

be, wherever he is. He's not the type to go wandering off through those grey deserted plains. How can he have left me? How ever did he make up his mind? Where did he find the courage to go off on his own? [*She sees the branch on the table, takes it in her hand and looks at it.*] He really has torn out the flower of love, pulled it up by the roots. How can he have ripped it out of his heart, how can he from his heart have ripped it? Poor Jean! How he must suffer! My poor little Jean's been hurt. He's leaving a trail of blood, behind him on the road. [*She sits down near the cradle which she starts rocking, her back turned to the audience. In her other hand she is holding the branch.*] We're alone now, little one. How can I lose the habit I've got of touching him, expecting him. Can I get used to not hearing his answering voice? [*She takes up the refrain again:*] If you could tear this love from your heart, if you could tear this away, if you could tear this love from your heart, from your heart, from your heart . . . [*The back wall, which she is looking at, vanishes. You can see a garden: trees in blossom, tall green grass, a very blue sky.*] Oh! [*She half rises, then sits down again. By some movement of her shoulders and her back she must convey to the audience the wonder she herself feels. Then, on the left of this landscape, which is also on the audience's left, you can see a silver ladder appear, hanging in the air, the top of it out of sight. The joy and astonishment of Marie-Madeleine, who is contemplating the landscape, is still conveyed, perceptibly but discreetly, by certain movements of the shoulders. She stands up very quietly:*] He didn't know *that* was here! He couldn't have seen *that*. I thought the *garden* was here. I suspected it was. Though I wasn't absolutely sure. If only he'd seen, if only he'd known! If he'd had a little patience, he wouldn't have gone, he wouldn't have left us behind!

CURTAIN

II

THE RENDEZVOUS

THE SET

A terrace that appears to be hanging in mid-air. A dark sky. Later, when Jean arrives, the sky will clear. The light, however, will be cold, an empty brilliance, without shadow and without sun. In the background and as far as possible all round, arid mountains. Jean enters.

JEAN: What wonderful light! I've never seen anything so pure! Those mountains could seem too stark. But I like clarity. [*Discreet appearance, on the right, of the First Keeper, with cap and moustache.*] Good morning. I love the light in this part of the world. I like the dust too. These stone buildings and the altitude. Especially after roaming through so many wet countries: gloomy plains, marshland and rain. See how these mountains stand out against the sky, they look almost alive. It's all so new to me.

1ST KEEPER: Have you travelled down from the North?

JEAN: From the North? Well, you know, really I'm not too sure . . . I've no sense of direction. Countries where it rains anyway. Dark and dusky lands. This is the kingdom of light.

1ST KEEPER: I suppose so. Rather an empty brilliance, though. A bit bleak, perhaps. If that's what you're after, help yourself.

JEAN: This is the entrance to the museum, isn't it? Are there still lots of visitors?

1ST KEEPER: At the moment it's not the season. Do you want to go in?

JEAN: Not just yet. I'm waiting for her.

1ST KEEPER: It's not the first time you've been?

JEAN: No, that's why I'm here. When you've seen it once, you can't help coming back. What a brilliant idea: to have your museum on this vast plateau at the highest point. When she's arrived, we'll both go in and see the statues. All those amazing rooms I promised to show her. This domain is the finest in the world. The situation's sublime. There's no other word. To think I can show her this land where once I came bewildered and alone. To think I can be here with her now. Happiness uplifts me . . . No, it's more than that, it's a rising tide of irresistible joy, a great wave that sweeps through me and makes the desert fertile. Have I really been here before? Of course, but I can't tell you when. The actual date escapes me. Did I come here before? Or did I only imagine this place? Yet somehow I seem to have been brought here. Yes, of course I was, I was here before and *she* wasn't able to come. Now I remember. All those impressions lost in the dark night of memory are coming back to me one by one. They weren't gone for good. Now they're emerging, each one clearer than the last. As if the waters of oblivion had washed them clean. Oh, it's beautiful, it's magnificent! As dazzling as it was the first time. When was that? When? It seems like the first time now. But I've had it before, this feeling of exaltation: how can such a landscape exist, how *can* it be here, how can it *be* that there's . . . that there's . . .

1ST KEEPER: That there's what?

JEAN: I'm amazed there can be such mountains, and the space, and this sky all round, resting on the peaks, then stretching out over the world.

1ST KEEPER: It's perfectly natural. It's Nature.

JEAN: The long night is over.

1ST KEEPER: Have you been asleep?

JEAN: No. Or rather, yes. Let's see now, what was I doing?

Was I lying awake or drowsing? Anyway, I've woken to the wonder of the morning, of *this* morning at least. And I hope it's never going to end. I've been born again. That's what I came for, to make a fresh start. By that I mean, I'll be starting any time now. I'm a different person, yet I'm still the same one. I'd got too involved in things.

1ST KEEPER: What things?

JEAN: Problems I thought were an essential part of myself.

But *we* are not the things we do. That's why I can throw them off and find I'm still in one piece.

1ST KEEPER: Well, that's all right then! Good . . . I'm glad, for your sake, to see you so happy. [*Enter the Second Keeper, who is very like the First.*] This gentleman's happy to be here. This gentleman is happy.

JEAN: Actually, I'm happy thinking how happy I'll be in a minute. Any moment now. She told me she'd be here. I'll have all I want in a minute. If I weren't so sure she'd be here, I'd have nothing at all. Hope, well-founded expectation, that's what makes me happy. There's still one tiny cloud in my sky, though it will soon blow away. Though I can almost feel her presence, behind that there's a void. But it's sure to be filled in the end. Bound to be. Nothing can stop her coming, we have a rendezvous. No-one made her promise. It was *she* who wanted it. I expect I'm a bit early. What time do you make it? [*To the First Keeper, who looks at his watch without saying a word. Jean looks at his:*] That's what I make it. [*To the Second Keeper:*] What time do you make it? [*The Second Keeper looks at his watch without saying a word:*] I'm right on time. [*To the First Keeper:*]

She will come, won't she? She can't help coming, can she?

1st KEEPER: You should know better than we do.

JEAN: We fixed a rendezvous. [*To the Second Keeper:*] We fixed a rendezvous. [*To the First Keeper:*] I've just arrived. A second here or there, what's the odds? Besides, we didn't decide on the second, or even the minute. A little leeway, that's natural. Can I go on waiting?

1st KEEPER: As long as you like, Sir. A good while, anyway. The museum's nowhere near closing-time yet.

2nd KEEPER: We have to stay here. It's our job.

JEAN: The curtain's lifted, the sky has cleared. Time for her to come! [*To the First Keeper:*] If the impossible happened and she didn't arrive today, could I leave word for her with you?

1st KEEPER: I don't know the lady.

JEAN: Don't ask me for her photograph. I must have had one, of course. What did I do with it? It can't be much good. I had a terrible camera. I could describe her to you. Perhaps she's been here before? Perhaps she waited for me and went away again? [*To the Second Keeper:*] You haven't seen a lady who looked as if she was waiting? You'd never forget her face. Perhaps she's been already? In which case, she's bound to come back. She didn't say anything to you?

1st KEEPER: I can't know all the folk, Sir, who visit the museum. I don't stare them all in the face.

JEAN: But I tell you *her* face is unforgettable! You couldn't help noticing *her*!

2nd KEEPER *to the First Keeper*: Tell the gentleman that for a small consideration we'll keep our eyes open. If we remember this lady, if she's really been before, we'll tell him if she comes back. If it's her first visit, and it seems more likely to me, we'll have a closer look.

1st KEEPER *to Jean*: Give us some means of identification, Sir, if you've no photograph on you.

JEAN: Identification?

1st KEEPER: Or tell us her name. We'll write it up at the entrance and then we could give her a message.

JEAN: I've forgotten her name.

1st KEEPER *to the Second Keeper*: He's forgotten her name.

2nd KEEPER: Let him describe her, then.

JEAN: Describe her! Well, now! She's, she's, how can I say?

Like a chapel on top of a hill. No, a temple suddenly emerging from the jungle. No, what she's really like is a hill, a valley, a forest, a clearing.

1st KEEPER: Please be more precise.

JEAN: She used to wear bracelets.

1st KEEPER: In our country all the women wear bracelets.

JEAN: She sails proudly along like a swan. I know! . . . That's not enough to go by.

1st KEEPER: Is she dark, or fair, or a redhead?

JEAN: She had a dress with trimmings . . . a blue dress . . .

