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THE NOISE ANIMALS MAKE IS UNBEARABLE

A fictional drama, based on real events

Slovenia, 2002

Translated by Lesley Anne Wade

Characters**The living:**

ARMIN aged 16

AZRA his grandmother

PSYCHIATRIST

SOLDIER 1

SOLDIER 2

POLICEMAN 1

POLICEMAN 2

NEIGHBOUR

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

MAN

WOMAN

OLDER WOMAN

YOUNGER WOMAN

MAN WITH A BAG

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN

TRAMP 1

FEMALE TRAMP

TRAMP 2

MALE AUXILLIARY NURSE

The dead:

MOTHER

FATHER

ALISA Armin's younger sister

EROL Armin's brother

LANA Armin's older sister

Armin is mentally retarded, autistic, and does not know how to speak. He utters strange sounds. His grandmother thinks she understands him.

(The roles from the Psychiatrist to the Male Nurse are written so that each actor can play at least two roles.)

It happened yesterday - it's still happening today - somewhere ...

Scene 1

*Darknes; there is shooting somewhere in the distance and it is getting nearer; screams, shooting, screams. Silence. Slowly the lights come up. In front of us - a yard, in the background a house is indicated, ablaze; there is smoke. It is evening, shortly before nightfall; the flames light up the stage with an almost unreal effect, shadows, smoke, a strange silence. As the smoke dissipates somewhat, we notice corpses scattered about everywhere. Armin's relatives, with the exception of his grandmother, lie dead. From somewhere off to the side - a strange voice, strange wailing, groaning. **ARMIN** crawls between his dead father and mother and tries to move them, presses himself up against them. He is terrified and completely beside himself. He falls silent when **SOLDIER 1** appears out of the darkness, pushing in front of him a weeping and bloody grandmother **AZRA**. Soldier 1 and **SOLDIER 2** are in combat uniform. **AZRA** sees her grandson and calls out his name, she wants to run to him and to the dead, but **SOLDIER 1** prevents her. Armin does not respond to Azra's call, he has managed to drag his father's and mother's corpses into a pile and is now pulling Alisa's corpse towards them as well.*

SOLDIER 1 (to Azra, whom he has by the neck): Where are the others, where have you hidden them, bitch?

(AZRA is crying, she does not answer.)

Do you want to die? Bitch! How will he manage?

(Pointing to Armin.)

He doesn't even know how to wipe his own arse. Do you want him to wander around with a dirty bum?

(He pulls her hair, hits her.)

Fuck you, do you really want me to smash your brains out? Where are the others? If I tell you to answer, then answer!

*(He hits her. Meanwhile, **ARMIN** drags Erol's corpse onto the pile.)*

AZRA: Three days ago they ... they ... I've already told you!

(SOLDIER 2 arrives, a walkie-talkie in his hand. He is speaking with someone on the other end. SOLDIER 1 throws Azra to the ground, goes over to Armin, and observes him.)

SOLDIER 2: Yes, I understand, boss! Right away. Of course ... yes, it's burning great, no, not even a trace. Don't worry, there'll be nothing left at all, no problem, boss!

(He calls to Soldier 1.)

Wrap it up now! Hurry up, it's a retreat, retreat in five minutes, come on, come on!

(On his walkie-talkie again.)

Yes, received, boss! Five minutes, no more, yes!

(Hangs up. To Soldier 1.)

What are you bugging about at? Throw them on the fire! All I found was a bit of jewellery, no money, for fuck's sake. The boss'll be pissed off. Have you taken everything off of them? Watches 'n all?

SOLDIER 1: Yes, but there's three of them missing.

SOLDIER 2: No worries, Bato intercepted them. Didn't you hear how they shrieked as he threw them on the fire? Course the bitch we shafted.

AZRA *(screams)*: Aisha, Aisha ... oh, my baby ... Mevlud, Mevlud, where are you ... Aishaaaa ...?

SOLDIER 1 *(pointing to Armin)*: Shut that devil up! The boss said - cleanse completely, everything! Nothing must remain, not even a trace!

AZRA: No. Noooooo ...!

SOLDIER 2 *(pointing to Azra)*: Kill the bitch!

SOLDIER 1: You do it!

(They look at each other. **AZRA** throws herself on Armin, embraces him. **ARMIN** drags her to the others on the pile.)

SOLDIER 2: Are you afraid of the old cow?

SOLDIER 1: No, but ...

SOLDIER 2: No buts! I'm going to do another check ...! Action, action!

(Starts to leave; turns around.)

Leave the kid, he can't even say boo!

(Laughs. Exits. Armin and Azra are lying on the pile of corpses.)

SOLDIER 1: Get up, you old bag. Did you hear me? Hurry up, go on. Get up ...

(more quietly) and get lost, get away ...

(He starts dragging Armin's mother's corpse towards the fire. **AZRA** and **ARMIN** drag her back.)

AZRA: You're not going to, no, no, no ... my Aida, Aida ...!

(She embraces her dead daughter's corpse.)

SOLDIER 1: I told you ...! Don't you get it? What'll the kid do without you? Do you have to bugger me about?

(Pulls his revolver and shoots. Azra falls.)

You cunt ... you stupid cunt! Go to ..., all of you! I have to clean up all the shit instead of him, all on my own, all the fucking shit! He always chickens out.

(He pulls at Armin's mother's corpse. **ARMIN** clings onto her leg, talking in his own way.)

Get out, out of the way ... Do you understand? Get out the way, if I tell you to...!

Bastard!

(**SOLDIER 1** pulls Armin's mother's corpse out of his grasp, then lifts her and disappears with her into the smoke, and throws her into the flames of the house.

Armin's mother's shoes have remained in Armin's hands, and he holds them to him.

Grandmother **AZRA**, who was lying immobile on the ground, slowly drags herself to

one side. **SOLDIER 1** returns for the next corpse, the father's. **ARMIN** has taken off his father's shoes. Now he has two pairs, he holds them to him. **SOLDIER 1** notices him.)

What are you doing? You don't know what you're doing, of course...

(He drags the corpse towards the fire.)

He really is an idiot!

(AZRA is still dragging herself away. She calls quietly to ARMIN, who is now taking Alisa's shoes off and does not respond. SOLDIER 1 returns.)

Yeah, yeah, so the shoes won't burn, good boy!

(SOLDIER 2 runs in. SOLDIER 1 lifts up Alisa's half-clothed corpse.)

SOLDIER 2: What are you hesitating for, for fuck's sake ..., the boss'll ...! Ooh, ooh, what knockers ...

(While he is 'handling' with them, he also pulls off her cross and chain and puts it into his pocket.)

My God, what knockers! I couldn't half fuck her again!

SOLDIER 1: I'd have another go too. Shame we didn't leave her alive a little bit longer.

SOLDIER 2: The boss said to clean everything out!

SOLDIER 1: I'm going to dream about her.

SOLDIER 2: Here she is, but hurry up about it.

SOLDIER 1: Are you crazy?!

SOLDIER 2 *(laughing)*: She's still warm. Hurry up, trousers down and away we go, 'allo 'allo ... I'll take your picture!

SOLDIER 1: You fucking necrophiliac! The only time you dare to do anything is when it's all over. Necrophiliac! Yuk!

SOLDIER 2: Look out, I've been watching you for a while now!

(SOLDIER 1 swears and carries off Alisa's corpse. SOLDIER 2 picks up Erol's corpse, from which ARMIN has already taken the shoes, and carries it away to the fire. Meanwhile AZRA has disappeared. SOLDIER 1 comes back for Lana's corpse, picks that up in his arms too, and carries it away. SOLDIER 2 returns.)

SOLDIER 2: You're right, though, those cunts have got something, something ours haven't. You get an appetite. You done the old woman?

SOLDIER 1 *(confused.):* The old one? *(Uncertainly.)* I did her first. She's already roasted beautifully, just a bit hard to chew.

SOLDIER 2: Stop bugging about!

SOLDIER 1: Didn't you say you were hungry?

SOLDIER 2: I'll smash your gob, not just so you can't talk shit any more, but so you can't even eat! Get it?

SOLDIER 1: All right, all right, mate, you really don't understand messing about.

SOLDIER 2: Go fuck yourself in the mouth, fuck yourself ... which way you want, just fuck yourself. Ooh, we've already been more than ten minutes ... The boss'll go mad! Move, move!

SOLDIER 1 *(to Armin):* Don't cry, it isn't worth it, you know.

(He reaches into his pocket and offers the boy some chocolate. Armin, who is quietly 'talking' to the shoes, does not look at him. The chocolate is lying on the ground.)

SOLDIER 2: Ooh, he's spoiled! Enjoy, little one, at least no-one will nag you any more now!

(They exit.)

SOLDIER 1 *(from offstage):* What's he going to do with those shoes then?

