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Prose: *Galley Slave*, novel, 1978; *The Pale Sinner*, short stories, 1978; *Polar Lights*, novel, 1984; *Death at Mary-of-the-Snows*, short stories, 1984; *The Look of an Angel*, short stories, 1992; *Mock Desire*, novel, 1994. Novels and short stories translated into English, German, Polish, Czech, Hungarian and other languages.

Plays: *Profesor Arnož and his Followers*, stage play, produced 1982, new production 1983, published in Novi Sad, Serbia, 1982, and in Prague, Czech Republic, 1986; *The Great Brilliant Waltz*, stage play, produced 1985, subsequently staged in Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Hungary and the United States, published 1988 in Austria and 1989 in Hungary; *Night Scenes*, stage play, produced 1986; *Stakeout on Godot*, stage play, produced in Sarajevo 1987, in Austria 1988, in Slovenia 1989 and subsequently in the United States, Serbia and Austria, published 1989 in Serbia (in Hungarian) and 1992 in Prague, Czech Republic; *Klement's Fall*, produced 1988 and in the same year in Novi Sad, Serbia; *Dedalus*, produced 1988 and subsequently in the United States; *Hallstatt*, produced 1994, new production in 1995, presented at the International Festival of Modern Drama in Veroli, Italy, published in English by the Slovenian Repertory Theatre in Trieste.

Drago Jančar

THE GREAT BRILLIANT WALTZ

translated by Anne Čeh and Peter Perhonis

Characters:

- SIMON VEBER, historian and the Polish rebel, Drohojowski, 40
- KLARA, his wife, over 30
- LJUBICA, student of French and an artist, 23
- VOLODJA, male nurse, over 40
- DOCTOR, director of the Institute, 50
- EMERIK, a pianist, 45
- SAUL PAUL, a religious man, 55
- RAJKO, a recluse, 27
- OLDER EXPERT ON METAPHORS, aged 50
- YOUNGER EXPERT ON METAPHORS, aged 30
- CAPTAIN, an officer in the national army
- DOBERMAN, a stutterer, heavy eater and box maker
- FIRST ORDERLY, on the staff of the Institute
- SECOND ORDERLY, on the staff of the Institute
- NURSE, on the staff of the Institute
- PERSECUTOR, a law-and-order man, model citizen and basket weaver
- OFFICE WORKER, a woman with lipstick, an envelope stuffer
- WOMAN-WITH-DOLL
- FREDERIC CHOPIN

SETTING

Somewhere in the East. The entire action takes place in the "Freedom Makes Free Institute." This institute is not a mental hospital in the usual sense. Rather, it is an organization which specializes in making over its patients into citizens who have been purged of their hidden anti-social tendencies.

The central room of the Institute is a large day and work room. This is probably the hall of a former feudal mansion with its characteristic arches and windows. It is simultaneously the dining room and later becomes the ballroom. Upstage rear there is a second-level gallery along which the sick rooms/cells are arranged. Each room has a heavy wooden door which can be opened only from the outside. Each door has a peep-hole. Stairs lead up to this corridor. The scenes of the play which occur on the second level (i.e. those in the cells and the director's office) are actually presented on the floor level in small spotlighted spaces.

The play begins in Simon's cell, a small spotlighted space on the floor level of the set. Successive scenes slowly enlarge the playing space until finally at the end of the play, the playing space (for the ballroom scene) is at its largest dimensions.

TIME

The present.

I/1

(Simon's room in the Institute which resembles somewhat a cell. Simon is lying on the bed. Volodja's head with a crew-cut appears at the peep-hole in the heavy wooden door.)

VOLQDJA: Good morning.

(Simon continues to stare at the floor.)

VOLQDJA: Psssr! Hey!

(Simon raises himself onto his elbow.)

VOLQDJA: Hey, know any good jokes?

(Simon sits up on the bed. He runs his hands through his hair.)

VOLQDJA: Are you deaf? I just asked you if you know any good jokes. They don't even have to be good!

(Open-mouthed, Volodja waits for an answer. When there is none, Volodja's head disappears from the peep-hole, which he slams shut. Simon looks around, gets up and begins to pace. The peep-hole opens again.)

VOLODJA: You want something to eat?

(Without waiting for an answer, he pushes a hospital cart into the room, on it a tin plate and a spoon. He sits on Simon's bed, the cart next to him. Simon watches all this from a corner of the room.)

VOLODJA: Have some. Try it. *(Taking the spoon and trying it himself, as though Simon were a reluctant infant)* Yum, yum, yum... but I think we need a little salt. *(taking a salt shaker from his pocket and salting the food too much)*... Delicious! Come on, have some. It's got fresh sheep's guts in it.

SIMON: Am I... am I in... in...?

(There is a straight-jacket lying on the bed which Volodja picks up with his spoon.)

VOLODJA: Yes, you are. You're in. Now you are really in.

(As he drapes the straight-jacket over his knees, Volodja accidentally shoves the handle of the spoon into the food. He turns the spoon in the food a bit and then he wipes his hands on the straight-jacket. He begins to eat now.)

VOLODJA: I knew you weren't going to eat anything. None of you guys have an appetite in the beginning. You don't mind, do you? Later on you'll be stuffing your face like there's no tomorrow just like all the rest of them. Take that stutterer, for example, that ddddumb sssshhhhhhit. That twit can eat twice as fast as he can talk.

SIMON: Today's... what day is it, today?

VOLODJA: You don't know that either? It's Monday. As Ljubica would say in French: "C'est Mardi, Mardi."

(Volodja sings this French as though it were the opening bars of the American pop song from the 1960's, "Monday, Monday.")

VOLODJA: Monday's a nice day. Everything starts over again on Monday. The new arrivals come on Monday. On Monday it's soup with fresh sheep guts. God rested on Sunday and then he created Monday. Saul Paul knows all about that kind of thing. He's well connected up there *(i.e. with God)*.

SIMON: Are you also... I mean... a patient?

VOLODJA: My God! Nobody's ever asked me that kind of question before. What are you up to, anyway? Do you have any idea who you are talking to here? Have you got the slightest clue who this Volodja standing here is? *(Simon shakes his head.)*

VOLODJA: You don't know? Well, you'll find out soon enough. But for now this is me, Volodja, sitting here in front of you, honoring you because he is sitting here eating your soup. *(Threatening Simon with the spoon)* and remember: "There's just one other person above Volodja—the doctor,

and he isn't around that much. He does his rounds, has a look *(pulls down skin under his eye)*, says m-mm, yes-yes and gets out. Then it's just good old Volodja again. Remember that.

