One thing he knew, despite the pall:  
It had not happened in a dream.

Two lessons in his mind were there  
That left in him a knowledge sure:  
The trap of evil woman's snare,  
And noble woman's virtue pure.

Henceforth he swore his back to turn  
Against the first and passion's chains,  
The second's deep respect to earn,  
Through noble tasks and endless pains.

Bearslayer performs another mighty feat

Now climbing down, where through the banks  
The Perse flows, a crowd he spied,  
A group of people from whose ranks  
A boat was lowered in the tide.

They wished to cross, but none was fit  
With strength enough to pull the oar.  
If room there were for him to sit,  
Alone to row Bearslayer swore.-

They boarded fast, the boat was full,  
Hard rowed the young man then for shore:  
But after just the first stroke's pull,  
He found he held a broken oar.

Without control the ferry tossed,  
Downriver drove the torrent's swirl.  
The people knew that all was lost,  
With death before their eyes awhirl.

Bearslayer did not pause to scheme,  
But straight away rowed with his hand;  
And, thrusting strong against the stream,  
Their course directed to the land.

Across the Daugava's waves they fought  
And reached the other side at length!-  
The people were by wonder caught,  
And praised Bearslayer's mighty strength.

A young man on the bank paid heed,  
Who from the forest hauled a tree.  
He saw Bearslayer's mighty deed  
And to the hero thus spoke free:

"Here as 'Koknesis' I am known,  
'The mighty youth' is how I'm called,  
For from the woods, I have alone

Great logs upon my shoulder hauled."

"To build a fortress here we work,  
Where Perse in the Daugava flows;  
A refuge strong when dangers lurk,  
To save us from our many foes."

Bearslayer made a friendly bow  
And told the youth his own great name,  
To Aizkraukle that he went now,  
And what the purpose why he came.

They soon were friends and made a rule,  
With him Koknesis too would ride;  
The two in Burtnieks's school  
Would learn great wisdom side by side.

Spidala swears revenge, but they reach Burtnieks

When Spidala the next day saw  
Bearslayer healthy in full view  
Approaching close her castle's door,  
It can be thought what fear she knew.

She asked her father that alone  
The coming guests he would receive,  
And since her heart was heavy grown,  
To her own chamber she would cleave.

Bearslayer too had no more use  
To meet false Spidala once more,  
And so he made a good excuse,  
When Aizkrauklis threw wide the door:

His journey hence had known delay,  
And to depart was now his whim;  
The forests had concealed his way,  
Until Koknesis rescued him.

Old Aizkrauklis had different views:  
Bearslayer was a welcome sight.  
His wish had been to send forth news  
To Lielvarde of his plight.

And so disturbed he stared back hard,  
But brought out, at the youth's behest,  
His saddled colt into the yard,  
And sent him forth upon his quest.

False Spidala watched with a glare  
And in her eyes a madness grew:  
"Ride to the east," she threatened there,  
"And my revenge will follow you!"-

Next evening they arrived at dusk  
In Burtnieks's learned court,  
Where he received them asking brusque,  
From whence they came and what they sought.

The young men told him of their need,  
His father's words Bearslayer passed;  
With friendship Burtnieks agreed-  
They were his pupils now at last!

### **CANTO III BEARSLAYER AND LAIMDOTA ARE BETRAYED**

**Scene 1: Kangars and Spidala combine against Bearslayer**

Kangars learns that Bearslayer was in the Devil's Pit

Upon the hills the forests gloomy sougled,  
In mountain passes swamp mists blocked the light,  
Dread serpents writhed and savage beasts roared loud,  
While frightened owls called lonely in the night:  
For travellers this was a fear-filled ground.-  
Beside a narrow path, that marked the way,  
And past the swamps and hills its passage found,  
The house of falsely pious Kangars lay.

The day's last penitent sought grace to earn,  
And soon received an absolution sure  
From sins of every kind and sufferings stern,  
Then Kangars lit his lamp and closed his door.  
He put the people's offerings with his hoard,  
Piled in a chamber other things to join;  
A room in which, in chests and boxes stored,  
Lay finest hides and gold and silver coin.

He muttered as he bent at these to peer:  
"How truly evil if the Fiend that night ...!  
But have I now perhaps bought life too dear?  
The burdens of Hell's service are not light!  
But evil deeds the witches close protect,  
And from the folk great honour I command.  
In ignorance the people show respect,  
That gives me greater strength than wealth or land!"

"I have no mind to join that hero band  
That suffers hunger, need and hardships great,  
While striving for the folk and Fatherland."  
Thus speaking, Kangars went in through his gate.-  
That night, he heard a whirlwind raging round,  
While distant evening thunder rumbled dour.  
Upon his door then came a knocking sound;  
He opened it, while wondering at the hour.

Then Spidala came in, all finely dressed,  
Not like a witch but in a lady's state.  
"Good evening, uncle," greetings she expressed,  
"No visitor is usual here so late?"-  
"None was expected," Kangars answered sure.  
"The greater then the pleasure I can show,  
To greet my beauteous neighbour at my door.  
Does all go well? The answer I would know."

"All is not well," false Spidala replied,  
"Some mighty force opposes firm our will.  
To ask your help I've come," the witch then cried,  
"Yet can our powers combined our goals fulfil!"  
She then told Kangars that Bear Slayer saw,  
And in the pit observed the work they wrought,  
But though cast down in Staburags's maw,  
Was yet alive, and Burtnieks now sought.

Close Kangars listened then, and felt great fear,  
And anger too that witness there had been,  
Whose words to ill-repute could bring him near:  
Bearslayer must not tell what he had seen!  
Now Kangars spoke: "Oh Spidala, you tell  
Of young Bearslayer in the pit, and show  
The gods protect him now and guard him well;  
This makes him even stronger as our foe."

"For his defeat we need a different scheme,  
To let this rash young man himself betray,

And seek out death, pursuing fame's sweet dream;  
Example I will show you of the way.  
For years upon our hills our foes no more  
The giant, Kalapuisis, employ.  
Word we will send to Peipus Lake's far shore,  
The time is ripe, in Latvia to destroy."

"The Latvians I will urge to go to war.-  
I know Bearslayer bold will not delay,  
But in a fearless mood will go once more,  
With Burtnieks to struggle in the fray,  
Although they know that death will follow sure,  
If Kalapuisis they meet and fight.  
On Latvian soil no warrior can endure  
Against the dread Estonian giant's might."

Perkons sends a storm to kill the Germans, but they are rescued

Then Spidala would thank him, but all round  
The whole room glowed with fire, and thunder crashed.  
It rocked the house and shook the trembling ground;  
A storm broke out and rainstorms downward slashed.  
The wild bears roared, the wolves all howled in fright,  
And from the swamps they heard the night birds call.  
In all of nature terror reigned that night,  
When lightning sent by Perkons lashed the squall.

Both pale as corpses witch and warlock shook.  
Their fear was greater than the forest kind's,  
Because they knew that Perkons would not brook,  
Nor bear the vice of evildoers' minds.  
Then Kangars spoke: "You cannot go tonight!  
Until the storm subsides, here must you bide."  
He closed the windows and put out the light,  
Into the darkness drew the witch inside.

They covered up their heads, crept into bed,  
And hoped the storm would end, but feared profound,  
For clap on clap of thunder still it bred,  
And on the hills smashed oak trees to the ground.  
In truth, the Baltic gods fought hard that night.  
The lightning sent by Perkons split the sky,  
And Antrimps threw up waves of mountain's height-  
To meet the clouds he made the waters fly!

Meanwhile, nearby the storm had seized a ship  
That mastless drove before the wind and rain,  
And soon with all beneath the waves would slip:  
The people cried for help, but all in vain.  
Decreed by Perkons, death was close at hand.-  
But Fate to human will free choice affords;  
The Livian folk who dwelt upon the land  
Rash saved the Strangers, soon to be their lords!

To end this night the morning sun rose red.  
On rising, Kangars saw his guest slept on:  
"So wild a storm I have not seen," he said,  
"A frightful night! How good that it is gone.  
To kill the Devil Perkons now would please!"  
Outside, the roof lay torn off on the ground,  
While in the yard criss-crossed lay broken trees,  
As filled with wonder Kangars gazed around.

Then on the narrow path two men came near;  
He watched them quickly walking to the gate.  
One was a Riga fisherman was clear,



With him a stranger pale, in weary state,  
Who wore long robes, a cross around his neck.-  
The fisherman told Kangars of the night,  
And how they saved the people from the wreck;  
Among them was this man all garbed in white.

The stranger wished to speak now with their lord,  
And thus the man to Kangars he had brought,  
Who better knew than he what to afford.-  
Within the Stranger's eyes now Kangars sought,  
And see, their souls communed across the seas!  
The people's tongue the Stranger could employ:  
"By 'Dietrich' called, as priest my God I please,  
Who sent His Son to bring the world great joy."

"To trade we travelled to the Baltic shores,  
Although the wreck has made this goal in vain  
-Our God we thank, whose mercy is our cause-  
And here my people helpless must remain,  
Until a German ship the way is shown.  
Thus, with a leader now I wish to meet."  
In welcome Kangars spoke: "Your goal is known.  
Fear not-your God's new presence here I greet."

"Although we do not trust each other's mind,  
In mighty Kaupa's castle, that lies near,  
Your welcome message fertile soil will find!  
But rest today with me, cast off your fear,  
Although the Baltic gods are mighty too!"-  
Here Spidala rose up and joined the round;  
They talked at length of many topics new,  
Until the way to friendship deep was found.

## **Scene 2: The Estonian War**

Bearslayer goes to war against Kalapuisis

The years passed by in peaceful Baltic lands:  
Great changes came and much Bearslayer learned.  
From Burtnieks he heard of warriors' fame,  
And with Koknesis knightly wisdom earned.  
Bearslayer read the ancient books with greed.-  
They opened up deep knowledge well-springs clear,  
That told of worldly life and human need;  
Rest at the end, eternal spirits near.

The talisman that on his hat he wore  
Stayed by him and surprising fortune brought,  
When "Staburadze's maid" he met once more,  
The fair Laimdota, daughter of the court.  
For noble goals, in her he reason found,  
For toiling too for Burtnieks the lord.  
And in his heart love flared beyond all bound,  
While in Laimdota too her spirit soared.

They often met, and in the evenings' glow  
Together walked upon the lakeside shore.  
She told him of a castle sunk below,  
And tales about the Burtnieks of yore.-  
To win the maiden's hand Bearslayer sought,  
But from the hills the message came in haste,  
That Kalapuisis great havoc wrought,  
By striking down the folk and laying waste.

Fear seized them all, for none could hope to stand,  
Who in the hills should face the giant's might.

Old Burtneiks sent news across the land:  
The hero who could save them from this plight  
Might claim as bounty any wish he made,  
Laimdota's hand, if even that he chose.  
Bearslayer then from Burtneiks leave prayed,  
And with Koknesis sought to face the foes.

Old Burtneiks refused their wish at length,  
Moved by the danger they would surely face,  
But, knowing well the measure of their strength,  
At last he gave his blessing with good grace.-  
Soon, riding dashing colts, with sword in hand,  
Into the hills they went to right the wrong;  
Sent forth as saviours in the field to stand,  
By youths and maidens and the sound of song.

Halfway they met swift riders seeking aid;  
To Burtneiks a message grim they brought:  
Estonian foes had made a border raid,  
And burned and killed, and thus his help they sought.  
They asked for aid from Burtneiks's Lord,  
And knew that his agreement would be found;  
If they should fight against Estonia's horde,  
To send his men he was by honour bound.

What best to do the youths had to decide.-  
They settled soon, since time was not to lose,  
That one of them to Burtneiks would ride,  
And with the hasting riders bring the news.  
This task Koknesis took now, saying plain:  
"Alone, Bearslayer, triumph realize,  
And so Laimdota's hand in marriage gain.  
I know your love, and will not seek the prize."

Bearslayer defeats Kalapuisis and befriends him

Beside his wood-framed hut, high on the hill,  
Sat Kalapuisis and ate a calf,  
Then with a suckling pig consumed his fill.  
Beside him lay his club, a mighty staff,  
A tree trunk with a millstone on it bound.-  
On seeing bold Bearslayer riding past,  
He seized his club and swung the weapon round,  
So fast it caused a whirlwind's swirling blast.

The giant laughed, asked if his mother dear  
Knew he had come, untimely death to face.  
Bearslayer answered that the hour was near,  
When giants in the world would have no place;  
To Pakols, therefore, he would show the course!  
In answer then his club the giant cast,  
And sent Bearslayer tumbling, while his horse  
Into the swamp with tangled club fled fast.

Bearslayer sprang up safe, swift at a bound,  
Then drew his sword, and struck a mighty blow,  
That brought the giant tumbling to the ground.  
The giant grasped a pine in falling low,  
With branch and roots the tree trunk loose he tore,  
Which falling pinned him down across his chest!-  
Bearslayer did not let him rise once more,  
But made to strike his head off from his breast.

"Heroic youngster wait," the giant cried,  
"Before I die allow me moments more  
To speak some words that may assuage your pride.

Were you the babe a savage she-bear bore?  
My mother told: When, from the Daugava's bank  
A bear-cub comes, sent here to fight with me,  
A fit opponent with a worthy rank,  
The Baltic tribes will soon once more be free."

"The sea will bring dread monsters to our shore,  
In iron clad, and full of boundless greed;  
All living creatures, crops, and soil and more,  
They will devour to sate their endless need!-  
It is not wise in such a circumstance  
To strive in war, and in the monsters' hands  
Thus give our folk. This promise I advance:  
An endless peace shall reign between our lands."

"Forth I will go and both our shores guard fast,  
That, while I live, unwanted from the west,  
The strangers will not come. And at the last,  
When life is done, in Zunda I will rest."  
Bearslayer quickly offered him his hand,  
That Kalapuisis might gain his feet,  
And said: "Henceforth let peace between us stand!  
Though on the plain in war our peoples meet."

"But we will now ensure their rage is spent;  
Between our lands this war shall be the last."  
They bound his wound, then to the valley went,  
And soon the cruel Estonian war was past.-  
But where the giant fell and wounded bled  
Remains impressed a pit into the hill,  
That yet today is called the "Giant's Bed",  
And buried in the swamp his club lies still.

Bearslayer and Laimdota plight their troth in song

All sweetly singing, forth Laimdota came  
With other maidens through the castle gate,  
To greet the heroes and to mark their fame,  
When Burtnieks's men were saved by Fate,  
And homeward rode, safe from Estonia's war.  
With oak-leaf crowns the maidens decked each brow-  
Alone, Laimdota's wreath Bearslayer bore,  
And with this song she made a solemn vow:

"The oaks still grow on Latvia's ground,  
With sturdy branch and jagged leaf.  
Still in our folk are heroes found,  
Who guard our land with strong belief;  
We deck their brows with oak-leaves round,  
And sing their praise and show no grief."

"Sing of Bearslayer in our lore,  
The giant fell at his strong stroke.  
There in the hills the youth struck sure,  
To save us from Estonia's yoke.  
The foe destroys our land no more,  
No village burns nor daunts the folk."

"Our brethren safe their fields will till,  
And brew their beer at autumn-tide.  
To newly-weds with joy we will  
In song and dance success and pride.  
Bearslayer's quest I shall fulfil,  
And be his virtuous, upright bride."

With joyous heart Bearslayer heard these lines,

They filled his soul with feelings deep and grave.  
He sought to show the maiden his designs,  
And with this song his answer pure he gave:

"Where stout oaks grow the linden thrives-  
Where heroes dwell are damsels pure;  
The Latvian warrior proudly strives,  
That in our land fair maids endure.  
And willingly men give their lives,  
The Fatherland defending sure."

"In guarding Latvia's maidens fair,  
They earn their oak-leaf crowns anew,  
The foemen's strokes unyielding bear.  
Then Laima brings their bride to view.-  
Oh fair Laimdota, beauty rare,  
I pledge to live and die for you."

Moved by the youthful people's greeting song,  
Soon Burtnieks himself to sing began.-  
In warrior hearts the joyous mood was strong,  
And brotherhood stirred deep in every man.  
All bade Laimdota enter through the door,  
A meal awaited there the heroes bold;  
At Burtnieks's order there was more,  
For mead was served to greet them to the fold.

When then Laimdota served them the drink she brought,  
Bearslayer found that all there pleased him dear.  
For in their toasts his future joy they sought,  
And with their words his destiny's path made clear:-  
The evil plot to kill the gallant boy  
Was by the will of all the gods made vain,  
And turned from grief into a larger joy,  
From which Bearslayer endless fame would gain.

### **Scene 3: Bearslayer rescues the Sunken Castle**

Bearslayer finds his way into the Sunken Castle

Time passed: One evening down Bearslayer went  
Into the stronghold's massive crypt alone,  
Where learned volumes safe the ages spent.-  
He saw, half open in the floor of stone,  
A trapdoor that he had not seen before.  
He took a lantern, wanting now to know,  
And looked inside where, dropping from the door,  
A narrow flight of steps led down below.

