

Ket Kêçor Välenai [The Stone of Välen]
A One-Act Play

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Background

The following play was written in spring of 1995 and performed for the eighth grade and some of the seventh grade of Newton Middle School in Littleton, Colorado on May 16, 1995. The play had its genesis in the previous fall, closer to the start of my eighth grade year. Newton's Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Mary Ratigan, had a long-standing idea of inventing a language and writing a play in it, as a way to explore the relationship between language and culture. Having been working on a language that I called Skerre for several months previously, I volunteered it when I heard this idea and the Skerre play was on its way to fruition.

The play was a collaborative process. It featured writing and acting contributions from the seven person class created for the project (the names are above), which met regularly the entire second semester to work on the project; costumes, scenery, and props from Mrs. Hardwood's art class; and acting and other contributions from various other members of the seventh and eighth grade.

The version here, for better or worse, is neither the original translation of spring 1995 nor the version spoken onstage in May 1995. The most recent version I have (and thus used as the source of this transcription) is a revised version done sometime in fall of 1995. It features a number of changes, which have been preserved below: the "bad guy" is called Gauçoran in this version, while he was named Elkorg in the original; the ending has been slightly re-done (incorporating a goof from one of the performances); and the characters have largely been re-gendered to match with the original performers.

The language of this play bears only a scant resemblance to the language called Skerre in 2006, and there is some question in my mind whether both really deserve the name Skerre, since they are so different. Still there are a few similarities, maybe even a few that a very careful reader could discover. I should make it clear that the changes between 1995 and now are in no way simulated natural language change; rather they are changes of my own whim, largely inspired by my increasing knowledge of linguistics and experience with non-Indo-European languages. In re-typing the play, there seem to me to also have been some linguistic changes in my later source. To the extent that I've been able to see them, I have eliminated them, though probably not to the original form. This version also includes more polished prose for the stage directions (which are in English, for the ease of the performers and translator).

Notes on Pronunciation

The writing system used for the Skerre here is not the original; at this point, the original seems far too confusing. So, I have re-transcribed the play using a different writing system – one that has some of the original aesthetic, but also is far more transparent. The letters *d, g, k, l, n, s, t* have their standard roman values; the following letters have values worth commenting on:

Skerre Letter	IPA sound	As in
a	ɑ	General American English <i>f<u>a</u>ther</i>
â	ɐ	General American English <i>c<u>a</u>t</i>
ä	æ	General American English <i>b<u>a</u>t</i>
ai	aɪ	General American English <i>k<u>i</u>te</i>
au	aʊ	General American English <i>h<u>o</u>w</i>
e	ɛ	General American English <i>m<u>e</u>t</i>
ê	e	French <i>beaut<u>é</u></i> , ‘beauty’
č	tʃ	English <i>ch<u>u</u>rch</i>
ç	θ	English <i>th<u>i</u>n</i>
i	i	General American English <i>mach<u>i</u>ne</i>
j	dʒ	English <i>jet</i>
o	o	German <i>k<u>o</u>hl</i> , ‘cabbage’
r	ɹ	English <i>r<u>e</u>d</i>
š	ʃ	English <i>sh<u>o</u>e</i>
u	u	French <i>f<u>o</u></i> , ‘crazy’
v	v	English <i>vel<u>v</u>et</i>
x	x	Scottish Gaelic, <i>loch<u>x</u></i> , ‘lake’
y	j	English <i>y<u>e</u>t</i>

Unlike present Skerre, what you write is what you get – there are no sound alternations in the play’s early version of Skerre.

Kiserosiina tsa tir,

Doug Ball, July 2006

Dramatis Personae

Tâleris (M), the arän [king]
Kestri 1–4, plus other Kestri, soldiers under Tâleris
Ečon 1–4, plus other Ečons, minions of Gauçoran
Tosai (F), a Tärtansk
Rivos (M), a merchant
Gauçoran, the demon king
Dis (M), one of Gauçoran's henchmen
Sêtol (M), another of Gauçoran's henchman
a Spy (F)
Terängard (F), a wizard
Käs (M), a Tärtansk
other Tärtanski [a group of peasants]

Synopsis

(Warning: spoilers)

A drunken brawl at a celebration allows agents of the demon king, Gauçoran, to steal a powerful amulet, the Kêçor Välenai. Unfortunately, leaving the scene, they lose it. It is then found by a peasant girl, who sells it to an unscrupulous merchant. He, in turn, takes it to Gauçoran, and attempts to sell it for a profit. However, his gambit does not work, and he loses both the amulet and his life. With the Kêçor Välenai, Gauçoran uses its power to enslave the peasants. Unbeknownst to the demon king, a spy saw his acquisition, and she reports back to the original owner, Tâleris. Tâleris, determined to get it back, enlists the help of a wizard. He and the wizard journey to confront Gauçoran in his newfound domain of enslaved peasants. A battle ensues, and, in the end, Gauçoran is defeated, the peasants are freed, and Tâleris regains the Kêçor Välenai.