(Volodja waits for Simon to nod and then continues to eat.)

SIMON: Mr. Volodja...

VOLODJA: For you... just Volodja.

SIMON: In my case, there's been a mistake. I don't belong here.

VOLODJA: Aha.

SIMON: Really.

VOLODJA: Really... tell me, what day is today?

SIMON: MONDAY.

VOLODJA: Correct, and you know that because I told you just now but before you thought it was Thursday.

SIMON: I'm a normal person.

VOLODJA: And I'm not?

SIMON: Oh, no, you're normal, too.

VOLODJA: Well.

SIMON: Well what?

VOLODJA: So were both normal.

SIMON: Yes.

VOLODJA: Except I'm little bit more normal than you.

(Simon wants to say something but decides not to. Volodja puts the spoon down and wipes his mouth on the straight-jacket.)

VOLODJA: You're a Pole, aren't you?

SIMON: What?

VOLODJA: Aren't you a Polish officer or something?

SIMON: Oh, that.

VOLODJA: We've already got one officer here. He's a major.

SIMON: I'm a historian. My name is Simon.

VOLODJA: I'm honoured.

SIMON: I do research work at the Foundation for History.

VOLODJA: But you're a Polish officer, too, aren't you?

SIMON: No.

VOLODJA: No, eh? Not even as a joke?

SIMON: Well... maybe... sometimes.

VOLODJA: It doesn't seem that way to me.

SIMON: Not today, it doesn't. I don't understand how I ended up in here.

All I remember is that my colleagues and I went on a little binge—starting last Friday.

VOLODJA: Friday. Friday is a bad starting day.

SIMON: Somebody's taken advantage of me. That's how I got here. At first I thought it was Sunday morning, I thought I was in jail... to sober up... but now I see... this doesn't make any sense. This must be cleared up immediately.

VOLODJA: They don't go together.

SIMON: What doesn't go together?

VOLODJA: Booze and brain problems. That's the First Commandment—mental illness and liquor don't mix. So you be careful because if I ever catch you with a bottle...

SIMON: But I'm not ill!

VOLODJA: Mais oui! Bon, bon.

(Volodja likes to show off what little French he knows whenever he can.)

SIMON: I am not a mental patient.

VOLODJA: And I'm not either.

(Volodja gets up off the bed and pushes the cart toward the door. He has the straightjacket on the cart.)

VOLODJA: Well, we've had a good meal, and we've had a nice conversation. You see now that you can talk to me. That won't be the case with the doctor. He's been here a long time *(tapping his head with the spoon)*, but he doesn't understand anything.

(Volodja exits, bolting the door behind him. Simon leans on the door and then begins to beat on it with his fists.)

VOLODJA *(at the peep-hole)* What do you want?

SIMON: I'd like some newspapers and some books.

VOLODJA: Come on. Today is barely Monday. Don't worry, you'll have books up the gazoo soon enough. But now that you've gotten me back here—*(mispronouncing the French)*—a *proposs*—do you remember any good jokes now?

SIMON: No.

VOLODJA: Quel damage.

(He exits, slamming the peep-hole shut.)

(The office of the institute's director. The Younger and Older Experts on Metaphor are waiting for the doctor to come. The Older is sitting in an arm chair looking through his briefcase. The Younger is bored and restless.)

OLDER: I've got a lot of stuff here about our historian, Mr. Simon Veber. He seems to have survived his youth pretty well—if we overlook his confirmation and first communion, those stupid leftist activities at the university, and a couple of nights in jail for drunken hooliganism. But it just goes to show you, you never know. Here's a man who ought to be setting down—in the prime of his life—and instead he's going crazy.

YOUNGER: *(has taken a book absentmindedly off the director's desk and just flips the pages for something to do)* I've never trusted historians. They are always sniffing around the archives and then when they've finished that, they all sit down and write a different version of the same thing. I don't approve of that. What's happened has happened. They don't have any right to go around changing everything.

OLDER: *(pointing to the book which the younger is playing with)* You know what you've got in your hand?

YOUNGER: A bouquet of roses.

OLDER: That's our Professor Simon's personal diary.

YOUNGER: *(tossing it to the older as if it were a hot potato)* I thought I smelled something funny.

OLDER: There's some very interesting material inside here.

YOUNGER: I couldn't care less.

OLDER: Our Professor Simon has been doing research on a certain Polish rebel named Drohojowski.

YOUNGER: Never heard of him.

OLDER: His big year was 1830.

YOUNGER: That was well over a hundred years ago. Who cares?

OLDER: Do you know what happened in the year 1830?

YOUNGER: I think... the Paris Revolution... no... the French Commune—I don't know. Something French.

OLDER: You'll never make much of a historian.

YOUNGER: You're breaking my heart.

OLDER: The 29th of November, 1830, was the beginning of the great uprising in Poland and this Drohojowski fellow was one of the leaders.

The uprising was suppressed, of course, but Drohojowski was able to escape –to our country here.

YOUNGER: Isn't it time for lunch yet?

OLDER: Listen to this. It's important. So when he arrived, this Drohojowski was starving and exhausted but at least he was in one piece. Then somehow here in our country he broke his leg – in two places. He spent two days in the gutter in full view of passers-by but nobody bothered to stop and help him. Finally he had to bribe somebody to take him to the hospital but they treated him so badly that this leg of his developed maggots.

YOUNGER: That's our health service for you.

OLDER: It wasn't our health service then, not in 1830.

YOUNGER: (*looking at his watch*) Well, pardon me... time for a coffee break!

OLDER: Just a minute now, my young colleague. I want to read a few passages to you.

YOUNGER: You can skip the parts about maggots, if you don't mind.

OLDER: May 19. I'm quoting now our historian: "I cannot forgive what happened here in my own country to the proud Polish rebel, Drohojowski—a man who spoke only of liberty—a man prepared to die for liberty—a man who ends up in the gutter in my own country, the very symbol of freedom itself there in the gutter and our citizens, no better than rabble, walk right past him."

YOUNGER: What a load of crap.

OLDER: And there's more.

YOUNGER: Wonderful!

