

THE CROSS

In eight scenes

By Matjaž Briški

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Translated by Lesley Anne Wade

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Characters

Coki and Ize - carpenter's apprentices, a touch retarded, between 35 and 45 years old

Christ - plays himself, 33 years old

The Boss - Coke and Ize are in his employ; he is getting on in years

The Mother - dependent on a wheelchair, about 60 years old

The Son - dependent on his mother, about 33 years old

Crowd and Voice Off - recorded, of indeterminable age and gender

The action takes place on a Good Friday, somewhere deep in the wilderness, in a corner forgotten by God and man. A road forks into a y- shape. At the intersection of the three ways stands a cross. On the road that divides into two is an old wind-blown tree. Only the moon (which is not quite full) lights up the darkness, when it is not covered by clouds. At first there is complete darkness, through which two voices can be heard.

Scene 1

IZE: Tight.

COKI: Totally...

IZE: Is he still trembling?

COKI: No, not even a quiver now... but he was shaking a lot.

IZE: We nailed him pretty well.

COKI: It wasn't easy, him resisting the whole time.

IZE: Well, he gave in, so it's fine.

COKI: Who's going to lift him up, then? It gets my lumbago.

IZE: He weighs a ton. You don't think I'm doing it on my own, do you?

COKI: Even with him there's a cross to bear.

IZE: Stiff as a cross.

COKI: A double cross.

IZE: A cross deserves a sinner.

COKI: Of course, he's tight now, isn't he. Come on then...

IZE: Up under these black clouds... up with him!

COKI: One, two, three! Jesus, this devil's heavy.

IZE: Hold him up with your hand, not your gob.

COKI: My back's going.

IZE: Have you got him?

COKI: He's even heavier now he's on tight. He's hanging on me.

IZE: Go on then, hold him up properly.

COKI: You hold me up. Otherwise I'll be fucked...

IZE: We've got the cross standing.

COKI: Now straighten out my back.

IZE: Are you supporting it?

COKI: What?

IZE: Your back, mate.

COKI: It's supporting me, for Christ's sake.

IZE: Your back's your cross.

COKI: It's an even worse cross to bear if you're tight on the cross.

IZE: There, you see, we've got him standing upright.

COKI: It's a lovely crucifix all right.

The moon comes out from behind a cloud. We see two people and in front of them a life-sized crucifix with Jesus Christ.

IZE: Its owner's even more beautiful.

COKI: There's no getting away from it, our boss is wicked. He banged him on the cross just perfect.

IZE: We weren't exactly useless, though. It's solid as a rock.

COKI: What about my back?

IZE: Come on, I'll straighten it out.

He turns his back to Coki, pulls him onto his back and starts stretching him out. Coki groans.

COKI: Watch out, the cross! *They collide with the cross and fall to the ground.*

They stand up, groaning loudly.

COKI: Bloody cross!

IZE: Don't worry, it's nailed together good and proper.

COKI: It might be nailed, but it's bent.

IZE: All right, so it's bent, as long as it's nailed together. You wait till you see the boss's face, when he sees the cross in place.

COKI: Our boss is our cross.

IZE: He's really sensitive about his cross.

COKI: A truly lovely likeness.

IZE: We should get all the credit. We nailed the Good Lord up again like a real poor soul. We did a good job on him, that's for sure.

COKI: Only a rough one, though. The boss sanded him, that's in his favour.

IZE: He always takes all the credit. Us poor devils get forced labour.

COKI: And it's been like that for twenty years. He makes out we're useless.

IZE: Look how nicely we've finished it off, just look at this figure of Jesus.

COKI: The boss only did the sketch is all.

IZE: Forget the sketch, it's the inspiration that'll enthrall...

COKI: ...that kindles passion in the heart, and with a chisel peels off each part.

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IZE: Life led the way, take a look at our Saviour.

COKI: I feel sorry for him.

IZE: Why?

COKI: Because he'd be beaten just the same today.

IZE: But at least he was saved.

COKI: Yes, his death was really lovely.

IZE: It is death, though. That's better sometimes than this world that's so ugly.

COKI: The struggle's cruel and never-ending.

IZE: But as we struggle death comes, to release us from our suffering.

COKI: We're bound by the cross all the time.

IZE: We're all Redeemers, even if our blood isn't sublime.

COKI: Our blood's full of sin.

IZE: We're sinners, we can't win.

COKI: Poor wretches full of sin.

IZE: Without being crucified even.

COKI: We'll have to take down the Saviour...

IZE: And nail up some piss-poor bleeder.