He took the stair into a cavern deep;  
Within the earth he strode a tunnel through,  
Until he reached an ancient castle's keep,  
Which, from the distance he had walked, he knew  
Beneath the middle of the lake must lie.  
Within the rooms were many things on show  
-Old scattered weapons caught Bearslayer's eye-  
And in one chamber shone a lantern's glow.

He slowly entered in, where chests he saw  
And shelves with ancient volumes heavy grown,  
And wooden tablets carved with words of yore.-  
There in the centre, on a slab of stone,  
A lantern dimly burned, and by its light  
He saw a woman, parchment in her hand,  
Who did not mark Bearslayer come in sight,  
As, deep in thought, the document she scanned.

But as he neared, by chance she turned her head.  
"Laimdota!" then Bearslayer joyful cried.  
"Forgive that I disturb your thoughts," he said,  
"For me to meet you here gives greater pride  
Than some fair goddess in a wondrous place.  
Within the vault I found the secret door,  
And passing through into the cavern's space,  
Thus entered this enchanted castle's core."

"Allow me but a moment here to stay,  
To look into these parchments and their spell;  
Is this the place of which you spoke that day?"  
"It is," she said.-"But yet I cannot tell  
How I forgot to close the door, for none  
Without my father's word in here belongs.  
Still, stay! -Your entry to the castle now is done-  
And we will read the texts and learn their songs."

Bearslayer spoke: "To stay I were content,  
My whole life here with you and with these books!"  
"Haste not, Bearslayer, such a wish to vent,"  
Then swift Laimdota said with warning looks,  
"Your words may rise up to the gods' stern ears,  
Who oft fulfil our wish in unsought ways.-  
Above all here, where in the coming years  
Will lie for me the joy of future days."

"I, Burtnieks's youngest daughter, yearn-  
Can but a hero stay here through one night,  
Within this castle rest, yet still return,  
And join the living folk at morning light,  
The castle then will break the magic spell,  
And in the morning, at the hero's side,  
Will rise and greet the sun it once knew well!"-  
Bearslayer took her hand and ardent cried:

"Of Burtnieks the youngest daughter fair,  
Within the castle of your sires I ask,  
If you will love old Lielvarde's heir,  
And make him strong to carry out this task,  
To break the spell within these halls to lie?"  
To this Laimdota earnest answer made:  
"Together we shall live and striving die,  
That to the folk our service will be paid!"

Bearslayer drew her close. She pressed her face  
Against his chest. Two mighty spirits there  
In lofty virtue soared to heaven's space  
Like rising stars-such moments pure are rare!  
Upon the lake the waves broke white with spume,  
In moonlight glow the castle's rooftops shone;  
Light shadow spirits flitted through the room,  
Smiled down upon the lovers-then were gone.

The youthful pair but of themselves took note;  
The happy moment's joy they would not share.  
And soon they knew how when first lovers dote,  
True love's sweet bliss can conquer worldly care.

Oh, blissful joy-filled moments, soon you go,  
So like a dream, a sweetly fading tune.  
Oh, paradise on earth we briefly know,  
Why drive you forth your favoured ones so soon,  
Your pleasures but a fleeting moment show?  
Why give them bitter sorrow as your boon?

But does not briefest joy pain overthrow,

And blunt of life the sharpest anguish keen?  
Be sure it does! If once true love we know,  
Life's further joys or sorrows nothing mean-  
Love only is remembered as we go,  
Though we a lifetime naught but grief have seen.

While both the lovers felt a joy divine,  
An evil presence in the lake close by  
Looked in the window with a will malign,  
A water snake-false Spidala's grim eye!  
Soon marked Laimdota that the time was late,  
She had to leave because the time had flown.  
Bearslayer through the night resolved to wait;  
Since he stood firm she took the path alone.

Bearslayer conquers demons and raises the Sunken Castle

Past midnight hour the castle grew so dank,  
Bearslayer only warmed himself somehow,  
By lighting in the hearth a broken plank.  
He waited then for what would happen now.

In all the rooms a sudden whirlwind ran,  
And seven demon fiends rushed through the door.  
They bore a coffin with an ancient man,  
Like scythes his teeth, like knives the nails he bore.  
Although at first it seemed that he was dead,  
He moved himself and uttered ghastly groans,  
With opened eyes, "How cold I am!" he said.-  
An unwished shudder gripped Bearslayer's bones.

He scarce could bear a voice so fearsome grim.  
He banked the fire, then from the coffin's bounds,  
Drew forth the man and said these words to him:  
"Grow warm, you hell-hound, only-cess these sounds!"  
But now the old man snarled, and tried to seize  
And tear Bearslayer's ears with his sharp tooth.-  
It seemed he knew Bearslayer's strength would ease,  
So he could fight and overpower the youth.

Bearslayer struggling held him in the fire;  
His hair was burning, but despite this plight,  
Bearslayer swore: "No rescue from the pyre,  
Until the castle rises to the light."

A noise was heard, and through the open door  
Rushed Spidala the witch, and with her came  
The seven demons who had come before,  
With pitchforks armed, reflecting red the flame.  
They fell upon Bearslayer one and all,  
And with their forks they made to stab at him:  
There at the fore-they answered to her call-  
Came Spidala, her eyes aglitter grim.

Bearslayer was hard-pressed to face such odds,  
Until of Staburadze's gift he thought  
-The mirror that she gave him from the gods-  
And from his clothes her magic glass he brought.  
He held it out in Spidala's wild face,  
And horrid wailing sounded in the gloom,  
While all the demons shrank down in their place,  
And spun like motes of dust about the room.

The dust cloud ebbed, the spinning whirlwind died,  
A cool breeze cleaned the air and light now shone.-  
A sage old man emerged and greetings cried:

"Our people's founder in the days bygone,  
I Viduveds now guard the Latvian folk!  
That you, my son, these demons here could slay  
Has saved this castle from the dark world's yoke.-  
Tomorrow it will see the light of day."

"Light to the people too the things will bring  
Their ancient sires collected in this cell,  
Among them laws, which from the Godhead spring;  
Remember these and you will prosper well!-  
I warmly thank you that you won this fight;  
Rest now with gods in Burtnieks's keep.  
Your task is done and peaceful through this night,  
My maidens fair will lull you into sleep."

The old man vanished in the glow once more.  
And afterwards three beauteous maids came by;  
Reed pillows, sheets and blankets warm they bore,  
And for Bearslayer made a bed to lie.  
Full weary grown he lay down for the night,  
Sweet heavenly songs then sounded in his ear.-  
With easy breath, his drowsy eyes closed tight,  
He slept at peace, freed for the night from fear.

Next morning-light into the air to take-  
Bearslayer, chests and documents were raised.  
But with them rose the castle from the lake!  
Of Burtnieks the folk were sore amazed;-  
A castle stood upon an island bold,  
Bathed in the centre of the lake in light.  
Her father, straight Laimdota quickly told,  
Bearslayer in the castle spent the night.

At once he knew that broken was the spell,  
Rejoiced to see the ancient castle saved,  
Thence with Laimdota went, pleased well,  
And found the youth asleep, all dangers braved.

Laimdota gently roused him, and he saw  
That golden sunlight through the pane shone free.  
He jumped up quickly and embraced her sure,  
Said, kissing her, "You now belong to me.  
The shackles broken that kept us apart!"-  
"Praise to the gods, praise to the spirit band,"  
Said Burtnieks. "The maid gives you her heart;  
I give you blessings from her father's hand."

"This covenant our two great clans will lead,  
To take the task of saving Latvia's folk!"-  
From then the pair the ancient books could read,  
And of their teachings oft together spoke.  
With wonder then Bearslayer clearly saw,  
That of the books Laimdota took good heed,  
And well could talk about the gods' high law,  
Of human virtue and of hero's deed.

Laimdota tells Bearslayer how the Devil sank the castle

One evening, in the castle sat the two,  
And thus Laimdota deep the youth amazed:  
"Now from a parchment I will read to you  
About our Sunken Castle that you raised."

"Far to the east, past seven kingdoms grand,  
Rose up a cloud, shaped like a saddled colt,  
Upon which Perkons sat with whip in hand.

Each whip crack smashed great rocks with lightning bolt,  
Made humans tremble, hill and valley quake.  
Then Perkons spoke and all the earth took heed:  
'Who keeps my laws with me the path may take,  
And to a new land westward will I lead!'"

"But, fearful of the god, stood silent all,  
Until the tribe of Burtnieks bold grew.  
Its legendary fighters strong and tall,  
Then said: 'Great Perkons, we will come with you,  
As pious subjects we will heed your mind,  
If you but lead us to the fair new land!'  
With Perkons at the head, the tribe behind,  
They walked far to the west, a sturdy band."

"By savage creatures harried on the track,  
Foul fiends and giants, dragons fed their fears.  
All fell on them, but Perkons drove them back,  
And Burtnieks's men fought with their spears.  
At length they won through to the western bound:-  
The place they settled called the 'Baltic Sea'.  
A fruitful valley in this land they found,  
And chose the site where future life would be."

"They built a castle there and cleared the plains,  
Sowed barley fields that Perkons fertile made.  
From Patrimps and Saulite came ripe grains,  
From Uzin autumn honey in the glade;  
The Gods' Sons made from it a heady brew.  
The brides were fair, the tribe grew greater still.  
Both springtime's spirit came, and Liga too;  
Her golden kokle's songs filled vale and hill."

"Upon the Earth this was the Golden Age!-  
The Devil, who such fortune could not bear,  
Commanded that a mighty whirlwind rage,  
And suck a massive lake into the air,  
Then in the valley down its water pour.  
The whirlwind blew until, to calm its lust,  
An old man, who a three-pronged pitchfork bore,  
Prepared the fork into its midst to thrust."

"Another, seeing this, cried: 'Wait, until  
I say a water spell. Within the gale  
Is water seeking place, that down will spill  
And fill our valley should the wind now fail.'  
Not understanding this, the first thrust through.  
The lake poured roaring down, the valley filled,  
And Burtnieks's castle sank from view.-  
All seemed then lost, but Liga different willed."

"Beneath the flood she played the kokle long,  
So beautiful the rocks grew soft and broke;  
A tunnel opened, and with Liga's song,  
Into the light came out the rescued folk."

#### **Scene 4: The story of the creation**

The Earth is formed

Another time, Laimdota read anew:-  
"In the beginning nothing was. But plain  
There shone an endless light, from which all grew.  
No start or ending marked God's perfect reign.  
He was the world's pure soul, good spirits' kin.  
The Devil still obeyed his God in all,



Beside him stood and knew not stain of sin,  
Although his mind was close before the fall."

"To make the world, God asked of him one thing:  
To fly deep down, primordial ooze to view,  
To find there slime, a handful back to bring.-  
The Devil found the slime when down he flew,  
But wondered why God had for it a plan.  
To copy God he thought some slime to save,  
A handful placed inside his mouth's broad span.  
The other handful then to God he gave."

"'Earth, form!' God cried, and down the slime He threw,  
And from this handful formed the level plain.  
Within the Devil's mouth the other too,  
Became so large he spat it out again,  
Where from the ground it raised the hills up soon!-  
From His own substance God a handful chose,  
And shaped it saying: 'Form now, Sun and Moon!'  
To light the Earth their gold and silver rose."

"Such was the beauty of the Sun and Earth,  
God loved them both and gave the Gods' Sons life,  
And to the Daughters of the Sun gave birth.  
The largest one the Moon took as his wife:  
The many thousand stars their children are.-  
The Gods' first Sons were godlike heroes all,  
And Earth's broad lands divided near and far,  
Among themselves they took them in their thrall."

"The sons of Perkons -five stout youths all told-  
Then built the spirits' beautiful abode.  
He fashioned for the Sun fine steeds of gold,  
Which through the sky from dawn to dusk it rode,  
Then in a boat returned to morning shore;  
Sailed through the night, and in the dawning rose,  
The while the sea its horses swimming bore  
-Which Antrimps as his dwelling-place now chose."

The Devil rebels against God

"Soon Patrimps gave the Earth its verdant loam,  
And springtime's spirit added flowers and grains;  
The way paved Pakols to the soul's last home.-  
But many things changed through the Devil's pains,  
And were not as they had been at the start.-  
All stones were soft and God gave firm commands  
To shun them while He gave them form apart,  
And shaped them all at once from shifting sands."

"But here the Devil sought his Lord to mock,  
To find out through what means God would condemn,  
If he should tread upon the yielding rock.  
He sought great stones and firmly stepped on them,  
And in that moment all the rocks grew hard!-  
Upon the Daugava's bank yet stands a stone,  
That still today the folk can clear regard,  
And as the 'Devil's Footprint' now is known."

"In ancient times, on trees no branches lay,  
With only trunks, straight standing they were made.  
The Devil had a scythe for reaping hay,  
While Perkons' sons forged God a chisel blade.  
God took this scythe one day-the Devil slept-  
And with it hay in masses in He brought.-  
Not knowing God had scythed, with tool inept

To use a chisel too the Devil sought."

"The grass still stood.-Unfit as reaping hook,  
The chisel was in anger cast away.  
The blade then struck a tree and hold firm took.  
Since then strong branches all the trees display."

"The Devil had fine cattle but unhorned,  
With rounded solid hooves and bluish hair.  
God built himself a byre; the Devil scorned:  
'What use a byre when yet no cows are there?'  
God answered then that cows he would provide!  
Next night he took them from the Devil's lair,  
And gave them all sharp horns, and coloured hide,  
And cloven hooves-the Devil's pen was bare."

"The Devil went and God's new byre soon found.  
The cows were there, but strange he found the sight  
Of cloven hooves, bent horns, and all around  
Were spotted cows and beasts with faces white!"

"God wanted then a dog, and to the Devil said:  
'Up to the mountaintop this stout staff bear;  
From clay a creature shape with snout and head,  
Two eyes, two ears, four legs, a tail and hair;  
And three times strike it with this staff, cry bold:  
'God made you!' and the thing will straightway live."  
The Devil struck three times as he was told,  
The dog sprang up, its homage God to give."

"The Devil now himself desired a pet,  
But bigger far than God's, with darker pelt.  
Hairs of his own above its eyes he set,  
Cried out, as with the staff a blow he dealt:  
'The Devil made you!' But it lacked life's zest.  
When 'God has made you!' were the words he said,  
The creature lived, and nuzzled to his breast.  
'Hail, wolf,' he cried as to the woods it fled."

At last God chose to make the human race;  
To do this from the Earth He took pure clay.  
One eye and ear alone possessed the face,  
Though arms and legs the body could display.  
'No evil see, nor hear, nor do,' He praised,  
'And walk a righteous path avoiding strife,  
True virtue show, from endless Godhead raised.'-  
With His own breath then breathed it into life."

"The human being slept while breathing light:  
'Here wait for morning,' God contented spoke.  
'The rising sun will wake you from the night.'-  
The morning sun into the world awoke  
Of all creations yet, the one most fine;  
With freedom's spirit filled and with free will,  
So noble that it strives to grow divine,  
To seek the good, and highest goals fulfil."

"But now the Fiend God's creature would enslave,  
And in the night another eye and ear,  
Another nostril too the human gave,  
And of his essence breathed in-hate and fear.  
Then said: 'Now evil you can see and speak,  
And henceforth not just lofty good will know,  
But stumbling helpless, blind the path will seek,  
And good and evil, both directions go.'"

"God saw the human, dangerous and wild,

In treachery that falls on other folk,  
And kills, destroying all the good and mild,  
And in His heart a mighty anger broke.  
He could not bear the Devil in his sight,  
And drove him forth to Hell's forbidding shore.  
He cursed the Devil to an endless blight,  
And banished him from Heaven evermore."

"The Devil gave foul fiends and dragons life,  
And on the good a bitter war he waged.  
All gods and Gods' Sons faced him in the strife,  
And fighting too, both Earth and Heaven raged.-  
From Perkons thunder roared, vast whirlwinds blew,  
And, spitting lightning, down the mountains sank.  
The rising sea up to the heavens grew,  
And soon engulfed the mountain's lofty flank."

"Though, beaten, to the boundless pit now run,  
Still man's corruption seeks the demon pack,  
Trapped in the web of evil they have spun.-  
But Perkons sees them, strikes and drives them back."

#### The tasks of humankind

One evening, thus Laimdota spoke in turn:  
"Bearslayer, now the Guardian's words well heed,  
He wrote them that we understand and learn;  
These ancient wisdom's teachings I will read."  
Aloud Laimdota read to him this view:  
"Time is eternal. Thus it brings no peace  
To seek beyond, and endless life pursue.  
Time comes, time goes, and rolls on without cease."

"This satisfies the gods, the Earth, the Sun,  
But sates not us, who fleeting moments live.-  
Yet human life will through the ages run,  
For who its count of years the day can give,  
Since first upon the world gazed human eyes,  
And who can know when last these eyes will close?  
Our kind survives though each of us soon dies,  
And will so long the Earth existence knows."

"To help the great undying human race  
To prosper and a perfect state achieve;  
To live and die to give it lofty place,  
This is our task, ere worldly life we leave.  
And like each person, too, our human kind  
To godlike wisdom's state itself can raise.-  
But then to ancient gods it soon grows blind,  
Who made the Earth for it in bygone days."

