

**Biography:** Laima Kota (Muktupāvela) (1962) is one of Latvia's most well-known and beloved authors. She gained widespread recognition with her first novel, *The Mushroom Covenant* (2002), which won the 2002 Annual Latvian Literature Award. Her range of writing extends to include her children's book, *Matilde and Teresa or How to Be Here, There and Elsewhere* (2013), and a biography entitled *BrotherBrother* (2008), which is about the brothers Imants and Gido Kokars, conductors and masters of Latvian choral music.

**Synopsis:** *The Mushroom Covenant* tells the story of a young woman named Īva Baranovska, who goes to Ireland to earn money to pay off her debts and buy a flat back home in Latvia. Already interested in Celtic culture prior to her arrival in Ireland, Īva spends many hours listening to her colleague tell her local legends and myths, in which she begins to see connections with Latvian folk tales. Gradually, Īva grows tired of spending long days on the fields picking mushrooms and decides to become a prostitute. She slowly sheds her former self and matures, both sexually and spiritually, yet finds it difficult to remain connected to her own culture, which eventually gets reduced to Latvian food and cooking.

## Excerpt

### MONEY, SWEET MONEY

The woman in the mirror smirks at me...

She wears a beautiful long grey coat. Around her neck lies a crinkled, greyish scarf like a small crocodile. A black booted foot nervously taps the floor, while a gloved hand, as if in passing, brushes her waist. Aha! This move betrays her. A thief would see clearly that this reed-slim, noble-looking woman is simply as scared as a small ant facing a monstrous enemy.

She's got something under her skin.

Suddenly the woman looks at me in terror, her eyes blinking rapidly. I can see that something is wrong. She fools everyone that she's confident, self-assured, beautiful, smart, and so on and so on. A woman who has swum across three seas, even more – has walked on water, keeping her feet miraculously dry, like the saints. Believing that all would turn out fine.

It is not fine – all has gone off-track.

Nothing to worry about, old girl, just straighten your Pamper. So a telltale corner doesn't peek out like a horn unfitting for a lady.

Stiffly I enter the airport's women's washroom and behind closed doors rustle out the hidden loot from between my legs. Pounds and dollars. I had put them THERE with care, the bills neatly organized in ascending value. Tens, twenties, fifties. Pounds. Irish pounds, which I've earned with my own hands, back and ... maybe nothing else. You don't need your brain for this blue-collar work. I arrange the money in a tight little bundle, fasten it down with a sticky tape, and once more place it between my warm thighs, where it's safe.

One earns money, saves it, puts it in a sock or buries it in a pot in earth thinking that it will be safe. Not a hope in hell. After a hundred years a farmer happens to find the pot with the silver coins in his field. The body of the person who hid the loot has long ago turned to dust; the money now only has archaeological value, some prestige for whoever discovers it, and measly recompense of a few percent of the value of the find.

Much better to save it in a sock. But that too isn't a particularly bright thing to do. Socks get holes in them.

Does anyone not know the pleasant feeling one gets, when one hears the sound of money jingling or rustling? Yes, especially, of course, if it happens to be in your pocket. Your sweat-drenched work shirt may be glued to your back, but the white bread earned from your work, ah, that's so lovely. Yeah! Money, sweet money – lati, dollars, pounds, roubles or silver bars – I don't care what name it goes by, because it sounds like amen does to believers, like indulgence granted to sinners. So hopeful and bright. Jingle, jingle, rustle, rustle...

Money likes to be counted, to be turned over, to be put to use, to have women sell themselves for it for a suitable price, to have men put their egos on the money scales. On one side of the scales the man himself, on the other – his earnings. Then you'll have "Harmony of the soul and respect from society<sup>1</sup>", like my Latgalean granny Gena would say.

Money likes to be worshipped, to be fussed and stormed over, because it can open any door. By its smell alone, even though it's said that money does not smell. It smells, but there is some sense and art, as well as mystery, about laundered money.

I have to protect my money, my little stash until I get home. How many stories worthy of highway robbers have not been heard about muggers in the Riga airport. You call a cab, but the cabby is just waiting for this, to fleece the hard-earned moneys from the fool of a guest worker returning home. The thief makes such a theatre of it, that you don't even notice when your wallet has made its way to the amiable pickpocket's pocket, while you yourself are left somewhere in a ditch between the airport and some bushes. That's how safe it is.