COKI: But isn't it blasphemy to put Christ on the ground?

IZE: What about nailing him up there in the first place, was that very sound?

COKI: We did it to him too, didn't we.

IZE: It's not the same, you see!

COKI: You're right, it is different, we lugged his cross all the way here for him. So it's his problem if he's got trouble with his sacrum.

IZE: Why?

COKI: What do you mean, why?! Why didn't he wear a corset, then! *They both burst out laughing.*

IZE: We did a good job of straightening him out. We're chiropractors! *They continue to laugh.*

COKI: He did the same for us. What if he climbs down from the cross again?

IZE: His crown might fall off his head.

COKI: Our heads are always on the block.

IZE: They can't be crowned if they're ready for the chop.

COKI: I'm dying of hunger.

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IZE: I thought it was the cross that did you in. We've only got eggs.

COKI: Not eggs again. Eggs give me gas! Give me an egg.

Ize searches in his trouser pocket for a long time, then gives him an egg.

IZE: The road's forked like a snake's tongue; it's a strange place, all right.

COKI: A god-forsaken hell pit.

IZE: Where the devil is, so is God; not necessarily the other way round, though.

They both peel their eggs.

COKI: I'm more afraid of God. The devil doesn't make you feel guilty. Look how this Saviour keeps looking our way.

IZE: This poor devil would have the same fate today.

COKI: You're a criminal in His sight, but when the devil's with you you're clean, even if you do stink to high heaven.

IZE: You mean the purer you are the more you stink.

COKI: No-one can tell if you've got a bad conscience.

IZE: You can't see anything here. The devil could breathe right in your kisser.

COKI: There's no devil where there's a cross, is there!

IZE: Don't call up the devil! With the devil there's always a cross to bear!

COKI: Well, at least we've got it up... the cross I mean! We'll paint it in the morning first thing, so the boss won't bawl us out again.

IZE: Bloody eggs, they've given me gas, and how.

COKI: Yep, you're a bad egg when you're egg-bound all right. Wow! *He farts and laughs.*

IZE: We should probably be pushing off now.

COKI: The worst is behind us! *He points at the Saviour on the cross.*

IZE: You mean that devil is. *They burst out laughing and fart away in the dark; the moon disappears behind the clouds.*

Scene 2

The same place. Out of the darkness come the voices of a man and a woman. A middle-aged legless woman in a wheelchair, pushed by her son.

MOTHER: She's not for you, hammer that into your brains.

SON: Yes, mum.

MOTHER: For your own sake, not mine! She's nothing but a common whore!

SON: But...

MOTHER: That's enough, not one word more! What did you drag me here for?

SON: You wanted to get some fresh air, didn't you...

MOTHER: Fresh air, yes, not in this wasteland, though. The damp goes through to my bone marrow. The soles of my feet are cold again.

SON: Shall I massage them...?

MOTHER: ... do it gently, then. *The Son takes off her legless shoes and starts massaging the soles of her feet, even though she has none.*

SON: How come your feet are cool, if you haven't got any legs at all?

MOTHER: Am I the one without legs, or you? I know when they're cold, isn't that true?

SON: Yes, Mum...

MOTHER: Don't be rough, do you hear? And get that cow out of your head. You're not going anywhere, do you hear me?

SON: Your feet smell.

MOTHER: You brat, don't fuck with me!

SON: Sour. *His Mother hits him with a stick.*

MOTHER: You're gonna get it, you and that whore! My shoes are too tight, I told you to cut my toe-nails more. *Her Son starts cutting her toe-nails.*

SON: Dad would let me...

MOTHER: Don't mention that pig to me. He was never your dad. Ow, you cut into my nail!

SON: Sorry, it's dark as hell.

MOTHER: Put my shoes back on. *The Son starts putting on her shoes.* Be gentle, I told you son. *She hits him again.* You're such a cross to bear.

SON (to himself): You're the cross, so there.

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MOTHER: What?!

SON: There's a cross. *He points towards the cross.*

MOTHER: So?

SON: You could pray a bit.

MOTHER: Are you crazy?

SON: It wouldn't do you any harm, would it?.

MOTHER: What are you talking about, that superstition's for old women.

SON: You're not so young yourself any more.

MOTHER: Push me away from here!

SON: You're staying here forever! *He takes a rope out from his belt and starts to strangle her.*

MOTHER: Don't be daft, are you listening... *He strangles her and goes over to the cross. He squeezes a fistful of earth, so that it slips through his fingers and scatters onto the ground.*

VOICE OFF: Bedouins wrapped in memories, years pass.