(Armin stands alone centre stage, explaining something to the empty shoes in front of him, in his own way, of course.

Darkness.)

Scene 2

*(Almost a year to the day has passed. A psychiatric day clinic. A table, on one side of which sits the **PSYCHIATRIST** and, on the other, grandmother **AZRA** and **ARMIN**. Armin is content and calm; in his arms he is holding a large black plastic rubbish bag. Azra and the doctor speak fairly loudly, jumping on each others' words.)*

AZRA: You mustn't say - no. It would be a sin, doctor.

PSYCHIATRIST: My dear woman, you have to understand ...

AZRA: I know I'll have to pay for it all, when Armin starts earning a bit ...

PSYCHIATRIST: No, madam, I've already told you, the problem is that the boy ...

*(**ARMIN** stands up and takes a few steps around the consulting room. He does not let go of the bag. **AZRA** blackmails the psychiatrist by sobbing.)*

AZRA: He's the only one left apart from me. I don't know how I survived. God's foresight, so the little one wouldn't be left on his own ... And that's why we've come to you ...

PSYCHIATRIST: I know that, you've already explained it to me three times ...

AZRA: Then you shouldn't say - no! You've got to teach him to speak. At least enough to find a woman, never mind what kind, as long as she's honest, so he can have children with her ... At least teach him enough so he can sweep the streets. Please God I live to see that day! His children will be grateful to you and their children's children.

PSYCHIATRIST: But Armin is ...

(ARMIN sits on the floor, plays with the shoes and explains something to them in his special language.)

AZRA: The last hope for our lineage (*sobs*).

PSYCHIATRIST: Tell him to clear up.

AZRA: Pardon?

PSYCHIATRIST: The shoes are ... muddy.

AZRA: They've been through a lot.

PSYCHIATRIST: They're very muddy.

AZRA: Mud to some, gold-dust to others.

PSYCHIATRIST: I'm not sure if ...

AZRA (*strokes her grandson*): He understands everything, he just doesn't know how to speak.

PSYCHIATRIST: Your grandson is, how to put it ... damaged.

AZRA: Yes, very.

PSYCHIATRIST: I didn't mean that ... Those murderers knew exactly why they let him live.

AZRA: The next day they would never have found us again. I've already run away before, during the second world war, that's why I know ... that's why this time I couldn't close the door behind me so easily ... It can happen that you never come home again.

PSYCHIATRIST: What you've lived through is beyond the bounds of comprehension. But sometimes there is nothing we can do but accept. Try to accept that ...

(Azra watches him, then it just pours out of her.)

AZRA: They killed my three sons, two daughters, three daughters-in-law, two sons-in-law, nine grandchildren. They killed nineteen, in the most savage way, you heard me, nineteen of my family! Ten adults and nine children! And I'm supposed to accept that? Somebody decided that my family was to be wiped off the map of the world ... , because it was war actually, because we stepped on somebody's corns, because we've got dark hair instead of light ... because ... Because we eat beef instead of pork, because we look towards heaven in a different way, because ... and I'm supposed to come to understand that, and stop weeping, because now's no longer the time for that, because now it's peace actually and I have to shut up, because ... Nobody asked me - not about the war or the peace!

PSYCHIATRIST: I understand you very well ... However ... Nonetheless, look at what he's doing.

AZRA *(completely out of it):* What?

PSYCHIATRIST: He's talking to ... he's talking to the shoes.

AZRA: Are you trying to say he can already talk?

PSYCHIATRIST: You know very well what I mean. You're the only one I can help.

AZRA: No, I don't need you.

PSYCHIATRIST: Medicine isn't advanced enough yet to deal with a case like your grandson's.

(AZRA puts away the shoes in the bag. ARMIN takes leave of some of them particularly warmly.)

AZRA: And who says it's only my nation that's cursed?

PSYCHIATRIST: Please ... I really have a lot of work to do, I haven't time ...

AZRA: That's how it begins!

(The PSYCHIATRIST opens the door. AZRA just keeps on talking.)

Be careful what kind of medicine you prescribe, be careful what kind of prescriptions you sign ...!

PSYCHIATRIST: If those words help you feel a little better, then we've reached some kind of objective anyway. Good-bye.

(The PSYCHIATRIST closes the door behind Azra. Armin is still inside, but he does not notice him. As he calms down a little, he slowly turns around. Armin is standing in front of him with his bag of shoes. They look at each other for a long time. The PSYCHIATRIST tries to stroke his hair. ARMIN bites him. The PSYCHIATRIST is just raising his hand to hit him when AZRA, who has opened the door meanwhile, calls to her grandson.)

AZRA: Come on.

(Blackout)

Scene 3

(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. ARMIN is standing in front of us centre stage, his hands over his eyes, counting slowly. His sister ALISA is hiding behind him. Alisa is wearing her clothes from scene 1, her face very pale, dirty, and bloody. All the 'dead' look as they did in Scene 1.)

ARMIN: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten! I'm coming!

(He looks around slowly, considering in which direction to take off. He does not notice Alisa, who is crouching hidden behind him. Alisa suddenly gets up.)

ALISA *(happily)*: One, two, three – I'm here!

ARMIN: You're cheating again!

ALISA: No I'm not!

ARMIN: Yes you are!

ALISA *(whispering loudly)*: If you give me some chocolate I'll tell you where Mum and Dad are.

(ARMIN hesitates at first, but then pulls out of his pocket the whole chocolate bar that the soldier gave him in the first scene. Only the paper is a little ripped. ALISA already has it in her hands when ARMIN reconsiders and grabs it back roughly.)

ALISA: All right, but you won't find them!

ARMIN: Oh yes I will!

(He runs off stage. ALISA looks after him for a moment, then calls out quietly.)

ALISA: Mum, mum ... dad!

(Heads pop onto the stage from various positions. ALISA shows them that the air is clean.)

Quick, hurry!

(ARMIN runs back on and catches sight of his mother and father.)

FATHER: One, two, three - for me!

ALISA: Good one! Good one!

(MOTHER stumbles and falls. ALMIR picks her up as he runs past her, but he still overtakes her.)

ARMIN: One, two, three - Mum!

MOTHER: Oh, my old bones!

ALISA: I know where the others are too!

FATHER: You mustn't tell. *(He gives her a sweet.) (To Armin)* Sorry, I haven't got any more.

ALISA: He's got a whole bar of chocolate anyway.

MOTHER *(leaning on Father's shoulder):* I've had enough for today.

ALISA: Because you're peeking!

MOTHER: No, no ...

ARMIN: Just one more go?

(ALISA sees LANA creeping up and signals to her to wait.)

ALISA: What about Erol?

ARMIN: Oh, you're right!

(And she is already running past.)

LANA: One, two, three – I'm here. *(To Alisa.)* Thanks.

FATHER *(to Alisa):* Who taught you to play like that?

ALISA: You. *(Laughs.)*

FATHER: I'll give you what for!

LANA: I'm not playing any more.

MOTHER: That's two of us now. Armin will be very upset.

(ARMIN runs up, with EROL behind him, but Armin is faster.)

ARMIN: One, two, three - Erol! One, two three - Erol! Another one. Who's peeking?

(Grandmother AZRA calls from offstage.)

AZRA: Armin, Armin ...!

ARMIN: One more, one more, quickly, quickly ...!

LANA: No way!

AZRA: Armin, Armin ... Lunch!

ARMIN: Please, please!

MOTHER: Quickly, otherwise ...

(MOTHER quickly counts. The others scatter in all directions. At that moment AZRA appears. LANA runs past her. She takes off her shoes, leaving them on the ground. Azra doesn't see Lana anyway, nor do the others. She picks up the shoes.)

AZRA (to Armin): What are you pretending you can't hear me for?

(Mother has finished counting, ARMIN presses himself against her, she does not let him. It is not clear to Azra what Armin is doing. The light changes, the music disappears.)

AZRA: What are you doing?

(MOTHER has left, ARMIN is unhappy, AZRA picks up her shoes. Then Father's, which have been left centre stage.)

Why do you have to scatter them all over the place?

(ARMIN looks at her blankly.)

Lets go, the polenta will be cold.

(ARMIN starts to 'explain' something.)

Not now, later on ... Armin, let's go.

(ARMIN looks around.)

Where have you hidden them?

(ARMIN runs away. AZRA waits for him, starts to get irritated, looks at the shoes. She spits and cleans the dust off one of the pairs.)

Armin, now I've had enough!

(ARMIN returns, bearing Alisa's and Erol's shoes victoriously in his arms.)

Have you found them?

(AZRA pulls the plastic bag from Scene 2 out of Armin's pocket. They put away the shoes.)

As long as you've found them again.

(Soft music with a touch of an Oriental melody. ARMIN and AZRA slowly leave the stage hand in hand. Armin is holding the bag of shoes in his other hand.

Blackout.)

