

THE EYES OF OTHERS

A PLAY IN SIX SCENES

by Ivan Dimitrov

translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

CHARACTERS:

FIRST MAN – mid-40s, dressed in an elegant black suit.

SECOND MAN – late-30s, dressed in an elegant white suit.

THE VOYEUR – off-stage, we never see him.

THE SALESGIRL – mid-20s, in a red dress.

JACKIE – mid-30s, in a yellow dress.

PIZZA DELIVERYMAN – early 20s

Scene I

A city square.

FIRST MAN: So was I right or what?

SECOND MAN: You were right. You can't be any more right than that.

The FIRST MAN extends his hand towards The SECOND MAN. The SECOND MAN hesitates for some time, then digs in his pocket, pulls out a large bill and gives it to the FIRST MAN.

SECOND MAN: So are you happy you won the bet?

FIRST MAN: Being right is nice. Rightness is a nice thing, it creates a sense of direction. If you're staggering around, you can easily get lost.

SECOND MAN: I always look ahead. No matter what happens, no matter where I'm going, I always look ahead.

Short pause.

FIRST MAN: Should we get a bite to eat?

SECOND MAN: There's no time for a restaurant. What did you have in mind?

FIRST MAN: A hot dog. I could definitely go for a hot dog.

SECOND MAN: They only sell hot dogs down at the end of Main Street.

FIRST MAN: They only sell hot dogs down at the end of Main Street, but here, on the square, there's only pretzels and popcorn. It doesn't make sense. You can't get filled up on pretzels and popcorn.

SECOND MAN: I thought you never completely stuffed yourself.

FIRST MAN: Never completely, but somewhat at least.

SECOND MAN: You're forgetting about the bakery.

FIRST MAN: It's not on the square itself, but rather on the corner of Main Street and Levsy. And who's going to have lunch in bakery? I can't even imagine munching on some greasy snack in this heat, say a donut, for example.

In the summer, I can only eat donuts in the morning, when it's still cool and semidarkness reigns. That makes eating donuts secretive. I like that.

SECOND MAN: So what's wrong with donuts?

FIRST MAN (*leans over SECOND MAN and whispers to him*): I don't know. Maybe it doesn't seem classy en...

SECOND MAN (*interrupting him*): So eat donuts with crème fraiche. A bakery by our place makes them. They're really delicious and not the least bit hick!

FIRST MAN: A donut with crème fraiche? Well, well! Why not?

Silence. The two men sit down where they are. Silence.

SECOND MAN: But still, what should we eat? We were late today, so now we barely have twenty minutes. Isn't it high time we decided?

FIRST MAN: I almost choked this morning. I was eating toast with crème fraiche and brie for breakfast. One bite went down the wrong pipe and my wife had to give me a good shake. I was fine in the end, thank God. But I really got scared for a second there. Can you imagine dying like that, during breakfast, with your mouth full, clutching at your throat? Your mouth is hanging open, and the chewed up food is peeking out. Your eyes are glazed over.

SECOND MAN (*with a grimace of disgust*): How hideous!

FIRST MAN: There is only one thing worse than a hideous life, and that's a hideous death. Death should be beautiful to make up for all of life's hideousness!

SECOND MAN: The Egyptians embalmed themselves. They thought the soul was connected to the body. You die and go wherever you belong. You spend all of eternity there. And suddenly your skin starts wrinkling up little by little, it wastes away. Your eyes fall out. You lose your hair. Your skin sloughs off. Your bones are laid bare. Only your teeth are left to give your face a deathly smile.

FIRST MAN (*frightened*): Forget all that falling apart. I'm convinced that *there* you're exactly like you were at the moment of death. So you can't meet eternity with your mouth full.

SECOND MAN: You can't?!

FIRST MAN: You can, but it's best to save yourself the bother. Angels and demons – those bastards have equally strong senses of irony.

Silence.

What time is it?

SECOND MAN: Quarter to one.

FIRST MAN: Looks like we're going to miss lunch.

SECOND MAN: It won't be the first time.

FIRST MAN: Can you remember when we last ate lunch?

SECOND MAN (*stops to think briefly*): No.

FIRST MAN: I can't either. It must've been a long time ago. Since neither of us can remember...

SECOND MAN: Maybe we don't remember because it's not important. I remember most of our conversations in detail, I have an excellent memory.

FIRST MAN: So then what were we talking about the other day?

SECOND MAN: When it was raining?

FIRST MAN: When it was raining.

SECOND MAN: When it was raining and we sat under the eave of the café so as not to get wet?

FIRST MAN: Yes.

SECOND MAN: About umbrellas. What else is there to talk about during a downpour like that? You were explaining that the umbrella existed all the way back in antiquity and in the beginning of its existence, it was a symbol of power. And so on. And so on. One edifying fact after another. I pointed out that I couldn't see why the umbrella was not a symbol of power today as well. Then the two of us compared our umbrellas: mine – Cerruti, yours – Charles Jourdan.

That duel ended without a winner – we decided that both umbrellas were equally nice.

FIRST MAN: I wonder when it will rain again.

SECOND MAN: When have I last eaten lunch on a work day?

FIRST MAN: Well, we really do need to be careful about how we die.

SECOND MAN: Back in my student days, I could never go without lunch...

Pause.

And why aren't there any people here? Isn't it lunchtime?

FIRST MAN: Yes, it's lunchtime and people are eating lunch! Plus, there's the heat.

SECOND MAN: It seems to me that in the beginning there were people here.

This is a square, after all, right? No one can deny that this is a square, and squares usually have people. This square is located in the center of the city, for Christ's sake. Why are there no passersby? Where are the mothers with strollers, the retirees, the neighborhood punks?

FIRST MAN: It's lunchtime, don't be foolish. Who goes out for a stroll at lunchtime in the worst heat of the day? (*He looks at the watch on his wrist.*) It's quarter to one!

The SECOND MAN notices the watch, moves closer to the FIRST MAN and grabs his arm.

SECOND MAN: New watch, eh?

FIRST MAN: A Porsche design from the new collection. Cost upwards of 3K.

SECOND MAN: When it comes to Porsche, cars are the only thing I accept! Why did they have to go and start making watches? (*lifts his arm to show off his own watch*) Now I can accept Emporio Armani. It makes sense for Armani to be making accessories, but Porsche!?

FIRST MAN: A Porsche is a Porsche, even if it is only a watch!

SECOND MAN: A Porsche is a Porsche only when it's a Porsche. And a Porsche is a car!

FIRST MAN: A car and a watch!

SECOND MAN: A car!

FIRST MAN: A car and a watch.

SECOND MAN (*emphatically*): A car!

FIRST MAN: Once you dig your heels in, there's no stopping you, stubborn mule that you are.

SECOND MAN: Once you get started, there's no stopping you. I feel obligated to dig in my heels, otherwise it would be boring.

FIRST MAN (*sighs*): Boring...

Silence.

SECOND MAN: In there beginning there were people. There were people on this square! If I'm not mistaken, we picked this spot precisely because of the people. Kids with ice cream cones. Women with popcorn. Howling babies. Forgotten bums. Businessmen shouting into their cell phones. Stoned teens kicking around a footbag. Widows tossing crumbs to the pigeons. The local drunks reeking of liquor from early morning. Kids cutting physics class. Crowds of people. And us.

FIRST MAN: There were people and there will be people! You'll see how when autumn creeps in, they'll swoop down with the falling leaves and bury the whole square to such an extent that somebody will have to come and give them a good, hard sweeping.

SECOND MAN: And what if they go elsewhere?

FIRST MAN: Where else could they go? You can't move the center of town. Centers don't move! Centers exist so as to stand in the middle of an inhabited area and to play they role of a stronghold. Without a center, every city, whether big or small, would fall apart.

SECOND MAN (*pensively*): The center of the village where my grandma and grandpa lived moved. Back in the day there were swamps around the village. During the rainy season the swamps would fill up with fish. Villagers would

drive whole carts full of fish to the center and so they started calling it the Fish. Let's go drink a beer at the Fish, they'd say. But in time they kept building up the village in the opposite direction from the swamp. They drained the swamps and put up a dike so there was no way they could build out that way any further. So little by little the Fish ended up on the edge of the village.

FIRST MAN: You're a fish! A city is one thing, a village is quite another.

SECOND MAN: I thought the city grew out of the village.

FIRST MAN: I've never been sure whether the city grew out of the village or the village out of the city. Both versions seem equally plausible to me.

Silence.

SECOND MAN: One... As of one we're back at work. Then each of us goes his separate way and so on until lunch break tomorrow.

FIRST MAN: Sometimes I wonder whether we shouldn't see each other more often.

SECOND MAN: Me, too. Well, except for when I don't feel like seeing you at all.

FIRST MAN: What would you do between 12 and 1 if you didn't come here, to the square?

SECOND MAN: Most likely what everyone else does. I would have lunch or sit at my computer at work. Or drink coffee with my co-workers. What about you?

FIRST MAN: Same.

Silence.

