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TRIPP: That's not what I mean. You're not mistaking me for someone else. Your mistake is an error in your thinking. I'm hungry.

BRECHTOLL *to the Brother who is pushing the ladle under his nose and pulling it back again.*: Stop that! Please!

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: Again?

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*: In the name of what, in whose name?

JEAN *from his seat*: In the name of what, in whose name?

BRECHTOLL: In the name of nothing.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: An error of judgment? There was no trial. [*To Brechtoll*]: Do you believe in nothing, Mr. Brechtoll?

3rd BROTHER *to the public*: A trial is just ritual. Judgement precedes the trial.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: So we're meant to have made an error in our reasoning? Now, is that likely? [*To Brechtoll*]: I'm sorry, but you don't believe in God?

BRECHTOLL: What's God got to do with all this?

TRIPP: I'm hungry.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: I know, I know. But answer. I'm hungry too, and thirsty, for your words. [*To Brechtoll*]: Speak without concealment. I wish to know your deepest thoughts, and then you'll have your soup. [*To Tripp*]: Speak your mind, answer. [*To Brechtoll*]: Don't mince your words.

TRIPP: In the state I'm in . . .

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: You wouldn't be in this state if you hadn't refused the meal we tried to serve you. Obstinacy is a bad thing. It gets you nowhere.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: Yes or no, do you believe in God?

[*To Tripp*]: Make yourself clear: in your opinion, has this mistake affected your particular case?

TRIPP: That's not the right approach.

BRECHTOLL: No, I don't believe in God. How could anyone believe in Him? [*Various reactions on the Black Side.*]

TRIPP *to Tarabas*: There's no fault in your reasoning. That you should arrest me is perfectly logical, in accordance with your scale of values. It's just that, with you, there's a fundamental error, which all your doctrine's based on.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: You unhappy man, not to believe in God! [*Pointing his finger at Brechtoll, vehemently*]: That's why you imagine all mankind is wicked. That's why you invent this unlikely solidarity between men. [*To Tripp*]: We have no doctrine. But you have prejudices. [*To Brechtoll*]: This human solidarity you speak of, what else could bind men together, but God?

BRECHTOLL: We have no basic principles. Necessity binds them together. We'll discuss it after the meal, after the meal.

TRIPP *to Tarabas*: On what do you found your scale of values then?

TARABAS: What scale of values?

TRIPP: Whatever induced you to put me in prison, for example.

TARABAS *shrugging his shoulders, smiling*: Such questions are beyond me. I had my orders.

BRECHTOLL: I answered: No. I gave you a definite No. So give me something to eat as you said you would if I gave a straight answer yes or no.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: Mr. Tripp . . .

BRECHTOLL *to Tarabas*: Now I've answered No, keep your word.

TRIPP: For charity's sake, Sir . . .

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*]: Call me "Brother".

TRIPP *to Tarabas*]: For charity's sake, Brother . . .

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: Keep my word? By virtue of what agreement? You're of no use to me. [*To Tripp*:] We have no doctrine . . .

BRECHTOLL: I can't go on standing any longer.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: . . . no principles, no values: we are free.

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Still hungry?

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: If you've been imprisoned, it's because you have belief, values, a doctrine—[*turning his head towards the Second Brother*:] what does he call it?—a moral system. [*To Tripp*:] In other words, prejudice. You are not *our* prisoner. It is your *thought* that imprisons you.

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: I don't know whether I should serve you or not. How does it serve us to serve you?

BRECHTOLL *to the 2nd Brother*]: I'm not asking you for anything else.

TRIPP: Freedom, that's my choice.

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: You'd rather starve to death?

BRECHTOLL: I'd rather.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: A philosopher, even when he's half starved! You're going to starve to death, poor Mr. Tripp. And I was just thinking of giving you back your freedom. [*To Brechtoll*:] You'd rather starve to death. And I was just thinking of helping you to regain your freedom . . . You see, you're not indifferent to everything.

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp, brandishing his ladle*]: Eat first? Or get away first?

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: You believe in neither good nor wickedness, you don't believe in God. You believe in soup and freedom. And yet this thing which is so precious to you and which you cannot define is what I wanted to give

you back: your freedom.

TRIPP: Let me eat first. Then you can open the door of the cage. Right now, I'm too weak.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: You've made your choice: to eat first. Which means: to stay where you are. Now you can see that choice imprisons.