Scene 4

(A room with very shabby humble furniture, an old iron hospital bed, a table and two chairs. ARMIN is kneeling on the floor, next to him is the bag of shoes; he is rubbing with a piece of wood, scratching the floorboards, scraping lines. The whole time consistent, the whole time in the same rhythm. It is obviously not the first time, for he has already made a kind of pattern, which from afar resembles hop-scotch. After a while, grandmother AZRA enters, carrying a washing-up bowl of water.)

AZRA: Stop that! You've already scratched everything! I can't pay for that. I'm warning you for the last time!

(ARMIN pays her no attention.)

I told you to wash! Do you hear me, Armin? Put that thing away! What will mummy and daddy say? You know they're watching us. It'll make them very sad. Give me that thing at once, do you hear, Armin?

(They grapple with each other, then grandmother falls. ARMIN does not look at her, he strokes the piece of wood as though he were comforting it. He whispers to it. AZRA is on the floor.)

Instead of doing what you're told, instead of learning ... Everything your own way! I know how clever you are only too well, but you're lazy. That's all it is, you're lazy. And those parents of yours, believing that stupid doctor! You'd be speaking by now. You'd be going to school, instead of me having to struggle with you like this in my old age.

(The grandmother is getting up when she sees ARMIN coming for her with the stick in his hand. ARMIN is trembling.)

Not on Granny's head! I've told you a thousand times I'm not playing war any more. Throw it away right now! Armin? Look what you're doing to me. Just look at my knee, look how it's bleeding.

Why aren't you listening? How can I explain to you? Armin ... Armin ...? Look. Look.

(She gasps. Then she pulls the stick out of his hand and breaks it.)

Who's going to obey who, me you or you me?

(ARMIN beats AZRA soundly. She retreats. When she grabs the bag of shoes, ARMIN stops immediately.)

If you ever hit your grandmother again, I'll take these away from you so you'll never see them again. Do you understand me, Armin, do you understand that?

(A long silence. ARMIN throws himself onto the bed, sobbing and panting. AZRA slowly approaches him, takes him in her arms, caresses him, whispers to him and sings softly to him. ARMIN slowly calms down and clings to her.)

My little sunshine, I'm so glad I have you. Everything will be all right, you'll see. I'm sure someone else must have survived. We just have to believe it. So what, if the house is burned down.

(Azra undresses Armin, who no longer resists.)

You'll lie in the grass and watch the clouds, you can watch them to your heart's content. And ... *(a long silence)*. Good, yes ... And the other arm ... Now you're being a good boy. And now this ... *(she puts his pyjamas on him)*, and your leg ... The neighbour's got such a lovely jacket for you, it's almost new, you'll see. Lift up ... there. New, so you'll be the handsomest boy in town, so the girls will just fall down when they see you.

(Armin does not like the latter. Azra laughs.)

That's just an expression. If one of them really fell, you'd pick her up, wouldn't you? Of course. Well, and when you've chosen one, you'll buy her some popcorn, and you mustn't eat it all yourself. If you have a girlfriend, Armin, you must love her more than yourself, otherwise it's nothing.

(Armin is alarmed; he stands up.)

What's the matter now? It's nothing bad. Everyone has a girlfriend. When you're old enough, it's normal. Armin, come here. These things happen by themselves. Armin ... Armin! *(to herself)* Now what have I ...? Armin, bed, bed right now Armin! Armin?

(Armin pulls his clothes off.)

Now what are you doing? Stop it, right now. Stop it!

(She dresses him again.)

What's got into you today? Put it back on ..., you'll tear it, Armin, stop it if I tell you!

(She swings her arm forcefully and hits him. Armin plunges into his absent-mindedness.)

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have ...

(She caresses him and presses him to her.)

Blackout.)

Scene 5

(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. ARMIN and his DEAD SISTERS are sitting half undressed in a circle, surrounded by clothes that have been strewn about. They are facing one another, playing a finger game. First they hide their fingers behind their backs. At a certain moment, each of them calls out a number from zero to five and immediately raises a number of fingers at will. The fingers are then counted. The one who differs most from the sum when it is called out, loses. The loser has to take off an item of clothing as a forfeit. Poor Armin is already practically undressed; now he is taking off his undershirt, to his sisters' amusement.)

ARMIN: I don't like this.

ALISA: But you're lovely.

LANA: There's no point being embarrassed.

ARMIN: Stop it.

ALISA: Woah, look at that hair!

ARMIN: Don't pull them!

LANA *(to Alisa)*: Leave him, you're always doing something to him... One more quick one.

ARMIN: No.

LANA: Only one more!

ALISA: Two.

(They play again. ARMIN loses again. ALISA and LANA laugh.)

ARMIN: You're cheating, you're cheating.

LANA: No we're ... Trousers down, trousers ..., trousers ...

ARMIN (*shouting*): Mummy, mummy ...

(*ALISA puts her hand over his mouth, they both throw themselves on him and tickle him. ARMIN defends himself with all his might.*)

LANA: Stop it, you pig.

ARMIN: You two are pigs ... Mummy...!

ALISA: You're crazy. Do you like this then? And this ...?

ARMIN: No, no ... Mummy ...

LANA: If you won't play, we won't play football either.

ALISA: Yes, that's right!

ARMIN: This isn't even a game, you two just made something up.

LANA: It's great. (*To Alisa.*) Let's pull them off him ... Down ...

(*They laugh while they drag down his trousers.*)

ARMIN: No ... Mummy ... I ... Let me ...! Mummy I hate you both!

(*The light slowly changes, the wind disappears. The NEIGHBOUR passes by. ALISA and LANA grab their clothes and run off. The NEIGHBOUR does not see them. ARMIN is sitting on the ground, touching his penis.*)

NEIGHBOUR: Oh, you dirty thing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

(ARMIN pulls down his underpants now as well, the NEIGHBOUR looks at him with interest.)

You dirty thing! Put it away ..., ooh, you're a big boy. Put it back. Pull your pants up. Hide that ..., that shameful thing. Do you hear?

(She calls out in the direction of the house.)

Azra, Azra! He's exposing himself again out here!

(Blackout.)

Scene 6

(The room is the same as in Scene 4. ARMIN is playing with the shoes of the dead. He is making out line for hop-scotch, as indicated in Scene 4. At the same time, he is mumbling something rhythmical and repeating the same action for quite a while. Grandmother AZRA selects a pair. ARMIN is alarmed.)

AZRA: I think Erol's will fit you. They're still brand new, we're just going to try them on. Put them on, then you can go on playing ...

Give me your foot, I'm sure they'll ... Armin! You're going to try them on and ... You're being disobedient again!

(She tries hard to put them on him. ARMIN ignores her.)

We can hardly get yours on any more. You can see they're too small a mile away. You've got bleeding blisters, that hurts ... Let's try ..., come on ... You can't walk in those any more!

You always wore Erol's shoes, the one's you've got on are his too. Please, little one, come on, put ... You have to put them on! He'd have been so pleased!

Shall we ask him? Oh yes, you'll see ... Haven't I told you before, they hear and see everything.

(ARMIN deliberates with himself fervently.)

I'll call him. Be quiet, I can't hear myself speak if you're talking.

(She looks up at the ceiling and calls out. ARMIN is talking to himself.)

Erol, Erol! Can you hear me? It's me, Grandma, yes. All right, thanks, Armin gives me a hard time sometimes, yes, really difficult ... There's something I wanted to ask you – isn't it right that you don't mind if Armin wears your shoes? You don't?

Really? He should just try them on and wear them like a good boy? Yes, that's what I say too!

Give me your foot, quick ... Did you hear him? Armin! That's enough! Do what you're told, pick up your foot right now. Armin!

(A long silence. She looks up again, continuing as loudly and emphatically as possible.)

Are you still there, Erol? It looks like he didn't hear you. Yes, you'll have to say it again, louder this time ... No, just the same as before. But loudly, yes. How do I know, maybe he was just distracted. You tell him, and we'll listen, both of us, yes ... You can't see us then? That doesn't matter.

(She pulls Armin to the other side, and looks up.)

Is that better now? That's very kind of you, thanks, Erol. Ready, yes ..., you just tell us.

(ARMIN looks straight ahead. Azra tries to force him to look up, but in vain.)

If you really want to hear something, you have to look the person in the eyes first.

Look, look, and you'll see Erol.

(A long silence. ARMIN is sitting in his characteristic posture, hugging his feet. Azra sounds cheerful nonetheless.)

No, I think he will. You just fly, go on, fly away. We'll see each other soon, yes. Say hello to everyone else for us.

You really can't say you didn't hear him this time, because ... Now what is it? Armin!

Stop that! You've got bleeding blisters and you mustn't put those shoes on any more.

You'll ruin your feet for the rest of your life. I've no money left for a doctor!

I don't know ... You have to do as you're told! Erol's seen how badly you behave and he'll tell mummy everything, you know how sad she'll be.

