

Vinko Möderndorfer

CAMERA OBSCURA

(a Mardi Gras play in one act)

Translated by Erica Johnson

This is the story of how the destiny of several people, on a night during Carnival, meet as if by accident in a half-finished half-furnished flat. And this is how the story - which will unfold before our eyes in one theatrical gesture with a great number of ascents and descents - begins. Its character is eminently appropriate for the unpredictable and drunken nights that are Carnival.

Language

I am of the opinion that language must be various...multilayered... never uniform. Especially when it is to be used in a genre play. Which this play undoubtedly is.

People speak in various languages. Moreover: individuals who in one specific situation speak »bookishly« might in another situation (not so far from the first one) speak using some sort of slang. This seems logical to me. It is necessary, if possible, to elevate this sort of variety of language to the level of poetry (?!). The language games in the first fifteen pages of the play are conceived as the product of some sort of quasi-artistic and intellectual circle. In this context, they are meant to sound comical, absurd, bacchanalian

All of Erhard's utterances should be translated into very cultivated German. All of the German statements should be short and, where possible, composed of words that are easily recognizable in our own language. But, in general, all of Erhard's utterances (though translated) should be understood from the context of the scene or situation.

But what is most important are the misunderstandings. It is probably not necessary to emphasize that this is a play that wants to address communication, the absence of communication, different kinds of communication. It also intends to illuminate the multilayered quality and variety of the language people use among themselves.

Humor is also important. In the linguistic sense, it is necessary to use all interpretive possibilities offered by forms of »slang« and quasi-intellectual expression.

And we must also listen to non-verbal theatrical forms such as silences, passage of time, voices, breath, etc. The non-verbal »language« is very noticeable in the text. It has its own space and time which is essential to the growing atmosphere of the text.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Jana - Over forty years old.
A bright and dynamic woman with a heavyset figure.
A passionate divorcee and a fellow traveller in intellectual circles.

Dušan - Culturati – over forty years old.
Elegant: dressed in grey with a silk tie.
A man with many skills: possibly some kind of an
artist, writer, perhaps even works in the theater.

Erhard Piler - A Berliner of around fifty years old.
Pleasant and plump. Also some kind of culturati
who is visiting for a »symposium« or some such thing.
A pleasant and very trusting European.

Walter - A young man of twenty-five. Athletic body.
Slick. He's a failed student of philosophy or
maybe literature. And that's exactly how he acts.

Number One,
Number Two - The two are very similar. Maybe even twins.
One has his arm in a cast. Very simple boys who
are completely under Walter's influence.

Walter, Number One and Number Two – a very mysterious trio.

Darkness.

A song in the darkness. Guitar and voice.

From the distance.

(Walter's voice – we will recognize it later.)

Let's exchange a kiss, a bite and a blow

Let's trade a lonely year for an afternoon's lusty swoon

Let's ride in a magic circle across the distant moon

Where the seed stops and returns with no echo.

And then: Just a little bit and a little bit less

than the loathsome juices of the body can distill

Bitter-sweet anus and all that is sweeter still

in an instant like gas explodes and bursts into mess.

A new instant born? A new time? Does the dawning day let

You and I hold each other without passion or lust?

We both know the traces of our kiss adhere they must

when the seed falls like a kiss, we light another cigarette.

A moment of silence and darkness.

The lights go up slowly.

We see the stage.

A flat. Like any other flat. We see a big living room at the back of which is a narrow corridor leading to the front door of the flat. On the back wall are two more doors. One door leads into the bedroom (as we will find out later). The door to the bedroom is practically in the center of the back wall so that when it is open we can see a large part of the room which is completely empty. We see (in addition to the front door) another door on the extreme left. This is the door to the bathroom.

At the far left side of the stage is a kitchen. It is narrow, furnished with kitchen cabinets and counters on both sides. On the left side of the kitchen, there is a little window above the sink. There is a door between the living room and the kitchen so that what we have before us is a divided space, a sort of simulated scene with three closed doors in the background (one to the bedroom, one to the bathroom and one the front door of the flat). There is a large window on the far right. Beneath the window is a radiator.

In the living room, there is a large couch, a table (glass with a modern design) and two armchairs. To the far right against the wall (where the window is) there are white shelves with a stereo on them along with some records and books.

All the furniture is completely new. It's still covered with the plastic packing wrap which is torn here and there. Above the table hangs a naked light bulb. Lying on the table, there is a ceiling light wrapped in packing paper. No one has yet managed to hang it up.

In sum: before us we have a picture of a totally new flat in which no one yet lives. In other words: before us we have a flat into which someone is in the process of moving... There are no traces of life in the kitchen either, except for a few kitchen appliances. Only this: on the table near the window (in the kitchen), there is an open half-drunk bottle of wine and two different types of glasses in each of which there is a little wine. We imagine that someone will come soon to celebrate moving into the new flat.

The walls are white, almost sterile. Lifeless. The floors are hardwood, freshly installed and completely bare. There is nothing in the corners of the flat: everything is virgin white and totally new. It smells of unpacked furniture.

New, new and sterile.

In a short while, we make out the sounds of barely audible Mardi Gras music. It is Carnival time. Then the scratching of the key in the lock. Laughter, the voices of a man and woman who are about to enter the flat. Their conversation is a little awkward. Laughter and giggling and then a little song:

»The key is in the lock,
the lock is in the key,
key, pea, tree ...«

More laughter and the singing of a quite harmonious duet:

»The key and the lock
what a handsome pair,
the lock grinds and gnashes
when the key turns in there...«

More laughter and finally, the door opens. Success!

Light from the hallway. In the frame of the front door, we see two figures which are swaying a bit.

One is Jana. A sturdy creature with great energy. We notice that right away.

The other is Dušan. Elegant gray suit and tie, an elegant leather jacket draped over his arm. We immediately recognise a slightly extravagant intellectual-artistic soul around fifty years old (maybe a little less).

She (Jana) is dressed simply and appropriately for a woman in her late forties. They're both tipsy. Not too little, not too much. In an excellent mood.

Jana: After you, step in please ... (grinning)

Dušan: (theatrically) Please keys, in you go!

(They laugh so hard they can hardly catch their breath.)

Jana: After you and the silver key, turn to me!

(They collapse in helpless laughter, falling against each other and gasping with laughter, sit down on the threshold.)

Dušan: Key... (Laughter)... silver key... (Laughter)...

Jana: (Laughter) ... turn to me... (Laughter)

Dušan: Should I carry you across the threshold... (Laughter) ... across the threshold into the twilight. (Laughter)

Jana: Into complete twilight... (Laughter)

(Dušan lifts himself up and tries to lift Jana. But she slips out of his hands. Her body is contorted with laughter.)

Jana: Across the threshold ... (Laughter) first twilight, then a hop, a skip and a jump under the roof (Laughter).

Dušan: You'll see... (Laughter) ... you'll see, we can do it ... aaaand up!

(He tries to lift her into his arms so he can carry her across the threshold like a bride. But he doesn't succeed. Once more they both slide down to the floor. Laughter again that doesn't seem to end.)

Dušan: I caaaaan't. (Laughter) I'll never get married. (Laughter)

(Now Jana lifts herself up.)

Jana: Hold on a second... (She starts to grimace and talk like a man.) Am I butch or what? Uuuuuup!

(Now she lifts Dušan. She hoists him easily up in her arms.)

Dušan: (In falsetto) Not me, don't take me, I'm still a virgin, aaah, put me down!

(Now they enter the flat together. Dušan, despite everything, is too heavy a load for Jana. He lunges into the room, as if shot from a catapult – with a lot of giggling – and the two fall down together on the couch. Actually Jana is lying on top of Dušan. Both are out of breath, now and again a short laugh as if left over from the previous situation. Then quiet.)

Dušan: Do you love me a little bit?

Jana: Of course I love you, you know I love you.

Dušan: How I love it when someone loves me.

Jana: (all of a sudden) Wait ... where is ...?

Dušan: Who?

Jana: Oh no, did we lose...?

Dušan: What?

Jana: (sitting up) Before when we were opening the door... Where's the...?

Dušan: Oh, the key! It's still in the door. (Sings) How it squeaks, when in the door it peeks!

Jana: (yelling or calling out) Erhard! Erhard!

Dušan: Keys please for Erhard!

Jana: (she stands up) Erhard! (to Dušan) Oh, I hope he didn't get lost. Maybe he left. This block of flats isn't finished... what if he fell into the lift shaft! (calling out in panic) Erhard!

Dušan: (whistles and calls as if to a dog) Erhard!

Jana: Don't joke! I'm really scared now!

Dušan: (half laughing) But how should I call a dog if not like that: Erhard (whistles) Erhard!

Jana: He's not a dog.

Dušan: Why does he have such a muzzle? Why does he look so sad? (whistles) Heeere boy! Erhard!

Jana: I'm sure that he was still behind us up until the fourth floor.

Dušan: Wagging his tail. Ja, ja, meine frau, ja, ich bin eine dog, ja!

Jana: Bloody hell! I knew I should have never dragged the two of you up here. (She flies toward the door, calling out in panic.) Erhard, Erhard!

Dušan: (stretching out on the couch and imitating Jana) Erhard, Erhard!

(From the open door a sound is heard: Woof woof! And then a man crawls into the flat on all fours. He's wearing a plastic dog mask on his face.)

Erhard: Woof woof...Ich bin here... hau hau!

Jana: Thank god, I was so worried. (She leans down toward Erhard as if he really were a dog – Erhard is still on all fours.) I thought that something bad might have happened to you – Herr Erhard.

(Erhard slowly gets up, nodding his head and giving the impression that he understands everything.)

Erhard: Ja, ja, ich bin Erhard. Erhard Piler. (He holds out his hand to her.)

Jana: You gave me such a fright, Herr Erhard. You could have fallen into the lift shaft. This row of flats isn't finished yet. It's still a construction sight, understand? You could have been kaput.

(Erhard pulls off the mask. We see a slightly fat man of around fifty.)

Erhard: (extends his hand to shake Jana's) Ja, ja, ich bin Erhard Piler.

Jana: (to Dušan) Tell him what I said. My hand hurts already.

Dušan: (speaking in fairly fluent German)

Sie hatte Angst, dass sis sich etwas angetan haben, dos Hochhaus ist noch nicht ganz vertig, es konnte ein Ungluch geschehn. Aber nun is ja alles gut.

She was afraid that something happened to you. The row of flats isn't completely finished and an accident could happen here. But now everything is alright.

Erhard: (German) O nein, ich bin namlich ein vorsichtiger Mensch. Auch wenn ich so bin...so unter Gas...Aber was fur eine Unterhaltung Herr Dušan, bin glucklich Euch kennen gelernt zu haben!

Oh no, I am a very careful man. Even when I'm like this...(he laughs) like this, a bit tipsy ... But what a party, Dušan, I'm so happy that I have met you both! (Erhard hugs them both and rolls on to the couch.)

Jana: What did he say?

Dušan: That he likes us.

Erhard: (German) Bin durstig. Ach bin ich durstig. Haven sie was zu trinken. Am liebsten mochte ich Wein.

I'm thirsty. Oh, I'm so thirsty? Is there anything to drink. Preferably wine.

Dušan: He says that...

Jana: (interrupting him) Thanks. That I understood.

(She gets up and walks toward the kitchen. She turns on the light.) A little light.

Erhard: (German) Nicht, nicht Licht!

No, no light!

Dušan: (imitating Erhard's pathetic tone) »Niht mer licht!« for Master Goethe.

Jana: (As quickly as she turned it on, she now turns off the light.) Whatever you want.

(In the kitchen she turns on the light. A neon light illuminates the kitchen. Erhard sits next to Dušan. Dušan grabs him around the shoulders.)

Dušan: Wie unterhaltest Du dich?

Are you enjoying yourself?

Erhard: (German) Sehr, sehr... Was für ein Glück, dass ich Euch begegnet bin.

Very much, very much... What luck that I met you!

Jana: (from the kitchen) Nothing here. It looks like my ex-husband still keeps an empty kitchen.

Dušan: (calling back to her) You didn't tell me you were an ex-wife.

Jana: We see each other so rarely. (She looks in the cupboard above the stove.)

Absolutely nothing. Nothing anywhere.

Erhard: (Softly in German) Was machen sie, Dušan?

What are you doing, Dušan?

Dušan: (German) Wie, soll ich was machen?

What am I doing?

Jana: (turns over a box on the shelf) Bloody hell!

Dušan: Did you find something?!

Jana: Shit!

Erhard: (German) Mit was befasst Du Dich? Was ist Dien Beruf?

What do you do? What's your job?

Dušan: (German) Literatur.

Literature.

Jana: (she has found the half-empty bottle and the two half-drunk glasses) I found something, I found something!

Erhard: (German) Schriftsteller?

Writer?

Dušan: (German) Als ich jung war.

When I was young.

(Jana emerges with the bottle in her hand.)

Jana: Voila! Euridice! Isn't that how you say it! (She turns toward the light switch.)

Dušan: Eureka! Eureka!

Jana: And now let there be light!

(She turns on the light. Erhard stands up.)

Dušan: (German) Hab keine Angst. Jana ist meine beste Freundin. Sie weiss alles.

Don't be afraid. Jana is my best friend. She knows everything.

(Jana sets down the bottle and the two glasses on the table in front of the couch.)

Jana: Jana, Jana...you're slandering me again! What ugly things are you saying about me?

Dušan: I told him that you're completely safe.

Jana: Safe yes, completely safe. That's why I'm an ex-wife. Cheers!

(She presses a glass into Erhard's hand and the bottle into Dušan's.)

Jana: So: to the safety of fidelity, to my ex-husband who, without knowing it or wanting it, lent us this dump. A toast to these Carnival days, a toast to you boys. Why are you making a sour face, Herr Erhard. We're not in Germany, this is a free country.

Erhard: (to Dušan in German) Was sagte sie?

What did she say?

Dušan: (German) Sie sagte ... zum Wohl!

She said ... (he hesitates a little)...to your health!

Erhard: (German) Aur ihre Gesundheit Fraulein!

Here's to your health, madam!

(Erhard lifts his glass.)

Jana: Oh no, not that! (She takes the glass from his hand.) Relax a little bit as they say, Herr Erhard!

Erhard: (German) Erhard Piler!

Erhard Piler! (He offers his hand again.)

Jana: (imitating him) Erhard Piler, Erhard Piler! Why are these Germans so polite. It's Mardi Gras, you understand, masks off, Lord Swabian!

Erhard: (German) Was?

What!?

Dušan: (German) Sie sagte, sie sollten den Mantel ausziehen.

She says you should take off your coat! (He helps getting the coat off.)

Erhard: (German) Ja, ja!

Yes, yes!

Jana: Now a toast!

Dušan: Again?!

Jana: (She imitates Miss Piggy from the Muppet Show.) Yeees, again, take it away, oh Kermit!

Erhard: (laughing – German) Bravo, bravo!

Bravo, bravo! (Applauds)

Jana: (bowing slightly) Thank you, thank you! So: a toast to this happy day, to this short meeting...

