

**THE GHOST FROM THE FIRST CLASS WAITING ROOM
(IF I WERE AN ANGEL)**

A TWO-ACT PLAY

**By
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**OLD MAN
POLITICIAN
STATIONMASTER
WHORE
YOUNG MAN
NUN
PEASANT WOMAN
BLIND MEN
DEAF MEN
(HOMELESS) GLUE SNIFFERS
TRAVELLERS**

The action takes place in a Railway Station that offers shelter both to characters and travellers. Occasionally, the *Ghost from the first class waiting room* flits threateningly above their heads.

ACT ONE

The scene shows the railway station at the moment of its deepest slumber before the coming of dawn. The travellers sleep lying on benches and booking offices and shops are closed. THE OLD MAN sleeps on a bench. He wakes up, looks at the large station clock, takes his trousers off and starts examining them.

OLD MAN:

(Looking about him)

There's no privacy to be found in this world.

(Pointing at his trousers)

They're going to last a little more. The part that gets frayed today will be mended tomorrow. That is, till the day when I'm going to stop sewing them and then everything will go down the drain. By the way they look, they'll still serve me a while.

(He produces a needle and thread and is prepared to sew them)

This rip here appeared yesterday, when I could no longer remember why the hell I had come to this station. They always burst like this when something happens to slip my mind. Oh, God, which direction did I want to go? I'll do the mending again, but in a few days, when a new gash will appear in my trousers I'm going to find an answer to that question. Why did I come to this station? Why? Well, to go some place, that's a sure thing. But where? It's only natural for them to burst because my mind fails me so very often.

(Sewing carefully)

Well, well I've sewn it again.

(Silence is unexpectedly broken by the violent whistling produced by a locomotive. The travellers wake up suddenly, move about excitedly and yell, "The train is coming!" The STATIONMASTER, YOUNG MAN, POLITICIAN, WHORE, BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN come out of the waiting rooms)

STATIONMASTER:

(At the top of his voice)

Stop that excitement and flurry! Sit tight, because it won't stop in our station anyway!

YOUNG MAN:

What if it does?

STATIONMASTER:

Well, what do you know, young man?

POLITICIAN:

Leave him alone, he knows nothing of the world.

(To BLIND MEN)

Hey you, stop roaming all over the place.

(To DEAF MEN)

And you there, stop stamping your feet. I can't hear the rumbling of the train!

(To the STATIONMASTER)

What train is that?

STATIONMASTER:

A train like any other. There's nothing special about it! But it won't stop anyway.

WHORE:

What if it does?

(The whistling of the train grows louder and louder. All rush towards the edge of the platform)

POLITICIAN:

I would have known if it stopped here. It's just normal for me to know everything, because I pull the levers of history. Apart from the fact that I understand everything about trains, I met every minister, every head of state...

(He opens his briefcase and takes out a large manila envelope, fat with photographs)

I haven't missed any of them. Hey, move aside, will you?

(He pushes his way up on a bench)

Look at this, here I am with the Italian Prime Minister.

(BLIND MEN gather around him)

That's me, the one wearing glasses. I was just walking up to him to slap him on the back. That's usual practice between important people like us. I would call to him: "Well, spaghetti bender, what now?" That's how I would speak to him in privacy. And he would say, "Come on, corn mush, let's have something to eat. We know we both have the colly-wobbles and if we give these bloody journalists a chance to catch the sound of our rumbling stomachs on their machines, they will surely do it and sell the tapes to some channel which will drum everywhere how hungry we felt." We were at a reception and on such occasions, the food is so great that it's a pity to leave it on your plate. Well, as I was telling you, the Italian premier and I... But you haven't the faintest inkling what high politics is.

OLD MAN:

What if the train stops this once?

POLITICIAN:

You'd better keep your trap shut!

(A train thunders through the station. A few travellers run wildly along the platform, making imploring gestures in the hope that the train will stop, but most are halted by STATIONMASTER)

Look at this one. Here I am with the British foreign affairs minister.

(One by one, furtively, the other travellers, WHORE, YOUNG MAN, BLIND MEN and the DEAF MEN run along the platform)

This is my man, the one who looks all strung up. My head pops up behind him. I was just whispering something in his ear, "Hey, starchy, stop looking like a pole and let's have a snort of whiskey. That's it, buddy. We are bosom friends, honestly. Too bad he doesn't have time enough to write to me. But I do, once or twice a month. But I think you know that these Englishmen are different. Very official-looking guys. Once in a while a secretary of his, I'm sure it may be a stiff-lipped serious looking lady, would send me a letter beginning, *Dear Sir*, or *We regret to inform you* or other some such thing, followed by a lot of officialese. But I have recently said to him, "Well, Sir, you'd better take a pen yourself and commit something to paper, because you are a descendant of Shakespeare's and...

(He finds that, with the exception of STATIONMASTER and OLD MAN, no one listens to what he says. The latter looks inquiringly at his trousers)

You there, aren't you ashamed to appear in your underwear in my presence?

(To STATIONMASTER)

Where did all the rest vanish?

STATIONMASTER:

They keep running like mad after that train. I told them it wouldn't stop.

POLITICIAN:

(In an angry voice)

Old man, if you poke your nose into somebody else's business, I'll...

(Stops abruptly and turns to the STATIONMASTER)

You seem to have lost your stamina. Remember, when I speak to the people I don't want any train to come! Is that understood? Let us instruct them to the effect.
(POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER GO OFF STAGE. The old man sits down on a bench)

OLD MAN:

What if it will stop one day?

(He turns the trousers on one side and the other and looks at them critically)

Now let's see. Here's another rent! I haven't seen the like of this for a quite a while. It's clear, this part here has been worn thin. I must mind my step and keep my cool. What the heck, I'm not getting any younger. Here I am an old man who loses his head over a trifle. It would appear that I am not able to learn my lesson once for all. Why can't I understand that running after every petticoat must be over and done with? This will always happen when I abandon myself to forbidden pleasures. Yesterday I stared for a second at that lady; man, she was beautiful, I must admit that, and snap, the fabric ripped like nothing. And for what? It is so very ridiculous to have my trousers burst at the seams for a piece of ass. Oh, my trousers. I'd better come to my senses, or who knows what might happen?

(Sewing carefully)

It will last for a while. But no dames, remember.

(WHORE comes on stage and goes round OLD MAN)

WHORE:

Old man, why the hell don't trains stop in this damned station? What's the use of sitting and watching the rails if the trains run through the station without stopping? You know what? I'm sick of everybody and when I see all this confusion around me and when I hear that shithead talking and talking, I feel like puking. Besides, this ancient station drives me mad.

OLD MAN:

Whether they go by or stop, we will all learn to leave our helplessness behind.

(The whistling of the train is heard again. The stage becomes crowded again: TRAVELLERS, POLITICIAN, WHORE, DEAF and blind men. Excitement reaches the climax)

STATIONMASTER:

Stop it! Order, please!

(To POLITICIAN)

They seem to have become uncontrollable.

POLITICIAN:

Come on, come and draw yourselves closer!

(Steps on a bench)

STATIONMASTER: Quiet, please.

POLITICIAN:

So. Where the hell is that photo with the Kraut? Where did I put it? Well, here it is. Do you know who this is? The chancellor of Germany. You wouldn't believe it, would you? I told him, "Well fatso, I'd rather lose one war with the Germans on

my side, than win one in alliance with the Russians. I speak perfect German, just listen to me, "*Das oberlicht, acktung!*" Fat man, be ready, because I'm going to call you to invest money in my country, *ferstand? Grupir!* Is that clear?

(Lights flicker in station. Loudspeakers spout snatches of parade music. DEAF MEN start jumping mechanically)

STATIONMASTER:

Stop!

POLITICIAN:

Grupir! Really, that's exactly what I told him. Well, sir, he's not angry with us. I call him fatso only in private; for the rest, no matter how close we are to one another, I address him with *Herr Chancellor*. A matter of protocol. That's what I mean when I speak of the elite in politics. What the hell, sir, we are refined politicians. No one would dare say that the Romanians have no political class.

(A light flickers above the station. Loudspeakers crackle and waver for a short time. The NUN and the PEASANT WOMAN come on stage)

YOUNG MAN:

What was that?

POLITICIAN:

You are too young to remember. Watch out!

OLD MAN:

(Shouting)

Watch out, a train's coming! And it will stop!

POLITICIAN:

Hey, are you raving?

YOUNG MAN:

On platform two.

(All run to platform two)

WHORE:

Listen to the train whistling. It's coming in, it's coming!

(DEAF MEN run and gather on platform one, milling about. After a moment's confusion, a train stops and whistles piercingly. All rush at doors but they are locked)

YOUNG MAN:

Open the doors! Please, open them!

PEASANT WOMAN:

Open the doors, dear! Open!

(STATIONMASTER tries unsuccessfully to pull travellers away from locked doors. People ask imploringly that doors be opened. OLD MAN starts tapping the wheels with a special hammer)

STATIONMASTER:

Be calm! Step off the train. It stopped here by mistake.

(STATIONMASTER looks at POLITICIAN, pleading mutely for his help, but POLITICIAN is himself confused. The WHORE peels herself off the locked door and takes a defiant stance before the window of a compartment)

WHORE:

Look at this piece of ass. Don't you like the little sweetie? Don't you feel aroused? Wouldn't you feel like having a matinee?

YOUNG MAN:

(Stands in front of another window)

I am young and strong. Look at my well-developed arms. I can also do the square root of any number; I know a lot of things.

PEASANT WOMAN:

(Opening widely her large bag before another window)

Come on, my dear, I have food. I can sew, I can mend things. Take a bite, my dear, they are fresh and nice.

NUN:

(Crossing herself before another compartment window)

God, have pity on us. Help us. Open thy Gate to us and offer us guidance and salvation.

(BLIND MEN throw down their black glasses and walking sticks and bump into one another, staring blindly. The DEAF MEN cast away their hearing aids and yell at one another, making an infernal noise and creating general confusion. Simultaneously, POLITICIAN raises a manhole cover and invites the HOMELESS GLUE SNIFFERS out, then pushes them towards the compartment window)

GLUE SNIFFERS:

Give us a dime, uncle. Give some spending snaps to the motherless tramps.

(STATIONMASTER rises the signal to give the train green light. OLD MAN rushes to snatch it off him but is pushed from behind and falls to ground. STATIONMASTER lifts repeatedly the signal; the train whistles and starts rolling, leaving the station slowly, followed by travellers who continue to ask imploringly that doors be opened. The stage is occupied by OLD MAN, STATIONMASTER and GLUE SNIFFERS)

POLITICIAN:

(To STATIONMASTER)

It took you a lot to give it the green light.

STATIONMASTER:

(Pointing at OLD MAN)

Couldn't you see how he tried to snatch it from my hand?

POLITICIAN:

(To OLD MAN)

I told you to mind your business. How many times do I need to remind you that I am the one who runs this station. The tracks are all yours. Can't you understand that you stand no chance whatsoever?

(To STATIONMASTER, in a whisper)

Well, sir, what about that train? Why didn't anybody tell me anything? What are those people in the information office doing? Why aren't they reporting? And while we are at it, what's going on in this station anyway?

(To GLUE SNIFFERS)

And you little dope fiends, you hid yourselves God knows where and those on the train couldn't see you.

(To OLD MAN)

You look quite well. You would make quite a good figure. Why are looking like that at me? Do you imagine I can't detect your anger? I sure can hear you growling in your inner self. Go and watch the tracks!

(A few TRAVELLERS return on stage; they are dishevelled and disappointed because they have just failed to catch the train. POLITICIAN recovers his composure)

STATIONMASTER:

Aren't you ashamed to appear like that before us?

POLITICIAN:

Look, now. I have always adhered to sound principles. That's why the media and my political rivals never liked me. The President of France told me privately, "My dear, *mon cher*, think of me as your elder brother. I won't leave you down in distress." A great man. A true Christian and a gold-hearted fellow. Here is what he said in a loud voice, "*Mesdames, Messieurs, voilà le plus grand*", that's the greatest, "*le plus grand homme d'était roumain*." Mon frère. Aren't I speaking impeccable French? How they love me for that. He embraced and hugged me. Then I whispered in his ear, "Hey, Frenchy, you may be my elder brother, but remember that short accounts make long friends and you can't eat your cheese and have it." He got the hint at once and put some cheese of theirs in my baggage, but God knows why it got rotten in no time.

(GLUE SNIFFERS feel inclined to rush and snatch his briefcase)

STATIONMASTER

(To the GLUE SNIFFERS)

Go away from here!

POLITICIAN:

Why did it become so smelly and moldy?

(He opens his briefcase and takes out a carton of cheese)

It stinks to high heaven. I wouldn't even throw it to the dogs, they may die eating it. I decided to keep it as a souvenir. But I'll tell him a few things as soon as I see him again, "Frog eater," -- you can hardly find his match when it comes to good food -- "here's a whole cheese, a barrellful of it." I'll give it to him straight, but he surely deserves it. I can afford it, because we are quite close friends. That's politics. Some say it's a trifle. They have no idea what they speak about. Hey, fellers, come and eat as if there's no tomorrow. Take boys, have your fill of it.