SECOND MAN: I'm glad that we snuck out of there, my friend. I wouldn't have lasted much longer.

FIRST MAN: Me, neither. I was sick to death of it. Those endless circles from home to the office and back. And smaller circles at the office. And even smaller ones at home.

SECOND MAN: What about the square? It's a circle, too!

FIRST MAN: The square is *different*.

A long silence.

FIRST MAN: Is he there?

They both look around. They stroll through the square. Finally, with feigned casualness they look over towards the hidden VOYEUR.

SECOND MAN: He's there, of course. Him not there?! Impossible!

FIRST MAN: At first I didn't see him. I thought maybe he was sick or something... Even though, can you imagine it: him sick?!

SECOND MAN: He's never gotten sick. He never gets sick. And even if he were to get sick, he would keep coming here, just like we keep coming here.

Pause.

Actually, who started coming here first? Him or us?

FIRST MAN: Either him or us. It would be too much if we'd started coming at the exact same time.

SECOND MAN: But what if it happened just like that? What if we arrived at the exact same time and he followed us? What if he had been watching us while we were at work? What if he'd been watching us for weeks before we came to the square? He'd been following our footsteps, hiding in the backseats of our cars, looking through our windows at home! Wouldn't that just be too much?

FIRST MAN: He's not that kind of person. He has never hidden. He has never tried to disguise his presence. He has always been honest with us. Just as we have been with him. We are here, he is there. We pretend not to notice him. He pretends not to know that we know of his existence.

SECOND MAN: He knows that we notice, we don't know that we don't notice, everyone is pretending. I'm all mixed up...

FIRST MAN: What I mean is... He's there, we're here – that's a fact. We meet every weekday on our lunch break, if only at a distance – that's another fact. Whether we are here because of him or he is here because of us – now that's something nobody can say.

SECOND MAN: Why not? He's here because of us. In the beginning we didn't notice him, right? And when we discovered him, there was no way of knowing whether he had been here before us.

FIRST MAN: It'd be no surprise if he had been! But that doesn't mean that he's here because of us. I think he's here for the same reason we are. He's here because of the square, not because of anything else. In the end, does it really matter who's on the square since there's always somebody here?

SECOND MAN (*disappointed*): So now we're just somebodies again.

FIRST MAN: We very well may be. And so what if we are?

A short silence.

Until the next pause, each man talks to himself.

SECOND MAN: He loves watching people. Haven't you noticed how his gaze changes when he watches us?

FIRST MAN: I don't know whether he was watching us from the very beginning. That is, it doesn't make any difference who was here first. We would've kept coming here even if he hadn't been watching us, right?

SECOND MAN: His eyes are predatory, his nose is slightly turned up, his eyebrows knitted. In fact, his expression is always different.

FIRST MAN: We definitely would have kept coming. The square is our place. It's been our place for at least five years... Or maybe six already? I wouldn't be surprised.

SECOND MAN: It varies with the temperature, with the seasons. Sometimes he watches us completely dispassionately, like a scholar. With curiosity, yes, but without passion. If aliens did experiments on people, they would surely look at them in exactly the same way. Just as empty.

FIRST MAN: Since the place is ours, we play by our own rules. He can watch us and that's all.

SECOND MAN: Maybe we're part of some experiment? Why hasn't there been anyone else on the square for weeks? Why is he the only one there?

FIRST MAN: If we come here often enough, will they name the square after us?

SECOND MAN: It's like somebody kicked all the people out and left us alone with him.

FIRST MAN: After the two of us.

SECOND MAN: Him and us.

Silence.

SECOND MAN: I wonder what his name is?

FIRST MAN: Why do you care what his name is? Even if you called to him, he wouldn't come over. He's just not that kind of person. He doesn't like socializing.

SECOND MAN: Precisely the opposite. He loves socializing, he just does it in a different way. He socializes with his eyes and is hypersocial.

FIRST MAN: He socializes with his eyes? I wouldn't call that communication.

SECOND MAN: You wouldn't call it that, but would he?

FIRST MAN: Him, him, him. What's gotten into you?

SECOND MAN: Every now and then I wonder who he is, what he does. What thoughts go through his head? Where does he come from and where does he go? Why is he like that? Because he's different. Yes, despite the fact that we don't actually know him, despite the fact that we've never spoken, I know that he is different. He is not like the others. He isn't satisfied by the usual things. He wouldn't feel satisfied leading a normal, orderly life. He wouldn't be happy going to the market every Friday, then going out to clubs, spending Saturdays and Sundays with his wife and later his kids, while on the week nights he's come home from work tired and sit in front of the TV. He would not be excited by a promotion at work, by a new car...

FIRST MAN: He's an odd duck. I get what you're saying. I like odd ducks, as long as there's a healthy distance between us. Odd ducks are useful in small doses. Weirdness is amazingly contagious and you can never be sure whether you yourself won't turn into an odd duck, and what could be worse than that?

SECOND MAN: There are a whole slew of things worse than being an odd duck.

FIRST MAN: For example?

SECOND MAN: *Simply* being nobody.

FIRST MAN: You're right about that.

SECOND MAN: Haven't you ever felt small and anonymous? Just another guy in line at the store, just another guy walking down the sidewalk, just another guy. And all that while the newspapers and magazines can't stop talking about what the celebrities are doing. It has a pretty depressing effect. Let them say what they will about modern man's problems. About alienation, isolation, virtualization. About world hunger, the destruction of nature, and global warming. Modern man's problem is anonymity. Thirty-odd years ago being anonymous wasn't the end of the world, there was even a sort of charm in it. But today it's truly a nightmare to be anonymous amidst this whole flow of information. To be anonymous on the Internet. To be anonymous at home, to be anonymous on the street. Better to be anything else, as long as it's not anonymous.

FIRST MAN: Anything else?! That's going a little far...

SECOND MAN: It's better, it really is. It is preferable to be the loser who lets in the decisive goal. Better to be the suicide on the roof who's gotten the whole neighborhood on their feet, a participant in a nasty accident who miraculously survived, only to have to live with the guilt of having killed a family of three. To be a thief, rapist, murderer, convict. Anything else, as long as you're not anonymous.

FIRST MAN: You're taking it to the extreme.

SECOND MAN: Life is extreme.

Silence.

SECOND MAN looks at his watch.

When did it get to be five to one?

FIRST MAN: Five to one? I'm going to be late!

SECOND MAN: You only think about yourself. We're going to be late.

FIRST MAN: Let's go, shall we?

SECOND MAN: Should we wave goodbye to him?

FIRST MAN: Geez, something has really gotten into you today! If we wave at him, we'll ruin the illusion. We don't even suspect that he's watching us!

SECOND MAN: But all three of us know very well that that's a farce.

FIRST MAN: Precisely because we know this, we cannot allow ourselves to ruin it!

SECOND MAN (*disappointed*): If you say so.

The two men look towards THE VOYEUR and then leave.

Scene II

Store. After an indefinite period of time. Winter. The salesgirl is behind the counter. Through the window we can see the place where the two men were just standing.

THE SALESGIRL (*a newspaper is spread out in front of her*): Another week. Another week of bad weather! Blizzards. Wind. Sub-zero temps. Why the heck should a person even go out when there are so many sub-zeroes outside? Why the heck should a person even bother working in such weather? When it's snowing out I spend whole days alone. Who's gonna want to buy underwear in a blizzard? Good luxurious underwear, he says, is always in demand, so you'll sit behind the counter and sell it. Go to hell, why don't you! I don't see you sitting here, now do I? On days like this you leave me here to sell your stuff out of greed. Well, if someone at 20 below suddenly gets it into their head to buy a few more boxers? Where should I go for boxers? he'll ask himself. Why don't you go downtown, to the center, his wife wisely suggests, they just opened a new underwear shop there. Quality underwear. Good underwear. And that moron, does he really think somebody is gonna run down to the center? I wouldn't go out at all if I had a choice. I would stay home for days on end.

She falls silent and pages through the newspaper for a few seconds.

And when did he decide to open up the store? In winter! And why underwear? Where did he get that bright idea from? 'Cause he's got nothing better to do! Enough money to float a battleship, so he doesn't give a rip that the store is bleeding cash. It'll catch on, he says, one of these days now it'll catch on! People need time to get used to our existence. But when they do, when they realize how convenient it is to buy your underwear at a shop downtown, then look out! Get ready for the big-time rush. There'll be lines like you've never

seen in your life. It'll be downright scary. They'll attack you, clambering over one another, and you'll be wishing it was like this again – lonely. People always want the opposite of what they have, the poor guy started philosophizing on me! Man, when that guy starts philosophizing on you, it makes you want to kill him. You, he says, sit alone all day in the store and want more customers. Well, what do you want then, I ask the greasy little bastard. He had just gotten back from some restaurant. Lunch break, a person's gotta indulge himself. And the way he indulges himself, he's already stuffed for life. So that's what I tell him, so what do you want, since if it's the opposite of what you have, you surely wish you would end up without a penny to your name, so that's why you invest in businesses like this deserted, godforsaken store. That's what I say, and he laughs. Just look how you turned that around on me, he shakes his head. You're a sly fox, too, but I'm still not sure it's a good idea to hire sly foxes as salesgirls. 'Cause they can not only do a good turn-over with customers, but they can also turn on you yourself. All they do is turn things around. So I'm a sly fox now, am I? If I'm a fox, then he's a wolf! A wolf!