RORAN YAT [SCENE I]

EĀON 1 and EĀON 2 lurk in the shadows. The Kestri are celebrating a recent victory. TĀLERIS, the king, is wearing the amulet called the Kĕĉor Vĕlenai. He and four Kestri (KESTRI 1–4) are all in front of the castle.

	<i>Itorvi, itorvi, itorvi ti</i>	[Animals, animals, animals are
	<i>vex koliř aviki,</i>	my best friends,
KESTRI (singing):	<i>Kailar, āvun, elgorai,</i>	Hawk, seal, grizzly bear,
	<i>savek aiklĀ vĕk</i>	they make a day]

They are obviously drunk. They repeat their song and begin a third time when TĀleris interrupts them.

TĀLERIS: (after <i>vex</i>)	<i>Retsat ālxtri kĀl!</i>
	[Stop singing that!]

The Kestri are quiet for a second. Then, they start again.

KESTRI: (singing)	<i>A Itorvi, itorvi, itor–</i>
	[Oh, animals, animals, anim–]

TĀLERIS:	<i>Retsat ālxtri!</i>
	[Stop singing!]

The four singers stop and stagger around. One bumps into another and they start fighting. Using the brawl as a distraction, EĀon 1 and EĀon 2 rush into the chaos. They knock TĀleris out and carry him off the stage. They carry him into the forest and rip off the Kĕĉor Vĕlenai. They put the amulet into a bag and quickly leave. On their way out, the amulet falls through a hole in the bag onto the ground. EĀon 1 and EĀon 2 do not notice and continue on their way. TĀleris remains onstage, unconscious. TOSAI ambles onstage, sees the amulet, and picks it up.

TOSAI:	<i>Ooo, ait.</i>
	[Oooo, pretty.]

Tosai walks offstage with the amulet. After a bit, TĀleris comes to, and walks off, dazed, back to his castle.

RORON TOR [SCENE II]

Enter Tosai, who continues to stroll through the woods, admiring the amulet. RIVOS enters opposite her. Upon sighting Tosai, Rivos hides behind some shrubs, not knowing who she is. However, he continues to watch her and, looking closer, spots the Kĕĉor Vĕlenai. He turns to the audience.

RIVOS: *Ê, ket Kêçor Vâlenai. Divân va kre tašes! Sek vorat vauk eltâro Gauçoranâ divân, vorat kientor lêç.*
[Ah, the Kêçor Vâlenai. It's worth millions! If I could sell it to Gauçoran, I might become rich.]

He stands up and walks over to Tosai.

RIVOS: *Ča, vorat oka vek teken lagça vex kasan. Teken vax kiçox divân.*
[Hey, I see that you have found my amulet. You may return it now.]

TOSAI: *Je kâlrisa.*
[For a price.]

RIVOS: *Tâlviet-â?*
[How much?]

TOSAI: *Teken va tâlviet-â?*
[How much do you have?]

RIVOS: (grossly under-reporting) *Sis yev tâlini*
[Three hundred tâlins]

TOSAI: *Likâ!*
[(It's a deal!)]

They exchange money and the Kêçor Vâlenai. Tosai exits.

RIVOS: *Âlterân. Sis yev tâlini ti korin vâlisê kent vorat irgor je kâla. Kan vorat eltâr Gauçoranâ divân.*
[Fool. Three hundred tâlins are nothing compared to what I will get for this. When I sell it to Gauçoran.]

Rivos walks offstage.

RORON SIS [SCENE III]

GAUÇORAN, DIS, and SÊTOL are in Gauçoran's throne room.

GAUÇORAN: *Kâl eçoni ti laudovi. Savek kor vos dâg sento xil kasan.*
[Those eçons are stupid. They can't even steal a simple amulet.]

DIS: *Tarkai, savek xâl kišeg-â?*
[My lord, could they try again?]

GAUÇORAN: *Kor. Savek dax čarelš xâl.*
[No. They would just fail again.]

EČON 3 and EČON 4 enter with Rivos.

EČON 3: (motioning to Rivos) *Avân lagê kâlin jau ortena, Tarkai. Divân čalêsor râlû au tekna. Vorat kisikê divân vortisu-â? Divân yaik vek divân ensk vortêlê.*
[We found this guy at the door, Lordship. He would like to speak with you. Should I let him proceed? He says it is urgent.]