Time, the ruler of the infinite deserts.

The sand-dune engulfs memory's cloak.

Where do the sands of time run away to,

Where to, through the sand all our life.

When the text is at an end, the last fistful of fine earth falls to the ground. The Son takes the rope, goes over to the tree and hangs himself. An infinite silence sets in.

Christ descends from the cross. He goes over to the hanged man and swings him for a while on the rope, then takes him down from the tree. He takes his clothes and puts his own on him instead. He carries him over to the cross and nails him to it. Then he approaches the woman in the wheelchair and strokes her head. The mother wakes.

MOTHER: I slept a long time.

CHRIST: You only closed your eyes for a second.

MOTHER: Strange dreams.

CHRIST: Dreams indeed.

MOTHER: A frightening place.

CHRIST: People are frightening, not places.

MOTHER: And this cross...

CHRIST: What about the cross?

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MOTHER: Nothing's wrong with the cross: it's people who are a cross.

CHRIST: There's a cross with the cross.

MOTHER: It's as silent as the grave.

CHRIST: The hush is deafening.

MOTHER: Silence feeds all words...

CHRIST: From silence words come rushing...

MOTHER: It's so silent. It's not cold any more, just chilly...

CHRIST: It cuts through to your bones quite thoroughly...

MOTHER: Take me away from here.

CHRIST: The road leads in several directions...

MOTHER: It doesn't matter where.

CHRIST: It matters with whom, not where...

MOTHER: As long as it's away from here...

CHRIST: Time brings us back the same way again. *They exit.*

Scene 3

IZE and COKI return, carrying pots of paint.

COKI: What a night...

IZE: And it's not over yet...

COKI: Even the stars are still asleep...

IZE: Not only the stars.

COKI: Just as well we're nearly done.

IZE: The end's a beginning as far as our boss is concerned.

COKI: With a beginning at the end.

IZE: Day in day out...

COKI: From day to night...

IZE: All our life...

COKI: It's not a life! It's a cross.

IZE: A man's nailed to it all right. Only death releases us.

COKI: We'll sleep like the dead. We'll rot nice and slowly in peace.

IZE: As befits the deceased.

COKI: It'll be as quiet as in paradise.

IZE: And we can cross off that devil, our boss.

COKI: Well, here we are again!

IZE: Good job we didn't lose our way in this dark, then.

COKI: It really is as dark as the tomb. And tonight a cloud's hiding the moon.

IZE: We won't get anything done without any light.

COKI: The journey wasn't easy. Let's take a little rest.

IZE: We're lucky we got here alive in this darkness; the road was winding like a snake.

COKI: It's so silent. Fuck me, everywhere's so quiet.

IZE: This valley's really horrible.

COKI: Look at the cross's shadow! It's falling on us.

IZE: Ah, a nice stretch, after all that fuss.

COKI: The roads cross in a strange place; nobody anywhere, it's like a graveyard all around here.

IZE: There's always a cross on graves.

COKI: And a poor bastard nailed up to be saved.

IZE: We've got less than nothing, we're poor bastards.

COKI: That's true, not a lot more than that devil, God bless us.

IZE: We're tied to the cross too, I think we could be saints, don't you?

COKI: Saints, us?

IZE: Why not? We're needy, rich we aint, and we suffer like a proper saint.

COKI: What about a miracle?

IZE: What about it?

COKI: Not what, who?

IZE: Who, what?

COKI: Him, of course! *He points at the cross.*

IZE: He's got a cross!

COKI: That's why he's a saint, a cross and a miracle!

IZE: He's a saint because he suffered and we have as well.

COKI: So are we saints too?

IZE: I think so, don't you!

COKI: What about a miracle?

IZE: Well the miracle is that we are. We might not have been.

COKI: Might not have been? How come, if we are?

IZE: Well, there's your miracle, of course we are!

COKI: That's the miracle, because we are!?! And what if we hadn't been?

IZE: First we have to be, to be able to not be being.

COKI: So I can't not be if I'm not already being?

IZE: Because then you're not. You haven't a hope... A miracle's a conception.

COKI: And a conception's a miracle.

IZE: Correct.

COKI: And we're a miracle.

IZE: No!

COKI: Why not, though?

IZE: We're miracles. Because there's two of us...

COKI: We're miracles?

IZE: We are!

COKI: What about the third miracle?

IZE: What do you mean, the third?

COKI: If we want to be saints, we need another miracle. Three's a holy number.

IZE: I didn't think of that. Where are we going to find a third miracle, huh?