(She has an idea and looks for his father's shoes.)

Do you want these? Yes, your dad's are even nicer. Let's try them. I don't care, as long as you've got shoes on. Maybe they're still a bit large for you, but if we stuff a bit of paper inside they'll fit perfectly.

(ARMIN does not reply. Azra all of a sudden gets up and with a decisive gesture, and throws the shoes at Armin.)

Wear what you like then! Don't come crying to me ... I don't even know what I'm going to give you to eat, and you, you won't even try on these stupid shoes!

(A long silence; they both stare into space.)

God. I don't understand, I just don't understand ...

(She crumples and weeps, ARMIN stares into space and mumbles something. Slow blackout.)

Scene 7

*(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. The **DEAD** and **ARMIN** are playing Heaven - Hell, on the shape that Armin scratched out with a piece of wood in the previous scene.[The first square is hell, and the further you progress the closer you are to heaven, which is the last square. When you are out, you return to hell.] Grandmother **AZRA** is lying on the bed, dressed as in the previous scene, with her shoes on. Azra is dead, although none of those present pay any attention to that. They are completely preoccupied with their game, which they have obviously been playing for goodness knows how long, for they are acting very tired. If anyone secretly rests, **ARMIN** resolutely lifts them up. The 'Dead' are wearing bloody clothes as in the first scene. **EROL** is hopping, pushing a small piece of wood along in front of him –part of the stick Armin was playing with in the previous scene. **EROL** steps on a line.)*

LANA: Stop the game, Erol! (***EROL** continues hopping.*) You were on the line.

EROL: I wasn't.

LANA: You were! (*To Alisa.*) Wasn't he?

ALISA: I think he's done it twice.

MOTHER: I couldn't see properly, but ...

LANA: He was on the line! When he hopped he ... (*To Erol.*) Stop playing! (*To Alisa.*) You tell him!

ALISA: I told you I saw him before!

FATHER: Erol. Two witnesses. Nothing you can do.

*(**EROL** just keeps on hopping. **ARMIN** is very nervous.)*

ALISA *(to her Mother and Father)*: Stop him!

EROL: O.K., O.K. It's boring anyway! We've been playing nothing but 'heaven - hell' for three days! I'm not playing any more!

(He flings the piece of wood a long way away; MOTHER tries to slap his face, FATHER stops her.)

FATHER: Aida, no. We said we'd put that behind us.

MOTHER: Of course, I'm sorry, I'm sorry ... *(Kindly)* Erol, you shouldn't do that.

(ALISA cannot hide her satisfaction. FATHER scolds her. In the meantime, ARMIN runs for the piece of wood.)

FATHER: Alisa, Alisa darling.

ALISA: Just because he's losing!

EROL: That's not true, if I really wanted to, I could ...

ALISA: You could fart, because that's all you can do.

MOTHER: Alisa!

LANA *(to Erol)*: You haven't got a hope, we're all better than you. Even Dad.

FATHER: Why are you exaggerating?

(ARMIN takes advantage of the quarrel to continue playing alone. He places the piece of wood on his left foot and hops on his right.)

EROL: It's not a boy's game at all!

LANA: If you won it would be, though!

MOTHER: We said we were going to play, so we're going to play. Where would we be if everyone did what they wanted?

FATHER (*laughing*): In heaven.

EROL: I couldn't care less.

MOTHER (*to Erol*): Majority decision, you'll have to get used to it. Whose turn is it?

LANA: Mine! (*She sees Armin.*) Now he's cheating too!

ALISA: And he started in the middle. (*To Armin.*) You can't start in the middle if you haven't even got to 'heaven' once yet.

ARMIN: Yes I have though, I always get to 'heaven'!

(*ALISA and LANA fall about laughing because of Armin's lie.*)

MOTHER: Armin, there's no point, you know. And now please ...

ARMIN: I'm winning while you're arguing.

LANA (*to her mother*): I hope you're not going to believe him again!

ALISA: Let him do what he wants, he's in 'hell' all the time anyway.

MOTHER: Alisa!

(*ARMIN still keeps on hopping.*)

LANA (*to Armin*): Get off, or I'll get you off!

(*LANA pushes ARMIN so that he loses his balance and falls.*)

MOTHER: Lana!

ALISA (*laughing*): Now you're in real heaven!

(*ARMIN picks himself up.*)

EROL: We've been playing nothing else but this for three days.

(LANA starts hopping. She balances the piece of wood on the back of her left or right hand, hopping of course on one leg. Lana is a real expert.)

MOTHER: He's right, you must give us a little rest, Armin.

ARMIN: No, you can't!

FATHER: You'll have to find a way.

LANA: I've already started, so you won't ...!

MOTHER *(to Armin):* Nothing bad is going to happen if we take a little rest. We won't go away, don't worry. If we can just sit down for a minute and rest these heavy legs ...

(Very slowly she starts to sit. ARMIN lifts her up.)

ARMIN: No and no!

MOTHER: I'm not going to fall asleep, don't you worry.

LANA: What you're demanding of us is really rude.

FATHER: Don't worry, Armin, we're never going to leave you, never.

ALL *(almost as one voice):* Never, never, never ...!

ARMIN: If we're playing, we're playing! No-one's going to sleep, I won't let you! I'm the one deciding.

MOTHER: Why are you so hard-hearted, Armin?

ARMIN: You have to cheer me on ! The rules of the game are clear!

EROL: They're not, because you're always changing them.

ARMIN: That's not true!

EROL: Say them then, if you know them.

(They all wait, apart from Lana, who is hopping.)

ARMIN: You say them, you can't remember them!

FATHER: Stop it you two.

MOTHER: Don't provoke him, Erol, be patient, you know how he is.

(Now Armin is really offended.)

EROL *(to his mother):* You always stick up for him, let him grow up for once! I'm not well either! *(To Armin.)* I'm sick of you!

ALISA: *(hopping):* I am crazy. Crazy, crazy ... I am crazy ...!

FATHER: Be quiet, I said!

(LANA makes a mistake. ALISA claps again. LANA starts to cry.)

LANA: I'd nearly got to 'heaven'. It's all because of you, because of you! Can't you keep quiet? You argue all the time!

FATHER: You mustn't be so sensitive.

ARMIN: Now it's really my turn!

ALISA: It's not! It's mine now!

ARMIN: No, it's not true!

ALISA: Oh yes it is!

ARMIN: No it isn't!

MOTHER: Armin!

FATHER: Stop it, all of you!

(The girls run at Armin, ARMIN shouts, FATHER and MOTHER pull them apart.)

ALISA: You idiot! Idiot, stop being a pain!

MOTHER: What did you call him?!

FATHER: She didn't mean anything by it.

ALISA: Oh yes I did!

MOTHER: Leave him alone!

ALISA: You leave me alone, you always only stick up for him!

FATHER: Alisa, you should know better, you're not a child any more!

LANA: Let him leave us alone for once, he can't keep us here for three days, he doesn't own us! I want to go somewhere else. And him; he can carry on doing whatever ... Well, it's all right if we come now and again, but not all the time. If he doesn't stop soon, there won't be anything left of me for anyone else's memory! There are other dreams to dream! I want my death back!

ALISA and EROL: Me too, me too!

(ARMIN shouts, someone enters, but we do not see him yet. All the 'dead', apart from Azra,, look back and then disperse in an instant in all directions. They leave the shoes lying scattered across the stage. The light changes, the voices and wind cease.

ARMIN yells almost like an animal.

Blackout.)

Scene 8

*(A few minutes have passed. The stage is the same as in the previous scene. The light changes, the wind has disappeared. Grandmother Azra lies dead on the bed, Armin is next to the bed on the floor, at first also without any sign of life. Two **POLICEMEN** wearing white masks are on the stage, later a **NEIGHBOUR**. **POLICEMAN 1** is writing in a notebook. **POLICEMAN 2** is next to Armin.)*

POLICEMAN 1: He's breathing, but ...

POLICEMAN 2: Give him some water. *(He looks at Azra.)* She's the third this week.

*(**POLICEMAN 2** looks for water. There is no pipe.)*

Looks like they're just dying of hunger.

*(**POLICEMAN 2** trips over the shoes. He swears.)*

POLICEMAN 2: Bloody shit!

POLICEMAN 1: Even if it's suicide, it's because of poverty.

POLICEMAN 2: They haven't even got water.

POLICEMAN 1: Go ask the neighbours.

No particular evidence. Apart from ..., apart from perhaps ...

POLICEMAN 2: Apart from the stench.

POLICEMAN 1: Well she did lie down with her shoes on.

*(**POLICEMAN 2** turns towards the door, goes to the bowl, cups his hands and splashes Armin with water.)*

POLICEMAN 1: There's no need to drown him! He's dehydrated, give him a drink, don't just stand there like an idiot!