OLDER: May 32nd. Quote: "Even though he was exiled from his homeland, in spite of his horrible fate in the end, I myself would willingly trade places with him. Oh, for a second's worth of risk, of rebellion, of complete conviction! To be a rebel is to lead a life of principle, the only true life, the authentic life."

YOUNGER: "The authentic life"! Ha, ha.

OLDER: I ask you: what kind of historian is this Simon Veber?

YOUNGER: The usual kind – first-rate slinger of bullshit. I'm going for coffee.

OLDER: (*taking out a letter*) Read this first... our historian writing to a colleague of his.

YOUNGER: (*skimming it impatiently*) Blah, blah, blah, yeah, so?

OLDER: Look how our Mr. Simon Veber signed that letter.

YOUNGER: "Greetings from the Polish rebel, Drohojowski." He thinks he's this Drohojowski?

OLDER: Exactly. (*He takes back the letter and reads randomly*). "My research is going very well... incredible things are happening... unbelievable coincidences and parallels. Greetings from the Polish rebel, Drohojowski." So what do you think of this letter?

YOUNGER: I think the postal service shouldn't have delivered it.

OLDER: It does happen, of course. People do go crazy. Even historians.

YOUNGER: Especially historians.

OLDER: But why does he have to be some Polish officer – a rebel, no less? What an obnoxious word that is – rebel. Why couldn't he have been Napoleon? Madhouses are full of Napoleons. Or Hitlers. There's a shortage of Hitlers.

YOUNGER: And he knows German, too. He could have been Goebels or Rosa Luxemburg.

OLDER: Don't we have somebody in our own history that a lunatic can model himself after? Do we always have to look elsewhere? Couldn't he have become native revolutionary?

YOUNGER: You did say the nineteenth century, though.

OLDER: So, haven't we any lunatics in the nineteenth century? I mean: great personalities?

YOUNGER: Maybe in some other archives.

OLDER: If you ask me, something is beginning to stink here. If this Simon Veber were a normal lunatic and even if he wanted to be somebody Polish—if he couldn't do any better – then why wouldn't he be Sobieski, for instance. Sobieski saved Vienna from the Turks. He's a historically positive personality. He could have been Sinkiewicz for that matter. I read about him when I was a school-boy.

YOUNGER: He could have been Gomulka.

OLDER: Exactly. Everybody knows him. But who really ever heard of Drohojowski?

YOUNGER: It's strange all right.

OLDER: It's more than strange. It stinks to high heaven.

(*There is a period of intense silent deliberation on the Older's part. The Younger waits anxiously.*)

OLDER: I think someone's trying to screw us to the wall.

YOUNGER: Do you really think so?

OLDER: I think so – therefore I am. I also think someone is trying to pawn-off a metaphor on us.

YOUNGER: A metaphor?

OLDER: A metaphor or a screwing-to-the-wall – it's one and the same thing.
You ought to know that already.
YOUNGER: I know that already.
OLDER: My ass, you do. *(Even angrier now.)* But if someone intends to fuck me over, he'll have to pay through the nose.
(The doctor, head of the Institute, enters.)
YOUNGER: Well, Doctor, what's he up to?
DOCTOR: He wanted some books.
YOUNGER: Books especially for exiles, eh?
DOCTOR: He didn't say what kind... just books and newspapers. He wouldn't eat anything.
YOUNGER: Nothing strange about that. He probably has a terrible hangover.
DOCTOR: So... what have we got on him?
OLDER: *(showing the diary)* This.
DOCTOR: *(taking the diary and looking through it)* Anything else?
OLDER: *(showing the letter)* And this.
DOCTOR: *(looking at the letter)* Is that it?
OLDER: What do you want, Doctor! We've got all kinds of information on him. We even know what he says in bar-rooms. I can give you an entire dossier if you want.
DOCTOR: I'll have a look at everything but I'll tell you right now – this is going to be a difficult case.
OLDER: What do you mean "difficult?" Just one electroshock through the head and he won't be a difficult case anymore.
DOCTOR: Oh, no, no. We must have a careful analysis, extensive interviews and a good over-all diagnosis. We work systematically here in our Freedom Makes Free Institute. We expose the hidden desires to the light of day and we do it with strict scientific methods – no electroshock or that kind of thing here. I'm afraid that historian, Simon Veber, is still a long way from being the rebel, Drohojowski.
OLDER: A long way? Look what's written here: "Greetings from the Polish rebel, Drohojowski." What more do you want? Is he supposed to get on a soap-box in Victory square and shout: "I'm the Pole, Drohojowski."?
DOCTOR: I am very sure he doesn't yet identify himself completely with Drohojowski.
YOUNGER: I could get him to that point in no time – with a night-stick. And he'd still be conscious, too.
DOCTOR: Science solves it in a different manner.

OLDER: Then solve it and stop lecturing us.
DOCTOR: You must understand that transformation takes a long time in an intellectual. Furthermore, I can't work in over-crowded conditions. All the cells are full here. You're bringing everybody here. What are the prisons for?
OLDER: Has your science gone to your head? You know that who goes where is decided elsewhere, not in this office.
DOCTOR: *(restrained but firm)* I can hold him for observation for three days.
OLDER: For three days?
DOCTOR: That's the law.
OLDER: *(to the younger)* He says that's the law.
YOUNGER: Well, it seems to me the law will have to be changed.
OLDER: Doctor, this whole thing sounds a bit fishy to me. The Captain, who is an officer in our army, really did have a hidden idea about a *coup d'etat*, and when we found this out, did we tell him we couldn't be friends anymore? No! And you accepted him immediately.
YOUNGER: And the same with Saul Paul.
OLDER: That's right. Saul Paul lives here, too. Saul used to be my colleague. Then he began to change into Paul and you didn't hesitate for a moment when we brought him in. But now we have here a very serious case, somebody who really needs to take the cure, a Polish rebel of the first order and you don't accept him. What does this mean?
YOUNGER: Isn't there some equality among citizens, Doctor? It's in the constitution, you know.
DOCTOR: But...
OLDER: No "buts" about it. One more "but" from you and you'll be back at your old job as director of the cooperative. Or we could get you a new job – how about theatre manager! Would you like to be a theatre manager?
DOCTOR: No thanks. They're all crazy in those theatres.
OLDER: So then. Are you going to accept him or not?
(The Doctor simply nods.)
OLDER: Now you're talking.
(The Older and Younger now gather up what they need and prepare to leave.)
OLDER: Well, goodbye, Doctor. And you can tell our Mr. Simon Veber from me that he is about to experience a real "authentic life"... metaphors...
ha, ha, ha.
YOUNGER: Ha, ha.
(The Older and Younger exit.)