COKI: So much for our saintliness...

IZE: Hang on, holiness is down to the method you choose.

COKI: Which method should we use?

IZE: A miraculous one.

COKI: So where do we start?

IZE: On the spot.

COKI: Here! There's definitely no miracles here.

IZE: A miracle can be anywhere.

COKI: Not here it can't.

IZE: It's possible that...

COKI: In this hole...

IZE: Why not?

COKI: There's nothing here but a cross...

IZE: Yes, the cross is crossing us, there won't be one.

COKI: A miracle has to happen on its own.

IZE: And if we're a miracle ourselves, we mustn't have anything to do with it. A miracle is God's will.

COKI: And we won't be able to be saints...

IZE: Nothing's impossible if you have faith...

COKI: True enough, anything can come to pass...

IZE: Let's get on with the work, so the boss won't be cross.

*They pick up their brushes and begin painting the cross and the man hanging there.
They start to look it over enthusiastically.*

COKI: This Saviour looks real, it's like there's a man nailed to the cross. We've got to hand it to the boss, it's not easy to give God a human form like this.

IZE: Yes, he got all his divine perspective through human suffering.

COKI: Art really is a thing of inspiration, all his faith breathes through this creation.

IZE: Every sinew's as taut as a string, he really made the chisels sing...

COKI: If anyone knows what he's doing, it's him...

IZE: What the hell's that smell...

COKI: I thought it was you...

IZE: And I thought it was you...

COKI: Take a look at this devil, will you, look at this sticking out...

IZE: It's a bad bulge. How on earth did this problem come about?

COKI: This Redeemer gets weirder and weirder. You'd think he'd just been flogged.

IZE: This is a man nailed to this cross.

COKI: That's impossible.

IZE: Look, have you ever seen a statue smelling like a man's arse?

COKI: We've nailed a man's arse to the cross?

IZE: The cross just merged with his bum.

COKI: Fucking hell, now what have we done? Wasn't it only yesterday the boss's work of art?

IZE: We nailed him up when it was dark.

COKI: We killed him just like that.

IZE: What do we do now? He's stiff as a board...

COKI: As if he was a statue...

IZE: That's right, where's the statue gone?

COKI: What if we've nailed up this poor bastard like the figure of God. You're right, where's the statue?

IZE: We did nail the statue to the cross, didn't we...

COKI: ... and we turned him into a human, can't you see... a lump of dead wood turned into this poor bastard.

IZE: Really weird...

COKI: It's not weird at all...

IZE: It's not weird?

COKI: No, but it's miraculous...

IZE: Miraculous?

COKI: Such is God's will. And we're his heralds...

IZE: That means we really are saints!

COKI: We nailed a wooden statue to the cross, God's might performed all the rest...

IZE: It's a miracle all right...

COKI: And us two are saints...

IZE: Great is the power of our Saviour...

*They fall to their knees and begin to pray. **Christ** appears with the **Mother** in the wheelchair.*

MOTHER: This place is weird...

CHRIST: Weird people are even more weird.

MOTHER: What are they looking at that cross for?

CHRIST: Where there are people there's always a cross to bear.

MOTHER: Good-day, gentlemen, what's your problem?

IZE: The problem is we haven't got one.

COKI: The two of us are saints.

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MOTHER: Poor idiots...

IZE: Madam, saintliness depends on how you look at it, and we really are saints...

MOTHER: I can see you're mental patients...

IZE: As you like, madam, but we know what we are...

MOTHER: So it seems. And what are you doing bumming around here so early ...

IZE: Praying to our Saviour... and if I might ask, madam, what about you?

MOTHER: We've been for a walk, it does my legs good too.

COKI (*to Ize*): This old woman's round the bend, that's bloody obvious. *They begin to chuckle.*

IZE: Excuse me, but do your legs hold you up O.K.? Especially all that long way?

COKI: I think this is just a sham, madam would surely rather run. (*They burst out laughing.*)

CHRIST: If you're saints, then wash the lady's feet. *Ize and Coki stop laughing and look at him in astonishment.*

IZE: Feet?

COKI: She hasn't got any feet.

MOTHER: Who hasn't got any feet?

IZE: This lady...

CHRIST: Nothing's impossible for saints...

IZE: Eh?

COKI: ... of course, madam, at once. *He beckons Ize, who at first looks at him in astonishment, but then joins him in washing her feet.*

MOTHER: Do it gently...

COKI: Perhaps the water's too chilly?

IZE: Shall we warm it up?

MOTHER: These men really are holy!