"With higher gods, new faith the old amends,  
The old alone as heresy holds sway.  
This is the mighty task for mankind's friends,  
To stand and guard the folk from evil's way,  
Which, fair disguised, will freedom's spirit break.-  
But from the gods derives the people's mind.  
Inspired by this, their laws themselves they make,  
And for these laws their chiefs and rulers find."

"But should these laws the leaders not fulfil,  
For their own gain the people sore oppress,  
Like all bad servants here the people's will  
Can drive the rulers out and end distress.  
For freedom's lovers clear the task at hand:  
To make just laws that goods and life protect,

On lofty human morals firmly stand,  
And nature's deathless wisdom give respect."

"Then in the folk all hate will fade at length,  
If they acknowledge nature's perfect law,  
And recognize its hidden wondrous strength.  
This is the task for those whose gifts are pure:  
With glowing ardour strive with spirit vast,  
Respect great nature, love the countryside,  
Part wide the misty curtain of the past,  
New form themselves and build the future's pride."

"Who striving seek the highest good, each one  
Will earn great fame and honour with the best.  
Their mourning friends, when once their course is run,  
Will weeping lay them to their final rest.  
And, cradled safe in Mother Nature's womb,  
From people's hearts their names will never fade.  
In realms of light they soar above the tomb,  
Whom Gods' bold Sons eternal life once gave."

Then, silently, Laimdota closed the tome,  
And placed it in a chest with others too,  
And said: "These chests to more are dusty home,  
A task for many years to read them through.  
Perhaps in later age some humans bold  
Will bring them to the sunlight, in them pore,  
And teach the folk the wisdom that they hold,  
About the past, its knowledge and its lore."

### **Scene 5: The Latvians are deceived by the Christians**

Laimdota is stolen by the Germans

On All Souls' Day a feast was made complete.  
Much strove Laimdota, for upon this night  
Old Burtnieks departed souls would greet,  
And dear ones' spirits lost to death requite.  
Bearslayer worked as did Koknesis too:  
They cleaned the barn, the drying rack made sound,  
Raked smooth the yards and cleaned the oven's flue,  
Pine needles strewed with sand upon the ground.

The barn for spirits is the favoured place:  
Behind the fireplace household gods safe dwell,  
Within live dwarves, while on the roof's broad space,  
There stands a dragon, neighbours' spite to quell.  
In wintertime when threshing work is done,  
In empty barns at midnight goblins roam.  
But on this night the barn such spirits shun,  
To yield to honoured souls their rightful home.

The two young men had cleaned and decked the space,  
Put back the chairs, brought tables to the shed,  
Where now Laimdota set a cloth in place,  
Laid on it honey, milk and new-made bread,  
And plates of soft-boiled barley with dried pork.  
Then Burtnieks the windows opened wide,  
And placed on both smooth wooden planks to walk,  
To help departed souls to come inside.

Together came the family to relax,  
And with Laimdota came a maiden throng,  
Put baskets filled with finely carded flax  
Beneath the tables, while they sang this song:

"From up above, from down below,  
Tread in a basket fit,  
Tread in the yarn, before you go,  
And in the reed chair sit!"

"Into the barn, Mother of Souls,  
Go in my father's door.  
Go in so light, no mark unrolls  
Upon the white-sand floor."

"Mother of Souls, I ask you true,  
Enjoy the feast we share.  
Enjoy the feast we offer you,  
And still my body spare."

"Oh, spare my body, stand me by,  
Preserve me while life runs.  
Preserve me safely so that I  
Can give our people sons."

As darkness came they lit both torch and brand.  
They stayed together up to midnight's stroke,  
When Burtnieks pronounced: "Young people, stand,  
Go silent to your beds, no noise evoke.  
Allow to me to stay here quite alone,  
With shadows of each dear departed one!"  
All went away in silence on their own,  
The sacred night's deep peace disturbed by none.

Next morning Burtnieks, in pensive mood-  
Expecting thence Laimdota soon to bring  
From in the barn the souls' uneaten food-  
In solemn tone Bearslayer told this thing:  
"My son, last night the spirits showed portent:  
For you and your Laimdota saddest fate.  
-May Perkons and the gods such times prevent!-  
But where is now Laimdota? Why so late?"

Bearslayer sought her at her chamber's door;  
He called and knocked but answer there was none.  
Returning then he sought to reassure:  
Perhaps her work outside she had begun.  
Throughout the castle now the maid they sought,  
But none had seen her though they hunted well.  
They went into her room, which nothing brought-  
She had not slept there, that was plain to tell.

Both felt concern: They ran out now to view  
Both castle grounds and all surrounding space.  
But all was vain. Worse was, Koknesis too  
Was missing from the castle-void his place.  
Shocked, Burtnieks returned home full of fear.  
"It pleased the gods," he said, "to strike us hard.  
We must take action, since to me is clear,  
That evil hands now close Laimdota guard."

"We must act fast," he said, "Call forth my men.  
Pursue the traitors, yet they may be caught."  
"Too slow that way," Bearslayer answered then:  
"By me alone the foe is better sought.  
I swear to find Laimdota, bring her back,  
Or else Bearslayer no more will be seen."  
Saluting then he set out on the track,  
And left the place where happiness had been.

Kaupa sets out for Rome

In Turaida, within a castle hall,  
Of three men talking voices could be heard.  
False Kangars shared with Dietrich priesthood's call,  
The chieftain, Kaupa, was of them the third.

The German priest a way perfidious found,  
The fiery chieftain in his web to snare:  
He told what things in German life abound,  
Of heroes of the folk, and culture rare,  
And of the faith that man and God unites.-  
Of Rome's High Father too the plan unfurled,  
Together with the brotherhood of knights,  
To spread the sacred faith across the world.

Here Kangars aided Dietrich in his work  
-Though Kaupa's mind so much he had in grip,  
His fathers' gods the chieftain soon would shirk.-  
From Germany had come a mighty ship,  
And all the merchants wished now to remain,  
A city at the river's mouth to build,  
Which for the Baltic folk would bring much gain,  
If only mighty Kaupa all this willed.

He read a letter from the Pope's great home,  
Who Kaupa sent good words and blessings fair,  
And wished the chieftain's presence there in Rome.  
Moreover, Dietrich said that Kaupa there  
With his own eyes the German land would see,  
And through the Holy Father earn much fame.-  
In Kaupa surged the wish in Rome to be,  
He felt the Pope gave honour to his name.

He swore a German city to condone,  
Resolved next day within their ship to sail,  
With Dietrich leading to the Holy Throne.-  
On their return vowed Kangars not to fail.

At Daugava's mouth soon after All Souls' Eve,  
Slow on the tide a German vessel swayed.  
A throng looked on while, casting loose to leave,  
Last goods in haste were dealt in final trade,  
And for their castle men the Germans hired.-  
To go on board, soon Kaupa there appeared,  
And Dietrich too into the ship retired.  
With greetings warm the watching folk all cheered.

From high upon the ship now Kaupa spoke:  
"My countrymen, of wonders I am told,  
Of famous German lands and wealthy folk.  
A friendship thus with them we will unfold,  
And let them build a castle on our soil,  
Through which for us new springs of trade will flow,  
Our riches will increase, reward for toil,  
Our land will thrive, the wealth of all will grow."

"To German shores to seek this out I go:  
But first my promise firm to you I give,  
To tell what we must do, so soon I know.  
Until that day with them in friendship live."  
The people cheered, their caps rejoicing threw:  
"If they with good intention friendship hail,  
Long live then Kaupa, and the Strangers too!"-  
Then with fair winds the mighty ship set sail.

But Kangars of their friendship knew the cause,  
And understood full well the Germans' heart.  
With Spidala he stood upon the shores,

And, spiteful smiling, watched the ship depart.

Bearslayer is consumed by sorrow, and disappears

Just then was heard: "Bearslayer now is here,  
Who brought the giant low." The crowd spread wide,  
As from his weary horse he sprang down clear.-  
He knew that Kangars had an evil side,  
And raging at the priest he loudly roared:  
"Reveal now, traitor, what Laimdota's lot,  
Or else your bones will feel my hacking sword.  
Her disappearance is your evil plot."

In place of Kangars Spidala words found,  
As on the far horizon sailed the ship:  
"Look, there, where she to Germany is bound."-  
Bearslayer cried: "We are in murder's grip!  
Such wicked deeds the people will not stand,  
But will strike back, for open I will say,  
That you and Kangars magic means command,  
And for yourselves the people's faith betray!"

"Oh people, do not trust the Strangers' guile,  
If love for freedom and our faith you feel!"-  
As all the people heard his deeds so vile,  
False Kangars summoned strength the breach to heal,  
Lest in this moment fame and power he lose.  
These words he spoke: "Young hero, for this shame  
Like you, the wrath of Perkons I would choose,  
Did I not know you wrongly give me blame."

"Soon Kaupa's eyes in German lands will see,  
How far to trust the friendship they have shown.  
Your second charge too gives no blame to me:  
Laimdota did not wish to go alone.-  
Since Kaupa planned to take some youths from here,  
To gain the wisdom Germany entails,  
Your friend, Koknesis, rushed to volunteer;  
As lover of Laimdota now he sails."

"Last night was opportune from you to part,  
To go with Kaupa to the German shores.-  
Be sure, young hero, in the maiden's heart,  
Though praising all your deeds, she was not yours.  
To make you sad she did not have the will,  
Through unrequited love. Her heart's behest  
She yet knew well, and was resolved to fill:  
She knows now joy, with true love in her breast."

If Perkons of a sudden walked abroad,  
Bearslayer's mind had not been more amazed.  
Both pale and shocked he lowered then his sword,  
That set to strike at Kangars had been raised.  
Deep in his heart struck pain that knew no end,  
Like stabbing knives his soul felt jealousy.  
Could thus Koknesis prove so false, his friend?  
And chaste Laimdota too? How could this be?

Though naught he shared with Kangars of this view,  
Another reason plain was not to find,  
Why both Koknesis and Laimdota too,  
In secret left the castle gates behind.  
But thoughts like these Bearslayer gave no place.-  
Through Kaupa's voyage to the German shore,  
For him all things now had a different face;  
Of Kaupa's motives he had doubts no more.

"Your innocence," he cried, "my thoughts refuse,  
But I will wait while Kaupa sails the sea,  
Or for a ship from Germany with news;  
But warning take, if you have lied to me!"  
Regarding them no more, he rode away.-  
Then Spidala rejoiced with devilish glee;  
The longed-for moment now had come this day;  
Bearslayer's fate was worse than death could be!

In sadness deep, Bearslayer homeward rode.-  
With joy old Lielvardis saw him come,  
But marked at once his sorrow's heavy load.  
When asked, Bearslayer told his care's full sum.  
Then Lielvardis said: "Do not despair,  
Do not lose hope. Strange ways can Fate fulfil.  
Perhaps, though things against it witness bear,  
A blameless maid, Laimdota loves you still."

Calmed by his father's soothing heartfelt view,  
Bearslayer sent to Burtnieks to tell,  
Of fair Laimdota's fate all that he knew.  
In Lielvarde's halls he chose to dwell,  
Though mourning sorrow occupied his days.-  
Alone he walked the cliffs where Daugava flows,  
The water's white-capped waves drew then his gaze,  
He bitter raged at Destiny's cruel blows.

He yearned to roll like waves down to the sea,  
That with the North Wind's icy blasts wild fights,  
To gaze upon the North Wind's Daughter free,  
With her to bide, beneath the Northern Lights.  
The young man deeply longed to calm his breast,  
And cool his fevered brow, and felt compelled  
No more to be in Lielvarde guest.-  
And soon none knew the place the hero dwelled.

## **CANTO IV THE LATVIANS SUFFER MANY HARDSHIPS**

### **Scene 1: Kaupa is seduced by wealth and power**

Kaupa accepts Christianity

In mighty, ancient Rome,  
The Pope's eternal See,  
He called from Peter's dome,  
The Holy Land to free.

The Baltic he decreed  
To be the Holy Land.  
All knights from sin he freed  
Committed by their hand,  
If in the Baltic's bounds,  
They fought the pagan foe,  
Built castles in strong grounds,  
That priests might safely go.

His call to arms soon raised  
A fortune-seeking band,  
Who loud the venture praised-  
They sought estates and land.  
Such men their fate pursue  
And sail to foreign shores.  
They seek a homeland new,  
And follow no man's laws.

In Peter's Church one day



The Pope absolved their sin,  
A bishop gave, to pray,  
And leaders from his kin.  
At last, to those he turned,  
Come from the Baltic shore;  
His blessings Dietrich earned,  
To Kaupa he gave more.

They were allowed with grace  
To kiss his slippered feet;  
With Kaupa, face to face,  
The Pope then deigned to meet.  
He asked of Baltic tribes  
If Christ's true faith they sought,  
The faith now sent with scribes,  
To them as brothers brought.

Theirs were, as brothers, too  
The benefits and more,  
That round them stood in view,  
Or on the way they saw.  
Yet all of that was slight,  
Against the endless price  
That is believers' right,  
When death brings paradise!

Now Kaupa thought of home,  
The wealth could not deny,  
In Peter's Church in Rome  
Arrayed before his eye.  
His ancient sires seemed weak,  
Their gods could not thus bless.  
He vowed the God to seek,  
Who gave such happiness.

He would resist no more,  
Such opulence evade,  
On reaching home, he swore,  
His people to persuade.

As Kaupa now bowed down,  
The Holy Father's grace  
Conferred a knight's rich crown  
With seven stars in place.  
Such gifts, both fine and rare,  
For him alone to own,  
To knights and bishops there  
Made Kaupa's favour known.

Since to the knightly throng  
Now Kaupa numbered too,  
He soon the blessing strong  
Of Rome's great Father knew.  
Back in the Baltic land  
His will he would assert,  
With weapons in his hand,  
The Baltic to convert.

In monasteries remained  
The youths thence Kaupa bore.  
Great knowledge there they gained-  
From monks to learn they swore.  
Among them in that place  
One's later fame has grown;  
Although of Latvian race,  
As Henry he is known.

## Riga becomes the centre of German influence

The springtime had returned;  
In green it clothed the days.  
New life all nature earned,  
And sang the maker's praise.-

But Strangers saw no worth,  
To raise their eyes and see  
Who made the bounteous Earth,  
And nature caused to be.  
They had a different goal:  
An idle life to crave,  
And drunkenness extol,  
But others to enslave.

On Daugava's bank, the folk  
In hundreds hewed and filled,  
Forged iron, hammered oak,  
A city toiled to build.  
With ramparts fortified,  
Arch, passage, columns tall.  
A church stood safe inside,  
Within its lofty wall.

Named "Riga", on the banks  
It stood, on Daugava's side.  
Within its church's ranks  
Ruled Bishop Albert's pride.  
His priests with news he sent,  
The message of our Lord,  
But to their preaching lent  
The power of the sword.

They went throughout the land,  
To teach and preach of Him,  
But plundered out of hand,  
And murdered at their whim.-  
The Daugava along,  
They cast a deadly pall,  
And soon the fear was strong,  
These monsters would take all.

All Germans who now came,  
In Riga place received.-  
The folk cursed Riga's name,  
And knew they were deceived.

"Oh, Riga, much have you  
Poured out our brothers' blood!  
Oh, Riga, much have, too,  
Caused bitter tears to flood!"

"Oh, Riga, much you spurned,  
Laid waste the fields of grain!  
Oh, Riga, much you burned-  
Scarce homes and barns remain!"

"Oh, Riga, you have seized,  
Like wolves our humble food!  
Oh, Riga, you have pleased  
To swill the beer we brewed!"

"Oh, Riga, you have torn  
Our plundered things away!  
Oh, Riga, you have sworn  
With freedom we will pay!"

"Oh, Riga, can you find,  
Yet things that we hold dear?  
Oh Riga, what behind,  
Is left for looting here?"

## **Scene 2: Laimdota and Koknesis in Germany**

Laimdota's abduction

While all of this took place,  
Where down the Daugava falls,  
In Germany's far space,  
Behind a cloister's walls,  
A weeping maiden lay,  
To dear ones no recourse,  
From them false lured away,  
And carried off by force.

Laimdota was the maid,  
And Spidala's base lies  
Deception's guile displayed.-  
Clad in her mother's guise,  
She lured the girl outside,  
Where helpers in her pay  
Forth made Laimdota ride,  
From Burtnieks away.

A prisoner in their might  
To Turaida they brought,  
And further in the night  
The Daugava they sought.  
Ignoring tears and pleas,  
Their mercy to implore,  
They put her on the seas,  
To sail to German shore.

On board was Dietrich too,  
Who came to seek her ear,  
Proposed a calming view,  
And claimed she need not fear.  
Since countrymen she knew  
On board were at her call,  
Of Kaupa servants true,  
No evil could befall.

To study life they went  
Among the German race,  
Enlightened with the bent  
The faith of Christ to face.  
God's mercy deep and wide,  
Christ soon to her would show,  
Selected as His bride,  
Through Him true God to know!