She falls silent and angrily pages through the newspaper.

God, you even get sick of newspapers! How I would love to say hello, what would you like, can I help you with something. To lay out the bright-colored panties on the counter, to twist and turn them in my hands. You won't believe how I can turn 'em over! But here's it's one sale every couple days, well that's because it's winter. Who opens an underwear shop in the middle of winter?

The bell on the store door rings. The FIRST MAN comes in and goes over to the salesgirl.

FIRST MAN: Hello. I...

THE SALESGIRL (*affectedly enthusiastic*): Hel-l-o-o-o-o! How can I help you, sir?

FIRST MAN: Well, I...

THE SALESGIRL: What size are you?

FIRST MAN: I don't know... That is, I only...

THE SALESGIRL: By the looks of you, you're an M. Pure M.

The salesgirl grabs a pair of boxer shorts. She unfolds them and stretches them out.

Are you looking for something like this? No, surely not.

She picks up a different pair.

This is more your style, now isn't it?

FIRST MAN: Please, I have more boxers than I know what to do with. And they're a damn sight nicer than these. I only wear Cal...

THE SALESGIRL: Ah, I see, you don't like the color. Should we try a different pattern?

FIRST MAN: Ever since I've made my own living, I've worn only Calvin...

The salesgirl holds up a new pair of boxers.

THE SALESGIRL: Now these are the ones for you!

FIRST MAN (*with a grimace of disgust*): These!?

THE SALESGIRL: Yes, these. They would definitely accentuate...

FIRST MAN: With those bananas!... Banana boxers?!

They are talking over each other.

THE SALESGIRL: I realize you're a serious man. You need something a little more...

FIRST MAN: Do I look like some kind of pimply teenager to you...

THE SALESGIRL: ...dignified. Perhaps black or...

FIRST MAN: ...in eighth grade...

THE SALESGIRL: ...blue. Most probably black, but definitely not white in any...

FIRST MAN: ...What normal man would...

THE SALESGIRL: ...case. White just doesn't work. I don't even know...

FIRST MAN: ...buy banana underpants. That's ridi...

THE SALESGIRL: ...why they even make white boxers.

FIRST MAN: ...-culous.

THE SALESGIRL (*holding up black boxers*): This model is really nice, it sells well.

FIRST MAN: I don't wa...

THE SALESGIRL (*continuing, without hearing him*): So I have fewer pairs left of it, but I have your size. The Ls are almost gone, but I've got as many Ms as you want.

FIRST MAN (*exploding*): Aren't you going to pay attention to me?

THE SALESGIRL: That's exactly what I'm doing!

FIRST MAN: You're paying attention to yourself. Not to me.

THE SALESGIRL (*indignant*): How dare you?!

FIRST MAN: See! Did you hear me now?!

THE SALESGIRL: I heard you the first time! Don't accuse me without reason. I'm not to blame for anything. Is it my fault that none of the boxers we sell meet your requirements?

FIRST MAN: First of all, what boxers?

THE SALESGIRL: The boxers you want to buy.

FIRST MAN: That's precisely the problem, miss. I don't want to buy any boxers. Now do you understand?

A brief pause.

THE SALESGIRL (*disappointed*): None?

FIRST MAN: None at all.

THE SALESGIRL: But what are you saying? You come into my store, ask me to show you boxers, and then categorically announce that you don't want to buy any boxers!

FIRST MAN: I never said I wanted to buy any boxers.

THE SALESGIRL: I heard you very clearly.

FIRST MAN: You may have heard me very clearly, but I never said anything like that. So that's means you're hearing things!

THE SALESGIRL: Oh, so we're going to insult each other now, are we?

FIRST MAN: Please don't take offense!

THE SALESGIRL: Don't take offense? That you think I'm nuts? So I was hearing voices, yeah right!

FIRST MAN: I simply pointed out that...

THE SALESGIRL: Well, what if you're the crazy one? What if you have no idea what you're talking about, hmm? Speak up, speak up, I beg you. In my opinion, you never even noticed how you asked me about the boxers. Why not? Because you were looking at me – a nice young girl behind the counter – and then... I'm hearing things!

The telephone on the counter rings. The salesgirl answers it.

Hello... Is that you?... What are you calling for?... To check up on me?!... How sweet of you! It would've been even nicer if you'd stopped by to see me, but that would never cross your mind, of course. What? The cold? Ah-h-h yes, the cold? Oh, so the cold scared him, poor guy. He's huddled up cozy warm at home, napping. He doesn't want to go out anywhere. He only needs to see how cold it is outside on TV and he's immediately frozen solid... What, I shouldn't talk to you like that?... Because you're my boss?... You could fire me?... Come on, what kind of boss are you anyway? Just take a look at yourself in the mirror! You're no boss whatsoever, you just wish you were! The little momma's boy decided to open up a shop. So he wouldn't be bored, so he could feel useful, so he could go tell mommy that he's running a store. Look, mom, I opened up a shop in the center of town! Bravo, my boy, bravo! If only you knew how happy that makes mommy. Mommy's little boy... I've gone too far, have I? No. I'm even being nice... Is it that time of the month?... You can't even begin to imagine what I'm like when it's that time of the month. Got that?!... So that's enough about my times, or else your time will come before you know it... Yes... Yes... Yes... Look. I've got a customer here... Yes, a customer. The one

time you decide to call and it's exactly when I'm helping a customer. I'm hanging up!...

The salesgirl slams the phone down.

Now where were we?

FIRST MAN (*he has calmed down during the phone conversation*): I'm not going to buy any boxers.

THE SALESGIRL: Ah-h-h, yes!

FIRST MAN: Better we just forget all the rest of it.

THE SALESGIRL: Since you don't want boxers, why don't I show you some socks?

FIRST MAN: Uh, well...

THE SALESGIRL: One-hundred percent cotton or synthetic blends that don't make your feet smell?

FIRST MAN: What are you...

THE SALESGIRL: Let me take them out to show you...

FIRST MAN (*raising his voice again*): Stop! Stop! I don't want to hear another word about boxers and socks! Are boxers and socks the only thing you can think about! For shame! What kind of nonsense is this? OK fine, you're at work, but still!

THE SALESGIRL: Don't, sir. Just stop.

FIRST MAN: Do I necessarily have to buy something?... Not that it's a problem, I'll buy something if you want (*he tosses a large bill on the counter*). Give me whatever. I don't care which boxers, which socks, just stuff them into a bag, but whatever you do, don't give it to me. You take them yourself. Give them to someone. Just take the money if you want. Just don't bother me with it!

The salesgirl stands speechless. She doesn't know how to respond.

I came into the store because it is freezing cold outside. I saw that a new store has opened up. So I said to myself, why not go inside, instead of standing out here in the cold? I'm on this square every day during lunch break, I meet up

with a friend. But today my friend is sick, he's got a fever of 103 and a bad cough. The doctor told him it was bronchial pneumonia and that he should not go outside under any circumstances. That he should stay in bed for at least a week. And so I was left on my own. Alone for a week on the square, which isn't very pleasant at all. So I thought we could keep each other company, and here you are bothering me about boxers and socks!

THE SALESGIRL: First, you think I'm crazy, and now you want to buy me with this cash. I don't need your money!

She angrily throws the money back at him. He looks at her in bewilderment.

You thought that I'm stupid, that I can't hear very well, but I stand behind this counter all day long. It's winter, almost nobody comes into the store. And if somebody does come in, they're just like you. They only want to look around, to warm up, to chat a bit. I am a salesgirl. I have been a salesgirl my whole life. I first landed behind a counter when I was eleven. My sister was working at a local grocery store. After school I always went to see her and one time she got hit with some kind of bug, she felt sick, she up and left without a word, that's how sick she was. As for me – straight behind the counter. And now? Nobody all day long. And don't go thinking it's a piece of cake sitting behind this counter for days on end! If I see another crossword puzzle I'm gonna die! The radio keeps playing the same songs over and over. On the talk shows, the hosts keep rehashing the same tired topics. The newspapers are total hell. The boss promised to bring me a TV, but I doubt a TV will change things. Nothing can make up for the lack of customers!

FIRST MAN (*putting his money away and saying awkwardly*): I had no idea.

THE SALESGIRL: You have *absolutely* no idea, but that didn't stop you from pouncing on me.

The salesgirl bursts out crying. The FIRST MAN whirls around, unsure of what to do. He tries going over to her, but that only makes her cry harder.

FIRST MAN (*looking at his watch*): Damn it all, I'm late for work. I'm never late for work. (*To the salesgirl.*) I didn't mean to upset you. I beg your pardon. I'll stop by again tomorrow. Good-bye.