BRECHTOLL: You're lying.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: You abuse me, but I forgive you.

BRECHTOLL: Let me get out.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: We'll do as you say. [*To Tripp*:] We'll do as you say. [*To them both*:] It's agreed. We'll give you something to eat first and open the door for you later.

BRECHTOLL: Open it.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: I've told you before, you'd collapse on the road.

TRIPP: Just a bowl of steaming soup for now, that's all, for charity's sake.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: First, build up your strength! [*To Tripp*:] Really, it's an obsession! You've always got the word charity on your lips. Will that feed you? No, it won't, will it?

BRECHTOLL: Will you let me out after the meal?

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: To go and imprison yourself somewhere else? But that doesn't matter, it's your own affair.

TRIPP *to Tarabas*]: For the love of God.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: So you *do* believe in God, Mr. Tripp? [*To Brechtoll*:] Yes, you can go if you eat. [*To Tripp*:] The love of God isn't a linguistic obsession, definitely not. Do you believe in God. Answer! No need to be shy about believing in God. Come along, yes or no? It's not difficult to answer. Yes or no, do you believe in God? [*To Brechtoll*:] Know that nothing binds me to give you your ration. No promise, even your word, nothing. Unless, perhaps, you pray.



TRIPP to *Tarabas*]: I believe in God, yes, I believe.  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: That question was simply a formality.  
We know you believe in God, in divine mercy.  
BRECHTOLL: I have prayed you, yes, and I'm praying you now.  
JEAN from *his seat*]: He's praying you now.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: You must *pray*, not just pray *me*.  
TRIPP to *Tarabas*]: Yes, I believe in His mercy and His charity.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: And it is not to me you should address this prayer.  
BRECHTOLL: To whom? To the Brother Superior?  
2ND BROTHER to *Brechtoll*]: To Someone even more highly placed.  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: All this chatter won't assuage your hunger.  
BRECHTOLL to the *2nd Brother*]: Is there someone more important in this institution?  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: Let's break off this discussion: You're famished.  
BRECHTOLL: Is it allowed to make a request in writing?  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: As God can do anything, you have the solution, pray *Him* to give you something to eat. His soup is better than ours.  
TRIPP: But . . .  
3RD BROTHER to *Tripp*, making as if to go away]: His soup is better than ours.  
BRECHTOLL: Some paper and I'll sign it.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: There is One who is above all institutions. He is not written to. He is spoken to, invoked. He alone can give orders. We listen to none but Him.  
TRIPP to the *3rd Brother*]: I'm praying you.  
JEAN from *his seat*]: He's praying you.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: Don't pray *me*, my friend. Pray to the

Almighty Lord.  
BRECHTOLL: So there's nobody, then.  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: Come along. Say "Our Father which art in Heaven". You don't know that prayer? [*To Brechtoll*:] Only to Him of whom I speak can you address yourself. How obstinate you are! What blindness! Your freedom is at hand and you don't want it.  
TRIPP: "Our Father which art in Heaven, blessed be thy Name."  
BRECHTOLL: But I *do* want my freedom.  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: Don't recite the whole prayer. Let's go straight to the most vital part: "Give us this day our daily bread."  
BRECHTOLL: What must I do?  
TRIPP: "Give us this day our daily bread."  
3RD BROTHER to *Tripp*]: So that's you served.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: The door is almost ajar. All that's needed is to . . .  
BRECHTOLL: . . . make some concession? Which one? [*The Third Brother makes as if to go away with his trolley*.]  
3RD BROTHER to *Tarabas*, looking as if he is about to go]: I think Mr. Tripp's had his portion already.  
TRIPP to the *3rd Brother*]: Brother, my soup.  
TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: You're eaten up with pride. It is not a question of making concessions, but of trying an experiment. Ask God. [*Approbation from the Black Side. To Tripp*:] Do you want a second helping? You're too greedy, Mr. Tripp. You should leave some for those who *don't* believe in God too, those whom God does *not* feed. Or perhaps you haven't been served, after all? [*To Brechtoll*:] Try the experiment! Ask the Good Lord for your soup!  
BRECHTOLL: When I don't believe in Him!  
TARABAS to *Tripp*]: Your soup and your daily bread, have

you had it or not? [*Mocking laughter from the Red Side. To the Third Brother:*] Has he been given his soup? [*To Brechtoll:*] You don't believe in Him. Try all the same. Pray to God. [*To Tripp:*] Answer me! That's an order. Have you had your food, yes or no?