Laimdota listened grave,  
Contempt burned in her eye,  
Then answer briefly gave,  
A dignified reply:  
"Though Christ from God above,  
Takes brides against their will,  
I cannot give my love,  
A promise binds me still."

"I love a hero bold,  
Have pledged to him my hand,  
My father's leave we hold,

Our hearts united stand.  
So therefore let me go,  
And tempt me not in vain,  
Or retribution know,  
And suffer for my pain."

"But more: My mother's child,  
Of humans I am one,  
My mortal flesh defiled,  
Not fit for God's true Son."

Though evil to the core,  
No conscience to feel shame,  
Yet Dietrich flushed once more,  
As though he felt the blame.  
Struck by the maid's lament,  
Of further words bereft,  
In silence hence he went,  
Alone Laimdota left.

Her lot did not improve,  
Though liberty she sought;  
False Kaupa did not move  
To help her as he ought.  
He said it was Fate's plan,  
And so she must remain,  
Until its course Fate ran,  
And took her home again.

And thus he saw no crime,  
If Dietrich fitting found,  
To put her for some time  
Within a cloister's bound.  
The ferment was so great,  
On board that was his lot,  
The maid Laimdota's fate,  
Enthralled, he soon forgot.

Soon heartless Dietrich too  
Ceased thinking of the girl,  
Because full well he knew,  
A rich and precious pearl  
A cloister had received.  
The grateful prioress,  
About his goals deceived,  
Was sure his scheme to bless.

The prioress deferred,  
Laimdota showed respect,  
But still to preach preferred;  
Advice did not neglect  
To leave old gods behind,  
The faith of Christ to take,  
And when the maid declined,  
Harsh threats began to make.

She threatened to condone,  
Support a knight's design,  
Laimdota as his own,  
To make a concubine.

Laimdota heard this view  
And felt a surging fear,  
Fore all, because she knew,  
An earl's son had been near.  
Kin to the prioress,  
He had the maiden seen;

Her beauty to possess  
His fervent wish had been.

He urged the nuns anew,  
The girl to him to give.  
The earl was of the view,  
Those who unchristian live  
No rights had in that land.  
To take the maid, his whim,  
To do with by his hand  
What deed perchance pleased him.

So time Laimdota sought,  
To plan how she could cope,  
But time no counsel brought,  
In vain her rescue hope.

Soon came the fateful day,  
So she the prioress told,  
Her gods were laid away:  
All teachings of the old,  
The things that she had learned,  
Through Burtnieks embraced.-  
In truth, Christ's faith she spurned,  
And death had rather faced!

Laimdota is rescued by Koknesis

One evening, having strayed  
With tears into her bed,  
To spirits good she prayed,  
That help to her be led.  
Then tumult loud began,  
Spread through the cloister's bounds,  
The people rushed and ran,  
And prayed with frightened sounds.

At length the shouting died,  
Her room loud footsteps neared,  
Her door was opened wide,  
And in it there appeared  
Men all in armour clad,  
With weapons in their hand;  
The guards and monks were glad,  
There at their side to stand.

One monk with glutton's face  
Spoke to the armoured ranks:  
"The pagan take apace-  
We give her up with thanks.  
For long enough has she  
This sacred place defiled;  
Take her and ride out free,  
And cleanse our cloister mild."

The monks she loud implored,  
The prioress to call,  
Protection to afford,  
That nothing should befall.  
But they refused as one-  
The reason was well known,  
For with each other nun  
The prioress had flown.

Of plunderers in fear,  
Their church the nuns sought fast,

And forth would not appear,  
Until all risk was past.-  
Then iron-clad hands with force  
Laimdota dragged outside;  
They flung her on a horse,  
And made away to ride.

But blocking them their place,  
A single man they saw.  
He held an iron mace,  
And shook it with a roar:  
"Release this blameless girl,  
Surrender now and leave,  
Or with this club I whirl  
My arm your skulls will cleave!"

Surprised to hear this call,  
At first they heeded well,  
But then as one they all  
Upon the stranger fell.-  
At this the man revealed  
Strength others cannot show;  
With skill he used his shield,  
And parried every blow.

He swung his club with hate  
Against each armoured head;  
The men who felt its weight  
With cloven helmet bled.-  
He struck the one with force,  
Whose steed Laimdota bore;  
The man fell from his horse,  
And loose his helmet tore.

The earl's son all espied,  
Who lay before their eyes.  
"You dog," the stranger cried,  
"You cur in Christian guise!  
Know that this free-born girl  
Is to such honour heir,  
Unworthy any earl,  
For her her cup to bear!"

"In virtue without lapse,  
In woman's form and face,  
In Germany, perhaps,  
No equal has your race!"

"Go! To your comrades run;  
Tell them, in Baltic land  
Each free-born woman's son  
Will crush them by his hand,  
As I tonight did here!  
Your life this day I spare-  
But if our lands you near,  
Then face me if you dare!"

Laimdota's senses cleared,  
As this the man declared;  
His face at last appeared,  
Beneath his helmet bared.-  
A cry of joy began,  
Within the moonlight grew;  
Laimdota saw the man,  
And straight Koknesis knew!

Koknesis took her hand,

This greeting to proclaim:  
"To Gods and spirits grand  
Give thanks in time I came!  
Together we must flee,  
We cannot here delay.  
Hence you must ride with me,  
My fate learn on the way."

Into the saddle straight  
Both leaped on horses' backs,  
Rode out and did not wait,  
On rutted forest tracks.  
A distant mountain hut  
Gave shelter for the night-  
The folk who firewood cut  
Helped strangers in their plight.

They rested for some days,  
Then rode a further stage.  
Laimdota found good ways  
Disguised to be a page;  
Koknesis was her knight.-  
They from a seaport planned  
By ship to make their flight  
To reach their Fatherland.

Koknesis on the way  
Told her his story grim.-  
One night in bed he lay,  
When Kangars came to him,  
Said Kaupa at the dawn  
To Germany would go;  
Dispatches must be borne  
For Burtnieks to know.

Since Burtnieks, alone,  
Kept watch on All Souls' Eve,  
Koknesis, to him known,  
The message should receive.-  
No harm Koknesis saw  
To Turaida to go,  
Where waited on the shore  
Young men that he would know.

With Kaupa soon to sail  
Upon the German trip,  
With pleasure they would hail  
Koknesis on the ship.-  
Koknesis gave assent  
When Kangars told his plight:  
He had no document,  
Until the morning light.

Aboard, they broke their fast,  
And Kangars gave them wine,  
A gift from Dietrich passed.-  
Since none would thirst confine,  
But drank deep at a stroke,  
They all were soon asleep,  
And when Koknesis woke,  
The ship rocked on the deep!

Just landless sea and sky  
He saw now all around.  
His heavy head asked why,  
And shame within him found.

His thirst had so prevailed,  
With appetite so hot,  
That with them he had sailed,  
If this he willed or not.

The others swift condoled,  
That not all bad would be,  
And with the thought consoled,  
Soon Germany to see.

To Germany now sent,  
With monks to live and learn,  
Koknesis seemed content,  
New wisdom thus to earn.  
But visits soon he paid  
And time spent with an earl,  
There to the knights displayed  
His strength in jousting's whirl.

All there his skill admired,  
His agile arm's strong weight.-  
But news was not acquired  
About Laimdota's fate.  
But later, there he heard,  
That in a cloister's court,  
A woman was interred,  
Thence from the Baltic brought.

The earl desired the maid,  
To seize her deemed it right  
The cloister's grounds to raid,  
And steal her in the night.-  
Her fate Koknesis knew,  
Thus earnest vow he gave,  
The unknown maiden true,  
From such a fate to save.

When at the cloister gate,  
Laimdota's face he saw,  
He felt an endless hate,  
And caution was no more!  
And thus the slaughter grew,  
No mercy would he show;  
The earl's son, humbled, too  
For misdeeds pain must know.

### **Scene 3: In the Realm of the North Wind**

The boatmen's song summons the North Wind's Daughter

Long parted from the quay,  
Thus sang the sailor folk,  
Upon the Northern Sea,  
Good fortune to invoke:

"Oh father, build a ship,  
Oh mother, weave the sail,  
We seek straight from the slip,  
The North Wind's Daughter pale."

"We travel night and day,  
No North Wind's Daughter find,  
And reach a northern bay,  
Where snow three giants grind."

"Our greetings, grinders three,



Comes North Wind's Daughter forth?'-  
'Thanks travellers on the sea,  
No, sail on further north!'"

"We travel night and day,  
The Daughter seeking twice-  
And reach a northern bay,  
Where giants forge pure ice."

"Our greeting icesmiths three,  
Comes North Wind's Daughter forth?'-  
'Thanks travellers on the sea.  
No, sail on further north!'"

Thus sang the sailor folk  
Upon the Northern Sea,  
Until the helmsman spoke:  
Their way no more was free!

Bearslayer in this boat,  
Sailed on the Northern Sea,  
To Germany afloat,  
To set Laimdota free.

But battered by the force  
Of wind and storm that blew,  
And lost, far from the course,  
The way no more they knew.

It seemed that evil powers,  
Sea ghosts, were ever near,  
In day and night-time hours,  
They filled the crew with fear.

Dank mists and deepest gloom  
The light blocked as they swirled;  
While hail and snow-filled spume  
Were by the North Wind hurled.

Then, where the sky's edge gleamed,  
A brilliant glow forth surged,  
And, from the glow, what seemed  
To be a sail emerged.

Across the dark sea wave,  
Its course approached them near,  
Close up assurance gave:  
It was a ship was clear.

And at the helmsman's side,  
A woman they could view,  
Who, nearing, sweetly cried  
In greeting to the crew:

"Your song to my ears came,  
Called me across the sea.  
You called aloud my name;  
Say what you want from me!"

The sailors were amazed,  
And stood as turned to stone.  
In wonder they all gazed,  
The North Wind's Daughter shown.

Her face was peach and cream;  
Reflected in the glare,  
Eyes blue as Heaven's gleam  
Shone in the north's pure air.

Her hair was long and gold,  
And to her shoulders hung.  
She wore, they could behold,  
A rainbow robe that clung.

And on her form flowed down  
A snow-white woollen shawl.-  
Upon her head no crown,  
Instead, a helmet tall.

And weapons she had too,  
Within the ship there seen:  
Bow, spear, and shield on view,  
Stout forged from copper green.

Thus was the Daughter's form,  
About which legends tell.-  
That she provokes the storm,  
All sailors know full well.

With terrors she can soar  
Into the northern height,  
Lead souls of men to war,  
All formed up for the fight.

And when each lets his spear  
In warlike manner fly,  
On earth the people fear,  
Say: "War and plague are nigh!"

In the domain of the North Wind's Daughter

As first, Bearslayer stirred,  
The North Wind's Daughter told,  
That, lost, they were interred  
Within the northern cold.  
But their desire was clear,  
The homeward course to find:  
The North Wind's Daughter here,  
To help might be inclined.

The Maiden now explained  
That this was hard to do:  
Few crews the course obtained-  
A very seldom few.  
To trap them in this deep,  
Great storms the North Wind sent,  
Her father, who his sleep  
In ice-bound caverns spent.

Yet longer he would rest,  
Perhaps a month in all;  
For them to stay were best,  
Safe in her island hall.  
Then later, firm she swore,  
To strive hard for their sake.-  
No course Bearslayer saw,  
But her advice to take.

The North Wind's Daughter steered,  
Her ship sailed further on,  
To where bright had appeared  
The glow that earlier shone.  
And at an island's shore,  
Its hills in icy grip,  
Her craft she docked once more,

Here led Bearslayer's ship.

She took him with his crew  
Far inland from the shore;  
Where they, with wondering view,  
A splendid castle saw.  
Its towers, roof and walls  
Of ice were frozen hard.-  
They stayed outside its halls,  
The North Wind's sleep to guard.

Across broad fields of snow,  
Rose smoke clouds from the land.  
Her guests she told to go,  
And gestured with her hand.-  
Some way they went apace;  
The air soon ceased to freeze,  
And snow drifts now gave place  
To fields and groves of trees.

Within a garden fair,  
Was, deep as Hell, a pit,  
Whence flames shot in the air,  
From fires eternal lit.  
As they at Earth's core burned,  
Their endless flames rose hot,  
This icy island turned  
Into a verdant plot.

Dense foliage, full of fruit,  
Hung there upon each tree,  
With babbling brooks to suit-  
All creatures lived carefree.  
Wild birds and beasts of prey,  
But farmyard creatures too,  
Could flourish here and play,  
In meadows sweet with dew.

The North Wind's Daughter's spear  
Upon her shield struck thrice-  
This made small folk appear  
From all sides in a trice.  
At Earth's far edge they dwelled,  
And served the Maid's behest;  
These folk she now compelled  
To welcome every guest.

A pavilion they observed  
Where tables full were laid,  
Delicious food was served,  
And all was ready made.  
The North Wind's Daughter bade,  
Her guests should there appear;  
And while they ate was glad,  
To serve to each sweet beer.

Another tent again  
Had beds all warm prepared,  
That rest might dull the pain  
Of hardships they had shared.-

No sun could come or go,  
They knew not day or night,  
Yet still the pit's bright glow  
Gave forth sufficient light.

The time passed full of ease,

Of pleasures they were sure;  
Each day as much could please,  
As had the one before.

They stayed a goodly spell,  
Could all their needs fulfil,  
It pleased them there so well,  
To leave none had the will.

#### **Scene 4: The journey back**

They leave the Northern Land

At last Bearslayer stirred:  
The Maiden he implored,  
To show the course preferred,  
And let them go on board.  
The North Wind's Daughter gave  
Her vow all to fulfil,  
But sought their lives to save,  
With better counsel still.

For he should not retrace  
The path he took before,  
Because he there would face  
His enemies of yore,  
Who now might well succeed  
To smash him with their force.  
Therefore, he should proceed  
Along a better course.

This path was long to go,  
And full of risks severe,  
But known not to the foe,  
Whose envy he must fear.  
The course would lead him past  
The Land of Ogres, then,  
Along the coast at last,  
To reach his home again.

Like people with dog's jaw;  
Thus was the ogres' form.  
They ate their meat while raw,  
And drank fresh blood still warm.  
No mercy could distract  
Their hunt for humankind.  
On foot their prey they tracked,  
Killed all that they could find!

Still, men could foil their hunt,  
By wearing footwear turned,  
The heel towards the front,  
So none their path discerned.-  
Still further was a land  
Where lived in caves deep set,  
Of little folk a band,  
Who helped all those they met.

Within their lands were found  
The Gardens of the Sun.  
So when it from the ground  
Rose up, its course to run,  
It hung close to your hand.-  
Which meant, at dawn of day,  
In caves they had to stand,  
Or burn up in its ray.

Here shelves nobody knew,  
Nor cups on hooks hung loose;  
Behind the clouds they threw  
Their spoons straight after use.  
To get the washing clean,  
The maids boiled what they wear;  
Then clouds of steam were seen,  
And storms formed in the air.

On leaving from this land,  
No more they would see sky,  
But in the darkness stand,  
And endless sea pass by.  
At length their eyes would sight  
A Hill of Diamonds rare,  
That sparkles giving light.-  
Yet none to land should dare!

Bright shining is the peak,  
It glistens without stop-  
But let no sailor seek,  
To climb up to the top!  
Still further on their way,  
The sky would lighten, then  
The night would yield to day,  
And they would see again.

A verdant island near  
Its beauty plain would show.-  
But let them all know fear,  
And never closer go!  
This island to it draws  
All vessels from the sea,  
And once upon its shores,  
They never more come free.

If cunning he revealed,  
Through all these troubles passed,  
The Northern Sea would yield  
And bring him home at last.

Heartfelt Bearslayer then  
His earnest thanks could say;  
Together called his men  
To set out on their way.  
But quickly they all scorned  
Their life of ease to break.-  
The North Wind's Daughter warned,  
Her father soon would wake.

Then all would be in vain,  
Their homes they would not reach.-  
They hurried back again  
And rushed down to the beach.  
Their ship they found safe there,  
As it had been before.  
It needed no repair,  
To leave this northern shore.

But ice-flows formed up fast  
And ringed them all around.  
They felt earth tremors vast,  
That shook the island's ground.  
The North Wind's Daughter's cries  
Were, "Save yourselves and go,  
My father soon will rise,

And winter storms will blow!"

Then all knew that they must  
At once raise up the sail,  
And, with the wind's first gust,  
They tried to flee the gale.  
They scarcely were at sea,  
When, with a tempest's roar,  
The snow-capped waves rose free-  
The North Wind slept no more!

In fear of death the crew  
Exerted all their strength;  
Before the wind they flew,  
And got to sea at length.

#### The Land of the Dog-Snout Ogres

Long hours in waves they heaved  
Until, about to drown,  
Their troubles were relieved,  
Land found, the anchor down.-  
They seemed from death here saved,  
But new risks were at hand:  
Blown by the storm just braved  
Into the Ogres' Land!