(Throws the cheese to GLUE SNIFFERS who scuffle over it and then retreat into the sewer)

STATIONMASTER:

I'll go and call all the pack. I think you might want to tell them a few words.

POLITICIAN:

What a pity I did not keep a crumb for them too.

(POLITICIAN, STATIONMASTER and a few TRAVELLERS go off stage. OLD MAN sits again on bench and examines his trousers)

OLD MAN:

(Trying to calm himself)

What a wicked rent! Did you imagine I wouldn't notice and you'd snap when you felt like it? Did you imagine you would take me by surprise with your cracking sound and make my heart freeze in my chest? At my age even a ladder gone is a sign of death. I know I shouldn't get jumpy. With age I should have become wiser and let everything go by. "Stop being so sensitive and you'll live till tomorrow to sew your underpants in peace. What the hell! It isn't worth seeing red before your eyes with anger for this and that. What if trains stop here no longer? Does anybody care that your trousers are broken? Don't be so naïve. It would be foolish to think that anybody bothers to give you a piece of thread to mend your things so that they may last another day.

(Shakes his trousers and examines them thoroughly again)

I hope I didn't miss any rent.

(POLITICIAN comes onto the stage and assumes a very serious air. He is followed by DEAF MEN, BLIND MEN and YOUNG MAN)

POLITICIAN:

I told the President of the Spanish Parliament: "Listen here, *Sancho Panza*, those of Latin ancestry will talk politics at all times of the day. I call him *Sancho* because I like him. *Amigos, toro*. Blobs of politics flow through our veins. Rest assured that I'm speaking the truth. A funny bunch, these European politicians. But we feel fine together, aren't we?

(To YOUNG MAN)

What brings you here, young man?

YOUNG MAN:

I would like to leave.

POLITICIAN:

Look here, you intend to flee, to desert us. Listen to me, the smoke in this station is more pleasant than the heat of the tracks.

YOUNG MAN:

I wouldn't think so.

POLITICIAN:

My boy, the solution is to flee your destiny, but I also know that to be impossible. I tell you. Do you have any idea what keeps me in this station? The people. These people. I feel they deserve that.

(To DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN)

I'm speaking the truth, aren't I?

(The DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN answer by stomping their feet and gesticulating. WHORE enters the stage and navigates past the POLITICIAN and YOUNG MAN, showing off, and this makes the BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN gesticulate more excitedly)

POLITICIAN:

(To WHORE, in an annoyed voice)

Walk off, you woman.

WHORE:

Do you boys feel lonely? Are you bored?

YOUNG MAN:

Yes, a little.

POLITICIAN:

There's no time for that now.

WHORE:

What about money, do you have any?

POLITICIAN:

We have some business to attend to instead. Leave him alone, we want to teach him politics.

WHORE:

Teaching him was exactly what I intended to do myself. Do you think you're a better teacher than I am? I could at least put some soul into it.

POLITICIAN:

Stop playing the saint, you won't get away with it.

WHORE:

The saints are sinful people who got away with it and managed to cut a good figure for themselves. What are you doing with those photos? Are they naked girls?

POLITICIAN:

You're overstepping the bounds of your welcome. You'd better walk away and see to your eager customers. Look at that one laughing at you.

(Points to a TRAVELLER who feasts his eyes on the WHORE)

I think he's exactly what you need.

WHORE:

Looks like it.

(To POLITICIAN)

Don't pound ideas into his head. Isn't this whole station large enough for you?

((To TRAVELER)

Sweetie, let me tell you a fairytale.

(The WHORE and the TRAVELLER go off)

POLITICIAN:

My dear, let's turn back to our problems.

(The DEAF and the BLIND MEN gather round the POLITICIAN)

As I was saying, I...

YOUNG MAN:

How could I forget? I didn't show you the picture with my best buddy. Look here, he's the one.

(The BLIND cluster round to look at the photo)

What a smart moustache he has! That is the Prime Minister of Hungary.

YOUNG MAN:

It's astounding how much bacon they can eat. And they drink palinka. Then they sing and dance the csardas. I admit, I have no idea of Hungarian and, as a politician, this is not at all good. But I hope to catch up with my Hungarian. Kezi ciokolom, io no can speak...

(To the DEAF MEN)

I hope I did pronounce well, didn't I?

(DEAF MEN wave their hands in utter confusion)

We shall be able to understand one another anyway. We don't need words. This is tradition, sir, what else can I say? Whenever we spend the weekend together, we drink ourselves under the table. This is not provided for in the protocol, but as long as the press is not present, we go the whole hog. We know very well that the Hungarians are working their heads off during the week. That's the truth. Whenever we feel fine, he takes me by the shoulders and we both sing, "That's how the Romanians are when they have some fun..." And then we both fall under the table. He knows this song as if he had learnt it in the cradle. No funny foreign accent at all. Mr. Moustache, the women of the minority population are very nice indeed, aren't they? Don't forget he loves me as though I were his brother. As a matter of fact, everyone in Europe loves me and pays homage to me.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Listen to me, boy, that's how the Romanian people are!

YOUNG MAN:

(Singing)

"That's how Romanians are when they have some fun..."

POLITICIAN:

That's how I like the people to be: merry and mindless. Sing along, all of you, make the platforms resound!

(POLITICIAN, YOUNG MAN, DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN walk off the stage singing loudly "That's how Romanians are when they have some fun." OLD MAN starts sewing his trousers)

OLD MAN:

Well now, look here. Seam upon seam upon seam, with no end in sight. I don't like at all how they look. No, sir. And then I told myself, "Hey man, you'd better stop stirring up your memories. Why do you keep trying to recapture the past? Had it been different, had I done this and that... No matter what, these rips would have appeared anyway. What's the use of rubbing salt on a raw wound, man? It could heal nice and neat, leaving no scar, but no, you would have it raw and ugly. A disgusting and vile scab you'll have to see as long as you live. A wound is like a

memory. And these trousers are my memory. How could I forget what I went through when they got this gash here? The less you think of it or the better you manage you put a stop to the flow of your memories, the harder the fabric becomes. But I couldn't live a life like that, like an unworn pair of trousers.

(STATIONMASTER enters and seems to be looking for something)

STATIONMASTER:

What do you think you're doing there?

OLD MAN:

Sewing. You keep asking me the same question every morning, but from what I see, the answer goes in at one ear and out at the other.

STATIONMASTER:

Oh yes, it goes in, I register it all, but I need to be on my guard.

OLD MAN:

Quite so, but don't ask that silly question again.

STATIONMASTER:

That's what I get paid for. To ask questions and urge you to work, because you are lazy, light-fingered, clever, evasive, reactionary, false, anarchic and indolent. Why have you stopped? Keep sewing. Haven't you heard anything? Haven't you seen some blind people feeling their way around? Or some dumb men gesticulating? Where could they have gone, for I can't find them anywhere. Don't just sit there like that. Keep sewing. And I warn you, if some little devil inside your head urges you to try and stop the trains I'm going to throw you under the wheels.

(Goes off the stage)

OLD MAN:

He'll need a train coming to be true to his word. Well, this is how life wears itself thin. These people won't even give you the peace you need to mend your trousers. And what's worse, there comes a time when you have to mend them every day.

(The group of BLIND MEN comes. OLD MAN stops mending his trousers)

These people can't see to thread the needle. I almost envy them. Hey, you there, don't go that way, or you'll bump into that man who will ask you, "What's preventing you from seeing the world you live in?"

(BLIND MEN sit down and stay still. OLD MAN continues his work)

They are all in rags. What's the use of having thread if you are not able to thread the needle?

(He seems content with the way his trousers look)

Well, that's different. They are much better. From a distance they look quite strong. Who would bother to take a closer look? No one cares how my trousers are. Damn, I missed this one. What the heck, have I lost my eyesight? There's a little rent that, if untended to, might tear wide open tomorrow to let you put your fist through the gap. That one was caused by... Might it be from waiting too long? What made it?

(The group of DEAF MEN comes muttering and gesticulating)

Hey, keep quiet, or that man might hear and ask you what business drives you here. Well, these people are deaf. Lucky devils. They never hear when their trousers burst at the seams. They have no worry in the world.

(The DEAF MEN lie down carelessly)

If I couldn't hear the fabric snap, I would be lost. Who else would watch the rails, who would tap the bogies?

(He looks admiringly at his trousers and then puts them on)

We are as different from our own selves as from the others. Yes, sir, now I can face another day.

(The Station starts from its sleep. The other characters come on stage. Doors and shutters are opened, there is the usual agitation felt and seen in a railway station at sunrise. Everyone seems to be animated, fresh and even joyful. All get ready to start a new day. Those who are familiar with the station resume their daily routines, moving among the hurried travellers. STATIONMASTER opens shutters, YOUNG MAN brushes his boots, NUN takes her harmonica out of its case, produces a money box and implores people to donate something for the restoration of a monastery, the PEASANT WOMAN opens her wicker basket containing vegetables, fruit and greengrocery, STATIONMASTER checks and gives orders. The pavement is washed and swept. HOMELESS GLUE SNIFFERS come begging. BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN walk up and down. Various announcements are made via the public address system. In all this agitation, the POLITICIAN paces haughtily, accepting respectful greetings from the rest of the people. OLD MAN checks the rails and walks along them going out of the station. A flicker of light passes above the platforms. WHORE comes along, arranging her dress and cursing angrily at the direction she has come from)

WHORE:

You little dirty bug in the rug! You evil-minded prick! You cheap scrumpy son of a gun! Aren't the sluts wise to ask their money before? You tried to give me all that sentimental mush, promising the rest "after". You little jerk.

POLITICIAN:

(Whispers to YOUNG MAN)

We'd better talk politics.

(Goes off together with YOUNG MAN, followed by BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN)

WHORE:

You said you'd give me one hundred bucks. Why only thirty? I moaned, I worked myself off, I rolled my eyes out of my head, I screamed the roof off this station when you came. To give you full satisfaction. To make you feel macho. You crummy little worm! I did all this almost for free, you dirty pig.

STATIONMASTER:

Keep your mouth shut. You've turned on the waterworks like an old maid.

WHORE:

Listen here, sir, don't insult me. Why can't I learn my lesson and stop making such silly mistakes? I should go about it like a real slut: lay your money on the line and then I'll do the work the way the customer likes it.

STATIONMASTER:

You are an ignorant.

(Goes off the stage)

WHORE:

He's quite right, I'm so weak in the upper story. What's gone wrong with me, why do I have these stupid inclinations? As though it would pay to be generous with the customer. Or over-sensitive. What a hare-brained idea! Money comes first, that must be the rule. I feel myself dirty and used. And that, for a mere pittance. Dirty ridiculous clown!

(Fumbles through her handbag, takes out a cigarette but finds she has no light. Sees the NUN, deeply engrossed in prayer and carrying the charity box.

NUN:

For the restoration of the...

WHORE:

Hallo, pardner, don't you happen to have a light? Hey, dolly, can't you hear? Or you don't smoke?

(Looking back towards the place she came from)

Incredible, to have such a thing happen to me. Well, I know my job, and I have a price. What a cheap cheat! There is no respect left in this world for a well-done job.

(To NUN)

My dear, can't you talk? I need a light. do you have one , by chance? What are you babbling there?

NUN:

Will you give some money for the restoration of my church?

WHORE:

God forbid! After I'd been had by that jerk? Will you have a cigarette instead?

NUN:

I don't smoke, thank you.

WHORE:

What a shame!

NUN:

It's a pity you smoke. But I do have some matches to light candles. Here.

WHORE:

(Lights her cigarette)

Thank you.

(To PEASANT WOMAN)

Can you believe it? That worm pulled a quickie on me. That fat blob who didn't seen a woman in ages. We agreed on one hundred to let him have some fun and he

gave me only thirty. He ran away with his trousers unbuckled. Tell me, would I have been better off if I had concluded a contract with him?

PEASANT WOMAN:

What can I say, dear, this place is going downhill.

(She collects her basket and things and goes off)

WHORE:

Should I have asked for collateral?

(Looks again angrily towards the place she has come from)

Hey, if you want it free, do it yourself.

NUN:

God save us all from the Evil One! It's not proper to speak like that, my girl.

WHORE:

My dear, that's life. There are worse sinners in this world than a poor whore. Let all those shitheads go to hell. Come on, don't be afraid, I'm not the Devil himself.

(STATIONMASTER appears in a barrow pushed by a BLIND MAN)

STATIONMASTER:

What's going on here? What are doing?

NUN:

We are saying our prayers.

WHORE:

We pray that the devil take you so I may never set eyes on you again.

STATIONMASTER:

Watch your language, girl, or I'll change my tune! Are you both working?

WHORE:

I'm working at high pressure. But that jerk pulled a fast one on me.