TRIPP: No, Sir, no, Brother, I have not had my soup or my daily bread.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: Perhaps He will give you proof of His existence. Perhaps you will have some success with Him. With me you have none. [*To Tripp*]: Perhaps he hasn't heard you, you didn't speak loud enough. Try again! [*To Brechtoll*]: Make up your mind, while you've still a little strength left to pray . . . [*Silence from Brechtoll.*] . . . before it's too late.

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: You were asked to try again.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: You hesitate, Mr. Brechtoll?

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: Try again: This time it will work.

BRECHTOLL: I refuse. [*Rhythmical applause from the Red Side; disapproval from the Black side.*]

TARABAS: The rights of men! No soup, no freedom for the dogmatic.

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: So you've no more faith in Him?

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*: You won't give in, will you? You won't give in, will you? [*The last two questions are also put by JEAN from his seat.*]

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: Try again!

BRECHTOLL: What must I do?

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: Just a short prayer, I told you. A simple little prayer. You can judge for yourself how effective it is.

JEAN *to Brechtoll*: . . . How effective it is . . . how effective it is . . .

TRIPP *kneeling down*: Our Father . . .

BRECHTOLL: What prayer?

TARABAS *to Tripp*: Louder! [*To Brechtoll:*] What it is not to know! On your knees!

TRIPP: Our Father, give me my daily bread!

3rd BROTHER *to Tripp*: Not clear enough.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: Don't turn towards me! I'm only a poor Brother. On your knees! Face that way! [*Brechtoll turns towards the audience.*]

TRIPP: Give me my daily bread, oh God!

TARABAS *to Brechtoll, who has fallen on his knees*: Now clasp your hands!

BRECHTOLL: This is the first time I . . .

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*: It's easy. Like this.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: Are you in the correct position? [*To the Two Brothers:*] Are their hands properly clasped? [*To Brechtoll:*] Don't get up again! Link your fingers! Don't be ashamed! He is the only one who sees you, apart from me and these two Brothers, all very discreet.

BRECHTOLL: I can't do it.

2nd BROTHER *to Brechtoll*: No soup, then.

TARABAS *to Tripp*: Perfect. Hands properly clasped. Eyes to Heaven. That's the prescribed attitude, all right. It's a habit you've obviously acquired.

2nd BROTHER *to Tarabas, indicating Brechtoll*: He won't do it.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*: No soup. The door of the cage won't be opened either. Come on, make up your mind, damn you, pray! Don't bow your head like that! Courage! Eyes to Heaven! [*To Tripp:*] Concentrate and gather more strength before you try again.

BRECHTOLL: Heaven?

TARABAS: I mean: look at the ceiling.

BRECHTOLL: What a sinister farce! . . .

TARABAS: Don't be rude! Why do you try to annoy us? And



again, what can it matter to you if it succeeds? An experiment is an experiment. On your knees! Like that.

Don't move! [*To Tripp*:] Have you concentrated enough?

BRECHTOLL: I'm hungry.

2ND BROTHER: That's the idea. You tell *Him* you're hungry.

BRECHTOLL: I'm hungry.

2ND BROTHER: (*to Brechtoll*): I'm hungry, who? Name Him.

TRIPP: Give me my daily bread.

BRECHTOLL: God, I'm hungry.

TRIPP: Oh God!

BRECHTOLL *to Tarabas*]: Are you satisfied? I've said what I had to . . .

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: That's not the way you should speak to Him. There are certain conventions, the method, etiquette, there's the formula . . .

BRECHTOLL: The formula?

JEAN *from his seat*]: What formula? [*His face expresses the torment of Brechtoll and Tripp.*]

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Am I deaf? Have you lost your voice? Louder! [*To Brechtoll*:] If you've forgotten it, we'll teach it you again.

TRIPP: Give me my daily bread, oh God.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: It's so easy. Repeat after me: "Our Father which art in Heaven." [*To Tripp*:] Louder!

TRIPP *loud*]: "Our Father which art in Heaven, give us our daily bread."