The storm its course had run,  
The sea could gently rock.  
The sailors had begun  
To take of things good stock.  
The ship survived the storm,  
Which showed that it was strong.  
Repairs they would perform,  
Their voyage then prolong.

As far as eye could sight,  
It was an empty shore.  
The crew thus thought it right,  
To go on land once more.

Upon a mossy rise,  
Some doe were grazing near.  
Bearslayer, for supplies,  
Went out to hunt the deer.  
A hope formed from this scene:  
These parts could well be clear,  
No Dog-Snouts might have been;  
Perhaps they need not fear.

Bearslayer with some men  
Approached the mossy hill;  
Already deer for them  
He had contrived to kill.  
And now with dagger blows  
This meat they would share round.-  
Then from the hill arose  
A horrid shrieking sound.

And from a cave now poured  
The Dog-Faced Monsters out.-  
Surrounded by this horde  
The men yet battled stout.  
But doglike teeth soon ripped  
To shreds men fighting here.  
Bearslayer firmly gripped,

And faced them with his spear.

He stabbed the howling gangs,  
But still could not prevent  
That with their vicious fangs  
His hip and side they rent.  
He had not found the strength  
To hold them long alone,  
If not a thought at length  
Had saving counsel shown.

No monsters any more  
Were pouring from the cave,  
So he rushed to its door,  
Therein himself to save.  
Now, standing in this way,  
He could, with sturdy limb,  
Drive off or quickly slay  
All those that ran at him.

A howl the monsters gave,  
When first they saw this trick,  
Then rolled before the cave  
Great boulders broad and thick.  
They heaped the stones until  
The entrance they secured.  
Bearslayer waited, still,  
Within the cave immured.

The sailors could not wait,  
Until the hunters came;  
But orders did not state  
To seek them, all the same.  
They worked on board until  
All readied was to sail;  
Their comrades, missing still,  
They sought to no avail.

They felt a special care  
About Bearslayer too;  
Without his presence there,  
They knew not what to do.  
But then the helmsman cried:  
"Bearslayer comes, see now!"  
And soon with hurried stride  
He reached the ship's sharp prow.

He did not wish to wait,  
But sailed without delay;  
Then told the hunters' fate,  
And how he got away:-

Low in the cave's dark rear  
An opening small he found,  
That with his heavy spear  
He widened all around.  
Within the cave there lay  
Some half-raw scraps of meat,  
Of that on every day,  
A portion he could eat.

And after some days more,  
He fled from in the cave.-  
The Dog-Snouts to the door,  
Their full attention gave,  
And so they had no chance-  
He gave them all the slip.

Without a backward glance,  
He set off to the ship.

They travelled far once more,  
Across the distant sea,  
Until they reached the shore,  
A land where they were free.

#### The Kingdom of Dreams

The East, of legend place,  
Where dreams their kingdom find,  
First bore the human race,  
The cradle of our kind!  
Here sky and ground both merge,  
Do not exist apart;  
The gates at Heaven's verge  
Near Hell's domain here start.

Here is the home, behold,  
The sons of Perkons won,  
Where bright they forge their gold,  
In Gardens of the Sun.  
Its Daughters care devote,  
Grow golden apples bright.  
Safe in a diamond boat,  
Here sleeps the Sun each night.

Each morning new, its steeds  
Swim in the ocean's tide,  
With golden reins it leads  
Them from a mountainside.

The people living here  
Enjoy a happy lot;  
Like children nothing fear,  
Of evil know no jot.  
The Gods' Sons them protect,  
From what foul spirits do.  
Their destiny close direct  
The Sun's fair Daughters too.

Bearslayer stayed here long,  
And with his men lived through  
Of happy days a throng;  
Saw many wonders too.  
The people of the land  
Protected them from harm,  
And sought to show the band  
The country's special charm.

The Gardens of the Sun  
Alone they did not show;  
To live mankind must shun  
The splendour of their glow.

#### The Hill of Diamonds

Bearslayer once again  
To set off homeward chose.-  
The happy day came when,  
Before the Sun arose  
And crossed through Heaven's dome,  
The sails were raised up high.  
The ship set out for home,  
Beyond the land and sky.



The darkness was as thick  
As in the depths of Hell.  
The sailors could not pick,  
One from the other tell.  
But somewhere far away,  
A glimmer caught their glance;  
They steered the ship that way  
To seize this happy chance.

When suddenly, quite near,  
They reached the Diamond Hill.  
Although in mists unclear,  
The peak bright sparkled still.  
The golden glow they neared,  
Whose rays like diamonds pour..  
To land the helmsman steered-  
The crewmen rushed ashore.

All felt now strong the will  
The Diamond Hill to seek;  
Bearslayer warned, but still  
One clambered to the peak.  
Up on the hilltop's height,  
With all to him revealed,  
Cried: "God, how fair a sight!"  
But then his fate was sealed.

As though on wind's wings borne,  
From off the hill he flew,  
Into the air was drawn,  
And vanished from their view.  
A second climbed up high,  
To where the diamonds shone:  
"Oh God, how fair!" his cry,  
And then-he too was gone!

To miss this fate, a third,  
Tied to a rope, climbed too.  
The same words all then heard-  
He also slipped from view!  
But others seized the line,  
And could him backwards draw.  
Though he would always pine,  
And never word spoke more.

Bearslayer left this hill,  
And long they sailed around,  
Their voyage blind until  
The light of day they found.

#### The Enchanted Isle

There was no more delay  
Upon the journey there;  
The weather every day  
Like all the winds was fair.  
The vessel soon sailed free,  
And hope in all was born,  
To find the Baltic Sea.-  
Then came a fateful dawn:

At first by fog concealed,  
An island came in sight,  
Whose beauty when revealed  
Filled all with great delight.  
Upon Bearslayer dawned,

That this the coast must be,  
Of which the Maiden warned,  
That draws ships from the sea.-

In vain to flee they sought;  
The coast neared more and more,  
Until, by magic caught,  
They grounded on the shore!

## **CANTO V THE JOURNEY TO THE HOMELAND**

### **Scene 1: Bearslayer is victorious on the Enchanted Isle**

They go ashore on the Enchanted Isle

Though Spidala revenge had gained  
And borne Bearslayer's love away,  
Within her heart deep hate remained;  
More evil yet she sought to pay!  
So with the crone she northward flew,  
Set storms and tempests bursting free,  
To plague Bearslayer and his crew  
Upon the unknown Northern Sea.

That every man had died is sure,  
Had North Wind's Daughter not shown guile.-  
Now further trials they would endure,  
Upon the strange Enchanted Isle.  
Recovered from their early fear,  
A host of captured ships they saw,  
All drawn in there throughout the year,  
Upon the island's lonely shore.

The ships all lay as though pinned fast,  
The sea waves crashing all around;  
Their crewmen frozen round the mast,  
Stood still as stones and made no sound.  
Of signs of life the isle was free,  
Although a path led from a wood,  
Across a bridge into the sea,  
And at its end a palace stood.

Bearslayer and his crew of men,  
Crossed on the bridge, went through the door;  
But even there no sign again  
Of any living creature saw.

That someone lived there, this they knew:  
On tables food and drink were spread,  
And in another room in view  
Stood ready made for each a bed.-  
Not long the sailors chose to wait,  
But soon the feasting was begun.  
They later did not hesitate  
Into his bed then climbed each one.

Bearslayer warned, it was not good,  
And they would risk their lives this way,  
Unless someone as sentry stood,  
To keep them safe until the day.  
At this, Bearslayer they beseeched  
Himself that night to stand on guard,  
Their weariness the point had reached,  
To watch all night would be too hard.

Bearslayer fights the many-headed demons

He armed himself and went outside,  
Upon the bridge the watch to stand,  
But for a time no-one he spied,  
A deathly silence filled the land.  
Then as time's passage midnight brought,  
A rider came along the track,  
But at the bridge his horse stopped short;  
It balked and tried to gallop back.

At this, the rider's anger grew.  
He shouted in the horse's ear:  
"What groundless fear is troubling you?  
No enemy awaits us here.  
Bearslayer bold, my greatest foe,  
Is lost upon the Northern Sea.  
He is too young the course to know,  
Or come so far to challenge me."

On hearing this Bearslayer swore:  
"You err, you hell-hound, doubt my power;  
I have indeed come to this shore,  
And stand before you at this hour!"-  
A frightful demon with three heads,  
The rider answered full of spite:  
"If truly here a hero treads,  
Then prove your strength and with me fight!"

Along the track they rode ahead,  
Until thick forest blocked the way.  
"Blow down some trees," the demon said,  
"To make a clearing for the fray!"  
"You have three mouths," Bearslayer cried,  
"That is a task more fit for you!"  
And, in a circle three miles wide,  
The trees fell, when the demon blew.

The way now freed from blocking trees,  
So hard the demon struck his foe,  
Bearslayer sank near to his knees  
Into the island's ground below.  
But just as quickly back he fought;  
His heavy sword flashed in a trice,  
Its slashing blow the fiend's neck caught,  
Lopped off one head clean at a slice.

Although the demon struggled hard,  
Bearslayer hacked its shield to shreds,  
And with his sword forced down its guard,  
Then struck off both the other heads.  
He took the body and the horse,  
Deep in the forest both he led,  
Back to the building traced his course,  
His armour loosed, and went to bed.

Within the building, sleeping yet,  
Safe at the bridge's end secure,  
The sailors faced no further threat,  
From evil forces guarded sure.

The whole next day they did the same,  
In celebration drank and ate;  
But asked Bearslayer when night came,  
To stand once more and guard the gate.  
He armed himself and went out then,  
Lest on the bridge a guard should lack.  
And, see, at midnight once again,

A demon rode along the track.

And half aloud the rider thought:  
"Where can my missing brother be?  
No chance that he Bearslayer fought;  
The youth still roams the Northern Sea."  
On hearing this Bearslayer swore:  
"You err, you hell-hound, doubt my power;  
That I am here you can be sure.  
Your brother fell at midnight hour!"

This demon fiend, with six-fold head,  
Then answered him in angry tones:  
"If you have struck my brother dead,  
Then I will hack and crush your bones.  
Blow down some trees," it further cried,  
"To make a clearing for our fight!"  
"You have six mouths," the youth replied,  
"That you should do this task is right!"

The demon blew and, six miles round,  
No tree could stand, the blast defy.  
It struck Bearslayer to the ground,  
So hard he sank in to the thigh.  
But just as quick the youth now fought:  
His heavy sword flashed in a trice,  
Its slashing blows the demon caught  
And two heads fell, lopped at a slice.

In single combat long they strove,  
Until Bearslayer could prevail.  
He slew the fiend; its horse he drove  
Deep in the forest's densest trail.  
Exhausted by the savage fight,  
Back to the building he returned.  
He deeply slept throughout the night,  
Into the day took rest well-earned.

The third night came: Bearslayer then  
The others cautioned watch to keep.  
The palace he would guard again,  
But they were not allowed to sleep.  
If he should need it, help they owed,  
Within the night, to give him aid.-  
The mirror that to them he showed,  
Into his grasp then must be laid.

A bowl Bearslayer took in hand,  
And filled it up with water clear;  
Upon a table it would stand,  
By Staburadze's mirror near.  
If in the night-he told them all-  
The water in the dish stayed clean,  
Then they could stay within the hall;  
No help was needed, this would mean.

But if they saw that in the night  
The water sweet to blood had turned,  
They all should rush to join the fight-  
This loyalty his deeds had earned.

Bearslayer armour donned again,  
And stood upon the bridge as guard:  
At midnight, see, a demon then  
With nine fierce heads came riding hard.

Upon the bridge its horse then propped,

It balked and would no further go.  
The rider asked why it had stopped:  
"What do you fear? There is no foe!  
If to Beaslayer had been shown  
The way to reach this secret place,  
Then both my brothers would have known,  
And would have fought him, face-to-face."

Beaslayer roared: "Yes, I am here!  
I killed your brother yesterday,  
And at this bridge stand, free of fear,  
That with your life the price you pay!"  
Beaslayer's words held meaning plain,  
And caused the monster long to stare.  
"If you have both my brothers slain,  
Your flesh alive to eat I swear!"

"Blow down some trees," the demon cried,  
"To make a clearing for the fray!"  
"You have nine mouths!" the youth replied,  
"Why should not you blow trees away?"  
The demon raised a storm all round,  
That nine miles wide all trees displaced,  
Then struck Beaslayer to the ground,  
So hard he sank in to the waist.

But yet Beaslayer was not slow,  
Three demon heads their blood let spill,  
But he received a second blow,  
That drove him downward, deeper still.  
Again he fought, and struck back strong,  
Three further heads were tumbling sent.  
They fought together for so long  
Both were exhausted, nearly spent.

The fiend, who now had but one head,  
Had sunk Beaslayer armpit deep,  
Who now supposed the crew he led,  
Their word to give him aid would keep.  
But of his men not even one  
Could help him in the battle hot.  
All slept already, watching done-  
His orders they had soon forgot.

So, hard his club Beaslayer threw,  
And three miles even, far away,  
Straight through their window in it flew,  
And in the room caused disarray.  
By such a noise disturbed from sleep,  
The sailors sprang up to their feet,  
Thought of the watch that they should keep-  
With blood the bowl was filled complete!

To help the youth all courage found,  
And ran to save him from distress.-  
To drive him down below the ground,  
The fiend stood close before success.-  
They passed him Staburadze's glass;  
The demon looked and quickly froze,  
And helpless lay upon the grass,  
While with their help Beaslayer rose.

From out the hole he clambered free,  
And cut off quick the final head,  
Then let his men his anger see:  
They had not kept good watch, he said.

Although he thought the island now  
Was safe and under their control,  
The only thing he would allow  
Was on all sides to make patrol!

Perhaps the demon brothers' men  
Might still be there, he could not tell.-  
He rested several days and then,  
Bearslayer searched the island well.

## **SCENE 2: Bearslayer meets Spidala again**

Bearslayer captures Spidala

Once through the forest's gloomy bound  
They reached a pleasant valley's floor,  
A cooling well within it found,  
Near which a tree sweet apples bore.  
The sailors hastened without thought,  
There at the well to slake their thirst,  
But stern Bearslayer caution taught,  
Forbidding them to drink at first.

Deep in the water with his sword,  
Triangular, a mark he slashed.-  
Where just before clear water poured,  
Not water now but blood there splashed!  
At first, loud wailing cries were heard,  
But soon again deep silence reigned,  
And in the water nothing stirred;  
As clear as amber it remained.

At this, he said they might drink free,  
No harm would suffer, this he knew.  
They drank, then hurried to the tree,  
Where near the well the apples grew.  
They sought as one the fruit to eat,  
But loud Bearslayer gave a yell-  
To seek here apples was not meet-  
And raised his sword, the tree to fell.

Just at this moment from the tree  
A frightened voice begged: "Harm me not!"  
Alarmed Bearslayer jumped back free,  
And in that moment, on the spot,  
The tree became a maiden fair.  
He looked at her, was sore amazed,  
With feelings he could scarcely bear-  
At Spidala his eyes now gazed!

Before his feet, herself she threw,  
And for her life began to plead:  
She would reveal great secrets true,  
And make good every wicked deed,  
No evil more do all her days.-  
Bearslayer gave to her her life:  
Foul fiends and giant foes he slays,  
But with weak women seeks no strife.

Then Spidala confessed to him  
Her every evil deed and ploy,  
Through which, with Kangars plotting grim,  
Bearslayer bold they would destroy;  
How forth Laimdota they could lure,  
And tricked his friend, Koknesis, too,  
And that both friend and sweetheart pure

In faithfulness to him were true!

The ancient witch, whom once before  
He saw within the Devil's Pit,  
Upon the pleasant island's shore  
A spell had placed, her plans to fit.  
And all the ships this spell there drew  
Upon the beach were helpless thrown;  
She then bewitched the sailors too,  
And every one was turned to stone.

The fiends Bearslayer there had killed  
Were her three sons, foul demon beasts.-  
The palace at the bridge she filled  
With sumptuous meals to give them feasts.  
But as time passed they wished to taste  
The flesh of human beings sweet;  
Stone sailors she revived in haste,  
And gave them to her sons to eat.

Her sons' defeat she could not brook;  
A fearsome anger now burst free,  
Then of the well the form she took,  
Made Spidala the apple tree.  
If they had drunk deep from the well,  
Before Bearslayer thrust his sword,  
She would have cast a deadly spell,  
That painful death would all afford.

His slashing sword blows deep inside  
Had killed the witch-they heard her groan-  
As Spidala would too have died,  
Had not Bearslayer mercy shown.  
In rapturous voice these words she cried:  
"Success is yours, and Heaven's Sons,  
With Perkons too, stand at your side,  
Against all fiends and evil ones."

"But further deeds will be the cost,  
Once to our Fatherland returned.-  
While on far oceans you were tossed,  
Our fathers' halls the Strangers burned!  
Make haste, return home to our land,  
On these oppressors vengeance wreak!  
How happy with you I would stand,  
Like chaste Laimdota virtue seek."

"I long salvation sure to win.  
But who the Devil's grip can shake,  
Escape a pact conceived in sin,  
An oath in blood, once signed, can break?"