STATIONMASTER:

Those who work are sometimes ripped off...

(Turns to the NUN)

Are you working too?

NUN:

I was saying my prayers.

STATIONMASTER:

Stop doing that or forward your prayers in writing. We shall have them solved, every one of them. Did you collect any money? Well, don't forget to pay the tax on charity, clear? And keep working!

(NUN starts playing the harmonica)

WHORE:

Will you give me a ride in that barrow?

STATIONMASTER:

No whore will ever have a ride in my barrow. Is that understood? Work, keep working! And watch your step!

(To BLIND MAN)

Push on.

(He goes off)

WHORE:

May you find your end under the wheels of the train!

(To NUN)

Aren't you getting bored here? Well, I am. Or are you waiting for the train to Heaven?

NUN:

I can't wait to go to my monastery and get away from this sinful world.

WHORE:

That's your business, but mind, Heaven is to be found in Hell and the Hell is right here. I wouldn't be able to live exclusively among women. They are so wicked and boring. I would rather stand men.

(She notices a crucifix hanging round the NUN's neck)

I have one like that in my room.

NUN:

This shows Jesus Christ crucified.

(She stops playing the harmonica)

WHORE:

I don't need you to tell me who that is. Do you think I'm so stupid? He looks sexy, really. That's why I keep it hung on the wall, near my bed.

NUN:

Great Heavens, stop talking like that. How can you?

WHORE:

After you passed through heaven and hell in this station you can do anything. Do you like Jesus?

NUN:

God forbid. Pray, stop talking so lightly of Him.

WHORE:

Well, if He appeared I would recognize him at once.

(Points to the crucifix)

That one doesn't look like him.

NUN:

Please, it is blasphemy to say this. May God have us all in His care.

WHORE:

You have no idea what it means to be blasphemous. Isn't it blasphemy when I have some animal gasping heavily on top of me? Or when he comes inside me screaming like a beast and gurgling as though he had just flushed a toilet? Well, how can you call that? And then, when he flops beside me like a rag, all sweaty and heavy like a muddied rock, isn't that also a cross I have to bear?

NUN:

Please, please, stop.

WHORE:

You may rest assured that Jesus knows all this. But he can't do a thing. Man is worse than he ever thought.

NUN:

Pray, stop.

(NUN resumes playing the harmonica. GLUE SNIFFERS come out of manholes and start dancing around WHORE and NUN)

WHORE:

I will see him one day walking along the platform. I'll shut up, for I am not able to quote from the psalms.

(She dances with the GLUE SNIFFERS)

Do you like this station? I do, madly. It's so great, the sounds produce an echo, the lights glitter dazzlingly.

(To the GLUE SNIFFERS, who dance faster and faster around her)

Slower, please, I'm getting dizzy!

NUN:

Like a church. Maybe it would be better for every railway station to be turned into a cathedral. As long as you have to wait, you may also pray. Implore God...

WHORE:

That would crown it all! Going to the information office as though it were a confessional, or bowing respectfully before the train timetable as though it were an icon. To leave your funeral wheat porridge at the parcels office, to ask for Coca-Cola and be offered holy water. To pray before the platform, taking it for an altar.

NUN:

Don't do that. Thou shalt not take such things in vain.

(Two GLUE SNIFFERS rise the skirt of the WHORE. She pushes them away and they go down into a manhole. NUN stops playing her harmonica)

WHORE:

What fire eating fiends you are!

(To NUN)

You said you wanted every station turned into a church. Only the trains are holy. You know what? Stop teaching me lessons. I've had my fill of them! You don't have the faintest idea what the world is like and yet you dare start preaching to me. It won't work, no matter what.

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN come on stage, one behind the other, imitating the winding movement of a running train. They whistle, dance and stomp in rhythm)

NUN:

(Crossing herself)

Oh, God, take them in your care and show them the right way. Watch over them, God, and listen to their confessions.

WHORE:

You pray in vain. These people are deaf, they cannot hear the lies. Those are blind, and cannot see the cheat.

NUN:

They are deaf because they haven't heard God's voice. They are blind because they haven't seen God's face.

(She plays the harmonica again. DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN go off stage)

WHORE:

Stop making God a part of all our shortcomings. My dear, you'd better do something else than pray and kneel vainly. Don't you happen to have some scissors with you? I've just found that one of my fingernails broke.

NUN:

Sorry, I don't.

WHORE:

You play nicely. If you didn't wear those garments I would say you were a beggar. Neither a whore, like me, nor a nun. Something in between. We all sell or buy some little part of what we are not. One man may come and go away with a portion of my youth, a crumb off my soul, or a blessing of yours. Oh, shit. Will you have a cigarette? Come on.

NUN:

No, thank you. I have no idea what to play further. Nobody ever stops to give a nickel. They all seem to have become deaf.

(She stops playing)

WHORE:

They hardly walked past you.

NUN:

What's worse, they didn't even look at me.

WHORE:

But they should. Why don't you try something else? You are quite attractive. Don't you put into your head to vie with me, or I'll have you by your hair and sweep the platforms with you. Is that understood?

OLD MAN comes carrying a wheel with the help of a TRAVELLER)

NUN:

I can only play the harmonica and the violin.

WHORE:

If I catch you stealing my customers, I'll gouge your eyes out. That's all, you hear? If you want us to stay friends, don't do anything like that. Are you sure you don't want a cigarette?

NUN:

God forbid. I hope I may be forgiven. I won't sin.

WHORE:

(Looking after the TRAVELLER who walks slowly)

He will come. Yes, he will, that's his job. Amen! How sad that man is. My dear, I have a little business to attend to.

To OLD MAN)

Old Man, aren't I right?

(She follows the TRAVELLER. NUN starts playing the harmonica again)

NUN:

She's such a good girl, but her speech is so evil. I couldn't believe my ears. May God forgive me. She has such a vile mouth...

OLD MAN:

The station may be held responsible. Had she taken the train a while ago she might have been a nursery teacher.

NUN:

And I might have played before a knowledgeable audience. I might have gone on tours all over the world and be a guest of honour at receptions, with rivers of champagne flowing and lots of flowers. When I was little everyone said I was a wonder-child, a promising violinist.

OLD MAN:

Music is a gift given by God. And those who sing or play music are God's angels. Sometimes I can hear the angels' voices.

NUN:

So can I. I've never heard God talk. Only singing.

OLD MAN:

Sometimes the rails are singing too. They cry after distant places.

(He departs, tapping the rails rhythmically with his hammer)

NUN:

If I were an angel...

(The WHORE comes counting a wad of bills. She stops for a moment and listens to the NUN playing)

WHORE:

Well done, bravo! Divine, I may say. You are a piece of the Heavenly One above. I am a part of the One below. But look what a good deal I concluded and worked. One hundred bucks, one pair of good stockings and a bottle of expensive perfume. I must say, sir, there are still honourable men in this world. I got the money in advance, but he kept his word anyway. He said that if I gave him satisfaction, he would come out with something extra. I mean the stockings and the perfume. That's how these sailors are. Poor devils! They sway for months and months on high seas and their piping starts to leak. It didn't take long to make him come. He pumped and pumped, poor him. Why are you making faces, Virgin Mary?

NUN:

(Pointing to the charity box)

Give your pittance.

WHORE:

I wish I hadn't said a word. I'll give you some, but maybe as a loan. How could you return that money to me? Whoever throws money on music nowadays if they are stingy even when it comes to real meat? Will you offer your body, too?

(She takes out the bottle of perfume and sprinkles some of it on her)

Come on, my dear, I tell you it was worth it. First class merchandise.

(STATIONMASTER enters, hurrying to the station pub)

STATIONMASTER:

Are you still here, ladies? How come you are still dawdling about? What's wrong? And what's that bad smell? As though we were in a brothel, or some such place. My wife smells like that sometimes.

(He goes into the pub)

NUN:

He called us whores!

WHORE:

And what's wrong with that? Men seem to think that all women are whores. With only one exception: their own mothers. Animals, what else can I say?

(NUN rises and begins to play)

Don't torture yourself, my dear. Come on, I'll buy you a beer.

NUN:

(Appalled)

I never drink alcohol.

WHORE:

But I do. I'll buy you some plain water. You may delude yourself it is holy water. Let's raise the glass to the existing seas, to ships and months and months of miserable life. We'll have some foamy beer. I love tall foamy beers.

(NUN and WHORE walk towards the station pub, "Miss Your Train". POLITICIAN, YOUNG MAN, STATIONMASTER, PEASANT WOMAN and other travellers are sitting at tables talking quietly over their drinks. WHORE and NUN sit at a table)

POLITICIAN:

Young man, that is what I would call a lesson in politics. From the very source, I mean, from me. Now you are ripe. You may become a soldier to guard the station. Here's to your new career!

YOUNG MAN:

Here's to you, sir.

POLITICIAN:

There's a good lad, wonderful. Oh, yes. It's nice to just sit and do nothing. Slowly does it. And with your overtime paid, if I may.

YOUNG MAN:

A sweet pleasant life. Trains come and leave. If you lose one, you have no worry in the world.

POLITICIAN:

You can travel anywhere. You have no regular destination, so you're better off waiting. Under the circumstances you may miss all the trains there are and you won't feel the difference. You learn fast, that I can tell.

YOUNG MAN:

Yes, sir, and if there's some money in it, so much the better. I'd like something to drink. I'm so thirsty. Will you buy me a drink? I honestly need one.

POLITICIAN:

Honesty is the fools's armour. Do I look like a fool? I've been smart since I was born. By the way, do you know why do infants cry when they are born?

YOUNG MAN:

Because the nurse slaps their buttocks.

POLITICIAN:

You're utterly wrong. They cry out with dissatisfaction. They felt much better in their mother's wombs, with food and sleep galore. Coming to this cursed world makes them feel sorry. I never shed a tear. I understood at once how things worked around here. I told you I was wise ever since I was born. Crying is for losers.

YOUNG MAN:

I used to cry from time to time. I couldn't hold my tears. Whenever I saw one whose business didn't work, or someone who fell ill, or when I heard that the people lived substandard lives I felt inclined to weep and I really did that, occasionally.

POLITICIAN:

Well, as far as I understand you kept weeping all along, without any respite. How stupid you were. How ridiculous! I could say you were as soft as fresh dung! Soft and smelly. Why would you be that stupid to cry for no reason at all? Be strong, man. Well. Why did your mother go through so much pain and labour? Be smart, my friend. You look like a freshly de-enlisted man. You would have liked to become a general. Don't start crying now or I'll get annoyed.

YOUNG MAN:

That was a whole lot ago. Now I feel I've missed my train.

POLITICIAN:

That's no big deal. Everyone here lost his or her train. What's wrong with that? Nothing at all. That's what trains are for, to come and go. Let me buy you a drink. I'll do it, honestly. But don't take me for a fool.

YOUNG MAN:

Well, I'll never think of it.

POLITICIAN:

(To a waiter)

Boy, bring him a little glass of brandy, will you? Don't forget, a little one.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Look at these people. They're having a good time, they drink their fill and laugh for no reason at all... You should do the same and not care a fig that you have missed another train. Be smart, what the hell! With us, missing trains has become a national pastime and pride.

(The waiter brings the small glass of drink)

Come on, drink it. Here's to you.

YOUNG MAN:

All we need is a good state of health, for there are plenty of trains to miss.

POLITICIAN:

That's my man, bravo. Well, look at that one. Can you see him?

(Shouts at the STATIONMASTER)

Hey, master blaster, what's cooking? Is business running smoothly?

STATIONMASTER:

It's running when it's not stalling. I'll have them all work like devils.

POLITICIAN:

(To YOUNG MAN)

Do you have any idea who was that man? I bet you don't. Had he caught his train, he would have become a great boss but, as he missed that opportunity, I made him a stationmaster. He knows how to control people; he was born for that. He was the one and only promising man here, there you have the reason why I offered him my protection. At present he has no worry. He's just cooling his heels and playing the waiting game.

(The groups of DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN come. They wander among the tables causing the customers' annoyance)

Hey, be careful, or you'll overturn my table.

(To STATIONMASTER)

Sir, do something about that herd and drive out of here. Can't we wait for our trains in peace and quiet?

YOUNG MAN:

Maybe they lost their trains too.

POLITICIAN:

Hang it all, will you? Let the devil take them, for they no longer care. For them it's the same whether they ride the train or wait on the platform. They only see from hand to mouth and hear in their sleep.

STATIONMASTER:

What do you think you're doing here?

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN take no notice of him)

POLITICIAN:

(To STATIONMASTER)

Do something, man. Take control of the situation, don't just stand there like a post.

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN go off stage without anyone urging them. The atmosphere relaxes. POLITICIAN to YOUNG MAN)

Did you see that he's no good at anything? How could one aim higher than that? And he says he missed his train. If he listens to me he will still stand a chance. Well, let me have a sip first to calm my nerves. Here's to you.

YOUNG MAN:

Here's to you, sir. I was just sorry for those unfortunate...