POLICEMAN 2: Why don't you just call me a stupid peasant?

(Exit.)

(POLICEMAN 1 finishes taking notes and puts away the notepad. He bends over Armin and carefully lifts him up. ARMIN utters an inarticulate cry.)

(To himself) Poor thing.

(He tries to position him more comfortably, ARMIN opens his eyes, tries to get up, lies back down feebly.)

Don't worry, lad, everything's going to be all right.

(POLICEMAN 2 brings a glass of water, accompanied by the NEIGHBOUR, who makes a cross in the air over Azra.)

NEIGHBOUR: She is saved ... God rest her soul.

POLICEMAN 1: Is this her grandson?

NEIGHBOUR: She had no choice. He used to send her mad, too.

POLICEMAN 1: Mad?

(POLICEMAN 1 wets Armin's lips with the water.)

NEIGHBOUR: She never let you say anything against him. It's strange he didn't shout now. Sometimes he shouts so ...

POLICEMAN 1: Shouts?

NEIGHBOUR: I'll say! You have to block up your ears.

POLICEMAN 2: Did she hit him?

NEIGHBOUR: Don't be daft! She said he stopped speaking during the war, but I don't think anyone believed her. I reckon he's always ... Well, you know.

POLICEMAN 1 *(to Armin)*: You feel that bad, do you? *(To the Neighbour.)* Can he hear, though?

NEIGHBOUR: I don't think so.

(POLICEMAN 1 tests him. Armin reacts.)

Well, there you are then! I hadn't heard them for three days, well, I hadn't seen them either ... I was starting to think they'd gone back home. Although ... well, we all know they didn't have anywhere ... But Azra kept on fantasising. Sometimes that's the only comfort there is.

(ARMIN raises himself to his knees and tries to take Azra's shoes off. The others stand still.)

NEIGHBOUR: She took the same size as me.

POLICEMAN 2: Shouldn't we slowly finish up here now?

POLICEMAN 1: What relatives are there left?

NEIGHBOUR: Not a single one.

POLICEMAN 1: Christ. Oh well. I suppose he couldn't stay with you, could he?

NEIGHBOUR: There's only one place for people like that.

(Holding Azra's shoes, ARMIN starts to pick up the others.)

POLICEMAN 2: Look, he's clearing up.

NEIGHBOUR: No, he's got some really strange ...

POLICEMAN 1 *(to Armin)*: Good lad. Are you coming with us?

NEIGHBOUR: What are you asking him for?

POLICEMAN 2: We've already been here for an hour! I'm really going to be sick in a minute.

NEIGHBOUR: When are you going to take her away?

POLICEMAN 1: I don't know, the doctor has still to come and the sanitation crew and ... Thank you and good-bye. *(He takes Armin's arm; ARMIN tears himself away.)* I'm not going to hurt you.

(ARMIN runs about all over the place, picking up the shoes.)

Let's go, I know you're ..., you're going to see your grandmother again. We're only going to ... They have such kind aunties there ... You can leave the shoes here.

(ARMIN tries to get out; they chase him around the stage.)

POLICEMAN 2: He's flipped.

POLICEMAN 1: Take hold of him. What are you afraid of him for?

POLICEMAN 2: He's gone mad. He's gone completely mad!

POLICEMAN 1: I'm not going to do anything bad to you ...

NEIGHBOUR: I told you ... I told you ... He'll start shouting next.

(POLICEMAN 1 intercepts him in front of the door.)

POLICEMAN 1: I know it's hard, lad, but ... Better do as you're told ... it's no good ...

POLICEMAN 2: Why are you discussing this?!

(POLICEMAN 2 takes the handcuffs.)

POLICEMAN 1: Put those away!

(ARMIN runs away again, dropping the shoes. He lets out a piercing scream.)

Calm down, will you? I don't want to hurt you, you'll come home with me ... Do you understand me? You'll come to my place for a while ... And then ...

NEIGHBOUR: There you are, what did I tell you!

POLICEMAN 2: There's no way, boss, we're going to take him straight there!

POLICEMAN 1: He's a poor thing. *(To Armin.)* It'll be a lot easier for everyone if you calm down. Do you understand me?

POLICEMAN 2: What are you explaining to him for? This one's definitely, and I mean definitely ...!

POLICEMAN 1: You definitely shut up!

(POLICEMAN 1 expertly overpowers Armin onto the floor, POLICEMAN 2 puts handcuffs on him. ARMIN shouts and hurls himself at the shoes, which he now tries to seize with his teeth.)

POLICEMAN 2: And now I'm ... ? It's always me!

POLICEMAN 1: Well, if you're an idiot!

(Whilst running towards the door, ARMIN accidentally knocks down POLICEMAN 2, POLICEMAN 1 runs after him, trips over the shoes on the floor and falls over. The NEIGHBOUR has been feeling sick for a while now, and throws up in the bowl.)

Wind, lighting change, music. ARMIN stops and turns round.

ARMIN: I'm going to put your shoes on, Granny.

(Blackout.)

Scene 9.

*(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. The stage is the same as in the previous scene, as well as the performers, with the addition of the **DEAD**. The **POLICEMEN** and the **NEIGHBOUR** hold their previous position.*

*The **DEAD** are arranged in a circle around the stage and they are tossing handcuffs as though they were passing a ball. Before you throw you speak a thought. Laughter. **ARMIN** stands in the middle and tries to catch them. The person throwing speaks.)*

AZRA: You're not going to cry!

MOTHER: Don't worry.

FATHER: Accept it.

LANA: Don't be sad.

ALISA: Take it.

EROL: Go on.

(They all speak quickly.)

MOTHER: Don't be afraid.

ALISA: Come on then ...

FATHER: Come on ...

LANA: Come on ...

*(**EROL** shouts out and throws with all his might; **ARMIN** backs away at the last minute.)*

AZRA: This isn't the last circle!

*(**AZRA** gestures to Erol to pick up the handcuffs.)*

FATHER: Erol!

(EROL gives them to Azra.)

EROL: Why would he wait? There's no point in waiting!

ALISA: He'll have to one day, anyway!

LANA: Soon or later!

AZRA: Be quiet!

(They all quieten down. Armin is quite confused. They continue the game. AZRA throws without speaking.)

FATHER: Whatever you find ...

MOTHER: Whoever you meet ...

AZRA: Will be far from the truth, son.

FATHER: Don't look for it ... Don't look for anything, just go.

MOTHER: Because the truth isn't the meaning.

ARMIN: What?

AZRA: The meaning of something isn't its truth - that's what she was trying to say.

ALISA: That'll be the day when he understands that!

(ARMIN stops the game.)

ARMIN: I'm sorry, I don't want to upset anyone, but this isn't the same game. I want my game back.

(Silence. They all look at Azra, who remains silent.)

MOTHER: You're right, son. She meant ...

(Again very firmly to everyone.)

AZRA: We 're not here to be clever!

(They all look at Armin. A long silence.)

MOTHER: You're ours anyway, you're ours.

*(Redemptive laughter. They all laugh. They run off contentedly, Armin included.
Blackout.)*

Scene 10

*(Return to the time and place of scene 8. **POLICEMAN 1** is holding his head and slowly getting up, the **NEIGHBOUR** is throwing up. **POLICEMAN 2** turns away from her and leans against the wall by the door.)*

POLICEMAN 2: Stop it, or I'll be doing it too!

POLICEMAN 1: For a moment there I ... As if something were ... The lad?!
Where's ...?

(He looks around.)

How come? The little devil!

POLICEMAN 2: When, though? He couldn't have got past me. I've been standing here the whole time.

POLICEMAN 1: Staring at the wall.

*(**POLICEMAN 1** starts looking for Armin.)*

POLICEMAN 2: The door's shut. He hasn't left ... He's inside.

NEIGHBOUR: He hasn't left, he's definitely ...

POLICEMAN 2: Can't you take that bowl away?!

NEIGHBOUR: Sorry, the air's really bad ... I couldn't ... It's a good job the bowl was here...

*(The **NEIGHBOUR** carries out the bowl. She leaves the door open.)*

POLICEMAN 1: Can't you shut that door?!

*(**POLICEMAN 1** and **2** search everywhere.)*

POLICEMAN 2: This is crazy! Absolutely crazy!

(POLICEMAN 1 goes to the window.)

POLICEMAN 1: He couldn't get through a closed window, either.

POLICEMAN 2: We might be hallucinating. I wouldn't be surprised, what with this stench.

POLICEMAN 1: You do that anyway.

(POLICEMAN 2 tries to open the window.)

POLICEMAN 2: This doesn't open at all.

POLICEMAN 1: He's outside, he couldn't be anywhere else.

POLICEMAN 2: The wardrobe, have you...

POLICEMAN 1: Three times.

(POLICEMAN 2 looks again anyway.)