Spidala is freed from her pact with the Devil

Now Spidala concealed her face,  
And bitter tears wept without end.  
Bearslayer could not doubt the case:  
She wished her evil ways to mend.  
From nowhere came a sudden thought:  
The little package which, that night,  
From out the Devil's Pit he brought,  
To keep in mind the evil sight.

He bade some men the package bring;  
To Spidala he gave it then.  
The moment that she saw the thing,

With heartfelt joy she cried again,  
In gratitude fell to her knee.  
Before Bearslayer's feet she lay:  
"Your grateful servant I will be,  
Bearslayer, now and every day!"

"This package is the pact I signed,  
When evil deeds to do I swore.  
With this I now can freedom find,  
And break the Devil's grip once more.  
For now I can dissolve the pact,  
Can do good deeds, while yet alive,  
And seek as much for good to act,  
As once I would for evil strive!"

The magic staff forth now she brought,  
With which the crone the sailors woke,  
When human flesh her sons had sought,  
Went to the beach to save the folk.-  
She entered every ship and boat,  
That lay pinned fast upon the shore,  
And with the staff each sleeper smote,  
And all rose up, alive once more.

To them it seemed a single night  
That they had slept, and nothing more,  
And so their sprightly step was light,  
That took them round the island's shore.  
Bearslayer stood and watched them long,  
Then suddenly surprise he knew,  
For with Koknesis in the throng  
There stood Laimdota clear in view!

### **SCENE 3: The return to the Fatherland**

Bearslayer, Koknesis and Laimdota are reunited

Escaped from in the convent's bound  
Laimdota travelled with her knight  
Through journeys long a seaport found,  
And there a ship to give them flight.-  
To foreign ports the sailors sought  
To bring their goods and make their trade,  
And on the Daugava's bank they thought  
To see the castle newly made.

Of this Laimdota nothing knew,  
Nor knew Koknesis, of this fort,  
And of their loved ones nothing too,  
Since far away they had been brought.  
And thus it was their fervent will  
To seek out soon the Fatherland.-  
Though Destiny's wish all would fulfil,  
The course proved longer than they planned!

As with Bearslayer, now the crone  
Sent storms so that their way they lost,  
And soon, from off their course far blown,  
Upon an unknown sea they tossed.  
They wandered blind a lengthy while,  
Until one day the lookout hailed  
On sighting clear a pleasant isle,  
To which with gratitude they sailed.

Come near the isle, the ship raced fast,  
As though a storm wind drove its quest,



Until, unstoppable, at last  
It ran on shore among the rest.  
Upon the isle a sage old man  
Across the bridge now led them all  
That to the palace entrance ran;  
A sumptuous meal stood in its hall.

Then, after all had had their fill,  
On their own ship they deeply drowsed,  
And slept away the time until,  
By Spidala disturbed, they roused.-  
About their feelings who can tell,  
Here with Bearslayer now to stand?  
Upon his neck Laimdota fell,  
Koknesis firmly pressed his hand.

How many words there now flowed free,  
When each unchecked could full relate  
Adventures faced on land and sea,  
Of tribulations and harsh fate?  
Bearslayer full believed his love;  
Doubts disappeared-his trust was sure.  
Again they swore by powers above  
Their faithfulness for evermore.

Alone and separate from the band,  
No contact Spidala now sought,  
Until Bearslayer took her hand,  
Her to the others gently brought.  
He told them how, now free again,  
Brave Spidala helped break the spell.  
With gratitude Laimdota then,  
Koknesis too, both thanked her well.

They asked her to become their friend.  
And Spidala her friendship swore,  
And vowed that she would help defend  
Against all trials the future bore.  
Well Spidala the island knew,  
And so the other folk apace  
She guided all its comforts through.-  
It proved to be a fruitful place.

So fair it was some made a vow  
To settle there, and thought it well,  
Because the island's master now  
Bearslayer was, who broke the spell,  
That he should stay some weeks or more,  
Until these folk a chieftain chose.-  
Across the bridge now lived the four,  
Within the palace of their foes.

This building Spidala knew too:  
She showed her friends a wondrous hoard,  
Preserved in chambers there to view,  
Where many things to eat were stored.  
Our countrymen here happy grew,  
Had been content upon this shore,  
But for the longing that they knew,  
Their fathers' land to see once more.

They longed to serve the Fatherland,  
To fight and make its troubles cease.-  
But Destiny's will had not thus planned  
A life for them of joy and peace.  
Then came the day they chose, again

To journey back where they were born,  
And so Bearslayer spoke out plain,  
The people how to live would warn.

Koknesis confesses his love for Spidala

Koknesis, walking sunk in thought,  
The island crossed with solemn stride,  
The pleasant valley pensive sought,  
Where, in the well, the witch had died.

Far off, a flame soon caught his gaze,  
And near the well, his searching view  
Showed Spidala beside the blaze,  
With magic staff and package too.  
Enchanted words aloud she spoke,  
As both into the fire she cast:  
"Into thin air, like dust or smoke,  
Now vanish: Make me free at last!"

At this there reared up from the pyre,  
And hung a moment in the air,  
A writhing dragon made of fire,  
That crackling vanished soon from there.  
The earth devoured the fire away,  
And twilight cloaked the valley floor.  
Then Spidala fell down and lay,  
While from her eyes flowed tears once more.

Touched now, Koknesis took her part,  
And gently spoke and helped her rise:  
"Why, little one, so sick at heart,  
That tears flow from your comely eyes?"  
Then Spidala felt rising shame,  
Her answer spoke with voice so small:  
"These tears I weep in joy's sweet name,  
And for the future's hope they fall."

"I yearn to start my life once more,  
The evil of the past put by.-  
Forget whatever here you saw,  
And let my secret with you lie.  
Though soon our paths will separate stand,  
Your memory long my heart will keep."  
At this Koknesis took her hand,  
And answered her with feelings deep:

"Oh, Spidala, your secret dark  
For all my life will stay well hid.  
Already but the half you mark  
Of wicked things that once you did;  
Then why should I remember them?  
But I a secret now must tell,  
Which, if your heart does not condemn,  
Will link our paths together well."

"Fair Spidala, I love you true.  
Come, travel now with me life's quest!"-  
When Spidala his heart's love knew,  
She paled and asked with heaving breast:  
"Have you not yet, Koknesis, learned,  
Whom you as bride seek to persuade?  
Beside this well just now I burned  
A compact with the Devil made!"

"I know," then said Koknesis stern,

"But that it vanished also saw!  
I know too what respect those earn  
Who fall and yet rise up once more.  
More surely to their feet they rise  
Than those who never fall have known."  
When Spidala, stunned by surprise,  
Still hesitated, this his tone:

If his first love her could not reach,  
Then it had been a better fate  
To stay as stone upon the beach.-  
At this she did not hesitate:  
"If love so strong is felt by you,  
I cannot seek another man;  
So take me, I will be as true,  
As in this world a woman can!"

With joy Koknesis held her tight,  
And kissed her tears away complete.-  
A warm breeze wafted through the night;  
It was Great Laima's blessing sweet.

They return home safely

Then came the day they homeward sailed,  
Their ship set forth upon the sea.  
The island's magic power had failed,  
And from the spell the ship was free.-

His friends Koknesis told his love,  
Bearslayer and Laimdota too.  
Both now rejoiced, since from above  
Such happiness is sent to few.  
All sorrows now they soon forgot,  
That they had suffered in the past.  
Their strong desire to leave this spot,  
Back to their land of birth at last.-

No more delays to block them seemed;  
The North Wind sent no raging storm,  
As though the great Sea Mother deemed  
Their journey worthy to perform.  
The far horizon showed them clear,  
Thick forests that they joyful hailed,  
The shore rose up, drew ever near.-  
Into the Daugava's mouth they sailed.

## **CANTO VI THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE INVADERS**

### **Scene 1: The Midsummer's Eve Festival**

The people come together and give thanks

In Latvia now Midsummer came,  
Called forth its children with one word,  
The country over, all the same,  
Now "Ligo, Ligo," clear was heard!

The nightingale with sweet refrain  
By every brook and streamlet trilled.  
Midsummer, Liga's Eve, again  
The carefree folk with pleasure filled.

Up to the Azure Mountain borne,  
The logs burned bright, for fires thence hauled.  
The Ligusoni Priests' loud horn  
All to the festive evening called.

And thence they came, both young and old,  
Both great and small, a happy throng.  
The men brought mead from honey gold,  
The wives brought cheese and bread along.  
The lads and lasses with them bore  
Soft grass and wreaths of flowers too,  
That on Midsummer's Eve all wore,  
Adorned themselves, and pleasure knew.

They danced, they ate, they drank,  
And down their offerings put;  
The priests, the folk to thank,  
Led to the altar's foot,  
Poured goblets full of mead,  
Burned costly herbs and rare,  
Whose sweet aromas, freed,  
Rose swirling in the air.

Together they all sang  
The famous songs and prayers,  
That to the goddess rang,  
And solace brought from cares:

"With love we look to you,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Linked here in friendship true,  
Ligo!"

"Our humble farms now bless,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Fill barns with your largesse,  
Ligo!"

"Now saddle your grey horse,  
Ligo, Ligo!  
Ride round our fields your course,  
Ligo!"

"Sow seeds of grass and grain,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Fine barley grow again,  
Ligo!"

"For meadow grass we pray,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Our heifers give fine hay,  
Ligo!"

"Let hay our heifers eat,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Our colts feed oats grown sweet,  
Ligo!"

"Make all the flowers grow,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
That on our hillsides blow,  
Ligo!"

"Let maidens braid their hair,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
With wreaths of flowers fair,  
Ligo!"

"Give young men on all sides,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Hardworking beauteous brides,  
Ligo!"

"To all our daughters yield,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Strong men to till the field,  
Ligo!"

"Come to our farmyards near,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
Your children visit here,  
Ligo!"

"Guard us from evil's spell,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
That we may love you well,  
Ligo, Ligo,  
And of you we may tell,  
Ligo!"

The ancestors' spirits call the people to live in harmony

While rich the sound of song rose high  
Across the vale and woodland's tops,  
The shadows of their sires gone by  
Appeared within the sacred copse.  
Beneath the leafy oaks once more,  
To guard the people's soul they sped.-  
The priests these heroes passing saw,  
And reverent covered each his head.

The eldest of the priests then spoke,  
The teachings of their fathers told:  
In harmony and peace the folk  
Each to the other ought to hold;  
To give their brethren help and aid,  
When they were caught in suffering's grip.-  
Then soon both old and young obeyed,  
And all joined hands in fellowship.

They promised friendship through the land,  
And those in strife with fellow men  
Went to them, offered warm their hand,  
And lovingly sought peace again.

There in the grove upon the hill,  
Close to the gods come face to face,  
The folk could settle every ill,  
Blessed by the spirits' saving grace.

In groups there seated on the grass,  
The fathers and their wives agreed  
Within their family gifts to pass,  
While jugs and horns, filled up with mead,  
Passed all along from row to row,  
And each one drank a healthy pull.  
Then bread and cheese passed to and fro,  
And all was tasted to the full.

They ate and drank, discussed the year:  
Men had with workmates much to say,  
And women saw, again drawn near,  
Clan sisters come from far away.  
And even greybeards friends could spy,  
Their childhood comrades there could find,  
Companions from the days gone by,  
The age of youth, now left behind.

Midsummer's Eve best pleased the young;

Their songs through wood and valley rang.  
The lads in crowds to love gave tongue,  
Hot-blooded songs of passion sang.  
The lasses answered, love denied-  
But in each maid was clear the case,  
The time she scarcely could abide,  
Until her love she would embrace.

Now closer pushed the youths in rows,  
Close to the maidens to advance,  
Until each found the one he chose,  
And hand in hand they joined the dance.

## **Scene 2: The struggle begins**

The Lord of Lielvarde brings terrible news

Beneath the oak trees on the hill,  
That by the sacred grove near stood,  
The priests and chieftains talked their fill  
Of war and peace, things bad and good.-  
The runic scriptures in the grove  
Showed grim portents that warning gave.  
To know their fate the leaders strove;  
Their faces and their talk were grave.

Old Burtnieks was plain in view  
With Aizkrauklis, and though delayed,  
The Lielvarde Lord came too,  
And soon a speech the old man made.  
He warmly uttered greetings strong,  
As old companions welcomed him,  
Then took his place before the throng,  
And told them there his tidings grim:

"You Chieftains gathered on this hill,  
Do not yet know the fate that looms,  
The threat that all with fear must fill,  
And Latvia's folk to serfdom dooms.-  
Near Daugava's mouth, as well you know,  
Upon the river's bank arrayed,  
The Livians let the Strangers go,  
And settle there to work and trade."

"But later they were joined by more,  
By men in armour iron-clad,  
Who with the spring came by the score,  
And works have done that we forbade.  
They now control the river lands:  
At Ikskile a castle-work,  
At Salaspils a fortress stands.-  
In these like beasts the plunderers lurk."

"Like cunning foxes first they sought  
With everyone to be a friend;  
Like ravenous wolves then victims caught,  
All prey devoured, right to the end.  
The Livian lands are now laid waste,  
Each village plundered, burned in spite;  
The men and women slaughter faced,  
Who stood against the Strangers' might."

"Survivors even lose their soul,  
Compelled a foreign faith to take.  
And clear we see now that their goal  
Is conquest of our folk to make.

They seek to break the people's pride,  
Upon them serfdom's yoke to place,  
Among themselves then to divide  
All lands within the Baltic space."

"Upon a day now passed not long,  
The people made report to me  
Of foreign soldiers armoured strong  
To Leilvarde riding free.  
Still full of hope, great haste I made,  
And armed my people straight away.  
We stood behind our palisade,  
Drawn up to face them in the fray."

"I asked them plainly why they came.  
A mighty knight then forward went,  
And said that Daniel was his name,  
By Riga's Bishop he was sent  
To seize all Lielvarde's space.  
But if I wished he would allow  
That I might live there by his grace-  
In my own home a vassal now!"

"His own stone castle he would build,  
That for himself to raise he planned,  
And hostages to take he willed,  
From every village in my land.  
From farms a tenth part was his now,  
And of their crops a share was due.  
The Church's Father for each plough  
Would take from them a levy too."

"Such shamelessness I bitter spurned.  
It would destroy my ancient home:  
Possessions plundered, houses burned,  
The people would be slaves to Rome.-  
Together with a little band  
I fled to safety from their ranks,  
And came to Dabrels in his land,  
Found refuge on the Gauja's banks."

"Some Latvian Lords who shared my plight,  
Came to this stronghold, where they thought  
With warriors bold to stand and fight,  
And threw up ramparts round the fort.  
They, with the Livs as allies, tried  
To stand against the Strangers' strength;  
All hoped that though some would have died,  
They would defeat the knights at length."

"By Daniel warned about their stand,  
A troop of knights the Bishop sent,  
To travel to the Gauja land;  
Among them riding, Kaupa went.-  
In Turaida in open show,  
The Christian faith he now professed,  
And formed deep friendships with the foe,  
That all his people sore distressed."

"The Gauja fort for Christ to win,  
With knights he soon began to seek.  
The mind of Dabrels doubt put in,  
And made our fathers' gods seem weak.  
He said the Bishop had come here,  
To hold from Riga's Castle sway,  
And cherish as his children dear,

All those who would the Pope obey."

"High on the ramparts Rusin spoke,  
Sought Kaupa's message to reject,  
As was the custom of his folk,  
His helm removed to show respect.  
A heavy arrow from a bow  
Then struck his unprotected head,  
And mortal wounded by the blow  
Down to the ground he toppled dead."

"All were enraged by this base deed,  
Ran from the palisade pell-mell;  
They charged the Strangers without heed,  
And slaughtered them until night fell."

"But reinforcements soon were sent  
To help the Strangers in the fray;  
The Latvians then withdrew and went  
Into their fort to wait for day."

"For days and weeks sharp was the fight,  
Until at last the stockade fell,  
Defeated by the foemen's might,  
Like heroes though our men fought well.  
At length the Latvians, nearly all  
Found death upon the ramparts high.-  
And having lost this sheltering wall,  
Our people's lands defenceless lie."

"The Bishop soon his ranks will fill;  
In sorrow, Lords, such news I send,  
But, if we do our gods' just will,  
Our fight will know a happy end.  
For still in Latvia's rolling lands  
Are men by whom sharp spears are made,  
And still a hundred hundred hands  
That well know how to wield a blade."

"So, sound the trumpet, beat the drum,  
Our warriors brave to war to send,  
And straight they will as one man come,  
To fight for freedom to the end!"

Bearslayer comes to lead them in the fight

While, shocked, the chieftains listened well,  
Around them through the valley wide  
The songs of Liga silent fell.-  
But then a hundred voices cried:  
"Bearslayer, see, where he comes near!"  
Rejoicing, people called his name.  
Into the grove, unchecked by fear,  
With his companions now he came.