DOCTOR: *(after they leave)* Ha, yourselves. *(Looks at the letter and downs some vodka).* Theatre manager! *(At the door he calls out into the corridor).* Volodja, let the new patient join the others.

VOLODJA: *(just his voice)* In the large room?

DOCTOR: Where else?

VOLODJA: Will he be here long?

DOCTOR: *(slamming the door shut)* Idiot!

I/3

(Volodja as confident guide brings Simon into the day room. Simon looks around like someone seeing it for the first time.)

VOLODJA *(smiling confidently)*: And... here we are!

(The Captain immediately comes towards them from across the room, his hands behind him and carefully inspecting the newcomer. The Persecutor switches on his flashlight, hunches his head between his shoulders and follows everything closely. Volodja brushes past the Captain as he leads Simon all around the room. The Captain follows at a distance.)

VOLODJA: We will put the writing table here. *(He yells out his famous monosyllabic command to the orderlies)* Hey!

(The orderlies throw down their cards and rush over.)

VOLODJA: I said a writing table.

(The orderlies run and bring a writing table and Volodja gets a chair.)

SIMON: *(referring to the chair)* Thank you but I could have gotten it myself.

VOLODJA: *(quietly to Simon)* You see how they obey me?

(Simon nods politely. Then he stares about the room.)

VOLODJA: What are you staring at? Sit down. Work. Write.

SIMON: *(sitting at an empty table)* Book, paper?... a pencil, too.

VOLODJA: Mais oui! *(He looks toward Ljubica to see if she heard him speaking French. Trying to impress her, he speaks again, more loudly.)* Mais oui! *(Ljubica smiles at him and nods. Volodja smiles, too, and then he yells out sharply.)* Hey!

(The orderlies drop the cards again and come to Volodja, this time less willingly. He motions with his head and the three of them exit. Simon gazes around the room. The Prosecutor stares at him from amid his baskets. The three return, the orderlies with a heap of dusty books which they throw on the writing table, Volodja with a pencil but no paper. Volodja joins the card game now. Simon twirls the

pencil in his fingers and blows the dust off a book. He leafs through a book while he stares around the room. The Persecutor crawls up to the writing table and shines his flashlight in to Simon's eyes.)

VOLODJA: *(without looking up from his cards)* Everybody to work!

(As the Persecutor returns to his baskets, Saul Paul gives Simon a friendly wave which Simon acknowledges. Doberman is secretly eating a sandwich under the table. Whenever Volodja throws down a card and grunts, Doberman hides his boxes under the table. The Captain, taking no notice of Simon, is trying to get close to the Office Worker so he can take away her lipstick. After a short scuffle with her, he gets the lipstick.)

OFFICE WORKER: Give me back my lipstick. Give it back to me!

VOLODJA: Return her lipstick, Captain.

CAPTAIN: Major.

VOLODJA: Alright, "major" then. Return the lipstick.

(The Captain salutes and returns it.)

VOLODJA: For God's sake, what's going on here today? I can't get a lousy hour's worth of work out of anybody. What's so special about somebody new showing up? It's happens every Monday. This time it's this Dro... Dro... Hey, what's the name again?

SIMON: Simon.

VOLODJA: Your other name... the Polish name... Dro... Droho...

SIMON: You mean, Drohojowski?

VOLODJA: That's it—breaktime, everybody. Ten minutes early today.

(There follows a subdued routine bustle.)

SAUL PAUL: *(at Simon's table with Bible)* What are you reading?

SIMON: Nothing special. They gave it to me.

SAUL PAUL: You must have patience. I waited a long time for this book.

SIMON: May I see?

SAUL PAUL: No, I don't let it out of my hands for anybody. No offence but I've had bad experiences. Somebody used to tear out the pages.

SIMON: But why would they do that?

SAUL PAUL: Because the pages they tear out I can't read anymore. That's why.

SIMON: Oh, that's why.

SAUL PAUL: This is the Holy Bible. Before, I wasn't even allowed to look at this book. That's the kind of job I was in if you know what I mean. They'd have gotten rid of me immediately. In the end, they got rid of me anyway. That's why I can read what I want now. Everything is in here. Nothing more can happen that hasn't already been recorded in here.

(Ljubica comes closer and sits on the table with her sketchbook in hand.)
 SAUL PAUL: Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is with the body. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.
 LJUBICA: He's Saul... no, Paul. Well, he was Paul. Now he's Saul... I think... no, Paul Saul or is he Saul Paul?
 SAUL PAUL: I became Paul. I was Saul.
(Exit Saul Paul.)
 LJUBICA: *(drawing a few lines)* May I sit down?
(Simon rises to offer his chair.)
 LJUBICA: Not there. Here.
 SIMON: You're already sitting here.
 LJUBICA: May I draw you?
 SIMON: Well, alright, but I don't know that I'll be any good as a model.
 LJUBICA: I have to draw you right now—while you're still afraid. Afterwards you'll get a face like all the others.
 SIMON: Who says I'm afraid?
 LJUBICA: Aren't you? I was terribly afraid when I came. In the beginning it's all strange—not that it isn't strange enough outside sometimes, but you know... What do you do, outside?
 SIMON: History, research... boring things like that.
 LJUBICA: Why should they be boring? I'm really a student of French. I paint for the fun of it, you know. I mean I didn't finish my degree. I went off the deep end.
 SIMON: Everybody does sometimes.
(The Persecutor approaches with his flashlight.)
 LJUBICA: *(waving him away)* Get away with that lamp!
(The Persecutor moves away.)
 LJUBICA: *(calling out)* Emerik! Come here! *(To Simon)* Be friendly to him. He's very sensitive.
(Emerik approaches. Volodja is behind him.)
 LJUBICA: This is Emerik, my friend. He plays the guitar very well.
 VOLODJA: Whenever he's loaded, that is.
(No one pays any attention to him.)
 LJUBICA: Emerick, play something. Simon would like to hear.
 EMERICK: *(confused)* Ljubica, please. I'm not in the mood. I couldn't get anything out of that guitar right now. Besides, you know I'm really a pianist.
 VOLODJA: *(with a forced laugh)* A pianist on the rocks!
 EMERICK: I played with Matačić in Salzburg.