Dušan: (interrupting her) A short meeting for a long farewell...

Jana: (surprised) What?

Dušan: Peter Handke.

Jana: Who?

Erhard: (German) Peter Handke? Kennen sie ihn?

Peter Handke? You know him?

Jana: Another one of your German friends.

Dušan: (responds to Erhard in German) Ich verehere ihn.

I admire him.

Jana: Enough now! Stop being a charmer, just listen to what Miss Piggy wants to say to you two. Oh Kermit, I love you!

Erhard: (enthusiastically in German) Bravo, sie sind eine richtige Schauspielerin!

Bravo, you're a true actress!

(Jana leans in toward Erhard and squeezes his double chin.)

Jana: Of course, of course, my little tub of lard!

(Dušan laughs and sits back down on the couch.)

Erhard: (German) Ja, ja, eine richtige Schauspielerin!

Yes, yes, a true actress!

Jana: So: where was I? Oh yes, a toast. We'll drink this and then we'll go. What I mean is if we don't go, as the old song goes, we'll stay here forever, right Dušan? Isn't that the way it is?

Dušan: Yeeeah, thaaat's the way, bravoooooo, more, more!

Jana: (in the heat of the moment) And that is why we are all here together, three lost ... lost ... uuum (she can't find the word) ... lost ... help me out here, Dušaaaaan, help...

Dušan: Okay, okay...lost... lost... lost what?

Jana: That word, you know, that word ...

Dušan: Souls... lost souls... three lost souls... Euridice, I found the Souls!

Jana: (almost screaming) No, no that one, another word ... you know, like when you're searching for someone ... c'mon, c'mon... help me!

Dušan: Three lost searching souls!

Jana: Not that, oh Kermit, nooooo...

Erhard: (German) Bravo, bravo!

Bravo, bravo ! (applauds)

Jana: Wandering! That's it, wandering, that's the word.

Dušan: (giving in) Okay then, let it be wandering.

Jana: And that's why we're altogether here, three lost and wandering souls on this lonely Carnival night, drenched in alcohol, drenched in tears...ah Dušan, I'm gonna cry ...

(Her face falls into the characteristic look of drunken sadness.)

Dušan: Pull yourself together, darling, you know, step up here, okay....

(Dušan helps her to step up on to the glass table.)

Jana: Ah, Dušan, I'm really gonna cry... I'm so horribly...so horribly...

Dušan: (trying to help her) Lonely...

(Jana strikes at him, imitating Miss Piggy again.)

Jana: Noooo, not lonely, oh Kermit... divorced, that's the right word, divorced...

Erhard: (German) Bravo, bravo, Sehr geistreich... Wie das Fraulein dass kan, nicht wahr?

Bravo, bravo, very funny...(to Dušan) How well she knows how to do that, no?

Dušan: (German) Sie kann auch so manches Andere...

She knows a few other things too... isn't that so, Jana?

Jana: (continuing her drunken speech) So very very divorced, from bed, from life, what did I wanna say, oh yes, from all those lost and wandering souls, understand, like in that film, you know the one, *The Divorcee*, with that actress, that one who...who is kinda like me, you know...(suddenly) Ooooooh! Herr Erhard!

Erhard: (puts out his hand again) Erhard Piler!

Jana: We didn't yet drink to brotherhood, my dear Erhard, take that, hold it out toward me, another toast...

Erhard: (to Dušan in German) Was?

What?

Dušan: (German) Jana wünscht zu Kussen.

Jana wants to snog you. (in English) Don't you Jana, kissy kissy on the lips, no?

Erhard: (German) Ach, mit mir?

Me?

Jana: And now, a toast!

Dušan: You're repeating yourself.

Jana: I'm not! Now the toast will be kissy kissy. Don't you remember, Dušan? You didn't always know everything you know now. I was also completely different then. And it was just that kind of night. A night for kissy kissy. Just that kinda night in a half-furnished sanctuary for two wandering souls.

Dušan: Twenty-one years ago.

Jana: No, really?! Twenty-one years, oh god, already twenty-one years since our night of kissy kissy.

Erhard: (trying to enter their dialogue) Kis-sy, kis-sy

Jana: You see, Erhard, it works: kissy kissy.

(Jana grabs Erhard and pulls him on the table and holds him around the neck. She is still holding the two glasses in her hands.)

Jana: Now to brotherhood, eh kissy kissy, Herr Erhard!

Erhard: Erhard Piler!

Jana: (throwing her head back imperiously as if she's conducting a whole orchestra)

Music!

Dušan: (singing and dancing around the table with the bottle like a prima donna)

»The key and the lock
what a handsome pair,
the lock grinds and gnashes
when the key turns in there...«

Jana: (to Erhard) Well Erhard, lips to lips, kissy kissy.

Erhard: (over her shoulder to Dušan)(German) Was vill sie von mire?

What does she want from me?

Dušan: (German) Sex. Jana will immer sex.

Sex. Jana always wants sex.

Erhard: (German) Ach so, dann verstehe ich.

Oh that, I see...

(But Erhard cannot finish his sentence. Jana pushes her tongue into his mouth. A long silence entirely dedicated to kissing.

End of kiss.

Jana looks as if she just polished off a delicious morsel.)

Jana: Hmmmm, how I love the taste of a man.

Erhard: (German) Ja, ja, ich weiss, Dušan hat es mire gesagt.

Yes, yes, I know, Dušan already told me.

Jana: And I love to convert them too, in need be!

Erhard: (German) Sie riechen so schon...Ihr Perfom ist mir bekaant...

You smell so nice... (He sniffs at her neck, very closely, like a connoisseur of perfumes)... I know that perfume.

Dušan: He's asking about your perfume.

Jana: Chaz, darling, Chaz!

Erhard: (German) Prima, so leidenschaftlich, so ein sexi Geruch.

Great, so passionate, such a sexy scent!

Jana: Chaz only for men. My ex-husband's.

Erhard: (German) Ich wusste es, ich wusste es...

I knew it, I knew it... (He smiles and looks toward Dušan.)

Jana: It's the only thing I kept from my ex-husband. Y'know, he used it too. I put just a little behind my ear "Chaz only for men." Men who like cologne for men. Are they real men?!

Erhard: (German) Ich wusste es, so sexi...

I knew it, so sexy... (He sniffs at her again, very close, right behind her neck)

Jana: And now, a toast!

Dušan: (interrupts her) Whoa! Now it's my turn!

Jana: Wait. I'm not through...

Dušan: So: to my friend (translating into German as he goes) Meine Freunde in der faden Fastnachte, (English) on this Carnival night of nights, what can I say... (German) was soll ich sagen, let the masks fall and let them turn to ashes! Cheers! (German) Auf ihr Woll.

(Erhard looks at Dušan – they toast – Jana also lifts her glass.)

Jana: Cheers – also to my ex!

Dušan: Ex for group sex!

Erhard: Sex!

(Everyone lifts their glasses, Dušan his bottle, they look deeply into each other's eyes and lean in,

A moment of silence.

All three take a big gulp. Simultaneously they take their lips from their glasses - Dušan from the bottle. They look at each other, the look travels from one to the other. We can see, we can sense that there is something terribly wrong with the drink.

An instant of contained tension. Then Jana spits all the liquid she held in her mouth on to the floor. Dušan does the same, coughing helplessly – the cough sounds more and more like throwing up. Erhard also empties his mouth but in a much more refined manner than the others. He spits the wine back into his glass.)

Jana: Yuk! How sour!

Erhard: (German) Es ist verdorben!

It's gone bad!

Jana: As sour as old socks.

Dušan: (still coughing) Ahhh...disgusting...

Jana: (to Dušan) Are you going to be sick... (she puts her hand on his forehead) You're not going to throw up... are you...?!

Dušan: (slowly recovering from his cough) No, no, I'm okay!

Jana: You see what that bastard of a husband, of a ex-husband, cooked up for me. And that's the way it was with him every single day! It's no wonder that I couldn't take it anymore and got a divorce! Bloody bastard!

Dušan: It's not his fault that we fell on the first bottle we laid eyes on. There could have been petrol in it far all we knew!

Jana: (already her mood improving) Petrol ,ah! Can you imagine, Petrol! Shit like that! Can you imagine – three charred corpses on the sixth floor in an unfinished block of flats, unrecognisable lumps of cooked flesh, gender indeterminable, probably homicide. The owner of the flat under suspicion, the architect Joseph denies any wrongdoing, but the court convicts him and sentences him to death ... (changes her tone of voice and addresses Dušan) ...yuk, they still sentence people to death here, don't they?

Dušan: I don't know ... actually yes ... but very rarely ... they get twenty years at the most...

Jana: (eagerly continues) He was sentenced to death by hanging for ruining his poor ex-wife's Mardi Gras party by substituting pure petrol in a bottle labelled (she looks at the bottle) "highest quality wine – Lashko Riesling".

Dušan: It went sour... God knows how long it was standing open in the kitchen.

Jana: Yeah, you just go ahead and make excuses for him...

Erhard: (German) Vielleicht gibt es noch irgendwo was zu trinken. Ach, es brennt in meiner Kehle!

Maybe there's something else to drink ... my throat is burning!

Jana: What's he saying?

Dušan: That he's thirsty.

Jana: Me too! After that taste of petrol, even more so! I'll go buy something! We won't surrender... (she yells into the space as if they were someone else there) Do you hear, we won't surrender! We're going to have a great party in this bloody dump!

Dušan: What are you screaming for?

Jana: Just to let the bastard know... (she yells again into the space) ... I also have rights, y'know... I served you for ten years, didn't I?... (to Dušan) Do I have rights or not, even an ex-wife has some kind of rights!

Dušan: (ever faithful) Yes, yes, you have the right, you have all the right!

Jana: Gimme some money!

Dušan: (He pulls his wallet from his back pocket and gives it to her.) Here. Hurry back!

Jana: There's a pub next door ... I'll come back right away... (turning to Erhard) Give us a snog, Herr Erhard! (She presses a kiss on to his mouth. Erhard stupidly gapes.)

Erhard: (German) Schmatz, Schmatz Fraulein Jana!

Snog, snog Miss Jana!

(Jana quickly leaves.

A moment of silence.

Erhard slowly goes to the window.

Dušan sits down.)

Erhard: (looking through the window)(German) Sie lieben so ohne Sorgen, scheint es mir.

You live in such a carefree manner, it seems to me.

Dušan: (scornful) Yeah, yeah, carefree. But not everyone.

Erhard: (turning toward Dušan)(German) Bei uns in Deutschland haben wir genug Sorgen, wir arbeiten, müssen arbeiten, wir feiern nie zu viel.

At home in Germany we have so many worries, we work, we must work, we hardly ever celebrate...

Dušan: (interrupting him with irritation) At home in Germany, at home in Germany! I know you don't party like us. (German) Arbeiten ja, ich weiss, arbeiten...

You work, yes I know, you work... (he continues in English more to himself) we work too, y'know, we work and work, but get nothing out of it...

Erhard: (German) Bitte?

Excuse me?

Dušan: (German) Auch wir arbeiten, arbeiten wenig Vergnugen wir uns, verstehen sie...

We also work, we work a little, we party a little, understand?... (in English) work, party, work again...(German) Und wieder Arbeit wieder Vergnugen...

Work, party, work more... (English) God, I'm getting a headache!

Erhard: (German) Was?

What?

Dušan: (German) Mein Kopf! My head! (in English more to himself) That sour wine really sobered me up!

(Erhard steps up behind Dušan's back and begins to massage his temples.)

Erhard: (German) Sie werden sehen, das hilft! You'll see, this will help.

(Erhard massages Dušan's temples very attentively.)

Dušan is silent. He abandons himself to the "tender care" of Erhard's hands.)

Erhard: (while massaging)(German) Sie sagten fruher, sie sind Schriftsteller?

You were saying before that you were a writer.

Dušan: Oh, is that what I said...that I'm a writer...sometimes I say I'm a writer, but otherwise I'm just a nice little lad, eh?

(Dušan looks at Erhard over his shoulders.)

Erhard: (German) Verzeihung, ich verstehe nicht! I'm sorry, I don't understand!

Dušan: But it is true...(continues in German) Ich bin Schriftsteller, grosser Schriftsterller so wie Euer Gothe! I'm a writer, a great writer, like your own Goethe!

Erhard: Goethe?!

Dušan: (laughing): Yes, like Goethe, you stupid German, I'm the greatest writer and the greatest liar...(German) und ich bin funfundvierzig Jahre alt...and I'm forty-five years old...

Erhard: (cheering up)(German) O, dann sind wir die gleiche Generation, es freut mich sehr. Erhard Piler! Oh, then we're the same generation. Pleased to meet you. (He extends his hand past Dušan's shoulder.) Erhard Piler!

Dušan: (through his teeth) Yeah, yeah, same generation, but from a completely different world, y'know?

(Erhard stupidly nods his head and continues massaging Dušan's temples.)

Dušan: I'm just like Goethe.

Erhard: (grasping on the one word he understands) Goethe, ja!

Dušan: Just like you're a real man, right?!

(Erhard stupidly nods his head.

Dušan gets up suddenly.)

Dušan: Let's look what's in the next room.

(Dušan steps toward the door in the back wall and opens it. There is only darkness in the "next room" Dušan leans on the doorframe, Erhard is more in the centre.)

Dušan: The next room! It's opening night! It's all darkness! As black as the inside of my bum! Nothing on the other side!

Erhard: (German) Verzeihung, verstehe sie nicht. Really, I don't understand!

Dušan: That's all that matters. What you don't understand. (German) Verstehst Du? Understand?

Erhard: (German) Lieder nicht. Unfortunately no.

Dušan: I'll tell you a story. Would you like that?

Erhard: (smiling stupidly) (German) Was? What?

Dušan: (German) Geschichte. Ich werde ihnen eine Geschichte erzählen, In Ordnung? A story. I'll tell you a story. Alright?

Erhard: (German) Ja, ja eine Geschichte. Yes, yes, a story.

Dušan: (German) Vor langer Zeit, mann weis nicht wann, vielleicht gestern, oder auch heute oder aber erst morgen...

Once upon a time, it's not known exactly when, perhaps even yesterday, perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow...

Erhard: (German) Interessant, sehr interessant! Interesting, very interesting!

(Erhard in the heat of his "interest" sits on the couch and watches Dušan who conducts his "monologue" in front of the door into the next room.)

Dušan: Idiot! I haven't told you anything!

Erhard: (claps) Bravo, bravo!

Dušan: So...(German) Verstehst Du...You understand...(English) There was a man, a great man...(German) Mensch...Man... (English) a talented man. Created in the image ... (German) wie Gott...of God... (English) and that great man felt the power to create something as well ...(German) Verstehst Du...gestalten! You understand...to create! (English) He felt that he was not merely a creation, but was himself creative...(German) Gottes Kreation...God's creation... (English) a creative creation . That he could give,

he could give birth to something from out of Nothing, that he could sit in front of a typewriter and unlock the whole world... (German) Die ganze Welt, verstehst Du! The whole world, understand? (English) New people, new destinies, new images which were different from him. His own secret picture ... (German) Furchtbares Gefühl, weisst Du... als wenn du Gott warst. A dreadful feeling, you know... as if you are God! (English) As if you are stepping into a space where there has never been anything at all, and you walk into it as if you are at home.