You've looked everywhere but in my shoes! Weren't there some ...?

POLICEMAN 2: There was a whole pile of them.

POLICEMAN 1: He's escaped, he can't be far.

POLICEMAN 2: That's what I'm saying, he can't be.

POLICEMAN 1: After him, quick.

(POLICEMAN 2 runs out.)

POLICEMAN 1: Bloody idiot!

(POLICEMAN 1 follows. Immediately afterwards the NEIGHBOUR returns, without the bowl. She looks round the room, opens the wardrobe, takes out some clothes, switches things around, puts things into her pocket ... Finally she thinks of Azra's shoes. She exclaims with surprise, the corpse is shoeless. She throws the things aside that she had collected, crosses herself and quickly leaves the room. Blackout.)

Scene 11

(The scenes from 11 to 15 inclusive follow one another in a serie, without intervening blackouts.)

***ARMIN** staggers past people, who turn round and look at him. He runs, loses the bag, retrurns. He comes to a standstill. **PEOPLE** walk past him. **ARMIN** is standing in a strange position, clutching his bag to himself. Some people stare at him in amazement, others pretend not to see him. Armin is absorbed in himself. Other people arrive. A **MIDDLE-AGED MAN** approaches him carefully.)*

MIDDLE-AGED MAN: D-d-d-do you n-n-need help?

(No response from Armin.)

Are you ill?

(No response from Armin.)

C-c-can you t-t-tell ...?

*(**ARMIN** pushes him away roughly and runs from the stage shouting. The bag of shoes is lying on the ground. The **MIDDLE-AGED MAN** slowly picks himself up and is about to leave when he catches sight of it. He looks to see what it contains. He considers whether or not to go after Armin. He leaves the bag on the ground and exits. He returns. He takes the bag and hurries off in Armin's direction.)*

***PEOPLE** pass by. **ARMIN** returns from the opposite direction. He stands on the spot where the bag had been. Nothing is clear to him. He stands there.)*

Scene 12

(PEOPLE are walking past, among them the TRAMP, who is passing by somewhere in the background. ARMIN stops in front of a WOMAN and MAN, who are licking ice-cream. The pair move on. ARMIN walks behind them. The WOMAN looks round and stops, the MAN walks on a few more paces. The WOMAN follows the MAN. ARMIN follows both of them. The MAN exclaims ill-temperedly.

MAN: Do you know him?

WOMAN: No. Maybe. I don't know.

(The WOMAN turns round, ARMIN looks at her. The MAN stops and turns.)

MAN (to Armin): Did you want to say something?

(ARMIN stares at them absently. The WOMAN becomes embarrassed.)

WOMAN: He wants something.

MAN: I know what he wants!

WOMAN: No, really ... It's as though ...

(The MAN carries on his way.)

He's behaving strangely. He's really ...

(She moves towards Armin.)

MAN: Idiot! Can't you see that ...?

(The WOMAN does not know what to do. At the moment there are no other passers-by.)

I'm going.

WOMAN (to the man): Wait! *(More quietly)* Or go then.

MAN: Are you coming?

*(The **WOMAN** is looking at Armin.)*

You're not coming! *(Exits.)*

WOMAN: Did you want something ...?

*(**ARMIN** is abstracted.)*

I just wanted ... I don't know ... Can you hear me?

*(After a moment **ARMIN** grabs the young woman jerkily by the arm. The **WOMAN** shouts out. **ARMIN** does not let go of her.)*

Let me go! Let go of my arm ...

*(**ARMIN** makes strange movements with her arm, shakes and pulls it; in short, it is obvious that he wants to touch her with his whole body as much as he can. The **WOMAN** pulls away, but is unable to escape.)*

Let me go, I wasn't going to ... I only wanted to ... I didn't know what the matter with you was ... please.

*(**ARMIN** calms down, and rubs his head against her arm and body. The young woman does not know what to do. Her ice-cream falls to the ground. The **WOMAN** escapes and runs away. **ARMIN** looks at the ice-cream, crouches down and licks it.)*

Scene 13

(PEOPLE walk past. ARMIN is kneeling on the floor. He starts pulling off his trousers. Some of the people stop. ARMIN pulls off his trousers. A dishevelled OLDER WOMAN stops and watches him. ARMIN moves uncoordinatedly on his knees.)

OLDER WOMAN: What does he want? Does he ...?

(A few people stop and enjoy the 'show'.)

Do you want to go ...? You have to undo your pants ... and go over there ... Go over to the side, so these apes don't look at you.

(To the others.)

He can't hear. He really can't ...

YOUNGER WOMAN: Go on, he's drunk.

OLDER WOMAN: No, no, this one's ... If you ask me he's a bit ...

(ARMIN pees, and it runs out of his trousers; people are watching.)

YOUNGER WOMAN: Shall we call the police?

OLDER WOMAN: He hasn't hurt anyone, he hasn't stolen anything, it's just ... He's got to be taken somewhere ... What can be done with him?

YOUNGER WOMAN: Take him home with you!

OLDER WOMAN: Perhaps I should ...

YOUNGER WOMAN: Are you mad?

(ARMIN, on his knees, persists in his abstraction. YOUNGER WOMAN pulls the older woman away. The WOMEN move further away.)

I don't know why you have to interfere in everything!

OLDER WOMAN: Maybe he's lost?

YOUNGER WOMAN: So, he'll find the way!

OLDER WOMAN: Anyone would think you weren't my daughter.

YOUNGER WOMAN: I wish I weren't when you behave like this!

(ARMIN splats about in the puddle. TRAMP 1 passes by.)

Scene 14

(ARMIN is sitting in a puddle on the ground. PEOPLE are walking past, some hurrying, others stopping and looking at him in astonishment. Armin pays no attention to them. Amongst those hurrying is the MAN WITH A BAG. The bag goes past Armin's head. ARMIN lifts his head and stares at the bag. The MAN disappears. ARMIN 'hurries off' after him in his particular way of hurrying. Someone drops something into the puddle. ARMIN comes back with the bag in his hand. A bloodstained MAN WITH A BAG, this time without the bag, runs after him.)

MAN WITH A BAG: Give it me back, give it me back at once!

(ARMIN looks for somewhere he can stop.)

Stop him. Stop! Him ..., with the bag! With my ...!

(PEOPLE look round. ARMIN shakes out the contents of the bag. The MAN WITH A BAG comes up to him.)

How dare you? How dare you? Police! Police!

(ARMIN is disappointed with the bag's contents.)

Pick it up. Pick it up, do you hear?! Put it all back! If you don't pick it up ...!

You'll pay for this, you will, I'm going to sue you, you'll see how I'm going to sue you!

(ARMIN is unhappy and withdraws into himself.)

Stop pretending now. I know very well that ... Pick it up, it's the last time I'm going to tell you. Pick it up! Pick it up! On your knees ...!

(The MAN WITH A BAG starts to push and hit Armin, who does not respond.)

So you're afraid now? When there are people around you, you're afraid? You poor thing, you poor little shit! Pick it up! You bloody cretin!

(ARMIN withdraws into himself even more. The MAN hits him so hard that he remains lying amidst the contents of the bag.)

Now you're going to pretend some more, I suppose?! Get up, pick yourself up, do you hear? Wait, I'll ... I'll send you to hell. If I've told you to ... You stupid devil, you snivelling brat ... You ...

(Now he drags him upright. Armin does nothing.)

Arse-hole, how dare you fuck me about like this? I'm gonna send you to your maker.

(To the bystanders watching the 'show'.)

Mind he doesn't escape, I'm going to get the police.

(Exit.)

You stupid fucking idiot, you bloody shit, you crazy idiot, you lousy pig, stupid fucking shit-head ...

(Exit. ARMIN lies down amidst the contents of the bag. PEOPLE walk past, some of them stop, others do not even look, and pretend they are not interested in any of it.

TRAMP 1 is one of these.)

Scene 15

(ARMIN is lying amongst the things on the ground. TRAMP 1 is standing to one side, other PEOPLE walk past. ARMIN watches their steps, their coming and going in shoes that he attempts to touch - he crawls after shoes, turns round and looks at another pair, tries to catch hold of them; people evade him, protect themselves from his touching them, resist him. The people have no time. ARMIN lies down, next to him are shoes and more shoes. Alisa's shoes come by on the feet of BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. ARMIN runs after her and clings to her leg. BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN screams. ARMIN strokes her and tries to take her shoes off. He is strong.)

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Hey, stop it, stop it ... What are ..., what's the ..., hey ... Leave me alone ... Can somebody ... Hey you ...! Help! Let me go. These are mine ... Can you hear me, are you mad? Leave my shoes alone.

(A HANDSOME YOUNG MAN approaches.)

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN: Hey, kid! Did you hear what she ...?! Let go of her. Right now, let ... Let go of her or ...!