VOLODJA: *(in exaggerated German)* Not with Bergstein?
 EMERIK: *(pronouncing the name correctly)* Bernstein, if you are thinking of the famous conductor.
 LJUBICA: *(clapping her hands)* With Bernstein, with Bernstein.
 VOLODJA: *(insulted)* So what? *(Attempting to get the upper hand again.)* Show us your hands, Emerik. Come on. Let's have a look at them.
(Emerik hides his hands nervously.)
 CAPTAIN: *(disturbed from a distance by the noise)* What kind of anarchy is that over there? Obey the command.
 VOLODJA: You don't dare show them, do you? They're shaking, aren't they? You're going to play with Bergstein – pardon moi, I mean Bernstein – with those hands, Mr. Booze Hound?
(Exit Volodja)
 LJUBICA: *(calling after him)* Mr. Big Shot Nobody! *(Angrily to Emerik)* Play something, Emerik, on purpose so that neckhead will see. Go on, play something on purpose.
 EMERIK: I can't now, Ljubica. I can't, really. *(To Simon)* Excuse me. I am utterly indisposed at the moment. Utterly.
(Emerik moves into a corner, sits down, and bends over the guitar. Doberman approaches him cautiously, trying to soothe him. He offers a sandwich but Emerik declines.)
 LJUBICA: *(crumpling up a paper)* I can't do it today. I'll draw you tomorrow. You won't have aged before tomorrow.
 VOLODJA: *(loudly as if to children)* Alright everybody. Play time is over. The doctor is on his rounds.

I/4

(There is no break between this scene and the previous one. Volodja stands by the door, looking out. Ljubica brings some drawings, setting them out on Simon's table. Emerik watches her.)

SAUL PAUL: Israelites, hear... what Paul says unto you! For I am prepared to go to jail. If need be, I will die in Jerusalem for the name of Lord Jesus.
 DOBERMAN: *(to the Office Worker)* YYY-our mmmake up-up-up's sssmcc-ared ooo-n yyyyy-our eeeears.
 VOLODJA: The rounds. Quiet, please. Everybody in their places.

(In passing between the tables Volodja takes the doll away from Woman-with-a-Doll. He tosses it to an orderly who is playing cards. The woman chases after it but the orderly tosses it back. As Ljubica is tidying-up her drawings, Emerik approaches her.)

VOLODJA: Hey, Johnny Guitar!

(Emerik stares scornfully. Volodja indicates his place to him with a finger but he turns to Ljubica.)

VOLODJA: Hey, Bergstein.

(Emerik goes to his place, head erect. The Captain sets himself by the door next to Volodja. The Doctor enters, the Nurse behind him.)

VOLODJA: *(as if a command, sharply)* Hey!

(They all rise and the Captain salutes.)

DOCTOR: Sit down. Sit down. Continue with what you were doing, please.

Pretend I'm not here. At ease, Captain, please. Volodja, how many times do I have to tell you: This is not the army.

VOLODJA: There must be discipline.

(The Doctor passes from table to table looking at the various work. Doberman raises two fingers.)

DOBERMAN: I've gggot a oooo-com-pppplaint. I gggot only one sssseak.

DOCTOR: Nurse, I've told you he is to have as much food as he wants.

(The Doctor stops by the Woman-with-a-Doll. She is staring at the floor.)

DOCTOR: What's the matter? Is anything wrong?

(The Woman shakes her head but continues to stare at the floor.)

DOBERMAN: *(pointing at Volodja)* Vo... Vo... Vol... Volodja took her chchchild again.

DOCTOR: Volodja, I want to see you in my office when I'm through here.

(Volodja hunches his head between his shoulders. Saul Paul comes up behind the Doctor.) Brother, behold! *(The Doctor is startled.)* Behold!!

VOLODJA: See what happens when there's no discipline!

DOCTOR: *(approaching Simon)* Mr. Drohojowski, I hope they treated you well when you arrived. Our employees are not always up to the highest standards. If your pride should become affected or your sense of liberty for an authentic life, please let me know immediately.

SIMON: *(calmly)*: You know very well I'm not Drohojowski.

DOCTOR: *(ignoring him)* Did you find anything suitable to read, Mr. Drohojowski.

SIMON: Maybe Mr. Drohojowski found something but I didn't. The kind of political reading they want me to do here I'm not interested in. I'm an historian, you know.

DOCTOR: So are you writing anything at the moment, Mr. Drohojowski?

(Simon does not reply.)

DOCTOR: You there! Are you writing a diary? You may write your own diary here, if you wish.

(Simon twirls the pencil.)

DOCTOR: Nurse, get him some paper. Write, Mr. Drohojowski, write! You may write letters to your colleagues, too. Give them to the orderlies to mail or you can give them to me... How's the leg? Is it getting better?

SIMON: Pardon me?

DOCTOR: *(grumpily)* Sit down.

(Simon sits on the chair.)

DOCTOR: Not there. On the table. Yes, there. Now roll up your trouser leg, please.

SIMON: What are you doing?

DOCTOR: Just turn it up, Mr. Drohojowski. Nurse, roll up that trouser leg since the gentleman can't be bothered.

SIMON: *(pushing the Nurse away)* Stop it. This is ridiculous.

DOCTOR: You stop it.

SIMON: This is crazy.

DOCTOR: What's crazy?

VOLODJA: Roll up your trouser leg!

CAPTAIN: Carry out the order – you can complain later.

(Simon turns up his trouser leg, slowly and unwillingly. The Doctor inspects his leg and dictates something to the Nurse. Volodja comes closer to peer at Simon's leg. Simon pulls down his trouser leg in his face.)

DOCTOR: Well, you'll have to have an examination. Emerik! Come here! Over here, so everybody can see.

(Emerik comes to the Doctor.)

DOCTOR: *(taking a sheet of music from his pocket)* I've got something for you, Emerik. This is Chopin! Yes, Chopin, Emerik.

Your dear Chopin. Look through it and refresh your memory. And by the way—listen to this everybody—it looks like we'll be getting a piano! Emerik will play again and we'll have a big dance. How about that?!

(Some begin to clap.)