(Erhard, during the course of Dušan's "monologue", is relaxing into a much more comfortable position than he was at the beginning. The more intense is the flow of Dušan's words, the less they seem to interest him. Now he is only waiting for the monologue to end. Only now and then, when he hears a word that he knows, he reacts a little, and then falls back into a boredom which doesn't seem too far from sleep.)

Dušan: (more and more intensely: a drone of words running into each other and Dušan himself is growing from moment to moment more and more intense but also more personally involved and serious.)

You see, you feel such power, you step across the threshold, you're inside, you understand things, they turn around inside of you as if within a mysterious unknown machine. While you eat, while you write, while you replicate images as you wander around the world, while you communicate, while you listen to others, watch how they drink, how they eat, how they replicate images... images ceaselessly spin inside of you, the value of something completely new, a truly creative world which shifts inside of you and then wants to be released... And you go and you go and you go and you sit behind the typewriter, pour colours on to your palette, prepare your paper, sharpen your pencils and you want and you want and you want... yet there's nothing there.

(Silence.)

Erhard has taken off his shoes. He crosses his feet on the table. Wiggles his toes in their black socks.)

Erhard: (breaks the silence enthusiastically) (German) Verstehe, ja, verstehe!

I understand, yes, I understand!

(Silence.)

Dušan continues, quietly, only to himself.)

Dušan: There's something wrong. There's some kind of boundary. You can't express all that you feel. All of this wealth... that you understand all things... gives you no advantage... sheets of paper remain unwritten, the canvas unpainted. As if whatever was

inside of you ...here somewhere... everything closed up and is growing now only inside. (German) Verstehst Du? Do you understand?

Erhard: (yawning) (German) Ich verstehe. I understand.

Dušan: A time bomb. Ticking away before an explosion.

(Dušan slowly moves into the room in front of which he has been standing all this time. He disappears into the dark and unknown space. We hear him. His voice emerges from that dark space – a hollow voice bouncing off the naked walls of the empty room.)

Dušan: You become wicked. A cynical race. You feel that there must be more to you. Some sort of force is building inside of you, it has to get out somehow. And one day you say...(German) Gott ist tot! God is dead!

Erhard: (reacts immediately with great pleasure for at least he has understood something and perhaps he can be included in the conversation)(German) Ich kenne dass, Friedrich Nietzsche, ja Gott ist tot. Yes, I know that, Friedrich Nietzsche, yes, God is dead!

Dušan: And you put yourself in His place...you despise everyone who doesn't have this inside of them... this un-lived creativity... And you say: Tyranny!

Erhard: (German) Ja, Nietzsche!

Dušan: (his scream echoes in the empty room) Tyranny!

Erhard: (German) Gott ist tot, so sprach Zarathustra! God is dead, thus spake Zarathustra!

Dušan: (screaming) Tyranny!

Erhard: (German) Und auch: Die Geburt der Tragödie, kennen sie die? And also: The Birth of Tragedy, do you know it?!

Dušan: (quietly) And you build: Dachau. And you build chimneys. And you build Auschwitz. And you build a system. You create. At last. You create!

Erhard: (stands up, shocked) Auschwitz?!

Dušan: (still unseen, in the room) (German) Du bist eifersüchtig auf alle die das können, du kannst es nicht, du verwechselst die Kreation für Massenmord, für Genozid, plus in minus, es ist ja gleichgültig. Auschwitz, Dachau, Birkenau, Oswiencim.

Yes, you are jealous of those who can when you cannot... You exchange creativity for massacre, for genocide, plus to minus, it's all the same. Auschwitz, Dachau, Birkenau, Oswiencim.

(Erhard puts his shoes back on. We can see that the “word” Oswiencim has greatly upset him.)

Erhard: (German) Oswiencim...ich war nicht dort...bin nicht schuld...dachte sie sind ein ehrlicher Mensch...verzeihung ich mochte gerne gehen, wo ist mein Mantel?

Oswiencim...I wasn't there... I am not guilty.... I thought you were an honest man... excuse me, I would like to go now, where is my coat?

(Erhard lunges toward the couch where his coat is lying and, in a panic and also a little bit of anger, starts to put it on.)

Erhard: (German) Ich wusste es, ich wusste es... I knew it... I knew it...

(When he has his coat on, he turns toward the room where Dušan is, somewhere in the darkness.)

Erhard: (German) Bitte...ich mochte gerne gehen! Please ... I would like to go!

(Silence.)

Long and unpleasant silence. Almost dangerous.)

Erhard: (German) Bitte ... melden sie sich! (looks at this watch) Ich muss zuruck ins Hotel! Please... come out now! I must be getting back to the hotel!

(Silence. Erhard Piler extends his hand toward the door opening into the darkness. In farewell. Silence.)

Erhard: (German) Verabschieden wir uns... Es war genug... Let us say goodbye...

Enough now...

(Silence.)

Erhard: (we sense fear in his voice) (German) Bitte... was ist zu viel, ist zu viel... Ich bin ein Fremder und... Please...too much is too much ... I am a foreigner here and...

(Now in the darkness of the doorway a lighter is lit and illuminates for an instant Dušan's face. Erhard takes fright, rushes to the other side of the room, toward the window.)

Erhard: Ich versichere ihnen, dass ich ein Auslander bin... ich kenne sie nicht und... ich werde schreien... wirklich ich werde schreien... I tell you, I am a foreign citizen ... I do not know you and ... (a moment of hysterical laughter) I'm going to scream... really ... I'm going to scream...

(Silence.)

In the dark rectangle – the doorway to the room – we see the tip of a cigarette which is glowing. Silence.

Erhard is just about at the end of his rope. He begins to repeat himself and runs his hand nervously through his hair several times.)

Erhard: (German) Ich wusste es... ich wusste es... I knew it... (short burst of hysterical laughter) I knew it.

(Silence.)

The ember in the darkness.

Erhard begins to slowly slide along the wall. He is trying to be completely silent. He wants to slide along the wall and out of the place.

A painful silence.

The ember in the darkness.

Erhard is still trying to move and not be heard. However, because he is terribly upset, he is not succeeding. His shoes are squeaking – at least that’s how it seems to him – so he leans over and slowly takes them off. He’s standing there like that, glued to the wall, shoes in his hands, a sort of funny-grotesque-horrible situation –

Silence.

The ember in the darkness.

Erhard slides right up to the door where Dušan is hiding in the dark... Only a step, one step, and Erhard would be at the door out of the flat...

Now: a voice from the darkness.

Dušan in the door. Suddenly. Right next to Erhard.)

Dušan: (German) Wohin den wohin Rotkapchen? Where are you going, Little Red Ridinghood?

(Erhard screams and covers his head with his shoes and sits on the floor next to the door. He is waiting for a blow to fall. Dušan steps from the room and shuts the door behind him.)

Dušan: (laughing)(German) No, no, Verzeingung, ich wollte sie nicht erschrecken, es ist Fasching... Well, well...I’m sorry, I didn’t want to frighten you, it’s Mardi Gras...

Erhard: (jumps up to his feet)(German) Nein, lassen sie mich... Ich gehe... No, let me be... I’m going...

Dušan: Oh for God’s sake... some people really don’t know how to take a joke...

(German) Verzeihen sie, verzeihen sie wirklich, ich machte ja nur Spass, ich wollte geistreiche Geschichte erzählen... gelang mir nicht. Excuse me, really, I’m sorry, I was joking, I just wanted to tell a funny story. I guess I didn’t succeed.

Erhard: (calming down a little)(German) Ich mag solche Spasse nicht... sie haben von Oswiecim gesprochen I don’t like that kind of joke... You spoke about Oswiecim...

Dušan: (stepping around the stage in irritation) Yeah, yeah, it looks likes I really fucked up..I was using Auschwitz as a kind of allegory... (German) ... als Vergleich, verstehen sie... as an allegory, you understand...

Erhard: (German) Das dürfen sie nicht. Wir Deutsche sind sehr empfindlich auf
Auschwitz. You mustn't, Germans are very sensitive about Auschwitz!

Dušan: Oh man, it's true, I really fucked up (he pulls something out of his inner pocket
and shows it to Erhard) ...Here, look, my ID card, that's me.... (German) Das bin ich,
sie müssen mir glauben, es war nur ein geschmackloser Spass, vergnügen wir uns!
That's me, you gotta believe me, that was just a tasteless joke, c'mon let's have some
fun now!

(Dušan offers his hand to Erhard.)

Dušan: (German) Verzeihung, ich wollte geistreich sein. I'm sorry. I just wanted to be
funny.

Erhard: (completely put at his ease, takes Dušan's hand)(German) Ich kenne sie nicht,
ich sah sie heute zum erstenmal... darum war ich auch so sehr erschrocken. I don't
know you, today I met you for the first time...that's why I took such a fright!

Dušan: I understand, I completely understand (he points at the ID card) Look, that's me,
that's my identification card... (German) Sie brauchen keine Angst zu haben. You don't
need to be afraid. (English) I'm a well-known man and I wouldn't do you any harm.
You're our guest! (German) Sie sind unser Gast. You're our guest.

Erhard: (German) Wissen sie ich bin ein Deutscher und daren... You know, I'm German
and that's why...

Dušan: There's nothing wrong with being German, I'm nothing better... (helps him to
take his coat off)(German) Kennen sie diesen Witz? Do you know this joke?

Erhard: (German) Was? What?

Dušan: I'll tell you a joke, it goes like this: late at night two men meet ... (German) Zwei
Menschen treffen sich ... two men meet... (English) one is a Jew and the other is a
pissed German...

(Dušan begins to laugh at his unfinished joke. Soon he's laughing so hard he needs to sit
down on the couch.)

Erhard: (German) Bitte, sagen sie es bis zum Ende... Please tell it to the end...

(Dušan looks at him and nods as if to say: Yes, I will, right away – but through clenched
teeth.)

Dušan: If I tell you to the end... (laughter) ... you won't get it again ...

Erhard: (he also begins to laugh slightly) (German) Was ist den so sehr spasshaft? Is it so
very funny?

Dušan: (German) Ja, es ist sehr sehr witzig... Yes, very very funny... (English)

Especially when I tell you that the two men meet in the middle of Nazi Germany in Berlin... (German) die zwei Menschen, einer nüchtern, der andere betrunken... these two men, one is sober and the other is drunk...

Erhard: (laughs)(German) Nüchtern und betrunken, ja, witzig, sehr witzig. One sober, the other drunk, yes, funny, very funny.

Dušan: A pissed German and a sober Jew... (laughs)... in the middle of Hitler's Berlin in 1935... (laughs)... and the pissed German says to the sober Jew: you are a mangy Jewish dog ... (laughter)... and the Jew says to him: and you, sir, are completely drunk... (laughing so he almost chokes)...

Erhard: (German) Bitte, ich verstehe sie nicht... Please, I don't understand...

Dušan: The drunk German says: yes, yes, I'm drunk, very drunk... (laughs)... but tomorrow morning I'll be sober ... (thunderous self-satisfied laughter)

(Dušan laughs more and more until he is twisted up on the couch. Erhard stands next to him, a bitter smile on his face and his shoes still in his hands.

Jana enters.)

Jana: Miss Piiiiggy, as herself...

(Jana rushes in holding several plastic shopping bags. Bottles of beer and wine are clanking together. Jana rushes to Erhard and Dušan and begins to embrace them a little too wildly.)

Jana: I love you both, ohhhhh, my sweet little Kermit, oh yeah! Kissy kissy for Mister Universe, yeah, yeah!

(Right after Jana has finished violently, vehemently "hugging and slobbering on" both the men, she begins – as if nothing had happened – to unpack the bags which had fallen from her hands. She sets the bottles of beer and wine on the table in front of the couch.)

Jana: I can see that you two have been enjoying yourself...

Dušan: How can a man enjoy himself when you're not here?!

Jana: (she looks at them over her shoulder and then says affectatiously) Why thank you! I see that things got a little erotic around here ... (to Erhard) Oh, Mister Universe, what sexy socks you have...

(Erhard looks at his stocking feet and then at his shoes which he has been holding in his hand all this time.)

Erhard: (German) Ach, Verzeihung. Oh, excuse me.

Jana: Don't you worry, Erhard, everything's a-okay. It would only be a problem if you were just beginning to undress; but since I interrupted you in the process of putting your clothes back on, then everything's okay. But now you won't have any more time for ha-ha funny because we have guests. Oh yeah, Kermit, your piggy likes you so much!

Dušan: (pulling himself up) Guests?

Erhard: (German) Was sagte sie? What did she say?

Dušan: (to Erhard)(German) Besuch. Gäste kommen. A visit. Guests are coming.

(Erhard goes to the corner of the room and begins to quickly put on his shoes. He does it with the same intensity as if he were putting on his pants to hide his nudity. Jana turns toward the door to the apartment.)

Jana: Boys, come in... here inside ... here where the light is...

(A moment of silence and expectation. Walter enters very quietly – a young man, around twenty-five years old – hands in his pockets, leather jacket, an orange scarf around his neck, a knit cap on his head. Over his face, he has an extremely silly plastic mask, the image of the Devil. And there's more: entering the apartment right behind him are two boys wearing pants and sweaters – Number One and Number Two - almost indistinguishable from one another. Same colouring, same length and colour hair – long and lank blondish hair falls down their backs – like a pair of twins. They can only be differentiated by the masks they are wearing. One is wearing an “Ollie” mask and the other “Stan”. They can also be told apart because one of them has a plaster cast on his right arm. A white cast which has been written and drawn upon from the fingertips up to the elbow. They walk in right after the “devil”. Both are silent and extremely still.)

Dušan: Well, how nice...the more the merrier! And only boys, Jana! You'll be crushed if we all jump on you at the same time!

Jana: Oh, Kermit, you are very funny! I met the boys in the pub next door and since they had no where to go I asked them up. There's plenty of room, the party is happening, the alcohol is flowing, cheers, Euridice!

(Jana eagerly takes a pull on the bottle she just opened.)

Dušan: Well, let's go for it then!

(Dušan also takes a bottle and opens it. Jana offers her bottle to Erhard who takes a big gulp.)

Dušan: (to the boys, still wearing their masks, who stand unmoving on the threshold) So, I'm Dušan.

(Dušan offers his hand to the boy in the “devil” mask. A moment of silence and then the mask speaks.)

Walter: (takes Dušan’s hand and shakes it) Walter!

Dušan: Pleased to meet you!

(Dušan wants to let go of Walter’s hands and extend it to the other two but Walter hasn’t “finished the introduction” yet. His hand still grips Dušan’s.)

Walter: The pistol.

Dušan: Pardon me?!

Walter: The pistol!

(A moment of silence.)

Walter: Walter, like the hand gun.

(Silence.)

Walter: Just so you’ll remember.

(Silence.)

Dušan: Oh yeah, Walter the pistol, right?

Walter: (quietly) Yeah.