I approach the mirror once more. The self-assured woman again looks back at me. Back straight, chest stuck forward, mouth smiling confidently, eyes shining.

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<sup>1</sup> *Garmonijs dvieselē i cīņa sabīdreibys acis* - Latgalean - a dialect spoken in the region of Latgale in Latvia) literally translated "Harmony of the soul and respect in the eyes of society"

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That beautiful and confident woman is me.

A woman with money.

The more money you have, the greater your self assurance. Whoever said that lied, don't you agree? At least it doesn't seem like that to me any more. Fine leather gloves hide my work-worn hands because I couldn't clean out the black earth and mushroom stains from under my nails. No one needs to see that.

They just see that I like all other good folk at the Gatwick airport in London am waiting for my plane. I push my cart with my carryon bag and slowly roll along from one tax-free shop to another. I examine the price tags and with pleasure conclude that I can buy everything my heart desires. Do you understand, everything?

Fine English Stilton cheese from Harrods. A pure wool white scarf or Scottish black, green and red tartan, beautifully boxed sweets, perfumes, lovely sounding brand name cosmetics, rattles, glittering baubles, expensive and good or to-be-read-once-then-thrown-away trashy books, alcoholic drinks of varying strength, delicacies such as "Shrimp bits with button mushrooms, in a basil and garlic sauce".

I peruse the recipe to see how this delicacy is prepared.

- ½ dozen shrimp
- marinated button mushrooms
- handful of sunflowers
- 2 tbsp ground walnuts
- 2 tbsp. Mayonnaise

- 1 clove garlic
- 3 – 4 basil leaves

- Cut the shrimp in half.

- Mix the cut shrimp with the other dry ingredients.

- Add the chopped garlic and moisten the mixture with the mayonnaise.

- Serve garnished with fresh basil leaves.

- When you savour this delicacy, think of the union of sea and earth (shrimp and mushrooms).

I ask the Harrods' saleswoman for the special English Stilton cheese in a small covered crockery pot. I'll enjoy it with some light wine at home and find some housekeeping use for the little pot. Perhaps to keep cloves or pins in.

Moving with the airport cart among the store counters, I suddenly hear something inexplicably familiar in this Babel and I glance over my shoulder at the speaker. In melodious, softly enunciated English, asking for exactly the same Stilton cheese in the cream-coloured pot with blue lettering on it, is the owner and Chef of the Riga gourmet restaurant who frequently appears on television. Our *alma pater*. Right now his face appears weary. He looks the same as everyone else at the airport – unrecognisable, therefore he can afford to be himself. There's not even a vestige of the half-idiotic, good-natured shiny countenance, so like the American smiling mask, which he for purposes of publicity and self-protection puts on like an apron.

I don't buy anything else, because I've grown tired walking. The flight to Riga has not yet appeared on the TV information monitors, so I have ample time. I sit down on a soft lounge chair and stretch out my fatigued legs. The money hidden near my crotch feels good and safe.

And then I start to notice those who announce their own presence. One wears a long leather coat. In fact there are many wearing leather in the vicinity. They have a different way of walking and different hairstyles, but above all – an odd way of looking at you. Talking Russian, they sit down in the lounge chairs opposite mine. I understand all that the Russians are saying. They too are flying to Riga. Russians are generally called Russian representatives in Latvia because to call someone a Russian alone amounts to swearing. But they don't represent anything! No one has given them the right or the duty to represent. They are Russians. The same as I am a Latvian or as the Italian sitting in front of me is Italian. And if anyone feels that the word 'Russian' sounds like a swearword, sorry but he himself is to blame!

The Russians are calmly debating where they still can buy something cheaply. "Computers are very cheap here, while jackets are stylish and leather boots cost about twenty pounds and in Riga cost about three times more."<sup>2</sup> Satisfaction with life can be heard in their voices. Just like me, after having done hard work, they're now wearily relaxing, content and, yes, kindly disposed to each other. Even benevolent.

One of their group gets up to leave, and the others call after him to buy "something good, not any kind of weak rotgut."<sup>3</sup> The consigned representative nods happily in agreement as he trots off. The smooth departure of the man is observed by the woman sitting beside me.