2nd KEEPER: Her eyes . . . What's the colour of her eyes . . . ?

JEAN: Misty eyes . . . no, black . . . no, very bright . . . and penetrating . . . no, elusive . . . with a present, no, absent look, the colour of certain dreams, as gentle as the touch of a warm river in summer. You see? She's easy to recognise!

1st KEEPER: I think if you had a photo or knew her name, it would be more helpful to us.

JEAN: I promise you'll recognise her by her smile. No-one smiles like her. She's on the tall side, I think, and she has long arms. But you'll recognise her too by the look of wonder on her face at finding herself here . . . She'll close her eyes a minute because the light's too strong. She'll ask you if I've been here, if you've seen me, if anyone's waiting for her. But will she know her self as her? Know

my self as me?

1ST KEEPER: You didn't note on your memo-pad the actual date and time?

JEAN: Where can that memo-pad be?

1ST KEEPER: How can you forget a memo-pad!

2ND KEEPER *to the First Keeper*]: Is he quite *sure* he didn't fix the rendezvous somewhere else?

JEAN: I'm sure it was here.

2ND KEEPER: I wouldn't be too sure, with a memory like yours.

JEAN: The past is coming back. I seem to remember now. I explained how she'd have to climb some steps to get here. I can see us walking side by side in the sunshine . . . I can still see our two shadows. I'd made it quite clear that to reach this place, before the steps, before the main flight, there was a dusty road by the sea. And before that, olive trees, the white town, the desert . . .

1ST KEEPER: That's it. Those are the right directions.

JEAN: She said: "I'll come for sure". She couldn't have made that promise lightly, could she? Then she said: "I'll come for sure, even if I lose my memory, it will still be me. If *you* forget, it will still be you, it will still be us, just the same but without *our* memories." How can you lose your memory? We arranged to meet again, some year or other, in June, at eleven o'clock. At three o'clock in the afternoon? The fifteenth? The thirteenth? The seventeenth? Or was it to be in July?

1ST KEEPER: You've lost *your* memory anyway. So how can I possibly help you?

JEAN: I think we changed the date to another, only a few days apart. That's what's muddled me up, that's why my mind's so confused. Hers too, I suppose. What did we decide, in the end? Let's see: the thirteenth, eleventh,

fifteenth, seventeenth, thirteenth, eleventh, fifteenth, seventeenth . . . She said: "Just now we can't, we're being watched. We're prisoners, with too many obligations!" But later on she'd come with me, to a country where everything starts afresh. I told her about *this* country, but it would take a long time to get here. A country with no station or airport. To reach it she'd have to pass through mournful plains, gigantic cities, and a desert. And climb mountains too. "To reach it", she echoed, "I'll pass through deserts and gigantic cities. I'll climb mountains too. Nothing shall stop me. I'll leave everything behind, burn all my boats." She *knew* it would take a long time.

1ST KEEPER: I'm sorry, Sir, but I'll *never* recognise her. As you've nothing better to do, why don't *you* wait for her! If she promised, I expect she'll come. Don't worry!

JEAN: My description must seem a bit far-fetched to you.

1ST KEEPER: Are you sure you'll recognise her?

JEAN: It's just possible her face is a little more lined, but she'll always have the same expression. I'll recognise her by the way she's trying to recognise me: she'll come, she told me she would. A meeting like this, of such vital importance . . . she'd have sent a cable, or written to explain. I'm so aware of everything all round me, yet I feel so empty inside. Something must be missing. What else can it be but her? Lost memories will guide her. Working deep down like grains of wheat, secretly seeking the light. She did all she possibly could, to be sure she wouldn't forget. "When we meet again", she said, "I'll have time for no-one but you . . . just for you . . . for my little Jean . . ." How did she put it? I'll only have time for you? For you? Or for my little Jean? I can hear her voice, but I can't hear her words any more.

1ST KEEPER: Perhaps she has forgotten?

2ND KEEPER: Perhaps, in the meantime, she's made other appointments?

JEAN: If she'd forgotten, I'd have forgotten too. She knows *I'm* bound to come. And she knows, if *she* doesn't, I shall be tramping the roads, quite homeless, century after century, because she is my home, my haven. She'll come all right. Why don't we quietly enjoy these splendid mountains while we wait? Who's that? There she is! No, it must have been a mirage. May I sit down on this bench? [*He sits down on the bench, then gets up.*] Perhaps something unexpected stopped her from getting away. What a state she'll be in! Yet she told me she'd manage it, she promised: "I'll get there somehow, I promise. For your sake I'll come!" It wasn't a hasty decision, you know, but it was a spontaneous one. Spontaneity is the expression of a profound emotional . . . There she is! [*He makes for the back of the stage.*] No. I'm wrong: only the shadow of a bird on the wing. But once she *did* say: "We'll keep that for next time". Really she did! Is that her?

1ST KEEPER: It's a trick of the light.

JEAN: Is that her? I can hear the crunch of sand beneath her feet . . .

2ND KEEPER: It's the wind.

JEAN: Oh! Why must we cling so to other people! What hope is there in someone else? "You'll find no hope", she'd say, "*except* in someone else. I'll teach you what joy is, I'll give you a zest for living that you've never known before." To think I wasted all those years, lived through them without living! "You'll have your time over again, *I'll* give it back." Did she really say that or is it my imagination? "What have you done with your life?" she asked. It's been one long nightmare. I've slept it away. "I'll keep

you awake, I promise. One fine morning, you'll wake up a different person, and yet you'll be just the same. The same person and someone else at one and the same time. And we'll live happy ever after. I'll teach you what life is!" But why doesn't she? Isn't that her climbing the steps? Is it still only the wind? Is it just that shadow again? Just the play of light? What's the time?

1ST KEEPER: Midday.

JEAN: What's the time?

2ND KEEPER: One o'clock.

JEAN: What's the time?

1ST KEEPER: Late afternoon.

JEAN: The evening's still a long way off. Can you hear her? I can: "Come along, here I am! Where are you?"

1ST KEEPER *to the Second Keeper*]: Can *you* hear anything?

JEAN: The sun hasn't moved. It's not late. Not nearly evening yet. Can you hear her? I can: "Come closer! I want to see you!"

2ND KEEPER *to the First Keeper*]: I can't hear a thing.

1ST KEEPER *to Jean*]: My partner and I can hear no voice at all.

2ND KEEPER: Do you remember her last words?

JEAN: Remember, dear? *I* can: "I love you, sweetheart, love you to distraction. Poor darling, don't worry!" That's what she said when she left me. She turned and went, in her blue dress, the smile of love on her lips. Oh! if only it would leave me, that vision of parting grace! She could not tear her love from her heart, from her heart she could not tear it, never from her heart could such love be torn, never, never, never! Can you see her coming? Can you hear her? Is she here yet? "Don't worry!" she said.

1ST KEEPER: We're going to close the museum soon, Sir. Come back tomorrow. It may be she's forgotten.

JEAN: I love you, sweetheart, love you to distraction. Anyone who can't forget bears the scar for ever. Haven't I often lied, often made promises I've not been able to keep? Will I carry this mortal wound inside through all eternity? Mortally wounded, for ever. [*He sits down on the bench.*]

1st KEEPER: It's nearly closing-time.

2nd KEEPER: Time's getting on.

1st KEEPER: The sun's going behind the clouds. It'll soon be evening.

2nd KEEPER: The season's nearly over.

1st KEEPER: It'll soon be the start of another one.

2nd KEEPER: And that one won't suit him.

1st KEEPER to Jean]: It's late, Sir.

JEAN: "What have you done with your life?" she asked.

"You've wasted it. But I'll give you a chance to live it all over again." Oh! If only she'd come! I can't manage all by myself. Is she climbing the steps? Is that the way she walks? Is she still just a shadow of the shadow of herself? Is it just a leaf? Is it just the wind? Or is it just the quiver of a wish? Just the whisper of a tear down my face?

1st KEEPER: That's it. Just a sigh from her lips.

JEAN: Show up in some form or other! I want to see you!

Give some sign of life, at least! [*He looks round on all sides.*]

I've no other refuge but you. There's nowhere I can live now. Who would welcome me? Oh, my friends, my keepers, I was so comfortable in my discomfort! Listen: and I'll tell you. I wanted to escape old age, keep out of the rut. It's life I'm looking for! Joy I'm after! I've longed for fulfilment and all I find is torment. I had to choose between peace and passion. I chose passion, fool that I was! Yet I was safe enough in my hide-out, firmly locked in gloom and nostalgia, remorse and anguish, fears and responsibilities, like so many walls all round me. The fear of death was

my truest shield. Now the walls have collapsed. And here I am, defenceless, exposed to the blazing inferno of life, and in the freezing grip of despair. I wanted life and life has hurled itself at me. It's crippling me, killing me. Why didn't I have the sense to welcome resignation? All my old scars have opened, my wounds are bleeding again. Thousands of knives are driving into my flesh.