The salesgirl stops crying abruptly.

THE SALESGIRL: Is that a Porsche watch?

FIRST MAN: See you tomorrow.

FIRST MAN leaves quickly. The bell on the door jingles.

Scene III

A room. The SECOND MAN is lying in bed. He wakes up.

SECOND MAN: What day of the week is it? I feel better today. It isn't Friday, is it? Yesterday I had quite a high fever. Or is it Thursday? *(in a loud voice)* Jacqueline, where are you, Jackie? She's forgotten about me. Maybe she's gone out to the store? If she's gone to the store, then it is definitely Saturday! *(again in a loud voice)* Jackie! Where are you, dear?

Jackie enters the room.

JACKIE: I'm here! Here! Stop yelling, please.

SECOND MAN: I woke up all alone and was startled.

JACKIE: By what?

SECOND MAN: That I'm alone?

JACKIE: Aren't you used to it?

SECOND MAN: To being sick?

JACKIE: To being alone!

SECOND MAN: No.

JACKIE: What about to being sick?

SECOND MAN: I hadn't been sick in ages!

JACKIE: Last year you caught a cold. Don't you remember?

SECOND MAN: Colds don't count as sickness. If you're not in bed, then it doesn't count as sickness.

JACKIE: In bed? So then are dreams a sickness?

SECOND MAN: Only nightmares.

JACKIE: I almost never dream.

SECOND MAN: Why don't you dream? How can you not?

JACKIE: I just don't. And when I do dream, I have nightmares.

SECOND MAN: Nightmares?

JACKIE: Nightmares, in which you're the bad guy.

SECOND MAN: Me!?! The bad guy!

JACKIE: And you torment me.

SECOND MAN: I thought I was the good guy. I was left with that impression.

Since we've been together I've been feeling like a better guy.

JACKIE: You are a better guy. You know how much I love you. But you're the good guy only when I'm awake. When I'm asleep, you're the bad guy!

SECOND MAN: Can't I be good in your dreams as well?

JACKIE: I'm afraid that's impossible.

SECOND MAN: Why don't you go to a shrink? He could help you.

JACKIE: With my fear of children?

SECOND MAN: Fear of children?

JACKIE: Or phobia, if you prefer?

SECOND MAN: I meant with the fact that I'm the bad guy in your dreams.

JACKIE: Oh, that's the least of my concerns! Don't worry about it.

SECOND MAN: The least?! So what else is there?

JACKIE: Are you sure you really want to know?

Short pause.

SECOND MAN: No.

Short pause.

JACKIE: How are you feeling today?

SECOND MAN: Normal.

JACKIE: Sick-normal or recovering-normal?

SECOND MAN: Normal!

JACKIE: I feel normal, too. I like having you at home. Otherwise I get bored.

SECOND MAN: It's not good for you to be bored.

JACKIE: That's what I think, too.

SECOND MAN: You should go to the movies more often.

JACKIE: You should come home more often.

SECOND MAN: I come home every night at 7:30!

JACKIE: That's not enough.

SECOND MAN: So when should I come home?

JACKIE: On your lunch breaks.

SECOND MAN: Lunch breaks are out of the question!

Pause.

I had forgotten how good I feel when I'm sick. Just look, I lie here, you bring me food, make me tea, smile at me. You only smile when I'm sick.

JACKIE: I smile when you're close to me.

SECOND MAN: And when I'm in bed.

JACKIE (*starting to lie down next to him in the bed*): When we're in bed!

SECOND MAN: When I'm in bed and I'm sick I can't stand touching anyone.

Jackie pulls away.

JACKIE: Can I get you anything?

SECOND MAN: What time is it?

JACKIE: 12:30.

SECOND MAN: Is it that late?!

JACKIE: Yes.

SECOND MAN: Give me my phone.

JACKIE: Who are you going to call?

SECOND MAN: Are you sure you want to know?

Jackie silently hands him his cell phone. He dials the FIRST MAN's number. We hear it ringing.

The First Man is on the square.

FIRST MAN: Hello?

SECOND MAN: Hello.

FIRST MAN: Is that you?

SECOND MAN: It's me.

FIRST MAN: How are you?

SECOND MAN: Better.

FIRST MAN: When will you be back?

SECOND MAN: In a few days, a week at most.

FIRST MAN: Hurry.

SECOND MAN: I'm trying. At least I'm not running a fever anymore.

FIRST MAN: That sounds encouraging.

A brief pause.

SECOND MAN: So how are you? Are you there?

FIRST MAN: Of course I'm here. Where else could I be?

SECOND MAN: How should I know? Maybe you decided not to go there.

FIRST MAN: It's cold.

SECOND MAN: Cold?

FIRST MAN: Didn't you watch the weather forecast? Cold... And windy.

SECOND MAN: You're dressed warmly, right?

FIRST MAN: The clothes I own does not do much in the face of ten below.

They are made so as to look good. And at ten below there's no way you can look good.

SECOND MAN: You're in a position to work miracles with respect to your outward appearance.

FIRST MAN: I've been going out to the square by myself for three days now.

Yesterday it was so cold that I went into the new store.

SECOND MAN: New store?!

FIRST MAN: For socks and underwear.

SECOND MAN: Really!? And how was it?

FIRST MAN: I don't feel like getting into it. The salesgirl was...

SECOND MAN: Tall, thin, pretty...

FIRST MAN: Bullheaded...

SECOND MAN: You can go see her while I'm gone. Just so you won't be alone.

FIRST MAN: I'm not sure that's such a good idea. She's in a position to drive anyone and everyone insane.

SECOND MAN: If it is really cold then you definitely have to go see her. So you don't get sick right when I'm better again...

FIRST MAN: You may be right...

SECOND MAN: About getting sick?

FIRST MAN: About the salesgirl.

SECOND MAN: I am right about the salesgirl.

FIRST MAN: That's what I'm saying.

Silence.

SECOND MAN: Is he there?

FIRST MAN: Yes.

SECOND MAN: Isn't he cold?

FIRST MAN: I have no idea. On the outside he looks the same as ever.

SECOND MAN: Has he registered my absence in any way?

FIRST MAN: I don't think so. He's sitting there staring, his behavior hasn't changed at all.

SECOND MAN: Maybe you should tell him that I'm sick? Just so he doesn't get worried...

FIRST MAN: He's not worried! He couldn't care less.

SECOND MAN: You have no idea whether he's cold, but you're sure he couldn't care less?

FIRST MAN: If he did care, then he'd do something, now wouldn't he?

SECOND MAN: He doesn't do! He watches! For him, watching is the same as doing.

FIRST MAN (*laughing*): So I wonder how he makes breakfast? Maybe he just uses photosynthesis?

SECOND MAN: You know very well that's not what I mean. Tell him I said 'hi!'

FIRST MAN: But that would ruin...

SECOND MAN: We ruined it long ago, and at the same time we haven't. He knows very well that we know he's watching us. Tell him I said 'hi!'

The FIRST MAN turns toward the hidden VOYEUR and with gestures explains that he is talking to the SECOND MAN, and that the latter sends his greetings.

FIRST MAN: Done.

SECOND MAN: Did he respond?

FIRST MAN: No.

SECOND MAN: That's wonderful.

FIRST MAN: Is it?

SECOND MAN: Absolutely. In that way he silently confirms that things will remain the same.

FIRST MAN: I've got to get back to work. Get well soon!

SECOND MAN: And you don't spend too much time out in the cold, seriously!

FIRST MAN: I won't. And be sure to take your medicine.

SECOND MAN: I will.

They both hesitate.

FIRST MAN: I'm hanging up.

SECOND MAN: I'm hanging up, too.

Neither of them hangs up.

FIRST MAN: Come on, hang up.

SECOND MAN: I'm hanging up in just a second.

Neither one of them hangs up.

FIRST MAN: I'm going to hang up first.

SECOND MAN: Fine.

Both of them hang up simultaneously.

During that whole time Jackie has been standing by the bed, looking at him reproachfully.

JACKIE (*upset*): Give me the phone.

She grabs the phone out of the SECOND MAN's hand and angrily flings it aside.

SECOND MAN: What's the matter with you?

JACKIE: You know very well what's the matter with me!

Scene IV

The store. The salesgirl is standing behind the counter paging through the newspaper.

THE SALESGIRL: I get the feeling that only murderers, rapists, thieves, scammers and footballers make the news. All the rest of us are just background, white noise that no one pays any attention to. So what if I decide to make some headlines, too, hmm? And slaughter somebody to do it? A totally random victim. Say the first person who walks into the store, for example?

The bell on the door jingles. The salesgirl jumps and drops the newspaper.

Hel-l-o-o-o-o! What would you like? We have very nice...

FIRST MAN: It's me.

THE SALESGIRL: Oh, it's you!

FIRST MAN: Can we just forget about all those boxers and socks? About the whole store?

THE SALESGIRL: The whole store? Certainly not!

FIRST MAN: Fine, then at least the boxers and socks.

THE SALESGIRL: That, too, is impossible.