EMERIK: If I may say so, Mr. Doctor... I am... I am not... a...

VOLODJA: Spit it out, Johnny Guitar. Just spit it out.

DOCTOR: Volodja, please!

EMERIK: *(hesitates, looks at Ljubica and gains courage)* I am not a dancehall

pianist. I don't play for dances. I play for the Leningrad Philharmonic and the piano to me is... something... sacred... like Chopin.
DOCTOR (*more quietly*): Just a couple of numbers, just for the fun of it. Then you can play in concert.
EMERIK: I'd rather just do a concert.
DOCTOR: You will play Chopin, Emerik. Don't worry. (*More loudly to the others*) We shall hold a great dance—a gala affair—in the lovely ballroom of our Freedom Makes Free Institute.
VOLODJA: (*with exaggerated German*) And Bergstein is going to play.

I/5

(*Simon and Ljubica seated in the visitors' room. Simon is nervous, keeps getting up, and stares at the door.*)

LJUBICA: Don't be so nervous. She'll be here.
SIMON: If anyone can get me out of here, she can. Her father's a big shot.
LJUBICA: My relatives don't come here. They can't be bothered to drive all those kilometers for a crazy girl. The traffic's too heavy, you know. It's more comfortable at home in the garden.
SIMON: They'll come. Have a little patience.
LJUBICA: Oh, no, they won't. Sunday is for sitting around with the newspaper. It's not for highways and hospitals—not this sort of hospital, anyway. I'm going to go paint something.
SIMON: They'll come. Have a little patience.
LJUBICA: Oh, no, they won't. Sunday is for sitting around with the newspaper. It's not for highways and hospitals—not this sort of hospital, anyway. I'm going to go paint something.
SIMON: They'll come. Have a little patience.
LJUBICA: Oh, no, they won't. Sunday is for sitting around with the newspaper. It's not for highways and hospitals—not this sort of hospital, anyway. I'm going to go paint something.
SIMON: They'll come. Have a little patience.
LJUBICA: Oh, no, they won't. Sunday is for sitting around with the newspaper. It's not for highways and hospitals—not this sort of hospital, anyway. I'm going to go paint something.
SIMON: Wait a minute. I'll introduce you to Klara.

(*Klara enters with the First Orderly.*)
FIRST ORDERLY: Ten minutes only.
(*Orderly exits. Simon and Klara embrace. They move apart and gaze at each other. Simon forgets about Ljubica. Klara sits, crosses her legs and lights a cigarette. Ljubica watches Klara and then quietly leaves.*)
KLARA: Who was that?
SIMON: She's from here. Her name's Ljubica. She was waiting for her visitors.
(*A period of silence now.*)
KLARA: (*blowing smoke at Simon*) Hey!
SIMON: Don't ever say that word again.
KLARA: O.K., O.K.
SIMON: It reminds me of somebody here—that's all.
KLARA: So how are you?
SIMON: Perfect!
KLARA: Have you sobered up?
SIMON: Yes.
KLARA: Are you in a good mood?
SIMON: What are you trying to tell me, Klara? You're behaving like I've got a hangover or just got up on the wrong side of the bed. One thing for sure... I can't breathe good in here. I feel too crowded.
KLARA: Simon, dear, you know it's not all the same to me. But the way you were behaving over this last month, I just couldn't stand it anymore.
SIMON: What on earth did I do?
KLARA: We've only got ten minutes, Simon.
SIMON: Something's going on here, isn't it, and it has nothing to do with my drinking, does it?
KLARA: You'll give your liver and lungs a rest, Simon. You'll feel much better.
SIMON: You're not listening to me.
KLARA: Anyway, it won't last very long...about a month, I would say.
SIMON: (*getting angry*) What do you mean "you would say"? What do you know... (*silence, then horrifiedly*) My God, you agreed with them! You signed!
KLARA: They'll cure your alcoholism and your... attacks.
SIMON: And just what kind of attacks are they, "would you say"? And what alcoholism are we talking about, "would you say"?
KLARA: Stop it! I don't want to fight. I didn't want to sign. Then my father said...
SIMON: "Your father said"?

KLARA: Yes, my father. I discussed it with him. He had some information about you. I don't know what, and he said it would be best for you... for us... Simon?... only a month. Hey, what's a month?

SIMON: And you—you who knows everything—what kind of a place is this place here, “would you say”?

KLARA: Simon...

SIMON: It's a very special kind of place, Klara...the kind that gives a man the creeps. I can't sleep anymore. I don't understand anything anymore... Where did they get my diary?

(The First Orderly enters.)

FIRST ORDERLY: End of visit.

KLARA: Simon, trust the Doctor. Everything will be alright.

SIMON: *(trying to push the orderly away and shrieking at Klara)* There's nobody to trust. Get me out of here. Go to that old man of yours and tell him to get me the hell out of here right now. Tell him something crazy is going on in here. Tell him!

(The orderly pushes him out the door and then returns.)

KLARA: What's going on here?

ORDERLY: He's agitated, madam. He's just very agitated.

(Both the Experts and the Doctor are in the Office of Director.)

OLDER: How's he getting on?

DOCTOR: I'm afraid scientific theory and the needs of practical application are very much a part in this case. Simply put, I have a feeling that the historian, Simon Veber, is still a long way away from the Polish rebel, Drohojowski. I'm not saying he doesn't have some disposition in that direction but...

OLDER: Would you stopping babbling on about theory and disposition! I have the diary. I have the letter. Irrefutable proof. So just quit the jargon and get on with the work.

DOCTOR: I'll try to the best of my ability.

OLDER: What's the story on Saul Paul?

DOCTOR: He's doing well. At the moment he's writing the Epistle to the Corinthians – the second one, I think. He writes slowly, though.

OLDER: So, give him a typewriter.

DOCTOR: An Apostle with a typewriter? That wouldn't do.

OLDER: I see. And what about what's-his-name?—the one who was eating in Victory Square while everybody else was standing in the bread line?

DOCTOR: That was Doberman. He's convinced that there's going to be

shortages in the country at any moment so he eats four dinners every night.

YOUNGER: Boy, that adds up.

OLDER: And the Captain?

DOCTOR: He's been promoted to Major.

OLDER: How long before he attempts his coup d'etat?

DOCTOR: He wants to be promoted to general first. Then he'll start planning his strategy again for the occupation of the governmental palaces the radio stations and the post offices.