POLITICIAN:

Young man, don't be ridiculous. Look at that woman with her harmonica. She's a nun. She would strike those keys all day. If you as much as ask her a question you would be hard put to stop her. She has so many things to say. How she might have

become a great famous soloist, a violinist or harmonica player, and how much champagne she might have had.

(To NUN)

Bravo, my dear. Will you have anything to drink?

NUN:

I never drink alcohol.

POLITICIAN:

(To a waiter)

Boy, bring some holy water for our artist here. I'll pay for it.

(To YOUNG MAN)

She begs, crosses herself and waits for the One on the Cross to come down and walk along the platform. As though He would come when she wanted him to. Well, look at that other woman. That one with big tits. The make-up on her face is thicker than the walls of this building. You should listen to her talking. She would have become a teacher in a kindergarten. But she missed her train, too. Can you believe it?

(To WHORE)

Well, dearest, what's your price?

WHORE:

One hundred, but I'll make a discount for celebrities.

POLITICIAN:

(At half voice)

You'd rather see me hanged first.

(To YOUNG MAN)

See? Missing a train is no big deal. Well, mark my words. Take a second look at all of them and read them through like an open book.

(Pointing at the PEASANT WOMAN)

Can you see that peasant woman carrying a basket in her arms? She would wander all day long through the station asking the travellers whether they have seen her boys who went to town. Hey, woman.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Yes, sir, coming. Do you have any news for me?

POLITICIAN:

No news, woman, no new so far.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Can we open an office for lost people or lost generations here? This is an unimportant station, but it surely aims high. We have a lot of business to see to, sir. You know why I like this pub? I can sit quietly here, look around, listen and see the history of my nation. Well, what a brave people! Strong and enduring. There are a few crybabies like you, but for the rest, they are very patient. In a station like this, patience is a major asset. With us it is either the man who arrives late or the train is delayed. These are the whims of destiny. Here's a reason why I like my nation. The people understand that no matter how many trains you catch,

you are destined to arrive in a station. As a result, it's better not to trouble your head about it. Rather than travel someplace, you'd better go nowhere. Our nation was born in a waiting room.

YOUNG MAN:

Then what are we doing here, in "Miss Your Train"?

POLITICIAN:

What? We quench our thirst. We appease our hunger. What the hell? We have a discussion, exchange a pun, learn some gossip. Here's to us. Drink and be merry! Enjoy living in this little station, as the song goes.

(To NUN)

Hey, woman, can you play that song about the station? Can you? I see you can't.

(To YOUNG MAN)

You understand now that you cannot lay the blame on the train. Champagne is not for her, that's it.

(A few GLUE SNIFFERS come begging among the tables)

GLUE SNIFFER:

Give us a dime, Sir.

POLITICIAN:

Go chase yourselves, dirty bugs.

GLUE SNIFFER:

Give us some money.

POLITICIAN:

Get lost!

GLUE SNIFFER:

Please, sir.

POLITICIAN:

Take a walk and leave us alone, or I'll get mad.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Soldier, take a stick and drive this scum away. Don't just stay there. Wake up and move.

YOUNG MAN:

Well, go away, children, go away, please.

(The GLUE SNIFFERS continue to walk among the tables)

POLITICIAN:

Get the hell out of here or I'll beat the shit out of you.

(He rises to his feet, trying to strike the GLUE SNIFFERS who run away)

You dirty beggars!

(To YOUNG MAN)

Didn't I tell you? You wouldn't have won one single battle. You are a man of straw. Had you had some blood in your veins and ambition to become a general you would have stood up in arms. I don't like this about you, the... All of you blame it on the trains, when in point of fact you are the only ones responsible. Here's to you, though. Boy, if you don't take my advice you'll remain a sentry

here at the waiting room, or a guard at the end of the platform. Well, I need a leak, I feel some pressure building up inside me.

(He stands up and starts singing)

“Whether cold or hot in June,
I want you dancing to my tune.”

(POLITICIAN enters the men’s lavatory and melts among the men sitting before urinals, their backs to the audience. The conversation takes place between men whose identity is difficult to ascertain)

-- There’s so few pleasures left in this world.
-- So very few to last long.
-- To release your bladder is one, to make love, another.
-- Life is hard and very dry if you drop your pint of rye.
-- Five tankards of beer I downed down my thirsty throat.
-- I don’t believe you.
-- Honest. I couldn’t hold myself or I would have had some more.
-- To listen to music. Or read.
-- Hey, genius, watch your aim. You’re spraying it all around.
-- Or travel.
-- When you need to do it, there is no pleasure in it. I’m going to a repast.
-- May he rest in peace.
-- I go to a wedding party.
-- Hey, kid, what are doing here? Did you run away from home?
-- I’m going visiting my grandma.
-- Honey, aren’t you Red Riding Hood, by chance?
-- Leave him alone, sir. Go away, boy, and see to your business.
-- What a stink! You want to puke.
-- That’s how man smells inside.
-- What a stinking animal! Perfumed on the outside, bag of shit on the inside. Hey you there, stop groaning or you’ll burst at the seams.
-- The less one eats the more he shits.
-- That was a smart guy who invented the john. A good thing, indeed. He put order in this shitty world.
-- Watch out, man, I’ve just shined my shoes.
-- Boy, do you know what a straight line is? There is no such thing.
-- You’re wrong. The tracks are.
-- The really straight line is like a rope in a bag. I mean crooked, got it?

(STATIONMASTER comes)

STATIONMASTER:

Well, folks, what are you doing here?

MAN:

You won’t like it if we turn around to show you. So you’d better scram.

STATIONMASTER:

You’re talking too much. Don’t mind me, do your own business.

MAN:

Don't make me turn on you!

STATIONMASTER hurries out)

It sounds like a waterfall in the mountains.

(One of the men peeps through a hole in the wall)

--Look at that! What are you doing, mister? Are you spying on the ladies? Stop ogling or you'll get your hands sweaty. What do you hope to looksee? A woman's ass? They are all the same. Will you see mine instead? Don't desert me, playful one. I can't understand what's so special about a woman's ass. Don't you want to see my bottom?

-- If you don't stop I'll show you.

-- Come on, man, I was just joking.

-- Make yourself scarce, pansy.

-- These homosexuals tend to multiply like mushrooms after rain.

-- The male world has turned awry. You look at a man but you can never be sure.

-- This world has grown into a sewer.

-- Where the hell is it? Well, now, that's the limit.

-- What are looking for, buddy?

-- Honest, I could swear it was here. I feel the pressure.

-- That's one reason why wine shouldn't be had watered down.

-- Open your fly and you'll find it.

-- Are you sure? You're right. I knew it would be somewhere near. Here it is! Make room! I swear I won't drink water as long as I live. Water is good in irrigation. In clouds, too. Anyplace else, anyway. I'm sick of what I see. What I hear makes me puke.

(DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN appear, making noise and overshadowing the john. The scene darkens. The first and second class waiting rooms are lit now. At the second class the YOUNG MAN, NUN, PEASANT WOMAN, and DEAF MEN stand packed together. POLITICIAN dozes on and off at the first class waiting room. WHORE comes along the platform, bored and tired. She lights her cigarette and looks scornfully at the second class waiting room)

WHORE:

You seem to sleep the sleep of the dead. And you stink of sweat to high heaven. May the devil take you all! You took up all the room, and lie packed together like cattle taken to the slaughterhouse. What do you think? I have been working all day long. I'm at the end of my tether. Well now, a ladder's gone in my stocking.

(Takes out her powder case and makes herself looking in the mirror)

I'd better slow it down or I'll have to have an early retirement. If I go on like this any customer will be able to see I'm on the brink of collapse and ask for a price cut.

(Closes the powder case and starts counting her money. STATIONMASTER comes)

STATIONMASTER:

What are you doing? Sitting again? Why aren't you at your business?

WHORE:

Go to hell!

STATIONMASTER:

Watch your language, or I'll show you. What are you doing here?

WHORE:

I'll have none of your jokes. I'm all hot and bothered and I don't feel like listening to your...

STATIONMASTER:

How was the business?

WHORE:

You interfere with my counting the money. If you don't keep your mouth shut, I'll tell you a few words to remember me by...

STATIONMASTER:

How much did you make?

WHORE:

Not so much as you imagine. They are poorer and poorer. And they've grown stingy and choosy. The world has turned upside down.

STATIONMASTER:

Where's my share?

WHORE:

I think I've told you I'm beside myself with anger. What, do you call that money? I'll soon go bankrupt.

STATIONMASTER:

I won't buy that. Where's my percentage?

WHORE:

With such returns, I'll have the taxes deferred. Why are you staring like that? DO I really look so bad?

(She takes out her powder case and makes herself up perfunctorily)

STATIONMASTER:

Give me my share and stop complaining. Is that understood?

WHORE:

Man, can't you get it into your head that I haven't money to spare? I need to invest in myself. I have to buy flimsy and elegant undies, because that's what the brutes saw on television and they want to make sure that you wear such things. If you don't, then they go to the competition. Nail polish, perfume and the rest. This is an enterprise that needs constant supplies. This is no joke. Look, my stockings are gone. I will also need to see a doctor and have a check up, and the treatment costs me a pretty penny. This is a station, not any posh casino, what the hell? This place is a risk to one's safety. You come across all sorts of people. I will also need to put some money in advertising, because these young girls will grab everything and anything. There's no big profit to be made, is there? And as little as there is, must be reinvested. Condoms, soap, deodorants, because the customers sniff you all

over the way a hunting dog would. Not to mention that I will also have to lay something on the side, because you never know when you are a goner in this job. Time is like a wild beast. Who would include me in a pension plan? Stop making this long face. I'll give you your share from what I get tomorrow. Pray for some investors, and your percentage will be fatter.

STATIONMASTER:

I won't accept any excuse tomorrow, remember? Now, you'd better go back to work.

(He goes off towards the second class waiting room)

WHORE:

Go to hell! Let the others sleep.

STATIONMASTER:

Hey, what are you doing here? Sleeping?

(Nobody takes any notice of him)

What's going on? Are you sitting on your butts? Are you snoozing instead of working? You took up all the room.

(He sees that nobody pays attention to him and there is no place, so he goes out to sit on an armchair at the first class waiting room)

WHORE:

Animal! Hey, deaf men, stop snoring so loudly!

(She looks again at herself in the mirror)

These young working broads would do anything... Goddamn cats. They are so desperate for money that they would sell themselves for almost nothing. They have no bottom line in prices, no discipline while doing their job, they will take whatever the traffic will bear. They flooded the work market with their upright nipples and big tits, with their rock-hard round bottoms. But I won't give up.

(BLIND MEN invade the second class waiting room. They lie wherever they find room and disturb the other people. Angry voices are heard, the people shove and push)

Look at these blind people, they won't find their place. Can't they see there is no more room? And just look at them staring blindly, it gives me the goose bumps.

(There is great excitement among the people in the second class waiting room and a fierce struggle is fought for every inch of free space. Shouts, moans, curses are heard)

YOUNG MAN:

Halt, you there. Can't you see there is no more room? The latecomers should better scam out of here.

(The blind mutter in protest)

Go out on the platforms and sleep there!

PEASANT WOMAN:

Have a care, there are also women here! Stop pushing and shoving!

NUN:

Hey, man, stop kicking. You'll damage my harmonica.

YOUNG MAN:

Ouch, do you think I can't kick back?

NUN:

Hey folk, stop, will you? May God help us all!

PEASANT WOMAN:

Stop pushing, dear. Stay put, boy, I can't breathe!

WHORE:

Hey, all of you! Stop! Stop! Go to the first class waiting room, you'll find plenty of room there.

(The excitement subsides. They all come out and look at the first class waiting room)

YOUNG MAN:

There is no justice in this world. Some live in clover, while the rest of us stay cramped like sardines.

WHORE:

That's what you deserve for being so stupid.

YOUNG MAN:

We've been observing the regulations, and that explains it all. We were not stupid. But from now on, we would need to change the law.

(In the meantime, POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER wake up and see the excitement of the people)

WHORE:

A bunch of bastards made every one of these unfair laws! How come, we sweat all day long in the station and have no comfort whatsoever? Soldier, young man, let's start our just struggle! This is history in the making. People, wake up from your slumber of the dead.

(Patriotic music blares from loudspeakers)

YOUNG MAN:

(To NUN)

Strike the note and set the pace for a song. My dear girl, play something revolutionary in style, to make us feel rebellion explode in our blood.

NUN starts playing some very lively tune. YOUNG MAN places a soldier's cap on his head)

Citizens, the moment of our freedom has come! We are united! We are strong!

To one of the DEAF MEN)

Brother, remember you exist!

(To the WHORE)

Sister, think of the future of your children!

WHORE:

Go peddle your ideas somewhere else! Children would be the last things I needed!

YOUNG MAN:

(TO BLIND MEN)

Look forward to the future!

(To DEAF MEN)

Listen to the roar of history!