FIRST MAN: Well, can you forget that I'm a customer who might want to buy something?

THE SALESGIRL: What would you like to buy?

FIRST MAN: No, forget about it!

THE SALESGIRL: Fine. Whatever you say!

FIRST MAN: Look, it's freezing cold outside, and my friend is still sick. If he were well, I wouldn't be here bothering you, we'd be standing outside.

THE SALESGIRL: In the cold?

FIRST MAN: In the cold. When there are two of us and we keep each other company it doesn't seem that cold.

Awkward silence.

Actually, you must've seen us. Haven't you seen us? Don't I at least look familiar? My friend and I are on the square every day from noon until shortly before one. Every weekday. We're not here on the weekends.

THE SALESGIRL: Where did you say you are?

FIRST MAN: Here, on the square, every weekday between twelve and one.

THE SALESGIRL: No, on the weekends.

FIRST MAN: At home.

THE SALESGIRL: Why aren't you here?

FIRST MAN: I just told you! We're at home!

THE SALESGIRL: I see.

FIRST MAN: So, I was asking, haven't you seen us?

THE SALESGIRL: You?

FIRST MAN: Yes!

THE SALESGIRL: I've seen you. I mean, you came into the store the other day, right?

FIRST MAN: I asked whether you have seen my friend and me in the square since the store has opened up.

THE SALESGIRL: You didn't want to buy anything, even though I was being so polite!

FIRST MAN: Every day between twelve and one.

THE SALESGIRL: And we have such nice boxers.

FIRST MAN: During lunch break.

THE SALESGIRL: To say nothing of our socks!

FIRST MAN: Well, have you noticed us?

THE SALESGIRL: You, yes, when you came into the store the other day, but not your friend, who, according to you, is sick.

FIRST MAN: And you haven't seen us on the square?

THE SALESGIRL: Never!

FIRST MAN: Don't you look outside?

THE SALESGIRL: Why would I?

FIRST MAN: Just because. Out of curiosity, boredom, or whatever...

THE SALESGIRL: If I had a window, maybe I would look outside, but considering the situation I find myself in, there's no way.

FIRST MAN: But you have a huge glass store front!

THE SALESGIRL: Precisely! A store front! Not a window.

FIRST MAN: What are trying to say with that?

THE SALESGIRL: Store fronts are not windows, sir. They are store fronts.

FIRST MAN: Store fronts, just like windows, are also made of glass. They are made so you can look through them.

THE SALESGIRL: In which direction?

FIRST MAN: I don't understand.

THE SALESGIRL: Which direction do you look through store fronts?

FIRST MAN: In both!

THE SALESGIRL: That's exactly where you are mistaken. Store fronts cannot be looked through on both directions, but only in one.

FIRST MAN: Pardon!?

THE SALESGIRL: Store fronts are made such that you look through them from the outside towards the inside. The opposite is completely out of the question.

FIRST MAN: So you never look outside?

THE SALESGIRL: There's no way I could. Except for when passersby on the sidewalk walk right in front of the store. Then the rule can be broken.

FIRST MAN: How so? You just told me in no uncertain terms that store fronts can only be looked through from the outside in!

THE SALESGIRL: Their other goal is to entice, however. When some passerby walks by the store on the sidewalk, I am completely within my rights to toss him an enticing glance.

FIRST MAN: Ah, now I get it.

THE SALESGIRL: I like evenings best. Then I feel calm, since here where I am it is bright, while outside it's dark. I can't see anyone, but on the other hand they're constantly watching me. That's when I feel the least lonely, too. Being a salesgirl is not as easy as people think. Being a salesgirl means living on display. Getting used to accepting all the glances tossed your way. You can't turn them away. If you turn them away, you're turning away the customers as well. The worst thing you could do is turn away customers. The customer is your weapon against loneliness. The only ace you have against the monotony of days. Your only chance, your only consolation. Even when you don't have any customers, it's like you're constantly on the catwalk, onstage. The audience is the passersby and if the performance is good, they'll turn into customers.

Silence, during which each of them sinks into their own thoughts.

FIRST MAN: And have you seen him?

THE SALESGIRL: Who?

FIRST MAN: The voyeur.

THE SALESGIRL: Who?

FIRST MAN: The voyeur, who hides around the square every day to watch.

THE SALESGIRL: So, a voyeur, you say.

FIRST MAN: Yes!

THE SALESGIRL: I haven't seen him. Like I say, I don't look outside at all.

FIRST MAN: I wonder whether he looks inside? Whether he watches you?

THE SALESGIRL: Oh, I don't care about that at all. I'm already under constant surveillance as it is.

FIRST MAN: You're right.

Silence.

THE SALESGIRL: So you're really not going to buy anything?

FIRST MAN: I don't need anything.

THE SALESGIRL: How disappointing. You do look overindulged.

FIRST MAN: You could say that.

THE SALESGIRL: What do you actually do for a living?

FIRST MAN: The job itself doesn't matter at all, as long as they pay you well.

THE SALESGIRL: And do they pay you well?

FIRST MAN: More than well.

THE SALESGIRL: It shows. Especially with that watch.

FIRST MAN: What watch?

THE SALESGIRL: The Porsche.

FIRST MAN (*lifts his arm with the watch*): Ah, yes, the Porsche! (*He checks the time.*) It's time for me to go. Excuse me, but I've got to hurry back to work.

THE SALESGIRL: It was my pleasure.

FIRST MAN: Mine, too. Goodbye.

THE SALESGIRL: See you soon.

FIRST MAN: Farewell.

The bell jingles. The FIRST MAN leaves the stage.

THE SALESGIRL: Farewell? And he didn't even introduce himself. How impolite!

Scene V

The square. It is summer again.

SECOND MAN: I'm telling you, she really did it! I'm not kidding. She got up and poured...

The FIRST MAN laughs.

Seriously. She did it.

FIRST MAN: You're not trying to say that...

SECOND MAN: Yes!

FIRST MAN: But did he really go...

SECOND MAN: Yes.

The FIRST MAN starts laughing hysterically. His whole body shakes with laughter.

FIRST MAN: These people are too funny, they're gonna drive me around the bend.

SECOND MAN: That's people for you: funny creatures.

FIRST MAN: So funny that sometimes you think you're going to die of laughter, right?

SECOND MAN: I'm never yet heard of anyone dying of laughter.

FIRST MAN: I wouldn't be surprised if you hear of it soon. But you've really got a knack for telling stories like that. Some supposedly insignificant little incident. She gets up and pours it on him (*he bursts out in a new fit of uncontrollable laughter*). She pours it. And he... He...

SECOND MAN: That's enough!

FIRST MAN: You have no right to tell me all that stuff and then to say "That's enough" afterwards. I... I can't stop.

SECOND MAN: Fine, I'll wait.

The SECOND MAN freezes on the spot. The FIRST MAN stops next to him and bursts out in a new fit of uncontrollable laughter. The fit dies down little by little. The SECOND MAN waits patiently. He continues talking only when the FIRST MAN has quieted down.

Are you finished?

FIRST MAN: With what?

SECOND MAN: What do you mean with what? With giggling.

The FIRST MAN again bursts out laughing, but this time the fit is forced and much shorter. It ends abruptly, and the FIRST MAN grows serious.

FIRST MAN: I think I'm done.

SECOND MAN: That's great.

FIRST MAN: Yes.

SECOND MAN: Laughter is a good thing, a fine medicine... and all of that. But one mustn't overdo it. I don't like overdoing it. Better to be quasi-hungry than full to bursting.

FIRST MAN: You are a moderate person. Moderate in love and life.

SECOND MAN: In love?!

FIRST MAN: Only in life.

SECOND MAN: In life as a whole?

FIRST MAN: Simply moderate.

Silence.

SECOND MAN: You're not moderate in the least. You love being wasteful.

FIRST MAN: So?... Is there something wrong with that?

SECOND MAN: I'm convinced that when you eat dinner you only think about the leftovers. When you eat, there's got to be leftovers. If you think that there isn't enough food on the table, you're capable of not eating, but just taking one bite out of everything and leaving it. You've always got to be bursting with abundance.

FIRST MAN: For God's sake, I've got to invite you to dinner one of these days.

SECOND MAN: I do, too.

FIRST MAN: To meet your wife.

SECOND MAN: To play with your kids.

FIRST MAN: Why haven't I invited you yet?

SECOND MAN: We decided that it was better that way. That we'll see each other only here on the square. That there was no need to get to know each other's co-workers, to go to parties with them, to go bowling together, to drink coffee on Sunday mornings, to kick a ball around the park. To introduce our wives. For them to become friends. For our kids to play together. To get to know the neighbor kids as well. To grow up together. In that case our coming here would have no point. It wouldn't be so... special.

A short pause.

You are my best friend.

FIRST MAN: And you're mine, too. I don't know what I'd do without you.

They hug.

SECOND MAN: We've been coming to this square for such a long time now that I can't imagine life without it.

FIRST MAN: I can't either.