CHRIST: What about massaging them a bit as well?

COKI (*astonished*): Massage?

CHRIST: With oil! *Ize and Coki begin massaging her feet.*

MOTHER: Oh, thank you lads, you're so good!

IZE: Don't mention it, madam.

COKI: Now they'll be able to run around on their own!

MOTHER: Your hands are miraculous.

COKI: We're certainly a couple of miracles!

IZE: We can massage non-existent feet.

CHRIST: I can see you're really charitable. You heal the crippled. Mother, shall we go?

MOTHER: I'd rather we ran, though... *She jumps out of the wheelchair and starts to run around. Ize and Coki look at her in amazement and inspect their hands. Christ follows the mother with the wheelchair.*

COKI: Have you ever seen anything like it?

IZE: We've fixed her legs, she's fit.

COKI: Madam, where are you rushing off to?

IZE: And she's turned out really nice, too!

COKI: We could have chatted a bit longer.

IZE: I thought her son looked familiar...

COKI: Me too. Where have I seen that devil before?

IZE: Strange type, and subdued all the time ... as if he was nailed to the cross.

COKI: Types like him are dangerous. A scum-bag for sure, did you see how he looks you in the eyes!

IZE: I was sweating like a pig!

COKI: And my mouth went dry. We're lucky to be still alive, you and I.

IZE: With somebody like that you never know ...

COKI: You're right; so what now?

IZE: What about praying a bit more?

COKI: So that nothing else goes wrong.

IZE: Saintliness is a greater power.

COKI: Saintliness is mercy.

IZE: And that holy mercy is exactly what killed God.

COKI: Well, that's why we stayed alive. Destiny nailed Christ to the cross and we did the same ...

IZE: Not that that makes us guilty.

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COKI: We're saints, that why we're praying. *They fall to their knees beneath the cross and pray. When they have finished...*

IZE: There, we've finished that prayer.

COKI: My soul is breathing easier.

IZE: I told you faith depends on inspiration.

COKI: You know what, let's finish painting him. Then we'll run right off and get the boss. He'll soon find out he's employed two saints, the bastard.

IZE: We're going to hand in our notice.

COKI: And then we'll cross him off.

IZE: Enough of drudgery, twenty crosses already, just one great big misery.

COKI: And did he ever praise us? Did he, my arse! *They finish painting and leave. They take the pots of paint with them.*

Scene 4

*The same setting. The **Mother** and **Christ** return, the Mother walking, Christ pushing the wheelchair in front of him.*

MOTHER: I think we're walking along the same road.

CHRIST: All roads are the same, mother.

MOTHER: I'm already tired to death.

CHRIST: I have a feeling the end is close.

MOTHER: I'll have a little rest; let's stop here under this cross.

CHRIST: There you are, right under the cross.

MOTHER: Isn't the similarity strange.

CHRIST: Like out of the grave.

MOTHER: A mysterious cross.

CHRIST: Of all mysteries, death is the deepest.

MOTHER: I can feel a strange pressure in my chest.

CHRIST: It's your soul wanting to escape.

MOTHER: And that statue, it's like it's my son nailed up there! *She touches her son on the cross.*

CHRIST: Now he's been saved by the cross.

MOTHER: Saved?

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CHRIST: Saved from you.

MOTHER: And vice versa?

CHRIST: You as well. You've tied each other down and crucified each other. And now you are saved...

MOTHER: And you, who are you?

CHRIST: I'm a poor bugger without a cross.

MOTHER: Everyone has a cross to bear.

CHRIST: There's always a cross with people.

MOTHER: If only you could cross yourself under it.

CHRIST: Everyone deserves their own cross.

MOTHER: Where is my son?

CHRIST: Resting.

MOTHER: I'm tired too.

*The **Mother** sits in the wheelchair and falls asleep. **Christ** climbs up the cross and takes down the **Son**, changes his clothes again, and puts him in his mother's lap, so that they look like the *Pieta*.*

VOICE OFF: With faith a cross – it crosses itself in prayer,

In suffering a cross – agony draws you nearer there,

At death a cross – it crosses everyone,

A person a cross – a cross deserved bar none,

With a cross a cross – a cross crosses a cross.

***Christ** pushes the **Mother** and **Son** offstage. He returns to the cross, takes a stone and nails himself up, but only by one hand; the other is placed so that it appears nailed on.*

Scene 5

BOSS: What do you buggers want then?

IZE: Take a look at the Saviour.

COKI: We did a good job with the painting.

BOSS: It's about time too. The deadline's already gone.