(To the PEASANT WOMAN)

Mother! Mother!

(He embraces her)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Let me go, young man, you are no son of mine.

YOUNG MAN:

(To GLUE SNIFFERS who come out of manholes)

Our hope!

(During this time, POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER barricade themselves in the first class waiting room)

WHORE:

Come, people, to fight for our peaceful sleep! The great glorious day will arrive!

YOUNG MAN:

Look at these children! They are our future. Well done, Gavroche, there's a good boy!

(He embraces a GLUE SNIFFER and kisses him)

Let's start our fight!

(All rush in force towards the door of the waiting room. After a slight opposition they manage to get inside. There follows a fierce struggle between them to take the comfortable armchairs. OLD MAN comes along the platform and looks at the scuffle. There is the growing roar of a coming train. The whistling of the engine is very loud so as to suggest the passing of the train through the station and then it subsides as if the train went away. For a few instants all stop whatever they are doing and listen to the sound of the engine)

OLD MAN:

There they go again. When they remember who they are, they start fighting like mad.

(He sits down on a bench and starts striking matches, one after the other. During this time, from the scuffle, POLITICIAN creeps out. He takes his coat off, puts on a pullover and re-enters the first class waiting room)

POLITICIAN:

Brothers, we've won the victory!

(The excitement in the waiting room seems to have died down. Standing on an armchair, POLITICIAN speaks to the others. He gesticulates animatedly and fiercely until, one by one, all who have fought their way in return orderly to the second class waiting room, carrying little objects and splinters of furniture as souvenirs)

POLITICIAN:

The victory is all ours!

(To YOUNG MAN)

The Army is with us!

YOUNG MAN:

I certainly like that... It would be better to establish by vote the ones who have a right to stay there and who haven't. Justice was made! Is anybody hurt?

NUN:

(Leading one of the BLIND MEN by the arm)

This boy's nose is bleeding.

POLITICIAN:

We shall learn the truth, I promise you that! Long live our heroes. We all love you! We will honour you!

YOUNG MAN:

Victory! It's incredible how sweetly the moment of your victory tastes!

POLITICIAN:

You will be entrusted important offices. You deserve it. You proved your valour.

YOUNG MAN:

I feel I am growing into an adult. Long live to our victory!

POLITICIAN:

From now on, we shall have price cuts in train fares for all the young people, no matter what their destinations are. They deserve to travel and see the world, so as to become experienced. You are our chance, our salvation.

NUN:

Oh, no, the one who is coming, came and will come will give salvation to us.

(Voices and commands, mixed with beeps and other signals, are heard in the loudspeakers)

POLITICIAN:

He will come, yes, he will, and will find our station much cleaner. A holy station. We shall find our salvation. Immortality of the soul is more important than the invention of the gunpowder. Yes, sister, if you want, you will find the path to salvation.

YOUNG MAN:

We had a hell of a fight! Tactics is what matters under such circumstances.

POLITICIAN:

Right you are! Now we'll have to guard the platforms of the station! Bravo! You deserve a citation and you will get one.

NUN:

What else shall I play for you? Are these songs all right?

(She tries various tunes)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Goodness gracious, living in a city may be mighty confusing!

POLITICIAN:

Mother, be proud of your sons!

PEASANT WOMAN:

God may have them in his care, wherever they are. I have looked for them, but in vain. They got lost maybe on the boulevards or in the blocks of flats, in some district.

NUN:

DO you like this tune?

WHORE:

Carry on, my dear, carry on. Well now, I've ruined my other stocking. May hell take you with your violence! Crazy dogs, look, a button on my blouse is gone.

(GLUE SNIFFERS creep out carrying or dragging stolen goods; they hide themselves into the manhole)

POLITICIAN:

Very nice, my children. Look, good folk, how nicely these children grow. There's our future, the new man.

(DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN are more obedient and lie on the floor in the second class waiting room. POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER stop before the door of the second class waiting room like a pair of hosts who have just shown the way to their guests)

There, very nice, my children. We all need social harmony and peace. That's splendid! The entire world will praise us for our patience and understanding. A wise people.

(To BLIND MEN and then to DEAF MEN)

You shall get free tickets on the train to see the beauties of your motherland, and you will be distributed free tickets to Michael Jackson's mega-concert. Good for you, children. We shall call it as all of you wish: "Our Free Station". No access fees will have to be paid. Sleep tight, for tomorrow everything will look better. Well done, children. Let's make the station radiate beauty like a flower.

STATIONMASTER:

Well, go to sleep now, but tomorrow you'll have to pay something extra for the damage and noise. Is that clear?

POLITICIAN:

Let them be. They are exhausted. Good for you, my children, good! Sleep well. What a disciplined people!

(The first bursts of snoring are heard. The loudspeakers give a repeat of the POLITICIAN's last words. Flickering lights are seen above the station. POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER return to the first class waiting room)

POLITICIAN:

Stop being so abrupt with them at such important moments.

STATIONMASTER:

Leave them to me. I won't find my peace before they pay something extra. Not to mention that we have gone to all that trouble.

POLITICIAN:

Give them a respite till tomorrow. Now let them dream their dreams. This will last for a while. Be careful to change the numbering of the platforms from right to left

instead of from left to right. They will enjoy this. Have the walls whitewashed a little. And add a light here and there. Open a new glittering shop and bring some televisions. They must see there are some changes.

STATIONMASTER:

Why did you promise them the Free Station? It would have been better to tell them that they would not be a sacrificed generation. You know they are nuts about that. Anyway, they can't live twice to check the truth of your words.

POLITICIAN:

Don't be stupid. Pretend you surrender yourself! Give them satisfaction. I see no harm in letting them call this building a Free Station. With time, they will end up calling it Station because it's much simpler. What the hell! Oh, how could I be so forgetful? I'll be damned! It simply slipped my mind to say that the BLIND are free to be DEAF and the DEAF are free to be BLIND.

(WHORE comes out of the second class waiting room)

WHORE:

It stinks of sweat to heaven. I'm so very sensitive.

(To POLITICIAN)

Yes, sensitive. Do you have a light, please?

POLITICIAN:

Sure.

(He offers her a light. In half whisper to the STATIONMASTER)

Go and check on that man who watched us so intently and then report back to me. I have some business first.

(To OLD MAN)

Did you think it was enough to put into their heads that they would escape? Listen to me, old man, every rebellion is tantamount to some burden in excess. No matter how hard you try, you cannot help them escape their individual destinies.

(Laughing)

I think you saw how obedient they were.

(To WHORE)

Please, dear lady. We have a seat for you at the first class. That's where you belong.

WHORE:

I must say I find this class struggle very exciting.

(POLITICIAN and WHORE enter the waiting room and soon the light goes out)

STATIONMASTER:

(To OLD MAN)

Why are you dawdling here, man? What are you staring at?

OLD MAN:

I'm looking at the trains. How they come and go.

STATIONMASTER:

What was that noise? The rails screeched as if a train had derailed.

OLD MAN:

There's nothing wrong with the tracks. They go on forever.

STATIONMASTER:

You'd better see about your points and signals. Leave the rest to us. All right! Everyone, mind your own business!

OLD MAN:

Some said it was delayed, some that it had already left. Others still said it would never come.

STATIONMASTER:

Shut up, I'm finished. And you talk too much. Did you see anything unusual?

OLD MAN:

For a beginner many things would seem unusual. But for me they are all familiar.

STATIONMASTER:

You see and hear too many things. Besides, you have quite a big mouth. Are you convinced that everything is in vain? Stop countering us, old man, you stand no chance. Your job is to watch the rails. This is anyway above your lights. Whoever saw a finite man watch over the endless tracks of the trains? Who can see infinity? Stick to your job, it's better for you.

(STATIONMASTER goes off and OLD MAN sits on the rails, at one end of the platform. The station is asleep. Deep breathing of the people sleeping is heard. As though in a dream, the characters detach themselves from the dark background and come to the fore one by one, but wearing different costumes. First appears the NUN, slowly, and she starts playing the violin. Then, from the first class waiting room comes the WHORE, dressed in bridal white, and from the second class waiting room the YOUNG MAN dressed up as a commissioned officer. They meet in front of the platform and start dancing.)

STATIONMASTER comes dressed in an elegant suit. On the platform, PEASANT WOMAN is met by three GLUE SNIFFERS who come out of a manhole; they are dressed like schoolboys. DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN walk like normal people. POLITICIAN goes out of the first class waiting room carrying a frame through which his stiff and solemn face is seen. OLD MAN raises to his feet and walks along the platform until he disappears enveloped in the locomotive steam. NUN looks off in the distance.)

NUN:

How long will you be keeping Your face away from me? They say you are alive, but you may be dead for all I know. I heard of Your deeds: you are neither cold, nor hot.

(She stretches her arms forward as though embracing someone)

The one who collapses to the ground stretches out his arms, doesn't he? Is it in despair, or is it an embrace? Come and see me, for time has come. Come and see it all.

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The same station. On a platform, OLD MAN taps on some rusty carriage wheels. NUN sits on a bench.

NUN:

He will wipe any tear from their eyes.

OLD MAN:

Woman, whoever cries in public nowadays?

NUN:

And He will break the silence in their ears.

(PEASANT WOMAN comes)

OLD MAN:

You are too young, believe me. Those who have ears will listen to His words. Those who don't, won't. Can you hear the trains? They say that in great stations seven trains arrive and as many leave at the same time. But I can't believe that.

PEASANT WOMAN:

I can't believe either.

OLD MAN:

But where do you want to go?

PEASANT WOMAN:

To my sons. Have you seen them, have you met them? Why are you tapping the wheels with that hammer?

OLD MAN:

I check them. For endurance, you know? And so the people can see that they are undamaged and have nothing to fear. Then they rest assured that they will be safe and come to get on the train.

NUN:

Like the bell board sounding at vespers. It scares the devil away and the people can come and attend the religious service without suffering any harm.

OLD MAN:

(To PEASANT WOMAN)

She's so young. She thinks that everything takes His example.

NUN:

One day, the first born from among the dead will come.

PEASANT WOMAN:

And you stay here awaiting him?

NUN:

Yes, I do. I can also imagine how He will appear from the steam on the platform, as though from a cloud...

PEASANT WOMAN:

I thought so too. Come with me to the end of the platform to see for yourself how deserted it is. Neither living men, nor unborn. It is only dirt, nothing else. Come.

(PEASANT WOMAN and NUN walk away. From loudspeakers muffled voices are heard)

OLD MAN:

Misery is fertile. Seven trains coming, seven going out. Why aren't these nuns staying quietly in their convents instead of walking aimlessly through stations? Where was I before being born? Here I go again.

(He stops tapping the wheels and sits on a bench, takes out a white towel, a candle, matches, a glass and a piece of bread from his pocket. He lights the candle, fills the glass and starts singing to himself)

Many happy returns of the day, many happy returns...

(He dances around the bench, raises his glass and sings)

Whose birthday is it, whose birthday is it? Many happy returns! Many happy returns to me!

(PEASANT WOMAN and NUN appear and look in confusion at OLD MAN who prepares to blow the candle out)

Come on, old man, blow hard. There's a good boy. Many happy returns and good health to you! I wish you all the best.

OLD MAN claps his hands and jumps with joy like a child. PEASANT WOMAN and NUN begin to applaud.)

NUN:

Many happy returns! Many happy returns to you!

PEASANT WOMAN:

Many happy returns! Why didn't you tell us it was your birthday?

OLD MAN:

(Baffled for having been caught unawares)

But it isn't my birthday.

PEASANT WOMAN:

What is it then?

OLD MAN:

This is what I do when I remember of my own person. It is much simpler than remembering when I was born.

PEASANT WOMAN:

How old are you, anyway?

OLD MAN:

Didn't I tell you it proves useless? My birthday is when I remember of myself. Quite abruptly, I catch myself asking what the hell I am doing in this world and if I have an aim at all. Then I sing and I feel some joy. Many happy returns...

NUN:

(She starts singing and is soon joined by the others)

Many happy returns of the day to you

May God grant you everything you ever wished,

May he give you sunny and happy days

May you live a long and happy life.

OLD MAN:

Thank you, thank you. Well, I can't even...

(In an excited voice)

It was very seldom that it happened to me. Sometimes it is much worse. And I think, "How long and why?" That is nonsense. It is then that I drink myself senseless. You sang beautifully. Will you have a piece of bread?

NUN:

Thank you. May God's name be praised.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Thank you. My basket is still full. I'll leave you now. I have some work to do.

(PEASANT WOMAN goes off. NUN sits on the bench and eats the piece of bread she was offered. OLD MAN gathers his things and lies on the bench)

OLD MAN:

Is the platform long?

NUN:

I didn't go all the way to its end.

OLD MAN:

Don't be sad. One day your wish may come true. Will you have another piece of bread?

(The silence is broken by BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN; they come trotting from the station. They gesture towards the others and urge them to join them)

NUN:

They call us to join them.

OLD MAN:

Maybe they heard or saw something.