Gauçoran cannot see Rivos' face, for it is shrouded in shadow and by the hood of a cloak. Thus, he assumes that Rivos is another useless salesman selling a useless thing.

GAUÇORAN: *Kisikê divân vortisu, (to Rivos) oj lisyä aiklat divân.*
[Let him proceed, (to Rivos) but make it quick.]

Rivos steps into the light and takes off his hood.

RIVOS: *Yot, Gauçoran, vorat lisyê saik divân sek teken kilêsor, oj kan tekan oka vex kardinovet, vorat ês ges vek teken kädgor tir yavit.*
[Okay, Gauçoran, I will make it quick if you like, but when you see my merchandise, I am sure that you will change your mind.]

GAUÇORAN: (with mock friendliness) *Rivos. Teken tê kot-â? Sek vorat kidivê vek divân êket teken, vio avik, vorat časetê teken au vat visârena.*
[Rivos. How are you? If I'd known it was you, old friend, I would have treated you with more respect.]

RIVOS: *Ges.*
(under his breath) [Sure.]

GAUÇORAN: *Xâl, vorat juros je vex âliva. (Then with greed) Vax. Vorat tovâr okau tir kardinovet.*
[Again, I apologize for my rudeness. (Then with greed) Now. I want to see your merchandise.]

Rivos takes out the amulet and Gauçoran becomes very excited.

GAUÇORAN: *Teken tovâr tälviet je divâna-â?*
[How much do you want for it?]

RIVOS: *Trek tälini.*
[Ten million tälins.]

GAUÇORAN: *Kolis-â?*
[What?]

RIVOS: *Če onsk kälris je dorina.*
[There is always a price for power.]

GAUÇORAN: *Yot. Oj trek tälini ti čet kälris telso je tir yena.*
[Indeed. But 10 million tälins is a lousy price to pay for your life.]

Dis and Sêtol take hold of Rivos and grab the Kêçor Vâlenai away from him. One gives the amulet to Gauçoran, while the other begins to lead Rivos away.

RIVOS: *Retsat! Aiklâsari torstivâ. Teken kiva divân auken kolsa sek teken sik vorat yeno.*
[Stop! Let's make a deal. You can have it for free if you let me live.]

GAUÇORAN: *Divân vax ensk u dač je kâla, Rivos. Teken kičašaventê au vorata kan teken at vitx. (He laughs)*
[It is too late for that now, Rivos. You should have bargained with me when you had the chance. (He laughs)]

Rivos is taken away by Dis and Sêtol, struggling in their grasp.

Gauçoran puts on the Kêçor Vâlenai. Dis and Sêtol come back and witness the terrifying, yet fascinating sight of Gauçoran harnessing the Kêçor Vâlenai's energy.

GAUÇORAN: *Ê, vorat vos äslo ket dorin vortri do vorata. (SPY sneaks in) Vorat yats auvestgor ket Tärtanski. Kruat Dis a Sêtol. Avân vort jau Âtärtansk.*
[Ah, I can feel the power flowing through me. (SPY sneaks in) I will conquer the Tärtanski first. Come Dis and Sêtol. We are going to Tärtanskia.]

The trio of them exit. After they do so, the spy sneaks off in the opposite direction

RORON KRÊ [SCENE IV]

The spy runs onstage towards Kestri 1, who is standing outside the castle.

SPY: *Vorat va oros êstari. Vorat vêt rälu au aräna.*
[I have important information. I need to speak with the king.]

Kestri 1 goes off stage to get Tâleris. Tâleris comes out.

TÂLERIS: *Teken tovâr kolis-â, Vê?*
[What do you want, my lady?]

SPY: *Ket Ečoni skonâ ket Kêçor Vâlenai.*
[The Ečons possess the Kêçor Vâlenai.]

TÂLERIS: *Teken tê ges kot-â?*
[How can you be sure?]

SPY: *Vorat okaê divân. Aret tik vek avân rail kav.*
[I saw it. We must do something.]

TÂLERIS: *Kisikê vorat koru. (pause) Vorat yatoč taurskê ekor kelos vorstika.*
[Let me think. (pause) I once heard about a mighty wizard.]

SPY: *Aret äsk vek taken vir Terängard-â?*
[Might you mean Terängard?]

TÂLERIS: *Rika. Käl ensk divân. Lijaiat voratâ divân.*
[Yes. That's the one. Bring her to me.]

SPY: *Rika, Kai.*
[Yes, Sir.]

Spy and Tâleris exit.

RORON KEN [SCENE V]

TERÄNGARD comes in with the spy. Tâleris is waiting.