OLDER: Couldn't he be speeded up a bit?

DOCTOR: I don't think so. He's on a career track. He's very strict about that kind of thing. One other matter, however – he's still using lipstick. Maybe we should transfer him to an ordinary institution. Those places have very little to do these days and they've got plenty of space. It won't be long before we're worse off here than the penitentiaries used to be.

YOUNGER: You and your space problems bore the pants off me.

OLDER: What about Rajko? How's his resistance?

DOCTOR: I think he's getting by better than any of them. He doesn't talk to anybody. He just keeps cutting out newspaper articles and he hangs around with Saul Paul and Drohojowski but, don't worry, it's boiling slowly inside him. He'll probably blow all at once.

OLDER: In spite of everything, Doctor, I must say that the Freedom Makes Free Institute is one of the best transformation establishments we have and you, you are a man of science. In fact, if matters continue to progress in this way, you won't need to go into theatre work.

DOCTOR: Well, that's a relief. Thank you very much and I thank you in the name of the staff, too. I have only one request, if I may. Some months ago I asked for a piano... as therapy for the manics, the depressives, the alcoholics and the artists.

OLDER: *(to the Younger)* What about this piano?

YOUNGER: *(writing in a notebook)* I'll look into it. Maybe there's still something left in the People's Fund.

OLDER: You will have your piano and you will have the honor of our presence at your dance. I'm very interested to see what goes on in a...you'll forgive me...in a nuthouse. Ha, ha, ha.

YOUNGER: A specialized nuthouse. ha, ha.

OLDER: So that's everything. I want Drohojowski by the shortest route, the fastest methods. He's got a connection somewhere high up through

his wife. They could get him out of here before we have a chance to help him be what he wants to be. Ha, ha, ha.
YOUNGER: A rebel. Ha, ha.

I/7

(The Doctor is in his office with Simon who is there for a check-up. The Doctor has on his white gown.)

SIMON: Alright, Doctor, sir... if it has to be, just give me that electroshock and let's get it over with so I can go home.

DOCTOR: How can I give you an electroshock, Mr. Drohojowski? It wasn't invented until 1938. Two Italian psychiatrists, Cerletti and Bini, will discover the process after experimenting on pigs in a Roman slaughterhouse. But right now it's October 20th, 1938 and we're in the general hospital. They brought you here with a leg broken in two places and you've got a bad case of gangrene, too. The hospital staff did not treat you properly. Good help is so hard to find.

SIMON: Doctor, sir... why are you bothering for? You can see that this is ridiculous. Why try to convince me that I'm something other than I am in fact?

DOCTOR: I'm not about to discuss truth and appearance with you, Mr. Drohojowski. The fact is that the gangrene is spreading and antibiotics are yet to be invented. We're going to have to amputate.

SIMON: I beg your pardon?

DOCTOR: We are going to amputate your leg.

SIMON: Which leg?

DOCTOR: This one, the diseased one.

SIMON: But this one is completely healthy!

DOCTOR: Oh, well... then the other one, of course.

SIMON: This one is healthy, too.

DOCTOR: It can't be.

SIMON: Well, it is. Shall I kick you in the ass to prove it?

DOCTOR: Now listen: I'm not going to get angry. I can see that this isn't easy for you. The patient is always in a state of shock when we give him this kind of news... this terrible news.

SIMON: What terrible news?

DOCTOR: That his leg – I mean – your leg must be amputated.

SIMON: Do you want me to believe that... are you... actually?

DOCTOR: Sorry.

SIMON: You're out of your mind.

DOCTOR: If you say so.

SIMON: This is a madhouse!

DOCTOR: That doesn't change anything.

SIMON: This is the stupidest damned thing I've ever heard.

(Simon jumps off table and paces room.)

DOCTOR: Be careful!

SIMON: *(getting an idea)* Wait a minute here, Doctor, sir – you're not a surgeon.

DOCTOR: I suppose not but I've always wanted to be one. Even as a child I was dissecting frogs. As I recall I once wanted to operate on a cat. Do you know how difficult it is to tie a cat up? Harder than a man, but I tied it up finally.

SIMON: And you cut it up, finally, too?

DOCTOR: Unfortunately, no. My father found out and gave me a box on the ears. He said the cat was perfectly healthy and that even if it hadn't been, I couldn't operate without much more study.

SIMON: So you studied psychiatry?

DOCTOR: Yes, psychiatry.

SIMON: So you see, you're not a surgeon!

DOCTOR: No, I'm not. And what about you? Are you not the Polish officer, a follower on the revolutionary army, who lay in a gutter for everyone to pass by?

SIMON: No, I'm not.

DOCTOR: So now you think everything's alright?

SIMON: Yes, I do.

DOCTOR: Well, it's not.

SIMON: Why not?

DOCTOR: Because it's not. You really are an odd-ball, you know that? Who ever heard of an intellectual who doesn't understand anything? For such a condition as yours, the cure lies in bringing out that wish hidden dormant within your subconscious... that hidden idea, how can I explain it, must be... materialised. Once that happens then you and I, together, will kill it.

SIMON: Oh, no! I'm not going to kill anything... not even an imaginary man.

DOCTOR: A hidden, latently-present-man.

SIMON: No. Never!

DOCTOR: Just the hidden desire, just the idea – that's all.

SIMON: Forget it!

DOCTOR: Well, there we are. So you won't give him to us. And I know what's going to happen next. If I release you and that Pole inside you, you'll both go out and get drunk.

SIMON: I won't drink, I promise.

DOCTOR: Of course, you will and then that Polish rebel part of you will break out again – first in some bar-room, then at your Foundation, and then finally on the street or in some workers canteen. That's when the wiseguys will say: "See, that's our psychiatry!" And that's not even half the problem. Once I released a patient who thought he was Napoleon and you know what happened? I got ten Napoleons back, together with a LaFayette and a Fountainbleau.

SIMON: Fontainbleau is a place. I know that. I'm an historian and I have a clear brain and a good memory – drink or no drink. On October 10, 1807, a treaty was signed there.

DOCTOR: And, as I recall, there was a famous minister involved.

SIMON: You mean Talleyrand?

DOCTOR: Yes, I think that's it. Now where was I? What was I saying?