1st KEEPER: Why can't he lose his memory, and take refuge in oblivion?

2nd KEEPER: It's his own fault. Serves him right. He wanted everything, the glutton! He should have gorged himself on nothing.

1st KEEPER: For *forty* years I've been a keeper here. *I'm* not always on the move. I lead a quiet life. My wife's moustache is almost as big as mine.

JEAN: If only I'd been a mangy dog, or a cat that's out of sorts, all good ladies and dear old souls would come flocking round to carry me off and tend my sores and pamper me with pity. But I'm afraid I'm only a man. You can't take pity on a man: a man in pain is ridiculous to mankind.

1st KEEPER: Did *he* take pity on others?

2nd KEEPER: Everyone's looking for pity. They all want it for themselves. But no-one gives it to anyone else.

JEAN: Why did she drag me away from my slum, out of my tomb?

1st KEEPER: Wasn't he the one who said it's silly to suffer?

2nd KEEPER: Who advised indifference to others, or at the most a sneaking regard?

1st KEEPER: Who said you should idolise no-one? That not a living soul was deserving of veneration?

2nd KEEPER: Who claimed we should be free from the ties that bind us?

1ST KEEPER: Who said nobody and nothing could ever belong to us?

2ND KEEPER: What a breach between heart and head!

1ST KEEPER: What a contradiction!

2ND KEEPER: He doesn't believe what he thinks or think what he believes.

JEAN: What a breach between thought and life! Between myself and me! [*A woman seems to him to be passing over the terrace:*] Here she is! Is it really her? Is it you? Are you you? [*He has gone up to some invisible person.*] Isn't your name . . .? Let's see now, what is your name? . . . She's looking at me. She's going away. She *would* have recognised me! [*Another woman seems to him to be passing in the opposite direction.*] At last! . . . [*He rushes towards the shadow.*] I knew you'd come, after all the time I've been waiting! Since the beginning of time! Since the first time I was born.

1ST KEEPER *taking on the voice of a woman*: I don't know what you're talking about.

JEAN: Oh yes, you do! You know *me*! Open your eyes and have a good look! Gaze into mine. Don't you remember? Even if you don't, it's you all right. And I'm Jean. You've come for me, you were waiting for me.

2ND KEEPER *woman's voice*: What impertinence! It's my husband I'm waiting for. And what's more, here he is!

1ST KEEPER: It's late, Sir.

JEAN: Just a minute.

2ND KEEPER: What do you hope to obtain in one minute? Statistically, the laws of chance are against you. When it's centuries you've been waiting.

JEAN: And all that time I've been waiting for *her*, waiting for *you*.

1ST KEEPER: The day is passing. It's gone.

2ND KEEPER: The week has gone.

1ST KEEPER: The season has gone. We're off on our holidays.

JEAN: This life has gone. Once again, I'm afraid it's too late!

2ND KEEPER: Hope for another, you'll do better next time.

1ST KEEPER: You'll find her.

2ND KEEPER: Or find her *again*.

1ST KEEPER: Or you'll find another one . . . just like her.

JEAN: I don't want one of those women who all look alike and look like *her*.

1ST KEEPER: You're fussy.

JEAN: I want the one all the others look like, not one who looks like her . . .

2ND KEEPER: We're just closing, Sir.

JEAN: The light is going. I admit it's getting late.

2ND KEEPER: We're closing, Sir.

JEAN: It's very late. It's too late. It's cold. The landscape's not the same any more. When hope fades, everything changes. [*He looks all round him.*] These are the gloomy plains of nightmare reality. The deserted plains and the marshes . . . What if that was all there was! My heart's like a wounded beast, clawing me in its death-throes . . . My stomach's a bottomless pit, my mouth a funnel of fire. Hunger and thirst, hunger and thirst . . . [*He goes now towards one keeper, now towards the other, or holds them both by the hand or the waist:*] You're, my friends, my dear sweet Sisters! If only I could find that hide-out again where I dragged out my life, so cosy and snug, walled in by my fear of death . . .

1ST KEEPER: And comfortable in discomfort. You told us that before. You should have stayed at home.

2ND KEEPER: You should have done what we did . . . the same as everyone else.

JEAN: Why did she uproot me? Why did she promise? I

didn't ask her to promise anything, did I?

1ST KEEPER: She made you reflect the illusory light of love.

2ND KEEPER: There's no reason for living . . .

JEAN: Oh yes, sweethearts, pretend to pity me! [*The Keepers take out large handkerchiefs, wiping their eyes and blowing their noses.*] Thank you. It's a great help! I know there's no reason for living. I knew all the reasons for *not* living, for *not* plunging into life. I was cautious, my dears. If you knew how cautious I was, how suspicious . . . What memories did she stir in me, what nostalgia for the past, what secret wishes, what forgotten need? She awoke me to myself, she is absolute necessity. And I thought I could do without everything! Of course, of course, there's no reason for living. I found a *non*-reason . . . I clung to it and my hands got bruised . . .

1ST KEEPER: That's what comes of being so unreasonable.

JEAN: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! Madness only pays if it means *total* darkness, if the mind is quite unhinged.

2ND KEEPER: You like the good life. Go and console yourself! We haven't had our dinner yet.

JEAN: To live like a living wound. I'm going, I'm going. I've been gone a long time, out on the roads to conquer the world. Plenty of roads, but not much world. Where shall I go? Where? Where can I find earth that's not hard, water that won't scald me, a dressing that heals, a bush without thorns? I am sick, my sweet ones. And I'm going away, far away. I'm dead. Yet I'm still dying. One word could cure me. But who is there that knows it? Who can utter it? I've forgotten where my old home is, I can't find the way. I'll go wandering on through the valley. Perhaps I'll meet her by chance. And yet they promised her to me, she was promised. I don't seem to understand. I'm going away. I'll go on so long as there's night, so long as there's day, so

long as there's still twilight. [*Shouting:*] Where are you? I won't stop till I see the flashing of your crown.

1ST KEEPER: Good luck on the road! It's a wide wide world. You're still young, you've plenty of time. *We* can't do any more.

2ND KEEPER: We've no desire. We're satisfied with little.

1ST KEEPER *to Jean, who is disappearing towards the back of the stage*]: Come back and see us one of these days!

JEAN *you can hear him shouting*]: Appear and lighten my darkness! I need you because you're so alive, so dazzling, so gentle, intense and passionate and reassuring. [*His voice slowly fades.*]

2ND KEEPER: Who on earth *is* this girl? A sort of princess?

1ST KEEPER: Do you think she exists?

2ND KEEPER: Aren't you hungry? Hm . . . I sniff the aroma of soup.

1ST KEEPER: I can taste the wine in my mouth already.

2ND KEEPER: *Bon appétit!*

1ST KEEPER: *Bon appétit!*

CURTAIN

THE BLACK MASSES OF THE GOOD INN

THE SET

The stage represents the main hall or refectory of a kind of monastery-cum-barracks-cum-prison. At the back of the stage you can see a large gate made up of quite widely-spaced bars. Behind these bars for the moment you can see a dismal landscape, indistinct, rather misty or overcast, empty. Later, right at the end, this landscape will be lit with a brilliant light, a great deal of green, trees and flowers, a very blue sky, at the final apparition of Marthe and Marie-Madeleine with a luminous ladder hanging down, exactly as in the final moment of the departure scene of the first act: "The Flight". Marthe, fifteen to sixteen, is the child from the cradle, now grown into an adolescent. This bright, Eden-like garden will contrast with the grey walls of the refectory.

In the refectory for the moment you can see, in the foreground, on the audience's right, a hearth without a fire. On the left a heavy old door, more or less Gothic, which creaks a little as it opens. Standing motionless in the middle of the stage is Brother Tarabas, who looks like a monk without looking quite like a monk, a hood over his head, but no cross. He remains like this for a few seconds. Then Brother Tarabas turns with a sharp movement towards the door and takes off his hood.

You can see Jean moving through the landscape, behind the iron gate, from one side to the other, and disappear for a brief moment. Knocking is heard.