IZE: We've followed your instructions.

BOSS: You didn't mess anything up again?

IZE: Us, never!

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COKI: We cleaned him up and polished him up and then we nailed him up, like a real Saviour.

BOSS: And did you paint him?

IZE: Just as you ordered...

BOSS: Just as well for you, I've got a lot of work...

COKI: You can depend on us not to shirk...

BOSS: You do get carried away, that's for sure. It's a good job you've done it all, there's already plenty of new orders to fill...

COKI (to Ize): Arsehole, this way he's the one'll be carrying them out.

IZE (to Coki): We'll just wash our hands of it...

They all stand under the cross. Coki and Ize have their backs turned away from the cross, so that they can't see it. The Boss looks at the cross in astonishment.

IZE: Well, what do you think?

COKI: Are we saints or are we not?

IZE (to Coki): He's not answering!

COKI (to Ize): He's probably still in shock.

IZE: You don't get the chance to see a real Saviour crucified every day.

COKI: We only nailed him to the cross, God's mercy did everything else, I have to say...

BOSS: Are you two fucking me about?

COKI: We're deadly serious, without a doubt.

IZE: This is a miracle and the two of us are saints.

BOSS: Are you telling me you used these paints?

COKI: As befits Our Lord. From head to toe. ...

IZE: He still smelled a bit from his troubles, though...

BOSS: I'll give you two trouble! *He goes mad.* What do you mean you painted him, can you see any paint?! You're going to pay for this, or I'm a saint! *Coki and Ize turn towards the cross and find that the old sculpture is in place and is not painted. They stand in embarrassment in front of the Boss, staring at the ground. Now all three are turned away from the cross.*

COKI: The paint stripped itself off, clearly. *The two of them are standing within reach of Christ's hand that isn't nailed on, so that Christ slaps Coki's face. Coki looks angrily at Ize, thinking that he has slapped him.*

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IZE: It's not our fault, boss.

BOSS: Not your fault?

COKI: Well, we did nail him up... *Christ gives him another slap.*

COKI: Fucking hell. *Christ gives him yet another slap. Coki attacks Ize and a scuffle ensues.*

BOSS: Quiet! *They stop scuffling and stand quietly.* You're going to be working overtime...

COKI: But we're...

BOSS: Shut up! From now on there'll be a different tune... Go back and get the paint and make sure you paint him... so it shows! Because if you don't... *Coki and Ize set off.*

IZE: Back to being martyrs again.

COKI: It's only a step from a martyr to a saint...

BOSS: Those two are a cross! They'd even get on the nerves of Jesus!

Christ tries to give him a slap too but misses, because the Boss sees an unused nail on the ground and decides to pick it up. He notices that Christ isn't nailed on. He picks up the hammer and stone and nails up the Saviour. Bloody incompetents... He goes off after them.

Scene 6

Coki and Ize are painting Christ.

COKI: Here we are, painting him again...

IZE: I hope it's the right poor bastard this time...

COKI: We're the poor bastards...

IZE: ...we're always painting ourselves!

COKI: Where's that guy disappeared to?

IZE: He's turned again into a statue ...

COKI: What a transformation...

IZE: If anyone can do it it's him, no question ...

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COKI: No-one's fucked except us...

IZE: There's always a cross to bear with a cross!

COKI: Fate's played a trick on us again, as if suffering were a joke!

IZE: There's no joking with the Saviour.

COKI: Yes, it seems divine beings don't have a sense of humour!

IZE: The cross is holding him up, it's easy for him!

COKI: Us idiots are still carrying ours, he's finished suffering!

IZE: Hey, what if we nail ourselves up?

COKI: Where?

IZE: On the cross!

COKI: So we're crucified?

IZE: To get it all over with, cross ourselves off.

COKI: Will we become saints too?

IZE: We've got all the right qualities.

COKI: And we're carpenters...

IZE: And if we nail ourselves up and splice the crown, then we'll be like Jesus!

COKI: What about scourging ourselves?

IZE: A bit of piercing wouldn't hurt!

COKI: The mind would be cleared by a nice little squirt.

IZE: The mind is trapped within the body!

COKI: So smashing it to pieces is a priority.

IZE: To save it from its prison. We are going to enjoy this one.

COKI: We'd better not enjoy anything, something might go wrong again!

IZE: We must suffer, weep and groan, so the heavens can hear us moan.

COKI: And God will have mercy on us!

IZE: Where shall we put our cross?

COKI: We'll put the Saviour on the ground.

IZE: And save him from the cross.

COKI: There's not room on the cross for both of us.