Dušan: So, Walter, the pistol, pleased to meet you. . .

Walter: (interrupting him) And this is Stan and Ollie.

Dušan: Funny. Stan and Ollie wearing Stan and Ollie masks.

Jana: And I’m Miss Piggy in a Nastassia Kinski mask.

Dušan: And this is our European friend! (He pulls Erhard into the middle, between the two boys.)

Erhard: (He offers his hand to Walter and then to the other two. He is very awkward. He stretches out his hand quickly and almost painfully, gives each hand a small shake and then steps back again.) Piler! (to the second boy) Erhard Piler!

(Silence.)

They look at each other. Embarrassment. Dušan, Jana and Erhard exchange glances while the three masks stand in the doorway not moving. Jana is the first to break the unpleasant silence.)

Jana: Well, let’s have a drink. What are we waiting for?

Dušan: Right a drink!

(Jana distributes beers.

Silence again.

Each of the three masks has a bottle of beer. They don’t move.)

Dušan: Masks off! Alcohol beckons! The alcohol will make you you drop your masks!

Jana: Pull those masks off, boys! You can't drink through a mask!

Dušan: Or talk!

Jana: Or kissy kissy!

Dušan: Or call for help!

Jana: Or even say I love you!

Dušan: (German) Ist es so, Erhard Piler? Isn't that right, Erhard Piler?!

Erhard: (German) Verhstehe nicht. I don't understand.

Jana: You can't make a face through a mask. Like this, for example... (She makes a horrible face.)... or this... (another horrible face)...

Dušan: Bravo, bravo! (Erhard also claps, but it is clear that he is increasingly uncomfortable.)

(Jana and Dušan recite sentences in a lively, playful and humorous rhythm while the three masks remain grotesquely still.)

Jana: You can't show your face.

Dušan: Not what you think.

Jana: Not what you feel.

Dušan: What kind of eyes you have.

Jana: What kind of smile.

Dušan: Your white teeth.

Jana: The spots on your chin.

Dušan: The cold sores on your lips.

Jana: If you're pretty, ugly, clean, dirty.

Dušan: Full of intrigue, lice, centipedes, other creatures.

Jana: What you know, what you don't know, what you want, what you don't want.

Dušan: Bad, good, politic, impolitic.

Jana: Irridentist.

Dušan: Fascist.

Jana: Strong, erect.

Dušan: Sexy.

Jana: Sexy and how.

Erhard: (German) Vestehe sie nicht. I don't understand.

Jana: How very sexy.

Erhard: (German) Bitte. Pardon me.

Jana: Young, strong and sexy.

Erhard: (German) Sex. Wann? Sex. When?

Jana: I wanna see.

Dušan: That's the way, Jana!

Jana: I wanna see what he looks like!

Erhard: (German) Verstehe nicht. I don't understand.

(Dušan plays the role of looker-on. Erhard wants to get in on the conversation anyway he can. Jana is getting more and more playful. The masks stand absolutely still. Like some kind of grotesque statues.)

Jana: I wanna see how he looks!

Dušan: Go for it!

Jana: How miraculous.

(Jana approaches the devil mask – Walter. Now, now, she's going to pull it off.)

Dušan: Be brave!

Jana. How strong.

Dušan: Yeah, that's the way, no prejudices!

Jana: How erect!

Erhard: (German) Verstehe nicht. I don't understand.

Jana: How young!

Dušan: Yeah!

Jana: And nubile!

Dušan: Yeah! Yeah!

Jana: How brutal, how tough, how penetrating.

Erhard: (German) Ich verstehe noch immer nicht. I still don't understand.

Dušan: Go ahead!

Jana: With a smile or without!

Dušan: Go for it! No mercy! Masks off!

(Jana stretches out her hand toward the "devil" mask. Any moment now ,she's going to grab it and pull it off.)

Jana: How he's mine, yours, his own.

Dušan: Now, right away, immediately!

Jana: How, finally, he is revealed.

Erhard: (German) Verstehe nicht. I don't understand.

Jana: His face!

(Suddenly: the boy with the devil mask on his face grabs – violently, strongly – her wrist in his hand. A moment of silence which lasts and lasts. An unmoving picture. The boy holds Jana’s wrist in a fist right in front of his own face.)

Jana: Ooow!

(The boy lets go of her hand. Jana steps backward. The boy slowly, with an almost ritualistic gesture, takes off his mask. Right afterwards, Stan and Ollie also take off their masks. Now they’re all without masks. They have normal faces. Pleasant, nice, almost gentle boys.)

Walter: Excuse me. I don’t like it when anybody touches my face.

Jana: Yeah, well... what’s important is that you took...

Walter: Anybody...

Jana: Now we can drink a toast...

Walter: Even my best friend...

Jana: Masks on, masks off, courage always prevails.

Walter: Prevails?

Jana: Well yeah.

(Dušan intervenes.)

Dušan: Jana, the refrigerator. Let’s put these bottles in the refrigerator.

Jana: Good idea.

Dušan: I’ll help you.

(They grab the bags and carry them to the kitchen. In the meantime, Erhard approaches the two boys – Number One and Number Two – who are standing next to the couch.)

Erhard: (very pleasantly as if he is the host)(German) Bitte schon, machen sie sich bequem. Please, please, make yourself comfortable.

(The boys just stare at him. When Erhard realizes that they don’t understand, he tells them again, this time with broad gestures.)

Erhard: (German) Bitte setzens heirher, bitte... ganz bequem. Please... sit down... here... please... comfortable...

(In the kitchen. As soon as Dušan and Jana step into the kitchen, Dušan grabs her by the elbow and pulls her in towards him, leaning with his back against the door which he has quickly, with his foot, kicked shut behind them.)

Jana: Are you crazy?

Dušan: You’re the one who’s crazy.

Jana: What’s the matter with you?

Dušan: You go out and pick up complete strangers.

Jana: They're not strangers.

(She gets away from him and crosses the room to the refrigerator.)

Jana: They're really nice young boys.

(In the living room. The twins take Erhard at his word and sit down on the couch. Erhard walks around them like a cat around a bowl of milk. Walter starts to slowly walk around the room, making himself at home.)

Erhard: (German) Sprechen sie Deutsch? Do you speak German?

Walter: (He answers in place of the boys. He answers without looking at Erhard. He answers while looking around the room.) No.

Erhard: (He looks at Walter, a little surprised but not too much. He addresses the two boys again.) Habla espanol?

Walter: (stepping toward the shelves and studying the books) No!

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: I don't like anything about them.

Jana: (while putting the bottles into the refrigerator) Well I do.

Dušan: They're so... they're so...

Jana: What...?

(In the living room.)

Erhard: (Sits down next to the boys on the couch and asks) Parlez vous francais?

(Walter is now standing at the front door. We see how he surreptitiously takes the key to the front door out of the lock and slips it into his pocket.)

Walter: No!

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: So... so mysterious.

Jana: Yes and handsome!

(In the living room.)

Erhard: (staring at the twins) Italiano?

(Walter steps toward the door that leads into the bedroom. He opens it. Darkness.)

Walter: No!

Erhard: Un puoco?

Walter: (his voice echoing in the room) No!

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: And so you picked them up for some sort of sex carnival.

Jana: So what? You can have a turn too.

Dušan: (hissing through his teeth) Idiot!

Jana: (hissing back at him through her teeth) Intellectual!

(In the living room. Erhard doesn't know what to do. He stands up in front of the boys. He's trying very hard to get a spark of communication going.)

Erhard: (German) Vielleicht kennen sie dass? Maybe you know this... (He begins to speak with gestures, like a deaf-mute with his hands, making signs for letters, words, etc.) Mein Name ist My name is (spells out the letters in the air)... E-r-h-a-r-d... (German) verstehen... Do you understand... (with his hands) ... (German) ich, Erhard... Freund, hier sehr gerne, mir angenehm, sie ... me, Erhard, friend, here, I like, very nice, you...

(Walter - in the empty room – interrupts Erhard.)

Walter: (his voice echoing) No.

(Erhard looks up. Confused for an instant. Toward Walter, toward his voice which comes from the empty room in the background.)

Erhard: (German) Was? What?

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: They could be dangerous.

Jana: Don't freak out, we're not in America.

Dušan: We don't know anything about them.

Jana: Or about ourselves for that matter.

(In the living room.

Walter has come out of the backroom. He turns out the light and closes the door.)

Walter: No.

Erhard: (German) Nein? No?

Walter: No.

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: Okay, if you say so.

Jana: We'll have a good time, we'll drink, curse a little, maybe have a flirt, a joke and then it's over, period, morning...

Dušan: Yeah, morning...

Jana: And never again. Each to his own place. Back across the street. You'll see... (she hugs Dušan around his shoulders) ... you'll see, you little dummy...! (and kisses him on the nose.)

(In the living room.)

Erhard: (German) Ich wollte mich unterhalten... I want to talk...

Walter: No.

Erhard: Komunizieren... ich, sie und der anderen... Communication ... me, you, them...

Walter: No.

Erhard: (German) Wunderschoner Abend... Lovely evening...

Walter: No.

Erhard: (German) cignentlich Nacht... Karnewal... verstehen... Erhard Piler... Hund. Karnewal... ich... Actually night... Carnival... you understand... Erhard Piler... (he takes the mask of the dog which he had placed on the table earlier that evening and now slips it on his face) Dog, Carnival... I... Hund, Karnewal... ich...

Walter: No.

Erhard: (German) Und sie? Komunikation? And you? Communication?

Walter: No.

Erhard: (German) Mit mir? Nein, ah, gehen sie... ich... hau, hau, hau... With me? Oh, come on... Me... Woof, woof... woof, woof...

Walter: No.

Erhard: Hau, hau! ... Woof, woof!... (Erhard is really playing around now, jumping around in his carnival mask and barking like a dog.)

(In the kitchen.)

Dušan: What are we gonna talk about?

Jana: Oh, for God sake, about nothing... you know how it goes...

Dušan: I don't feel so good about this ...

Jana: You intellectuals are sooo flexiotic... (she pushes him and then opens the door)... c'mon, let's go!

(Dušan puts a smile on his face.)

Dušan: We're complexicated, Jana, complexicated – that's how you say it... (he slowly follows her into the living room.)

(In the living room.)

Erhard: Hau hau... woof, woof!

Jana: Well, I can see that you're having a good time out here... Cheers!

(Everyone is in the living room again.)

They clink together their bottles of beer.

Erhard takes off his mask.)

Erhard: (to Dušan but so everyone can hear)(German) Sehr feine Burschen, jedoch nicht kommunikativ... Very nice boys but very uncommunicative...

Dušan: (to Walter) Our European friend here complains that you're very uncommunicative.

Walter: No, no, certainly not ... We were having a very pleasant chat out here... (he looks at Erhard and winks at him) Isn't that so, Mr. Piler?

Erhard: (nodding happily) Yes, yes.

Jana: But those two cute friends of yours are awfully quiet.

Walter: It's true, they are rather silent types.

Jana: I am too actually; you know, I'm also the silent type.

Dušan: (with a good-natured smile) A truer word was never spoken.

Jana: Sometimes I'm so silent that I amaze even myself. Just like your little friends there. Do you mind if I squeeze in between you two. (She literally does) I love to sit between young boys. Wow, what a great cast. Can I put it in my lap? I can? (She takes the boy's hand and lays it on her skirt.) Look at all that graffiti, look Dušan, written and drawn all over. Look, this would interest you since you're a writer.

Walter: You're a writer?

Dušan: Well, yeah.

Jana: (reading the words on the cast) "Die, animal!" Now that, that's really funny! "What the fuck!" Signed "The Hard-On".

Walter: What do you write?

Dušan: Nothing, at the moment.

Jana: (amusing herself with the writing on the boy's cast) This is good, this is...!

Dušan: Otherwise for the theatre.

Jana: If you can't get it up, you're scared of pussy! (to Dušan) Did you hear that, it's to die for!

Dušan: Yeah.

Jana: (to the boy with the cast) Lucky man, to have such friends, each one dedicating such lovely thoughts to you. Dušan, I have an idea, why don't you write something?

Dušan: I can't, not now...

Jana: Well what kind of writer are you if you can't write a little something on a cast.

Dušan: It's extremely difficult to write on a cast, Jana. You have to know the person very well. It's an intimate thing. It's almost like writing on someone's skin.

Jana: You're just kidding me.

Dušan: We need to know each other better, that's all I'm saying.

Walter: And we will.

Dušan: (looks at Walter and asks with a quiet intimacy) Really?

Walter: (looking deeply into Dušan's eyes) I promise.

Jana: (gets up exasperated and grabs a bottle) So many boys and yet so dreadfully boring! My mother said it well: One boy – boring, two boys – boring, three boys - boring... (She stares at the boys.) What is it with you? Two deaf-mutes, one German, one little pistol and a failed writer... what's this country coming to? C'mon, c'mon let's party, what are you lookin' around for?! If you don't do something really crazy right now, I'm gonna shut up and I won't say another word until Ash Wednesday!

Walter: They're not deaf-mutes.

Jana: Oh those two? ! Then why don't they talk, huh?

Walter: They probably don't think it's worth it.

Jana: They don't think I'm worth it? That's outrageous!

Dušan: (ironically) Maybe we're not intelligent enough company for them?

Walter: I should warn you, they can get very upset.

Jana: Oooh really? What are they, some kinda of new breed?

Dušan: And you, little pistol, you provide the instructions for their use?

Walter: They're very sensitive.

(During the conversation, Erhard moves slowly behind the couch where the two motionless "twins" are sitting. He watches them from behind without them noticing him. Meanwhile, the conversation between Jana, Dušan and Walter is getting more and more heated.)

Jana: Yeah, a new breed, a pair of deaf-mute twins! That could be really fun!

Dušan: They come on a visit, they don't say anything, they don't even fart, they just sit there guzzling beer, they hardly even blink their eyes, I mean this is unbelievable!

Jana: Like some kind of new game!

Walter: It would probably be best if you were polite to them.

Dušan: (feigning surprise and fear) Why? Are they dangerous?

Walter: If someone bothers them too much....

Jana: (pretending to be terrified, she flies into Dušan's arms) Oh, I'm so afraid, oh my hero, protect me...

(Now the twins begin to smile. Up until now they've had faces of stone and now they are smiling. Erhard, who has been watching them unobserved, moves toward them...)

Erhard: (eagerly) (German) Ich wusste es, sie horen, sie verstehen, sie haben gelachelt!

I knew it...you hear... you understand ... you're smiling!

(Dušan and Jana turn toward Erhard.)

Dušan: (German) Was? What?

Erhard: (German) Sie haben gelachelt. Verstellt haben sie sich. Ha, ich habe sie ertappt!

You're smiling. You were pretending. Ha, I caught you!

(Walter starts to laugh.)

Walter: (laughing) I'm sorry ... we couldn't keep it up any longer!

(The two boys also start to laugh.)

Number One: Sorry...

Number Two: We did it as long as we could.

Walter: We arranged this outside...

Number One: That we wouldn't talk...

Number Two: A game, you know. A joke.