(He looks along the platform)

NUN:

(Shouting after the BLIND and DEAF.)

Where are going? The platform is deserted!

OLDMAN:

There's a train coming. Can't you feel the air trembling?

NUN:

Did they call the train?

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN disappear in the cloud of steam)

OLDMAN:

Let us go.

(OLD MAN and NUN disappear in the same direction. In the second class waiting room, PEASANT sits with the basket in her lap. From the loudspeakers an announcement is heard, "Passenger train number 1989, came into the station at twelve hours twenty two minutes" YOUNG MAN stands leaning against the doorjamb, reading a book)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Was that our train, son?

YOUNG MAN:

That is what the information office announced. And they keep repeating it.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Hasn't it come yet? By the way, what are you reading?

YOUNG MAN:

A Train Timetable.

PEASANT WOMAN:

And what does it say?

YOUNG MAN:

It only gives figures. Makes promises.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Could it have been that one?

YOUNG MAN:

I only heard it whistling. The station trembled and echoed, but it was gone. Some say it was a special train.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Poor me, I'll see my death in this station. And my plot waits unturned, the animals untended and unfed. This town gobbled up my sons. They were your age when they left to town.

A WOMAN:

Haven't you found them yet?

PEASANT WOMAN:

They went to town and nobody has ever seen them since. And I gave them some advice. I told them, "My sons, the pavement leads to sin. Think twice before you go."

YOUNG MAN:

Didn't they tell you where they were going?

PEASANT WOMAN:

To town. Before leaving, each holds council with his folk at home to choose the best road. That is the custom. They said to me, "Mother, luck is wandering, so you must follow it to catch up with it." And then my old man said, "My sons, luck resembles a stump; if you stumble against it all's well, but if you don't..." They may have got lost in the maze of the districts.

YOUNG MAN:

Perhaps you needn't fear. They are surely fine and maybe you are a grandmother already.

PEASANT WOMAN:

A grandmother? I wish God heard your words.

YOUNG MAN:

They will return home some time.

PEASANTWOMAN:

They may, but by that time, the land will have forgotten them. They have already forgotten it. And when they return, they will only mow wild weeds. God, how I

looked for them. I prepared fresh food from my own produce. I thought they might be longing for something clean and good, from the very source. I saw how people live in blocks of flats and town districts. People upon people, house upon house. They hold their feet upon the head of the people below. My, that's not life. It is worse than living in a stable. This turns people into domesticated animals.

YOUNG MAN:

Don't worry, woman, they will return.

PEASANT WOMAN:

When your son goes to war, you ask yourself whether he'll ever return. When he goes to town, you ask yourself whether you'll see him again. The wells are exhausted, the apple trees go dry. Son, I can't see very well, will you be kind and write a few lines on this postcard for me?

YOUNG MAN:

Who will you send it to?

PEASANT WOMAN:

My old man. He may have thought I was dead. I know him. And he forgets to feed the fowls.

YOUNG MAN:

What shall I write?

PEASANT WOMAN:

That everything is all right. Tell him my sons are fine. He needn't grow bitter. Thank you, dear. Will you have anything to eat? I have a lot a choice food. My sons looked just like you. They were only a little more burnt by the sun, that is what I remember.

(She takes a white towel and some food from the basket. From the manholes, GLUE SNIFFERS show their heads)

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

What a smell, man.

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

Come on, there's food to be had.

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Shall we snatch it or beg for it?

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Wait and see.

(GLUE SNIFFERS come out of the manhole and creep towards the PEASANT WOMAN)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Have some, there's plenty for all of you.

YOUNG MAN:

(To GLUE SNIFFERS)

Hey, take it easy, don't rush like that.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Don't scold them, they are hungry, poor devils. Have some more, dear, have some more.

STATIONMASTER comes. Seeing him, GLUE SNIFFERS run away into the sewer)

STATIONMASTER:

What's cooking here? You are eating from morning till night, filling your bellies.

YOUNG MAN:

You'd better have some. It's very good food.

STATIONMASTER:

Is that so? Let me have a bite.

(He takes a little to taste it)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Have some more, there is enough for everyone.

STATIONMASTER:

And you keep complaining that your life is hard. All right, I'm going to see to my business.

(He makes as if to go away, but returns)

You have too much here.

(He takes food and shoves it into one pocket and leaves)

YOUNG MAN:

You might at least say thank you.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Let him go in peace, maybe he's having his own troubles. Why should one say always thank you for a little food? This is not a repast.

YOUNG MAN:

Well, woman, I know that man better than you do. I wish the train ran him over.

PEASANT WOMAN:

It's not proper to speak like that. God forbid, he may find his death someday on the tracks and then you'll take the sin upon you.

(NUN comes, looking fearfully around)

NUN:

Did he go away?

YOUNG MAN:

Yes, he did.

NUN:

If he sees us, he will chase us again.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Have some food and eat. Please.

YOUNG MAN:

Thank you very much.

NUN:

May god help us.

(YOUNG MAN and NUN eat heartily)

PEASANT WOMAN:

Whatever comes from the land, is worked and washed in sweat becomes sacred.
Please, eat some more.

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN come and begin to eat)

YOUNG MAN:

All the people in this station will eat your food.

PEASANT WOMAN:

Come and take some. There is enough for everyone. The land is generous.

(All sit round the food and eat hungrily. PEASANT WOMAN goes to the end of the platform, looking in the distance)

I told them that the pavement leads to sin.

(PEASANT WOMAN disappears in the cloud of steam on the platform. Having satisfied their hunger, the people leave one by one. Only the YOUNG MAN stays. He takes a ladder and a tool kit from the second class waiting room. He climbs the ladder and starts re-writing in fresh paint the half peeled letters on the plates with "FIRST CLASS WAITING ROOM")

YOUNG MAN:

Everything is going to rot. Someone said once, "Very nice looking station, what a pity it is being lived in."

(STATIONMASTER comes)

STATIONMASTER:

Stop talking and keep working. Those who work have no time to chat. Is that understood?

YOUNG MAN:

Yes, sir! Understood.

(POLITICIAN comes)

POLITICIAN:

Atta, boys. Very well done, indeed, splendid. See what you can do when you put some heart into it?

YOUNG MAN:

The paint's too diluted and it flows like water.

POLITICIAN:

Leave it at that, it makes no difference anyway.

STATIONMASTER:

It makes no difference, all right, only the work matters.

POLITICIAN:

He who does not work, neither does make any mistakes. That's a very clever proverb. Keep at it that way and we'll get far. Splendid, my boys.

YOUNG MAN:

It's as good as a makeshift, not a proper job.

(He shows the writing on the plate)

Now it's illegible.

POLITICIAN:

Well, why does this bother you? What matters is to look freshly painted. If you do it minutely, your eyes will hurt and your back will get stiff with effort. And it comes out too well. What will you do next week then?

STATIONMASTER:

This young man wants to stay without doing anything. Take my advice, it's bad news when you are left with nothing to mend and patch.

(BLIND MEN enter. They move with jerky gestures, showing towards the first class waiting room, where flashes of light can be seen from time to time)

POLITICIAN:

What's got into these people? Why are they staring like mad, they can't possibly see anybody there?

STATIONMASTER:

I didn't give them a good dressing down for quite a while, that's why. They forgot who the master is. They seem to have seen a vision.

YOUNG MAN:

They point towards the first class waiting room. What have they seen to make them look so startled?

STATIONMASTER:

See? The got a glimpse of darkness inside themselves. Hey, make yourself scarce, we don't want you here. And stop staring like that, or...

(He repels the BLIND MEN)

They haven't been instructed, I understand.

POLITICIAN:

(Looking at the written plate)

Yes sir, listen to me, you have to be very wise to understand that even a makeshift thing may serve a purpose.

STATIONMASTER:

That's right, in this way everyone has a job to do.

POLITICIAN:

And that is to the good of the entire people.

(BLIND MEN appear. Noises and ovation made by a large crowd are heard from loudspeakers. DEAF MEN point to the first class waiting room, suggesting that something is heard from that direction)

STATIONMASTER:

What's wrong with them, are they possessed?

POLITICIAN:

(To the STATIONMASTER)

I think the disorder in this station reached a point where measures become necessary.

STATIONMASTER:

You there, what are you doing? Can't you find anything to do? Why are you hanging about? Go someplace else and leave the people work.

YOUNG MAN:

Help me, they push my ladder off the wall.

STATIONMASTER:

Can't you listen to reason? Go away or...

(He chases the DEAF MEN away. They go off while OLD MAN enters)

What brings you here? You wander aimlessly along the platforms doing nothing at all.

POLITICIAN:

Have you come again? Man, go and guard the rails.

OLD MAN:

I was looking at the young man on the ladder.

STATIONMASTER:

Leave him alone. He has a job to do.

OLD MAN:

(To POLITICIAN)

Have you already planned his future?

POLITICIAN:

There you are mumbling again. Go see to your business, if you have any. This boy is listening to your words.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Boy, pay no attention to him. This old man spends most of his time near the rails and is just rambling on.

YOUNG MAN:

The paint is too diluted.

OLD MAN:

And hey said it made no difference.

POLITICIAN:

It's your business if you want to play the wise man. But stop putting ideas into other people's heads.

STATIONMASTER:

I wouldn't mind that, but they may get annoyed.

OLD MAN:

And what's wrong with that?

POLITICIAN:

Old man, are you going to teach me my job? Me? I have always been holding the levers of history. A true politician like me knows everything about everything. And you know why? Because I was born that way. Politics was made by God Almighty too. And he proceeded in this way to make the system work. They say that He took a rest on the seventh day. They're wrong! This was when he devised politics. He pretended to sleep and he had a dream.

OLD MAN:

A nightmare, maybe. If that happened on the seventh day, then it was a very boring day. Boredom, nightmare and weariness fostered politics.

POLITICIAN:

(To YOUNG MAN)

Young man, I tell you, he speaks nonsense. His mind is wandering along the tracks, spinning together with the wheels of the train. He has no idea. Listen to me. The International Day of Politics is celebrated on a Sunday!

(To OLD MAN)

Man, do you know what I like best in this world? The inadequacy of force in maintaining something. Can you understand that?

OLD MAN:

Very well indeed.

(Pointing to the first class waiting room)

There it has come again.

POLITICIAN:

What has come again? What is it that these people see and hear?

(Lights are seen again in the first class waiting room. Broken and disconnected phrases come from the loudspeakers)

OLD MAN:

Can't you hear your own thoughts? Can't you see your own shadow?

POLITICIAN:

What nonsense are you talking about? Who came?

OLD MAN:

The ghost from the first class waiting room. It came again.

POLITICIAN:

Are you sure?

(YOUNG MAN steps down from the ladder. All look towards the waiting room)

STATIONMASTER:

Yes, sir, it is the ghost. It says something.

YOUNG MAN:

Can you understand what it says?

STATIONMASTER:

Not quite. Silence, there!

POLITICIAN:

It says that it is very useful that the ants should sing and not the crickets.

YOUNG MAN:

I can't get a thing. It mumbles something unintelligibly and waves its arms incessantly.

OLD MAN:

In this station, three terrible events are known: inundations, vibrations and indications.

STATIONMASTER:

You don't say so. When alive, that ghost would only shake his hand and stop trains from their run. He would have them translated from one track to another; he

would have them stopped, started, again, and so no. The tracks would extend during the night reaching as far as...

POLITICIAN:

It seems to be speaking about the road to the future. Let us take down some ideas. Listen, that is about our future.

STATIONMASTER:

(To OLD MAN)

There, take something down. Pay attention, he says that...

(In the loudspeakers are heard both the tumult of the crowd and the wavering, unclear, but authoritarian voice)

YOUNG MAN:

From the bottom of our hearts... The homeland is in danger. Now, what did he just say?

STATIONMASTER:

Shut up, there. We can barely hear.

POLITICIAN:

Great future. Strength in unity. What a pity, sir, that it's only a ghost speaking. Should it have been a real person...

OLD MAN:

Something was left of that. In myself, in you.

POLITICIAN:

DO you mean I'm a ghost? I'm alive and he's dead.

STATIONMASTER:

Look, it started towards the platforms.

YOUNG MAN:

The ghost from the first class waiting room.

(Lights depart. Sounds in loudspeakers become fainter and fainter)

YOUNG MAN:

Is it a vampire? Can it become reincarnate?

OLD MAN:

It can pass in minute traces into each of us.

STATIONMASTER:

Keep your mouth shut. That is nonsense.

YOUNG MAN:

How can you get yourself rid of a ghost? Can you shoot it?

POLITICIAN:

I have no idea. But why would one get rid of it? It is so peaceful. It may also be a tourist attraction. What is better known about us? How's that, has it ever done us any harm?

(To STATIONMASTER)

Well, did you take anything down?

STATIONMASTER:

Yes, I did. But I knew it all.

POLITICIAN:

So did I, but it is good to refresh your memory.