SIMON: A bit absentminded, aren't you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Ah, yes. So I got ten Napoleons back. These days, of course, neuroses are characteristic and megalomania is rare. But whenever it does appear, it spreads rapidly. The whole of Europe can be subjected to these... what should I say... to these social pathologies.

SIMON: Aren't we in the year 1838?

DOCTOR: We are and we are not. So if I release you and the Pole there will be repercussions for the entire psychiatric profession. We'll get back so many Polish rebels we'll run out of bed space, and then we'd probably have to call in the police, too.

SIMON: Isn't that a bit exaggerated?

DOCTOR: I don't believe you're in a position to judge what is exaggerated and what isn't.

SIMON: I see. So on account of some hidden desire of mine, some social neuroses, some megalomania—on account of all this, you're going to do the unexaggerated thing— you want to amputate my leg!

DOCTOR: It's not a matter of wanting. I will amputate your leg, colleague, just as sure as I'm standing here. I have quite enough knowledge from general medicine.

SIMON: Amputating a leg is not general medicine. It's surgery.

DOCTOR: Is that so?

SIMON: Doctor, listen to me. You mean all this symbolically, don't you?

Let's say that I do identify with this Drohojowski. So we find a way to get him out of my subconscious—this fixed idea I have about a Polish rebel—we get it out and kill it, you and I, for appearance's sake—symbolically, right?

DOCTOR: Wrong. I'm actually going to amputate your leg.

SIMON: You stupid idiot! Do you mean to tell me that your hidden desire to be a surgeon is going to amputate my hidden desire to be a Polish rebel?

DOCTOR: I think so, yes.

SIMON: *(after reflecting for a while)* I've just thought of something else, Doctor, sir.

DOCTOR: Yes?

SIMON: I have researched all there is about this Drohojowski and there's no evidence anywhere in any document, in any archive, in any source whatsoever, that they amputated his leg. Why would they amputate his leg?

DOCTOR: Because he wouldn't have survived otherwise. Look, I've studied the history of medicine, too. Smooth as butter in the exams, I was. Ten out of ten. As your diary so accurately describes it, the infection he had when they brought him in would have killed him for sure had they not amputated. Without antibiotics as an antidote to the infection, an operation was absolutely necessary.

SIMON: What about a small local operation? They could have cut around the wound and then disinfected it. They knew about disinfection then.

DOCTOR: No, no, no. That won't do. The leg must go or the infection will travel straight to the heart.

SIMON: Straight to the heart?

DOCTOR: Straight.

SIMON: May I make a telephone call?

DOCTOR: You may not.

SIMON: I'll call collect.

DOCTOR: You are already in intensive care.

SIMON: This is a medical crime! You cannot amputate a healthy leg!

DOCTOR: You make me laugh. Don't you know that the Aztecs used to cut the heart out of a living man and lay it on the altar? Did anyone call that

a crime? No! And it wasn't just a religious gesture either. It had deep social significance. What is one human heart compared to the spiritual well-being of the entire community!

SIMON: Viewed statistically – nothing, I suppose.

DOCTOR: And a leg is even less than nothing.

SIMON: *(after some silence)* Doctor, sir, how about trying a little electroshock? I wouldn't mind.

DOCTOR: Can't.

SIMON: But why not?

DOCTOR: Hasn't been invented yet.

SIMON: And... where... would you cut...

DOCTOR: Roll up your trouser leg. Here. No, a little lower. Here, above the knee.

I/8

(The large day room is now the dining room. The Nurse is doling out food to the patients. The Woman-with-Doll is in the corner. Doberman, with two plates in front of him, is hoping for more. Ljubica is near Emerik. Saul Paul with his Bible, Rajko with his newspaper clippings and Simon are all seated together. Volodja and two orderlies enter and walk among the tables. Volodja stops at Doberman's place.)

VOLODJA: Is it good?

(Doberman does not reply.)

VOLODJA: May I?

(Volodja dips his finger into the food on the plate but pulls it away as if the food is too hot.)

VOLODJA *(to an orderly)*: I need a fffff...

SECOND ORDERLY: I don't have a fffff...

VOLODJA: You don't have a ffff...?

SECOND ORDERLY: Nnnnnn....

VOLODJA: Ffffff.... forget it then!

(All three start laughing. Some of the patients laugh, too. The First Orderly is holding up both Doberman's plates of food. Some is spilled on Doberman.)

DOBERMAN: You bbbaastards. Fffuuu

VOLODJA: Fuck us?

DOBERMAN: Fuck you!

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VOLODJA: He got two words in a row! Bravo!

(Applause and laughter. The noise in the room increases. Doberman starts to cry and overturns his table. The orderlies jump out of the way.)

VOLODJA: Pick it up. I mean: pp-ppic-ppic pick it upppp.

(Doberman bends down but only picks up his own plates.)

VOLODJA: Clean this all up.

(Doberman shakes his head and the Second Orderly twists his arm so he drops his plates on the floor.)

FIRST ORDERLY: Pick up the plates, the forks and spoons, the table and everything else.

SECOND ORDERLY: Take the cloth. Clean it up and then wash the floor.

VOLODJA: This is a dining room – a place for eating food, not for breaking dishes.

CAPTAIN: No liberalism here!

(The orderlies manhandle Doberman some more because he refuses to clean up. They throw him to the floor. Saul Paul draws near.)

SAUL PAUL: Arise and go to Damascus.

(The orderlies push Saul Paul out of their way as they heave Doberman around the floor.)

SIMON: *(into his plate, simply)* Swine.

(The orderlies release Doberman. Everyone looks toward Simon who now seizes his table and starts to shake it. Emerik begins on his guitar. The Woman-with-Doll walks about the room and Rajko overturns a chair.)

SIMON: *(losing control, screaming)* Swiiiiiiiiiiiiine! Swiiiiiiiiiiiiineeeeeee!

(The orderlies try to subdue him but he resists. A great clamor breaks out. There is banging on plates, jumping up and down, thumping on tables, yelling and hissing. An orderly rushes for a straight-jacket and Simon is finally overcome. He is now firmly bound in the straight-jacket.)

I/9

(In Simon's cell. He is in straight-jacket on his bed. Volodja is pacing the floor.)

VOLODJA: Right from the start I thought you were a strange guy. When you first came here, I asked you if you knew any jokes. You didn't. It's not that you don't know any. It's that you don't want to know any. I don't believe intellectuals don't know jokes. Outside you could get

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