BRECHTOLL: "Our Father which art in Heaven."

TARABAS *to Brechtoll and to Tripp*]: Louder and clearer still! Again!

BRECHTOLL and TRIPP *together*]: "Our Father which art in Heaven, Our Father which art in Heaven."

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: You're too tense. Be more relaxed! [*To Brechtoll*:] Put more warmth, more conviction into the

phrase.

BRECHTOLL: Our Father which art in Heaven . . .

TRIPP: Our Father which art in Heaven . . .

BRECHTOLL: Give us our daily bread.

TARABAS: You admit you believe in God.

TRIPP *shouting louder and louder*]: Our Father which art in Heaven, give us our daily bread. Our Father which art in Heaven, give us our daily bread.

[JEAN *has spoken the last five speeches at the same time as TRIPP and BRECHTOLL. This may be punctuated by rhythmical applause from those on the Red Side and those on the Black Side, as at the Théâtre National Populaire.*]

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: Do you believe? Do you believe?

2ND BROTHER *to Brechtoll*]: Do you believe? Do you believe?

TARABAS *to Brechtoll, while Tripp goes on saying "Our Father" louder and louder*]: You hate me. You've no more strength to smash everything up. You can't even stand up. You can't unclasp your hands. You have just enough strength left to answer . . . Do you believe, yes or no?

BRECHTOLL *feebly*]: I believe.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: I can't hear you. Articulate properly! Is the aroma of the soup filling the cage?

BRECHTOLL: Yes.

TARABAS *to Brechtoll*]: You see: you've been touched by divine mercy already. One little effort. What, who do you believe in?

BRECHTOLL: I believe in God.

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: A fine voice for a starving man! . . . Do you feel you've been fed by now?

TRIPP: Stop this game!

TARABAS *to Tripp*]: Oh no! Let us pray together. [*To Brechtoll*:] As you now believe, just say after me: "Our Father which art in Heaven" . . .

BRECHTOLL: Our Father which art in Heaven . . .

3rd BROTHER to *Tripp*

*together*]: Give us our daily bread.

2nd BROTHER to *Brechtoll*

2nd BROTHER to *Brechtoll*

*together*]: Our Father which art in  
3rd BROTHER to *Tripp* Heaven . . .

TARABAS: Give us our daily bread, our daily bread.

JEAN *from his seat, together with the Red and the Black Sides, rhythmically and beating time by clapping their hands*]: Our daily . . . bread . . . our . . . daily . . . bread . . .

TRIPP: Give us our bread!

BRECHTOLL: Our Father which art in Heaven.

TARABAS: Oh God, give Trip his daily bread! Do give it to Tripp! [*To Brechtoll:*] That's it. Here's your soup. Your prayers have been granted. There's your proof He exists. [*The Second Brother holds out a bowl to Brechtoll through the bars, which the latter falls upon.*]

[*Reaction from the Black Side, approving murmurs, as though yet another fresh fact had confirmed their faith.*]

3rd BROTHER: Lord, give Mr. Tripp his daily bread. Mr. Tripp, who is one of your faithful, is about to starve to death.

TARABAS to *Brechtoll*]: Isn't this wholesome material proof of His existence, of the efficacy of prayer?

BRECHTOLL: After this . . . I'll get my freedom too? [*He eats.*]

TARABAS to *Tripp*]: Still nothing to get your teeth into? Could it be that He's deaf? Does He want to punish you? Has He run out of victuals? These jokes of mine are unseemly, aren't they? Are you still hoping for your providential soup? In your place, I wouldn't be too sure.

TRIPP: Lord, why have you forsaken me? Why do you leave me in their hands? Why don't you spirit this cage away?

Why do you let me suffer from hunger? Why don't you carry me off? Oh God, why do you forsake me?

TARABAS to the 3rd Brother, but looking at *Tripp*]: Can He forsake his most faithful of servants?

3rd BROTHER: I don't think so. It must be an oversight.

JEAN *from his seat*]: He can't have forsaken him, it's not possible.

TRIPP: No, it isn't, is it? He won't forsake me?

TARABAS to *Tripp*]: He certainly wouldn't, if He existed.

Does He exist? Answer! There's still some sou-soup left.

TRIPP: I think He exists.