SECOND MAN: Know what I think? Lunch break is what moves the entire work day. Without it, everything would be lost. A person works in order to rest.

FIRST MAN: Or rests in order to work.

SECOND MAN: It's all the same.

FIRST MAN: I used to feel confused. I didn't know where I belonged. Now I know that every lunch hour I have to be here, on this square!

SECOND MAN: Me, too!

FIRST MAN: This single hour that I spend with you from Monday to Friday drives my entire week forward. The weekend is different. Then I'm with my wife and kids. That's how it should be. Saturdays are fun. What strange little people! They are so wonderful, so happy. They have no idea that in a few short

years life will change them. They will set sail on the tide of days, into this whole emptiness, with no direction, no goal, alone with themselves. And even when they find a wife, have a family, they will again be alone with themselves. And the only thing they'll be able to do is to make themselves into a mast. Into a solid, towering mast, upon which who knows what devil has unfurled a sail and Lord knows who has taken control of it. A mast, which their children can cling to during storms. And that touch will be one of the few things that makes them happy.

Pause.

SECOND MAN: Relax. That's all over now. All of the emptiness, helplessness and wandering is over. Now we're here. Together.

Pause.

FIRST MAN: Should we grab a bite to eat?

SECOND MAN: We could order pizza.

FIRST MAN: Where'd you get that idea?

SECOND MAN: I was thinking to myself that there's no decent food nearby. So why don't we order pizza? I even brought a menu...

The SECOND MAN takes a carry-out menu from a pizzeria out of his pocket and hands it to the FIRST MAN. Both of them study it carefully.

FIRST MAN (*takes out his cell phone and dials*): Hello. I'd like to place an order. Yes. Just a second! Which one do you want?

SECOND MAN: The seafood pizza.

FIRST MAN: One seafood pizza and... Just a moment (*to SECOND MAN*)
What size?

SECOND MAN: Medium.

FIRST MAN: One medium seafood pizza and... Just a moment... (*to SECOND MAN*) They don't have medium.

SECOND MAN: Small, then.

FIRST MAN: One small seafood and one Quatro Stagioni with no mushrooms.

SECOND MAN: And an orange juice.

FIRST MAN: And an orange juice... Yes... No mushrooms. And a beer... A small beer... 330 ml. One moment... would you like any sauce?

SECOND MAN: No.

FIRST MAN: No, thank you. One small seafood, one Quatro Stagioni with no mushrooms, one orange juice and a beer. What size? Didn't I say a small beer? Oh-h-h... Make it a large, a large Quatro Stagioni with no mushrooms! Should I repeat that? You've got it? Great. What? Can you repeat that? Address?! Just a second... What's the address?

SECOND MAN: The address?

FIRST MAN: For the delivery.

SECOND MAN: How should I know what the address is! We're on the square in the center, aren't we?!

FIRST MAN: Bring the pizzas to the square in the center. Yes... in the center... The street? I can't... I don't understand... What's the problem? (*to SECOND MAN*) They say they can't make a delivery to the square. They only deliver to addresses.

SECOND MAN: What?

FIRST MAN (*into the phone*): We're on our lunch break. Clearly we're not in our offices!

SECOND MAN: Tell him that that simply won't do.

FIRST MAN: That simply won't do! We are customers! We want to eat pizza. It's lunchtime, we're hungry. And we're on the square!

SECOND MAN: Tell him you want to speak to the manager.

FIRST MAN (*into the phone*): No, we won't order from somewhere else. I'd like to speak with your manager. Yes, exactly, with the manager. Could you give me his phone number, please? I need to speak with him immediately.

SECOND MAN: Tell him that at the office we always order from them.

FIRST MAN: My friends says that in the office where he works, they always order from you.

SECOND MAN: And that we won't order from them anymore.

FIRST MAN: And that they won't... (*looks at SECOND MAN*) You won't do it anymore?!

SECOND MAN: Unless they deliver our order!

FIRST MAN: Yes, obviously, they won't order from you anymore if you don't deliver our order... (*to SECOND MAN*) How big is your office?

SECOND MAN: How should I know!

FIRST MAN: How many people work there?

SECOND MAN: There's around 20 of us on my floor. And there's three more floors, so that's at least 80 people.

FIRST MAN: At least 80 people. Did you hear that?

SECOND MAN: Think it over carefully.

FIRST MAN: Think it over carefully!... So you'll make the delivery, but just this one time? Wonderful! Fine, for next time we'll work something out. How long...? ... Ten minutes or so. Excellent. Thank you. Have a nice day.

SECOND MAN: What did they say?

FIRST MAN: The pizzas will be here in about 10 minutes, 20 max.

SECOND MAN: What a nice day!

FIRST MAN: The day really is nice.

A short pause.

And we'll eat.

SECOND MAN: The sun is so... good thing there are those clouds. Otherwise it would be too hot.

FIRST MAN: Two pizzas. Maybe we should sit down.

SECOND MAN: I don't like sweating.

FIRST MAN: We could have a picnic.

SECOND MAN: But I also don't like being cold. The weather is absolutely perfect. Not too hot and not too cold.

FIRST MAN: I'll spread out my jacket. We can sit down and eat our pizzas. Or maybe I should drag a bench over... But why should we drag over a bench when we can spread something out and sit right on the ground? We can't eat standing up.

SECOND MAN: It's definitely crisp. That's the word.

FIRST MAN: But where should we sit?

Pause. SECOND MAN looks at the sky. FIRST MAN is staring at the ground, looking for a suitable spot.

SECOND MAN: Do you see him anywhere? Maybe we should give him a piece a pizza once they deliver it?

FIRST MAN: Under no circumstances!

SECOND MAN: If you say so.

He looks around.

Do you see him?

FIRST MAN: Yes. There he is. Right over there. His head is sticking out! There, behind that statue. He's slumped against it, looking at us with his glassy stare.

SECOND MAN: Where?

FIRST MAN: There!

SECOND MAN: Ah, yes. How could I have missed him? I think my eyes have gotten worse recently.

FIRST MAN: So go to an eye doctor.

SECOND MAN: I wonder if I'll have to get glasses?

FIRST MAN: Most likely.

SECOND MAN: In my family, nobody wears glasses except the grandmas and grandpas.

FIRST MAN: You're starting to turn into a grandpa.

Pause. They both look towards THE VOYEUR.

He's sitting there watching us.

SECOND MAN: I'm too young to be a grandpa.

FIRST MAN: You're not that young.

SECOND MAN: I'm not that old.

FIRST MAN: You're more likely not that young.

SECOND MAN: Well, what about you? You're older than I am!

FIRST MAN: I'm older, but my vision is perfect.

SECOND MAN: Your vision is perfect, but your other things are going to pot.

FIRST MAN: What do you mean by that?

SECOND MAN: !?

FIRST MAN: What things?

SECOND MAN: I have no idea.

A short pause. The two of them again turn towards THE VOYEUR.

FIRST MAN: He's watching us.

SECOND MAN: I wonder what thoughts run through his head while he watches us.

FIRST MAN: He's leaning against that wall, he's completely flopped there, he's not even moving.

SECOND MAN: Does he imagine things about us or does he just observe us?

FIRST MAN: His eyes are wide open, they're not blinking at all.

SECOND MAN: The sight brings him some satisfaction, but what satisfaction exactly?

FIRST MAN: Not just his eyes, but his whole body hasn't flinched, it's as if all the functions have been shut down and he is concentrating solely on watching.

SECOND MAN: There are different types of satisfaction: wild, quiet, sweet satisfaction...

FIRST MAN: And his body seems to have stopped entirely.

SECOND MAN: Or perhaps it's not satisfaction, but need?

FIRST MAN: Stopped.

SECOND MAN: What need could make a person be a voyeur on a square every day at the exact same time?

FIRST MAN: His whole body...

SECOND MAN: That's got to be a pretty strong need.

FIRST MAN: Body! Stopped.

SECOND MAN (*startled*): What's wrong?

FIRST MAN: Body! Stopped.

SECOND MAN: Stopped? What's stopped? Your watch? Your watch has stopped?

FIRST MAN: Don't you feel like there's something not quite right about his behavior today?

SECOND MAN: No.

FIRST MAN: He's not moving. He hasn't even budged! He's frozen!

SECOND MAN: Really? I hadn't noticed.

FIRST MAN: You don't notice anything. He hasn't moved since we got here.

SECOND MAN: Really?

FIRST MAN: Yes!

SECOND MAN: That's something new. That's definitely a new development.

In principle his eyes blink, sometimes his mouth even moves as if he's talking to himself.

FIRST MAN: He definitely talks to himself. After all, he's got to keep himself company.

SECOND MAN: And you're sure that he hasn't budged!

FIRST MAN: Yes!

SECOND MAN: So let's see! Let's observe him together.

A 30-second pause. The two of them are frozen to the spot, looking at THE VOYEUR intently.

You're right. He's not moving.

FIRST MAN: Didn't I tell you... So what now? What are we going to do?

SECOND MAN: We mustn't leap to conclusions.

A short pause.