Bearslayer, with Laimdota, and  
Dark Spidala their sires embraced,  
While firm Koknesis gave his hand.  
Reunion's joy all gloom displaced.  
A special joy the fathers knew  
To see their children safe that day-  
Now with the young folk close in view,  
Grave peril's threat seemed far away!

With his companions close to him,  
Bearslayer in the council sat.



To all reports he listened grim,  
And what had passed he learned from that.  
His heart felt deep and burning pain,  
His eyes in anger glowed with hate,  
When, told the story once again,  
He learned of Lielvarde's fate.

The priests proclaimed the night at end,  
And prayed that all their people dear  
The god's salvation would defend,  
But urged their sons to show good cheer,  
And courage, if they must, to fall,  
For other folk to give their life.-  
At this, in thoughtful manner all  
Now homeward went, prepared for strife.

The chieftains knew that soon their lot  
Would be to fight upon this ground,  
But still upon this hillside spot,  
The sun's first rays the council found.  
They sat together, talking more:  
As one they pledged to make a stand,  
Destroy the Strangers in a war,  
Or drive them all from out the land.

Upon their spears this oath they swore,  
Bearslayer their commander made,  
The whole assembled host before,  
And named Koknesis to give aid,  
With Talvaldis as second man.-  
Then, once again to friendship sworn,  
At last the chiefs, as time fast ran,  
The Azure Mountain left at dawn.

Bearslayer's captains, in a band,  
With Aizkrauklis and Spidala rode,  
Laimdota too was close at hand,  
To Burtnieks his sire's abode.  
The youthful couples wished, once there,  
To celebrate their wedding vow,  
And in this ancient manor fair,  
Take priests' and fathers' blessings now.

#### Bearslayer's Wedding

"Why does my garland sit  
So crooked on my brow?  
How could it straighter fit,  
Weighed down with gossip now!"

"While I my garland wore,  
Of Laima was no heed;  
I wear it now no more,  
And, weeping, Laima need."

"Oh thatch a house with reeds,  
Put silver pegs beneath,  
So that our sister, needs,  
Can hang her oaken wreath."

"The rattling bridge astride,  
The groom now rides in view.  
My kinsmen, if you ride,  
Your swords will rattle too!"

"Look where in warrior's state

My kinsmen do great deeds,  
With swords attend the gate,  
And calm their fretful steeds!"

Within the castle's palisade  
The relatives thus joyful call,  
Awaiting suitors there arrayed,  
Who ride up, seeking, to the wall.  
With many friends Bearslayer rode  
Beside Koknesis to the fort,  
According to their ancient code,  
Like strangers, entrance there they sought.

They asked about a place to rest,  
For each, and also for his colt.-  
Within the gates now every guest  
Demanded answers to unbolt:  
From whence they came, to where they rode,  
If they were safe to have inside;  
Until Old Burtnieks forth strode,  
Himself the gates then opened wide.

Within the hall were tables laid,  
With sumptuous meals for feasting fit,  
And in the centre, clear displayed,  
Chairs where the suitors had to sit.

They asked to see the fairest maid;  
The wedding party led in some,  
But they rejected all displayed,  
Until Laimdota forth had come,  
With Spidala, and joined the folk.  
They wore rich clothes, and on their head  
Were decorated wreaths of oak,  
Bound with brocade and precious thread.

The suitors rose and praised each bride,  
And sat them in the chairs in state,  
And both men stood there close beside,  
And now began to ask them straight  
If they would sell their garlands here.  
Such precious goods with payment high  
They willingly would purchase dear.  
To which the guests made this reply:

"Not with a sack of gold or more,  
Can maidens such as these be bought.  
Through neither riches, nor through war,  
Can maidens such as these be caught."

But after both were full agreed.  
And when the men had promised fast  
To guard them well, meet every need,  
The maidens gave consent at last.

To marry both, the priests now came.  
With ivy twined round leaves of oak  
Their hands were joined in Laima's name;  
Meanwhile the priests this blessing spoke:  
"Just as the supple ivy curls,  
And round the oak itself entwines,  
So with the slender new-wed girls,  
Whom love now with their groom combines!"

The grooms before them gifts now spread-  
With tears her wreath gave up each bride.  
Then on their heads were placed instead

Expensive caps of marten's hide,  
Adorned with silver was each hat.  
Each new-wed bride went with her man  
Up to the table, where they sat.-  
The wedding banquet now began.

All day into the night it went;  
Led by the songs of choirs sweet,  
They danced until their strength was spent.  
But when the pairs went to their seat,  
Old Burtnieks, grown stern, required  
That banqueting should early cease.-  
Much sooner, then, the guests retired  
Than if their land had been at peace.

### **Scene 3: The Latvians enjoy early success**

The Latvian warriors gather from all sides

The new-wed pairs did not have long  
Their joyous unions to fulfil,  
Nor happiness to fashion strong,  
For Destiny's harsh unswerving will  
The grooms soon called into the field,  
From loving arms the husbands tore,  
To where in armour spears men wield,  
And where their legs wade deep in gore.

War's trumpet Burtnieks now let  
On every hilltop brassy sound,  
On every lofty mound they set  
At night the watch-fires burning round.  
And every chieftain did the same,  
Passed on the sign the rest to show-  
A signal that to all soon came,  
To gather and to war to go.

In every village homestead then,  
Across the Latvian country broad,  
The people's sons, the younger men,  
Prepared for war, grasped spear and sword,  
And saddled up their dashing steeds.  
Each sister and each young man's bride  
Adorned their helmets, then must, needs,  
With tears and singing part-way ride.

Now soon on every road and track  
-They slept at night beneath a tree-  
A gathering host streamed to attack,  
And after two full days or three,  
Together came upon their course.  
Bearslayer led thence further groups,  
And at the meeting-place in force  
"All hail! All hail!" rejoiced the troops.

Old Burtnieks rode with them too,  
And Lielvardis-both of those  
Close by the fighting in full view  
Wished to remain until the close.  
No longer there Laimdota more  
Nor Spidala at home would stay;  
The two young brides forth to the war,  
Rode with the army on its way.

There, where the River Gauja falls  
Through gorges to the valleys' bounds,

With palisades and earthen walls,  
Stood many strongholds built on mounds.  
Beside the streams in forests dense,  
There lived the clans and Latvian Lords.  
Led by Bearslayer riding thence,  
Here entered now the warlike hordes.

When they, in nests along the way,  
A German infestation found,  
The vermin pest was cleared that day.-  
They further marched and reached the ground  
That used to Dabrels to belong.  
Here they encountered German knights,  
Who there had built a castle strong  
And fortified it for their fights.

Bearslayer took it back again,  
And many German knights there died,  
Who lost their lives against our men.-  
The host rolled on then like a tide,  
Far, in a surging wave, it flowed  
Unstoppable through vale and wood,  
Advanced until the soldiers rode  
To Turaida where Kaupa stood.

Here in the Livian people's lands,  
They plainly saw as they passed by,  
Each village lay in German hands.  
In fields of barley and of rye  
The golden grain swayed full and fat;  
The Livians ploughed and sowed the fields,  
But Strangers ate their fill of that,  
Then sold the straw and other yields.

And closely with the castles merged,  
Stood foreign churches, places where  
The priests and monks the people urged  
The Christian faith with them to share.  
But by the Strangers converts here  
Were held as servants in their thrall;  
And from the Livians every year  
They took a tribute from them all.

A band of those not Christian turned  
Into the unknown forest spilled,  
In deepest thickets clearings burned,  
And chopped down trees their huts to build,  
There kept the ancient gods' commands.-  
But even here the Bishop's spies  
Could search them out and made demands  
Of tribute that to all applies.

#### The recapture of Turaida

Alarmed by this advancing horde  
The Strangers fled from their estates,  
Left monks and churches to the sword,  
Withdrew inside Turaida's gates.  
Where soon, attacking in a ring,  
From all around Bearslayer fought,  
But found it not an easy thing,  
To conquer them the way he sought.

High on the walls were many knights  
Whose heavy bolts, in hundreds loosed,  
Drove back the Latvians from the heights.

But then Bearslayer's men produced  
A scaffold built of wooden planks,  
On which, in deepest dark of night,  
They breached the castle wall in ranks,  
And to its ramparts brought the fight.

The struggle filled them all with dread,  
And both at times had to withdraw,  
For both sides suffered many dead.-  
Bearslayer, at the very fore,  
Slew many knights, until at length,  
The armoured Germans all saw clear  
That not their strongest matched his strength,  
And seeing this the knights knew fear.

So great this fear that at his sight  
They threw their swords and shields aside,  
And let Bearslayer, without fight,  
Choose those who lived and those who died.-  
Bearslayer razed the castle's stone,  
While monasteries and churches high  
In piles of ashes down were thrown,  
To Strangers refuge to deny.

False Kaupa was not there himself,  
But safe in Riga's Castle walls,  
Where more and more he kept his wealth,  
And dwelled within the Bishop's halls.

Among the foes who captive fell  
Was Dietrich too, the man of prayer.  
With lying tongue he sought to tell,  
At Kaupa's wish he had been there,  
Who gave to him the castle's ground.  
He therefore asked that as a guest  
All those be seen, whom there they found,  
And granted life and spared arrest.

Bearslayer honoured Kaupa still,  
And so he thought to grant them this,  
But strong the Livs opposed his will,  
Since much with it they found amiss:  
For by this person's lying tongue  
A hundred times they were deceived,  
By word and deed they had been stung,  
The cruellest blows from him received.

Thus, if Bearslayer would allow  
That Dietrich and the others live,  
To render justice they asked now,  
The ruthless priest to them to give.  
At this Bearslayer gave consent  
That Dietrich there should pay the price,  
And to the sacred grove they went,  
To give their gods a sacrifice.

But if a prisoner rode a grey  
That, stepping thrice across a spear,  
With left hoof each time led the way,  
This was a sign that showed them clear,  
The gods refused this man to take.  
The cunning Dietrich knew this lore,  
And so arranged the test to make  
And saved himself, though death seemed sure.

The Strangers-those who were not dead-  
Were stripped of weapons, armour too,

Bare-headed all to Riga led.-  
Then all the captured land in view  
Bearslayer gave the Livians back.  
Behind he left Talvaldis then  
To guard the Gauja from attack,  
Together with the Livian men.

Bearslayer took a second force;  
Swift with Koknesis forth he rode,  
And with his father set the course  
To what was once their own abode.

#### The return to Lielvarde

In Lielvarde now they saw,  
Like Turaida the Strangers thronged,  
And settled there with manner sure,  
As though to them it all belonged!  
Great anger Lielvardis felt  
At what his folk had had to face,  
For Daniel Bannerov harsh dealt,  
And of compassion showed no trace.

There in the ancient stronghold's stead  
He raised a castle's walls up high,  
And from it launched a reign of dread,  
In lands that near the Daugava lie.  
Forth thence he sallied and returned,  
Destroyed and looted any day,  
Both villages and houses burned,  
Oppressed the folk in every way.

Some elders then from him had fled,  
Who by such horrors were appalled.  
When to the woods their clans they led,  
A halt to plundering Daniel called.  
Swift messengers to them he sent,  
Who said oppression now had ceased;  
With them to live in peace he meant,  
And all invited to a feast.

These elders, yet who did not know  
The depths of Daniel's evil mind,  
Believed him and resolved to go,  
And peace with him there thought to find.  
Outside the wall with them to meet,  
To a pavilion Daniel went,  
Invited them to drink and eat,  
And seemed to speak with good intent.

But suddenly, from them concealed,  
While at the table they felt sure,  
He quickly went out in the field,  
And locked the stout pavilion's door-  
His murderous plan to start a fire!  
Around the building men piled straw,  
Then on all sides they lit the pyre,  
And soon they watched the hot flame soar.

The heat and smoke inside burst through,  
And all the elders loudly screamed,  
While Daniel and his butcher crew  
Stood on the castle walls and beamed.  
With devilish laughter they looked back,  
But laughter turned to looks of fear  
When, riding from the forest track,

Just then they saw armed men appear.

With shield and heavy spear arrayed  
Bearslayer rode them all before.  
He heard the shouted cries for aid,  
And straight away broke down the door.  
Then with the help of other men,  
He quickly to the rescue went.  
The elders hailed Bearslayer then,  
As though by Heaven he were sent!

Their gratitude was not concealed  
That rescue safe they had received;  
And then the elders plain revealed,  
How Daniel's lies had all deceived.  
On hearing of this devil's trick,  
Bearslayer's anger knew no bounds;  
He called his men together quick,  
And swore to take the castle's grounds.

Although the knights fought hard and long,  
And strove the fortress to defend,  
They could not block Bearslayer's throng,  
Who took the castle in the end.  
Then every captured knight they slew,  
And only one could still survive.  
Just Daniel Bannerov lived through,  
Was taken prisoner, yet alive.

The knight was given, on that day,  
Into the village elders' hands,  
Revenge to take in their own way  
For his base deeds within their lands.

Bearslayer and Laimdota know brief peace

Of Lielvarde word spread wide,  
It was Bearslayer's home once more!  
In every house on every side,  
To all, great joy the tidings bore.  
As though new-born all felt fresh life,  
And those, who to the forest's space  
Had fled from there to hide from strife,  
Returned and took their former place.

All hurried then in joyful ranks  
To Lielvarde's castle gate,  
To greet Bearslayer and give thanks  
That he had saved them from harsh fate;  
Their mood was bright with victory's glance.-  
A feast gave Lielvardis there,  
Where all could eat and drink and dance,  
And booty was divided fair.

The chiefs exulted, then one day,  
All thought of Daniel's crimes once more.  
They dragged him out, led him away,  
And took him to the Daugava's shore.  
"You, German dog," to him they cried,  
"Through you we felt the fire's scald!  
But power now is on our side-  
To you we give the water's cold!"

They took a plank of wood at last,  
And on his back tied to the beam  
Placed Daniel there, with ropes made fast,

And pushed it in the river's stream:  
"Sail to your homeland back," they mocked,  
"Go seek your brothers' welcoming hands!  
And take the foreign faith, here blocked,  
Away with you to other lands!"

By fear they had not felt before  
The Strangers all were gripped when told  
About the mighty feats in war  
Performed by Latvia's hero bold.  
They ran away from every side  
And fled to Riga with one mind,  
In its cathedral sought to hide,  
In those strong walls a haven find.

But even there, in this dark hour,  
No longer safety Albert knew-  
That soon in Baltic lands his power  
Would fade away, this was his view.  
And so, to get more armoured knights,  
He sailed the sea to German shore,  
Men to recruit to fight his fights,  
And in the spring renew the war.

In Riga, ruling in his place,  
He left false Kaupa, who explained,  
He would protect by God's good grace  
All Christian Strangers who remained.

The danger now was fully spent,  
Bearslayer knew, throughout the land,  
And so his soldiers homeward sent.-  
In Lielvarde, hand in hand  
Peace with Laimdota now found there.  
She worked inside all to restore,  
He strove the buildings to repair,  
And farmyard labours oversaw.

Koknesis too from war returned,  
And Aizkrauklis, from battle spent.  
With Spidala, to rest well earned,  
To Aizkraukle all three now went.  
From them with love they took their leave  
Bearslayer and Laimdota both;  
In parting sought not deep to grieve,  
To friends' good fortune made an oath.

Old Lielvardis, with his friend,  
To Burtnieks's castle rode.  
The two old men wished in the end  
To make together their abode.

To satisfy their own deep needs  
Now lived Bearslayer and his bride.  
Although great fame came through their deeds,  
And honour from the people's side,  
There on the Daugava's pleasant shore  
At last they found what, all above,  
Their hearts throughout had missed so sore-  
Sweet happiness and married love!

#### **Scene 4: The death of Bearslayer and the conquest of Latvia**

The secret of Bearslayer's strength is revealed

The springtime came and, once again,



Clothed hills and valleys all in green;  
And wakened nature's creatures then,  
That frisky gambolling could be seen.  
Within our Fatherland it seemed  
That warlike times had safely passed.  
All stayed at home because they deemed  
That springtime work should start at last.

They fixed the plough and beat the share,  
Worked hard each fence and yard to mend.-  
And even Kangars sought fresh air,  
And worked his garden beds to tend.  
He cut off branches, stakes drove in,  
To help the plants there healthy grow.  
His face looked sullen now, and thin,  
And let despairing feelings show.

The seed sown in his Fatherland,  
As everywhere, so with him too,  
Had borne a bitter fruit unplanned,  
And disappointment now he knew.  
The people no more came in need,  
As once in droves to him they poured;  
The Strangers took of him no heed.-  
But something else within him gnawed:

Bearslayer lived unharmed, and worse,  
Had lasting fame among the folk,  
And Spidala fled Satan's curse,  
When from his grasping claws she broke.

His future now was death, he knew,  
And all the torments that would give;  
Condemned he was, his last years through,  
With bitter heart each day to live.  
And so he scarcely felt more fear,  
When, as the sun was growing dim,  
He heard a voice, his garden near,  
In hollow tones that greeted him.