(Dušan and Jana are looking at each other and then they also start to laugh.)

Erhard: (German) Ich habe sie gefragt, und sie haben so getan, als dass sie nicht verstehen. Nichts... Kommunikation... nichts... I was asking them but they just pretending that they didn't understand. Nothing... no communication... nothing.

Dušan: Barbaric little buggers, ha!

Jana: Spoiled brats!

Dušan: I knew they were joking!

Walter: It could only be a joke!

Number One: It had to be. It's Mardi Gras! Carnival!

Number Two: We love to take the piss!

Number One: And to drink!

Dušan: And to party, right! To your health!

Erhard: (steps forward and speaks in broken English – he's trying very hard to be polite and social) To-your-health!

Jana: Bravo, bravo! You're getting it! You're getting it!

Erhard: (enthusiastically repeats it) To-your-health! To-your-health! To-your-health!

(Everyone applauds.)

All: Bravo, bravo!

Dušan: The borders of communciation have fallen! Long live dialogue!

Erhard: (again in broken English) Long-live!

Dušan: (to the boys) And how did you get the dumb idea to play a joke on us? Such mature serious people...?!

Jana: (taking up Dušan's self-ironic tone) as we are. We are, after all, well into our forties!

Walter: No seriously. We noticed you even before.

Number One: Before you came upstairs.

Number Two: Hey look at them, they're having such a good time. And they're with a foreigner. Looks like fun.

Number One: One woman and two men.

Walter: And we followed you.

Dušan: Ooh la la, you were tailing us.

Walter: It's kind of a hobby of ours. And then we saw her again when she came down to the pub to buy more drink, so we kinda slid up next to her.

Number One: It's like a hobby.

Number Two: Because we're bored.

Dušan: (to Erhard) Oh just like that, who would have thought? (German) Verfolgt haben sie uns, Herr Erhard! They were following us, Mr. Erhard! (English) They just walked right after us.

Erhard: (worried)(German) Sind es Polizisten? Are they police?

Dušan: No, no, not police. Hobbyists. They follow people. It's a hobby.

Number One: It's a joke.

Number Two: A game.

Number One: And you can make some money too.

Jana: What do you mean by that?

Walter: (interupts) He just wanted to say that it can be interesting, profitable in a way.

Number One: Yeah interesting. That's what I wanted to say, yeah!

(Silence, a rather uncomfortable one. Everyone is quiet then Jana starts to laugh.)

Jana: Good joke. But you can only fool us once, right? (to Dušan) And they wanted to do it a second time. (lovingly) Little buggers!

Walter: (smiling) Well, we tried.

Number One: Yeah, we tried to get you going again.

Number Two: It's Mardi Gras. Time for masks.

Dušan: So that's how you play with your elders.

Jana: Buggers, I told you!

Walter: (a more serious tone) Though, in spite of it all, there can be a certain benefit.

Dušan: Like what?

Walter: You should know, you're the writer.

Jana: (mocking) Failed.

Dušan: (pretending to be resentful) Thanks a lot.

Walter: The benefit, the profit, if you will, is in observation. You observe people.

Number One: You kill time.

Number Two: Like an exhibition. You sip your ale, look outside: they walk up and down.

Number One: People.

Walter: Different kinds of people. Crippled, hunchbacked, beautiful, ugly, blind...

Number One: People!

Number Two: The time passes, the ale flows...

Walter: One walks in such a way that even from a distance you can tell he's worried.

Maybe it's his wife. She has a lover. He's thinking of suicide.

Number One: Otherwise he wouldn't be part of our exhibition...

Number Two: He wouldn't stop so long in our gun sights.

Walter: Then there's the women in the fur coat. Hungover. Sleepless nights. Money to burn, but happiness...

Number One: ...she's not; she's not happy.

Number Two: No, not happy.

(Pause.)

Dušan: And that's how you pass the time. You stare out the window of a pub and dream up little stories.

Walter: We don't dream them up. We rummage into the past. We try to see what's already there. Behind the faces.

Number One: Sometimes we follow them.

Number Two: Get to know them.

Number One: And they us.

Jana: Just as you're getting to know us.

Walter: Yes.

Dušan: Strange hobby.

Walter: You could almost call it a vocation.

Dušan: How's that?

Walter: You wouldn't understand. You'd be surprised.

Dušan: Well, tell us, all the same.

Walter: (hesitating) No, maybe later.

Dušan: Right.

Walter: But you're a writer...you should already know about all this...

Dušan: What...

Walter: Observation. Dreaming up little stories.

Dušan: Sure I know all about it. (reflects) But then again, maybe I don't. You know, I write for the theatre.

Number One: What about for movies?

Number Two: (enthusiastic) Do you know *The Revenge of the Golden Cobras*?

Number One: Or the *Dangerous Journey*?

Dušan: No. I don't have anything to do with that sort of stuff. What I do is much less interesting.

(Erhard Piler stands beside them and listens tensely. Then he sits down on the couch, a bottle of beer in his hands. He is trying to keep his eyes open.)

Dušan: What I write disappears into thin air almost as soon as it's spoken. One word buries another word, one instant the next and one evening the following evening until all of it is forgotten.

Jana: (singing) A-a-a-a-me-e-n!

Dušan: (ironically) You're really very funny.

Jana: Well what? Such a nice evening and you have to start poeticizing. Isn't it a pity? Let's drink a little more and have some fun or I'll threaten you with a striptease a la Miss Piggy!

Dušan: Right, let's have a little fun!

Number One: (interrupting him) What about *The Revenger*?

Number Two: And *The Revenger II*, and *Godfather*, and the *Towering Inferno*?

Number One: And *Stage Coach*, even though it was black-and-white, it was still a really good movie.

Number Two: And *Yellow Dog*, thriller, super action...

Dušan: I don't know much about movies.

Number One: What about the one where Arnold, all muscles, throws a terrorist on the floor and pumps him full of bullets...

Number Two: *Predator!*

Number One: Or science fiction! *Alien!*

Number Two: Or classics: *Rear Window*, Alfred Hitch!

Dušan: I really don't know any...

Number One: *Goldfinger*, *Rocky*, *Amadeus*...

Dušan: *Amadeus*, I saw that...

Number One: *Jaws One, Two and Three*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Trail of Blood*...

Dušan: Literature is more my specialty...

Number One: Musical comedies...

Jana: I adore them!

Number Two: *Goodbye Girl*, *My Fair Lady!*

Jana: Barbra Streisand!

Number Two: *Casablanca*, *Cabaret*, *The Boyfriend!*

Dušan: What about: Shakespeare, Moliere, Dostoyevsky, Alphonse Daudet, Truman Capote, Pushkin, Norman Mailer, Guy de Maupassant, Czeslaw Milosz, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Arthur Machen, Chechov, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, Gombrowicz, Yukio Mishima, Kundera, Asturias, Peter Handke, Marquez, Mrožek, Harold Pinter, Edward Albee, Bulgakov, Bert Brecht, Kosovel, Lermontov, Griboyedov, Henrik Ibsen, Prešeren, Torquato Tasso, Bergson, Oto Bihalji Merin, Freud, Franci Zagoričnik, Hesse, Bukowski, Danilo Kiš and, of course, above all Henry Miller.

(Silence.

Dušan stands up, overheated, almost upset and also quite proud that he could carry on this "monologue of names" and manage to fascinate the gathered company.

Silence.

Erhard cries out.)

Jana: There you go! This intellectual shit again! There always has to be one fuckin' intellectual to fuck up a perfectly nice evening! I mean what do you have against Barbra Streisand anyway? Is it our fault that you happen to know the names of three-hundred mediocre writers?

Dušan: (upset) not mediocre, Goethe...

Erhard: (he wakes up for an instant and then falls back to sleep) Goethe, ja!

Dušan: (continuing)... Goethe is Europe, the world... Not mediocre, I won't allow it... You're trying to sell here some kind of cheap-American-bullshit-culture as the star of the evening! Arnold Scwharzeneger winks at you and you couldn't care less about Goethe...

Erhard: (waking up again, though only for an instant) Goethe, ja! (and back to sleep)

Dušan: I'm leaving. Where's my coat? I'm leaving. That was my last word.

(Dušan looks around the room for his coat. The others just sit there looking at him.

Unmoving.

Erhard sneezes several times.

Dušan finds his jacket and nervously puts it on. When he tries to put his arm in the sleeve, he somehow – probably because he's so upset – cannot find it. It's a very funny situation – Dušan, cursing at himself, is spinning around his own axis, desperately trying to hit the target of his sleeve.

This goes on a little while.

After a few “spins around his own axis”, Dušan gives up hope that he will hit the target, takes the coat off, rolls it up into a ball and throws it into the corner.

Then he calms down. He puts his hand through his hair. Then he is completely calm though defeated.)

Dušan: There. All forgotten.

Jana: You see what he said. Now we can get on with it.

Walter: Where were we?

Dušan: Cheers!

(Everyone bows to him.)

Jana: More drinks! I'll get more from the fridge!

(And she heads for the kitchen.)

Walter: (to Dušan) Did you really mean that about Henry Miller?

Dušan: Did I mean what?

Walter: At the end you said:... “and, of course, above all Henry Miller.”

Dušan: I said that?

Walter: He's the only writer I like.

Dušan: Really?

Walter: You know, he's interested in sex.

Dušan: Yeah? (pause) Me too.

(Number One – the boy who was wearing the Stan mask – slowly heads into the kitchen where Jana is opening the refrigerator.)

Dušan: I even met him personally.

Walter: Really?

Dušan: Yeah. In Paris. At a symposium. He was really old. Old and half-blind.

(In the kitchen.)

(The boy approaches Jana. Jana is frightened. He grabs her and kisses her. It's a long kiss, very deep and penetrating.)

Dušan: Then they invited us all out to a dinner at a well-known Paris restaurant. I went along too. He told us stories. Yeah, right there at the table he told us stories while he was eating his rice pilaf.

(The boy returns. Right after “Stan” gets back to the living room, then Number Two – the one who wore the “Ollie” mask – heads into the kitchen. Jana is recovering from the shocking and unusual kiss. She grabs some bottles and is about to return to the living room. The second boy intercepts her at the door.)

Dušan: He told us about the times back then, how he was often hungry, how he wandered the streets of Paris, from bordello to bordello, from woman to woman...

Walter: Do you think he really was such a womanizer, the great lay he described in his books...

Dušan: I don't know. Probably.

(In the kitchen.)

The second boy embraces Jana. Kisses her. The same kind of long “deep” kiss as the first boy.)

Dušan: Actually, I'm convinced he was a great lay. Writers are all complete in their literature, literature is their one truth, their real face.

Walter: And you? (pause) What do you write?

(In the kitchen.)

The boy moves away from Jana and returns alone to the living room. Jana, stunned, stands there for some time. Bottles in her hand.)

Dušan: Nothing. (pauses – a long look between Walter and Dušan – into each other's eyes. Both boys stand beside them as if they had been there throughout the entire conversation) Right now, I'm not writing anything at all. (Pause – another look into each other's eyes) I'm searching. (Jana enters. We can see that she is still under the impression of the unexpected secret kisses.)

Jana: Drinks! For you!

(Puts the bottles down on the table.)

Jana: Erhard, Erhard Piler! (to the others) We just forgot about him. Erhard!

(Jana steps toward Erhard and shakes him. Nothing. Erhard is sound asleep.) It looks like we won't be able to wake him... Erhard!

(Jana tries to wake him, shaking him vigorously.)

The boys – Walter, Number One, Number Two, Dušan – are standing in a half-circle like a choir.)

Walter: One, two, three, four!

Everyone: (very loud, drawing it out like a choir would) Goetheeeeeee!

Erhard: (awakens) Goethe, ja!

(Everyone laughs.)

Jana: Erhard, you were sleeping! For you: a drink, refresh yourself! (she presses into his hand a full cold bottle of beer)

Erhard: (standing, still groggy and hungover) (German) Was, bitte? Pardon me, please?

Dušan: (German) Sie haben geschlafen, Herr Erhard! You were sleeping, Herr Erhard!

Erhard: (German) Ich. Nein. Keinesfalls, habe nicht geschlafen, dass aber nicht. Me? No. Not at all. I wasn't sleeping. Not that.

Jana: Then let's go for it! I haven't finished yet!

(Jana steps on to the table and begins to enthusiastically enact a scene from the Muppet Show.)

Jana: Look Kermit! You see, I like you so much that I could eat you up! Skin and bones! Oh Kermit, take it away! Yeah, yeah!

Erhard: (applauds enthusiastically) Bravo, bravo!

Jana: There! Now you. Show me what you can do and I'll tell you if it's any good!

Walter: I'm afraid I can't do anything quite as well as you.

Jana: Try! Whatever!

Dušan: (jumps on the table) I know a little song. (he sings, seriously but out of tune)

The key is in the lock,
the lock is in the key,
key, pea, tree ...

The key and the lock

what a handsome pair,
the lock grinds and gnashes
when the key turns in there...

(Everyone applauds.)

Erhard: Bravo, ja, bravo!

Jana: Bravo, the failed writer finally speaks! Bravo!

(Dušan steps down from the table.)

Dušan: Very funny, Jana, very funny.

Jana: Of course, darling, of course. I'm well-known for my sense of humour.

Walter: I think that it's our turn now....

(The two boys stand in the center of the room. One next to the other.)

Walter: Each of us must show what we can do.

(The boys undress the top half: shirts and sweaters.

Now the two stand in the middle of the room, one next to the other, naked to the waist.

Young and muscular.)

Walter: From the movie: *Revenge of the Ninja!*

(The boys adopt the combative pose of Japanese marshal artists.)

Walter: Bushido! The Japanese mastery over body and mind. Tai-chi, the tautness of the body, the perspiration of death.

(The boys take up a few different positions.

They move slowly through the air: slow but violent and tense motions.)

Walter: The culture of the mind is the culture of the body. Arnold Scwharzenegger, samurai warrior with no master, everything is the body, the body is the soul.

(The boys slowly and deadly serious, taut as strings, move, taking the room they need to act out their mortal blows.)

Walter: A scene from the film. The last sequence. Black and white. Good is white, evil is black. The last duel. Who will be victorious – body, mind, emotion? Who?

(The boys jump and wave their arms in the empty air, and then again. Perspiring bodies, tension.

Ehrard moves closer.

Horribly intent, taking it seriously. Full, vigorous. The movie.)

Walter: But the attack is not successful. Maybe once again. Bones are breaking. Then with a single blow, the brow bone is pushed out through the brains.

(A fake blow.)

Walter: But he misses, the blow is intercepted. No blood, blood comes later. Blood is life. And now it's part of the code. Honesty. The six rules of Bushido: fear yourself as you fear your opponent! Hand to hand, bone to bone. Blow for blow, the Near East, fair play, bullshit, the code, let the best man win, the best, the strongest, the most honest, the whitest, bullshit....

(Walter pulls a walter pistol from his belt and shoots the first boy. The boy grabs his stomach and falls to the floor. Jana screams, Erhard and Dušan step backwards.)