FIRST MAN: Let's take another look. He might flinch, a tiny little flinch. Some leaf might brush against him and make him blink suddenly or he might sway from some gust of wind.

Another 30-second pause. The two of them are frozen in different poses, watching THE VOYEUR intently.

SECOND MAN: No movement!

FIRST MAN: None whatsoever.

SECOND MAN: Don't you think we should do something? I mean, he might be ill? Could he have had a heart attack or something?

FIRST MAN: He might be faking it. He might want to ruin everything, maybe he's tired of it.

A short pause.

BOTH MEN TOGETHER: No!

FIRST MAN: He's not that kind of person.

SECOND MAN: He doesn't talk, he just stares, but he stares so openly.

FIRST MAN: He can't lie. He's never been able to.

SECOND MAN: What should we do? We can't just leave him there, can we?

FIRST MAN: But we can't risk it, either. What if nothing's wrong with him? We'll ruin everything.

SECOND MAN: So that means we'll have to act subtly. Only one of us will go over there.

FIRST MAN: More like one of us will sneak over there. We shouldn't just go over there, but sneak!

SECOND MAN: You'll sneak over there very carefully.

FIRST MAN: I'll sneak over there?!

SECOND MAN: I came up with the idea, you'll come up with the sneaking.

FIRST MAN: Sneaking carries a lot more responsibility than coming up with an idea.

SECOND MAN: I agree and value your efforts.

FIRST MAN: But I don't agree.

SECOND MAN: You don't?

FIRST MAN: The fairer thing would be to flip a coin.

SECOND MAN: Well, since it's fair...

THE FIRST MAN slowly takes a coin out of his pocket, twirling it between his fingers.

FIRST MAN: Heads or tails?

SECOND MAN: Tails.

FIRST MAN slowly and uncertainly tosses the coin, SECOND MAN bends over to see it.

SECOND MAN: Tails. You go!

FIRST MAN slowly bends over, looks at the coin, then looks toward THE VOYEUR, then back at the coin and slowly sets off.

SECOND MAN: Just be careful, OK?

The FIRST MAN leaves the stage, the SECOND MAN watches him carefully.

His head and gaze mirror every one of FIRST MAN's moves, his eyes blink. The SECOND MAN makes some kind of gestures at the FIRST MAN. He tries to ask him what is going on, but it doesn't work.

The FIRST MAN comes back.

FIRST MAN: He's dead.

Both of them slump to the ground and burst out crying.

THE PIZZA DELIVERYMAN appears. He doesn't notice what is going on and leans over the two of them.

THE PIZZA DELIVERYMAN: Did somebody here order pizza?

Scene VI

The square.

SECOND MAN is holding a large, round, shiny, metal container. The two men are moving slowly. As they talk, their mood changes abruptly – sometimes very sad, other times euphoric.

FIRST MAN (*wailing as if at a funeral*): Now you are here again... Just as you wanted.

SECOND MAN (*wailing*): Just as you wanted...

FIRST MAN: You had bound your fate to this square. Now you shall be here in death as well.

SECOND MAN (*wailing*): Here...

FIRST MAN: We will spread your ashes on the pavement and you will take flight. It will stick to the windows of the buildings, on the store fronts, on the trees which surround the square. You will be everywhere.

SECOND MAN (*wailing*): Everywhere...

FIRST MAN: And perhaps in this way you will finally be happy. You will not need to have a home, to go to work or to come here, to the square, during your free time. You will be here forever.

SECOND MAN (*wailing*): Forever...

Both men burst out crying. They suddenly calm down. SECOND MAN wipes away his tears.

Maybe we should read the letter?

FIRST MAN: Yes, now is the moment to read the letter... Actually, how did you find it? I never understood that. It simply appeared in your possession.

SECOND MAN: When we came up with the idea of searching him, you said that you'd already gone over to him once. It was my turn. I walked towards the

corpse. I was so scared! Before I was telling you about my great-grandfather's funeral. My grandfather and grandmother asked me to walk at the head of the procession, there was no way I could refuse. They gave me a wooden cross and instructed me not to walk too fast or too slow, and when the moment arrived, we set off. The funeral took place in a village, so the coffin was being towed in a wagon behind a tractor. The band had already arrived and was accompanying the procession made up of my grandfather, my grandmother, fifty or so old people and my two cousins. The funeral band always played the exact same melody, where the trumpet is slow and sounds like it's crying, while the bass drum beats hollowly...

FIRST MAN (*interrupting him*): Aren't you going to read the letter?

SECOND MAN: Now where could I have put it?

SECOND MAN digs through his pockets, looking for the letter. He searches them once, twice and then a third time.

It's not here. Where could I have left it? Now that I think about it, I may have lost it somewhere...

FIRST MAN: Lost it!? He left *us* a letter! How could you have lost it?!

SECOND MAN: Then you should've taken it!

FIRST MAN: I wanted to. I wanted to take it. But you said, no, I found it, so it stays with me.

SECOND MAN: I was just kidding.

FIRST MAN: You were just kidding, yeah right!

SECOND MAN (*almost in tears*): It's not such a big deal... After all, we read it, didn't we? I remember perfectly well how we read it over twice.

FIRST MAN: Good thing we read it before you went and lost it!

A brief silence.

The two of them abruptly calm down.

SECOND MAN: He knew he was dying. He had been sick. Really sick!

FIRST MAN: Yet despite that, despite everything, he kept coming to the square. He didn't give up, not until the bitter end.

SECOND MAN: The doctors told him he had less than a year to live.

FIRST MAN: And he spent that year with us.

SECOND MAN: He listened in on us.

FIRST MAN: He read our lips.

SECOND MAN: A good voyeur, he wrote, is not satisfied only with what he sees, he has to be present within the picture, to be a silent friend whom nobody pays attention to.

FIRST MAN: First comes the visual image, the exterior, he wrote. Then come the gestures. After them the words come straggling along. They are not insignificant, it is simply in their nature to straggle.

SECOND MAN: The combination of these three perceptions brings the Voyeur satisfaction.

FIRST MAN: How he reveled in us! Just think of how long we brought him satisfaction!

SECOND MAN: He was grateful to us. Very grateful. It's no coincidence we were included in his will.

FIRST MAN: He had a wife and kids, but he had been divorced for years and only saw them at Christmas and Easter, when they came back to visit family, since they no longer lived in this city.

SECOND MAN: His parents died young. He didn't have any cousins.

FIRST MAN: You are my family, he wrote in the letter, you are. I communicate only with you. I go to work for eight hours a day, five days a week, but that is not communication, it's work.

SECOND MAN (*exhilarated*): Only with us! Only with us! Before us, he had been lonely, alienated. We brought back his lust for life.

FIRST MAN: Do not be saddened by my death, he wrote. I will always be with you, as I have been until now. Keep coming to the square, under no

circumstances should my death make you give it up. This square is something special. Something which the three of us built with mutual effort. Something which must be preserved.

SECOND MAN: As my only loved ones in this world, I turn to you with a single, solitary request, he wrote. I have no one besides you. This leads to certain difficulties connected to my death. You'll have to take care of my funeral. There is no one else to do it and this burden must fall to you. I hope you will honor my request, at the very least in memory of all we went through together. All those days. Thanks to you, my days consisted not of 24 hours, as it is usually thought, but of the single hour we spent together.

FIRST MAN: I'm not asking for much. I have never asked for anything more than to open my eyes and to be near this square. Cremate me with my eyes open. Do not close them under any circumstances. I want to enter into death with open eyes. I am not afraid to see it. Cremate me, but don't bury me in the ground. I don't feel connected to the ground at all. Nor with the sky, nor with God nor with any such thing. God exists for other people, but in any case I was never able to understand them. And so I ended up on the square, just like you.

SECOND MAN: Cremate me with open eyes. Put my ashes in an urn and take it to the square. If you cannot take it there immediately and the urn must stay overnight in one of your homes, open it up from time to time. Let light in. Spread my ashes on the square, and that way we will be together forever.

A long silence.

FIRST MAN: What a man! A wonderful man has left us!

SECOND MAN: Left us? No. As he himself said: we'll be together forever.

FIRST MAN: So you believe that, do you?... That if we spread his ashes, he'll come back?

SECOND MAN: He has never left.

FIRST MAN: Never!?

SECOND MAN: During the whole time we were together, he never missed a single day. What, you think death is going to get in his way!? His life was this square, so his death will be the same. Death comes from life, right? The logical continuation of his life on the square is his death on the square. So he is here in death, too.

The SECOND MAN's words visibly calm the FIRST MAN.

FIRST MAN: What... What... What you're saying is wonderful. So that means the only thing left to do... is spread his ashes.

SECOND MAN: That will make his presence here even more tangible. In life he only had two eyes at his disposal – and boy, could he gaze with them! His stare struck you like a strong, warm, autumn breeze.

FIRST MAN: Like a wave.

SECOND MAN: And that was with only two eyes.

FIRST MAN: Was? I thought he never left?