IZE: Two sides to a cross there'll always be.

COKI: One for you and one for me.

IZE: Right, let's get him down then.

COKI: On one, two, three... Ow, it's got my back again! *They take him down from the cross.*

IZE: Got him...

COKI: Now what do we do with him?

IZE: Let him have a rest over there in the shade...

COKI: So we'll put him under the tree. *They place him under the tree.* Poor devil...

IZE: ... our Saviour. Since we've pushed him off his throne...

COKI: ... he might as well throw in his crown ...

IZE: ... let's crown each other! *They divide the crown in two and crown themselves.*

COKI: Now what?

IZE: Let's cut some rods... *They cut the rods.*

COKI: ... and whip each other till we bleed ! *They take the rods and flagellate each other.*

COKI: Wow, my blood's flowing beautifully...

IZE: My mind's escaping from its prison.

COKI: It makes me so happy, a nice bit of flagellation; it's the easiest way to get rid of vice!

IZE: It does us good to torture each other, it's so nice.

COKI: It isn't human nature for us all to like each other...

IZE: Yes, if we can kill our friends it satisfies our nature...

COKI: We're changing from a torturer...

IZE: ... into a saviour...

COKI: ... from a sinner...

IZE: ... into the crucified...

COKI: ... from an executioner...

IZE: ... into victims. *They stop the flagellation.*

COKI: Now let's wash our hands...

IZE: And nail ourselves to the cross...

COKI: Ah, there's the problem!

IZE: Problem?

COKI: We'll have trouble nailing each other to the cross...

IZE: So what do we do now...

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COKI: We mustn't be responsible for our own deaths...

IZE: Why do we keep on having such a hard time... See, we've fucked up again.

COKI: It's not our fault, it's inhuman...

IZE: We're poor creatures...

COKI: ... we keep on getting crucified...

IZE: Let the devil appear...

COKI: ... and save us from torment.

IZE: I want to be a saint!

COKI: You can't be a saint if you want to be one... you mustn't want anything for yourself, it can't be done.

IZE: For myself I don't want anything ...

COKI: And I want even less than nothing...

IZE: We're still not crucified...

COKI: ... poor scourged wretches. *Out of the darkness indistinct voices can at first be heard. The moon disappears behind the clouds. Complete darkness.*

IZE: What kind of howling is that?

COKI: An angry crowd, it's as if it's driven by Satan it's so loud...

IZE: Where's this mob rushing off to?

COKI: It's thirsting for blood.

IZE: Someone's going to be lynched again...

COKI: And condemned to the cross...

IZE: Us! We're not guilty, not us!

CROWD: They've knocked down our Saviour. They've performed a sacrilegious act... And they've beaten each other and crowned themselves at that...

COKI: We haven't done anything, really, it wasn't us...

CROWD: Don't deny it, Judases!

IZE: Just don't put us on the cross...!

COKI: ... not us poor unfortunates!

CROWD: Let's flog the robbers. And stretch them out on the cross, let these blasphemers know who they saved from their cross ...

The Crowd nails them to the cross.

COKI: No...!

IZE: Never! *Absolute silence sets in.*

COKI: (*very quietly*): We've succeeded...

IZE: (*also very quietly*): We really are crucified...

COKI: Really proper saints!

IZE|: We're dying...

COKI: We're ascending into heaven...

Scene 7

*The **Boss** comes back onstage, where there is no longer a cross; paint pots and the tree remain, and **Christ** under the tree.*

BOSS: Where's the cross?

CHRIST: Your cross has disappeared and your apprentices too.

BOSS: I knew it, the ungrateful bastards! And who are you?

CHRIST: I'm not...

BOSS: ... you seem familiar...

CHRIST: Could be...

BOSS: ... that you stole the cross then?

CHRIST: The cross is mine!

BOSS: Ah?! That's a nice one. And where is it now?

CHRIST: They took it.

BOSS: Who?

CHRIST: Your apprentices.

BOSS: That's true. And where are they?

CHRIST: The poor wretches have crucified themselves!

BOSS: As long as I've got rid of them. And the cross?

CHRIST: What about it?

BOSS: Where is it?

CHRIST: How do I know?

BOSS: There's always a cross with your sort!

CHRIST: There is, I admit.

BOSS: I can see you're made from the right stuff. *He takes a good look at him.*

CHRIST: Like the holy host!

BOSS: They did a good job on you. Anything hurt?

CHRIST: My back's pinching me, it's quite bent.

BOSS: The earth will soon straighten it out.

