

Scenario (*)

A rough, deserted landscape with marshes, woods and mountains. The sun is setting. Mist rises from the swamps. In the darkening sky, small winged horses, the Nightmares, fly and carry people who have been selected by the Dreamking for a bad dream to his palace. At the palace, devils, witches and phantoms lead the people to the central revolving stage where the nightmares will be performed under the direction of the Dreamking.

At the stage, everything is made ready for the performance of the night. The Dreamking, an old, wrinkly little man with an immense bald head on an extremely thin neck, rejoices at the dreams he has invented and rehearses some important features with his staff.

The first clients are an aged couple living their last years in an asylum for poor people. In the asylum, they have to sleep in separate dormitories for men and women, but they dream of sitting together, as formerly, in a cosy room with their own dear things. The Dreamking fulfils their dream, but as soon as the atmosphere becomes too romantic, he finishes the scene and demands a place for himself on the stage.

The Dreamking wishes to stage a performance, including a leading role for himself, with the Piano Tuner, an old, soured man who in his dreams sees himself as a celebrated piano-virtuoso performing his own avant-garde compositions for a large audience.

The Dreamking puts the Piano Tuner at the piano and tries to compel him to a strictly dodecaphonic Ciaconna, but the Piano Tuner follows his own way, and the devils and phantoms begin to merrily join him in his improvisations. The Dreamking is displeased at this development and sends everybody away, also because his secret beloved, Aunt Anette, a 200 years' old noble spectre, has been brought in.

The Dreamking tries to impress his beloved with a stately Sarabande performed by beautifully dressed-up dust-wigs, but Aunt Anette is allergic for dust and sneezes the company out of the way. Offended, she rejects the Dreamking's offer of marriage and haughtily retires, whereas the Dreamking hastily sneaks away.

The General appears. He is old and retired, but he would like, as he did as a child, to play with tin soldiers and re-perform his glorious battles of bygone years. The Dreamking provides boxes with toy soldiers and the General happily gets to work. But the soldiers gradually take over, new soldiers keep coming out of the boxes and do not obey the General anymore. Desperately, he tries to stop his troops, but he is trampled over and faints.

The swooned General is carried away, followed by the Dreamking, disappointed by his rejected offer of marriage. His power is fading anyway, as the night is coming to an end.

The palace evaporates and the Nightmares bring the people back to their homes. The sun rises and the landscape is as deserted as the evening before. A few devils hasten to their hiding places and revel in the performance of the next night.

() Scenario freely adapted from the book "Truus de nachtmerrie" by the Dutch author Henriëtte van Eyk (1897-1980), published by N.V. Em. Querido's Uitgeverij, Amsterdam (Netherlands) in the "Salamanderreeks" (first printing 1939) (permission granted by the legal representative of the author's copyrights, Mr. P.J.J. Roth, Amsterdam, by letter dated 10-11-2007)*