TARABAS: Come in and welcome, guest. Come in. [*The door opens slowly, slightly creaking. Jean enters timidly, the door closes again. Jean is in crumpled clothes, he is ill-shaven and looks exhausted, older.*]

JEAN: Would you mind if I stopped here for a while? I can't go any further. I'm tired out. I've been walking for days, and I suddenly saw your place. May I have a little rest? I won't stay long. Don't worry, I don't want to be a nuisance. I'll soon have to be on my way again. I've seen so many things already and had all sorts of adventures. Very interesting, but quite exhausting. And my journey's not over yet. I just need a little rest before I carry on.

TARABAS: Make yourself at home. Take that stool and sit down. You can tell us all about it. [*Jean sinks down on the stool.*] That's the way, that's right.

JEAN *he wipes the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief, which he puts back in his pocket*: It's very kind of you to let me stay.

TARABAS: We like to make visitors welcome here.

JEAN: Is this a monastery?

TARABAS: Not exactly. And yet, if you like, it is a *kind of* monastery. We never leave it. When people like yourself, who have travelled a great deal, come to pay us a visit, we're quite anxious for them to stay. We like to have some idea what's going on in the world.

JEAN: I'm really most grateful. Thank you.

TARABAS: *We thank you* for spending some time with us.

JEAN: No, I'm the one who . . .

TARABAS: No, we're the ones! [*Pause.*]

JEAN: Are you the Superior in this establishment?

TARABAS: By no means. I am Brother Tarabas. My task is to welcome strangers. [*Jean looks all round the room.*] You see, it's not exactly a monastery, is it? Nor is this room the

guardroom of a barracks, as you might think. We're not a hospital either. In the course of centuries these buildings may have been used as a prison or a college, a monastery, a castle or a hotel. They're very old. They must have been used in many different ways. But things have changed now. This is an establishment, as you said. That's the very word, an establishment. We wear these habits for convenience. If we look like a religious order, that's because, in a certain way, religious we all of us are. No. I am not the Brother Superior. The Brother Superior is here with us now . . . [The Brother Superior appears, abnormally tall, dressed in white; he could be raised up on stilts hidden beneath his homespun habit; the Brother Superior has come in on the audience's right. Jean stands up.]

JEAN: My respects, Brother Superior.

TARABAS to Jean]: Please sit down. Our Brother Superior is a very simple man. [To the Brother Superior, indicating Jean:] This is our latest visitor. [Then, after looking at the Brother Superior for a few moments, to Jean:] The Brother Superior was expecting you, Monsieur. He bids you welcome, and thanks you for entrusting yourself to our care.

JEAN: Please thank him. I really mean it.

TARABAS: The Brother Superior is specially anxious for you to feel quite at home. So please sit down quietly and relax.

JEAN sitting down again]: You knew I was going to come?

TARABAS: We thought you would, we were almost sure. This is where people usually come. And you're here. That proves it.

JEAN idiotically]: That's true, yes, that's true. [While Jean is making the speeches that follow, a second brother, then a third and a fourth, will come on discreetly, one after the other; the fourth one will sit down near the door, on the audience's left; the others will stand near Jean, when they have waited on him; the rest will

sit on the ground, cross-legged in Eastern fashion.] It was very cold on the road. Then very hot. After that, very cold again. I feel rather cold even now. Is there a fire?

TARABAS: If you'd like one . . . The walls are very thick, that explains why it's so cool.

JEAN: And yet I'm thirsty.

TARABAS: Why not have a basin of hot water to soak your feet in? That will warm you up.

JEAN: Oh no! Really!

TARABAS: Why not? Yes! Take your shoes off . . . Your feet must have swollen . . .

JEAN: If you insist . . . [Jean takes off his shoes. Tarabas goes towards the right, behind the small stretch of wall—in which a kind of porthole will appear at the end of the act—which juts forward slightly at the side of the stage; he will come back with a basin of hot water, and a towel, after the second brother has entered and brought Jean a jug.]

JEAN drinking out of the jug]: Thank you, I was very thirsty. What was that? Water? Or wine?

TARABAS to Jean, who is trying to dip his feet in the water while he drinks]: Don't worry, let me do it! I'll wash your feet myself, you have a little drink.

JEAN to Tarabas]: All the same, I . . .

TARABAS: Don't be shy, it's the custom.

JEAN: I just drank it straight off, without thinking. I don't even know what I drank. Anyway, it was very good. Now I see: you keep a sort of inn in the old style, a rest-house for travellers.

TARABAS: A rest-house for travellers. Yes, that's it, if you like, the very word. You could call this place a sort of inn. Didn't you see the sign outside?

JEAN: I expect you're waiting for me to tell you about my journey: [The third brother enters from the right bearing a tray

on which there is a bowl and some bread.] Yes, please! I'm very hungry too. Thank you again.

TARABAS *at Jean's knees*]: Don't move. *I'll dry your feet. Don't waste time, eat.*

3rd BROTHER: Travelling always tires you and makes you hungry. It's only natural. You really need some refreshment. [*Enter a fourth brother who takes up his position, seated, near the door, on the audience's left. He is holding a carbine.*] That's our hunting brother.

JEAN: Oh yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

TARABAS: We do our own hunting, we do our own fishing, we're market-gardeners and we make our own wine. Organisation's essential.

JEAN: It's extraordinary! [*He has his mouth full and swallows greedily.*] I eat and drink, eat and drink. And still I'm thirsty, still I'm hungry. I'm sorry, I must seem like a bottomless pit. In my whole life I've never been so hungry. It's true I've had nothing to eat for weeks, for months you might say. But you know, I hadn't even realised, I was so engrossed in my adventures, in the beauty and the marvels of the countries I went through.

TARABAS: You're lucky to have the chance to travel . . .

JEAN: That's true. Yes, I am lucky. I almost forgot about food and drink. May I have some more?

TARABAS: Take as much as you like, of course. We're at your service. [*To the second and third brothers:*] Help him to more, brothers, whatever he wants, as much as he wants. Don't let his bowl or his platter stand empty. Hurry, what are you up to? You must look after our guest. [*The second and third brothers bring Jean food and drink.*]

JEAN: Don't scold them, Brother Tarabas! It's my fault, I'm gobbling it down. They just can't keep up with me. [*Tarabas goes out with the basin and comes back with fresh*

towels, while Jean eats and drinks greedily, wildly; the brothers are constantly rushing in, rather comically, to replenish the dishes and go on serving Jean. Rhythmical movements.]

TARABAS *to Jean*]: You must forgive them. They're slow, not so young as they were. A warm towel over your face makes you feel much better. [*Tarabas lays the towel over Jean's face. Jean removes it.*]

JEAN: Thank you. [*Between mouthfuls of food and drink:*] I must tell you my story too . . . I've so many things to say . . . I must tell you all about it.

TARABAS: No need to hurry. [*He again lays the warm towel over Jean's face.*]

JEAN *taking off the towel*]: It really does make me feel better . . . Oh! I've just thought! I don't know if I've enough money on me to pay for this magnificent meal.

TARABAS: Don't worry yourself about that! [*A further application of the towel between two mouthfuls of food and drink.*]

JEAN: I'd like to know . . .

TARABAS: It doesn't cost much.

JEAN: Still I . . . [*He takes off the towel.*]

TARABAS: Don't bother about it. We'll settle that later. We'll come to some friendly arrangement. Don't give it a thought.

JEAN *eating and drinking, very fast*]: You're so generous, so kind-hearted, friendship's a real vocation for you. It feels wonderful to be here!

TARABAS: Stay as long as you like.

JEAN: I wouldn't want to presume.

TARABAS: We're entirely at your disposal.

JEAN: It's so nice to be welcomed like this, it warms the cockles of the heart. But I'm afraid I must go in a minute. I've got to get back on the road. There's so much still to be seen, to be done, to be learnt!

TARABAS: Take a holiday, if you like . . . if you want to . . .

You're under no obligation . . . But we'd be delighted if you could devote a little time to us later on . . . as you suggested yourself . . . Just to talk, for a moment or two . . . and say a few words, over dessert, to our brothers and myself, to the Brother Superior, about the things you've seen. If you'd like to . . . Unless you're too pressed for time . . . There's no obligation . . .

JEAN: It's the least I can do.

TARABAS: Besides, your story's bound to be so absorbing it will be *our* turn to pay *you*. Are you still cold?

JEAN: I'm getting used to it, it's all right. No, no, it's not worth lighting the fire now.