SECOND MAN: You still don't get it? It's no coincidence that he asked us to spread his ashes on the square. He had a much deeper grasp of the situation.

FIRST MAN: What situation?

SECOND MAN: Once we spread his ashes on the square... He won't just have two eyes anymore... Every speck of dust that had been part of his body, every speck of dust will be like an eye, understand? And he will no longer be limited by the location of his hiding place. He won't be up on some roof or down on the ground, hidden behind some low wall. He won't be behind the trees, in the bushes, behind a newspaper at a table of some café in the summer. His ashes will disperse everywhere. He will be everywhere. Thousands, no millions, of small eyes will be staring at us from everywhere.

FIRST MAN: That... That'll be great. Why didn't I think of that? What are we waiting for? Let's spread the ashes!

SECOND MAN: Shouldn't we say something?

FIRST MAN: You heard what he said in the letter, to him the image is important, not the words. There's no need for speeches. Let's spread the ashes.

SECOND MAN (*unsure*): If you say so...

He hands the container to the FIRST MAN.

I never did find out what your name was, my friend, but your name doesn't matter. You also mean a lot to us and we will honor your final wish without hesitation.

A short pause. Both are frozen to the spot.

FIRST MAN: Are you done?

SECOND MAN: Didn't you say no speeches?

FIRST MAN: I thought you'd go on.

SECOND MAN: There's no point.

FIRST MAN: OK. Help me, open the lid.

The FIRST MAN hangs on to the urn tightly while the SECOND MAN tries hard to open it.

SECOND MAN: The lid is stuck.

FIRST MAN: Pull.

SECOND MAN: It won't work.

FIRST MAN: Don't give up, pull.

The container opens suddenly, the SECOND MAN reels back along with the lid. A bit of the ashes spill.

SECOND MAN (*angrily*): Just look what you've done! That's what you get for rushing!

FIRST MAN: What's the big deal? We just spread a bit of his ashes on the square.

SECOND MAN: I thought we would do it more solemnly.

FIRST MAN: Well, he was never one for showmanship, now was he?

SECOND MAN: Then should we spread them secretly?

FIRST MAN: Is anyone looking over here?

SECOND MAN (*looks around*): Nope, there's nobody.

FIRST MAN: So it's secret enough.

FIRST MAN flings some ashes towards the sky. Then he walks around the square, spreading some ashes here and there.

Farewell, my friend, or rather hello again.

SECOND MAN: Hopefully you'll be happy in death.

FIRST MAN: Hopefully...

FIRST MAN finishes spreading the ashes. At the end he shakes the empty container – nothing comes out. He gives it a few more shakes and then tosses it aside.

Well?...

SECOND MAN: Yes?

FIRST MAN: So that's that...

SECOND MAN: Now he's everywhere.

Silence.

FIRST MAN: And?

SECOND MAN: What?

FIRST MAN: Don't you want to talk about something?

SECOND MAN: This is a funeral, for Christ's sake!

Silence.

FIRST MAN: Well... What I mean is... So now he's everywhere, right?

SECOND MAN: I suppose...

FIRST MAN: He's watching us.

SECOND MAN: Yes.

FIRST MAN: And?

SECOND MAN: Nothing...

Silence.

FIRST MAN: How much time is left til the end of lunch break?

SECOND MAN (*looking at his watch*): Thirty-five minutes.

FIRST MAN: Thirty-five minutes?

SECOND MAN: Thirty-five minutes!

Silence.

Are you hungry?

FIRST MAN doesn't hear him.

(insistently) I asked: are you hungry?!

FIRST MAN: No, what about you?

SECOND MAN: No.

FIRST MAN: Then should we...

SECOND MAN: What...?

FIRST MAN: I don't know...

Silence.

What I'm trying to say is that I didn't imagine it like this. OK, fine, I know that he's here, but what of it? I can't feel his presence.

SECOND MAN: I can't either...

Silence.

Their mood gradually escalates, they get feverish, moving quickly with abrupt gestures.

FIRST MAN: What do you say we try to attract the attention of passersby?

SECOND MAN: Why not?

They both start shouting: "Hey!" and waving.

(crestfallen) Nothing. They just keep walking.

FIRST MAN: That's why they're called passersby, right?

SECOND MAN: I suppose.

FIRST MAN: So?...

Silence.

(in a sad voice) So what now?

SECOND MAN: We'll think of something. Some kind of alternative.

FIRST MAN (*suddenly livening up*): The salesgirl! Why didn't I think of her sooner!

SECOND MAN: What salesgirl?

FIRST MAN: In the store where I went when you were sick this winter. She said something.

SECOND MAN: What?

FIRST MAN: Something about how a good salesgirl looks through the store front and tries to entice the passersby into coming into the store.

SECOND MAN: Sounds promising.

FIRST MAN (*pointing towards the store*): To the store!

They both run over to the store. When they get up to it their steps slow, they clumsily try to act casual. They strut past the store window. However, the window is dark, the store is clearly closed.

SECOND MAN: There's no point. There's no one there. It's dark.

FIRST MAN: It'll open soon. Maybe she's on lunch break.

SECOND MAN try the door of the shop and sees a small note taped to the door.

SECOND MAN: It's no day off. They've closed down the shop.

FIRST MAN: Closed it down?

SECOND MAN: What will we do?

Silence.

The two of them return silently to the square.

FIRST MAN: It's your turn to think up something.

SECOND MAN: If only I could see through your eyes.

FIRST MAN: Through my eyes?

SECOND MAN: Then there wouldn't be any problem, now would there? What I'm trying to say is that it's obvious that through your own eyes you can only see the other person, you can never see yourself. If I could see through your eyes, and you through mine, our lawful right to happiness would be a fact. Happiness is possible only through the eyes of others.

FIRST MAN: But we can't do that, now can we? So rack your brain and come up with something. I... I can't live like this. I can't go back to... I can't live like before.

SECOND MAN: I can't either.

Silence.

Suicides always attract attention. At the very least you get the police, the fire department, and random passersby who stop to watch. That kind of thing attracts crowds.

FIRST MAN: You're not suggesting we...

A short, tense pause.

SECOND MAN: What do you think? We'll go up on some roof, we'll call the police and voila, people will come.

FIRST MAN: And when we climb back down they'll lock us up. Even if they let us go and we do it again, they'll lock us up again. That can only happen once. Plus, our families will find out about us. They'll see us... They'll see us here... They'll find out...

SECOND MAN: True. That won't work.

A long silence.

We could hire someone to take his place. We'll pay him to watch us.

FIRST MAN: But he'd never understand! He would think we're nuts! What would be the point then?

SECOND MAN: We need someone like us!

Silence.

FIRST MAN: It won't be easy to find a person like that. The only thing we have is our own selves.

SECOND MAN: Our own selves.

FIRST MAN (*excitedly*): Our own selves! Our own selves!

SECOND MAN: What?

FIRST MAN: We can only count on ourselves!

SECOND MAN: What are you trying to say?

FIRST MAN: We can take his place until someone else comes along.

SECOND MAN: Take his place? Then who will come here?

FIRST MAN: We will.

SECOND MAN: I'm not following. I'm not following you at all.

FIRST MAN: One of us will stand here, the other will take the voyeur's place!

SECOND MAN: That's not fair. That would put us on unequal footing.

FIRST MAN: We'll take turns – one day you, the next day me.

SECOND MAN: That might just do the trick, at least in the beginning, until we find someone else.

FIRST MAN: We'll definitely find somebody. This is a square... Squares attract all sorts of weirdoes.

A short pause.

So what are we waiting for! Go on!

SECOND MAN: Me? Why me?

FIRST MAN: I came up with the idea!

SECOND MAN: Last time we flipped a coin.

FIRST MAN (*hesitantly*): OK.

He takes a coin out of his pocket.

Heads or tails?

SECOND MAN: Tails!

FIRST MAN tosses the coin.

SECOND MAN: Tails! You go!

FIRST MAN is frozen to the spot.

What are you waiting for? Go! Go, the clock is ticking.

FIRST MAN: Fine.

The SECOND MAN carefully watches the FIRST MAN as he slowly heads to the place where THE VOYEUR had died. He is uncertain. He stops. He turns toward the SECOND MAN, who urges him on, gesturing with his head. Even

after he has disappeared from our sight, the FIRST MAN stops again and the SECOND MAN again urges him on. From the way the SECOND MAN moves his head, we “watch” the FIRST MAN stagger, fall, and get up. He finally takes up the post THE VOYEUR used to occupy. This SECOND MAN is still watching him carefully.

At a certain point he jumps and quickly turns away. He awkwardly pretends not to notice the FIRST MAN.

SECOND MAN: What a lovely day! I say, what a lovely day!

The SECOND MAN turns towards the audience.

SECOND MAN: It really is a lovely day, isn't it? Sunny, but not too warm.

The SECOND MAN falls silent. He is facing the audience. His body is visibly relaxed, his eyes glance slightly towards the FIRST MAN, then straight ahead, then again in that direction. He keeps standing there silently.

The curtain slowly falls.

THE END