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<sup>2</sup> Kompyuters tam deshevlye; a vot tam zhaketi klassniye, kozhanniye sapogi za paru desyatkov funtov sterlingov mozno takikh kupitj, kotorikh v Rige v tri raza bolshe ne kupish – Russian in original text

<sup>3</sup> *normalno, ne vodochku kakuyu-to* – Russian in original text

She seemingly is reading a German magazine, but her eyes follow the departing man. Aha, she also understands, she knows, to where the young Russian, like a dove of peace has trotted. Almost like in the good old days in the construction brigades, when among the duties of the young greenhorns was also the running for beer and *zakuskas* - snacks for the older master builders. She too knows that.

The passengers flying to Riga slowly gather. With half-shut eyes I watch how Noah's Ark starts to fill.

It all happens as if by accident. I instantly recognize two young men as Latvians, even though they are not speaking. Initially I even think that they could be gay, they look so effeminate. So proper. Though seated, they seem to tower over everyone else, who, like bees slowly swarm to fill up the airport lounge chairs. They sport small briefcases. One has something that looks like an elegant and delicate cane. They have on short black overcoats with Beatle era collars. Such slick young men, about whom they would say in the country that they've swallowed a stick. And only when one of the boy's mobiles starts to ring, does he betray himself. Not hearing the optimistic up-beat sounding English "Hello", but a recognizably Latvian sullen and hesitant "*nu-u*" – a cross between "well" and "what", I no longer care what the boy will say. He's a Latvian. My dears, a typical Latvian – seemingly somewhat sullen, peering out of a metaphorical corner. One, who doesn't want his peace disturbed and – ha, ha – instantly recognizable as a country bumpkin from some hellhole of an unknown Latvia. I unfortunately know such fine boys who, not feeling secure in this world, will brandish against all and sundry the spear of standoffishness and reserve. Later this self-protective stance can become a second skin.

"I'm going for a pee," a brunette announces laughingly to the three men sitting beside her. She takes delight in her daring and boldness, thinking that no one else understands why she's laughing; she dares to be so open. The three seated men are engrossed in reading their newspapers. Obviously they are her colleagues. The Latvian woman would not allow herself to flirt so openly with just any man. Her Latvian colleagues with a smile and grumbling in their gizzards, allow the woman to enjoy her freedom for the while – hoping that no one in this airport cacophony of languages will even recognize a language such as Latvian.

The woman beside me understands the brunette's call to pee as well as I do. She pretends that she's reading a magazine. But in reality her ears are radioing in on what's being said, while her eyes look at the Latvian knowingly. Those, who are wearing the traditional Latvian Namejs silver rings, those can be automatically counted as Latvians. Silver or gold. The gold Namejs rings are usually worn by Latvians not born in Latvia. Or by nouveau riche Latvians.

Not far from us, a young man takes a seat. He starts to study the others just as I'm doing. We exchange glances and within the space of a breath it's clear to both of us that the other is a Latvian. The eyes are a sure give away. Foreigners look differently at each other. Somehow through each other, more benevolently, in sum as if it were nothing, while Latvians look ... hm ...yes, also through you, but not seeing, initially distrustfully. Unfortunately much time must pass, perhaps enough to eat your way through a cliff or devour a mountain of pancakes, in order for Latvians to simply smile at each other. None of the quick "How are you" and up-beat optimism and sparkling good will is reflected in Latvian eyes.

Understanding that he's surrounded by his own kind, the young man searches around in his bag and lifts out a laptop. Look, see what I have? See how I, like the rest of the world, am



mobile and technologically up to date! None of the county clerk's sleeve protectors, goose feather pens or abacuses for me. I am like them, and the rest of you – can go to hell.

He is writing something or simply fingering the keyboard. It looks as if the laptop is new and he, as he used to in his childhood, has brought out the new tractor given to him by his uncle to show to the rest of us neighbourhood kids, in order to boast, see what I have! Nana-nana!

While I by their looks identify a few more solitary Latvians, a joyful rumble develops at the Russian end. The dove of peace – the departed has returned. His brought goods are loudly praised – "Good. We'll stretch it out till Riga.<sup>4</sup> I hear the Russians exhibiting all the best traits of sponges. The Scotch whisky expands the Russian group like a coral reef. A woman has joined the rumble and is enthusiastically recounting something. "Ah, what joy" she laughs sincerely, to meet up with my own sort in London"<sup>5</sup>

She is beautiful. Extravagantly so. About forty-five years of age. Dyed, thick coiffed hair, a bright green skin-tight sweater, breasts firm and thrust forward, gold jewellery and a finely made-up face. High-heeled boots. Tight pants with stylish flared bottoms. It's instantly obvious that the Russians like the woman and she's aware of it. In fact that is her trump card – a good appearance for a good price and through her own persistence.