TARABAS: Nothing pleases us more than entertaining visitors. Satisfy your hunger, quench your thirst. We'll have a small fire all the same. It's cosier. [*A monk lights the fire.*]

JEAN: No, no please, it's not worth it.

TARABAS *signing to Jean to drink*]: You must get warm and take proper refreshment. Don't be afraid, the bill can take care of itself. [*Jean goes on with his meal.*]

3rd BROTHER: Now, voyager! Tell us all the fine things you've seen!

TARABAS *to the 3rd Brother*]: Give him time to breathe.

2nd BROTHER *to Jean*]: How goes the world? Is it in a healthy condition?

TARABAS *to the 2nd Brother*]: Give him a chance to recuperate.

3rd BROTHER: Who have you seen then, voyager? What have you seen? [*The towel is applied again.*]

TARABAS: Wait! Wait a moment, can't you! [*To Jean:*] Our brothers are so impatient! Please forgive them! [*The towel is withdrawn.*]

JEAN: I understand perfectly. I feel better now, thanks to you. My tiredness has gone. If you don't mind, I'll eat a bit more of this in a moment, and drink some more of that.

3rd BROTHER: What have you seen?

2nd BROTHER: What have you heard?

[*The three brothers sit down in a circle round Jean. The fourth brother still remains motionless near the door. Brother Tarabas and the Brother Superior remain standing, Brother Tarabas closer to Jean. From time to time Tarabas casts a glance at the Brother Superior, as if asking his opinion, in a wordless exchange.*]

JEAN: What have I seen? What *have* I seen? Oh! So many things I can hardly remember. Everything gets mixed up. Wait . . . wait. I've seen people, and meadows, and houses, I've seen people, I've seen people, and meadows . . . Oh yes . . . Meadows and streams and railway-lines and trees . . .

3rd BROTHER: What trees?

JEAN: All kinds. Lots of them.

2nd BROTHER: Trees in blossom?

JEAN: Yes. Trees in blossom, trees that have lost their blossom, trees without blossom, trees without leaves and . . . Oh yes! Trees lining the roads. I've seen . . . children.

3rd BROTHER: What were the children doing?

JEAN: They were wearing satchels, on their way to school. On their way *from* school. Or else they were playing . . . at hopscotch or leap-frog or long tag. Lots and lots of children, dark and fair. Children . . .

2nd BROTHER: Did you speak to them? Did they say anything to you?

JEAN: Er . . . They were walking along. I overtook them on the road. There were others coming the other way. We passed each other and they just walked on. And then I saw other people, men and women. I couldn't talk to them all. I didn't speak to them. I hurried on. I hadn't got time. I wanted to arrive before it was dark. What am I saying?

Sometimes I travelled through the night as well. Then it was daylight again.

TARABAS: What kind of day?

JEAN: Grey and dismal over the plain, as far as the eye could see.

2nd BROTHER: Before the plain, on your way through the meadows, you must have seen the knight of olden times asleep on his feet in his armour like a statue.

3rd BROTHER: Did you go as far as the Palace? And see the Emperor, or his Attendants?

JEAN *eating*]: I told you: a dismal empty plain . . .

3rd BROTHER: Before the plain?

JEAN: There was sand and beaches.

2nd BROTHER: Then you must have seen the crimson ocean, the blood-red lakes and the chinks in the blue vault of Heaven, the rape of the stars and those contraptions whirling round in the shimmering rainbow sky?

JEAN: I saw the countryside, men and women quarrelling, weddings, yes, and lots of brides and bridegrooms.

3rd BROTHER: In the woods and the meadows, before the plain and the beaches, did you see the luminous springs, the crystal wolves, the petrified hag and the airy temples in space? [*Jean shakes his head.*] Temples with pillars reaching down to Earth?

JEAN: I've seen pillars of wood, pillars of church and state, yes, pillars of the pub, and pillars of hearth and home, I've seen pillar after pillar and people peregrinating . . .

TARABAS: We've plenty of pillars and peregrinating feet. How else could the universe go on, how could mankind progress?

JEAN: They'd stand up and go away, then they'd sit down, then they'd stand up again. Later on I saw some who were fast asleep, and then they'd wake up, they'd talk and

then they'd fall silent, speak no more, lie down to rest and never move again. They'd never be seen again.

3rd BROTHER: Did you see those lands that change colour as soon as you set foot there, with whole cities that are metamorphosed and towns like chameleons?

JEAN: I didn't see all that . . . I saw landscapes and towns and moustaches and mountains. What else do you want me to tell you? Moustaches and rivers and belts, turkeys and oranges, cannons and trucks, drunkards and white men and yellow and black, red houses, green houses, curtains and rivers and drums . . . I'm still hungry.

TARABAS: Don't be polite! Eat and drink! It's all yours for the asking.

JEAN: May I? Oh thank you, thanks. I'm eating and it's just as if I wasn't. A bottomless pit!

TARABAS: Our Brother Superior, if I interpret the expression on his face correctly, has not yet had his fill of the news you're giving us, which only increases *our* hunger and thirst.

2nd BROTHER: There's nothing new in what he's told us so far.

3rd BROTHER *to Tarabas*]: Ask him for something more exciting. Some memories are very well entrenched. Make him dig them out.

JEAN: The lowering plain, lonely paths, empty crossroads, wastelands.

TARABAS *to Jean*]: Tell us more. Before the deserted plain, before. You must have seen lots of other things. You're no ordinary traveller, you're an explorer. With sharper vision, longer memory, imagination.

JEAN *eating*]: I saw [*in between mouthfuls of food and drink*:] river . . . curtain, drum . . .

TARABAS *to Jean*]: Our Brother Superior will ask us to assess the value of this test. We must take notes. [*To the 3rd*

Brother:] Brother Accountant, Brother Psychologist, take note, take note. [*To Jean:*] Pull yourself together. Come on. Force yourself a little. We'll take it all into account.

JEAN *eating and loosening his collar and tie*: Colour, river, drum, curtain, garden, belt, moustache. [*During this time the 3rd brother, the brother accountant, takes notes.*] Turkey, curtain . . .

3rd BROTHER: You've said that before.

JEAN: I'm choking . . . Let's see: cascade, drum, school, relative, house, sun, turkey, peasant, colour, garden, belt.

3rd BROTHER: You're repeating yourself, Brother Jean.

TARABAS *to Jean*: You're repeating yourself, my dear sir. The Brother Superior isn't very impressed.

JEAN: I saw . . . I saw . . . garden, turkey, school, relative, sun, garden, garden.

3rd BROTHER: Not only is he repeating himself, but he's forgetting things. He's losing names and faces and objects on the way . . . He's losing everything on the way. What's more, he's not saying the words in the same order. [*To Jean:*] You're forgetting things, Brother Jean.

JEAN: No, I'm not, you know. [*He is trying to remember:*] River, curtain, turkey, drum. It's true, I'm remembering less and less . . . Ah . . . I've got it: peasant. Oh! And this is the word I'd forgotten . . . solstice!

3rd BROTHER *to Tarabas*: That word doesn't exist in the vocabulary test we set him. [*To the 2nd Brother:*] He's inventing new words, so we don't notice the ones he's forgetting.

TARABAS *to Jean*: You can't cheat, you know! This test's made up in such a way you can't fool anyone. None of us, or even yourself. But if you *are* inventing, other experiences, other memories, tell us about them.

JEAN: Belt, colour, colour, mask, mask, mask . . . The more I eat, the hungrier I get. The more I drink, the thirstier I

get. My feet are cold.

TARABAS: Don't put your shoes on again. [*To the 2nd Brother:*] Put some sandals on him. [*To Jean:*] They'll keep you warm.

3rd BROTHER *to Tarabas*: There are some words he always forgets. He never says them at all.

JEAN: I've noticed lately there are gaps in my memory. It's fatigue.

3rd BROTHER: You're overtired, that's true.

TARABAS: We'll get you back on form. This establishment of ours was once a clinic. We've a stock of medicine built up over the centuries by countless generations. It's all right, Brother Jean, these medicaments are imperishable.

2nd BROTHER: Imperishable. And fully tested.

TARABAS *pointing to the 2nd Brother*: You can trust him, he's the brother who runs the pharmacy. We'll give you some pills you can take with you on the road. They'll improve your vision, so you'll remember what you've seen. You're so unobservant it's pathological. With renewed powers of concentration these sights and sounds will stick in your conscious mind. You'll have a more vivid imagination.