TARABAS to *Tripp*]: You won't get any soup then. [*To Brechtoll:*] It's good to see you eating with such an appetite. I didn't want to give you anything to eat. It's He [*looking towards Heaven and pointing to the ceiling:*] it's He who ordered me to give you your daily bread. In the soup, He even made that clear. Bread soup. [*To Tripp:*] Do you believe in God?

TRIPP: I believe in God.

TARABAS to *Tripp*]: No soup then. [*To Brechtoll:*] It was His voice all right. [*To Tripp:*] Do you believe in God?

TRIPP: I believe.

TARABAS: No soup then. Do you believe in God? I feel you do. No soup then. [*To Brechtoll:*] When He gave me that order, I was bound to obey. He doesn't let His faithful starve to death.

TRIPP: Don't let me starve to death.

TARABAS: Do you believe in God?

TRIPP: Yes.

TARABAS: No soup then. [*The "no soup then" is taken up in chorus by the Red Side.*] Do you believe in God, Mr. Tripp? You don't want to answer? No soup. [*Again repeated by the Red Side.*]





you I'll find out. It's possible, after all, that there may be one . . . [*Tripp and Brechtoll eat. To Jean, who has risen and gone up to Tarabas:*] How did you find me in this part? Did the show bore you? What do you think of the production?

JEAN: Very good, why yes, yes . . . Brother Tarabas. You're an excellent actor.

TARABAS: This is only the first episode, there are another twenty-nine. Total drama needs stamina. We won't show you the rest, unless you're particularly anxious . . . [*Jean makes some negative signs.*] No, you'd rather not . . . haven't the time . . . Anyway, for your information . . . in the next episode, as suggested by the character I was playing, they go off freedom . . . get disintoxicated. We demystify, forgive this hackneyed expression, the idea of winning one's freedom back, we demystify freedom itself . . .

JEAN: That's interesting. Thank you, thank you. I feel quite weak at the knees . . .

TARABAS *clapping his hands in the direction of Tripp and Brechtoll*: That's it. The scene's over. [*The Brothers Tripp and Brechtoll have given their bowls back to go out with their trolleys, then return to the back of the stage and stand round Jean and Tarabas. Tripp and Brechtoll turn towards the supposed audience, that is to say towards Jean, and bow to him.*

*The Red and Black members of the audience applaud. They stand up and either go out or take up a position right or left. Perhaps one Brother on each side will serve them something to nibble . . . rolls or refreshments . . .*]

JEAN: The two clowns are extraordinary . . . my dear fellow . . . what technique! Congratulations . . . Once again, bravo! [*The two cages disappear with Tripp and Brechtoll inside. Later, perhaps, these two will appear again, as monks, at the end of the act. The tiers of seats disappear too; Jean's chair is*

*removed.*]

TARABAS *continuing*: My clowns have specialised in that kind of part.

JEAN: When you entertain visitors and want to do them the honour, the full honours, of putting on this show, do you always have the same two actors to play the prisoners? Always acting the same thing, surely they must get tired?

TARABAS: They never have enough. One day, perhaps they will. We've anticipated that. So, as they've each learnt the two parts, we put them in alternate cages. Brechtoll plays Tripp. Tripp plays Brechtoll.

JEAN: Gentlemen, Brothers, I'm eternally grateful to you for your welcome, for this magnificent show.

TARABAS: We've got thousands like it. And in quite different styles. Once again, I don't want to press you, but don't hesitate if you'd like to see more.

JEAN: Thank you, it would give you too much trouble.

2ND BROTHER: Trouble?

3RD BROTHER: Trouble? Why did you say trouble? [*To Jean:*] It was for *our* pleasure and for *your* pleasure. Why use the word "trouble"? Did you find anything unpleasant in it?

JEAN: No, not at all. That's not what I meant. I used the word "trouble" rather than any other, it just came to me automatically. It's "pleasure" I meant to say. It gave us all pleasure. So much pleasure that we've had enough.

3RD BROTHER: The words we use are revealing. The words that come spontaneously are the very ones that express our secret tendencies, our way of looking at things, our personality.

TARABAS: You've recovered now, you're rested. We've made you very welcome, haven't we, in our establishment? You must be pleased?



JEAN: Why yes, of course, I'm extremely grateful for your welcome. You have a delightful place. What panache, what style! I feel far better than I did. Thank you so much. Now I'd like to be on my way again.