CHRIST: So what do I do now?

BOSS: About what?

CHRIST: About my cross of course!

BOSS: I'll make you a cross. Under contract...

CHRIST: ... that...?

BOSS: ... you come to me as an apprentice.

CHRIST: Back to being an apprentice again?

BOSS: If you don't want to...

CHRIST: I have to warn you, with me you'll have to bear a cross ...

BOSS: If I'm not mistaken your cross was taken.

CHRIST: Oh well... that's true!

BOSS: There's a stick for everyone, including you...

CHRIST: I've had enough of sticks, thanks!

BOSS: Everything has to be earned.

CHRIST: Even a cross?

BOSS: Especially a cross.

CHRIST: So be it then.

BOSS: Let's shake hands on it.

CHRIST: Your hand's cold, boss.

BOSS: It comes with warmth from my heart.

CHRIST: Is it a deal?

BOSS: Done, out of pity for you, you poor devil...

CHRIST: Christ as an apprentice!

BOSS: Just leave Him in peace!

CHRIST: Why?

BOSS: God hasn't been here for a long time.

CHRIST: Where is he then?

BOSS: Not here.

CHRIST: Have people forgotten him?

BOSS: There's something of him in everyone... everyone has their own cross to bear...

CHRIST: Does Christ live in them?

BOSS: No...They're all living Christs, each one suffering in their own way...

CHRIST: Is that kind of blood holy...?

BOSS: ...holier than any blood! What about yours?

CHRIST: Mine?

BOSS: Are you coming with me?

CHRIST: There's no choice. For a holy cross?

BOSS: For holy blood...

CHRIST: ... I hide among the people...

BOSS: ...come with me as an apprentice...

CHRIST: ...from Christ to a poor wretch...

BOSS: Work clears the mind... We'll work miracles.

CHRIST: Oh, not again!

BOSS: Don't just stand there with your arms crossed, let's get going.

*He points to the paint pots. **Christ** picks them up and they set off. The pots are on a plank that Christ puts on his shoulders, so that it looks like he's been crucified. He stumbles and falls.*

CHRIST: This cross is heavy! Farewell Holy Spirit, a carpenter's bread is hard to get.

They exit.

Scene 8

*Absolute silence. An infinite whiteness over all. **Ize** and **Coki** are nailed to the cross.*

The same setting, except that all around is white.

COKI: It's so quiet here!

IZE: A silence white as snow.

COKI: Yes, but not freezing though...

IZE: Nobody anywhere...

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COKI: Where are we?

IZE: Look, see the sky?

COKI: I see everything and nothing...

IZE: It's the same for me...

COKI: I can go in every direction...

IZE: ...and you're gone...

COKI: And there you are again. My back doesn't hurt any more...

IZE: And we're still what we are...

COKI: As long as we're not a poor bugger...

IZE: We've got everything...

COKI: ...and we don't need anything at all...

IZE: Are we holy?

COKI: We're holy...

IZE: And our soul?

COKI: Our soul's been washed away...

IZE: And our conscience?

COKI: We've got rid of it forever.

*The **Mother** arrives running onto the stage. She is now without the wheelchair and runs around joyfully. **Ize** and **Coki** look at her in amazement.*

COKI: Do you see what I see?

IZE: The same as you, if it's not a vision.

COKI: Hey, lady, where are you off to in such a hurry?

IZE: Are your soles itching you then, Mother?

MOTHER (*smiling*): Oh, look at these weirdos... *The **Son** enters.*

SON (*smiling*): You mean poor devils.

COKI: Look at him, it's the crucified devil... *Coki and Ize are amazed.*

IZE: He's risen from the dead...

SON: There are no dead here...

MOTHER: There are no living here...

SON: There are only memories...

COKI: And we're...?

MOTHER: If my eyes don't deceive me, crucified.

SON: You are what you feel you are inside.

COKI: And holiness?

SON: Here everything and everybody's holy. All equal in diversity.

IZE: And the cross?

SON: What about it?

COKI: How do we get rid of the cross?

SON: Freedom's all in the mind, they say...

IZE: Our soul's been washed away.

MOTHER: And the cross along with it.

SON: And with the cross, your cross.

Coke and Ize descend from the cross. They all look at the cross, which is slowly let down to the ground.

IZE: Our cross went away with our conscience ...

COKI: With the cross there's always a cross to bear...

VOICE OFF: The cross is holy

And the holy body

Of innumerable eyes

Over the earth presiding.

The cross is not holy,

Is not the holy body

Of innumerable people

On earth residing.

THE END

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