Walter: Civilization. The asshole code of the Bushido, the asshole white man, shot in the stomach, salvation. Last frame, end of the movie. Just one more sentence.

Number One: (dying) I would like just once, at least once again, to see the red sun set...

Walter: (repeats it) I would like just once, at least once again, to see the red sun set...

(pause) Then he dies.

(Number One dies.

Silence.)

Walter: The movie ends, credits roll, actors, technicians, consultants, closing music, darkness.

(Silence. Everyone is still and quiet. Jana, Dušan and Erhard are still not sure whether what they saw was illusion or truth. The pistol Walter pulled out has totally mixed them up.

Release.

Applause.)

Jana: Bravo, bravo! You fooled us again, boys!

Dušan: Jesus Christ.

Erhard: (German) Wunderbar, gratuliere. Wonderful, congratulations!

(Erhard steps decisively toward the boys and seizes them in an embrace.)

Walter: (modestly) That's the way a trick has to be. Everyone knows best what seems real to him. Don't you think that's so?

Dušan: (surprised and confused) What?

Walter: When you were taking about Miller.

Dušan: Yeah, yeah. Great, really great. You see, one more proof that truth is always playing on the borders of fiction. You never know where you really are.

Walter: How 'bout the part with the gun, wasn't that good?!

(Dušan grabs the gun and looks at it up close.)

Dušan: Amazing how appearances can be so deceiving!

Walter: Russian roulette! It's Carnival, we gotta explode, right!

Dušan: Yeah, it was such a realistic trick. Such a realistic depiction of death. True theatre!

(Now Jana moves toward the boys and – much less shyly than Erhard – embraces them and touches their smooth muscles.)

Jana: What beautiful boys you are and the things you know how to do! (She touches them more daringly.) You're just like sculptures! Good enough to eat! (She turns to Erhard who is still standing shyly beside and holding the first boy by his shoulders.) Isn't that right, Mr. Erhi?

Erhard: Yeah, yeah!

Dušan: (still all fired up) You see, that's what I feel, when I sit powerless in front of my typewriter. Every single thing, every event in reality is so much more convincing than its artificial literary counterpart. You know? Not only what's happening here (walks around the space) between us who are, after all, real. But also all those tiny tricks, tiny illusions, lies, politics – or whatever you want to call it – all of that is also real and convincing. I believe all of that. You see, but I can't believe in the theatre anymore ... and that's the source of my crisis. Do you understand?

Jana: (confused) No.

Dušan: I wasn't talking to you. (He turns again to Walter.) I especially like the part you played because you were so realistic. I was really afraid, terrified ... there was an instant of terrible fear, only an instant, then a blow, catharsis, release... You know, *where* is that, *where* is that instant when you become something different, it's in the theatre of life... understand? (He grabs Walter by the shoulders as if he wants to look in his eyes for the words he cannot find.

Silence.)

Walter: No.

Jana: Congratulations (giving Walter her hand), now you're on my side. (Turning to Erhard.) You, Erhi, also don't understand, do you?

Erhard: (German) Bitte? Pardon me?

Jana: (speaking German with an English accent) »Niht frshtensi, niht frshtensi«.

Erhard: (German) Nein, freilich, nein. No, of course not, no.

Jana: And you (to the boys), you boys are also on my side, aren't you?

Number One: Sure.

Number Two: Yeah, we like the movies. (Jana returns her gaze to Dušan.)

Jana: So, you see... it's about time that you cut it out, stop babbling your stupidities...

What terrible fear!? What castration?! What release?!

Jana: (stepping back) Catharsis, Jana, it's called catharsis!

Jana: Okay, catharsis, what difference does it make? It's meaningless. It was great and now it's over so stop abusing the guests, for Chrissake. Let's have another drink! What are we holding back for?

Erhard: (German) Verzeihen sie bitte, ich musste aufs Clo... WC, Toalette? Excuse me please... there must be a bathroom... the WC, the loo?!

Jana: (with a wave of her hand, she indicates the door which can be seen in the back hallway) There in the back, Erhi!

(Erhard goes to the bathroom and shuts the door.)

Dušan: Okay, I give up. I won't do it again (he raises his hand), my word of honor! (and returns to the couch)

Jana: That's the way to talk! (she sits on his lap) And for a reward you get »kissy-kissy« (and she plants a wet one right on his cheek).

Walter: (cool and entirely in control of the situation) What's on the telly? That's the reallest reality in your living room. Seven-thirty, good evening Nicaragua, someone shot in the head for real – top of the evening news – or a fire which consumes body after body, Saigon... that you probably do believe in?

Dušan: That's different...

Walter: It's real.

Dušan: Yes, but I was talking about artistic realisty...

Walter: Or maybe it's not... (pause) real? (another pause)

(Boy Number One is secretly leaving the »scene« and moving along the wall towards the bathroom where Erhard is. He opens the door and slips into the bathroom. The door closes noiselessly behind him.)

Walter: Did you ever think that maybe it's not true. Artificial corpses, artificial blood, like some kind of »slash and burn« movie. Very convincing, very realistic...

Dušan: (smiling) No ... it is, after all, the news...

Walter: So what... technology, plastic bubbles filled with fake blood worn under a shirt, then bing bang, shot in the chest, a camera records it all, black and white, the camera man is shaking, the commentator with a trembling voice: attempted murder, justification,

provocation, father of six children, revolution, congress, six million dollars, Reagan, applause, voter rolls... Director, screenwriter, theatre, Goebbels...

(Boy Number One slowly returns from the bathroom. Unseen, unheard... Erhard is still in there.)

Jana: You two should get together somewhere on your own. I can see that!

(Fed up, Jana grabs her bottle of beer.)

Dušan: That's different. Goebbels, for example, was...

Walter: He knew how... yes... he thought that he was the Shakespeare of the modern age. That he was directing »Die Welt«! And, in many ways, he succeeded.

Dušan: (enthusiastically) Well, well, what have we here! I thought you were only interested in movies and now I see that you also know a little history.

(Boy Number Two slowly and unobserved heads toward the bathroom where Erhard still is. He slowly opens the door and slips inside. He closes the door behind him.)

Walter: No. I'm only interested in movies. And money.

Dušan: Then what's all this about Goebbels...

Walter: (cutting him off) From the movies.

Jana: I, for example, am interested in Barbra Streisand. She sings beautifully and has a beautiful profile. Shall we talk about Barbra Streisand for a change?

Dušan: About her beautiful profile?

Walter: About her nose?

Jana: Sure, why not? Let's talk about her nose as long as you guys stop with the politics...

Dušan: What politics...we were just chatting...

Walter: (cutting him off again) A nose can be political.

(The second boy comes back. Just as quietly and unobserved as he had went. He closes the door of the bathroom silently behind him. Erhard is still in there. Both boys stand in the back, as if they had not gone anywhere.)

Walter: There was a time when the nose was the most fateful part of the body.

(Jana stands up and guffaws in a vulgar way.)

Jana: And, from the length of the nose, you can also tell the length of the...(she grins)... you know what... and... (still grinning)... I've been looking at all of you and I'm afraid that your noses are not long enough for even one... (grinning)... you know what...

Dušan: You are becoming more and more vulgar and tasteless.

Jana: (returning the insult) And you, more and more straight and boring.

(Erhard comes out of the bathroom. He closes the door behind him. We can see that something unpleasant has happened. He's clearly confused. Nervously, he rejoins the group. He positions himself between the two boys who act as if nothing has happened between them. And maybe nothing has?)

Walter: When the allies discovered the concentration camps, no one could believe that it was possible. The people who were living near Auschwitz didn't know that not so far from their nice homes something truly horrible was happening.

Erhard: (agitated) Auschwitz?!

Dušan: (calming him down) (German) Nichts, wir unterhalten uns. It's nothing. We're just talking.

Walter: (continuing, cool and collected) People lived in their warm family homes and not very far from their living rooms, other people filed in long gray lines, through the crematoriums and straight up to heaven.

Jana: (drinking from her beer) Oh, fuck this!

Walter: It was happening so close by, almost in the next room. Reality was happening but they didn't see it and later no one could believe it.

Jana: I'd believe it.

(The conversation has become uninteresting to the others. Jana crosses the room and stretches out on the couch. Erhard also sits down. Only the boys are still standing.)

Dušan: (to Jana) Gimme that bottle!

Jana: That's the man talking. (She hands him a bottle.)

Walter: Sometimes you can't comprehend things that are happening, for example, in the next room. It's too close and, for that reason, it's also too far.

Dušan: I would. I would see and I would react. Isn't that right, Jana? You and me would realize what was going on.

Jana: Oh yes, my little Kermit, you're so sweet.

Erhard: (enthusiastic once again) Bravo, bravo...nochmals, bitte, dass machen sie so gut... diese Muppet Show... Bravo, bravo... Do it again, please, you do it so well... the Muppet Show...

Walter: The border between truth and illusion is sometimes invisible. Just think how, only ten minutes ago, you almost believed that the shot from this little walter pistol was not only real but fatal.

Dušan: That's true but it was only for a second...

Walter: Which could also be reality.

Dušan: Well, I bet that I can, as a professional, at least as far as the theatre goes, easily differentiate what is convincing from what is fake.

Walter: A fake can be convincing.

Dušan: Maybe so, but you can fool me only one time, and now I know you, you're not a devil who can trick me into not knowing anymore what is real and what is not.

Walter: Do you want to bet on it?!

Dušan: (arrogant) For as much as you want, kid!

Jana: Finally something is happening! Let's go, let's go! I'll bet too.

Dušan: (more and more convinced of his own superiority) I would, I'd make a bet for as much as you want.

Walter: Would you make it for your life?

(Silence.

Several long uncomfortable seconds.)

Dušan: (with a smile) You're bluffing, kid, you're only bluffing! (a pause and then decisively) No, I'll bet money. As much money as you want. Here (he tosses his wallet onto the table) I can write a check.

(Silence.

The silence continues for some time.)

Walter: (grinning) No. This is a party! A joke! Forget the money. Each will give something of himself and that's all. (He turns to Jana and starts to speak with the voice of an announcer or a game-show host) Madam, we will need your assistance in the execution of the first round, if you please.... (he offers his hand and she gets up affectatiously).

Jana: With pleasure, (to Dušan) ta-ta, my little Kermit, I have a new lover now...

Walter: Boys, get the chairs ready, the performance is about to begin.

(The boys jump up and in two movements turn the couch so it is facing the back wall, toward the doorway into the empty room.)

Erhard: (German) Was geht hier vor. What's happening?

Dušan: (German) Sie werden uns eine Vorstellung vorbereiten. They're going to do a performance for us.

Erhard: (German) Herrlich, sehr interessant. Great, very interesting.

(While the two talk, Walter – in the background – is whispering some instructions into Jana's ear.

The stage is set.)

Walter: And now... the next room!

(Walter opens the door to the room. Darkness.

Walter guides Jana to the door.)

Walter: If you please, madam!

(Jana steps into the room.)

Jana: Thank you.

(Walter closes the door. He steps into the center of the living room. He takes the gun from the table and tucks it into his belt. The two boys stand by the door. Silence. A long wait. Erhard and Dušan sit on the couch and, like an audience, look at the closed door on the back wall.

Silence. Waiting.

Dušan shifts uncomfortably.

Silence. More waiting.)

Dušan: (to Walter who is standing motionless to the side) Well, is something gonna happen or not?

(Walter does not respond. Silence. Waiting. Time passes.

Dušan stands, goes around to the table, takes a new bottle of beer, opens it, crosses to the boys who are standing by the door and offers them the bottle. The boys don't move a muscle. Dušan smiles.)

Dušan: Funny, very funny but totally unconvincing. Like some kind of cheap American flick.

Erhard: (German) Was geht hier vor? What's happening?

(Dušan sits back down next to Erhard.)

Dušan: Wichtig-Macher! Show-offs! (He points to the boys.)

(Silence. Waiting.

After some time, Walter gestures to the boys. They step into the room and close the door behind them. Walter crosses to the door and turns around so that he is now looking at Dušan and Erhard.

Silence. A long and uncomfortable silence.

Then a scream from the room. It is heard again. Jana is screaming.)

Erhard: (German) Was war dass? What was that?

(Dušan calms him with a gesture.

Silence.

Waiting.

Then a bang against the door, someone is struggling on the other side. Another scream. Erhard stands and looks at Dušan. He's frightened. Dušan remains seated. We can also feel the tension building in him but he does not react.

Walter stands in front of the door staring at Dušan and Erhard who are becoming more and more frightened.

Another scream. Jana is screaming in the room. Someone is thrown against the door. The door opens. Jana flies into the room. She is wearing only her bra and panties. The boys are holding her arms.

Jana screams.)

Jana: Noooo, noooo, leave me alone.... help meeee...

(The boys pull her back into the room with all their combined force. The door slams shut. Screaming and struggling in the room. Walter stands in front of the door like a statue.

Now Dušan also jumps to his feet. He runs to the door but Walter blocks the way. Erhard presses himself against the wall.

Silence.

Walter and Dušan look at each other.

Silence.

Then Walter smiles. He steps back from the door and knocks on it.

After a few seconds, the door opens. Jana's head.)

Jana: Peek-a-boo!

(The tension disappears.

Erhard applauds enthusiastically.)

Erhard: (German) Bravo, bravo... Theatre... wie interessant... Bravo, bravo...

Theatre...very interesting...

(Everyone returns to the living room.

Jana is buttoning her blouse.

Dušan returns to the couch and takes a long pull from his bottle.)

Dušan: I knew... ha-ha ... a well-executed hoax... congratulations...

Walter: You should have seen yourself. You were as white as a sheet.

(Erhard rushes toward Jana and hugs her.)

Erhard: (German) Sie sollten Schauspielerin werden. You should be an actress.

(Dušan looks at his watch.)

Dušan: I'm going home. I've had enough.

Erhard: (German) Sie sind eine prima Schauspielerin, Jana, wirklich... auch ihr Beide... Wir haben keine talentierte Jugend in Berlin... was für Schauspieler... You're really a great actress, Jana, really... You two, as well.. (he holds the two boys and kisses them on their cheeks) At home in Berlin, we have no talented young people...what actors...

(Walter approaches Dušan.)

Walter: Well, at least admit that you lost...

Dušan: (rudely) Lost what... I didn't lose anything...

Walter: You couldn't tell... you couldn't distinguish truth from illusion...

Dušan: I'm a professional writer... I write for the theatre...

Walter: The truth in the next room... your eyes couldn't see...

Dušan: I saw and I knew... from the beginning....

(Jana approaches the two.)

Jana: Oh calm down, darling. It was only a joke. We were having a good time back there in that room, weren't we? At least, you have to admit that.

(Dušan turns again toward Walter and looks him in the eyes.)

Dušan: You're a very talented young man!

Walter: And you're so polite all of a sudden.

Dušan: (angry, through his teeth) I don't mean to be.

Walter: So, I won the bet!

Dušan: You didn't win anything, sonny! If I recall correctly, we never decided what we were betting for.

(Jana intervenes. She puts her arms around their shoulders and hangs between them.)

Jana: (giggling) For your soul, darling, for your soul... Hello, let's drink up...