Work, oh what extensive work she's invested in herself. Her lips are brilliantly coloured, eyelashes tinted, the wrinkles around her eyes concealed, her chin – thrust upward, and she herself optimistic. Yes, much work has been invested in this, but because of it all doors are wide open to gay company for the worldly Russian woman. Ah, not that I care. For the moment I'm

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<sup>4</sup> *normalno, do Rigi dotjanyem* – Russian in original text

<sup>5</sup> *Ah, kakaya radostj, zemlakji v Londonje!* – Russian in original text

sitting like I've turned to stone with a wad of bills between my legs afraid that the Mafiosi in Riga's airport will simply manipulate my money from me. Club me, throw me in a ditch and that will be that... That's what I hear....

The beauty invites someone to go somewhere to help her. After a while she returns with that someone, but now they are three not two. She's got her daughter with her. The fact that it's her daughter is instantly obvious, with the difference that the mother's face reflects the life passions she has experienced, while all this is still ahead for the daughter. The latter is at least twenty years old, with a velvet smooth complexion and that's about all. Still young, she'll probably tread in her mother's footsteps, because she has a good teacher in feminine wiles. She has someone to mimic. What is the teacher imparting? Only that which is a priority – how to be liked by men. One has to learn that lesson.

One has to learn how to make men notice you, how to snare them, in that dreadful bear-catching snare with its death noose, so the poor *homo sapiens* fool allows himself to be caught in the net. The net is woven from fine rope, strong materials tested over centuries. The formula for catching men's attention is approximately this – tits + waist + ass + slim legs + fun at all times + etc. and etc., which I forgot to use while I was here. I still have several hours in which I don't have to employ these manoeuvres to be noticed. I still don't have to use cosmetics and clothes as weapons. In a few hours I'll be there, in Riga. The hilariously laughing Russian *mother & daughter* transport and with a *hurrah* propel me into another dimension, into another time zone, where I will have to do this, whether I want to or not. I don't want to, but I guess I'll have to.

Everything after all is not what it seems. There is no loving *mother & daughter idyll*. There is no student–apprentice, master–journeyman or guru–disciple relationship here. Instead, it smells of a hidden struggle, of secret weapons, which the mother unwittingly has handed through her genes to her beauty of a daughter already at birth, as if on a platter. They are in fact competitors and silent enemies. The daughter is younger, slimmer, fresher, more naive with longer legs and with simply devastatingly lovely dimpled cheeks. One, who can still afford to be playful, one whose idiotic comments will be accepted with paternal laughter, only to be given a bonbon or a pat on the head for her caprices or pouts, with the comment, look, what a good girl...

The mother's arsenal is worth more. She could instantly write a "Help Yourself" series of books on "How to marry a man who satisfies your material needs", "Enhance the non-existent and tone down life's cloven feet", "What the hell do they really think" ...

Every once in a while the mother looks closely at her daughter when she says something inappropriately candid, about which the men in the company paternalistically snigger to themselves. Now and then the mother compresses her lips when the men start to gaze too long at the flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone. Then with a gleeful laugh, "Have you heard this story" <sup>6</sup> bright as a comet the mother shoots into the horizon of all, and attention again is hers. The wiser one, ha, ha.

The information monitor finally shows the anticipated – *Rīga 18:15. Gate No. 57.*

We, Latvians, stand up and proceed like geese, in a row, pushing our carts along a winding pathway. As if there was no one else around, as if we had not seen anyone from our own parish.

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<sup>6</sup>*Ha, ha, bila takaja istoria* – Russian in original text

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The Chef has been recognized, and he has also been found by acquaintances. Handshakes, questions, from where to where, joyful exclamations, "Now I live in London" – are heard, "Yes, yes. Going home to be with your old folks, are you?" etc. etc. ... And the invisible apron again goes on the friendly and accessible gourmet chef....