(HANDSOME YOUNG MAN tries to wrench Armin away from the young woman's leg. BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN is now on the ground too and is screaming.)

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Help me, help ...! Let go of me, you idiot! You stupid cretin! I'll strangle you, did you hear what I ...?

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN: No, I will, I'm going to give him one, I really am ...! Miss, just ..., just move your leg a bit ..., can you ...?

(They pull one another. All is done with a grotesque strength. TRAMP 1 has been among the spectators all this time.)

You think you're something, eh, just because you're strong ?

HANDSOME YOUNG WOMAN: Bloody crazy maniac, what did I do?

Get someone to call the police.

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN: Can somebody go and call the police?

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Police, police!

(TRAMP 1 hits Armin with all his might. BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN screams, ARMIN collapses.)

TRAMP 1: It's the only way!

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN: You hit him hard.

TRAMP 1: He's used to it, he'll be all right.

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Thank you, it's very kind of you. Really, thank you.

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN *(to the young woman):* Are you all right?

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Fine, I think ... Yes thanks. It hurts a little, but ...

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN *(to the tramp):* Do you know him?

TRAMP 1: My apologies, Miss, I apologise on his behalf, the boy's ..., he doesn't know what he's doing, you see.

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: You're very kind, it's not so bad, anyway ...

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN *(to the young woman):* Have you got time, I'm sorry if ...?

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: No, no ... Oh, no I didn't ... Yes, I have ... I do have time.

HANDSOME YOUNG MAN: Let's go then... Right, well ... It's around the corner, I think ... Are you limping? Is it hurting you?

BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN: Oh, no, no ... it's nothing ... it's nothing much.

*(They exit, flirting with each other. **TRAMP 1** remains and collects some things that are still lying on the ground from before. **PEOPLE** pass by again. **TRAMP 1** drags the unconscious Armin, then he puts him on his back and carries him off the stage.*

Blackout.)

Scene 16

*(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. **ARMIN** crosses the stage at a quick pace, turns round, looks about him, stops, and runs again. He comes back again. He stands for a long time in the middle of the stage; he is despairing, shaking, he obviously cannot control the worsening trembling, he tries with all his might to calm down, beating his limbs and head. He stamps his feet, waves his arms. He screams in agony, then falls to the ground in a catatonic convulsion.*

Quick blackout.)

Scene 17

(ARMIN and the FEMALE TRAMP are sitting on the pavement like beggars, a cap on the ground in front of them. Armin has one of his legs strapped under him, so that it looks like he only has one. It is clear that Armin is not feeling very well; he sits leaning on the tramp, continually moving his head here and there. At some distance from them, TRAMP 1 and TRAMP 2 oversee their work. PEOPLE walk past, now and again giving them money.)

FEMALE TRAMP *(repeats like a litany)*: What have I done wrong, blessed people, my people, listen, look at this unfortunate woman, I, his mother, beg you, there are six hungry mouths waiting at home, and this the oldest, who has lost his leg, who can't even speak, pity this orphan, don't turn away from this invalid, the poor are God's too, don't pass by, good people, give for my child, if you give to the Red Cross you never know whose pocket the money will go into, but if you give to me into my hand, I will ..., You can be sure that ... who else would I give it to?, I beg you, this one..., all my children, from the oldest to the youngest beg you, stop and help, God will repay you, thank you madam ...

(The OLDER WOMAN throws some change into the cap on the ground.)

Thank you, oh, if everyone was as good as you, it's like I say, we have no idea what's going to become of this world, all we know is everything is wrong, all we can do is help one another, thank you, all my best wishes to you and your family, God has seen you ..

(When the woman turns away, the TRAMP quickly puts the change into her pocket and carries on as before.)

I've done nothing wrong ..., good people, don't pass me by, stop and look at this orphan, take pity ..., eight hungry mouths are waiting for me at home, asking nothing, only to drink ..., I mean - they want to eat, like this poor boy without a leg, and he can't even speak, what can I do, it was God's will, that's why I'm saying ...

(TRAMP 1 and TRAMP 2 approach. The FEMALE TRAMP tries to get up.)

TRAMP 1: The money ... quick so that...

FEMALE TRAMP: It looks like we've got enough now.

TRAMP 1: You're doing too well! We've never taken so much before.

FEMALE TRAMP: No ... You two ...

TRAMP 1 (*hissing*): You'll lose customers!

(They disappear. After a while the FEMALE TRAMP continues her litany.

Slow blackout.)

Scene 18

(Evening. A park bench. An unfriendly, abandoned place. ARMIN is sitting among the group of TRAMPS that we have seen before. A bottle is passed from mouth to mouth. They are all under the influence of alcohol, including Armin.)

TRAMP 2: Jesus Christ, this country obviously doesn't know what it's doing! Sooner or later someone 'll have to tell them all this pretending is a piece of shit, not even ..., not even ..., any point to it. Know what I mean?

TRAMP 1: I do, because you're part of the country too.

TRAMP 2: I'm me. Stop bugging about!

FEMALE TRAMP: Are you sure?

TRAMP 2: I'm ... *(To Tramp 1)* That woman of yours is always messing me ... How can you put up with her?

TRAMP 1: Don't ask.

FEMALE TRAMP: The kid's had enough already, too much ...

TRAMP 1: There's none left anyway.

TRAMP 2: Oh, shit! Now we'll have to go and work again.

FEMALE TRAMP: How many bottles did you buy?

TRAMP 2: Three.

FEMALE TRAMP: There was enough money for at least five.

TRAMP 1: What do you know!

TRAMP 2: The kid's a money-spinner ..., you're like the virgin Mary with her child, even the devil would pity you. This kid of yours ...

FEMALE TRAMP: He's not my kid. My children are ... oh my.

TRAMP 1: Kids like this are the only ones you can earn money with.

FEMALE TRAMP: Please! Go ahead!

TRAMP 1 (*to the female tramp*): You take a lot of liberties, woman!

(A long silence.)

TRAMP 2: Now what was it I wanted ...? Oh, yes! The state ..., I've told you already ... And then ..., I'm supposed to write to myself? Eh? How are you going to explain that now? Explain that now ... I haven't written to anyone in ten years. But the state writes to me? So does that make me the state, then? Is that right? O.K. If you are, so am I, O.K. we all are, all us citizens are the state, O.K. I mean I'm against that in fact, but ... O.K., if you like ...? But the question remains - Who am I, if ..., if I don't write to myself, then?

TRAMP 1: The state writes to its citizens, doesn't it? We're all citizens, aren't we? Well ...?

FEMALE TRAMP: From that it follows that the state writes to everybody.

TRAMP 2: Oh, no it doesn't. It writes to me, but not to you.

TRAMP 1: What do you know? Do you think everyone shouts everything from the rooftops?

TRAMP 2: No, wait, that's really crazy ..., I mean this, what you said ... What did you ...?

FEMALE TRAMP: I don't know.

TRAMP 1: If there was any wine left I'd ... Hello, employment.

FEMALE TRAMP: I'm not going, I've nearly worn my tongue out, but you ...

(TRAMP 1 takes a forceful swing at the female tramp and hits her. She does not respond. TRAMP 2 observes Armin. After a while.)

TRAMP 2: This one's definitely not a citizen, and he can't write either.

TRAMP 1: You're an idiot!

TRAMP 2: So what does that make him, then?

TRAMP 1: What are you blabbing about? Are you drunk?

(TRAMP 2 gets up angrily.)

TRAMP 2: I hope you're not fucking with me!?

(TRAMP 1 gets up too. The FEMALE TRAMP calms him down.)

TRAMP 1: Were you going to fuck with me? Were you going to ...?

FEMALE TRAMP: Calm down, you stupid old goat! He's more unfortunate than anything else.

(After a while.)

TRAMP 2: Unfortunate - idiot - citizen ... Oh, my God!

FEMALE TRAMP: So the message is clear.

TRAMP 2: The sky isn't though.

(They look up at the sky. After a while.)

FEMALE TRAMP: Do you think it's going to rain?

TRAMP 1: Tomorrow ...

TRAMP 2: When we might not be here any more.

FEMALE TRAMP: You're as miserable as sin.

TRAMP 2: So are you.

(They sit down again.)

FEMALE TRAMP: He punched me!

TRAMP 2 (*laughs*): If you were mine, I'd rather fuck you. What do you still see in him?

FEMALE TRAMP: Fleas and lice.

(After a while.)

TRAMP 2: I'm going.

(The FEMALE TRAMP tries to wake Armin, or rather, pull him together.)

FEMALE TRAMP: He's as drunk as a newt.

TRAMP 1: Well, he didn't drink anything. Lift him up.

FEMALE TRAMP: You try it!

(After a while.)

TRAMP 2: I'm off to do my rounds, and I'll beg a bit while I'm at it.

(He picks up an empty bottle.)

TRAMP 1: I'm not staying and listening to that annoying woman either.