(Erhard, following Jana's example, hugs the two boys in just the same way.)

Erhard: (German) Zum Wohl Burschen, zum Wohl! Bin sehr zufrieden Euch kennen gelernt zu haben, so sehr zufrieden. Sie müssen nach Deutschland kommen, sie müssen, ich habe ein grosses Haus, wirklich!

To your health, boys, to your health! I'm so happy that I met you, so very happy. You must come to visit me in Germany. I have a very big house, you know!

Jana: Cheers! Bottoms up!

(Both boys, Erhard and Jana clank their bottles of beer together. But before they do, they count down, very loudly and very drunkenly. Erhard, of course, counts in German with a soldier's diction – vier, drei, zwei, eins, jeetzt!)

Everyone: Four, three, two, one, zero, noooooow!

(They clank their bottles together. Then they drink to brotherhood, each one individually, each one looking in each others eyes. Especially Erhard!

Walter and Dušan stand off to the side, staring into each other's eyes.)

Dušan: (quietly as if he is asking the essential question) Who are you actually?

Walter: (responds equally quietly, without dropping his gaze) I'm a guy who is very very bored.

(The whole group in the background drinks. A long gulp.

An instant of silence. Only an instant. Walter's words are heard in all their impassive demonic coldness.

The first to drink to the bottom is Jana, then the two boys and at the end everyone waits for Erhard.)

Everyone: C'mon, c'mon. Just a little more, just a little bit... Braaavo!

(Erhard finally drinks the last drop. Everything is blissful between the boys. Dušan has retreated to the end of the couch. He's still ruminating on Walter's words. Walter stands to the side.)

Jana: (to Dušan) Well, sweetheart... did you see what your little Miss Piggy knows how to do... I surprised you, didn't I? I'm known for that – that as I grow older, I can keep surprising. Wow, could it be true... (enthusiastically) ...that I could be an actress?!

Dušan: At forty?

Jana: Not now, idiot, before... when I was still young... (turning toward Erhard) Erhi, you understand me, don't you Erhi?

Erhard: Ja?

Erhard: Tell them, Erhi, that I'm a born actress (in poor pigeon German) "schauspiler ik...Erhi... ik schauspiler", tell them Erhi.

Erhard: (German) Ja, wirklich, sie ist eine gute Schauspielerin! Yes, she's a great actress, it's true!

Jana: (victoriously) So, you see!

Dušan: You could never be an actress.

Jana: And why not? You heard Erhard... I could be an actress in Germany, isn't that so, Erhi?!

Erhard: Ja, ja.

Dušan: There's a big difference between acting and cheating. Not every drunken cow is an actress.

Jana: (turns to him bitterly) And not every liar is a writer!

Dušan: Oh, stop it!

Jana: I won't stop! I'll even scream if I have a mind to.

Dušan: (more to himself) Oh God!

(Jana screams. A long scream of protest.)

Dušan: Sssshhhh... it's late. You'll wake people up.

Jana: I'm screaming because I'm free. Isn't that right, Erhi!

Erhard: Ja, ja!

Jana: I'm free and I'm an actress.

Walter: Don't worry, no one will hear you. You can scream your head off in the middle of an unoccupied, unfinished block of flats.

Jana: (still embroiled in her conflict with Dušan) Did you hear that? He also agrees that I'm an actress.

(Dušan stands.)

Dušan: (angry, he's finally had enough) Please stop going on and on about being an actress. It's offensive. I work professionally in the theatre and I know what is convincing acting.

Jana: (she doesn't take it) Yeah, we saw.

Dušan: (now he is screaming) That was nothing more than an amateurish hoax.

Jana: Oh, so then why did you get so scared?

Dušan: (stubborn and almost hysterical) I wasn't, I wasn't scared at all, not at all! From the very beginning I knew that all it was was a poor and unconvincingly played farce.

Walter: (quietly) All the same, you believed it.

Dušan: Nonsense, not at all.

Walter: Really?

Dušan: Maybe I believed it for an instant but then I immediately saw through it.

Walter: That instant is enough!

Jana: Did you hear what he said? (taking what to her is the most logical conclusion) So I could be an actress.

Walter: After that instant, there's no turning back.

Dušan: Ha!

Walter: There were pegs with little numbers on them. Just like in the public baths. And a door into an adjoining space where there were pipes and shower heads. Just like a real bathhouse. There was a lot of them. More than a lot. They were told to undress. They were told to remember the number where their clothes were hanging. They were told that

that way it would be easier to find their clothes when they finished showering.

Everything was like in a real bathhouse. (Pause) And they believed it. They believed it just for an instant. (Pause) They believed that their clothes would be there waiting for them. (Pause) Hanging by the number that they had memorised. (Pause) But they never came back. (Silence.)

Jana: (practically sobbing) Horrible story!

Dušan: (cynically) A real tear jerker, its been rerun a thousand times, deja-vu! (smiles stubbornly) Ha, you won't catch me again, sweetheart!

Walter: I never catch anyone; you caught yourself because you're always on the lookout. And I'm not.

Dušan: Well, you're a bloody prick to pull me along like that, you know? Okay, I'll admit that I believed you once, that it was convincing, but the next time it would have to be a lot better done for me to believe it... more realistic, better story, better trick, more blood, and better actors...

Jana: (lunging toward him) Are you talking about me?

Dušan: And then, maybe, maybe, it could be really convincing.

Jana: You're still thinking that I wasn't really good...

Dušan: Rank amateur!

Walter: Anybody can be convincing.

Dušan: (smiling) Well, don't tell me!

Walter: Another bet?

(A moment of silence.)

Dušan: The stake?

Walter: I don't know... (reflects) ... your belief, your conviction!

Dušan: Idiotic... but... (extends his hand) Okay!

(Walter and Dušan shake hands. The whole company gathers round, interested again.)

Walter: Okay, now choose!

Dušan: What?

Walter: The victim! (He smiles.) Whoever. Whoever you think would not be able to convince you. Whoever could not be serious enough.

(Dušan stares around the room. Reflects awhile though not too long. With his finger, he points at Erhard.)

Dušan: Erhard!

Erhard: (doesn't know what's going on)(German) Bitte?! Pardon me?!!

Walter: Right.

(Jana rushes to Erhard and puts her arms around his neck.)

Jana: Bravo, Erhard! You'll knock 'em dead! Don't disappoint me.

Walter: Tell him that we going to put on a little performance.

Dušan: (German) Sie werden aurtreten, so wie fruher Jana. You're going to perform just like Jana did before.

Erhard: (interested) Ja?

Walter: The boys will be with him.

Dušan: (German) Mit den Burschen. With the boys.

(Erhard eyes them enthusiastically.)

Walter: They'll explain everything to him.

Dušan: (German) Sie werden es ihnen erklaren. They'll tell you what to do.

Walter: In the next room.

Dušan: (German) Im Zimmer. In the room.

Jana: Bravo, Erhi! Break a leg! Don't let me down, you and me, "schauspiler"!

Erhard: (German) Ja, Schauspieler, ja! Yes, an actor, yes!

Walter: So let's get started.

(Dušan sits beside Jana.

Silence.

The silence of concentration.

Erhard stands in the middle of the room, blinking stupidly. Next to him stand Walter and the two boys, still naked to the waist.

Silence.)

Walter: He should take off his shoes. (to Dušan) Tell him to take off his shoes.

Dušan: Why?

Walter: I'm directing the play. He should take off his shoes or we won't continue.

Dušan: (German) Bitte, ziehen sie die schuhe aus. Please take off your shoes.

(Erhard stares stupidly and then grins.)

Erhard: (German) Gut, die Schuhe... Right, my shoes.

(He takes off his shoes.)

Walter: Tell him to put them next to the door just like in a hotel.

Dušan: (German) Neben der Tur... next to the door... (He points to the door to the next room. Smiling, Erhard goes and puts his shoes next to the door. Then he turns back toward the living room, awaiting the next instruction.)

Walter: His socks as well.

Dušan: (German) Die Strumpfe! Socks!

(Erhard takes off his socks.)

Walter: In the shoes.

Dušan: (German) Die Strumpfe in die Schuhe. Put your socks in your shoes.

(Erhard goes back to his shoes and puts his socks in them. Then he returns to the centre of the room.)

Jana: Bravo, brav...

Walter: (sharply) Silence!

Jana: Sorry!

Walter: Jacket!

Dušan: (German) Oberrock. Jacket.

(Erhard is a little more serious now. He does not follow the order but looks at Dušan, questioning. Silence.)

Walter: He can put his wallet into the back pocket of his pants. Tell him that he can have his wallet with him. No one's going to take it from him.

Dušan: (German) Die Brieftasche geben sie and die Rocktasche. Put your wallet into your back pocket.

(Erhard smiles again. He moves his wallet from his jacket into his pants pocket. Then he takes off his jacket.)

Walter: On the chair.

Dušan: (German) Auf den Stuhl. On the chair.

(Erhard sets his jacket on the chair.)

Walter: He should loosen his tie and undo the buttons on his shirt sleeves.

Dušan: (indicating his tie and cuffs)(German) Die Krawatte... und die Manschetttenknöpfe... Tie...buttons....

(Erhard obeys.)

Walter: He should take his mask from the table.

Dušan: (German) Nehmen sie die Maske. Take your mask.

(Erhard picks up the mask with the dog face which he was wearing at the very beginning.)

Walter: He should hold the boy by the hand.

(The boy without the cast on his arm, takes a pillow from the couch and puts it under his arm and then he steps up to Erhard.)

Dušan: (a little less willing now) Yeah, well... (German) Ergreifen sie den Burschen bei Hand. Take the boy's hand.

(Erhard shyly hold the boy's hand.

They stand there.

Silence.)

Walter: Go into the next room.

Dušan: (German) Ins Zimmer. Into the room.

(The boy guides Erhard toward the room. He opens the door. Darkness. They're still holding hands. The boy steps in first. Erhard after him. Erhard looks back toward Jana and Dušan. He waves with the mask which he has in his free hand.)

Jana: (raising her fist and whispering) You can do it!

(The second boy – the one with the cast on his hand – steps toward the door and slowly, almost ritualistically, closes it. Then he stands in front of the door and, very slowly, begins to execute the movements of Japanese marshal arts - “Bushido-Ninja”. He slices through the air.

Silence.

Dušan, Jana, Walter.

The boy in front of the door. Taut and silent, demonstrates karate blows.)

Dušan: And now what...)

(Silence.)

Dušan: Same old trick. A little screaming, a little banging on the door...)

(Silence.)

Dušan: Well?

(Silence.)

Walter: You wait. (Pause.) You wait. That's all.

(Silence.)

Dušan: Very clever.

(Silence.

Suddenly Walter – as if the time for waiting had elapsed – crosses to the table, takes his mask and puts it on his face. He is the same as when he and the boys first entered the flat. Walter now wears on his face the same funny plastic “devil” mask, a fiery face with little horns on top. The boy in front of the door stops doing his movements. He also crosses to the table and puts his “Stan” mask on his face. Then he steps past the seated

Dušan and Jana toward the window and with one decisive gesture pulls the curtains down to the floor.

Jana gets up.)

Jana: Hold on... that's not what we agreed ...

(The boy doesn't respond to her. He pulls the rope from the curtain rod that is now lying on the floor.)

Dušan: It's all part of the game, Jana... sit down... The boys (he smiles) are trying to be convincing.

(Jana sits down.

The boy pulls a knife from his pocket, opens it and cuts a long piece of rope. Then he puts the knife back into his pocket and quietly crosses the space toward the door of the back room. He opens it and disappears into the darkness, the door silently closes after him. The boy with the Stan mask and the piece of rope joins Erhard and the other boy in the back room. Walter, Dušan and Jana remain outside.)

Dušan: Well, that at least was something. Now I'm interested in ...

(He is interrupted by the noise coming out of the back room. Someone has been knocked against the wall. A stifled scream is heard. Then silence.)

Dušan: Do it again, boys.

Jana: Well, it's pretty convincing, I have to admit.

Walter: (from beneath his mask in a slightly deformed voice, speaking quietly, almost inaudibly) Would you perhaps be interested in knowing why he has a cast on his arm?

Jana: (with a woman's curiosity) Yes!

Dušan: (cuts her off) No. It wouldn't interest us at all. (To Jana) It's all part of this game of provocation. Believe me, I'm well-acquainted with these cheap dramaturgical tricks.

Walter: From a strike to the face. (Pause) He hit someone that hard in the face with his elbow.

Dušan: (smiling) And now, Jana, you and I are supposed to picture how that face looks, that face that was struck so hard. Horrible, Jana, like an elbow thrust into a rotten watermelon. Ha! Blood dripping down to the knees!

Walter: (quietly finishing his thought) He beat up a bloody queer.

(Another stifled cry. Now we recognise Erhard's voice. Another strike against the wall following by some sort of struggling, gasping. Then silence. Dušan stands up. The door to the room opens. The boy without the cast steps out. He's wearing the Ollie mask on his face. The door shuts behind him so that we do not see inside even for a second. We

can only be certain of one thing: that the room is still dark. The boy crosses to the chair where he has his jacket. He pulls out a white disk, a few inches wide. It's adhesive tape. He pulls about ten inches of tape from the disk and demonstrates its purpose by holding it over his mouth. He stands like that for some time. Silence. Dušan sits back down on the couch. The boy turns back and disappears into the room. The door closes after him. More struggling and gasping. And then something that sounds like a scream from Erhard. Then silence.)

Walter: Shall we stop?

Dušan: (slightly confused) What?

Walter: Do you give up?

Dušan: (laughs) What? You don't think that you convinced me with this cheap set-up. Oh no. I want more. I want realistic theatrical horror. Yes! Give it to me!

Walter: I'm afraid the horror is only of one kind.

(More banging this time with no stifled scream. Banging against the wall and then silence.)

Walter: And I'm afraid the horror is very real.

(Silence.)

Dušan: Tell me, who are you, young man. I admit that you're very talented!

Walter: And you're very stupid.

(Dušan stands.)

Jana: (also rising) Okay, let's quit. I'm thirsty.

(Dušan turns to her violently and screams.)

Dušan: Noo! We won't stop!

(He grabs Jana and sits her back down on the couch. Stubbornly, he sits beside her.)

Dušan: I want to know how they're going to convince me. Since we've started playing, we'll play to the end.

(The door opens. The young man with the Ollie mask – the one without the cast – emerges quietly and peacefully as if the job is completed. He sits on the edge of a chair and looks in the direction of Jana and Dušan.)

Walter: Right. Let's play to the end.

(Walter slowly approaches the boy with the Ollie mask. He asks him a question so quietly that Jana and Dušan can hardly hear.)

Walter: How is it?

Number One: Like usual.

(Walter nods in satisfaction and with the gesture of a superior claps the boy on the shoulder and turns back toward the centre of the room.

Silence.

Tension.

Walter speaks peacefully and quietly. We can hardly make out his barely audible voice which comes out from under the motionless “devil” mask.)

Walter: You two are afraid.

Dušan: (immediately objects but is unable to hide his fear) Afraid, not at all...