TARABAS: We're bound to render each other some little service. We're human beings. We have obligations towards one another, unless we prefer the cage of solitude. But that's not a comfortable place. You can't quite stand up or sit down properly there.

JEAN *pointing to the Brothers who have just arrived, together with the Clowns, who are putting hoods over their heads so as to resemble the others; they will all take their seats on either side of a long table. During the ensuing speeches they walk slowly across the stage and go and sit down next to each other*: Those are the actors? I mean the amateur actors, aren't they?

TARABAS: We're all amateur actors, but Brothers by profession.

JEAN: I know. You're right. Thank you. I'll be on my way again. To see what I didn't see before.

2ND BROTHER *to Tarabas*]: He hasn't really recovered yet. He's not been cured.

3RD BROTHER: That's my opinion too: he didn't enjoy the show. He probably even found it distasteful.

TARABAS: As you feel quite able to resume your journey, you're perfectly free to go.

JEAN: Yes, yes, I must. I'd like to see all I missed because of my failing sight. I've some crucial experiences still to come. The beauty I never noticed. I'm sorry about that word: this time, Brother, you'll be saying it reveals something or other I'm trying to hide, or some untidy thinking on my part . . . or Heaven knows what, hundreds of things . . . I haven't discovered the essential yet. But I have regained my strength. I must say goodbye. Give you my

best wishes. Thank you again: tell me what I owe you, please make out the bill!

TARABAS: It's not much. It can't amount to much.

JEAN: Did you find my story interesting?

TARABAS *turning towards the Brother Superior*]: Our guest's story . . . his story . . . Very good, Brother Superior. [*To Jean*:] In terms of money, it didn't carry much weight, from what our Brother Superior was given to understand by our Brother Accountant.

3RD BROTHER: It's certainly not worth its weight in gold.

JEAN: Tell me anyway, tell me what I owe you so I can be on my way. [*Short pause*.] Right. Obviously, what I told you wasn't very interesting, I realise that. But there's one thing I didn't confess to you. It's not that I wanted to hide it, it was just that I forgot.

2ND BROTHER *looking at the Brother Superior*]: Hiding? And forgetting? . . . It all comes to the same.

JEAN: Everything I wished for would vanish at my approach, everything I tried to touch would wither. As soon as I wandered into some sunny meadow, clouds would cover the sky. I was never able to take delight in anything. The grass wilted beneath my feet, before my eyes the leaves on the trees turned yellow and fell to earth. If I tried to drink the clearest of spring water it would taste brackish, nauseating.

3RD BROTHER: That's why he was always thirsty.

2ND BROTHER: Thirsty for everything. Disgusted with everything too. [*Jean goes towards the door where the monk with the carbine is stationed and the latter blocks the way. He goes to the back of the stage where the bars stand out against a grey background, that is to say the deserted plain. . . He comes back.*]

TARABAS: So you've always been a prey to this insatiable thirst, to some hunger you cannot assuage?

JEAN: Yes . . . No . . . Why yes . . . After all, why not tell you everything? Can I really remember? Am I inventing? It seems to me I haven't always been swept by this consuming fire. Once upon a time, such a long time ago, yes, perhaps before or right at the start of my journey, no, I rather think it was before, that's right, before, when the days were luminous, I'd stop in the heart of the countryside, and it was as if I was at the centre of the universe. Then I'd swivel round and look about me . . . lost in unspeakable wonder and delight I'd shout and cry: "It's fantastic! Out of this world! It's incredible and yet it is out of this world, that forest or those simple bushes, that road going up and up, that street, those three or four houses, or that procession, that lake or that expanse of sea!" Or else I'd sit down in the tall grass, and just gaze about intently, blissfully happy. Everything was complete, sufficient unto itself. I wasn't hungry. I wasn't thirsty, or rather this joy was my bread and water. Why this sudden change? This sudden deprivation? Can you explain that, Brother Tarabas? Can you explain, Brothers? Can you, Brother Superior? Why this sudden hunger, this sudden thirst? This dissatisfaction and the anguish, why, suddenly, this hollow feeling inside me, that's grown bigger and deeper ever since? This gaping void I've never been able to fill? Why were there no more luminous days, why this gloom? Was I meant to endure it? Was I meant to resign myself? Was I meant to wait? Was I meant to expect nothing? Was I or was I not meant to roam those twilight autumn roads in search of light . . . or one of those mirages?