(They slowly set off and exit.

Blackout.)

Scene 19

(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. ARMIN is centre stage. He looks round, to left and right, as though someone were following him. He begins to walk, slowly at first. He is on his guard. He walks as though on a conveyor belt, on the spot. Then he walks faster and faster. He still looks round. He begins to run. He runs slowly, then faster, he does not move from the spot, he cannot move from the position he is running in. He looks round for 'pursuers', he runs faster, as fast as he possibly can. He pants, breathing with more and more difficulty, a stampede of steps on the spot, he runs with all his might, until the moment when he can do no more. He falls.

Quick blackout.)

Scene 20

(Night in the park, as before. ARMIN is lying propped up against the bench. The FEMALE TRAMP is stretched out on the bench. She is obviously dreaming, for she utters incomprehensible words, tosses and turns, shouts out. She remains lying for a moment, then she raises herself slowly. Her head aches, she feels unwell, she takes in where she is, looks at Armin, whose eyes are open and who is pointing fixedly at a point. ARMIN does not move, he is still panting. The FEMALE TRAMP sits, also staring dully in front of her.)

FEMALE TRAMP: The same monsters, they never stop ... Can you hear me at all? God knows what's going round in your head. I was always hit on the head too. Why did it have to be my head? Anywhere but my head ... That's why it's always ringing, buzzing and popping ..., bloody hell, you can't sleep at all. That lousy pig could have brought something to drink, so ...

(She gets up, goes behind the bench and lifts her skirt. She talks while she is urinating.)

See, he even begrudges you a drop of water. As long as his backside's full. It is, too, full of shit, lousy, stinking shit. Anyway, I'm going to leave him, I will! No point being with someone like him, even ... even ... Anyway he's useless now, he can't even open his fly any more, his hands shake so much.

(She stands up and drops her skirt. She walks up and down.)

I bet he's found somebody else, of course, he's got loads of money now. Enough for at least another three liters. But I didn't give him everything, did I! Do you think I'm mad ...? Are you cold? Bloody hell, I'm cold. I won't be able to get to sleep. If you only knew how it buzzes, buzzes all the time, with ringing mixed in, it rings like hell, with rivers running, everything flowing ... juices ...

(She presses against Armin's leg, then slides higher and higher up his body.)

You're really warm, you know. You're hot; of course. How old are you anyway? A child, my child. That would be something! But you're not a child any more, I can feel you're not a child any more.

(She moves her hand slowly into Armin's trousers.)

Have you ...? Just don't piss on me, I don't want you to think that ... It's not that, it's just ...

(ARMIN wants to move away. She pushes him back.)

What are you nervous for? I don't want to do anything to you. If you didn't want it. I'm cold, just a little ... It'll make the buzzing stop, it won't buzz for a bit, then.

(ARMIN tries to get up, she clings to him with her arms and legs.)

I'm not going to do ... Oh, my God, you're strong. Shall we ...? I'm sure you know how to do it.

(She kisses him. ARMIN does not like it. She becomes all the more determined.)

You're so hot, come on, you know you like it, I can feel you do ... Relax ... We'll do it quickly, don't worry ...

(ARMIN gets up and pushes her away from him.)

No, no ... put me on the bench, on the bench. We'll do it here, then ... little one, my little one ... little ...

(ARMIN shakes her off him, so that she lurches over the bench. She hits her head on the edge of the bench and collapses. ARMIN remains where he is, panting. After a while he settles into his previous position, leaning on the bench, over which the FEMALE TRAMP lies dead, and dully withdraws into himself.

Slow blackout.)

Scene 21

(Night; the park bench, as before. ARMIN is asleep. The FEMALE TRAMP'S corpse is in the same place. TRAMP 1 and 2 stagger in.)

TRAMP 1: No, but you can try hard, you can break all your teeth on it, you can try everything, but it's pointless. And you know why? Because nothing changes.

TRAMP 2: Nothing.

TRAMP 1: It's all mouse shit.

TRAMP 2: Dog shit, you mean?

TRAMP 1: No, mouse's, 'cos it's even less.

TRAMP 2: I see, I see ... I like that, that's - mouse's, yes.

(TRAMP 1 looks at Armin closely.)

TRAMP 1: Hey, are his eyes closed or is he looking? I don't really like him, I have to say.

TRAMP 2: As long as he's bringing in ... I reckon he's looking, no, they're closed ... What does it matter? He doesn't understand anything, anyway.

TRAMP 1: I haven't decided yet ...

TRAMP 2: What? It's cold, isn't it?

(TRAMP 1 installs himself next to the Female Tramp ready to sleep and pushes her away. TRAMP 2 looks for a place on the ground next to Armin.)

TRAMP 1: In fact, I have, he's really the last thing I'd want to be.

TRAMP 2: But you don't know what it's like.

TRAMP 1: I know, I've been thinking about it all day. Even the worst mongrel, really though, a puppy who's never even seen a master, can piss on him. That's really dark.

TRAMP 2: Darkness first then comes light.

(The corpse of the FEMALE TRAMP falls to the floor. No-one takes any notice.)

TRAMP 1: No, no ... this is something ... This is something, only God knows what, for Christ's sake, we can't do anything down here.

TRAMP 2: Do you think he exists?

TRAMP 1: There must be something.

TRAMP 2: I don't think he exists.

TRAMP 1 *(to the corpse):* Get up you old bag. Stop sodding about ...

TRAMP 2: If he did exist, someone would have seen him by now.

TRAMP 1: Hey, old bag? All right, then ...!

(They all lie down. After a while, TRAMP 1 gets up and pulls the Female Tramp onto the bench.)

TRAMP 1: Christ, you weigh a ton. Did you have more to drink...?

TRAMP 2: Oh, I bet she hid some somewhere, she's not daft.

TRAMP 1: Give me a hand.

TRAMP 2: Is that all?

TRAMP 1: Lazy sod. *(To the corpse)* Come on, old lady, stop bugging me about ... Christ!

TRAMP 2: Shut up, will you!

TRAMP 1: You old cunt you, are you going to ...?

(After a while.)

You know, I reckon she's ... Something's not right ...

(After a while.)

You know, I reckon she's ... I think she's dead.

TRAMP 2: Dead drunk, all right.

TRAMP 1: No, really ...

(TRAMP 2 slowly gets up. He listens to see if the Female Tramp is still breathing.)

TRAMP 2: Hey, Christ ... Fucking hell ...

TRAMP 1: But how?

TRAMP 2: Wait a minute, it can't be true.

TRAMP 1: What am I going to do now?

TRAMP 2: Wait, she can't be, she couldn't just ...

TRAMP 1: The kid! You fucking cunt! You ...!

(He pulls Armin.)

You bloody bastard, this is what I saved you for, so ... So you could do this to me ...?

TRAMP 2: Leave him alone, you don't know that.

TRAMP 1: He's the only one who could have. Lousy son of a bitch ...!

TRAMP 2: Stop that, leave him alone! You'll rip him apart.

TRAMP 1: I'll squeeze his liver till the blood spurts out ...!

TRAMP 2: We need him, for Christ's sake ... We need him ...!

(Blackout.)

Scene 22

(Some time has passed.

*Night. A psychiatric clinic. **ARMIN** is lying strapped to a hospital bed. His mouth is taped with a wide strip. Next to him is the **MALE NURSE**, dressed in a hospital uniform. He is holding a syringe in his hand, testing it, then he pushes it fairly roughly into Armin's backside. He strips Armin further, opens his trousers and slowly climbs astride him. He begins to rape him. The **MALE NURSE** enjoys himself hugely. Armin lies dead still.*

Blackout.)

Scene 23

(The previous scene is repeated.)

Scene 24

(ARMIN is sitting on the floor next to the bed. It is clear that he has untied himself. He is banging his head against the iron edge of the bed. He bangs it increasingly harder. His head is already bloody. He bangs his head harder and harder, until he collapses in a pool of blood, dead.)

Scene 25

*(An orange blue feeling of infinity, wind, music. The **DEAD** and **ARMIN**, still covered with blood, are playing a game . All the others are also in their previous clothes and still bloody or rather, covered in soot. **MOTHER** begins the game, bent over and turned away from the others, who encircle her. **ARMIN** is standing to one side. The others silently invite him to join in. **ARMIN** hesitates, then hits his Mother on her behind.)*

MOTHER: Armin, Armin!

*(They all applaud with delight. **ARMIN** isn't very happy, because she has discovered him. Now he goes into the middle. Silence. The **DEAD** look at each other, and at a sign from **FATHER**, they slowly and silently disappear into the dark and exit. **ARMIN** waits a while longer, then slowly turns round. He doesn't search anywhere. He remains, sad and alone. A long silence. Then he shouts at the top of his voice.)*

ARMIN: WHERE ARE YOU?

(Sudden blackout.)

THE END