JEAN: And my fatigue? Yes . . . My fatigability.

TARABAS *to the 2nd Brother*: His fatigability?

2nd BROTHER *to Jean*: That will disappear. All you have to do, as you walk along, is to crunch these sweets.

3rd BROTHER: I've made a note of his answers to the test. It's only fair, if that. Slightly below the average.

TARABAS: Well now! We were hoping for something better. He couldn't even see the knight in armour. What's more, he doesn't remember the word.

3rd BROTHER: Not one allusion to the word.

JEAN: Did I know the word? I believe it was . . . No . . . I've forgotten . . . I'm sorry . . . But in self-defence I must

say I went through some very thick fog. I could hardly make out the road, even a couple of yards in front of me.

TARABAS: The gold of the knight's armour shines through fog.

3rd BROTHER: He didn't see the exploding star. Or that luminous contraption plunging through the dark.

TARABAS *to Jean, indicating the 2nd Brother*]: Before you leave, he'll give you a secret remedy, put some visionary drops in your eyes.

3rd BROTHER: His hearing isn't up to much either, or else he'd have heard the explosion, or at least imagined it . . .
[*A gesture from the Brother Superior. Tarabas turns towards him.*]
. . . used his intuition.

TARABAS *to the Brother Superior*]: All right, Brother Superior. We'll ask him the questions in the second test. [*To Jean:*] You're a much-travelled man, we should very much like to know what has become of the friends who left us and went astray. These friends of ours must be needing help. They're probably short of food. Did you meet any beggars, with outstretched hands, along the road?

JEAN: I tell you I was making straight for my destination, staring ahead of me, walking fast.

TARABAS: Well, tell us about the towns, then.

JEAN: It was darkest night.

2nd BROTHER *to the 3rd*]: That's how it is when a soul is in distress.

JEAN: Sometimes it would be lighter. There, you see? You notice, I can remember? Then, in the distance, before I reached the deserted plain, before the fog came down, making a half-light which is neither day nor night, far away, when I was still a long way off and before the fog thickened, I could see the glow of forges, blast furnaces ablaze.

TARABAS: Did you approach? Did you pass through these towns?

JEAN: I approached several of them. They melted away. Or else the gates were closing. It was too early or too late, forbidden to enter!

3rd BROTHER: Still no precise information. Nothing to add to our documentation, our statistics. So you haven't really seen anything very remarkable, nothing that made any special impression on you, that caught your imagination, in the fields, in the towns, on the roads? No interesting conversation with anyone?

JEAN: There was no-one, no-one at all. While it was still light, as I told you, I did catch sight of a few figures . . . trooping about . . . yes, troops of figures, and then nothing, no-one. The fog came down.

TARABAS: You're sure you didn't hear the cry of a man, even if you didn't see him, that man drowning in the pool near the road you were on?

JEAN: I saw and heard nothing. It certainly didn't happen as I was passing. It was just before, I expect, or after. I would have heard. Or perhaps I'd have seen some shape in the water. The fog came down.

TARABAS: I'm sorry to insist, but when the darkness gave way, when the fog cleared, what was there then?

JEAN: I told you. There'd been curtains and rivers before. I told you. Believe me, that's all there was: the lowering plain, grey, deserted plain, as far as the eye could see. What a long plain it was! Then, the fog came down.

3rd BROTHER: Troops on the march?

TARABAS: Our brothers know nothing about it, Monsieur. They're like children. They don't bother you, I hope?

JEAN: Not at all. Why, yes, soldiers at dawn in serried ranks. With a sort of satchel on their backs. Like school-boys.

3rd BROTHER: Did you follow them? Where were they going?

JEAN: Towards some kind of sun. They vanished before they got there, enveloped in smoke or mist.

TARABAS *to the two Brothers*]: Our guest is getting tired of your questions.

JEAN: Again, the plain, then a harsh light . . . and then the fog came down.

TARABAS: Nothing else to report?

JEAN: No, nothing else. Ah yes, several times on my way—I hardly took any notice—several times on my way, through the fog or the dark night, at the corner of some wood or at the far end of a road, thanks to a brief shaft of light, from a flash of lightning or one, of the moon's rays, a ghastly figure would appear, a ragged old woman leaning on a stick. She would stand quite still, and look at me without speaking. Yes, at rare intervals I did just catch sight of her in the darkness, almost bent double. I was right not to take any notice, wasn't I? It was a figment of my imagination, a trick my mind was playing, an old face such as I've never seen before, old age itself. I haven't seen her since. In my memory . . . the fog came down.

2nd BROTHER: Did you have a rest now and then, to get your breath back?

JEAN: When I couldn't walk any further, I'd stop, sit down on a milestone and shut my eyes.

TARABAS *more eagerly*]: And *then* what did you see?

JEAN: As I had my eyes shut . . .

TARABAS: Inside, what did you see? . . . What visions haunted you?

JEAN: The same: a lowering plain, a grey, muddy, endless plain, or paths that led nowhere, paths that led nowhere at all. And then the fog came down . . .

TARABAS: You're exaggerating. You don't seem to realise.

One of those paths must have led you to us.

JEAN: That's true. And I'm delighted. It was lucky for me you were here. I'm very grateful. How much do I owe you?

TARABAS *to Jean, after looking at the Brother Superior*]: Our Brother Superior wishes to thank you for giving us such a good talk about your travels.

JEAN: Oh well, you know! . . .

TARABAS: You're too modest, Monsieur Jean. It was more than a talk, it was a lecture, even if it was impromptu. It seemed thorough, carefully prepared, deceptively simple. I found it accurate and detailed, even if it lacked the usual touch of rhetoric. You're a genuine case, I'm quite sure of that. You probably noted our brothers were making notes. *They* were noting *you*. Nothing will be lost, not a single word you said. We're very grateful to you. Now we wish you to relax and enjoy yourself. What would you say to an amusing entertainment? Don't say no, we'd be most upset. Make yourself comfortable. You mustn't have any complaints when you leave. Please don't thank us. When you go out into the world again, a world we can never know, cloistered as we are, we'd like you to give our establishment a good recommendation. We want to ask you straightaway to forgive any deficiencies in the show we're going to put on. It's amusing, I hope, as I said. Instructive perhaps too. *Utile cum dulci*. Anyway, we do our best. Don't forget we're amateurs. Imagine we have among us two characters suffering from a traumatic education formation or, if I may say so, progressive malformation. Having become what they are, they have reached a point from which they must set off again and follow the other route. Each of these characters has to learn the contrary of what he knows. It's all in the artist's

imagination, of course. I see by the expression on your face that you don't understand me very well. It's a play about education and re-education. You'll see. [*The 3rd Brother looks at the Brother Superior, then:*]

3rd BROTHER to the 2nd Brother, discreetly]: I believe our Brother Superior agrees with me. The results of Monsieur Jean's tests are not good enough.

2nd BROTHER: They're unenlightening.

TARABAS to the two Brothers]: Be quiet. We're beginning.

[Two iron gates like two cages descend from the flies: two characters quickly enter them and take off their monks' habit, while two Brothers close the gates of the cages. Or else the cages arrive from the wings, with Tripp and Brechtoll inside, pulled in on tracks, or pushed on some other way. The two prisoners are old. The two Brothers push on a trolley bearing a bowl, a cooking pot and a ladle. They each make for one of the cells.]

TARABAS to Jean]: You already know the Brothers who play the jailors. I'm afraid they don't look fierce enough for the parts. The two seedy characters in the cages are the prisoners. They used to be professionals: real clowns. What we're about to show you might be called a didactic entertainment. It was produced by our Pedagogical Brother, who's in charge of our various education and re-education courses. [*He turns towards the Brother Superior:*] Brother Superior, my task is to welcome strangers, I cannot . . . It's not one of my functions . . . [*Silence from the Brother Superior.*] Very well, Brother Superior. [*To Jean:*] Our Brother Superior tells me our Pedagogical Brother has, at this moment, other fish to fry . . .

JEAN: Fish to fry?

TARABAS: So I'm obliged to take his place on the spur of the moment. It will be far from perfect. Still, I hope you'll be able to follow the action. Sit there, you'll see better, it's

the place of honour . . .