3rd BROTHER: He had talents, though.

4th BROTHER: He kept them to himself.

5th BROTHER *ex Tripp*]: They've stagnated inside him, they've

corroded.

6th BROTHER *ex Brechtoll*]: They became ulcerated, gangrenous.

3rd BROTHER: It would have been so easy for him to find relief.

2nd BROTHER: They become a disease.

JEAN: I cried out. I shouted. No-one came to my aid. One word perhaps would have done. But I'll take up my travels again. I must go in search of land that won't burn me, water that won't engulf me, a bush that has no thorns.

3rd BROTHER *to the Brother Superior*]: Does that count as something extra? [*Stubborn silence from the Brother Superior.*]

TARABAS *turning towards the Brother Superior, who is still silent*]: We can't take your last declaration into account.

JEAN: I must go. I must go on searching. Tell me, Brothers, what I owe you. I'm in a hurry. [*He rummages through his pockets, takes his hand out again and shows that it is open and empty.*] This dirt is all the change I've got. That's all I could accumulate on this trip. On *this* trip . . . I've bloodstains on my fingers too, the blood I drew when I got caught on the brambles . . . Still, it's only a tiny little scratch.

TARABAS: Don't worry! We're not ordinary inn-keepers! We're not in business, we don't take money. We don't take the blood of our clients as surety. We don't exact contributions. You should, however, discharge your debt, only in a different way. You will, if you don't mind, do us a little service. Then you will be free to go. No, no, it won't take long. Tell us first if you're satisfied, if the food was good, if you've been well entertained.

JEAN: Of course. Thank you with all my heart. Tell me what I must do. How can I prove my gratitude . . . how can I



discharge my debt, morally? [*Tarabas turns his head towards the Brother Superior, then again towards Jean: the Brother Superior goes quietly off on the audience's left. The back of the stage lights up: through the bars you can see Marie-Madeleine and Marthe. The set, behind the bars, represents the garden of the final scene of the First Act "The Flight": luminous, with a blue sky, vegetation, trees in blossom and the ladder hanging in the same place. Very intense light, deep blue. Marthe is wearing a pale dress, Marie-Madeleine a blue suit with a red carnation in her button-hole. The lines on her face have disappeared and she seems very young.*]

MARIE *behind the bars*]: Jean, we're here, we're waiting for you.

JEAN: My darlings! Oh my darlings!

MARIE: Come and join us, then! Look what a lovely day it is!  
[*She indicates Marthe:*] She was in her cradle when you left. Now she's fifteen.

JEAN: I remember.

MARIE: You see how tall she is. Would you have thought she'd have grown so beautiful?

JEAN: I still recognise her. My heart does. I'd stopped hoping I'd see you again. How happy I am now! Perhaps I should never have gone away. So you're really here. But the other one, that other one, she for whom I was neither father, nor son, nor husband?

MARIE: Come.

JEAN: In a few minutes, I can't come for a moment. I've got to pay for my food. I must repay them. It won't take long.

MARIE: Hurry up! Springtime is short. You know that. It comes back again, that's certain, but it's dreary waiting for it.

JEAN *to Tarabas*]: What do I have to do to settle my debt?

TARABAS: This strikes you as a prison here. It isn't. The Brothers you can see sitting at table may look mournful.

But if that's what you think you're wrong. They're not any more. They may look tortured. Yet there is no torture here. It may seem like melancholy. In fact it's serenity.

JEAN: You'd think they were dragging chains.

TARABAS: Look again. They haven't any. What gave you that idea? You must have hallucinations. We don't ill-treat them. They're sheltered from the sunshine and the rain. Protected from war and poverty. Our surgeons eradicated those germs of conflict in them which were ruining their health.

MARIE: Hurry up, come on!

JEAN: It won't take me long. Is the other one coming? [*To Tarabas:*] It won't take long, will it? [*To Marthe and Marie-Madeleine:*] I'd never noticed the light all round you before; you've always been in that light. I hadn't realised. In a moment I'll be with you and I won't leave you again in a hurry. Can you see the third one arriving in the distance? You ought to be able to pick her out. I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming! How I want to hold you in my arms! Just when I thought I'd lost you! I can't wait to kiss you. I'm so longing to kiss you. [*To Tarabas:*] Will it take long?

