Rainis’ play **“Love is Stronger than Death”** (*„Mīla stiprāka par nāvi”*) (1927)

The tragedy “Love is Stronger than Death” was composed from the year 1926 to 1927. It is based on historic materials from the 17th century. There are legal acts of the High Court of Vidzeme about the murder of a young girl named Maija Greifa at Turaida on the 6th of August, 1620. In the course of years these facts have become a legend and Maija came to be known as the Rose of Turaida. Many Baltic-German authors have written works of poetry and drama about this theme. In the second half of the 19th century Juris Dauge and Ernests Dinsbergs also had created their own stories. However none of them had reached a noteworthy artistic level. Rainis was having his doubts about the theme, but Eduards Smiļģis urged him to work on it, wishing to stage the play at the Daile Theater.

This Rainis’ tragedy has strong ideas of humanism, the confidence that love and ethic clarity will triumph over crude force. The tragedy’s events take place at the time when the land had been long tormented by war, deforming people relationships. Jakubovskis is a person of his time, a solder used to take everything using brutal force. He is drawn towards Maija as she is the complete opposite to the manner of wartime — clear, gentle and full of light. However Maija refuses him, because she loves her fiancé who is a gardener in Sigulda — Viktors Heils. Not being able to gain Maija’s love, Jakubovskis decides to gain his right with violence. With deceit he lures the girl to the Gūtmanis’ cave and tries to lay his hands on her. Not seeing any other way to protect her love and fidelity, Maija convinces the superstitious officer that the red shawl around her neck has magical protection properties. Jakubovskis believes in her words and to try out the magic, he slashes his sword and kills Maija. Rainis showed how in the philosophical aspect love and good still triumphs, even though one can die physically. The tragedy was written in prose with poems inserted in between. In contrast to the poems, in prose Rainis sometimes felt bound in emotions and thus sentimentalism and pathos manage to sneak in the text at certain places.

Even though “Love is Stronger than Death” didn’t reach up to the level of Rainis’ greatest plays, nevertheless the power of humanism and dramatism made it a favorite stage piece. It was published by the publishing house “Anša Gulbja apgāds” in 1927. At the same time the premiere of the tragedy was held at the Daile Theater, produced by Eduards Smiļģis.