[More Brothers arrive, representing the audience. Two of them are carrying an armchair and a platform on which they install Jean as if at the theatre. The others, more humble members of the audience, sit down on either side of Jean on chairs they have brought. They will look on fixedly, emotionless, at least at the start. When the play starts, they take off their hoods and reveal their lack-lustre faces. The monks on Brechtoll's side are dressed in red and flooded with red light; those on Tripp's side are dressed in black. Each group will, while the other remains still, show its appreciation at the critical moments, by rhythmical applause, by collective rhythmical movements, and appropriate mime, of the words Tarabas addresses to one or the other of the prisoners. Jean will also mime his anguished participation in this dual reaction. He will reflect the passion of the two prisoners. His mime contrasts with the alternating attitude of approval and disapproval of the two camps in the audience; he thus expresses the anguish of both prisoners, he "participates", he identifies himself with both; from time to time, especially at the start, he seems idiotically not to understand, he is stupefied, he laughs even, thinking it a game; then his reactions become pained and dramatic as he gradually comes to understand and he turns to face the audience of monks, mutely questioning them.]

Do sit down, then . . . No, please . . . Don't be shy . . .

JEAN: I don't want to look as though I'm presiding . . . This is the Brother Superior's seat . . .

TARABAS: Come along . . . No false modesty . . . Take your seat . . . Not another word . . . The play's about to begin . . . [*During this dialogue, the other Brothers have settled down on their seats, the Brother Superior behind, impassive, dominating everyone by his height. Tarabas puts on a more sumptuous cloak, red on Tripp's side, black on Brechtoll's side; he throws a*

hood over his head, also red and black, with great holes for his eyes, leaving his lips free.] How are you, Mr. Tripp? How's the morale? Still in prison! I'm afraid it's not very exciting for you! But you must make the best of it. Your faith will help. You're not sulking, are you? That's not very nice. [*Turning towards the other prisoner.*] Dear Mr. Brechtoll!

TRIPP (*to Tarabas*): while Tarabas is speaking to Brechtoll]:

Please, open this door and give me back my freedom.

TARABAS *to the public, in other words to Jean, the monks, and so to the audience too*]: They all say the same thing. Whether it's their fault, or someone else's, or nobody's fault at all, as soon as they land in prison, they want to get out again. They want their freedom. All freedom is provisional.

BRECHTOLL: I want my provisional freedom.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: You see, Mr. Brechtoll, Mr. Tripp, next door, is also in prison, but for different reasons, for exactly the opposite ones. He'd like to get away too. As for me, there's nothing I'd like more, but I'm afraid you're not the only two prisoners! After all, I can't let everyone out. Just imagine! Thousands and thousands of people at liberty, dashing all over the place, roaming pell-mell through the streets? Think of it: the prisons empty and the streets packed with people wandering aimlessly about. It would turn the world inside out. I can't risk a traffic-jam like that. [*Laughter from Jean, the others do not laugh.*] Let me put myself in your place, Mr. Tripp, in my thoughts, of course. Let me put myself in your place, Mr. Brechtoll. I can see why you find it hard to understand me. After all, it's because you don't understand *yourselves* that you're both where you are now. What would you be free from? Catching your death of cold? [*Laughter.*] Here, you're protected from the cold. Being struck by lightning? Here,

on the roof, we have a lightning conductor. Here you're free from all attachments . . . Just now you're in one sense attached to this place, it's true, but our strongest attachments are emotional. Yes. You're in a real prison when your mind is alienated. Aren't you, Mr. Brechtoll? Physical torture, for example, frees you from moral torment. When we were torturing you, did you think about anything else? Free yourself from the idea of getting away: it will be a great relief to you for a start. Your conscious mind is full of lingering doubts, old habits that cling to you: systems, doctrines, dogmas, myths, ticks, automatic mental reactions that get in your way. Shake them off, these relics of a faulty education. Oh! How tenacious they are! Ready-made ideas are very stubborn. When you've cast off your pitiful prejudices, you'll be almost free or at least prepared for freedom. [*The next four speeches should run together almost simultaneously.*]

BRECHTOLL: We know that speech. It's the hundredth time you've made it.

TRIPP: You've not convinced me.

BRECHTOLL: All based on a theory with no foundation in fact.

TRIPP: Vague ideas.

TARABAS: Up to a point I admit your objections. You're right. Anything that's not verified by experience is purely theoretical, hazy in its abstraction. The time has come to put it to the test. If you don't want to suffer, you needn't. You'll only suffer so long as you enjoy it: you can stop by yourselves whenever you want to. It's your happiness we're after, Gentlemen, *your happiness*. [*Rhythmical applause from both sides, Red and Black.*] We'll just put you on a course to disintoxicate you. You'll be purified, wiser than before. Your minds will grow more supple and you'll be completely free.

TRIPP: Then will we be allowed to go? [*Indignant movements from the Red Side.*]

BRECHTOLL: Will the cage be opened? [*Indignant movements from the Black Side.*]

TARABAS: What terminology! When you've been disintoxicated, you won't see things in the same way at all: what you now call your cage you'll know by its proper name. Your outlook will be different. Your intelligence cleansed. Your deep-rooted beliefs . . . Well, you'll see! Anyway, the three of us, you two and I, are going to proceed with the verification of what seem to you our hypothetical theories. In thirty lessons, released from all your obsessions, you'll be like these two enlightened brothers [*he indicates the Second and Third Brothers*] who are here just to be of service, just to help you. They've passed their apprenticeship in the art of un-learning already, they've been through the same stages as you. Are they complaining? Look at them, the very idea makes them laugh. It will all go perfectly. Thirty lessons, no more. Thirty. Today is the first. [*Miming from Jean. The others remain impassive.*]

2ND BROTHER to Brechtoll: Are you hungry, Mr. Brechtoll? It's lunchtime. There's a succulent soup. It smells delicious!

[*simultaneously*]

3RD BROTHER to Tripp: Are you hungry, Mr. Tripp? There's a succulent soup. It smells delicious!

TRIPP: I don't want any of your soup, or your bread either.

BRECHTOLL almost simultaneously: I'd rather starve to death.

Open the door!

2ND BROTHER to Brechtoll: There's nothing shameful in feeling hungry.

[*simultaneously*]

3RD BROTHER to Tripp: There's nothing shameful in feeling hungry.

TARABAS to Brechtoll, then to Tripp: It's lunchtime. Risk it. Have some. [*Hesitation from Brechtoll and Tripp.*] If you weren't hungry, we'd be cross. We've taken a lot of trouble to prepare you some good soup. [*To Brechtoll:*] You're only a prisoner, of course. [*To Tripp:*] You're only a prisoner, of course. [*To them both:*] But we don't despise you for that. [*Jean mimes his relief.*] We didn't want to kill a man for the error of his ways. [*To Brechtoll:*] Subjectively speaking, you're not guilty. [*To Tripp:*] We are charitable men. [*The murmurs of approbation and indignation, the carefully measured and highly rhythmical applause of the audience, Red and Black, should be regulated by the director. To both:*] We want to set you on the way of truth. We wish for your salvation. For that we must keep you in good health. [*To Tripp:*] We care about your health, Mr. Tripp. [*To Brechtoll:*] We like you, Mr. Brechtoll. [*To both:*] Sincerely, from the bottom of our hearts.

3RD BROTHER to Tripp: What a lovely smell!
[*simultaneously*]

2ND BROTHER to Brechtoll: What a lovely soup!

TARABAS to both: If you don't eat, if you lose weight, if you fall ill, it's we who will be punished. You wouldn't want to get us into trouble! Come, Mr. Brechtoll, show willing! Mr. Tripp, show willing! [*A clock can be heard striking.*] Midday. Time for a meal. [*The two prisoners do not answer.*]

2ND and 3RD BROTHERS together: It's time for a meal.

TARABAS to the two Brothers: They'll feel hungry eventually.

Keep the soup hot. [*To Brechtoll:*] The meal's ready.

[*To Tripp:*] The meal's ready. [*The clock is heard striking.*]

3RD BROTHER to Tripp: It's one o'clock. [*The clock is heard*]

again.]

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: It's two o'clock. [Clock.]

3RD BROTHER *to Tripp*]: It's three o'clock. [Clock.]

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: It's four o'clock. [Clock.]

JEAN *shouting desperately from his seat*]: Six o'clock, Mr. Tripp.
[Clock. All the Red Side turns towards Jean in brief astonishment.]

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Nine o'clock, Mr. Brechtoll.
[Clock.]

3RD BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Midnight, Mr. Tripp. [Clock.]

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Midnight, Mr. Brechtoll. [Clock.]

3RD BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Midday, Mr. Tripp.