He raised his head, and at the gate,  
There cruel Dietrich came in view.  
Then Kangars spoke, these words to state:  
"I truly am amazed that you  
Should visit here, your presence show.  
Did growing fat on roasted meat  
Within stone castles tedious grow?"  
Then Dietrich thus could Kangars greet:

"The feasts I ate there did not pall;  
But soon of them will be no more,  
Unless your powers heed my call.  
If you will help, reward is sure."

He said it was the Bishop's will,  
New troops to Riga soon to lead,  
But all would be in vain while still  
Bearslayer all the Baltic freed,  
And stood against the German force.  
From Kangars aid they sought, to show  
Of bold Bearslayer's strength the source,  
So that a knight could lay him low.

Then Kangars gave this answer back:  
Ten times he had upon the Earth  
Loosed giants and his demon pack,  
But all had been of little worth.

Bearslayer killed them all in fights,  
And had escaped each plot in turn.  
If now Bearslayer scythed down knights,  
That were to Kangars small concern.

But yet, another circumstance  
Led him to be the hero's foe-  
Though just what plan would have a chance  
Against the youth, he did not know.  
Hell's demons often served him well,  
Consulted, they might find a way.  
If in his hut were fit to dwell,  
Then Dietrich there some time could stay.

That night then Kangars all alone  
Tight shut himself within his room,  
That Dietrich, if he heard him groan,  
Would not know fear within the gloom.  
At midnight then a whirlwind's throes  
Shook hard the house from all around;  
Where Kangars dwelled loud groaning rose,  
And then was heard a screeching sound.

So horrible that, out of fear,  
On Dietrich's head stood up his hair;  
He crossed himself, such sounds to hear,  
And loud recited every prayer.-  
No pause to sleep by day or night,  
Long Kangars strove, help to invoke;  
The third day at the morning's light,  
These earnest words to Dietrich spoke:

"Accursed to all will be the day  
Bearslayer's secret was exposed;  
As traitors, curses too our pay.  
Here through our deeds, quite unopposed,  
The Evil One will soon be free  
To do at will each wicked deed.  
My guilty henchman, hark to me,  
To what I tell you pay good heed."

"A mother bear Bearslayer bore;  
The babe a holy hermit sired.  
His mother's line gave strength, but more-  
Through her the youth bear's ears acquired,  
And if opponents can prevail,  
And both his ears slice off with speed,  
His mighty power at once will fail.  
Enough! Go now. No thanks I need."

Bearslayer and the Black Knight fight to the death

The Bishop, Albert, now brought back  
A host of knights to fight anew.  
Among them was a knight in black,  
Who well the work of plundering knew.  
He claimed his mother was a witch  
Who guided him with magic charm,  
And he in devil's arts so rich,  
That never wound could cause him harm.

This Black Knight Dietrich chose, to fight  
And be his weapon in the fray,  
To beat Bearslayer's strength and might,  
And best him in a cunning way.  
He welcomed Kaupa too once more,

To help them conquer with his sword,  
And in the name of God he swore,  
In Heaven all would find reward.

One day Bearslayer resting sat,  
Close by Laimdota in their hall,  
And idly talked of this and that.  
But over her now hung a pall;  
She was not happy as at first.-  
A time her thoughts she still concealed,  
Then in a trembling voice conversed,  
And with these words her plight revealed:

"Bearslayer, my beloved, speak,  
What can it mean that many a day,  
Against my wish, my mood is bleak,  
And in my heart cold fear holds sway?  
I am so happy, but I fear  
That something could disturb our joy,  
For reasons that I do not know,  
And soon perhaps our life destroy."

Before Bearslayer love had shown,  
To calm her sorrow had contrived,  
The keeper of the gate made known,  
That friendly riders had arrived,  
And asked if he might let them through.-  
On looking out the window then,  
Bearslayer at the gate could view,  
With Kaupa in their midst, strange men.

Bearslayer did not hesitate-  
He recognized great Kaupa clear-  
And said to open up the gate,  
As guests, with honour brought them near.  
Now Kaupa said that they were sent  
By Bishop Albert to make peace,  
And through the land as heralds went,  
That friendship strong might never cease.

Bearslayer never sought a war  
Unless the cause were justified.  
And so good will to Kaupa bore,  
And willing let him come inside.  
At Lielvarde they all stayed  
As honoured guests so long they would.  
And for them there Bearslayer made  
The best provision that he could.

But still Laimdota restless grew,  
The Black Knight near her could not bear,  
Although he sought to change her view  
With gracious words and flattery fair.

Bearslayer ordered contests held,  
And tournaments were staged at length.  
Then came a day when both had felled  
Opponents beaten by their strength.  
The Black Knight to Bearslayer spoke,  
And made a challenge to a fight.  
The youth refused him with a joke;  
He did not wish to give a slight.

The Knight, however, angry seemed,  
And answered in a mocking way:  
No test of strength for him he deemed,  
To beat Bearslayer in a fray,

Despite the boasting he had heard!  
Bearslayer did not tarry more,  
But at the Knight without a word  
Swung hard the heavy sword he bore.

At first Bearslayer thought it sport,  
And jousted in light-hearted way;  
But, fighting fierce, the Black Knight brought  
Great strength and liveness to the fray.  
And suddenly in swift attack  
Bearslayer's ear clean off he slit.  
Enraged, Bearslayer struck him back;  
His blow the Knight's stout armour split.

The Black Knight's blood began to pour,  
But bold Bearslayer's sword had cracked.  
The Knight saw this, and struck once more-  
The other ear his slash clear hacked!  
Bearslayer's anger knew no bound:  
He seized the Black Knight in his grasp;  
Their deadly struggle shook the ground,  
As now they fought to their last gasp.

Three times Bearslayer seized him fast,  
And seemed the heavy Knight to beat.  
Three times he staggered at the last;  
The Knight broke free with kicking feet.

The watching men stood pale with fear,  
As though their feet were rooted deep,  
While to the edge the two came near,  
Right to the lofty cliff-top steep.

The Daugava takes Bearslayer to its bosom

His foe at last Bearslayer flung  
Into the river's depths to drown,  
But round with heavy armour hung,  
The Black Knight dragged Bearslayer down.

The waters made a cracking sound,  
The waves surged high and took the pair,  
And, in their fight together bound,  
Down in the depths they vanished there!

Into the Daugava's surging flood  
Now sank the setting sun's pale glow.  
A thick mist rose and dripped like blood;  
The waves sighed mournful down below.

The foaming waters parted wide,  
And took the hero to their breast.  
An island rose up in the tide,  
And in this place he sank to rest.

Within the castle fearful screams  
And cries of lamentation rose,  
And now Laimdota-dead her dreams-  
To end her life that moment chose.

The Latvian warriors, stricken sore,  
His kin and brethren, all in sum,  
Now, one by one, fell in the war,  
By stronger forces overcome.

The Strangers gained the upper hand,  
And ruled as lords, cruel and depraved:

The well-loved people of the land,  
For centuries were all enslaved.

But still, though ages long pass by,  
The grieving folk his memory keeps.-  
For them, in death he does not lie,  
But in a golden palace sleeps.

Below the island risen there,  
He lies within the Daugava's breast,  
With Latvia's folk their fate to share,  
And close to Lielvarde rest.

From time to time, late in the night,  
The Daugava boatmen sometimes see  
Two men in combat on the height,  
In struggles that they cannot flee.

While in the castle ruins, clear,  
A little flame there flickers bright.  
The fighting men the edge come near,  
But take no heed, so hot their fight.

Until at last they cross the bounds,  
And deep into the depths they drop.-  
A scream within the castle sounds,  
The little flame's bright flickers stop.

It is Bearslayer struggling there  
The Strangers to eradicate.-  
But long Laimdota's watching stare  
Upon his triumph yet must wait.

But still, the day will come, is sure,  
When he the Black Knight will cast down:  
In Staburags's raging maw,  
His deadly foe alone will drown.

Then for the folk new times will dawn;  
At last their freedom will be born.

## GLOSSARY OF PERSONAL AND PLACE NAMES

The entries in this section explain personal and place names for the purposes of the poem. I am not trying to give you a history or geography lesson! The material in square brackets after each Latvian word explains how I would like you to pronounce that word. This pronunciation is necessary for the metrical structure of the English-language poem, and may differ from standard Latvian pronunciation. I apologize for any offence that this causes. The syllable represented in the square brackets as "-a" should be pronounced as in "bad", the one represented as "-ah" as a long "bad". The syllable represented as "-e" should be pronounced as in "bed", "-o" as in "hot", "-oh" as in "throw","oo" as in "zoo", "ow" as in "bough", "-u" as in "hut" and "uh" as in "book". Syllables in boldface should be stressed.

Aizkraukle [Eyes-krow-kle]: A Latvian stockade near the southern bank of the River Daugava, about 100 Km SE of Riga.

Aizkrauklis [Eyes-krow-kliiss]: The Lord of Aizkraukle; father of Spidala.

Albert: The third Bishop of Uexküll (Latvian: Ikskile); sent by Pope Innocent III in 1199. He was the most effective in subjugating the Baltic people. He recruited the Sword Brothers (warrior monks and priests), who brought Christianity by force after diplomacy and gifts failed.

All Souls Night: A night in October when the souls of the dear departed return to visit the living; comparable with Halloween.

Antrimps [Un-trimps}: The God of the Sea.

Austra [Ow-stru]: The Goddess of the Morning/the Dawn.

Azure Mountain: A sacred mountain where ancient writings were kept; meeting place of the folk at Midsummer.

Black Knight: A German knight brought to Latvia by Bishop Albert to kill Bearslayer.

Burtnieks [Buhrt-nee-eks]: A wise Latvian Lord; teacher of Bearslayer and father of Laimdota.

Crystal Palace: The home of Staburadze beneath the whirlpool of Staburags.

Dabrels [Dubb-rells]: A Latvian Lord whose stockade was on the River Gauja near modern-day Sigulda. Across the river was Kaupa's stockade (Turaida).

Daniel [Dunn-yell]: The German knight who occupied Lielvarde (Bearslayer's home).

Daugava [Dow-g'vu]: The revered, almost sacred, principal river of Latvia. Its course lies mainly SE of Riga, but it flows into the sea to the west of Riga.

Destiny's Father: A pseudomythological figure invented by Pumpurs; the arbiter of human destiny-Fate.

Devil's Pit: A huge underground chamber dug under the River Daugava by the Devil.

Dietrich [Dee-trich]: A German priest who came to Latvia to prepare the way for Bishop Albert.

Dog-Snout Ogres: Mythological monsters in Latvian and Estonian folk tales.

Enchanted Isle: An island that draws ships to its shores. It is inhabited by the demon sons of the Old Witch (see Canto II).

Evil One (the): The Devil.

Fiend (the) The Devil (when capitalized; otherwise a demon).

Gauja [Gow-yu]: The largest river entirely within Latvia. Its course lies NE of Riga.

Henry: A Latvian who was educated in Germany and became a Christian priest in Latvia. He is remembered as "Henry of Livonia"

Holy Father: The Pope; Celestine III proclaimed the third Northern Crusade (the Baltic Crusade) in 1193; Innocent III succeeded Celestine, and appointed Bishop Albert in 1198.

Ikšķile [Eeks-chill-e]: A Livian town on the northern bank of the Daugava, SE of Riga; the Germans had already built a fort there before the arrival of Albert.

Kalapuisis [Kull-u-poo-iss-iss]: A gigantic Estonian warrior; more or less the Estonian equivalent of Bearslayer.

Kangars [Kun-gars]: A Latvian holy man who had secretly made a pact with the Devil.

Kaupa [Cow-pu]: A great Latvian Lord whose stockade was at Turaida on the Gauja.

Kingdom of Dreams: A land in the east where sky and earth meet and the gates of Heaven and Hell are found. It is the home of the Sons of the Gods and the Daughters of the Sun.

Koknesis [Kwock-ness-is]: A mighty youth who lived near the River Perse; Bearslayer's close friend.

kokle [kwock-le]: Traditional Latvian musical instrument - something like a zither.

Kegums [Chag-ums]: A town on the Daugava about 50 Km. SE of Riga.

Laima [Lye-mu]: The Goddess of Destiny/of Happiness.

Laimdota [Lime-dwo-tu]: The beautiful, virtuous, learned and wise daughter of Burtnieks.

Lake Peipus [Pay-puss]: A large lake along the border between Estonia and Russia

Latvian Lords: Latvian chieftains or clan (family) heads who lived in stockades (castles) behind wooden palisades on higher ground along the tributaries of the major rivers.

Lielvarde [Lee-ell-var-de]: A Latvian stronghold on the northern bank of the Daugava, about 55 Km. SE of Riga; home of Bearslayer and his foster father, Lielvardis.

Lielvardis [Lee-ell-var-diss]: The Latvian Lord of Lielvarde; foster father of Bearslayer.

Liga [Lee-gu]: The Goddess of Song.

Ligo [Lee-gwu]: Sing! (midsummer songs).

Ligusoni Priests [Lee-gu-swon-ye]: People selected to lead the (pagan) midsummer rites at the Azure Mountain.

Livian lands: The lands of the Livs: In Western Latvia, and thus the first area occupied by the Germans.

Livs: A Finnic (i.e., non-Latvian) people who lived along the shores of the Gulf of Riga and the Daugava estuary.

Lucifer: The Devil.

Midsummer's Eve: A traditional, extremely important, still-celebrated Latvian folk festival-Jani.

Nine-Headed Demon: A son of the Old Witch. He lived on the Enchanted Isle and was killed by Bearslayer.

North Wind's Daughter: The daughter of Ziemelis, the North Wind.

Northern Sea: The bitterly cold, stormy sea at the top of the world. The domain of Ziemelis.

Pakols [Pu-kwolls]: The God of Death.

Patrimps [Pu-trimps}: The God of Fertility and Wealth.

Perkons [Pah-kwons]: The God of Thunder; a strong supporter of the Latvian people.

Perse [Pair-se]: A river (and waterfall) that flows into the Daugava near Aizkraukle, about 100 Km. SE of Riga.

Pukaitis [Push-kye-tiss]: A pseudomythological figure invented by writers in the nineteenth century; often depicted as the God of Trees.

Riga's Bishop: Bishop Albert

Romove [Roo-oh-mwo-vu]: A town located near the site of modern-day Vilnius in Lithuania; sacred to all three Baltic peoples (Latvians, Lithuanians, Prussians).

Rusin [Roo-sinsh]: A Latvian warrior treacherously killed by a crossbow bolt at the start of the battle for Dabrel's stockade.

Sacred copse: A sacred grove of trees on the Azure Mountain.

Salaspils [Su-luss-pills]: A town on the Daugava where the Germans had already built a castle prior to the arrival of Albert.

Saulite [Sow-lee-tu]: The Sun-Goddess, wife of the Moon. At Midsummer she wore a headdress of red blossoms and danced on the hilltops in silver shoes. To honour her, at Midsummer human women wore similar braided wreaths in their hair, and walked through the fields singing songs to her- see "Ligo".

Sereniete [(Se-re-nee-e-te): A witch, who assisted Spidala to throw Bear-slayer down into the whirlpool of Staburags.

Six-Headed Demon: A son of the Old Witch. He lived on the Enchanted Isle and was killed by Bearslayer.

Spidala [Spee-du-lu]: The beautiful daughter of Aizkrauklis. She was a witch who had entered into a pact with the Devil, but escaped with Bearslayer's help.

Staburadze [Stu-boo-rud-zu]: A goddess who lives in a Crystal Palace beneath the whirlpool of Staburags.

Staburadze's glass: A mirror given to Bearslayer by the Goddess Staburadze. Evil-doers who look into it see the face of Perkons, and are frozen with terror.

Staburadze's maidens: Beautiful and especially virtuous young women, who live for a time with Staburadze to be educated.

Staburags [Stu-boo-rugs]: A high cliff above the River Daugava with a whirlpool at its foot.

Strangers The German knights sent to christianize Latvia , especially those sent by Innocent III under the leadership of Albert.

Talvaldis [Tarl-vull-diss]: A Latvian leader; second-in-command to Bearslayer (although hardly mentioned in the poem).

Three-Headed Demon: A son of the Old Witch. He lived on the Enchanted Isle and was killed by Bearslayer.

Tikla [Tick-lu]: The Goddess of Virtue.

Turaida [Too-rye-du]: A Latvian stronghold on the River Gauja NE of Riga, where Kaupa was the Latvian Lord; across the river from Dabrel's stockade.

Uzin [Oo-zinysh]: The God ("patron saint") of Bees (and Horses).

Vaidelots [Vye-de-lwots]: The Messenger of the Gods, who brings news from them (from Romove) to mortals.

Viduveds [Vid-oo-vads]: A man of legendary wisdom, who lived in the sixth century; also known in Prussian legends.



Witch (Old Witch): A crone who had authority over the younger witches in the Devil's Pit. She was the mother of the Three-, Six- and Nine-Headed Demons on the Enchanted Isle.

Ziemelis [Zee-em-ell-is]: The North Wind; hostile to human beings.

Zunda [Zuhn-da]: Narrow straits between the Estonian island of Saaremaa and the Kurzeme Peninsula (i.e., on the Estonia-Latvia border).

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