(To OLD MAN)

How did you dare to call me a ghost? I think you've forgotten yourself, and besides, you have no good breeding. You'd better go see to your tracks.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Let it haunt us, we can live together quite peacefully.

YOUNG MAN:

What if the station is torn down? What will it do then?

STATIONMASTER:

What a stupid question! This is a strong building, made of granite.

POLITICIAN:

Look at it how it is wandering. It floats above platforms as though it were in a magic boat. It seems to be extremely haughty.

STATIONMASTER:

That's a little boat, yet driven as though it were an ocean liner.

YOUNG MAN:

It vanished. Where did it go?

POLITICIAN:

On a working visit. Through the station.

OLD MAN:

It will return. It would let us alone so easily.

POLITICIAN:

Don't start saying again that it is in me, or us, or...

STATIONMASTER:

You just sit there talking and talking.

POLITICIAN:

It passed so close, nearly touching me, a few meters away.

YOUNG MAN:

A windmill is visible from a distance of 11 kilometers. Trees and people can be seen from 2 kilometers, buttons on somebody's coat from 170 meters, people's faces can be seen from 160, their traits can be distinguished from 160, their eyes from 60, the white of one's eyes from 20 meters.

POLITICIAN:

Splendid, wonderful, dear soldier. The knowledge you possess may make you of a general. Did you see the white of its eyes?

STATIONMASTER:

I seemed to feel his breath.

YOUNG MAN:

The roar of a booming cannon can be heard from a distance of 5 kilometers, the hubbub of a great city from 3 kilometers, the trotting of horses from 500 meters, people's steps from 120, the grinding of one's teeth from 14 meters.

POLITICIAN:

Splendid. Did it grind its teeth?

STATIONMASTER:

That I couldn't hear, because it was moving fast.

YOUNG MAN:

You mean it was travelling fast. The first man-made satellite launched by the Soviet Union on October 10, 1957, travelled at 8kmps, a bullet travels at 865mps, a fly at 5mps, a man at 1.5mps, a snail at 1.5 millimetres per second and memories at...

POLITICIAN:

Wonderful, my friend!

(To OLD MAN)

Now, can you say this youth is a ghost? That the ghost holds him in its power?

(To YOUNG MAN)

Do you know whose that ghost was? Has it ever broken its way inside your soul? Have you ever felt that?

YOUNG MAN:

Let me put it that way, sir. There is nobody within me. I only know from hearsay whoever that was and is. They call it the ghost from the first class waiting room.

POLITICIAN:

Wonderful. You can see now why a little station like ours will have a great future, can't you? Because we are tolerant with our ghosts. We are always ready to offer a warm welcome to anyone.

YOUNG MAN:

I could give them my own coat.

POLITICIAN:

Splendid!

YOUNG MAN:

I never finished telling about memories.

POLITICIAN:

We all have them, boy. To hell with them! What, do they travel too?

YOUNG MAN:

They travel at zero speed. They stay inside our heads. Wherever we go, they accompany us. Whenever we sleep, they fall asleep too. We cannot realize, but...

STATIONMASTER:

You're raving again, or aren't you?

POLITICIAN:

This man, with his ghosts inspired you, I'm sure.

OLD MAN:

But it haunts the platforms.

STATIONMASTER:

Come on, let's do our jobs. Too much talk and no work.

POLITICIAN:

Move the ladder. The ghost may come back and you know it wouldn't admit to see the second class waiting room unpainted.

(To OLD MAN in a whisper)

Save your breath, man. Can't you see he only takes my orders?

(POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER go off. YOUNG MAN moves the ladder near the plate reading "SECOND CLASS WAITING ROOM" and starts working)

YOUNG MAN:

I beg your pardon, can you tell me a little more about ghosts? Those two gentlemen seemed to know more on the subject but wouldn't say anything to me. Is it a secret?

OLD MAN:

It is a curse.

YOUNG MAN:

A curse on the station? I thought so much. Can I ask you something? Are ghosts like the human beings? Are they born to die like us?

OLD MAN:

They are very much alike. Sometimes you may confuse them.

YOUNG MAN:

How are they born?

OLD MAN:

They are born from lies. Some are born during one's lifetime and die slowly, a long time after the actual death has been reported.

YOUNG MAN:

I was a soldier. I only shot people.

(Pointing at the plate)

How do you like it?

OLD MAN:

If you apply their measure, it looks passable.

YOUNG MAN:

I can't understand very well how this thing stands. In war, if you do not aim properly, the enemy will fell you. You can't shoot at random. When you are dealing with death you don't take things lightly. They also shoot ghosts, don't they?

(Climbs down the ladder)

I take aim and press the trigger. Where do you aim when you want to shoot a ghost. The heart, the head? Where does its strength reside?

OLD MAN:

Within ourselves. You only fire when ordered. You shoot people on orders from the ghosts. Did anybody ordered you to fire at a ghost?

YOUNG MAN:

Here we start again. This is not a job for a simple soldier. I'm off.

(He carries his ladder and tool kit and goes off. From a manhole GLUE SNIFFERS come out; they surround the bench where OLD MAN sits. Flashes of

light appear above the platforms. Indistinct voices of children are heard from loudspeakers)

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

Old man, I saw a flash. Are we going to have a storm?

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

Old man, give me a dime.

OLD MAN:

Are you a boy or a girl?

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

What does it matter down there?

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

What were those lights?

OLD MAN:

The ghost from the first class waiting room. It's haunting the platforms.

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Listen to him, sister, That means our father has returned!

GLUE SNIFFERS look at the lights travelling all the time along the platform)

GLUE SNIFFERS:

Father! Father!

(They run towards the light with their arms stretched out and shouting at the top of their voices)

Father! Faaather!

(The light changes its position and the GLUE SNIFFERS cannot touch it. Then it disappears. Exhausted, the GLUE SNIFFERS return and sit down around OLD MAN)

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

This is what he does every time. He runs away from us. He wouldn't even want to play with us.

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

I'll catch it someday. I'm going to ask sweets and fruit juice.

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Last time when I asked him something, he directed me to that man who walks through the station and is shown on TV. Well, I don't need an adoptive father.

OLD MAN:

Is the ghost your father?

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

Well, are we barred from having a parent?

OLD MAN:

Don't you have mothers? Who are they?

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

The station. Once I heard my father saying, "Go to the station. That's your mother."

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

The station gave us life. Really. From its very bowels.

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

We live there now. We can hide and nobody would ever find us. We only come out to steal. We take a fresh mouthful of air and go back.

OLD MAN:

You aren't even born.

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

We play hide-and-seek.

OLD MAN:

That's what you play with your own lives.

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

Old man, give me something to eat.

OLD MAN:

(Takes out a loaf of bread and salami)

Here. Eat.

(GLUE SNIFFERS eat ravenously and then run away, disappearing in a manhole)

OLD MAN:

Is misery fertile?

(Towards the light that hovers over the platforms and goes to the first class waiting room)

Is that what you think? Is that what you want?

(OLD MAN walks along the platform. In a corner of the station, NUN plays her harmonica. Passers-by do not take any notice of her, so they naturally do not drop any coins in her charity box. WHORE COMES)

WHORE:

Why are you playing with no profit?

NUN:

I need to collect some money. I can't return to my convent empty-handed. The roof is leaking, icons are cracked and sooty; the cells are in half ruin and the candles, scarce.

WHORE:

You can't build anything from charity. Fear, madness would help, maybe. I wonder at your fingers running so smoothly and lightly on the keys.

NUN:

I wonder myself sometimes. They remind me of children jumping on the sleepers of a railway.

WHORE:

Now you're raving. My dear friend, in this way you'll never even raise money enough to build a small crucifix. I barely manage myself under these circumstances. Tell me, what does a pig crave for? Mud. What does a pickpocket need? A crowd. Isn't it a shame to waste such hips?

(A few TRAVELLERS stop and watch in amusement)

Isn't it a pity to waste these rock-hard boobies and round buttocks? You, living corpses! Look at my lips! God! I'm hot like hell and move like a devil. I'm far better than those beauties in magazines. Listen, I breathe like a real woman, I can gasp and moan. Those on television give you an electric shock if you just dare touch them. I'll make a real man feel the thrill, die and come again to life when he is with me. He would come into my womb and scream uncontrollably, "Mother, I am happy I was born." Tell me then, what do I lack? Nothing. You lack everything. Look into your underwear! Can you feel anything alive in there? Only water works. Or haven't you money to pay? This is where the state machine is at fault. What government is that to leave a piece of ass like me without a job? I want customers. I need men! Men to pay well.

(WHORE drives the TRAVELLERS away, by hitting them with her handbag)

I don't want dirt-poor men, winos, nickel-nursing, unemployed and stingy government employees. To you I'm speaking, government, what other business is more important for you than providing for the pleasure of your nation?

(GLUE SNIFFERS are halfway out of a manhole)

This is what I always wanted to be -- the station's whore. To have sex only with men who are always on the go. Weaklings, you are just fucking your secretaries in secret, because it's for free, you sneak your hands into the pants of lift-girls when there is nobody else around. I know it all. Dirty men with their flies wide open and ties thrown over their backs!

NUN:

You shout in vain. You'd better dream of His coming one day...

WHORE:

Yes, of His coming. Some engine driver. I seem to hear the steamy puffing of the engine coming into the station, its rhythmic roar. I can see clouds of smoke boiling out of the black chimney, well wrought steel rail guard, hard springs and pulsing valves.

NUN:

You're mocking at me again.

(She stops playing)

WHORE:

And so what, isn't life mocking at us?

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

(To NUN)

Don't stop playing.

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

Play some more. It sounds so beautifully.

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Keep playing. Don't stop.

(He comes out of the manhole, goes near the charity box and drops some coins in)

Look, this is all I got begging today. I'll give them to you, but pray, don't stop.

(NUN continues to play. GLUE SNIFFER 3 starts to jump with joy)

That's splendid. I like it!

WHORE:

What do you think of this?

GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Wonderful!

The other GLUE SNIFFERS come out of the sewer and start dancing. WHORE dances together with them)

GLUE SNIFFER 1:

I tell you frankly, brother,

This station's like a mother.

People come and go, all viewers,

While my mates emerge from sewers.

GLUE SNIFFER 2:

Gi'me a dime instead,

To buy myself bread.

To feel I was fed

Like a newlywed.

GLUE SNIFFER:

We know hunger,

We know thirst,

And the night

At its bitterest.

WHORE:

Commotion around, the train leaves and, great heaven,

The carriage is full of all sorts of strange folk,

My heart beats so wildly. It is ten after seven.

I turn to the window; with emotion I choke.

(BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN come in one by one. They join the dance. At times, one GLUE SNIFFER becomes a soloist for DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN)

BLIND MEN, GLUE SNIFFER 1:

Can't even see the train a-leaving

And if it's there, I cannot find the line.

The lights are dead: not one is burning

And yet my palms do feel the candles as they shine.

DEAF MEN, GLUE SNIFFER 2:

If in pain, why yell and shout?

Tell us, please, don't fret about.

It's no use to ask and yelp.

This Deaf Station wouldn't help.

BLIND MEN, GLUE SNIFFER 3:

Whether ugly or good looking,

Stingy, mean or unbecoming,

If your face is fine or pocked

If you're fat or thin or not,

DEAF MEN, GLUE SNIFFER 2:

If your words are commonsense

Or spell out dirty offence,

We don't care a tiny bit

That you take all the big shit.

BLIND MEN, DEAF MEN, GLUE SNIFFERS

We don't give a damn, you know,

That you cringe under the blow.

We won't melt in tears

That you have great fears.

We won't listen and won't hear,

Though unborn, we're living here

As small pieces of this station

But won't show our vexation.

WHORE:

Smoke, signals and points start marching past,

First slowly, then faster and then very fast.

I see many people with banners unfurled

And the fiery train catches speed as if hurled

From a slingshot. Good bye, dear town of my youth,

So idle and sweet, if I may say the truth!

With the train winding and chugging along

I wave back to you and tell you, "So long."

GLUE SNIFFERS:

There's always room to spare

Three times as many of us could stay there.

With trains gone and platforms bare

All adults were left behind,

There's no better place to find

This is high among its kind.

(STATIONMASTER comes; he finds the situation intolerable)

STATIONMASTER:

Stop that madness, have you gone out of your minds? Stop it at once!

(To NUN)

You are causing trouble, inciting people to dance and amusement.

(To WHORE)

Is that the proper education you are supposed to impart? And you!

(GLUE SNIFFERS scatter hurriedly and take shelter in the sewers. The BLIND MEN and the DEAF MEN are confused)

You are having fun, aren't you? You undermine the authority of the Station. I heard you telling jokes, mocking at this and that. You're laughing at us, at one another, but have no idea that the devil mocks at all of you! You, little...

(DEAF MEN and BLIND MEN run as though for their lives)

You turned this station into a nuthouse.

(To NUN, who closes the case of her harmonica)

Do you feel like having fun when the investors are going to come?