JEAN *as before*]: Midday, Mr. Brechtoll. [Clock, same reaction
from the Black Side.]

3RD BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Midday, Mr. Tripp.

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Midday, Mr. Brechtoll.

3RD BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Three o'clock. You're still
not hungry, Mr. Tripp?

[simultaneously]

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Three o'clock. You're still
not hungry, Mr. Brechtoll?

TARABAS *to both*]: Admit you are. It won't commit you in any
way. Then we'll give you back your freedom.

TRIPP: You're mocking me. You're lying.

BRECHTOLL: You're lying.

TARABAS *looking first at one, then at the other*]: We respect you
too much for that.

BRECHTOLL: I mistrust any kind of soup. [Laughter from Jean.
Disapproving murmurs from the Red and Black Sides. Jean is
shocked into silence.]

TARABAS *to both*]: You're making a mistake.

2ND and 3RD BROTHERS *together, while the clock can still be heard,
rattling bowls and ladles*]: Four o'clock, five o'clock, six
o'clock. Who's hungry? Who wants his nice sou-soup?

We're taking the soup away! [They make as if to leave.]

TARABAS *to the Brothers*]: Wait, be patient! They are patient
enough, poor devils.

BRECHTOLL: I want a drink.

TRIPP: I'm thirsty, I'm hungry. [Jean swallows as if he had a
dry throat.]

TARABAS *turning to the Brother Superior*]: They haven't held out
more than a week. [To the two prisoners:] Congratulations!
Congratulations! I've known others far more obstinate
than you. I don't suppose you're used to prolonged
fasting. It's better this way. You see, Mr. Tripp, you see,
Mr. Brechtoll, how stupid it is to go on a hunger strike.
Our prison soup is so good: our cooks are excellent. [To
Brechtoll:] Now, you'll be served. [To Tripp:] Now, you'll
really be served.

BRECHTOLL: Hurry up!

[together]

TRIPP: Quickly! Let's get it over!

TARABAS *to first one, then the other*]: Straightaway, straight-
away. [To both:] You'll get served, don't worry. However,
the Brother Superior has noticed you're not observing
protocol. He insists you respect the rules and have good
manners.

BRECHTOLL: I want some food, Brother, please!

[together]

TRIPP: My soup, Brother, please, my soup, my
soup!

TARABAS: That's not the way. Don't clutch at those bars,
it's forbidden. Don't poke your arms out through them
like starving men. [To the two Brothers:] Step back a few
feet, or they'll knock everything over. [To Tripp and
Brechtoll:] If you upset the plate, there'll be no more
soup. [To Tripp:] Why do you say "my" soup? It's "our"

soup. We prepared it with the vegetables from our kitchen-garden, with the water from our well drawn by our own Brothers. We even put some of our butter in it. Let it be clearly understood it is "our" soup. We don't mind sharing it with you, we don't mind at all, on certain conditions. [*To Brechtoll:*] On certain conditions. [*To Tripp:*] Certain conditions.

BRECHTOLL: Please, *please* have the goodness to give me some food!

TRIPP: For charity's sake, something to eat and drink!

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: What do you understand by goodness, Mr. Brechtoll? You appeal to my goodness. You believe in goodness. [*To both:*] You'll get your soup, all right, now I've said you will. Formalities first, though. We're not short of time or victuals. [*To the Second Brother:*] You'll give Mr. Brechtoll his food, pedagogically. [*To the Third Brother:*] And Mr. Tripp his, pedagogically. [*To the Second Brother:*] These gentlemen are human beings. We must not fling their food at them as if they were wild beasts. Methodically, Brothers.

JEAN *going towards Tarabas*: Listen, Brother Tarabas!

TARABAS *turning towards Jean*: I beg pardon?

JEAN: Do I have to sit through the whole scene? [*Murmurs from both sides, Red and Black.*]

TARABAS: As you wish. It would be unseemly to leave without seeing the rest. The actors would be annoyed. The Brother Superior is putting this show on for *you*. It won't last too long. We know you're in a hurry. Go and sit down. [*Jean goes back to his seat. To Brechtoll:*] If we gave you something to eat, would it be out of the goodness of our hearts? Wouldn't it be simply justice? [*To Tripp:*] You appealed to our charity, didn't you?

TRIPP: Yes.

TARABAS: You are charitable, Mr. Tripp. I understand that.

But if we gave you something to eat out of charity, that would be humiliating. We should give you some food because you deserve it. [*To Brechtoll:*] This goodness, where does it come from? Do you believe that we are good, that we are just or unjust? [*To both:*] You must be cold in your cells. I'm sorry. The soup will warm you up. Would you like your soup first or your freedom? You're too weak to go straight across the plains to the foot of the mountains, and then climb them and pass the frontier that's right at the top. So soup first. We'll open the gates later. [*To Tripp:*] Do you deserve your soup?

TRIPP: I don't know. I'm hungry.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: How does it come about that you don't know? [*To Tripp and Brechtoll:*] Try and restrain yourselves a moment. Have patience. [*To Brechtoll:*] The soup is good. In your opinion, are we as good as our soup, are we not so good, or are we good in a different way?

BRECHTOLL: I don't believe in your goodness, I don't believe the soup is good. But it's food.

TARABAS *to first one, then the other*: So you do deserve your soup? So you do deserve your soup?

TRIPP: I've done nothing wrong, so I do deserve it. It's next to nothing.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: So we're meant to be basically wicked?

BRECHTOLL: Man is neither good, nor wicked.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: If you deserve it, why did you say "something to eat, for charity's sake" and not "because I've deserved it"?

BRECHTOLL: I've demystified goodness. I know what's behind it. Everything depends on the compromises we reach. [*The Red Side applauds—disapproval from the Black Side.*]

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: You said "Something to eat, for charity's sake". So you think us unjust, but you also think us charitable.

BRECHTOLL: Some agreements just spring from necessity.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: What necessity? [*To Tripp*]: Why have we put you in there, Mr. Tripp?

TRIPP: I don't know.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Is it for our own pleasure?

TRIPP: I don't know.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: By mistake?

TRIPP: I don't know.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Is it because we are wicked?

TRIPP: I don't know.

BRECHTOLL: I mean social necessity: we live in a community.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: So we reach compromises, but there's no-one to see us?

BRECHTOLL: Who could see us?

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Are we meant to be guilty on your account?

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: So no-one can see us? No-one up there or down below?

BRECHTOLL: I don't know what you mean.

TRIPP *to Tarabas*]: I can't know whether you're good or wicked. We'll talk about that later. Give me my rations, you promised.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: As you wish. Just tell us if you think we've wronged you, yes or no. [*To Brechtoll*]: If no-one's there to see us, or compels me to be good, who's to stop me starving you to death? If you annoy me, I can break the agreement.

TRIPP *to Tarabas*]: Yes. Yes. You have wronged me.

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*]: So if we put you in a cage it is because we are wicked? Be more explicit if you want your

pittance.

BRECHTOLL *to Tarabas*]: That's right. No-one compels you to keep the agreement. I'm in your power.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: So I can starve you to death with impunity!

TRIPP *to Tarabas*]: No, it wasn't exactly because you're wicked you put me here. I can hardly stay on my feet. I'm hungry.

BRECHTOLL: Please stop playing this little game.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Hang on. If it's not through our wickedness, what *is* the reason? [*To Brechtoll*]: I wouldn't allow myself to play games. [*To Tripp*]: What *is* the reason? [*To Brechtoll*]: I understand: we're all meant to hate one another? Or at any rate feel indifferent. In that case, in whose name do you ask me not to starve you to death?

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll, rattling his ladle*]: No-one's responsible to anyone.

TRIPP: You promised, you promised.

TARABAS *turning towards Tripp*]: You're about to collapse . . . Ah! Now you're standing up straight again. No, don't faint. Doesn't it smell good! [*To the third Brother*]: Lift up the lid. The aroma alone will give him back his strength. [*To the second Brother*]: Lift the lid for Mr. Brechtoll too, we mustn't be unfair to him. The smell does me good as well and gives me an appetite. [*The Third Brother makes as if to offer the ladle to Tripp. He withdraws it, then offers and withdraws it again. The Other Brother does the same in front of Brechtoll's cage. From his seat Jean makes the gesture of offering a ladle. To Tripp*]: Now tell us, if you're not here for our pleasure, nor because we're wicked, what are you here for?

TRIPP: It's all a mistake.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Do you think we mistook you for someone else? We've got record cards on everyone. All kinds of