The Russians are moving along in a group, chatting and encouraging each other. While the tickets are checked once more, a few hurry to make a call from a phone booth, some muttering something, others smiling. The Russian wearing the long leather coat, mellowed by whisky looks very self-satisfied. He loudly announces to his compatriots but also to others, who cannot help but hear, that he is going to phone home. " ... Irochka, do you know where I'm calling from? Ah – my sweetling, I'm calling from the city of London. Aha! Just to let you know that the deals have been made and the business is about to fly. Aha. In three hours I'll be in Riga. Get the food on the table. I'll take a taxi for a hundred dollars – and will be home shortly. But you just make sure there are no strange smells in the house. Or you better watch out..."<sup>7</sup>

Having barked out his orders in the telephone monologue, the man feels ve-e-ery satisfied. Ha, did all of you hear that? We're not some simple two-bit players, flea market hawkers or fools but true blue lions of business boarding this plane, practical people who buy goods or services, people with whom one makes deals. We, who will soon drive in su-uch limousines that real men just dream about. And rest assured, we're not playing blind man's bluff.

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<sup>7</sup>*Iryukha, ti znayesh, ot kuda ja zvonyu? Aga, duryokha moja nenaglyadnaya! S gorodu Londonu ya zvonyu! Aga! Cherez tri chasa budu v Rige. Tak chto nakrivai stol! Vozmu taksi za sto baksov i budu doma. A ti smotri mnye, chtob chuzhovo vonya nebilo. Smotri u menya!...*Russian in original text

I look at the babbling Russians and I feel as I did in the past. When I wore bronze bracelets, a brass circlet round my forehead and heavy on my breast lay neck bands. Ancient hammered broaches kept my linen blouse fastened at the neck, and an ornamental long pin made from the horn of a wild ox held my woollen shawl together. A belt with jangling bells frightened away evil spirits. I see rich traders travelling along River Daugava with skins, honey, hemp and beeswax.

Initially came those who had nothing to lose, those who could explore the world, with what they had on their backs, no ties and not a santime to their name. The sort who didn't care if they lived or died when they could be pillaging loot worth more than any silver bars.

In the beginning not one of the rich people from the Land of the Evening Sun travelled to the shores of the River Daugava. The ones who did not own a business or had no post at the king's court came. But blue bloods would never come here. The ones wearing leather coats arrived, who got wise and figured out how to sell furless cats like a pig in a poke.

The management of the world's gadabouts skilfully plied their trade – selling useless trash and passing it off as Cleopatra's most beloved tomcat's offspring, claiming the offspring was derived through cloning from the DNA of the deified King of Cats! And wonder of wonders, people fell for it. Besides, if one has the chance to cheaply buy a product never seen in the market, why not go for it? Why not offer shiny glass beads to the aborigines, the trifles that bedazzle eyes, the junk wrapped in animal skins to confuse the mind. All it takes is courage flimsily veiled and the balls to risk. Then the nouveau riche in leather coats end up signing fishy contracts and deals, and monks bedecked with crosses arrive to smother all with the sauce of their one-and-only-god ideology.

And our Latvian brethren squat up in trees. Each on his own branch and, as confirmed in ancient chronicles, truly eat mushrooms.

And so gone forever are Pikols, Pakols and Potrimps, Laima and Dekla, in other words, the ancient gods, and the Ancient Holy One who walked in flaxen pants across rye fields, not once bending an ear of rye. Amen!

The carriage is waiting!

Madam, someone calls to me. *Excuse me?! Are you asleep or what?* I come alive, back to my senses, and follow the others along the carpeted narrow pathway. The Latvians keep silent, but behind me the Russian pair is speculating. "See," he says, "the stewardess doesn't greet us. It's not nice that she doesn't treat her passengers with respect." "Now, now Seryozha," I hear, his female companion objecting, "she's only tired." He, in response, "What do I care – she doesn't show us any respect, we're the 'Soviets' to her, no matter what ... never mind, I'll create such a fun trip for her, that she'll run circles round me..."

We all are so different, and I feel secret joy, taking delight in these differences with the friendly eyes of an observer. We'll all return to Latvia's reality and soon will be in a different dimension.

In Latvia.

I have an economy ticket, so I head for the far end of the plane to my window seat. No one is seated in the mid-seat beside me, but in the aisle seat – sits *the daughter*. Across the aisle, in the adjacent three seats, a young man on one side and an older one on the other, like the most extravagant, overblown rose in a flowerbed, sits the *mother*. Such a coincidence in assigned seats.