TARABAS: Patience, Brother Jean, patience. Don't get excited. For one moment . . . or for two moments, you're going to take the place of one of our absent Brothers.

JEAN *to Marthe and Marie-Madeleine*]: I'm coming! She must be coming too? Can you see her?

TARABAS: Would you like to be the warder of the dungeons? [*Jean shakes his head.*] That's not for you. You don't want to be the warder of anything. Would you like to be charged with attendance on the dying?

JEAN: No, no.

TARABAS: That's not for you, no. You don't want to do the

cooking, either. [*Jean shakes his head.*] Right. Good. We won't ask you to carry heavy loads. We've got labourers and carriers. Rest assured we won't send you after the gold buried in the mines beneath the building. You won't be looking after the accounts, the administrative business or the trials. No. We'll spare you all that, of course. Still, after all, we've got to find you something. No-one is excused some social service. So there, don't worry, we'll decide for you. That'll be best. All for the best. As everyone eats and everyone drinks, as we do nothing but that, it's easy to find you a job: we'll ask you to serve a meal to our Brothers sitting round the table, our Brothers, who look like miserable tramps, not because they're not well fed, but because they're always famished, like you. You know what it's like. After you've waited at table, you can go and rejoin your family.

JEAN to *Marie and Marthe*]: My loved ones . . .

TARABAS: In the meadow, among the beauties of Nature's scenery. You mustn't blame us if we ask you this little favour in exchange. It's so *you'll* feel more at ease. A small exchange, isn't it? Not asking too much of you? It's normal, the usual practice.

JEAN: Just tell me how long it will take. How long, how long? [*To Marie-Madeleine and Marthe*]: I'll soon finish, then I'll come. Yes, we'll hold each other by the hand, and we'll sing and dance through the fields, dance along . . . all keeping time together. Wait for me, tell her to wait too, if you see her!

TARABAS: How long? It's hard to tell.

JEAN: Tell me, all the same.

TARABAS: We'll have to work it out.

MARIE: The springtime you love . . .

JEAN to *Marthe and Marie*]: Wait for me! I love *you* above

everything. The tenderness I feel for you towers above the mountain-tops. I've always loved you, now I understand. [*To Tarabas*]: Tell me, Brother, tell me! Work it out more quickly. When will I be able to go? [*Through the opening in the wall, a hand passes out bowls, one after the other, and cutlery, a pot of soup, a ladle. Jean begins serving the Brothers at table while the Second Brother dresses him in a monk's habit. Reaction from Jean.*]

TARABAS: It won't be difficult to do. Just wait on them at table, no cooking to be done. The dishes are all ready. These Brothers aren't like the clowns just now, they're really getting something good to eat. This isn't the theatre any more. [*Jean looks as though he wants to take off his monk's habit.*]

2ND BROTHER: It's so you won't dirty your clothes, Brother Jean, you've got to look nice for your walk.

JEAN to *Tarabas*]: Reckon it up more quickly please, I'm in a hurry. They're here, waiting for me. Someone else may come too. Tell me, how many seconds? How many minutes? Work it out in minutes, I don't mind by the minute. How many minutes more do I have to stay? How many do I owe? How many minutes is the meal going to last?

TARABAS: You want me to work out in minutes the amount of time you owe us? In minutes? That's not one of my tasks. It's the Brother Accountant who makes these calculations. And *he's* had his instructions from the Brother Superior. [*To the Brother Accountant*]: How many minutes does our Brother Jean owe us? [*Silence from the Brother Accountant. The Second Brother puts the hood over Jean's head.*]

2ND BROTHER: It's so the smell of cooking doesn't get in your hair.

JEAN: All right. I see it's too difficult to work it out in





*rhythm.]*

MARIE: We'll wait! We'll wait! No matter how long, I'll wait for you, I'll wait for you for ever! [*The chorus continues: one, seven, three, six, nine, eight, one, seven, three, six, nine, eight, one, seven, three, six, nine, eight . . . The saying of the last figures is accompanied by a bell or several bells that strike the hours. Jean goes on serving at an ever-increasing pace, in the same rhythmically staccato style.*]

CURTAIN

THE PICTURE