Walter: It creeps in slowly. It's already here. Maybe just the thought: what if I'm wrong, if I really can't tell reality from illusion, if all this is really true...

Dušan: (laughter mixed with fear) Well, I'm really interested in finding out where all of this leads...

Walter: Who are they? Who are these people? I don't know them. This is the first time I've ever seen them.

Dušan: I know you... (he turns to Jana)... Jana, these are your friends...

Walter: Who am I? And him? What does he want from us?

Dušan: (to Jana) You know them... you brought them here?

Jana: No... it's the first time I saw them... before... (her voice dies away)

Walter: The fear grows, spreads. In the muscles, just under the skin, a warm numbness; fear as the absence of will, the inability to fight. When you watch violence in slow motion, how someone is going to strike you with all their might somewhere beneath your belly, is going to crush you beautiful polished balls. You think: let it pass, let it just be over, let the pain come!

Jana: (almost screaming) I am afraid!

(Dušan grabs her mouth.)

Dušan: These are just tricks!

Walter: And then the thought: what is on the other side, what is on the other side of these white walls. So near but also so far. Their behind that wall, at the tip of my fingers, I only need to turn the door handle...

Jana: (rushing forward) What is it?

Walter: To open the door.

Jana: What's going on?

Walter: To do it!

Jana: (calling out) Erhard!

Walter: To convince yourself.

Jana: (screaming) Erhard!

Walter: To gather your courage and to look.

Dušan: Jana, sit down! Calm down! They're just playing their roles well, that's all!

Jana: (screaming louder) Erhard!

Dušan: Or to sit back. To abandon fear. To timidly ask.

(Jana sits down and timidly asks.)

Jana: What's happening?

(Silence.)

Jana: (now even more timidly) What's happening?

(Silence.)

Then the first boy, who up until now has sat completely motionless on the edge of the armchair, responds.)

Number One: When we first came in. Into the room. He thought it was a joke. Ha-ha. He was breathing in a certain way. A pig. Like a pig. A kind of fat piggy breathing. I recognised him right away. He's the one who waits around the corner, who loiters in public bathrooms, who buys sweets and lollypops and then waits for his opportunity. He's the one who appears all of a sudden, when you're leaving school, from behind the corner and pushes it into your hand, wheezing like a pig and offering you his dirty money. He's the one who you meets in offices, in stores, he's the one who tears your ticket at the movie theatre, the one who speaks at public meetings, who writes books and drives the most expensive car. He's the one who's guilty, who's made everything go to hell.

Jana: (fearful) Who are you talking about?

Number One: I recognised him right away. He was drooling on my neck. Then he went lower. He thought it was a joke. Ha-ha. But then when I pressed the pillow on to his drooling mouth. Then he thought something different.

Jana: My God!

Dušan: (standing) What did you do to him?

(Silence.)

Walter: Nothing. (pause) It's only a story.

Jana: I don't believe you.

Walter: Convince yourself then. (pause) You only need to open the door, to look at what's on the other side. (pause) Go ahead.

(Silence. Decisively, Dušan steps toward the door. He already has his hand on the knob.)

Walter: Only... (pause) Then the game would be over.

(Dušan pauses.)

Walter: And you would lose.

(Silence.)

Dušan starts to laugh. Utterly relaxed, he laughs. He steps up to Walter and offers him his hand. Smiling.)

Dušan: Congratulations...

(Laughter.)

Dušan steps up to Boy Number One and offers him his hand.)

Dušan: Congratulations, congratulations... One, zero, your advantage.

(Dušan sits on the couch next to Jana.)

Dušan: Let's keep playing then.

Walter: Right.

(Walter gestures to Boy Number One.)

The boy pulls a wallet out of his back pocket. It's Erhard's wallet. He opens it. He pulls identification cards out of it.)

Number One: Passport.

(He opens it. Reads.)

Number One: Erhard Piler. (to Walter) Do we need this?

Walter: We need it.

(Number One continues.)

Number One: Drivers license. (to Walter) Do we need this?

Walter: We need it.

(Number One pulls a couple of snapshots out of the wallet.)

Number One: A house! (he shows the first snapshot and then another) A friend. Nice. At the seaside. (shows a third snapshot) A woman. Older. Probably his mother. (shows the next one) The seaside again. Lobster. Germans eating lobster. (to Walter) Do we need these?

Walter: We don't need them.

(The boy pulls a lighter out of his pocket and slowly ignites the snapshots – one by one.)

Jana: Isn't that a shame? What will we tell Erhard?

(No one answers.)

Jana: Dušan!

(Dušan is silent. The snapshots burn. The boy pulls a checkbook out of the wallet.)

Number One: A checkbook! (to Walter) Do we need this?

Walter: We don't need it.

(The boy puts the checkbook near the flames. The sheets start to burn.)

Dušan: Now you're going too far. Boys!

Walter: Maybe it's not real. Think about it! Maybe it's only little sheets of paper! An arrangement we made between us. Think about it!

Jana: The fire's real.

Walter: Who knows?

(Now we hear from the room horrible struggling. A stifled scream. Banging against the wall. Gasping, a sort of cry and some cursing. All of this lasts a few seconds. And then it quiets down again.)

Silence.

The door opens. Stan emerges from the room. The boy with the Stan mask and the cast on his arm. He's holding in his hands a pair of pants and a shirt. Erhard's pants and shirt.

Jana and Dušan recognize them right away and stand up.

The young man tosses them into their faces.)

Dušan: Erhard's pants... How's that?

Jana: His shirt!

(We hear an even banging against the wall. Three even bangs and then nothing, and then three more bangs.)

Number Two: He's hitting his head against the wall. He's calling for help.

Walter: He can't get away.

Number Two: I tied him to the radiator.

(More banging on the wall. Weaker, three and three, silence in between.)

Dušan: Now, hold on ... I don't understand... Let's quit now, boys... I give up now.

(Jana screams and throws the shirt on the floor.)

Jana: Blood... blood... blood... blood...

(She starts to hysterically scream.)

Dušan: What is it...

Jana: Blood... blood... blood...

Dušan: What, what, what...

(Dušan picks up the shirt and it's true that there are large spots of blood on it.)

Jana: (convulsively screaming) Blood... blood... blood...

Dušan: (looking at the shirt) What... blood... why...

(Jana jumps up and pushes Dušan away. She runs to the front door of the flat.)

Jana: Blood... blood... blood...

(She flies to the door and tries to open it. She bangs and shakes but the door is locked.

Walter slowly pulls the key out of his pocket and shows it to her.)

Walter: Locked!

(Jana grows quiet, now she is whispering.)

Jana: (whispering) Blood... oh my God... blood... oh God!

(Dušan gathers his courage.)

Dušan: Give it to me. Give me the key. Let's stop with this.

Walter: With what?

Dušan: With this...with this game.

Walter: Are you convinced?

Dušan: (energetically, aggressively) The key!

Walter: Come and get it.

(Dušan steps toward the key which Walter is holding in his hand. Immediately. Two steps. Walter pulls out his pistol. Dušan stops.)

Dušan: A toy! Blanks!

Walter. Are you sure?

(Dušan doesn't know what to do. He stands in place. Wavering.)

Walter: (harsher now) Are you convinced?

(Dušan shakes his head and powerlessly retreats into the corner. He covers his face with his hands. Jana slumps against the door.

The banging again in the next room. Three and three. Always weaker.)

Walter: Can you hear that? S.O.S. Smart, isn't it? Your intellectual friend is quite smart. He wants to get a message to you. S.O.S. He wants to tell you: this is real.

Number One: No more joke.

Number Two: No more ha-ha.

Walter: Now it's real.

(More banging against the wall. Three and three. Jana runs across the room to Dušan.)

Jana: My God!

Dušan: Who are you, for God's sake...leave us alone ... go... (He pulls his wallet from his pocket and throws it to Walter.) Here, I'll give you everything, take it.

(Boy Number One picks up the wallet, empties it and tosses it back empty on the floor.)

Number One: You follow a little, observe a little, and make a little money on the side.

Number Two: Like a hobby.

Walter: We're hobbyists!

(Again the weak banging against the wall.)

Walter: Would you like to see him? (pause) Would you like to help him?

(Silence.)

Jana: (whispering incessantly) Oh my God, oh my God!

Walter: See how he's calling for help! (pause) And you, his intellectual friends! (pause)

What are you going to do? Listen!

(Banging against the wall, three and three, a pause in between.)

Walter: S.O.S. Help-me! Well what? Will you listen, look, observe, maybe write a short story, a novella, maybe a poem or will you just switch off the screen. Not you! No, not you! This was only a game! A list of names! And I'm having a creative crisis: oh, how miserable I am! I can no longer distinguish between what is true and what is not, oh God help me!

(The banging again.)

Jana: Oh my God, oh my God!

(Dušan turns away, toward the wall. Defeated, he covers his face with his hands.)

Walter: Or will you simply forget it? There was no room! Only myself and my infinite sensitivity!

(The two boys go to the room and enter it. They leave the door open. We see darkness in the room. A great blackness on the other side.)

Jana: Oh my God, no... oh my God, no....!

(Dušan turned to the wall, his hands on his face. Completely defeated, close to tears which he holds in only with his hands.)

Walter: This is how you snap your fingers...

(Walter snaps his fingers. As if it was a command, the light in the room is turned on.

A white and empty room is before us.

On the floor, right near the door, we see Erhard's bare feet. His feet and legs are in sort of a strange cramped position. We cannot see the other half of his body because it is hidden behind the door. The young man, Number One, stands farther inside the room leaning against the wall. We can't see the other young man.)

Walter: And the room is suddenly....

(Erhard's legs. Gasping, as if somebody is grabbing Erhard by the mouth and suffocating him. But of course we cannot see this. We can only see his legs convulsively resisting.)

Jana: Oh my God, oh my God...

(Dušan, still holding his face in his hands, bursts into tears) Noooooo... (a scream from his throat).

Walter: And then you snap your fingers again.

(He snaps. The light in the room goes out. Darkness. Nothing. Blackness in the frame of the door.)

Walter: And there is no room.

Jana: Oh my God, help... God....

(Dušan sobs convulsively in fear and horror.)

Walter: And again...

(Snaps and the light in the room goes on. Again suffocating, stifled moans, Erhard's legs can be seen up to his thighs, naked and convulsing, in a death struggle.

Erhard is being strangled.

It goes on.

Jana falls on her knees.)

Jana: Let him go... oh my God...

Walter: (grabs her) You help him... go ahead, stand up, fight for him, overcome your fear.

(Walter also goes on his knees next to Jana.)

Jana: Let him go... help... (without voice, hysterically breaking down) Oh my God!

Walter: (encouraging her) Clench your fists, no more words, help him with your fists, hit me, love thy neighbour as you love thyself!

Jana: Oh my God... help me...

Walter: He cannot... God cannot... He's not here...

Jana: Pleeeeee... pleeeeee...

Walter: God is far from us. He has been from the very beginning. Stand. Fight. For your neighbour! Do it!

(Walter rushes toward Dušan, grabs him by his elbows and pulls him into the centre of the room. Dušan is sobbing like a child. He is still holding his hands over his face.)

Walter: You too... do something... Help him... No more words, gather your courage...

(Walter rushes toward the back room. He calls out, crying for help.)

Walter: Look, he's dying, he needs help, your help...!

Jana: Oh my God...God... God...God... God...God... (chanting in a mindless rhythm)...

Walter: There is no God... there are only names... The names of people...

(Walter rushes back to Dušan who is still sobbing, powerless.)

Walter: I want those names... names... beg for his life with those names... c'mon...!

Jana: Oh my God...oh God... oh God...

Dušan: (his hands on his face) Alphonse Daudet... Norman Mailer... please... Gilbert Keith... Peter...pleeeeee... Handke... Henrik Ibsen... Torquato Tasso... pleeeeee...

Walter: More, more...

Jana: Pleeeeeease...

Walter: Get up... fight with your fists.... hit me...

Dušan: Please... William Shakespeare... Czeslaw Milosz... pleeeeeease...

(Jana and Dušan get up, slowly... Dušan still has his hands on his face.)

Dušan: Bertolt Brecht....

Jana: Oh my God...oh my God...

Dušan: Edward Albee...pleeeeee.... Yukio Mishima....

(Walter snaps his fingers. The light in the room goes out. The black darkness gapes from the door.

Silence.

Only Dušan's childish snivelling who has slowly backed up against the wall. He still has his hands on his face. He doesn't want to see, he doesn't want to hear the cries... Jana stands in the middle of the room.)

Walter: Too late. (pause) No more room.

(The boys come out of the room. The Stan and Ollie masks are now like horrifying countenances. The boys get dressed.)

Walter: (quietly) Lost... Nothing can be done with words alone.... words don't kill... words don't avenge... a lost case...

(Silence.)

Walter: What a shame... so close... a real shame... the room was so very close...

(The boys walk up to Walter.)

Number One: Two-thousand-six-hundred marks...

Number Two: Credit cards...

Number One: Some change...

Number Two: Passport...

Number One: Gold chain...

Number Two: And a watch (looks closely at it) Casio!

Walter: Good. Really good.

(Walter looks around the room once more.)

Walter: Shall we go?

(The boys nod.

They all stand there a few seconds more. Motionless. Then Walter unlocks the door.

They go out quickly, leaving the door open. Dušan, still covering his face, slides down the wall and sits on the floor. Defeated, mortified... like a child.

Silence.)

Jana: (barely audible) Erhard!

(Silence.

Jana gets up. She steps toward the room. She stops toward the threshold. She doesn't dare to step in.)

Jana: (calling out with a powerless voice) Er-ha-rd!

(Silence.

In the dark room, something makes a sound.)

Erhard's weak voice.)

Erhard: Woof woof ... (barking like a dog, weakly, barely audibly)... hau hau ...

(Jana, hearing Erhard's approach, begins to back into the corner of the main room.

Erhard emerges from the dark on all fours. Slowly, injured.)

Erhard: Woof woof... hau hau

(He has on his face the bent and torn carnival mask of the dog. He is wearing a bloody tee-shirt and torn underpants which hardly cover him.

He slowly moves into the centre of the room.)

Erhard: (barely audibly with distorted diction) Woof woof... (German) Ich, hau, hau, ich... ich bin... hau... I... woof woof...I... I am....woof woof...

(He slowly moves into the centre.

Jana presses herself into the corner and powerlessly watches him.)

Dušan – sitting against the wall beside the radiator – violently squeezes his face with his palms and quietly sobs...)

Erhard: (on all fours – with his tattered dog mask) (German) Ich bin... ich... hau, hau... ich Erhard... Erhard... hau, hau... Erhard... ich bin... ich... Erhard Piler... Ich!... Ich

bin... Erhard Piler... I am... I... woof woof ... I Erhard... Er-hard... woof woof ... (he comes closer and closer) Erhard...I am... I... Erhard Piler...

(With the last of his strength and energy, in a voice of powerless protest.)

I!...I am!...I am Erhard Piler!

(slow fade to darkness,

in the darkness the same song as at the beginning, except it is like an echo,

the end)