The daughter is not happy about her mother's preferred seating. She is in fact offended and what she's thinking shows on her face. *Yes, yes, what more does my mother want! Not she, but I should be seated between those two men. She, who's already lived her life, been involved with God knows how many men, she should subdue her lust! Just look how she chatters and can't stop putting on a show. She already has turned grey, but doesn't feel any shame in flirting with the two men. Ah, and the younger one is so handsome...*

The daughter bites her voluptuous lower lip, crosses her arms over her tiny breasts and starts to suffer. That is – she demonstratively keeps silent. Seeing no one. She is suffering but can't even manage a tear. My presence she, of course, doesn't even notice. The mother pulls her attention away from the noisy boarding, manages to glance at her child and, eyes shining, asks, "Honey what's wrong?" The daughter doesn't answer. She has a headache. That's it in a nutshell.

There are four people serving the passengers. Two stewards – a lively redhead and a slow moving, freckled young man plus two vivacious black-eyed stewardesses – a mulatto sporting a hundred or more small braids and an Anglo Indian looking as if she had stepped out of Devi's temple. She speaks only English, but her movements are so expressive, that even to one who doesn't understand a word, it's absolutely clear that bags cannot be kept on a lap, that coats must be put in the compartments above and seatbelts fastened. Sorry, bags must be stored above! Sir, I repeat – bags in the compartment above, but you, yourself must fasten your seatbelt. Thank you! The two-metre tall mulatto knows how to handle the unruly *Seryozhas*.

The motor starts to purr, engines rev up, wheels roll and with a light d-a-h we lift off into another dimension. Along the x-axis. Under us along the y-axis – the United Kingdom and a totally different way of thinking. Another reality.

Tea or coffee? Irish coffee, please. Sorry but we don't have any whipping cream ...Never mind, we'll get by with Bailey's Cream Liqueur. I drink the so-called Irish coffee and it sinks in that it's all over. The humiliation and the shame, the blue-collar work and my own feelings of inconsequence. The wad of money pleasantly warms between my legs, but I can't yet afford to breathe a sigh of relief. We haven't flown over the entire dog yet. The tail still remains.

The airline meal has not yet been served!

The rest I don't remember. Only as a bah-ba-bah, trah-ra-rah. Someone falling, someone running, the aeroplane rocking and walls trembling, the electricity going off, with everyone screaming in the dark. I couldn't scream because the daughter was hanging onto my sweater as if her life depended on it. Her teeth were chattering. Someone was running somewhere, cursing, trying to slip through. Someone else was vomiting. The mother was screeching wildly in despair, while the stewards tried to shout over the storm, seemingly asking us, their ewes, to keep calm.

Now I was to learn what happens to me in crisis situations and moments when the earth and heavens tumble together mid sea. Now I know what I do at times like this. Lord, now I know. Once I've understood that soon, very soon we all shall be sorted according to our merits – some shall go to hell, others to better pastures, I throw in my lot. And laugh.

Initially I feel light, as if someone is tickling me, later, hysterically hilarious, as if someone had told me a funny joke, but then I hear also some others laughing. They probably



like me have understood that it's useless to scream. No sense in kicking or spitting against the wind, crying about unfulfilled future plans. You laugh and in laughing understand that everything you have accomplished or experienced in the past makes no sense. All will soon be over so you must prepare yourself for the *final act*.

Meaningless the humiliation you've suffered, so too the blisters, sweat, the snot and tears, stubbornness and short moments of satisfaction after work well done. You don't have that lovely feeling you get prior to entering the traditional washhouse, when you know – all of the weeks' heavy work shall be swept away with the birch switch strokes across your warmed back and you'll experience a long awaited release.

Meaningless that you like a white slave have improved the welfare of a foreign country, worked there from dawn to dusk, like a dog listened to the taskmasters orders, denying yourself, earned the little moneys hoping that sometime in the future all will be better. But it won't get better, it won't!

The future may not happen.

Only that which now surrounds you exists. The past no longer has meaning, the future obviously will not be, but the present consists only of noise and flying in the dark.

It even seems to me that I've been in such mesmerizing situations before. Ha-ha, I laugh with more joy, because I know that when the earth falls away from my feet again, I shall only change my place of operation, the people will change around me and I shall have to change myself.

I know that chaos will be most beneficial – as if rotating in a moving spiral carving out the sign of fire, fate as usual shall throw me from one hand to the other. Yes, when there is an

Laima Kota "Šampinjonu Derība" [The Mushroom Covenant]

Excerpt

Translated by Margita Gailitis, edited by Vija Kostoff

incomprehensible situation between earth and heaven, then I know – I must gather my toys  
and go and play in another sandbox. Good-by, grey coat.

Somewhere above three seas, between Ireland and Latvia.