SPY: *Dik ensk vek taken tovâr, Kai.*
[Here you are, sir.]

The spy exits.

TERÄNGARD: *Teris, Tâleris. Divân ensk kara seleno taken.*
[Hello, Tâleris. It is an honor to meet you.]

TÂLERIS: *Das. Teken vos orlo ket Kêçor Välenai-â?*
[Thank you. Can you get back the Kêçor Välenai?]

TERÄNGARD: *Teken açk vex dorini. Vorat auvils ket sistâdorin ket Kêçorai Välenai.*
Käl ensk yakit.
[You doubt my powers. I understand the power source of the Kêçor Välenai. That is enough.]

TÂLERIS: *Vorat auvils. (pauses) Teken klegor vorat a vex tensk jau Âtärtansk.*
[I understand. (pauses) You will accompany my army and me to Tärtanskia.]

They exit.

RORON ŠA [SCENE VI]

Tâleris, Terängard, and army have arrived at Tärtanskia. The Tärtansk KÄS is gathering fruit nearby. Other Tärtanski (including Tosai) are mindlessly working in the background throughout this scene.

TERÄNGARD: *Tir älvix ensk kolis-â?*
[What is your plan?]

TÂLERIS: (gestures to Käs) *Tes! Avân aršgor kâl Tärtansk sento arin divân je avâna.* (to Käs)
Käs) *Tärtansk! Kruat or dik!*
[There! We'll ask that Tärtansk to steal it back for us. (to Käs)
Tärtansk! Come over here!]

Käs comes over to the group.

TÂLERIS: *Teken sie tekar kolis-â?*
[What's your name?]

KÄS: *Vorat sie več Käs.*
[My name is Käs.]

TÂLERIS: *Yot, Käs. Vorat tovâr teken vorto êt ket skidara a sent ket ait sava vek ket tistin sart.*
[Okay, Käs. I want you to go into the mansion and steal the pretty thing that the evil one carries.]

KÄS: (not giving it a second thought) *Yot.*
[Okay.]

Käs goes into the room where Gauçoran is sleeping. Käs quietly walks up to Gauçoran, and violently yanks on the amulet. Gauçoran wakes up suddenly.

GAUÇORAN: (tossing Käs aside) *Teken olterân.* (upon seeing the others) *Jorâli! Ventorat! Ventorat! Ventorat!*
[You idiot. (upon seeing the others) Invaders! Attack! Attack! Attack!]

Kestri and Eçons fight a battle with swords. Half the combatants soon die and the remainder are in a stalemate. Tâleris and Terängard watch from behind the Kestri line, while Gauçoran watches from behind the Eçon line.

TERÄNGARD: *Vorat sauv vek aret tik vek vorat kivils savai êt vex eno êrê* (She moves behind a tree near the Eçons) *Ka isa šelekai, ka rosa kroiai, čelat!*
[I guess I have to take matters into my own hands (She moves behind a tree near the Eçons). By the light of the moon, by the dark of the night, freeze!]

The Eçons stop fighting and are frozen. The Kestri look around puzzled. Terängard steps out triumphantly from behind the tree.

TÂLERIS: *Kolis ekor ket Kêçor Vâlenai-â?*
[What about the Kêçor Vâlenai?]

TERÄNGARD: *Lisyä enevat divân. Käl ečoni yatyä oili čelent je vitor kätřisa.*
[Quickly get it. These Ečons are only frozen for twelve kätřis(= a unit of time roughly equivalent to about 45 seconds,)]

Gauçoran, unaffected by the wizard's spell, ambles over to them.

GAUÇORAN: (pointing to the amulet) *Vorat va ket Kêçor Välenai.*

[I have the Kêçor Välenai.]

TÂLERIS: (gesturing to the wizard) *Vorat va vorstik.*

[I have a wizard.]

Having reached a stalemate on the magical front, they draw their swords and fence all over the stage. Tâleris corners Gauçoran and cuts off the Kêçor Välenai. Gauçoran stabs Tâleris, but Tâleris falls on the amulet. Seeing that he had lost the battle, Gauçoran flees. Terängard comes over to look at Tâleris' wound.

TERÄNGARD: (her hand on Tâleris' wound) *Ka eskoiol to skâra, xadrakat käl katek.*

[By the stars in the sky, heal this man.]

The wound is healed. The Ečons "de-frost," but without Gauçoran, they are lost, and are easily cut down by the Kestri. The Tärtanski (Käs, Tosai, and other Tärtanski) are freed from Gauçoran's grip, and they disperse in various directions.

TÂLERIS: *Avân va torvik.*
[We are victorious]

Tâleris and Terängard salute each other.

End.