(NUN and WHORE run off)

Is this the proper moment?

(The whole stage is engulfed in darkness. Music inspiring patriotic sentiments is heard in the loudspeakers. Someone shouts: "Silence". The stage is flooded with light. With the exception of the POLITICIAN, all the characters are present and arranged as though they were participating in a special political show. GLUE SNIFFERS wear white cloaks over their dirty rags; they have bunches of white flowers in their hands. BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN are dressed for the occasion and form two choirs, with the STATIONMASTER as their conductor. They all look in the distance, along the platform)

DEAF MAN 1:

I seem to hear something.

GROUP OF DEAF MEN:

The whistling of a steam locomotive. U-huu, uhhu.

BLIND MAN 1:

I seem to hear something.

GROUP OF BLIND MEN:

The flashing speed of steel in the sun.

STATIONMASTER:

That's an inner vision you may have. Well, let's have a repeat before the arrival!

Soldier! Give us the tune!

YOUNG MAN:

Bang-bang, the drum is drumming, what a thrill,

Bang-bang for everybody to have his fill.

Bang-bang, the drum is booming, what a thrill.

Bang-bang, so everybody may have his fill.

Here we are meeting you in friendship.

Welcome, and peaceful relationship.

From the hearts of the entire people, this semester

All hope is placed in the train, sweet investor.

In mere words and mighty deeds

We praise you highly... creeds.

(DEAF MEN stutter in confusion)

STATIONMASTER:

You, morons. Aren't you capable, at the eleventh hour, to meet properly the luck coming upon us? You, traitors.

(To BLIND MEN)

Take the lead, I can't trust these morons.

GROUP OF DEAF MEN:

Bang-bang, the drum is drumming, what a thrill,
Bang-bang for everybody to have his fill.
Here we are mting you in worship,
Welcome, profitable relationship.
In the eyes of the people, for semesters,
All hopes have been pinned on investors
Whom they see on TV every night
Shedding tears for our sorry plight.
In simple words and mighty deeds
We wait and wait the future's seeds.

STATIONMASTER:

(To GLUE SNIFFERS)

Now it's your turn!

GLUE SNIFFERS:

We all go to school, to school,
And we know a simple rule:
Will you give us or you won't?

STATIONMASTER:

Did you see that you could do it?

(POLITICIAN comes)

We are prepared. How many wagonloads of investors are coming?

POLITICIAN:

We've been informed there might be at least fifteen of them. But rumour has it that there are more trains with their engines running idle and waiting for a signal to come into our station. Are we prepared to give them a warm welcome?

STATIONMASTER:

We are waiting here full of confidence, all of us prepared and meaning no offense!

POLITICIAN:

They'll have our station renewed. They are gonna mount that kind of smart toilet seats that give you a flush of water as soon as they sense the faintest smell. They will introduce new, silent and comfortable trains. They say you cannot even hear them coming and leaving. God has just taken our fate into His hands.

(To PEASANT WOMAN)

Old woman, as soon as the guests arrive and these lovely children give them flowers, I want you to tell them in a weak plaintive voice, but at the same time with an optimistic air, "Hopeful and ardent, I have been waiting for you for a half century. Now I found my peace of mind and can die without a care in the world."

PEASANT WOMAN:

I can't afford to die before I found my sons!

POLITICIAN:

Just say what I tell you, and they will be impressed and the deep emotion will prompt them to have air conditioning installed.

(To NUN)

I want you to cross yourself without having any rest and pray with your eyes upturned to the sky, just as those people in the icons do, and they will feel a mystic thrill and send a trainload of candles and incense for you. Say after me, "Give us, You, investor,"

NUN:

I only pray to God our Lord.

POLITICIAN:

You'd better do as I tell you!

(To WHORE)

And you watch your language and behave yourself. Pay attention to the way you say things. Gracefully, elegantly, uttering the words from the tip of your lips. Don't you dare to drop a brick. Be a lady, what the hell!

WHORE:

But I am a lady, what the heck! But my panties don't show from under the skirt.

POLITICIAN:

Be careful. These people will need personal assistants. Let us show them our achievements, pamper them, make them unknit their brows, because they work hard and deserve it.

WHORE:

They push on like slaves. Like tractors.

POLITICIAN:

Yes, and after that the champagne and all will flow no end. Caviar, looking like little greasy balls.

(To GLUE SNIFFER 2)

Stop picking your nose in public! Do you want them to think you have no manners?

(To WHORE)

And many of the same. Is that clear?

STATIONMASTER:

We have rehearsed everything and it all worked just fine. Soldier, show us how you salute!

YOUNG MAN:

Long live the investors, sir! Right about turn! Left-about turn! Forward, march! Left-right, left-right.

POLITICIAN:

Splendid, that's my man. Let them see at first sight that we are defending their interests.

YOUNG MAN:

Get ready for the fight! Lie down! Stand to your feet! Lie down!

POLITICIAN:

All right, all right, that's very well.

(To GLUE SNIFFERS)

Don't let me catch you stealing or begging, or I'll have kept under lock and key in the sewers!

GLUE SNIFFERS:

We all go to school, to school,
And we learnt a simple rule:
Will you give us or you won't?

POLITICIAN:

That was wonderful. Look at them, little angels they are.

(To YOUNG MAN)

Boy, have some exercise, do some push ups, lift a few dumbbells like as many feathers, extract a square root or two, recite the water formula by heart. I want the guests to see what a clever, healthy, well-educated young generation we have here. Let's not mince our words, a highly qualified work force. Clear?

(YOUNG MAN does a free exercise in gymnastics and stays in an arched position known as "bridge")

What are you doing?

YOUNG MAN:

Doing the bridge. This is an allegory, a symbol. Between them and us, you know, bridging the gap.

POLITICIAN:

That was a splendid idea. You have answers to every question, I can't catch you unawares. Well, there we go and we have them impressed. Just wait to see how they will wonder and the locks on their briefcases full of money will go snap like firecrackers.

(To NUN)

Put some more heart and pathos into your playing. Show them art, to make them faint when they see and listen to you.

(NUN begins to play)

There, there. Stomp your feet, there.

(POLITICIAN does a few dance steps)

stomp you feet, yes, yes. Splendid.

(To WHORE)

Have a dreamy, but determined air. Let them see that our women can be relied on.

WHORE:

I learned an ode.

POLITICIAN:

I'm all ears.

WHORE:

What I want for you my homeland dear...

POLITICIAN:

What are you up to, dear? You think we feel like listening to odes? Better read something from the *Train Timetable*. Let them see that we can be accurate for once.

WHORE:

But they are always delayed.

POLITICIAN:

It is then our duty to help them overcome the psychological stumbling block. Each delay is a little betrayal. Daily salvation derives from the daily practice of betrayal. What the hell, they must learn something from us. Did you put it into your heads that they are cleverer than we are? Come on, they have a lot to learn. They must also be apt for betrayals.

(To OLD MAN)

You are a thorn in my eyes and spoil the atmosphere.

(To STATIONMASTER)

I told you to beware. Didn't you have a medal or something to make him look like a war veteran? You could have cut a leg off him. That could be very lifelike.

(To OLD MAN)

Step back, at least. Why are you staring at me? Do you think I'll get scared? Go melt into the background because I don't want them to see how you are boiling over.

(To BLIND MEN and DEAF MEN)

Look straight ahead, blow out your chests and open up your ears, because these people speak foreign tongues. Nod your heads as though you understood every word. Is that clear? Very well, you look like a bunch of multilingual people.

(He gives an inspecting look at walls and ceiling)

You there, did you lock the first class waiting room? We wouldn't like the ghost to come out, or we are done for. We can blow it all. These people don't like our past. Not that they know much about it, but it's one principle they adhere to. I must admire their stick-to-it-ness. They hold high their principles. But why the hell aren't they coming? Rehearse a little bit more, I'll go and ask at the information office.

(He goes off)

STATIONMASTER:

Soldier! Play the Indian!

(YOUNG MAN leans down over the sleepers and places his ear against the rail)

Can you hear anything?

YOUNG MAN:

Just the usual humming sound. The one I can hear most often.

STATIONMASTER:

That one sounds like bad news and ill omen. Anything else?

YOUNG MAN:

No, nothing. Nothing at all.

(He resumes his position. POLITICIAN comes with a downcast air and sits on a bench)

POLITICIAN:

What stupid asses.

STATIONMASTER:

What's wrong?

POLITICIAN:

Just listen to this piece of tomfoolery. They made a mistake in decoding the message. It didn't say, "Investors coming", but "Harbingers forthcoming." What morons! To tell you frankly, I never believed that was true.

NUN:

Harbingers of spring?

YOUNG MAN:

Are migrating birds coming?

POLITICIAN:

Shut up, birdbrained soldier!

NUN:

Are they God's harbingers?

POLITICIAN:

Only God himself knows. Harbingers, that's all they say.

(To STATIONMASTER)

Take away their clothes and paraphernalia and keep them safe. Who knows, maybe we'll need them again.

STATIONMASTER:

Peel them off you! Be careful and orderly. Don't damage the clothes, because they must be returned intact.

All take off the special clothes and stay in their usual attire)

WHORE:

What now?

POLITICIAN:

We start all over again. We go the well-known routine. We start waiting. What else? Do you want me to tell you what to do? Do you expect solutions from me? Well, I'm a man like anybody else, aren't I? If you can wait, I can too. Let me see if you appreciate the idea. Raise some money, quickly, organize a charity. Why do you show me your empty pockets? Sell some part of the station: the shops, the pub, rails, the information office. Sell the Ghost. Can you? Make yourself scarce! You're an ungrateful bunch. You don't deserve me!

OLD MAN:

That's right. We don't deserve you.

POLITICIAN:

I expect a little gratitude from you. You'd better unlock the door of the waiting room or the ghost will choke for lack of fresh air.

(STATIONMASTER unlocks the door of the first class waiting room. All go off stage and leave the POLITICIAN alone on the platform)

I explained it to them one thousand times. "Folk, the purpose in travelling is not to set your foot on foreign land, but to step in your own country as though it were a

strange realm.” They simply don’t deserve me. And then, this is a small, unimportant station.

(He enters the first class waiting room. Whispers are heard in the loudspeakers; a babble of words dwindling gradually into heavy silence. All characters come on stage, minus POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER. Each brings a suitcase, opens it and stands in front of it in a tense expectant posture. From the loudspeakers, voices and muffled sounds are heard. In the first class waiting room the flashing light appears. It runs along the walls and platforms. By turns, it settles lightly on people’s faces, to the last of them who is the OLD MAN. The light slithers down along his body, hands, into the suitcase. With a sudden movement, OLD MAN slams shut the lid of the suitcase. The light goes off)

OLDMAN:

If you have a memory, a nightmare or something similar, tear off what belongs to it and throw it here, inside.

(He points to another open suitcase, belonging to NUN. Each of them drops in bits of clothes and other objects)

Now close it. Call them.

(YOUNG MAN goes off to look for POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER. POLITICIAN’s voice is heard)

OLD MAN:

Isn’t there anything left? Are you sure? Shut them in tightly.

POLITICIAN:

What’s going on? Is anything burning? Was the station flooded? Was there an earthquake?

(POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER come followed by YOUNG MAN. POLITICIAN and STATIONMASTER stand petrified at what they see)

STATIONMASTER:

What are you doing here? What’s got into you?

POLITICIAN:

I told you to wait patiently. Are you out of your minds?

(OLD MAN with the first suitcase in hand, goes towards POLITICIAN)

OLD MAN:

This is yours; take it.

(To STATIONMASTER)

And that one is yours. Take it.

POLITICIAN:

(To STATIONMASTER)

These people are completely nuts! My children, what’s wrong with you?

STATIONMASTER:

The harbingers took their minds away.

POLITICIAN:

What harbingers? Visions. Delusions. Come on, children, that’s not the end of the world.

OLD MAN:

Take your Ghost and go away.

(To STATIONMASTER)

You take what's left of it. Go away, both of you. There are enough free tracks for you to follow.

POLITICIAN:

Oh, no, you go away. The station is mine.

(All look at him with such determination in their eyes that he lifts the suitcase off the floor and goes towards the end of the platform. To STATIONMASTER)

Come with me. There must be another station at the end of the tracks.

(Both start walking along the platform and disappear in a cloud of steam. POLITICIAN's voice is heard)

Where will you be without us?

OLD MAN:

Tomorrow we may be either thieves or travellers. Now let's start on our way.

(Except for OLD MAN and NUN, who have no suitcases, all the other characters get into their own suitcases and pull the lid shut. With no one around, NUN and OLD MAN come closer to each other. NUN looks at the platforms, OLD MAN looks at the building of the station. The roar of a train running on tracks and someone's rhythmic gasp are heard in the loudspeakers)

OLD MAN:

Can you hear it running? The rail is good.

NUN:

If I were an angel to fly above them, the tracks would look to me like the lines in someone's palm. Could you see the destiny of a station in the lay of its tracks?

CURTAIN

